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**Electronic Portfolio as an Alternative Form to Assess the  
Cultural Understanding within EFL Context: Case of 1 st Year  
EFL Students at the University of Chlef**

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Requirements of the Degree of Doctorate in TEFL and Applied Linguistics

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*Dedication*

*To my beloved parents*

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## **Abstract**

With the current cultural diversity, improving learners' cultural understanding in EFL classrooms has become a major preoccupation of teachers and curriculum designers, especially at the university level. The cultural dimension of English language education is no longer focused on teaching, but assessment, which is remarkably underused, seems to be another contributing factor to improving learners' cultural understanding. In terms of assessment, learners need to surmount the passive role imposed by traditional testing and become active participants in the process of assessment. Accordingly, alternative assessment has come to foster autonomy through various tools that draw heavily on self-assessment skills. Portfolios are among these alternatives to assessment that may fit perfectly into cultural understanding data. This study explores the appropriateness of e-portfolios to assess the cultural understanding of 1<sup>st</sup> year EFL students at the University of Chlef. A survey method was selected to highlight the e-portfolio implementation and investigate the practical issues of teaching culture. This survey was done by adopting two questionnaires addressed to teachers and learners and an interview for learners. The submitted cultural e-portfolios were analysed through a content-based analysis that aimed to explore the dynamism of folio thinking skills and determine the affective data, namely tolerance and attitudes. It was revealed that students engaged actively in the e-portfolio implementation, and the submitted e-portfolios assessed cultural understanding comprehensively. In addition, cultural knowledge and skills were determined and assessed through this tool parallel with the test that focused merely on cultural knowledge. The findings also revealed that culture is typically taught without using special techniques, approaches, and objectives. In light of these findings, this thesis proposes a set of suggestions and recommendations to improve e-portfolio implementation and the teaching and assessment of culture in the EFL context.

**Keywords:** Alternative assessment, EFL Classrooms, e-portfolio, cultural understanding.

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## **List of Acronyms**

CBA	Competency-Based Approach
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
ELT	English language teaching
EP	Electronic Portfolio
ECTS	The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
EHEA	European Higher Education Area.
ELP	European Language Portfolio
FL	Foreign Language
FLE	Foreign Language Education
GVC	Global Virtual Classroom
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
GE	General English
ICTs	Information Communication Technologies
LMD	License Master Doctorate
MLAT	Modern Language Aptitude Test
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
PEP	Personal Education Plan
PLAT	Pimsleur Language Aptitude Test
TOEFL	Test Of English as a Foreign Language

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## **General Introduction**

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### **General Introduction**

The worldwide social transformation is one of the by-products of the globalisation phenomenon. The latter is a process that has come to unify ideas, philosophies, and products under cover of global integration. One of the significant ramifications of this phenomenon is the increasing interconnectedness and the blurring of boundaries that have given rise to an urgent need for international communication. International interactions and contacts among individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds produce cultural linkages or socio-cultural globalisation. For whatever purpose people meet, cultural awareness has become necessary to maintain understanding in international encounters.

Individuals have to be prepared for this challenge through systematic training within educational settings. Based on this, it can be said that educational integration is another feature of the globalisation process. The role of education surpasses the classical mission which is the design of educational programs for preparing responsible national citizens. Moreover, it has become responsible for preparing world citizens who are qualified to cope with global requirements. Educationalists have become preoccupied with finding appropriate ways of teaching and assessment to improve the cultural dimension of educational programs. As a matter of course, reinforcing the cultural dimension is primarily concerned with foreign language education since language and culture are inseparable.

Linguists and professionals agree that foreign languages cannot be taught and learned without mediating them to culture. Said differently, foreign languages are seen as best taught and learned via immersion in their cultural contexts. In this regard, it is widely believed that proficiency is one of the main objectives of foreign language programs, and maintaining this inseparability helps to maintain proficiency. Presently, language programs are required to emphasise the cultural dimension to cover the target communicative needs. In light of needs, linguistic and grammatical competencies are no longer sufficient to communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds. By necessity, improving cultural understanding is strongly recommended in language classrooms to avoid cultural shocks and misunderstandings. The pressing need for international communication necessitates the acquisition of intercultural and cross-cultural skills.

The concept of foreign language education, which occupies a privileged place within applied linguistics, is innovative because the theories and pedagogies are growing over



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time. However, as new studies and practices come into reality, they should be embodied into action to ensure well-rounded teaching and learning. As agents aspiring forever to qualitative teaching, foreign language professionals seek adequate curricula and course designs and appropriate evaluative patterns and methods that are complementary and indispensable for advancing the field. As a result of the relentless interconnectedness, the introduction of the LMD system in Algeria aimed to enhance students' mobility overseas and improve their employability skills to cope with cultural diversity. Therefore, the aim of foreign language education has become extended to encompass the development of cultural skills and potential.

English language education is one of the most sensible practices concerning the presumably circumstantial considerations that ELT professionals should be aware of as a foreign language teaching and learning. With the growing pace of globalisation, English has become the linguistic gate to the world. From a linguistic sense, it has become the global lingua franca where international bodies and encounters adapt to English as the official language of communication. In such situations, individuals may find themselves unfamiliar with their cultural environment, leading them imperatively to experience emotional vulnerability or insecurity. Language classrooms seem to be the perfect locus to acquire systematically the cultural competence that helps settle cultural misunderstandings whenever they happen.

Improving cultural understanding in English language classrooms is not confined only to the ways of teaching and learning. Assessment is another crucial determinant of exploring the extent to which teaching-learning goes in line with the set objectives. In light of these objectives, the fundamental objective of teaching culture in EFL classrooms is to improve learners' cultural awareness and understanding. Assessment, in this case, should not pertain merely to systemic knowledge of the language. Due to the pressing need to improve communication, its scope has to be extended to include non-systemic constructs. It becomes necessary to adopt and adapt assessment tools that scrutinise cultural understanding to realise these objectives. These tools need to take into account the different data that make up cultural understanding. Accordingly, it has been remarked that assessment of culture is receiving marginal attention in EFL classrooms, and whenever assessment takes place, it may not yield comprehensive data on cultural understanding. In this respect, the portfolio approach is seen as an alternative form of assessing culture in EFL classrooms. It is supported by going in line with the requirements and objectives of

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teaching culture in foreign language classrooms. Adopting the electronic form of a portfolio, '*the Cultural E-portfolio*' aims to show the advantage of integrating assessment and technology.

To explore the assessment of the cultural issue, the following detailed questions are asked to guide this study:

1. How do teachers assess culture within EFL classrooms?
2. How far might the e-portfolio be considered an effective tool to assess cultural understanding?
3. How do 1st year EFL students engage in the e-portfolio implementation for assessing their cultural understanding?

To answer these questions, the researcher speculates to formulate the following hypotheses:

1. Relying on traditional testing may be the only way for teachers to assess culture within EFL classrooms.
2. An E-portfolio might be considered an effective tool to assess cultural understanding.
3. 1<sup>st</sup> year EFL students may engage actively in e-portfolios implementation to assess their cultural understanding.

We adopted a survey to support the hypotheses above because this research method allowed us to explore the studied phenomenon realistically. Also, a mixed-method approach was adopted to gather both qualitative and quantitative data through the questionnaires, the interview, the content-based analysis, the cultural e-portfolios, a diagnostic test, and the checklist evaluation. The participants are the 1<sup>st</sup> year EFL students at the University of Chlef who constantly attend the listening and speaking sessions from 2019-2020. In addition to the EFL teachers who were merely concerned with a questionnaire.

The present research work is divided into four chapters. The first chapter is divided into two parts: the first part reports and describes the learning context, and the second part

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explains the research methodology. In the first part of this chapter, we strived to offer a detailed account of the learning context by providing background knowledge about the introduction of the LMD system to Algerian universities. Moreover, it describes the status quo of teaching culture within the LMD system, devoting specifically to situation analysis of teaching culture at the department of English at Chlef University. The second part of this chapter gives a detailed review of the research method, methodology, and the target population to enable possible replication of the practical side.

The second chapter reviews the literature related to the key themes of the research topic. It reviews assessment and testing in English language education, including the modes and the conventional quality standards. Also, it attempts to define the concept of culture, show the importance of culture within foreign language education, and tackle the assessment of culture by reviewing previous attempts, namely the European Language Portfolio (ELP in brief).

The third chapter is entirely devoted to the practical side. The data collected from the different data collection tools are analysed and interpreted. It is worth mentioning that collected data are qualitatively and quantitatively analysed. The researcher reports and discusses the main findings according to the research questions. The findings ensure correctly estimated facts about the teaching and assessment of culture in EFL classrooms and students' attitudes towards cultural understanding and assessing it via the electronic portfolio.

The fourth chapter offers suggestions and recommendations that help surmount the difficulties discovered previously in chapter three. The portfolio approach is recommended to be associated with the folio thinking process that enables students to develop a reflective mindset. In addition to the portfolio, many assessment alternatives may prove efficacious in assessing cultures, such as journals, diaries, and interviews. Extra importance is attached to cultural pedagogy that needs to be taught via special techniques and practices that raise students' cultural awareness and enhance their cultural skills.

Although this research work is not on a large scale, the obtained results make the theoretical basis more explicit by demonstrating the adequacy of e-portfolios for assessing cultural understanding. In assessment of culture, traditional testing is known for emphasising cultural knowledge, more specific factual knowledge. Recognising that

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cultural understanding is not confined merely to knowledge, other data, such as affective data, are worth highlighting via e-portfolios and other alternative assessment tools. Both teachers and students can adopt and adapt the portfolio implementation, paper-based or electronic, as a learning and assessment tool, and this has been embodied in *the Cultural E-portfolio* in this research work. The results may also help nurture self-assessment skills.

# **Chapter One: The Learning Context and Research Methodology**

## 1.1 Introduction

## 1.2 The LMD Implementation in Algeria

## 1.3 The Development of ELT in Algeria

### 1.3.1 ELT at the University Level: A Pedagogical Appraisal

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1.10.7 Content-Based Analysis

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1.11.1 Students' Profile

1.11.2 Teachers' Profile

1.12 Piloting the Study

1.13 Conclusion

## 1.1 Introduction

The teaching and assessment of culture, which occupy privileged places in applied linguistics studies, are highly technical practices in the sense that teachers need to be pedagogically prepared through having multiple roles inside the classrooms. The language teacher needs to use valuable techniques to teach about cultures, adopt teaching-aids materials, and find assessment tools that fit perfectly into certain cultural activities. Language remains inseparable from culture, and culture is the subject of this teaching whenever language is taught. Therefore, it is not bounded by a modular framework designed explicitly for culture. In the realm of teaching and learning culture, there should be a clear distinction between learning culture, which is concerned with the local culture to a great extent, and learning about the culture, which pertains to the target-language culture.

In the Algerian context, specifically at the university level, one of the main debatable issues related to English language education is the cultural dimension. To open lines to a broader conception, many questions need to be answered with a high degree of objectivity. For instance, is culture taught following objectives? Is culture taught with and through motivating techniques and activities? Furthermore, the *de facto* questions that deserve further investigation are: what are the mechanisms to assess culture? Does the assessment of culture take into consideration affective data? Finding answers to these questions requires delving deeply into the educational context to consult the status quo in practical terms.

This chapter includes two main parts: the first part tackles the educational context, and the second part tackles the methodological underpinnings of the research. The first part offers an accessible overview of the ELT status in Algeria, especially from the educational reforms onwards. It brings to light the cultural dimension by demonstrating how it is taught, modules that create suitable situations to mediate language and culture, and the most commonly used techniques to teach culture, all by referring to the studied case at Chlef University. The second part of this chapter attempts to lay out the methodological procedures that govern this research. There is an overemphasis on the electronic portfolio because this experiment revolves around it.

## 1.2 The LMD Implementation in Algeria

As elsewhere in the world, Algeria has unleashed further privileges into its market to integrate into the global market and to keep pace with the worldwide economic system. The latter has come along with the relentless interconnectedness that necessitates individuals to have the skills and competence to communicate with people coming from different cultural backgrounds far from misunderstandings. There should be an engagement in massive reforms to ensure a well-rounded education that takes into account the global standards and norms to meet the international needs. Interestingly enough, Algeria embarked on educational reforms in 2002, looking for global integration. In light of this unprecedented shrinking world, “the educational systems are now under pressure to produce individuals for global competition, individuals who can themselves compete for their positions in global contexts and who can legitimate the state and strengthen its global competitiveness” (Daun, 2002, p.01).

The powerful influence of globalisation and internalisation necessitates the global integration, and higher education seems to be a key concern in this integration. The conventional motto ‘think global, act local’ takes the lead to innovating education and other fields and disciplines. The relentless globalisation makes universities overloaded with hardly ever mission where the focus has switched from producing national citizens to producing world citizens. From a factual point of view, this needs extra effort in terms of time, experimentation, and pedagogical readiness. Altbach (2007, p.121) points out that “all the contemporary pressures on higher education, from massification to the growth of the private sector, are characterized as resulting from globalisation.” So, implementing the LMD system in Algeria seems to be a necessity to keep pace with global changes.

In light of this newness, the implementation of the LMD system went into effect in Algeria at the tertiary level in 2002. To make this newly adopted change work well, there should be good theorizing, adequate designs, and effective methods that are complementary and indispensable for providing individual learners with the competencies that foster flexible involvement in the current globalised marketplace and the internationalization of scientific research. The fundamental objectives behind introducing the LMD system, according to the guidelines set by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, are:



- ✓ Provide quality training.
- ✓ Making real osmosis with the socio-economic environment through developing all possible interactions between the university and the outside world.
- ✓ Develop mechanisms for continuous adaptation to changing jobs.
- ✓ Promoting universal values expressing the university spirit, mainly being tolerant and showing respect for others.
- ✓ Be more open to global developments, especially those of science and technology.
- ✓ Encourage diversity and international cooperation by the most appropriate terms.
- ✓ To lay the foundations for good governance based on participation and consultation.

More attuned programs have come into play to embody these guidelines, which serve up much more socio-economic profiling of students than scientific ones. An obvious starting point in any attempt to reflect upon these guidelines is that they draw heavily on the Bologna Process. The latter came to adopt a series of reforms that may be referred to as educational globalisation. The Bologna Process framed the European Higher Education Area, EHEA, in brief, which seeks to embody uniformity, innovation, and diversification of insights among European universities. It came to a final declaration on 16 June 1999 that advocated:

- ✓ Allowing mobility
- ✓ Strengthening employability
- ✓ Increasing the international competitiveness
- ✓ Enhancing attractiveness and European Dimension of the HE system
- ✓ Harmonization and acceptance of study degrees
- ✓ Implementing a credit point system (ECTS)
- ✓ Cooperation regarding Quality assurance
- ✓ Fostering lifelong learning
- ✓ Stressing students' participation in decisions on all level

No one can deny that higher education is one of the basic postulates that help consolidate any country's national development. Logically, higher education should be incorporated as

a sequel to what has been previously addressed in secondary school education and fundamental education. To remind, in the Algerian educational system, the fundamental school includes two cycles: primary school and middle school, stretching over nine years. The synergistic spirit among educationalists is the driving force towards any complementary relationship between university education and pre-university education. In the broader sense, this synergy is quasi absent in Algeria because some programs' theoretical and methodological underpinnings are not commensurate with the afterwards levels. Practically, this brings some educational gaps if we consider that collaboration is a *sine qua non* for innovation and change.

### 1.3 The Development of ELT in Algeria

Algeria's history of English language teaching (ELT) has been overshadowed by constant changes due to the global and international variables that led to periodic reconsiderations of its status. After the independence, all the educational levels were concerned with English teaching in the country, except the primary school, where French is taught as a foreign language because Algeria was occupied by French Colonialism, which gave the French language an important status not only within the Algerian school but within the overall socio-political scope of the country. Also, the new world order has educational implications, notably the linguistic and methodological ones, which deserve to be objectively recognized.

From the teaching methods perspective, English has been taught following various language theories. From a theoretical perspective, each language theory has accordingly gone along with specific approaches and methodologies to consolidate the linguistic potentials. During the post-independence period, ELT in Algeria was taught by the grammar-translation method, which has gained massive popularity within ELT circles worldwide. As the name suggests, extra importance is attached to grammatical rules and the lexis of the language because memorisation is seen as the central tenet of this method. They introduced *l'Anglais par l'Action* by Richard and Hall (1960) for middle school learners and *l'Anglais par La littérature* for secondary school learners by Richard and Hall (1969).

Starting in the 1970s, the focus switched to another method, which is the direct method. Also known as the natural method or oral method, this method is labelled by the word 'direct' because the learner is directly introduced to the target language, and

reference to the mother tongue is abstracted. This method is said to have appeared to overcome the shortcomings of the grammar-translation method. This period was marked by introducing the ELT textbooks *Success with English Coursebook 1* (1969), *Coursebook 2* (1971) by Broughton. It should be recognized that the implementation of the direct method in Algeria faced a severe hindrance, which is the lack of highly competent teachers who can conduct teacher-centered sessions. From this, one can conclude that the direct method de-emphasises the learner and textbook by placing extra importance on the teacher.

The discontent with the shortcomings of the Direct Method led to the adoption of the audio-lingual method. The latter gained popularity under the influence of behaviourism in language learning. Audiolingualism is an oral-based approach to language teaching. This means that speech is emphasised over grammar (Richards and Rogers, 2009, p57). This approach was similar to the direct method in the belief that the target language should be directly taught without referring to students' native language. What is different is that audiolingualism does not focus on teaching vocabulary and drilling is overemphasised.

The rise of structuralist linguistics leads to structural approach to language teaching. This approach examines scientifically language in a very detailed manner. In the Algerian context, the structural approach was adopted in the 1970s via the textbooks *Practice and Progress* and *Developing Skills* for secondary school classrooms. Notably, the focus remained attached to grammar, and language use was a far-reaching challenge. The overemphasis on the grammatical activities proved again to be infeasible for the sake of improving learners' communicative skills.

Under the rallying calls for the valorization of language use within ELT in Algeria, the communicative approach was endorsed at the beginning of the 1980s in response to the belief of learning English as a system of rules can have detrimental effects on learners' communicative abilities. The newly adopted approach is accredited for integrating the four skills or the standard modes of behaviour (writing, reading, listening, and speaking). In another way, language usage is as vital as language use. It could be mentioned that, under this framework, communicative language teaching gained massive popularity in the ELT setting. This method brought new pedagogical practices from the learning activities, teaching materials, teachers' roles, and assessment, and there should be well-trained ELT professionals to cope with this newness. Therein the problem is found in the Algerian context. Among the practical difficulties that marked the ELT profession within the CLT

framework was that some teachers did not have the complete readiness to practice the ELT profession. In this vein, Baiche (2006, p.63) posits that “what was perhaps strongly neglected was the preparation of teachers for such an important enterprise and thus the problems that followed this change”. It should also be recognised that the introduced textbook, *New Lines and Midlines*, was criticized for containing too much content that is not identical to the time allotted for English sessions.

It would seem reasonable to engage in changing the approach or the method after a period of implementation. In this context, the competency-based approach was introduced in the wake of the educational reforms in the 2000s. It comes as an application of competency-based education that improves learning quality and consolidates learners' technical abilities. This approach is an actual embodiment of learner-centered pedagogy that makes the learner responsible for his/her learning. The introduced approach does not slightly differ from communicative language teaching because both aim to empower learners' communicative abilities. In the Algerian context, CBA has imparted a reconsideration of national curriculum guidelines. Also, newly adopted textbooks were introduced, ascertaining learners' cognitive abilities.

### **1.3.1 ELT at the University Level: A Pedagogical Appraisal**

Since English took the linguistic lead around the world, it has become the subject of scrutiny, not only general English but also English for specific purposes, since scientific production is published in English all over the globe. In Algerian higher education, it should be recognized that English, unlike other languages, notably French, has some special circumstantial and historical backgrounds that influence its teach-ability and the overall pedagogy. In this respect, it is worth mentioning that “higher education systems, missions, structures, and institutions differ according to their historical development and traditional features, current characteristics, and efforts to deal with recent trends and respond to new challenges” (Forest & Atbacht, 2007, p.06). Generally, what might be said is that the growing importance of English in Algerian universities is one of the significant post effects of globalization and internalization. Therefore, under this super-ordinate position, it may be referred to as linguistic globalisation.

Importantly enough, English is being taught as a foreign language in Algerian universities. According to English departments, the language is taught in accordance with

modular frameworks and canvases that are quietly standardised across all universities, taking into consideration the systemic and non-systemic knowledge of the language. These modules vary from each other in terms of importance, time allotment and the way teachers conduct their teaching. Even within the same department, it is possible to find a module taught differently from one teacher to another. Furthermore, each module has to be taught accordingly with certain methodological procedures.

Learners, as newcomers to higher education, have been experiencing learning English for seven years. It can be said that this period is sufficient for learners to specialise in learning English. In this sense, critical appraisals made by ELT experts asserted that those students, despite this period, come with linguistic deficiencies, sometimes leading to educational failure. Without being too critical, the overt dependence on teachers, as it has been followed in the pre-university levels, seems to be a barrier for students to develop their linguistic potential. Seemingly intended, the overreliance on teachers has been instilled in recovering their input, although the pre-university syllabi and programmes, mainly embodied in the ELT textbooks, foster and call for autonomous learning.

### **1.3.2 ELT and the LMD System: New Prospects and Challenges**

Educationalists undoubtedly discerned that the License, Master, and Doctorate system implementation (LMD in brief) is a by-product of the educational dimension of globalisation. The latter is said to be a process to unify conventional educational content and share the same objectives. Opinions among specialists are divisive about whether English as a global language led to this interconnected world or whether the language is one of the effects of the process. Admittedly, the second view is widely endorsed by linguists whose fundamental task is to personalise this complicated overlap. Pennycook (2007) illustrates that “globalisation, it is argued, does not necessarily imply uniformity or homogeneity, whereby the current preoccupation with global English tends to unduly reinforce its role as an instrument and product of globalisation.” In light of this illustration, the move from international English to global English has been imperatively necessary.

The ELT profession within the newly implemented LMD system seems more challenging than before in the Algerian context. It has stimulated tremendous scholarly interest regarding the new challenges. This interest is frequently overshadowed by a critical stance, seeing the quasi absence of materials mobilised for teaching and learning

and the lack of human resources are among the serious deficiencies that have been associated with the classical system. ELT seeks to enrich students with social and socio-economic profiling within this new system to help them cope with the post-university phase. These requirements seem like a difficult challenge, especially under new course design and orientations, the way subjects and skills are taught, and the assessment modes that should fit into the specifications of each skill or module. Benmoussat (2008) notes that ELT in Algeria tries to achieve three main objectives: educational-scientific, economic, and cultural. They are incorporated into the table below.

**Table 1.1. Mid and long-term objectives of ELT in Algeria (Benmoussat, 2008, p.253)**

Educational - Scientific	Economic	Cultural
- To develop intellectual and emotional aspects.	-To widen economic and investment horizons	To develop in learners an awareness of the world around them
- To maintain the profile of a well-educated man	-To widen the bonds of partnership/joint ventures with foreign companies	To overcome the cultural hurdle
- To gain access to science and technology	-To prepare future managers and employees for globalisation	To prepare learners as world citizens
-To ensure continuing professional development		

It can be said that the cultural objective plays a crucial role in achieving the economic and educational-scientific objectives. Since communication is interrelated to all the objectives, mediating language and culture has become necessary to ELT in Algeria.

### 1.3.2.1 Communication-Oriented

In a wide range of contexts, it has been asserted that an undue need for communication characterises the current world. One can attribute this pressing need to the global market that has enlarged the scope of economic exchanges worldwide. Significantly enough, there should be a linguistic readiness to manage these deals and broaden communication

horizons within this socio-economic dynamism. To maintain social and educational integration, the ELT profession is seen as more favoured than other specialties in terms of the communicative needs.

One of the main contributions that the LMD system added to Algerian higher education is English for specific purposes (ESP). The rationale behind this point lies in the consolidation of university students' communicative skills because English has become the language of technology and economics in this globalised world. English teaching no longer focuses on criteria such as accuracy. The focus switches to emphasize language use over usage to realize high expectations to enhance communication skills. In this sense, Brown states:

Communicative goals are best achieved by giving due attention to language use and not just usage, to fluency and not just accuracy, to authentic language and context, and to students' eventual need to apply classroom learning to previously unrehearsed contexts in the real world (Brown, 2000,p.69).

Concerning courses in General English (GE), the LMD system created a favourable climate for students to engage in computer-mediated intercultural communications. The fundamental objective of such a step is to enable learners to acquire the necessary sub-competencies such as linguistic competence, pragmatic competence, and strategic competence that make up the overall intercultural competence. Unfortunately, this encouraging learning pattern is not available in all universities in Algeria, and it needs to be generalized on a much broader scale.

### 1.3.2.2 Cultural Emphasis

Within the ELT framework, the LMD system attaches particular importance to cultural understanding. It has become a necessity for ELT professionals to teach linguistic knowledge and cultural knowledge to raise students' cultural awareness of the target-language communities and their practices. With the latest reforms, this has been asserted in the pre-university cycles through the introduced textbooks for secondary school education, notably that of the third year, *New Prospects*, where acquiring intercultural knowledge is set among the objectives stated at the beginning of the textbook.

Teaching and learning culture at the university level is purposefully undertaken in order for learners to acquire intercultural competence and cross-cultural competence. In this sense, it should be recognized that providing cultural knowledge. Notably, factual knowledge seems insufficient to acquire such competence. All that is needed on the part of students are acquiring skills such as interpreting, relating, comparing, and evaluating. These skills may remove the complexities of cultural misunderstandings whenever and wherever they exist. By necessity, this is a real challenge for teachers because there should be straightforward and valuable pedagogies to introduce students to this assignment.

### 1.3.2.3 Technology-Integrated Education

The most ubiquitous issue raised by the globalization process is the use of technology everywhere. All over the world, the use of technology has become associated with educational reforms, recognizing the fact that technology provides realistically comprehensive support for a well-rounded education. Like the other systems that adopted reforms, the Algerian educational system placed extra importance on technology. The latter is restricted to the day-to-day courses, but other aspects of the teaching-learning process are concerned, such as assessment and evaluation and teachers' professional development. In terms of tools, technologies in classrooms are supposed to comprise many digital forms, such as audio-visual materials, tele-collaborative sessions, Web 2.0 technologies, online discussion forums, and so many other tools.

Integrating technology into education is a highly systematic task where teachers should be technically and pedagogically qualified. In this sense, Dias (1999) identifies five stages of technology integration in education: entry, adoption, adaptation, appropriation, and invention. It would be, indeed, better to call them the selection criteria. Sensitive enough, any violation in selecting criteria may cause risks, such as the construction of wrong held beliefs. In the same vein, Levy (2009, p. 777) states that "managing this risk requires a well-conceived pedagogy and careful selection of technologies to match the purpose". Language learning and teaching are not like other types of learning because the skills making up the language should be coupled with the selected technologies. Pursuing this line of reasoning, Ng (1999, p. 366) identifies four approaches to information technology-aided instruction: telecommunication mediated writing, word processor-facilitated composition, hypermedia-supported language learning, and simulation-



stimulated oral discourse. Every approach may fit into a particular aspect of language learning.

Delving into the Algerian educational system after the latest reforms, the adoption of information and communication technologies (ICTs in brief) is critically acclaimed for several reasons. Worse still, there is a severe shortage of materials, especially for the worthwhile modules, such as phonetics, listening comprehension, written expression, speaking, and ICTs. Additionally, if they exist, the selection of technological devices is not governed by criteria commensurate with the objectives set for realisation. For instance, some technologies include inappropriate cultural load that does not fit into the national culture. Furthermore, it should be recognized that digital skills in educational settings remain under scrutiny, and there should be further training to overcome the misuses.

#### **1.3.2.4 E-learning**

Called also online learning or e-education, e-learning is one of the main challenges introduced by the latest reforms. Briefly defined, “E-learning is used synonymously with the term “online learning” that takes place at a distance from formal classrooms and is facilitated and supported by web-based technologies” (Pachler & Daly, 2011, p. 11). It follows that the success of this newly adopted mode depends on the technological readiness of either the institutions or the individuals benefiting from online programs. Such a mode of learning is attainable to individuals “remaining on the other side of the ‘digital divide’, isolated by such factors as socio-economic circumstances, disability or simply a lack of interest, perhaps through personal choice or other cultural influence” (Holmes & Gardner, 2006, p. 13). In the Algerian context, the majority of e-learners pertain to the workforce. The rationale of giving such opportunities is to help them involve them in higher education without being influenced by their daily professional engagements.

E-learning in Algerian universities has recently seen quantum leaps though there are some remarkable deficiencies. Despite the scarcity of online courses, e-learners are supposed to review the online courses provided by university platforms. Even assessment has become computerised through online tests and quizzes. Digital competence is becoming a necessity, either for online tutors or for learners managing learning. Here, e-learning is seen as more technical sense. It is witnessing a relentless technical renewal. In this vein, Holmes and Gardner (2006, p. 14) have stated that “The focus of any exploration

of the state-of-the-art of e-Learning is therefore no more and no less than the combination and convergence of the most advanced features of digital information and communication technologies". To improve the quality of e-learning in Algerian universities, the ministry of higher education made it necessary for the newly recruited teachers to undergo systematic training. Training has to do with the technical and practical mechanisms that maintain a sense of ongoing professionalism.

E-learning has created a convenient situation for English language learners to immerse themselves in more authentic contexts than learning in educational settings. The e-learner is more accustomed to the computer that is considered the teaching machine in terms of resources. Regarding the nature of language learning, there is a necessity for audio-visual extracts that integrate all the language skills. For instance, studies have proved that writing can be taught through music and audio-visual plays. From an e-learning perspective, it might be easily applied because the internet network is quasi absent in language classrooms.

#### **1.4. Mediating Language and Culture: A Situation Analysis**

Language is strongly related to culture coming from the widely held belief that language serves as a vehicle to acquire an operative knowledge of the world. In the language teaching framework, focusing on culture is often covering communicative needs and constructing discourse. Buttjes and Byram (1991, p.7) point out that "If successful discourse across cultures is to be the test case of language teaching, much more comprehensive ideas about language, culture, and language education are required." Extant studies have proved that the issue of linguistic competence for communication does not yield well-expected interactions. In foreign language teaching, teaching for linguistic competence cannot be separated from highlighting the cultural practices and beliefs it embodies for particular social groups (Byram, 1997).

The binary of language and culture is considered from two opposing views: the opponent and the proponent. The first view, advocated by Canagarajah (1999) and Altan (1995), considers that any cultural load related to the target-language culture introduced within the target language materials may threaten the learners' native cultural beliefs and values. "While it is a known fact that foreign language learners are usually interested in learning about the people who speak the language they are learning, this interest may lead

to an underlying fear of losing one's native culture" (Altan, ,1995, p. 58). Losing identity landmarks is explicitly a sensitive issue, especially if foreign language learners are not culturally mature enough. Contrary to this, the second view supports the belief that foreign languages should not be taught inseparably from their cultural context. This view is strongly advocated by Byram (1997), who introduced the intercultural language theory. This theory means that intercultural awareness is a sequel to linguistic knowledge to develop solid communicative skills.

In the Algerian EFL context, the introduction of the LMD system has revisited the status of ELT at the university level. The new system redresses the balance by emphasising the cultural dimension by introducing subjects, such as cultural studies, language and culture, cross-cultural communication. Before that, the introduced ELT textbooks at the secondary level have been criticized for de-Anglicization of content (Benmoussat, 2008). In light of the de-Anglicization, Meliani (1998, p.78) points out that "...the design of English text using situations belonging to the Algerian context, thus providing culturally-barren situations in which the foreign language learner has very little chance of developing his awareness of others, or increasing his knowledge". The opponent view of teaching culture seems implicit in line with the stated quotation. In these culturally barren situations, extra importance is attached to the four language skills, or what is referred to as systemic knowledge, despite the non-stopping cultural diversity.

Including appropriate content is an effective way to mediate language and culture because it contributes effectively to increasing motivation to learn the culture. The inclusion of culture is aimed at raising cultural awareness and improving communication needs. These objectives should go in line with selecting appropriate content that creates real-situations for practice. In Algerian universities, it should be recognised that culture is taught within the EFL classrooms for one objective and only one objective, which is being culturally knowledgeable. The content overemphasises factual knowledge, which is only one part of cultural competence, whatever the subject is. Unfortunately, the current pedagogical practices of teaching culture do not allow the acquisition of intercultural or cross-cultural competencies in the EFL context because they are not substantively grounded in appropriate content, objectives, and materials development.

### 1.4.1 Teachers' Beliefs

The main preoccupation of English language teachers is to make learners able to speak and write the language. This can be done through presenting learning activities, giving feedback, managing the classrooms for effective learning. Richards and Lockhart (1996, p.53) have noted that “Traditionally, language teaching has been described in terms of what teachers do: that is, in terms of the actions and behaviours which teachers carry out in the classroom and the effects of these on learners”. It follows that teachers, to fulfill the afore-stated tasks, need to make use of some actions and behaviours to make learners dynamically responsive to the process of teaching. Teachers' beliefs are an integral part of the culture of teaching.

Improving students' cultural understanding draws heavily on teachers' beliefs that are constructed over time. The beliefs are generally recovered from many sources and are influenced by a variety of factors. For instance, the teacher may consider collaborative learning to contribute to learning culture rather than individual learning. This belief may be built up on many sources, such as personal experience or a scientific basis.

In the Algerian EFL context, cultural understanding is misconceived by many teachers. They think that the scope of understanding culture is confined only to fact-based knowledge, and the awareness of specific themes, such as geography, history, and religions is sufficient to be culturally aware. Some teachers share the misunderstanding that teaching culture refers to the students' local culture and these misunderstandings depict the overall failure of teaching culture in Algerian educational institutions (Benmoussat, 2008, p. 264). Other teachers do have a wrong belief that focusing on others' cultures emanates from cultural power. Focusing on aspects of foreign culture does not denote abandoning our own culture, but within the cultural diversity, it is thought to enhance communication skills if it focuses on the socio-cultural knowledge of speaking.

### 1.4.2 Students Beliefs

There is a widely held belief that the learning process drives straightforwardly the teaching process. Said in another way, students' reactions and the learning environment influence teachers' beliefs. Due to mixed-abilities classrooms, it is a pre-requisite to know that suiting every learner is a challenging issue for teachers. Within one class, the disparity of learners' abilities, potential, and other personal attributes influence their self-beliefs about

their personal learning, the program, teachers' behaviours and their way of teaching, learning goals, and many other learning aspects.

In learning about culture, learners might be influenced by the socio-cultural assumptions of the foreign language. In this respect, intercultural and cross-cultural differences are generated from this influence that spontaneously leads them to construct their own beliefs about certain societies or community members. "The attitudes learners have towards native speakers of English may also be influenced by cross-cultural differences in communicative styles between English speakers and people from other cultures (Richards & Lockhart, 1996, p.53). If these attitudes are negative, it will inhibit learning culture and make learners inactively involved whenever cultural situations are learned. Here it is the responsibility of the teacher who should adjust the wrong beliefs since the learners look upon him/her as a model.

Culture is likely to be taught from subjects such as literature and civilisation, which are thought of as sources and resources to widen cultural horizons. The two modules are perceived as frameworks that portray different aspects of the life of the foreign language culture/s. In this sense, there is a common idea that students embark on these modules, especially literature, with a noticeable discomfort. A significant part of didactic literature studies focuses on making students' attitudes positive and fostering openness towards these sources. The point worth raising here is the reasons behind such beliefs and assumptions. This is only a case of literature or civilisation as sources to develop cultural understanding. Some EFL learners in Algerian universities learn about culture with pre-existing knowledge, typically obtained from unreliable sources. These sources are sometimes not academic (outside the classrooms) what can give learners a distorted impression. In this way, students adopt certain positive and negative beliefs by relying on informal data without experience.

### 1.4.3 Assessment Issues

A further issue related to the cultural dimension of foreign language education is the assessment mechanisms used to assess the different data of cultural understanding. The fact that English language education tackles different cultural backgrounds and environments, it becomes necessary to evaluate and assess students' communication skills for intercultural and cross-cultural meetings. With the growing pace of international

communication, the objectives of English language teaching have been updated to improve students' employability skills and their mobility overseas. Teachers, as agents of assessment, need to use their assessment literacy in the profit for developing a solid cultural understanding.

Assessment raises learners' cultural awareness of their cultural skills and helps them envisage these skills for use outside educational settings. A foreign language learner is no longer assessed for his/her speaking and linguistic abilities, but the scope of assessment has been extended to explore his/ her communicative potential to integrate into the current cultural diversity. So, assessment of culture adheres to an ethical basis for moving beyond cultural sensitivity toward acquiring different cultural competencies. More importantly, "when we consider assessment, similar social factors have also to be taken into account: assessment is not simply a technical matter, for it is often associated with certification and increasingly with recognition across political frontiers" (Byram, 1997, p.30). It follows that mastering the technical aspect of assessment would not be sufficient for cultural understanding. The process becomes more sensitive because teachers consider the religious, linguistic, and ethnographic factors that may avoid misunderstandings.

Unfortunately, the underuse of assessment of culture in English departments may ensue from the quasi-absence of systematic teaching methods. Much interest is attached to the systemic knowledge of the language. Sometimes, the non-availability of culturally prescribed objectives would imperatively assess a critical situation. Teachers seem to pay considerable attention to the four skills, therefore, the most commonly used assessment tool is undoubtedly testing, which is often standardised in nature. In light of the quasi-absence of formative assessment, teachers, administrators, and students have become familiar with the summative nature of assessment. Teachers as assessors may not find a supportive environment to use formative assessment due to many considerations. One of these is the departmental mandatory that necessitates students to sit for standardized exams. Therefore, teachers find it unavoidable to use assessment of learning.

The dominance of summative assessment in EFL classrooms poses, in turn, another question about some teachers' self-beliefs in adopting and adapting their proper teaching prerogatives. It is said, "Teachers who practice autonomy in their professional development increase the likelihood, of producing potentially autonomous and lifelong learners" (Stevens, 2007, p.28). The assessment complexities sometimes found by some in-

service and novice teachers should be explored in whatever way to try out other alternatives. Thus, even if teachers' assessment literacy might be limited, the autonomous spirit might help manage innovation and change and keep a sense of professional development.

### 1.5 Goals of Teaching Culture in English Language Education

One of the most potent and potentially divisive issues of teaching culture is setting goals that do not adequately fit perfectly into the techniques, and the activities wanted to be accomplished. Teaching culture seems to be a sensitive issue since cultural understanding does not concern only cultural information. Cultural facts are not being learnt in order to communicate effectively. For instance, affective consideration, which is remarkably underestimated by the teaching community, seems to be another area of concern that deepens cultural understanding. "The goal is to be able to function effectively in foreign cultures or intercultural situations" (Byram, 2000). Therefore, from ideation to realization, the extant literature of teaching culture has taken into consideration three kinds of goals: cognitive, behavioural, and affective goals.

From a cognitive perspective, knowledge is famously associated with perceptive mechanisms of learning. Having sufficient knowledge about the target language cultures is best seen as the goal of foreign language education programs. Brown (2000) points out that the foreign language curriculum introduces cultural knowledge as 'A list of facts to be cognitively consumed'.

Regarding behaviours, foreign language learners are introduced to cultural information to understand the different behaviours and be aware of the ways of conduct for members belonging to the target cultures. At this point, Herbig (1998) states that "culture influences behaviour and determines which behaviour is helpful and should be rewarded, and which is harmful and should be discouraged". It is worth mentioning that behaviours can be good or bad, and it is the teachers' role to maintain the cultural vigilance. In action, language learning depends on a strict linguistic sense, i.e., systemic knowledge is considered incomplete; accordingly, it leads to the encoding of a message rather than communication with another person. In such situations, the sociolinguistic aspects of communication, such as age, register, or class, may influence how members of a particular society speak and behave. To face such situations, it is said that "appropriate and necessary

behaviours would become more situationally (culturally) specific so that the individual could accept a greater variety of such behaviours both in others and in himself” (Landis & Brisling, 1983, p.06).

Notably, another area of concern that has been less carefully explored in the literature on culture teaching is the affective side. Culture specialists consider mediating language and culture in language classrooms as another goal. This issue may contribute to catching learners’ interests and increasing their affective commitment. Brown (2001, p. 65) states that “Especially in second language learning contexts, the success with which learners adapt to a new cultural milieu will affect their language acquisition success, and vice versa, in some possibly significant ways”. Pursuing the same line of reasoning, Byram (1994, p.05) points out that “culture is subsumed in a range of variables which could affect learning and is interpreted primarily in terms of the affective.” In light of this argumentation, attitudes are included, and feelings such as motivation and empathy can be enhanced through immersing in cultural contexts.

### **1.6 Teaching Culture at the Department of English**

Before any attempt to reflect upon the teaching and learning culture in EFL classrooms, there should be recognition that students, before reaching university level, have been experienced some intercultural activities introduced in ELT textbooks. Hereby, learning culture is not something new, but students need further academic training to widen their horizons to acquire a solid cultural knowledge and skills or competence. Being culturally competent means having positive attitudes towards foreign cultures, having the necessary skills that maintain a sense of understanding, being knowledgeable about other cultural backgrounds, and being aware of cultural differences and similarities. The acquisition of these components of competence requires deliberate pedagogical procedures to learning culture.

The British and American cultures are the prominent target cultures in English language education. It can be addressed via teaching modules, such as literature, civilisation, listening and speaking, and writing to a lesser extent. What arouses some controversies is that culture is taught in EFL classrooms without using special pedagogical techniques and strategies that go with the objectives of teaching culture. In another way, culture is seen just as factual knowledge, possibly taught inseparable from language. There



are no systematic ways to enable students to acquire different cultural competencies. In terms of goals, they go paradoxically with the way culture is being taught, since only the cognitive goals seem achieved, whereas the other goals, namely the behavioural and affective, seem to be far-reaching challenges.

### 1.7 Sources to Learn about Culture

Rich sources and resources should raise their cultural awareness to promulgate a deeper cultural understanding for language learners. In this vein, one can say that many modules provide learners with the opportunity to be culturally knowledgeable. Literature, civilisation, reading, and oral expression can be considered rich sources and resources in which many cultural topics might be known. The modules mentioned above are not the only sources, but ELT teachers might raise students' cultural awareness through grammar and writing activities. Pedagogically speaking, ELT professionals need to teach these aspects by following specific techniques and strategies and using different materials that motivate learners to immerse themselves in different cultural contexts.

#### 1.7.1 Literature

Literature is considered an integral part of FLT programs at the university level. Sercu (2000, p .28) argues that teaching literature in the target language constitutes the cultural component of the foreign language curriculum. The didactic aspect of literature should be commensurate with the objectives set already before. In light of these objectives, Carter and Long (1991) have provided three models for teaching literature: the language model, the cultural model, and the personal growth model. These models are explained as follows:

- *The language model* tackles students' systemic knowledge of the language by clear exposure to lexis, grammar, and pragmatics that pertains to literary texts.
- *The cultural model* enhances students' cultural knowledge, especially that of the target language, by highlighting social, political, and even economic facts.
- *The personal growth model* tries to keep language and culture inseparable. It emphasizes language usage within particular cultural contexts.

Literature remains one of the main elements that make up any cultural background. It has become more emphasised within language learning classrooms, specifically in light

of the growing popularity of cultural studies and the pressing need for communication. Literature is no longer a series of events attributed to a specific community or a particular time, but learning literature while having specialized skills makes individuals more responsive to any literary background. Kramersch (1993, p. 175) has pointed out that literary texts open for language learners the sphere of attitudes, values, collective imaginings, and historical frameworks that form the memory of a specific community. Byram et al. (2001, p. 258) point out that “literature could provide a good basis for developing the cultural skills of students and achieving the ultimate goal of cultural teaching- the skill of reading another culture, 'interpreting' what you have read, and 'understanding' it.”

In the department of English at Chlef University, literature is taught to 1<sup>st</sup> year EFL students under the name “introduction to literary texts”. In the first semester program, this module tackles the technical aspects of analyzing literary texts and stories. Even though the module's name does not indicate the target literature, the second-semester program is considered an introduction to British literature without details about the addressed topics. As mentioned earlier, all that is included within the syllabus infers that literature is taught following the language model, bringing into focus the systemic knowledge of the language as a fundamental objective. The adopted program that has been obtained from the administration is as follows:

- Introduction to literary texts
- Introduction to literature.
- Theories to literature.
- Literary and non-literary texts: features and examples.
- The main literary genres: descriptions and examples.
- Literary devices: definitions and examples.
- Literary elements.
- How to analyze a short story, a novel, and a play.
- Practice analyzing a short story.
- Literature
- Introduction to British literature.

### 1.7.2 Civilisation

It is difficult to arrive at a succinct and satisfying definition of civilisation because different disciplines have tackled the concept, and each has its unique way of highlighting it. This concept differs in English, French, and German usage and may have different meanings for western nations. The concept of civilisation can be interrelated with culture, and the two concepts are sometimes misunderstood in education, specifically in foreign language education. A crucial distinction can be made through shaping the content of each, but sometimes what makes up each framework is hard to pin down because of the deep overlap between topics. Indeed, what should be overemphasized is that individuals are the makers of these concepts. Brooks has noted that (1968, p. 209), “civilisation deals with an advanced state of human society, in which a high level of culture, science, industry, and the government has been attained”. Thematically, the quotation of Brooks shows that literature emanates from civilisation, being categorized as a cultural practice.

As for the English department at Chlef University, civilisation is being taught within the core subject called ‘civilisation and culture’. It should be highlighted that this subject deals only with British civilisation and culture. It mainly tackles historical issues (the earliest times, the early middle ages, and the late middle ages) and other related topics, such as the origins of its people, politics, identity, and economics. It might be stated, through this module, that the historical aspect of culture is emphasized. The curriculum below has been provided by the teacher in charge of teaching this module.

- A General Introduction
- The country and its people
- Politics
- Identity
- The Earliest times:
  - Pre-history
  - The Celts
  - Roman Britain
  - The Anglo Saxon period
  - The Return of Christianity
  - The Vikings

- The Early Middle Ages:
- The Norman Conquest
- Feudalism
- Magna Carta
- The Late Middle Ages
- The Tudor Period
- The Stuart Era
- Republican Britain and the Restoration of the Monarchy
- The Industrial Revolution
- From Empire to Commonwealth

### **1.7.3 Listening Comprehension and Speaking: The Case in Point**

Often referred to as oral expression, the subject of listening comprehension and speaking is considered one of the main modules that provide learners with natural spaces to improve their proficiency. Although it entails two skills, the module directly links to other subjects that concern the systemic knowledge of the language, such as phonetics, grammar, and linguistics. In various language learning contexts, it is widely acknowledged that this module is named oral expression because the oral-based discussion is the dominant mode of expression. It could be, as well, argued that this wrong belief stems from the absolute exclusion of the written mode in language classrooms.

The listening and speaking module is seen as an affluent source of exchanging cultural information in cultural understanding. The latter comes under the banner of extra-linguistic knowledge. In this realm, it is said that “the kinds of knowledge that speakers bring to the skill of speaking comprise extra-linguistic knowledge, such as background knowledge of topics and culture, and linguistic knowledge, including discourse knowledge, speech act knowledge, and knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, and phonology” (Thornbury, 2005, p.26). The data above makes cultural studies a subject under scrutiny, considering that language and culture are inseparable. Hughes (2011, p.186) posits that “A better awareness of the potential differences between cultures in ways that affect language behaviour can also imbue research into speech with greater insight and sensitivity.”

Listening within this core subject does not receive the aspiring attention due to several considerations. In terms of teaching materials, there is a severe shortage of teaching

aids, especially technological devices. This skill requires multimedia technologies that provide learners with authentic input. The absence of laboratories specifically designed to teach listening at the English department at the University of Chlef makes teachers in charge of this module find it an arduous activity, turning them to pay extra attention to speaking. Moreover, the overcrowded EFL classes may hamper the listening comprehension courses in particular and the overall courses.

- ✓ To consolidate students' communicative abilities;
- ✓ To enhance the students' linguistic and extra-linguistic knowledge;
- ✓ To improve students' listening skills and to experience the different types of listening;
- ✓ To widen the cultural horizons;
- ✓ To make students aware of the different accents and varieties.

Procedures differ from teacher to teacher in teaching this module. The time allotted is three hours per week (two sessions). What is standardised among teachers is that one session is devoted to listening comprehension, and the second is devoted to speaking. Starting with speaking, many techniques and strategies, such as plays, free talk presentations, and group discussions based on teacher's feedback, are adopted to involve learners in an interactive atmosphere. Some speaking activities are integrative, including sometimes writing about such information gaps. Concerning listening comprehension, the teacher goes through three phases during the session: the pre-listening phase, where the audience is required to find definitions of concepts and terms that the audio will revolve around; the listening phase, considered the most important because the audience should activate their listening skills through filling in gaps, reordering, and matching ideas to passages; the post-listening depends on the type of listening students were exposed to. The teacher freely chooses audios for listening comprehension, and s/he is not guided by certain topics or audios.

### **1.8 Difficulties to Teaching Culture**

Any attempt to define the word culture seems difficult because there is a redundancy of axes making up this concept. It is much harder if someone is asked to teach culture within an educational setting. Admittedly, teaching culture is perceived as equipping learners with solid cultural knowledge; therefore, culture is merely a matter of knowledge. Over time, this has been proven to be a wrongly held belief since this task requires the teacher to keep language and culture interacted with rather than merely interrelated. Knowledge is only

one component of the interaction between language and culture, and the teaching process needs additional skills and data to simplify the interaction.

In the Algerian EFL context, ELT professionals attach cultural pedagogy to communication, starting with the language being a means of communication. Whenever culture is taught, it is directly grounded in the communicative dimension. According to Benmoussat (2008):

The oft-held definition of language as a means of communication is nowadays, and to a certain extent, of no avail, more misleading than illuminating; a more accurate definition of language would be that language is a means of social control and integration (p57).

One of the main topical issues concerning the mediation of language and culture in EFL classrooms is which culture should be taught. Supposing that the target language culture/s should be emphasized, these cultures include sub-cultures and regional cultures. For instance, teaching about British culture seems to be of paramount vagueness regarding the Irish, Scottish, Welsh, and many sub-cultures. This issue remains potentially divisive within teaching culture since there is not a common culture to teach about. The question above opens a debate on the approach adapted to teaching culture. In this respect, it seems necessary to distinguish between teaching culture and teaching about culture because it is a landmark to determine the teaching approach. In addition to the latter, the objectives of teaching culture also remain strongly related to the culture emphasized by the teacher.

Another difficulty worth mentioning is motivation. Different studies ascertained that the lack of motivation is a serious problem that inhibits learners from actively engaging in learning culture. In action, the disengagement can be attributed to several factors that are overlapped in nature. First, motivation per se is ensured by the quasi-absence of appropriate teaching materials, especially technological ones. In addition to the vitality provided by the audio-visual input, technology ensures an authentic cultural load. Therefore, limited exposure to authentic cultural environments and cultures creates a kind of disinterest and disengagement. Another factor worth highlighting is the nature of topics introduced to address culture. It should be said that the inappropriate content or topics may not correspond to students' expectations. Introducing cultural themes or topics needs to be strategically selected to increase the motivation to learn since the affective side contributes

to cultural pedagogy. For instance, learning about ancient civilisations, especially the pre-histories, would not be interesting for students due to many considerations, such as the scarcity of resources and information or the traditional exposure method. It depends on fact-based information that does not meet the communicative needs. Contrary to this, teaching about the socio-cultural norms of speaking motivates learning about the culture.

### 1.9 Research Design

To opt for the appropriate research design and method, the researcher should already plan a strategic scheme to solve the problem found at the beginning. Since the overarching goal of any study is to obtain systematic data to find solutions and interpretations of different phenomena, there should be a clear distinction between research methodology and the research method. The data are collected concerning the nature of research, precisely, the statement of the problem that contribute crucially to determine the methodological procedures that would be followed. Regarding the nature of the data surrounding the pedagogy of culture, a survey was seen as the appropriate research method to investigate the issue, emphasizing the electronic portfolio as an alternative tool to assess the cultural understanding of the first-year EFL students.

Surveys have recently become widely endorsed in applied linguistics studies due to their acknowledged quality, accuracy, and time-effort economy. Despite the variety of definitions, a survey may be defined as “a methodological technique that requires the systematic collection of data from populations or samples through the use of an interview or a self-administered questionnaire” (Denzin, 1978, p.158). It follows from this definition that surveys hinge upon a sample of participants who experience a particular aspect of learning. Data cannot be collected merely via interviews or questionnaires but also via other tools according to the nature of the research topic. In second language research, surveys describe, explain, and explore opinions, behaviours, and attitudes that influence the teaching-learning process. In this concern, Nunan (1992, p.140) points out that “the purpose of a survey is generally to obtain a snapshot of conditions, attitudes, and/or events at a single point in time.” To this end, researchers need to prepare carefully helpful questions that provide a clear account of the studied topic.

In the language learning context, the areas for which surveys are used vary according to the needs. Brown (2001) states two main uses of language surveys: curriculum

development and conducting research. For the first use, the two elements of curriculum development wherein survey research is most useful are needs analysis and program evaluation. Secondly, survey research may be the most practical and easy to adopt because it depends heavily on common sense and less on complex statistics. In this realm, one should distinguish between the uses and the functions of surveys. The followings are the main functions of the survey:

- Bio-data surveys: are used to collect personal data of the informants about a particular issue
- Opinion surveys: are used to elicit opinions and are not different from bio-data surveys
- Self-ratings: ask the informants to rate their abilities, tendencies, and qualifications
- Judgmental ratings: are used to collect judgmental views from the informants.
- Rankings: the informants are asked to rank a set of learning choices.
- Q-sorts:

(Brown, 2001)

In research, a survey design is not an easy task, and aspects such as research questions and hypotheses, data analysis, and the objectives need to be attentively considered while designing an effective survey. Denzin (1978, p.173) identifies the following critical steps in which researchers should go through to design systematically workable surveys:

- Designating the problem
- Formulating specifics of the research
- Choosing a survey design
- Formulating the research instruments
- Anticipating data analysis
- Anticipating the tabulation of data
- Arranging for interviewers and respondents
- Analyzing results
- Testing hypotheses

There should be a careful thinking about the question of ethics in doing survey research. Of course, survey studies aim at describing the characteristics of a population by examining a sample of that group (Dörnyei, 2007, p.101). This issue implies that the researcher should adhere to highly de-ontological practices and that the survey participants demand



trustworthiness. It is said that surveys are intrusive, i.e., the participants are asked for personal information about themselves, their behaviours, and their beliefs. So, researchers should make a priority of their right to privacy when administering surveys. In terms of age, if the participants are children or do not have the age of maturity, there should be parental consent if the survey topic is sensitive (Lavrakas, 2008).

In the present study, a survey is best seen to fit into assessment of cultural understanding from the electronic portfolio perspective. It gives a high degree of explicitness about the teaching and assessment of culture within which the e-portfolio is advocated for its appropriateness as an alternative form of assessment. The survey seeks to elicit opinions, arguments, and critical remarks about the teaching and assessment of culture, and e-portfolios as tools for assessing culture.

### **1.10 Data Collection Tools**

It is clear that adopting tools for data collection in any research follow the nature of the studied phenomenon and the selected research method. By relying on different research instruments, the researcher collects data or empirical knowledge (Shohamy & Seliger, 1989, p.15). In light of empirical knowledge, there should be a careful consideration of the nature of the research, whether qualitative or quantitative. It should be recognized that researchers who embrace qualitative methods do not rely on instruments for data collection because natural data can be spontaneously gathered (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991, p.26). As widely endorsed in research methodology, researchers rely on different instruments and procedures to collect data about phenomena. In language learning studies, the most common methods or instruments for data collection in studies are interviews, questionnaires, tests, observations, audio and video recordings of interaction, and the collection of print artifacts. They are used for qualitative and quantitative purposes.

In this research work, the researcher adopted a triangular approach to collect data. Triangulation is defined as “the process of collecting data from several different sources or in different ways to provide a fuller understanding of a phenomenon” (Richards & Schmids, 2002, p. 565). These sources may collect qualitative or quantitative data, such as interviews, questionnaires, observations, etc, to add further clarity and precision to the phenomenon being studied. To delve deeper into this process, Mackay and Gass (2016, p.233) have stated that triangulation can take three types: theoretical triangulation which

implies a variety of perspectives for analyzing the same set of data, investigator triangulation which relies on multiple observers and interviewers, and methodological triangulation which relies on various research methods. In second language studies, most researchers use triangulation to add further reliability and validity to their studies. Starting from the aforementioned theoretical basis, and regarding the present research as depending on a mixed-method approach (qualitative and quantitative), the researcher sought to handle this survey from different perspectives by adopting two structured questionnaires for the teachers and learners, unstructured interview for the students, an evaluation checklist, a content-based analysis of the e-portfolios, and a test for learners.

### **1.10.1 Test**

The test tried to diagnose the students' cultural understanding. The test included four activities that try to define some cultural concepts and address the critical cultural topics such as history, sport, economics, education, and geography that concern the target language cultures, more specifically the British and American ones. In this point, it is worth noting that the content of the test takes into account both intercultural and cross-cultural knowledge since knowledge is the essential component of any competence. So, the test-takers need to reflect on national culture to evaluate the cultural similarities and differences. Pragmatics is another aspect that was handled through devoting a task to checking students' socio-pragmatic understanding. This aspect plays a leading role in the communication process because it varies according to interlocutors' contexts and cultural backgrounds (See appendix B).

### **1.10.2 Questionnaires**

Questionnaires are the most commonly used instruments in second language studies. The questionnaire is "any written instrument that presents respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting them among existing answers" (Brown, 2001, p.06). In language learning studies, the growing popularity of questionnaires is attributed to "they are relatively easy to construct, extremely versatile, and uniquely capable of gathering a large amount of information quickly in a form that is readily processible" (Dörnyei, 2007, p.101). When carefully analyzing its definition, the questionnaire can have the same purposes as tests, inventories, and checklists because questions make up the crux of the structure.

Questionnaires are tools used to collect quantitative and qualitative data within language learning studies. The construction of questionnaires should take into consideration the nature of the data being collected. Sometimes, qualitative data might be quantified and vice versa. This may also depend on the way the questionnaire is administered. According to Brown (2001, p.06), a questionnaire can be self-administered or group administered. The former involves the respondents without time restrictions or scope limitations. The latter involves a group of individuals conditionally sharing the same time and place.

At the construction level, the nature of questions should be formulated according to the respondents' level. Ambiguity and lacking explicitness may provoke a kind of demotivation that can influence the reliability of the instrument. In terms of affective influence, it is said:

...Indeed, respondents are often unmotivated, slapdash, hasty, and insincere. Yet, it is also an established fact that careful and creative questionnaire construction can result in an instrument that motivates people to give relatively truthful and thoughtful answers, which can then be processed in a scientifically sound manner (Dörnyei, 2002, p.16).

Regardless of the subject being questioned, there should be a special consideration to the respondents' age, cognitive and metacognitive abilities, and discipline. Dörnyei (2002, pp. 16-17) states the following steps for constructing a valid and reliable questionnaire:

- Deciding on the available features, such as the length, the format, and the main parts.
- Writing valuable items/questions and drawing up an item pool.
- Selecting and sequencing the items.
- Writing appropriate instructions and examples.
- Piloting the questionnaire and conducting item analysis.

### **1.10.2.1 Learners' Questionnaire**

In this research work, the questionnaire was addressed to the 1<sup>st</sup> year EFL students at Chlef University to add further accuracy and precision to our phenomenon under investigation. Through this tool, the researcher tried to reach a high degree of explicitness through

formulating plausible items. This was done by asking questions that fit appropriately into the respondents' linguistic abilities. Pursuing this line of reasoning, Brown and Rodgers (2002, p. 142) explain that questionnaires are predominantly designed with more closed response items, such as Likert scales, multiple-choice, yes-no, and ranking. The nature of the questions enables the researcher to collect qualitative and quantitative data. The questionnaire gave the researcher the opportunity to address many issues, such as learning culture, assessment, and portfolio assessment.

This structured questionnaire tried to tackle two main axes: learning culture within English language learning framework and the portfolio as alternative assessment tool as the case in point. In terms of content, the questionnaire included 15 questions which are implicitly divided into two sections. The first section addressed the cultural understanding through which the researcher tried to collect some personal data. For this purpose, the key questions of this section sought to explore whether learners are interested in learning about foreign cultures. Also, it tried to find out the interesting topics that learners want to learn foreign cultures.

Concerning the second section, the focus was attached to the meaning of portfolio and the purposes for which it is used. Additionally, the researcher attempted to elicit background information about using portfolios as assessment tools the practical mechanisms of assessment in EFL classrooms. Questions in this section sought to discover if the respondents depend on themselves to assess their learning, assess their cultural understanding, and use the portfolio as an alternative form to assess culture. The respondents were given certain choices, and they were asked to put tick the most appropriate answers (See appendix C).

### **1.10.2.2 Teachers' Questionnaire**

The teachers' questionnaire was designed to gather data about teaching practices and assess the culture in EFL classrooms. The questionnaire aimed to reveal how teachers teach culture in their classes. Put differently, if the teaching and assessment of cultural understanding are done following specific pedagogical procedures. The questionnaire included twelve questions (see appendix D). These questions were mainly open-ended; they were carefully formulated to avoid any source of error. Just like the learners' questionnaire, that of the teachers was designed in such a way to gather data that would

enable the researcher to find answers to the research questions and their respective hypotheses. The total number of the questioned teachers was twenty-four. Administering the teachers' questionnaire helped us explore the status quo situation of teaching culture in the EFL context. Teachers were given enough time to feel free to provide valuable data.

### 1.10.3 Interviews

The interview is one of the research tools that elicit data in a retrospective manner. It is used to obtain detailed information about the studied phenomenon by asking questions via face-to-face meetings with the interviewees or through other situations, such as telephone conversations. Interviews are widely endorsed in qualitative studies because “they are personalized and therefore permit a level of in-depth information- gathering, free response, and flexibility that other procedures cannot obtain” (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989, p.166). In addition to the stated advantages, interviews are endorsed for the interactional atmosphere they can create. More importantly, in-depth knowledge can be quickly gained through interaction and conversation, unlike other research tools. In this vein, it has been said that while other research tools focus on the surface elements of the studied phenomenon, interviews give the researcher more insights into the meaning and significance of what is happening in the inquiry (Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003, p.44).

The way interviews are designed and developed differs in the structure, the formulation of questions, and the sessions they take. Based on these aspects, interviews are categorized into three main types: structured interviews, the formal ones, which go with questions planned by the interviewer who has control over their order; semi-structured interviews, also referred to as focused interviews, are done without planning a list of questions, but the interviewer steers the conversation. Unstructured interviews have a minor formality concerning the types mentioned above; single or multiple session interviews are considered in terms of time, specifically sessions (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 134).

In second language studies, interviews are conducted to obtain data that can be non-linguistic, that is to say, data related to the affective side of learning a second language, such as attitudes or motivation (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989, pp. 166-167). To search such information, the interviewer should have some specialised skills that make it easy to administer. Strategic thinking seems to be of paramount importance when the interviewer can rely on a funneling technique. The latter means that questions switch from general

opening inquiries to more specific and focused questions; as a result, the interviewees get relaxed, comfortable, and responsive to the questioning (Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003, p. 47).

To design a high-quality interview, the designer should undergo several stages or steps in a linear progression. Kvale (2007, pp. 35-36) identifies seven stages where the interview designer must be committed in practice. These stages come in the following order:

1. *Thematizing*: Formulate the purpose of the investigation and describe the concept of the topic to be investigated before the interview.
2. *Designing*: Plan the study's design, considering all seven stages, before the interview starts.
3. *Interviewing*: Conduct the interviews based on an interview guide and a reflective approach to the knowledge sought.
4. *Transcribing*: Prepare the interview material for analysis which commonly includes a transcription from oral speech to written text.
5. *Analyzing*: Decide, based on the purpose and topic of the investigation and the nature of the interview material, which analysis methods are appropriate.
6. *Verifying*: As certain the generalizability, reliability, and validity of the interview findings.
7. *Reporting*: Communicate the study's findings and the methods applied in a form that lives up to scientific criteria, take the ethical aspects of the investigation into consideration, and results in a readable product.

Quite the same, Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003) put another scheme to the interview design, but it emphasizes the methodology over procedures.

### 1.10.3.1 Learners' Interview

In this research work, the 1<sup>st</sup> year EFL students were interviewed through a semi-structured interview. The researcher opted for the semi-structured interview because he needed to explore data outside the scope of the prepared questions. Accordingly, it is argued that

“less rigid are semi-structured interviews, in which the researcher uses a written list of questions as a guide, while still having the freedom to digress and probe for more information” (Mackey & Gass, 2016, p. 225). It is the prerogative of the interviewer to determine the areas he would like to investigate, but the interviewee might change the direction by pointing out themes that can be considered irrelevant to the topical issue being investigated. This ensures the fact that the interviewer, in the semi-structured interview, does not control the interview's subject matter.

The semi-structured interviews were done with eight students who make part of the e-portfolio implementation (cultural e-portfolio) to assess cultural understanding. Before interviewing, they were informed about the interview's agenda without appointing the interviewees. This step was undergone to keep a sense of understanding and an equitable relationship with the interviewer. Interestingly enough, “the inequitable relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee will affect the content of the interview as well as the language which is used” (Nunan 1992, p. 150).

The content of the interview tried to investigate the practical applications of the electronic portfolio. Its main pivotal issues tackled whether students need exceptional support around e-portfolio use, the practical difficulties faced when compiling e-portfolios, and whether the e-portfolios contributed to their cultural understanding. To obtain more comprehensive and more detailed data about the already-mentioned issues, the interview included open-ended and close-ended questions (See appendix E).

#### **1.10.4 The Cultural E-Portfolio**

In this research, the portfolio is the primary tool to collect data about assessing learners' cultural understanding. Through the portfolio, researchers collect qualitative and quantitative data over a period of time. The researcher provided the students with all the theoretical and technical basics because portfolio implementation is newly adopted in the Algerian EFL context. Additionally, executing it electronically requires highly specialised computer skills, and the researcher tried to provide technical help whenever needed.

The portfolio adopted in this research work was researcher-made since it aims at assessing cultural understanding. It has already been highlighted that the European Language Portfolio tackled the question of assessing culture. To give a detailed account of assessing cultural understanding, the researcher went a step forward and tried to offer a

comprehensive model referred to as the *Cultural E-Portfolio*. To make students familiar with this specific portfolio design, the researcher tried to be the information provider, explainer, enabler, and motivator for them. The Cultural portfolio was electronically implemented. It comprises three main parts: the first part is theory-based and deals with cultural concepts and their definitions; the second part deals with cultural knowledge, and the third part is mainly concerned with cultural experiences. In light of data collection through the portfolio tool, it should be recognised that data may be qualitative or quantitative depending on the study case. In the same way, data can be analysed.

The first part is mainly concerned with cultural concepts, terms, and words that fit into cultural understanding. This part attempted to put the conceptual framework of cultural understanding. It seems to serve up the linguistic aspect more than any other aspect. Students, via this section, tried to document the cultural terminologies that can be embodied into action when needed. For instance, distinguishing between interculturalism and multiculturalism will be crucial for learners to reflect on their behaviours and the skills they have to acquire. This can be documented through different forms, such as written definitions, images, and audio. The purpose of this step is to systematize the learn-ability of culture.

The second part of the portfolio is devoted to cultural knowledge. The latter is considered as the crux of any competence. Within the cultural understanding framework, Byram et al. (2001) refer to knowledge as (*savoirs*) and point out:

Knowledge (*savoirs*): of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction. So, knowledge can be defined as having two major components: knowledge of social processes; and knowledge of illustrations of those processes and products ; the latter includes knowledge of how other people see oneself as well as some knowledge about other people (p6).

It follows from the given illustration that knowledge pertains to all that is societal, and this seems logical if we consider members are the makers of the culture of their society. Learners who compile the *Cultural E-portfolio* were supposed to collect knowledge about different cultural backgrounds. The knowledge stored in this part takes many forms,

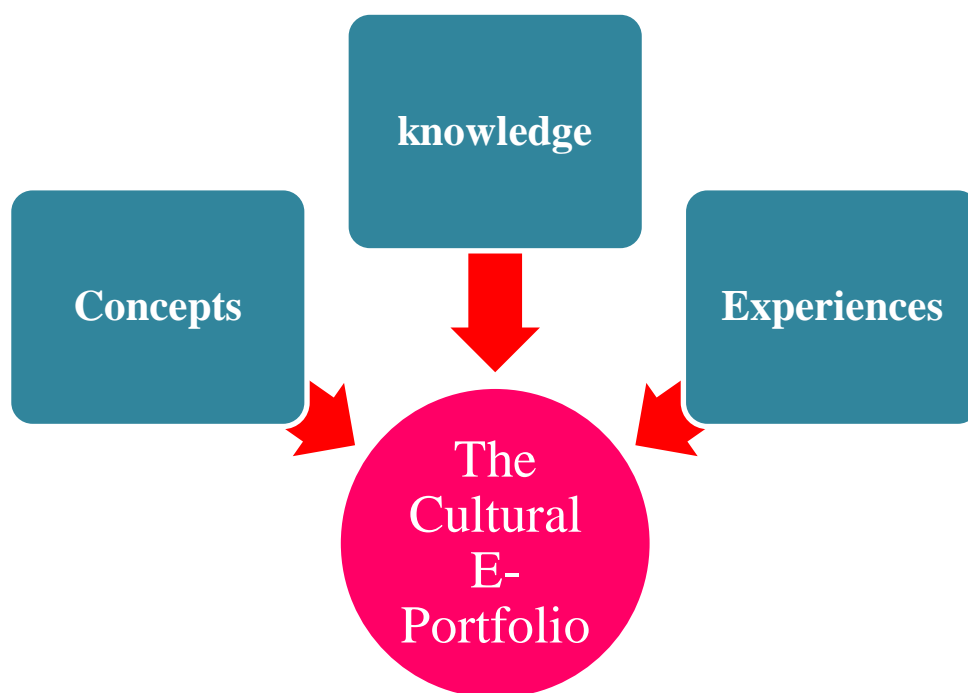


attached with visual and audio-visual evidence since the portfolio is electronically implemented.

The third part, named the cultural experience, attached a great importance to learners' personal experiences. With a high degree of subjectivity, learners are expected to reflect on the intercultural and cross-cultural situations they underwent. This part is considered the most important one since the cultural skills and affective data, namely the attitudes towards otherness, can be elicited. This was attempted to engage in taking evaluative decisions that are based on specific cultural differences and similarities. The evidence or the evaluative statements are supposed to be critically posited in different forms. In this vein, Barton and Collins (1997) categorise the evidence statements included in the portfolio into the following statements:

- ✓ Goal statements: students' interpretations of each specific purpose for the portfolios.
- ✓ Reflective statements: students write as they review and organize the evidence in their portfolios.
- ✓ Captions: statement attached to each piece of portfolio evidence, articulating it what it is, why it is evidence, and of what it is evidence.

The pivotal issue of this part is that the learners can demonstrate feelings and actions in experienced situations from personal perspectives. Importantly, cultural skills are expected to be shown through launching critical evaluative statements on the part of learners. The teacher draws the final evaluation based upon the aforementioned affective data and learners' critical evaluations.



**Figure 1. 1.** The Cultural E-Portfolio Model

The cultural e-portfolio gives students the opportunity to demonstrate their evaluation skills, and this seemed to be clear through which they reflect on cultural issues, more specifically the third part (the cultural experiences).

#### **1.10.5 Self-Evaluation Form**

Self-evaluation in language learning has become paralleled with formative assessment. Their main advantages lie in their educational values, in improving the learning strategies of the learner, and in strengthening the learner's metacognition (Smith, 1999). In the portfolio assessment, the overarching goal is to foster self-evaluation or self-assessment through reflecting on the stored works. Self-evaluation can be conducted via a variety of tools through which qualitative and quantitative data might be gathered. The most frequently used tools are checklists, inventories, diaries, semi-structured surveys, and rubrics. These forms are credited with consolidating students' metacognitive thinking, reflective practices, and critical awareness. To fit ideally into this purpose, teachers should include a healthy balance of close-ended and open-ended items in the evaluation form (Lam, 2018, p.49).

Self-evaluation and self-assessment are two misconceived terms in educational assessment. In an attempt to remove this blurring, the terms should be tackled as evaluation and assessment. Evaluation is the process of making valuable decisions and judgments

based on valuable data. Assessment is only one component of the evaluation process that entails collecting information about certain aspects of learning. Bachman and Palmer (2010) note that:

We frequently use assessments for evaluation in educational programs, where we may use assessments to identify students' areas of strength and weakness to help them make decisions to improve or facilitate their learning, to select and place individuals into instructional programs, or to decide which students pass a course (p21).

The assessment comes under cover of evaluation. It is less subjective than evaluation, characterized by launching evaluative statements after having data about the performances. It can be said that assessment is typically used for diagnostic purposes that are non-impressionistic.

Self-evaluation and self-assessment have become substantively grounded in autonomy in that students take responsibility for assessment. Boud (1986, p. 5) states that “The defining characteristics of self-assessment are that learners identify standards or criteria to apply to their work, and make judgments about the extent to which they have met those criteria/standards.” What is more, self-assessment is not confined to the classroom, and it might take place outside the classroom whenever possible.

Portfolios, to be well-executed, need self-evaluation that may take the forms above. In this realm, portfolios are often associated with rubrics, and this is perhaps the bone of contention among their users. Brookhart (2013, p.04) mentions that “The genius of rubrics is that they are descriptive and not evaluative. Of course, rubrics can be used to evaluate, but the operating principle is that you match the performance to the description rather than judge it”. Descriptions in rubrics tackle typical learners' attributes, such as language aptitudes, cognitive styles, or language use activities.

In the current study, the researcher adopted a self-evaluation checklist, taking a box-ticking format. Within this checklist, students were given some statements or descriptions about the e-portfolio implementation, and they were asked to tick the appropriate scale from well done, good, and do not meet the expectations. Importantly, giving subjective comments remains an integral part of the self-evaluation process (see appendix F).

### 1.10.6 Content-Based Analysis

Content analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence and frequency of certain words or conceptual frameworks within texts or sets of texts. It has become widely endorsed by qualitative and quantitative studies despite the analysis of data are the prime concern of researchers. Dörnyei (2007) points out:

Content analysis has recently become closely associated with qualitative research, and we can therefore easily forget that it actually originates from a quantitative analytical method of examining written texts that involves the courting of instances of words, phrases, or grammatical structures that fall into specific categories (p.245)

Content analysis has recently become familiar with many fields of inquiry, such as psychology and cognitive science, media studies, literature and cultural studies, applied linguistics and communication issues, sociology and political science, psychology and cognitive science, and so many more. Berelson (1952) offers the following scopes where content analysis may be used:

- Reveal international differences in communication content
- Detect the existence of propaganda
- Identify the intentions, focus, or communication trends of an individual or group
- Describe attitudinal and behavioural responses to communications
- Determine the psychological or emotional state of persons or groups

Content may be analyzed in terms of concepts or relations. In another way, conceptual analysis determines the frequency of terms and concepts in written and verbal texts. A relational analysis seeks to discover the relationships among concepts in texts. Since content analysis deals with texts, this may take several forms. It can be written texts such as papers, articles, books; oral texts, speech tracks, or audio recordings; iconic texts which refer to all what works with icons, audio-visual text, videos and documentaries, hypertexts, which are online texts. To conduct systematically a content analysis, Krippendorff (2004) asked the following questions:

1. Which data are analyzed?
2. How are the data defined?

3. From what population is data drawn?
4. What is the relevant context?
5. What are the boundaries of the analysis?
6. What is to be measured?

In the present research, analyzing the contents of the submitted *Cultural E-portfolios* is both relational and conceptual. The e-portfolio implementation as an assessment tool necessitates the users to make use a set of metacognitive skills, namely collection, connection, reflection, and evaluation or what is referred to as the folio thinking process. Based on this process, the analysis was relational, and the researcher tried to analyze the relationships between the four aforementioned skills. The second facet of the current analysis is conceptual. It is mainly concerned with the third part of the e-portfolios that tackles the personal experiences. As the name denotes, the analysis tackles the cultural tolerance featured by two concepts: attitudes and cultural shifting. It is worth noting that this analytical account is considered as the teacher's correction to the submitted cultural e-portfolios.

### **1.11 Sampling**

In this research work, the researcher chose participants among EFL teachers and the 1<sup>st</sup> year EFL learners at the University of Chlef. Regarding the fact that scientific research draws much upon generalization, where it does not rely on pure deductive logic, as in the case of mathematics and other numerical sciences, generalisation is based on samples (Butcher, 1966, p.02). The researcher adopted a random sampling in order to avoid any systematic or sudden bias. Both the teachers and the learners participants were concerned with different data collection tools (questionnaires, interview, and test).

#### **1.11.1 Students' Profile**

The students who engaged in the e-portfolio implementation were 30 at the first-year level. They were assessed on their cultural understanding within the modular framework of listening comprehension and speaking. As a reminder, this module is scheduled twice a week: one session for listening and another one for speaking. The participants were males and females: 21 females and 9 males. The age of most of them ranges between 19 and 22 years old, and they used to attend constantly. They share the same cultural background

since all of them come from Chlef. The questionnaire was administered to 120 1<sup>st</sup> EFL students at the University of Chlef.

**Table 1. 2. Students' attributes**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Males	9	30%
Females	21	70%
<b>Age</b>		
19- 22	28	93.33%
Over 22	02	6.66%

### **1.11.2 Teachers' Profile**

The teachers who participated in this study were 24 teachers from the English department at Chlef University. All of them teach English as a Foreign Language to students enrolled in university education. They hold different degrees (Master, Magister, and Doctorate) and different grades (MAB, MAA, MCB, and MCA) belonging to different specialties, notably English for specific purposes (ESP in Brief) sociolinguistics, civilisation, literature, and didactics. All of them graduated from Algerian universities. Most of the participants have varying years of teaching experience at university, ranging from 1 to 12 years. Some participants are part-time teachers holding Master's degrees.

### **1.12 Piloting the Study**

In every study, the piloting stage is a very important step because it reveals the degree to which the research instruments are reliable and valid. To explain this procedure, Muijs (2004) points out:

The single most effective strategy to minimize problems is to make sure you pilot your instruments. Test them first by having colleagues read them. Following that, use them with a small group of people from the population you want to sample. Ask them to provide feedback on the instrument and test the instrument statistically to see if there are any unusual response patterns that could indicate that certain items have not been properly understood (p51).

In light of the procedures mentioned earlier, the researcher may remove ambiguities by adding further accuracies, superseding some items, and reconsidering the complexities for the tool to be commensurate with the informants' levels and abilities. The fundamental objective of the piloting stage is "to assess its quality while it can still be revised and improved and before it is used with the actual subjects in the research" (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989, p.195). Some researchers find piloting time-consuming; therefore, they go over it without considering the scientific and ethical ramifications. In this realm, Dörnyei (2001, p.57) has asserted that "sometimes the omission of the pilot stage is not due to a lack of will or interest, but rather to insufficient time".

In the present research work, piloting concerned the teachers' and learners' questionnaires. As far as the teachers are concerned, the questionnaire was proofread by two colleagues (experienced teachers), and their remarks were considered for reshaping its form and content. For the learners' questionnaire, the researcher tried it out with 16 students. The majority of them demonstrated some reactions that made the researcher alter some items of the questionnaire. For example, they noticed that some questions needed explanations, and led the researcher to reword and delete some words that seemed to be complicated. It is worth saying that the students involved in the pilot stage were exempted from filling out the final version of the questionnaire. It was only then that we started diffusing the questionnaires to the informants taking part in this study.

### **1.13 Conclusion**

After the latest reforms and the introduction of the LMD system in Algeria, the relationship between language, culture, and communication has been further reinforced in FLT framework, and it has become one of the preoccupations of ELT practitioners. Teachers have become responsible for creating a supportive environment that helps

learners immerse in different cultural backgrounds. Students have become aware of the inseparability of language and culture since the cultural loads introduced in the newly designed textbooks for the pre-university levels highlight this issue.

This chapter has highlighted the contextual and pedagogical data through which culture is taught and assessed within 1<sup>st</sup> year EFL classrooms. It has been revealed that several sources and resources can enhance learners' cultural understanding. Modules such as literature, civilisation, and listening and speaking help widen learners' cultural horizons if they are taught by following systematic procedures motivating techniques. To ensure appropriately estimated facts in EFL classrooms, culture pedagogy needs further improvements in terms of objectives, methodology, and teaching materials.

Assessment and testing remain crucial in improving cultural understanding in Algerian EFL contexts. Seemingly enough, traditional testing is the dominant mode even though it is not culture-oriented. It mainly tackles cultural knowledge, notably factual knowledge that might not be considered enough to promote communication abilities or cultural competence. As an alternative form of assessment, the e-portfolio is the subject of this survey research which is foreseeable to include all aspects of cultural competence (intercultural and cross-cultural). It is to this end that alternative assessment has been forethought as fitting superlatively into cultural understanding. The following chapter will review the literature related to the context of this research work.



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**2.1 Introduction**

Perhaps the most ubiquitous issue raised by the globalisation process is the increasing need for communication. The latter varies from one context to another, which makes interlocutors need to know the key norms that govern appropriate discourse. Linguistically speaking, language has to be contextually used. Contexts help speakers to be culturally aware and relevant during intercultural communication. In light of the pressing need for communication, English takes the lead and has become the most commonly used language in the world. Theoretically, as with other languages, it needs to be taught and learnt following some cultural considerations to avoid misunderstandings. Indeed, foreign language programmes are currently striving to enrich learners' trans-national experiences by raising their cultural awareness.

Language cannot be taught and assessed without systematic and pedagogical procedures. And that, in a nutshell, is what this chapter is about. In the first part, it starts by reviewing teaching and assessment, delving deeply into the quality standards that govern effective assessment. Then, tests and testing as key aspects of assessment are referred to in terms of the historical background for the former and the types of the latter. Extra importance is attached to the portfolio as an alternative form of assessment. In the second part, cultural understanding is reviewed with regard to language, communication, and its place in language teaching. Assessment of culture in foreign language education is considered as a debatable issue due to the interrelation of culture to communication.

**2.2 Assessment and Teaching in Language Education**

The requirements of the professional development make teachers in a pressing need to use different exploratory tools that maintain a sense of progression. Depending only on theoretical frameworks is not considered much more enough to diagnose what can happen inside classrooms. The teachers, as agents of innovation and change, need to use in action different tools that keep their professional development going in parallel with improving learning. In another way, some investigative procedures are indispensable in the classroom and assessment seems to be an integral part of these procedures.

Perhaps teaching is the only profession that depends completely on assessment and evaluation. If this teaching is to be a genuinely professional enterprise, it undoubtedly needs to be a subject of constant experiments and different evaluation modes by the

practitioners (Rea-Dickins & Germane, 1992). Evaluation, more specifically assessment, can be used professionally for themselves or for their learners. Looking for personal development, teachers may use different methods, such as observations, questionnaires, self-assessment, checklists, etc. As for learners, teachers need to regulate their minute-by-minute teaching in particular, and the whole teaching-learning process seems to be very important in language education.

It is probably true to say that assessment is present wherever the talk about teaching takes place. In this context, one should differentiate between the teaching tasks and the assessment tasks despite slight differences that exist whenever they are compared. Assessment activities come after the learning activities to surmount aspects gone unnoticed on the part of the teachers and learners. Additionally, teachers' roles as agents of teaching and assessment, switch from information providers, facilitators, and enablers in the teaching activities to data collectors in which they take assessment decisions on what has been collected through various tools. Effectively, the obtained data from assessment activities informs the teachers about the effectiveness and workability of their teaching. Therefore, it can be said that mastering the technical skills of assessment might be part of teachers' reflective practice.

### **2.2.1 Implicit and Explicit Assessments**

Even when carefully defined, no one can expect the way assessment is conducted. In this vein, it would be difficult to separate teaching and assessment. Many who tend to assess language learners do not distinguish whether they are teaching or assessing. Pursuing this line of reasoning, assessment can take two main modes: explicit and implicit. These modes should be perceived by teachers and assessors in order to remove any terminological confusion, despite the fact that the extant literature has not provided sufficient explanations about this issue.

Implicitness denotes something working indirectly without exactitude and clarity. As for the assessment mechanisms, implicit assessment refers to the way teachers involve learners in assessment in an unconscious manner, even though the teacher might be unaware of such a form. In such classrooms, it is difficult to decide if the teacher is teaching or assessing. Bachman and Palmer (2010, p. 28) argue that the teacher often uses this mode of assessment "to make decisions to facilitate his own minute-by-minute instruction by adjusting his presentation, rephrasing, repeating, and moving from student to

student in order to make decisions about his instructional activities”. In this vein, decisions are formative par excellence. Teachers strive to use assessment to improve both teaching-learning process. In practical terms, observations, unconsciously made, are widely endorsed by teachers to reflect on their minute-by-minute teaching. Houwer (2006) notes that the term implicit needs to be superseded by the word automatic. Based on the given two arguments, it can be said that implicit assessment is purely formative where it serves up for collecting circumstantial evidence about every aspect of teaching and learning.

Unlike implicit assessment, teachers may assess students explicitly. Both the teachers and the learners are aware of the assessment implementation. Through informing students, the teacher may involve learners in assessments. It is considered as the most common and used mode of assessment inside classrooms. McKay (2006, p.141) refers to it as a planned assessment that “may be formative and summative and involves forethought to ensure that information is collected about children, on relevant abilities, and that information is valid and fair or ‘useful’”. In this sense, one might ensure that this mode of assessment remains distinct from teaching or teaching activities. Teachers tend to use a variety of tools for collecting data about constructs that have been taught before. In action, explicit assessment might be implemented through many tools, such as interviews, questioning, testing, and doing so, even the high stakes tests, which are mostly standardized, are implemented implicitly.

### **2.2.2 Formal and Informal Assessments**

The practical applications of assessment seem to be of paramount importance if they are truly practiced. By way of distinction, assessment can be formal and informal according to the demanding considerations of the learning context. These kinds of assessment are less debated in the extant literature of assessment, especially that of language assessment. As exploratory activities within the classroom, they are useful for providing useful data about the teaching and learning process. Practically, the two modes have slight differences in terms of techniques, methods, and objectives.

Formal assessment is used within classrooms in accordance with systematic procedures. Brown (2004) defines formal assessment as “the exercises and procedures specifically designed to tap into the storehouse of skills and knowledge. They are systematic, planned sampling techniques constructed to give teachers and students an appraisal of students’ achievement”. It follows from this definition that the overall focus

of this mode is the improvement of learning. Measuring knowledge comes at the utmost importance, and due to this issue, it can be categorized as a summative assessment because the aspect of progression is discarded to some extent. It may take different forms, such as standardized tests, criterion referenced tests, achievement tests, and other tests that are developed and administered in a systematized manner. Essentially, formal methods of assessment are used to assess the overall achievements, to compare a student's performance with others, and even to find out about the shared strengths and weaknesses between students. The aforementioned tools of assessment are mostly content-based, high stakes, and time consuming. From an affective perspective, one of the main problems that students face during formal assessment is anxiety, and this is due to the different considerations such as time allotment.

Informal assessment, on the other hand, refers to the unsystematic procedures used by teachers inside classrooms. Teachers, by using this mode, depend mainly on observing learners during teaching in order to judge them without reference to any criterion or standard. Practically, "informal assessment can take a number of forms, starting with incidental, unplanned comments and responses, along with coaching and other impromptu feedback to the student" (Brown, 2004, p. 06). In such forms, teachers do not depend on strict criteria for administration and interpretation. A clear example of informal assessment might be the periodic comments and responses such as saying "nicely done!" or "this needs further improvements...", a matter that emphasizes the permanence of teachers' feedback. Moreover, what should be said about this kind of assessment is that students might be less stressed. Effectively, through comfortable affective considerations, they could show their real abilities. Furthermore, it might be praised for the fact that teachers, as agents of assessment, do not intensively endeavor to design and structure the assessment items.

### **2.3 Classroom-Based Assessment**

Assessment can be the only valuable way that allows teachers to monitor students' development inside and outside the classrooms. In this sense, assessment inside educational settings seems to be a highly technical task. This aspect needs to be highlighted in the way teachers could frame this integral aspect of instruction. To go a little deeper into the meaning of the concept, some consider assessment as being restricted only to formal tests. In addition to tests, it can be practiced by using a variety of procedures, including observations, interviews, dynamic questioning, questionnaires, and so on. These

tools are, as a matter of fact, grounded in instructional objectives that might be classified into four sorts: language objectives, which refer to the acquisition of language skills; strategic objectives, which are the strategies for communication, learning, and critical thinking; socio-affective objectives, which are mainly concerned with the social behaviors that result from classroom instruction; philosophical ones that pertain to learners' beliefs; and process objectives, which refer to processes, methods, experiments, and other elements of instruction (Genesee & Upshur, 1996, pp.16-17). To generate information about the aforementioned objectives, classroom-based assessment, regardless of the tool being used, serves as the frame of reference.

To be good agents of assessment in the classrooms, teachers need to master its practical and technical fundamentals. Typically, in language assessment definitions, terms and phrases such as collection of information, process, and procedure are mentioned without precision. Bachman and Palmer (2010, p.20) add further to this issue by stating qualities, such as systematicity and substantive grounding that distinguish assessment from other tools of collecting information. Assessments are systematic in the sense that they are developed according to methodical procedures open to scrutiny by other designers and researchers. Also, assessments are substantively grounded by being based upon verifiable parts of the content. In terms of purpose, classroom assessment can be used for formative and summative purposes, and this issue needs explanation with a detailed account.

### **2.3.1 Formative Assessment**

It would, in fact, be a mistake to assume that assessment takes place only at the end of courses, programs, and semesters. Teachers need to use periodically various exploratory tools that support the learning-teaching process. This kind of purpose is referred to as formative assessment. It has become widely endorsed due to the profound benefits it may provide for the enhancement of learning outcomes. Not only is it beneficial for the learners, but also, teachers can draw formative decisions through reflecting upon their professional development. As a succinct definition, "formative assessment is a planned process in which assessment elicits evidence of students' status and is used by teachers to adjust their ongoing instructional procedures or by students to adjust their current learning tactics" (Popham, 2008, p 6). Based on this definition, one can notice that the dynamics of this kind of assessment are not teacher-based. Regardless of the way or the method they use, learners preoccupy a central role in formative assessment. The teacher's role hinges upon giving feedback. In light of the latter, Sadler (1998) points out that formative



assessment is “the assessment that is specifically intended to generate feedback to improve or accelerate students' learning”. Importantly, feedback remains the basic postulate in order for both teachers and learners to make formative decisions, but not the absolute procedure for engaging in formative assessment. For instance, adjusting the methodology of teaching certain aspects of the course is also considered as a formative assessment strategy. Oftentimes, formative assessment is handled as a teacher-based assessment, disregarding the fact that learners should be primarily concerned with this process. In this vein, Brown (2004, p. 06) argues that the delivery by the teacher and the internalization by the learner put a formative stamp on assessment.

Formative assessment is well recognized as having a high-impact on the teaching-learning process. Through it, the teacher might obtain data about learners that informs him or her about the possibility of carrying on work or re-explaining certain elements. Indeed, formative assessment remains a complex process that requires technically careful structuring (Rea Dickins, 2000). In terms of methods, it is highly recommended to choose the appropriate methods that reflect the itemized details of the learning. Popham (2011, p.23) points out that “formative assessment based on shabby assessment instruments and procedures is destined to become shabby formative assessment”. For instance, interviews are considered effective assessment methods that provide sufficient information within language classrooms, through which learners can show linguistic, extra-linguistic, and affective data. Typically, FA content is harmonious with the courses taught before.

### **2.3.2 Summative Assessment**

Summative assessment is one of the main topical issues that have seen increasing dissenting opinions over recent decades, due to the ebb and flow among specialists concerning its potency in language learning. It is widely understood as an assessment of learning which takes place at the end of a course, program, or semester to evaluate what has been taught and learned over a period of time. A summation in assessment means “what a student has learned implies looking back and taking stock of how well that student has accomplished objectives, but does not necessarily point the way to future progress” (Brown, 2004, p.06). In this respect, progress on the part of learners is given the least attention and an extra importance is attached to what has been previously learned. Known most of the time as standardized testing, its main focus is attached to the outcomes through which teachers, schools, and communities use the results to determine success or failure

through taking summative decisions about a relatively fixed set of instructional activities. Because of this, it is referred to as assessment of learning.

Summative assessment tools are often marked according to a scale or set of grades to audit achievements. That's why it is featured by its overemphasis on the outcomes, a feature that may be found in high-stakes exams and standardised tests. Based on this evidence, the outcomes generated from summative assessment are looked upon as the information provider about the teaching-learning process. Gardner (2004) argues that:

Summative assessment provides, as the term suggests, a summary of achievements at a particular point. It is a necessary part of an assessment system as it provides information to those with an interest in students' achievements: mainly parents, other teachers, employers, further and higher education institutions, and the students themselves (p14).

Unlike formative assessment, which is implemented collaboratively, summative assessment is a teacher-centered pedagogy. It is a re-explanation of what has been formatively assessed but with further dependability. The latter is likely to be present in standardized assessment, notably tests. The teacher or the administrators develop the assessment without being participative- it is done without involving the learners.

#### **2.4 Quality Standards in Language Assessment**

Language assessment, which is a very important concept in applied linguistics and educational measurement, has some methodological underpinnings that make it effective. Because it is a systematic procedure, language assessment is substantively grounded in criteria or quality standards that have been elaborated over time. These qualities are characterized by the overemphasis attached to the post-assessment phase, more specifically the social aspect of assessment that has been considered the subject under scrutiny. Also, what should be recognized is that these principles recover a lot from psychometrics. McNamara and Roever (2006, p.01) state, "psychometrics became the substrate discipline, prescribing the rules of measurement, and language was virtually poured into these preexisting psychometric forms". Here, it should be recognized that applied linguistics has contributed jointly with psychometrics to the assessment and testing fabric. The quality standards will be reviewed in the following order: practicality, validity, reliability, authenticity, and washback.

### 2.4.1 Practicality

It is widely known that effective assessment is the most practical one. As far as one could know, practicality is mainly concerned with time allotment, finance, and resources mobilized for the use of assessment. For instance, a test that takes a long period of time to realize lacks practicality. Bachman and Palmer (1996, p.36) define practicality as “a matter of the extent to which the demands of particular test specifications can be met within the limits of existing resources”. In light of this definition, the words ‘demands’ and ‘resources’ should be initially understood to finally perceive practicality. Practical assessment, though tests are the case in point in the assessment literature, needs special requirements and resources through which it goes well. Here, the degree of importance is crucial for mobilizing the demands and resources. To merge into full-fledged assessment tools, more specifically tests, there should be a respectable time allotment, considerable resources mobilized for its application, and even financial factors should be taken into account to achieve practicality. Additionally, human resources are the most important factor in practicality in which administrators provide easy, methodical procedures for those who undertake assessment.

### 2.4.2 Validity

Validation is the most complex quality standard by which an assessment can be judged valid or not. It is difficult to arrive at a succinct and satisfying working definition of this concept in regard to the extant views, which are not identical among academics. To give a brief definition, “validity is the overall evaluative judgment of the degree to which empirical evidence and theoretical rationale support the adequacy and appropriateness of interpretations and actions based on test scores or other modes of assessment” (Messick, 1996 qtd. In Messick, 1989). That is to say, validity goes along with the term 'accuracy', where there is a degree of congruency between what has been decided for assessment in terms of theory and its probable existence by interpreting the results. For instance, if the test intends to measure students' writing ability by writing a certain type of paragraph, then only the volume is counted. It would, indeed, be invalid if there is no reference to the basic requirements of paragraph writing, such as organization, transition, and so on. An assessment is said to be valid if it pertains to the course as a whole. Making use of suitable authentic methods and subjects will be crucial in the prediction of the learners' future performance (Tummons, 2011, p 38).

### 2.4.2.1 Content Validity

Content validity, sometimes referred to as logical or rational validity, is one of the main dimensions that test developers refer to carefully when judging the validity of tests. As the name denotes, it has to deal with the content of the assessment tool and the extent to which it covers the areas intended to be assessed. Hughes (2003, p.26) refers to a valid assessment or valid test clearly “if its content constitutes a representative sample of language skills, structures, etc”. It follows from this argument that the test content should be related to a pertinent course, program, or semester. One can identify content-related evidence of a test by monitoring the achievements that are achieved (Brown, 2000, p.22). According to some assessment and testing experts, notably Bachman (1990) and Messick (1980), the concept of content within the framework of validity can be handled as having content relevance and content coverage. The former requires the specification of the behavioral domain in question and the attendant specification of the task or test domain. The latter concerns the extent to which the tasks given in the test adequately address the behavioural domain in question (Messick, 1980, p.1017).

### 2.4.2.2 Construct Validity

This aspect of validity addresses the accuracy and the correlation of the test with the theoretical attributes that the test is supposed to revolve around. The dictionary of the language teaching and applied linguistics defines construct validity as “a type of validity that is based on the extent to which the items in a test reflect the essential aspects of the theory on which the test is based (i.e., the construct)”. To investigate construct validity, it would be clear to ask the question: does this test actually tap into the theoretical construct as it has been identified (Brown, 2001, p. 389). For instance, if a test is considered invalid in terms of construct, it means that the items given in this test do not reflect the main theoretical aspects which it should be based on. Among the main factors influencing the validity of tests is having less information about the theoretical constructs since the early stages of development.

### 2.4.2.3 Consequential Validity

This aspect may be seen as pertaining to the societal aspect of tests regardless of whether they are positive or negative. As the name denotes, consequences are the primary concern of validation. It is worth recognising that consequential validity has been investigated

much more with standardized tests. To review such consequences, Brown (2002, p. 26) states that:

Consequential validity encompasses all the consequences of a test , including such considerations as its accuracy in measuring intended criteria, ,its impact on the preparation of test-takers, its effect on the learner, and the (intended and unintended) social consequences of the test's interpretation and use .

Staying within the same context of effects, consequential validity, and washback are interconnected concepts sometimes mistakenly understood. In terms of effects and consequences, they overlap to a great extent, but consequential validity seems to be larger in scope than washback. Messick (1996) argues that washback is only a component of consequential validity in which validity, in order to be evaluated, there should be a preliminary reference to some washback data.

#### **2.4.2.4 Criterion-Related Validity**

Sometimes referred to as instrumental validity, criterion related evidence refers to the extent to which the test-takers' scores are consistent with the criteria that make up the same construct of language ability. According to Hughes (2003, p.27), criterion-related validity "relates to the degree to which results on the test agree with those provided by some independent and highly dependable assessment of the candidate's ability". There are two kinds of criterion-related validity: concurrent validity and predictive validity. The former, is achieved when the assessment and the criterion can be managed and monitored at about the same time. For instance, the concurrent validity of a highly scored writing course might be proved by reflecting proficient writing skills. The latter, as the name denotes, has to do with the use of assessment or a test performance to predict a subsequent performance. For instance, a proficiency test will predict the test-takers' abilities (criterion).

#### **2.4.2.5 Face Validity**

Among the content considerations in the development of language assessment within the validation framework is face validity. Another aspect that concerns the extent to which an assessment or a test can measure what is supposed to be measured in terms of items and concepts. What makes face validity different from content validity is that the former can be determined without statistical methods by only taking informal observations based on a

high degree of subjectivity on the part of the test-takers, administration, teachers, etc. The latter is investigated through statistical methods and numerical data. In order for tests to have a face validation, Brown (2002, p.27) offers the following indicators: A well-constructed, expected format with familiar tasks,

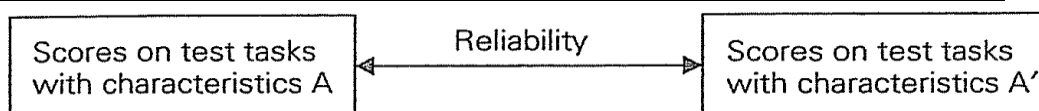
- ✓ A test that is clearly doable within the allotted time limit,
- ✓ Items that are clear and uncomplicated,
- ✓ Directions that are crystal clear,
- ✓ A difficulty level that presents a reasonable challenge.

### **2.4.3 Reliability**

Reliability is one of the key qualities not only to the usefulness of language assessment, but also within the whole discipline of applied linguistics. Assessment is said to be reliable when it is devoid of measurement errors. These errors pertain to the differences and changes that provoke inconsistency. If you give the same test to the student or make students engaged on two occasions, the test gives the same results or scores and hence the assessment has a high degree of reliability (Brown, 2004). Hughes (1989) gives some propositions that can increase the assessment reliability, which come as follows:

1. Take enough samples of behavior
2. Do not allow candidates enough freedom
3. Provide clear and explicit instructions
4. Write unambiguous items
5. Ensure that tests are well laid out and perfectly legible
6. Provide uniform and non-distracting conditions of administration
7. Use item that permit scoring which is as objective as possible
8. Provide a detailed scoring key
9. Make comparisons between candidates as direct as possible.

(Hughes, 1989, pp.38-39-40)



**Figure1.2.** Reliability (Bachman & Palmer, 1996, p. 20)

#### 2.4.4 Authenticity

Authenticity has become an important aspect of English language teaching and learning. Target language use has become tailored to real-life situations where tasks are preferably relevant. To explain clearly the concept from an ELT perspective, Buendgens-Kosten (2014, p.457) says that “Authenticity has been used to characterize texts (both written and spoken), learning materials, tasks, cultural artifacts, multimedia products, forms of assessment, and even types of teacher and audience”. In this argument, what needs further explanation is the way individuals judge the existence of authenticity or authentic features in any aspect of learning. In language assessment, it has to fit into a real-world situation where the assessment tasks can be done in natural and relevant ways. Authenticity has become a perennial aspect of assessment practice, especially under the powerful influence of technology on education. To keep the line open to wider conception, the teacher needs to imply authenticity in day-to-day teaching before moving to authentic assessment.

In fact, authenticity in assessment might be found as a situational or interactional aspect. The former refers to the extent to which the assessment tasks mimic real-life tasks outside the assessment situation. In another way, the test takers or the individuals being assessed engage in the target language use in certain situations that have special attributes. The latter indicates the degree to which the individual being assessed interacts with the assessment tasks (Bachman, 1990). Practically, to explore whether a language assessment in general or a language test in particular is authentic or not, the following features fit perfectly into authenticity:

1. The language in the test is as natural as possible.
2. Items are contextualized rather than isolated.
3. Topics are meaningful (relevant, interesting) for learners.
4. Some thematic organization to items is provided, via a story line or episode.
5. Tasks represented, or closely approximate, real world tasks. (Brown, 2004, p.28)

### 2.4.5 Washback

Every aspect of learning put into action is going to be judged as useful or not after having subtle effects. To this end, the concept of washback, sometimes referred to as ‘backwash’ or ‘measurement-driven instruction’, is a key principle that focuses on the effects of adding further usefulness to assessment. Found most of the time in large- scale assessment, washback refers to the impact of assessment on the teaching-learning process, behaviours, and educational programs. According to Popham (1987), “the concept is rooted in the notion that tests or examinations can and should drive teaching, and hence learning, and is also referred to as measurement-driven instruction” (In Cheng, ,Watanabe & Curtis, 2004, p.04). The washback might be positive or negative. This depends on the availability of other quality standards that are crucial to a great extent in the accomplishment of the positive impact of assessment, testing in particular.

It has been long asserted, in a wide range of the testing contexts, that washback can be individual or collective. To keep the lines open to wider conception for the effects of assessment, Cheng and Warren (2005) have clarified that the effects might be generated at two levels. At the micro level, the effects of the assessment use on the individuals. At a macro level, in terms of educational systems or society. In this vein, Bachman and Purpura (2008) state:

It has long been recognized that tests in general, and language assessments in particular, are intended to provide a valuable service to society, in that they yield information that can help decision makers allocate resources on the basis of merit, rather than lineage or patronage (p456).

Moreover, it is important to distinguish between the washback of formative and summative tests. Brown (2000) argues that formative tests provide washback in the form of information to the learners towards their objectives. But teachers think that summative tests do not need to offer in the way of washback, it is wrong belief

### 2.5 Language Testing: A Developmental Overview

Fresh theories in language teaching and learning sprang overtime innovatively into being, and the pedagogical practices within these theories have seen further elaborations as time went on. Among these practices are assessment and testing. Within language education programs, testing can be issued as a workshop that has seen relentless change and



innovation, especially under changing socio-economic and sociolinguistic circumstances. So it is highly important to review the phases of language testing, which are embodied in four approaches and ordered in a chronological order: the Essay Translation Approach, the Structuralist Approach, the Integrative Approach, and the Communicative Approach.

The Essay Translation Approach, which is attributed to the pre-scientific era, depends heavily on translation, essay compositions and grammatical analysis. Based upon a high degree of subjectivity, teachers give feedback and judgments without referring to any scientific or theoretical underpinning. As the name denotes, translation is the skeleton of this approach. It is critically acclaimed for misrepresenting the overall meaning of writing pieces, while a plausible interpretation of the gist may be faulty at the sentence level. Furthermore, this approach emphasises form over other language aspects.

Afterwards, the testing industry within the structuralist approach or the psychometric era started to be scientifically fabricated. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, language testing saw improvements. This approach came under the influence of structural linguistics. Kudchedkar (2002, p.272) states, “The description, which was hierarchical, began with the smaller elements, from phonology to morphology, the lexis to finally the syntax of structures”. With the growing concern of contrastive analysis, more specifically the testing framework of Lado (1961), testing strives to measure the knowledge of both form and structure, in addition to other linguistic elements such as ‘lexicon’ and ‘phonology’. In such tests, language was considered as a system of separate parts (Rea Dickins, 2000). Likewise, objectivity has started to be gradually endorsed by the testers.

Soon afterwards, language testing views the integrative approach as the way to overcome the shortcomings of testing within the structuralist framework. The focus, in this approach, is put on proficiency and contextualization more than necessary, and this by linking language tests to context. Among the most common tests are essay writing, dictation, cloze tests, and oral interviews. Oller (1979) describes the integrative tests as:

The concept of an integrative test was born in contrast with the definition of a discrete point test. If discrete items take language skill apart, integrative tests put it back together. Whereas discrete items attempt to test knowledge of language one bit at a time, integrative tests attempt to assess learner’s capacity to use many bits all the same time, and possibly while exercising several presumed components of a

grammatical system , and perhaps more than one of the traditionally recognized skills or aspects of skills (Oller, 1979, p.37).

Proponents of integrative test methods (Lowe & Stanfield 1988, Oller 1979) build their reasoning on what was known at that time as the Unitary Trait Hypothesis, in which its basic postulate is language proficiency, including vocabulary, grammar, and phonology, as well as the four skills (Brown, 2000, p.393). Therefore, the move started to switch from language usage to language use.

The crucial need for communication influences language testing. Communicative language testing comes along with various works by applied linguists, such as Canale and Swain (1980), Hymes (1964), Canale (1983). Language use is emphasised over language usage. Morrow (2012, p.140) states that “a communicative test aims to find out what a learner can do with the language, rather than to establish how much grammatical/lexical /phonological resources of the language he/she knows”. It is worth mentioning that communicative language testing has been criticized for the unlikely discarding of language usage, notably grammar which is considered by some linguists as the frame of any language.

## **2.6 Types of Language Tests**

In language education, language tests are considered exploratory tasks that provide linguistic, cultural, and behavioral background for teaching and learning. Despite the fact that tests have different specifications, there is one common specification that may be shared jointly between them, which is the scoring. The latter might be considered as a source of information in order to make merit-based decisions about test takers within some assessment contexts (Spolsky & Hult, 2008). Language tests could be classified into the following types: language aptitude tests, proficiency tests, placement tests, achievement tests, diagnostic tests, standardized tests, discrete point tests.

### **2.6.1 Language Aptitude Tests**

These types of tests are utilized to measure the cognitive individual differences of foreign language learners. As the name denotes, aptitude refers to the potential ability and skills to learn with special regard to the learner’s motivation, opportunity to learn and the quality of instruction (Carroll, 1971, p.03). Carroll (1991) categorizes aptitude into four sub-components: phonemic coding ability, grammatical sensitivity, inductive language,

analytic ability, and memory. Significantly, language aptitude tests do not only explore the individual's capacity but also predict his/her future success (Brown, 2000, p. 391). Typically, the most common standardized aptitude tests have been used in language learning contexts: the *Modern Language Aptitude Test* (MLAT) and the *Pimsleur Language Aptitude Test* (PLAT). All of these are mainly concerned with English (Carroll, 1990, p.12).

### 2.6.2 Proficiency Test

It would be wiser to review briefly the concept of proficiency before moving to its test and testing. Proficiency refers generally to an individual's mastery of certain areas of learning. For what concerns education, specifically language testing, Smith (1999, p.704) points out that "if proficiency is to be tested, the test cannot be restricted to the syllabus of a specific course". In language learning, a proficiency test is purposefully used to assess the extent to which a language learner has reached a certain level of proficiency in his overall ability. It includes the entire language knowledge, namely vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar discourse. Brown (2004, p. 44) notes that proficiency tests are often summative and norm-referenced in which results are globally given in a form of a single score. He adds that they are machine-scorable for rapid turnaround and cost effectiveness. Furthermore, a common example of a proficiency test is the *Test of English as a Foreign Language* (TOEFL).

In proficiency tests, the content is not substantively grounded in certain courses or objectives that the test-takers have learned before. The content is based upon the specification of what candidates have to be able to do in the language in order to achieve proficiency (Hughes, 1989, p. 09). In such tests, a heavy emphasis is put on quantitative data rather than qualitative data. Testers care much more about numerical scoring. McNamara (1999, p. 725) asserts that "proficiency tests are often professionally developed and are based on psychometric considerations rather than instructional ones". At this point, proficiency tests are mostly referred to as theory-based tests.

### 2.6.3 Placement Test

These kinds of tests are typically used to place the test taker in a particular level or class after the determination of certain skills and knowledge s/he can perform during the test. The Placement test usually heralds the possible sampling of the instructional syllabuses the students will follow at their valuable level (Harmer, 2001, p.321). To a greater extent, most

placement tests are based upon vocabulary and grammar given in both written and spoken forms. Richards (1990, p.16) mentions that “Placement tests are used to place students at an appropriate level within a language program”. Based on these arguments, one can say that there is not a great difference between the placement test and the proficiency test since the latter is specifically designed for programs and courses.

#### **2.6.4 Achievement Test**

The central motive behind using an achievement test is to provide an account of a student’s knowledge of language. An achievement test is often used to check the availability of the adopted pedagogical tools, such as materials, methods, curricula, and content. They are used most of the time for summative purposes because they take place at the end of courses or programs, in addition to the possibility of determining the upcoming level. Brown (2004, p.48) offers a list of specifications that can determine:

- The objectives of the lessons, unit, or course being assessed.
- The relative importance (or weight) assigned to each objective ,
- The tasks employed in classroom lessons during the unit of time
- Practicality issues ,such as the time frame for the test and turnaround time, and
- The extent to which the test structure lends itself to formative washback.

Achievements should go along with the teaching process through which teachers are responsible for the determination of theoretical basis of the test. In the light of achievement tests, to get into details, they might be categorized into two types: final achievement test and progress achievement test. The former refers to a test done at end of the course, and the latter is intended to assess students’ progress (Hughes, 1988).

#### **2.6.5 Diagnostic Test**

As the name suggests, a diagnosis test is used to find out and diagnose where the weaknesses lie in students’ performance and the needs that should be overworked. It is entirely syllabus- based. In this sense, Harmer (2007, p.379) says that “diagnostic tests can be used to expose learner difficulties, gaps in their knowledge, and skill deficiencies during a course”. Most diagnostic tests are conducted in the same way as achievement tests are done. Despite the fact that the extant literature does not suffice for diagnosis in language testing, it can be useful for individualized instruction or self-instruction (Hughes, 1989). What could be said about these kinds of tests is that they attempt to find out problems and weaknesses rather than strengths.

### 2.6.6 Standardised Test

These kinds of tests are designed to contain consistent questions, procedures, and scoring procedures in a clearly standard manner. Richards and Schmidt (2002, p.510) define a standardized test as a “test which provides uniform procedures for administering (time limits, response format, number of questions) and scoring the test”. It might be seen from this definition that standardized tests are seen only as having a unified content, objectives, and criteria. In this vein, there should be a reference to the learning framework. For instance, a standardized test can be used to determine the semester's achievements, unity or a scholastic year. These tests are often developed as a summative assessment for placing the test takers at a future level or scholastic success. However, standardized tests typically require more resources than other tests (non-standardized tests). That is to say, test developers are obliged to mobilize a great amount of material resources, human resources, and time. Accordingly, the prominent reason for standardizing assessment procedures is to ensure that the testing conditions and scoring procedures have similar consequences for learners' performances in different educational settings (Russell & Airassian, 2011, p.14).

Being classified as traditional testing, standardized tests are not seen well-rounded enough. Clearly, McNamara (1999, p.725) states:

They are seen as too often having a negative, restricting influence on progressive teaching, for example, by relying on conservative testing formats such as multiple-choice questions, or by not including direct tests of the spoken language because of expense or the difficulty of equalizing assessment conditions across raters.)

It worth recognized that most of the standardized tests are performed through the written mode, what makes them incomprehensive considering the fact that other skills, notably the speaking skill neglected. Therefore, achievements cannot be fairly assessed.

### 2.6.7 Discrete Point Test

This kind is also called ‘discrete point items’. It intends to test one structural element of language at a time, item by item. In such tests, language is regarded as a separate element where sometimes items are de-contextualized, as in the following example:

Underline the correct option:

He may not come but we'll get ready in case he...

A.will B.does C.is D.may

(Heaton 1989, p. 33, in Rea Dickins, 2000)

Clearly, the example shows that there is a single sentence format without any additional context provided. It is true to say that language testers are moving away from these kinds of tests that are quite out of step with the current needs of test-takers, especially proficiency assessment (O'Dell, Read, & McCarthy, 2000, p.06).

## 2.7 Alternative Assessment

Language theories are growing over time. Of course, fresh mechanisms for assessment have sprung into being, and among these innovative mechanisms is alternative assessment. As the name suggests, the word 'alternative' can be launched into a process that proves much more effective and efficient than its precedent. Alternative assessment is a newly explored assessment pedagogy which is said to have come as a reaction to traditional testing. Smith (1999, p.703) defines it as "the use of methods other than traditional tests and examinations. In this approach, assessment is not restricted to a uniform test given at a specific place and time, and designed for all subjects". For Smith's definition, alternative assessment seems to have slight differences from the traditional one, more precisely in terms of place and time. In action, alternative assessment comes to include further qualities such as autonomy, authenticity, and performance-based. The latter is the distinctive treat which has made it widely endorsed at the present time. In the language learning framework, alternative assessment tools have come to the forefront in the last decades as an adopted form of assessment. McNamara (2000, p.07) argues that "this approach stresses the need for assessment to be integrated with the goals of the curriculum and to have a constructive relationship with teaching and learning". It is also referred to as authentic assessment, integrative assessment, and holistic assessment. Alternatives are portfolios, self-assessments, interviews, journals, diaries, etc.

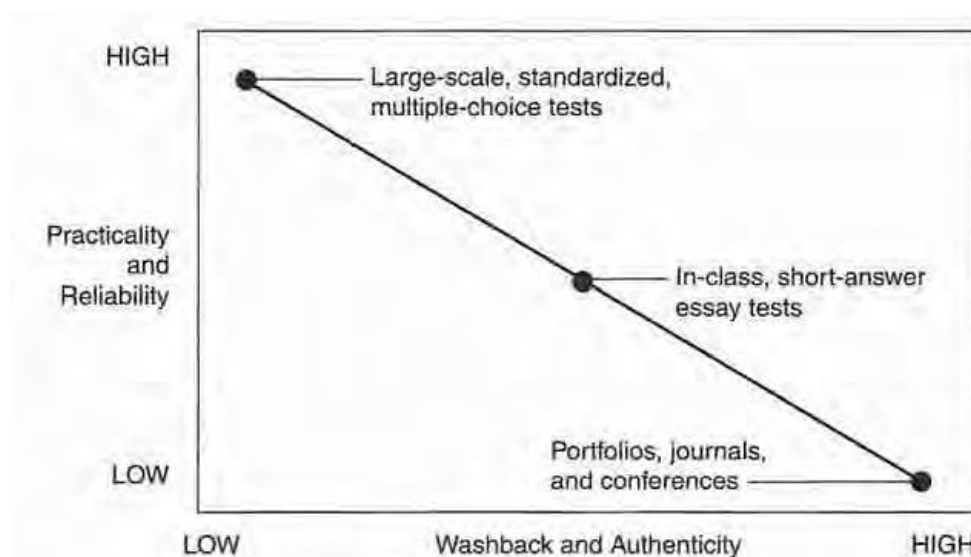
A prominent issue relates to the question of whether using alternative assessment breaks with the traditional one or not. In this vein, Coombe et al. (2012) says that it is preferable to use alternative assessment in conjunction with traditional "standardized testing", and he refers to alternative assessment as an additional assessment. Indeed, this approach to assessment is said to be more comprehensive than traditional assessment in what concerns the aspects of language being assessed. At this point, through using different alternatives, the assessment cannot only focus on criteria of language accuracy as

the traditional one does; different aspects of language use can be measured. This may be done through different tools or even by using technology.

Perhaps like any emerging pedagogy, alternative assessment has been criticized and praised for different issues. Some educationalists see it lacking or having fewer degrees of validity and reliability. However, these constructs are said to be sufficiently present in the traditional assessment context. In this realm, it has been pointed out that:

A problem with methods of alternative assessment, however, lies with their validity and reliability: Tasks are often not tried out to see whether they produce the desired linguistic information; marking criteria are not investigated to see whether they ‘work’; and raters are often not trained to give consistent marks. (Clapham, 2000, p.152)

Not only practicality, validity, and reliability, but also authenticity and washback need further comments. In terms of authenticity, alternative assessment has proved to be much more authentic due to the fact that it is practiced in real-world situations. In terms of washback, the alternative forms of assessment are said to be wealth, and this, of course, when it is classroom-based



**Figure 2.2.** Relationship of practicality/ reliability to washback /authenticity (Brown, 2004, p.253)

### 2.8 Portfolio as the Common Alternative

Portfolio is one of the main educational innovations that have proved effectiveness in both learning and assessment. The word ‘portfolio’ refers to a thin, portable case which contains loose papers, maps, drawings, photographs, notes and documents, and its Latin origin is ‘portafoglio’, which denotes ‘to carry’ (porta) and ‘papers’ (foglio) (Lam, 2018, p.03). To offer a plausible definition, a portfolio is the collection and documentation of individuals’ achievements, thoughts, and ideas in a systematic way which can be monitored autonomously. This pedagogical tool started to be endorsed with the advent of the communicative language teaching method. As the focus has been put on the learner, Shrum and Glisan (2009, p.425) explain that “portfolios promote positive student involvement, which has a positive impact on students’ confidence, facilitate students’ use of learning strategies, and increase students’ ability to assess and revise their work”. That is, the teacher as assessor needs to act as an enabler, involving the learners flexibly in this procedure. Portfolios may take different forms, such as essays, compositions, diaries, reports, videos, audio tapes, etc. They can be compiled by taking two prominent forms: the paper-based form or the electronic form.

From an evaluative perspective, portfolios are used to assess different language areas. Though some assessors associate it frequently with the written language, others use it effectively with the oral language by keeping an audio recording of their speech (Rea Dickins, 2000, p. 398). Both teachers and learners can adapt and adopt it to different skills and areas of language knowledge. Portfolios have become widely endorsed due to their high degree of authenticity, fostering reflection and instilling autonomy. These qualities make the language learner acquire a sense of ownership. In this sense, Paris and Ayres (1994, p.10) state that “the overarching purpose of the portfolio is to create a sense of personal ownership over one’s accomplishments, because ownership engenders feelings of pride, responsibility, and dedication”. Portfolios are also said to be a performance-based assessment in which learners’ productivity and autonomy are encouraged. To achieve this aim, it needs to be systematically done in accordance with certain principles. Smith (1999) states the following principles that serve for assessment and learning purposes:

- (a) The learner is involved in choosing what is to be put into the portfolio.
- (b) The learner is allowed to revise the work after formative feedback from the tutor.



- (c) The learner is required to assess the work, thus becoming aware of personal development.
- (d) There is a required part of the portfolio in which all learners have to provide evidence of having mastered a core body of knowledge.
- (e) Evidence can be presented in various forms, such as written work, audio, and video recordings.
- (f) The portfolio needs to be assessed by more than one rater if it is to be used for summative assessment.

(Smith, 1999, p.705)

Under the afore-stated evidence, teachers could make teaching and assessment go and interrelated at the same time; of course, through giving formative decisions and feedback.

In language learning context, portfolio assessment can be used by teachers and learners. Teachers, more specifically novice teachers, may engage in implementing a professional portfolio to keep their teaching reflective. Indeed, there should be continual teacher education development and one of the main investigative procedures that give the opportunity to reflect on daily teaching is portfolios. A teacher's professional portfolio can:

Serve as a source of review and reflection. The process of compiling the portfolio prompts the teacher to engage in a comprehensive self-assessment of different aspects of his or her work. By reviewing the portfolio (in consultation with a colleague or supervisor, if necessary), the teacher can make decisions about priorities and goals and areas for future development or improvement.

(Richards & Farrell, 2006, p. 99)

A parallel issue relates to the implementation of portfolios by teachers if they are systematically trained to initiate this enterprise. There seems little reason to regard this as a weakness in its implementation and this issue needs to be revisited.

### 2.8.1 Positivist Paradigm to Portfolio Implementation

The positivist paradigm categorizes portfolio assessment as an outcome-oriented process. This process could be embodied in tests, more specifically achievement tests, which focus totally on making inferences. From a pure positivist (psychometric) standpoint,

The purpose of the portfolio is to assess learning outcomes and those outcomes are, generally, defined externally. Positivism assumes that meaning is constant across users, contexts, and purposes (making it reasonable, for example, to think about national and even "world class" standards). The portfolio is a receptacle for examples of student work used to infer what and how much learning has occurred.

(Paulson & Paulson, 1994, p.07)

The portfolio developer follows a certain given database and criteria to cope with artifacts. It might be envisioned to a great extent as an assessment for summative purposes. It is worth mentioning that the positivist portfolio is recognized as having a high degree of validity and reliability, and this depends on its directory summation.

### 2.8.2 Constructivist Paradigm to Portfolio Implementation

From a constructivist perspective, learning relates to personal knowledge construction and observation, life-long learning and learning autonomy. It is not passively recovered through extrinsic mechanisms. Within the general context of assessment, educationalists seek to reflect the constructivist features, more specifically on the portfolio, by clarifying the meaning of constructivism which is:

A learning environment in which the learner constructs the meaning. It assumes that meaning varies across individuals, over time, and with purpose. The portfolio represents process, a record of the processes associated with the learning itself and that a summation of individual portfolios would be too complex for normative description (Paulson & Paulson, 1994, p.08).

Based on the Piagetian and Vygotskian perspectives, there should be active mechanisms to construct a meaningful learning. In this sense, portfolio assessment within the constructivist framework is a real embodiment of the hermeneutic process by which

there is an overemphasis on the support of synthesis to reassemble what analysis takes apart, that's why it is much better suited to the constructivist approach (Barrett, 2000).

## **2.9 Purposes of Portfolio Assessment**

Portfolio assessment, whether used inside or outside the educational setting, is implemented for different purposes. Before starting this assessment enterprise, the portfolio developer needs to plan ahead the purposes for which this tool will serve for. Pursuing this line of reasoning, many scholars and educationalists, Paulson and Paulson (1994), Barrett (2005), Kelly and Haber (2006) and others distinguish between two main purposes: process-oriented portfolio and product-oriented portfolio, regardless of having paper-based or electronic formats. The aforementioned purposes are reviewed below.

### **2.9.1 Process-oriented**

The embodiment of the portfolio as process-oriented is based upon the fact that it emphasizes the process. Clearly, the overall importance of assessment is attached to the learning process through which the student can reflect upon his learning in a certain course or phase in order to make a formative decision. Due to this, it is seen as a formative portfolio. Kelly and Haber (2006, p.150) state, “in the formative portfolio, the students add items, including reflections, as they move through a course of study. The resulting portfolio, usually organized chronologically, reflects the student's growth and learning over time”. That is, the assessment keeps the formative profile. To a great extent, this might be identical with the constructivist paradigm, which views the portfolio as purposefully done for learning. Noticeably, using a portfolio for process-oriented purposes is seen much more as a learning tool rather than an assessment procedure. To achieve this purpose, the portfolio organization is determined by the learner or negotiated with the teacher, and this may foster intrinsic motivation on the part of the learner (Barrett, 2005, p.18).

### **2.9.2 Product-oriented**

Another purpose for which portfolio assessment can be implemented is product-oriented. It is considered an assessment of learning in which the focus of attention is attached to the achievements stretched over a period of time. To this intent, “portfolio and/or artifacts are usually ‘scored’ based on a rubric and quantitative data is collected for external audiences” (Barrett, 2005, p.18). For such a purpose, the portfolio has to fit into the

administrative demands to draw summative decisions, that is why; it is often referred to as a summative portfolio. It can be classified within the positivist paradigm, which sets a priority on the selection of items that reflect standards and criteria externally imposed. Brown (2007, p.10) has argued that product-oriented portfolios are more appropriate at the secondary level, through which students collect their best works.

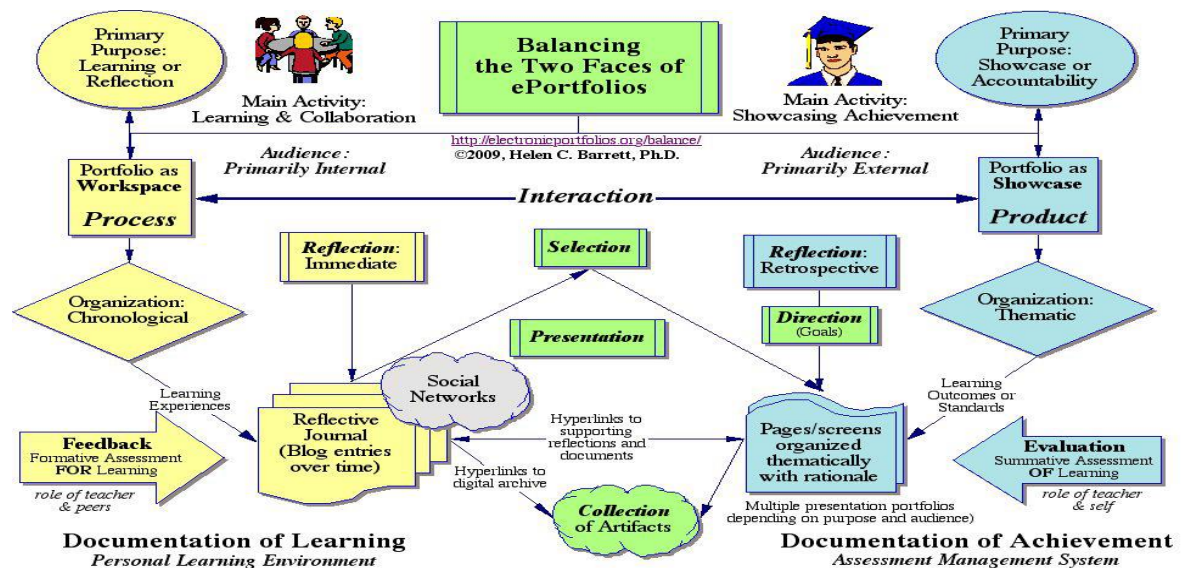


Figure 2.3. Balancing the two faces of portfolio (Barrett, 2010, p.07)

## 2.10 Types of Portfolios

The portfolio, regardless of being used as an assessment tool or learning tool, emerges as a unique portrait of the individual efforts made towards achieving specific purposes. To do so, one needs to distinguish between the different types of portfolio assessments, taking into consideration whether these are used for formative or summative considerations or for double-fold goals.

### 2.10.1 Progress Portfolio

It has been long asserted, in a wide range of educational contexts, that whenever progress is achieved in learning, there is efficacy in terms of assessment regardless of the tools being used. The Progress portfolio seems to be one of the prominent types of portfolio that reflects continually the learners' progress or improvement over time. This may be done through a constant collection of artifacts where the individual learner can track his or her step-by-step progress. This type of portfolio is considered a formative assessment due to the fact that the portfolio developer can draw formative decisions on the basis of the

collected artifacts. Lam (2018, p. 05) argues that “this approach is mainly formative, although certain learning tasks kept in the portfolio are graded for the purpose of accountability”. In this sense, the documented outcomes are possibly shared by the portfolio developer jointly with the teacher and parents for communicative purposes. Furthermore, the learner may reconsider the material in the portfolio after receiving feedback from the instructor or others.

### **2.10.2 Showcase Portfolio**

This type of portfolio, as the name suggests, is developed to show the learner at his or her best accomplished work embodied as written work, audio recording, video recording, etc. These different forms might include the learner’s skills, knowledge, and behaviors which reflect personal development. In light of the impressive echo it provides, Richards and Farrell (2006, p.399) have stated that “this kind of portfolio might be submitted as a part of an appraisal or included in an application for a new teaching position or for promotion”. Showcase portfolios are used in educational settings for summative purposes despite the fact that students are responsible for initiating their entries, which makes self-reflection, self evaluation, and self-selection take priority over standardization (Moeller, 1994, p.107). Not only are there learners who can compile such a type, but professional development makes it necessary for teachers to be reflective practitioners via adopting showcase portfolios.

### **2.10.3 Working Portfolio**

It is worth mentioning that the working portfolio is product-oriented. Through the working portfolio, the learner documents different forms of their work, seeking to reflect upon what has been documented with regard to certain goals linked to curricular constructs. Starting from this point, it can be said that learning and assessment are integrated. It is said:

The objectives of the working portfolio are to serve as holding tank for student work. The pieces related to a specific topic are collected here until they move to an assessment portfolio or a display portfolio, or to go home with the student. In addition, the working portfolio may be used to diagnose student needs. The student’s strength and weaknesses in achieving learning objectives is identified and suitable programmes can be devised to enhance his future (Mohan, 2016, p.220).

This kind of portfolios includes assignments and other pieces of work that provide evidence that certain objective has been realized. Perhaps better said, an overemphasis is put on the process rather than the product.

#### **2.10.4 Documentation Portfolio**

Also known as an archival portfolio, the documentation portfolio is characterized by recording works that may take many forms, such as checklists, tests, observations, and so many educational assignments. Through this type of portfolio, the student tries to file the improvements and the achievements issued from learning limited to a period of time. This can foster students' folio thinking by recording every aspect related to learning and assessment. It should be highlighted that every documented work reflects remarkable growth regardless of whether it was completed or not.

#### **2.11 Electronic Portfolio**

Named also, web-folio, e-folio, e-portfolio, or digital portfolio, is a techno-educational innovation that is looked upon as one of the main by-products of the powerful influence of technology on education. To give a brief definition, an electronic portfolio is "the use of electronic technologies that allow the portfolio developer to collect and organize artifacts in many formats (audio, video, graphics, and text)" (Barrett, 2000). It is necessary to mention that Barrett's definition does not focus on the e-portfolio over time, and this may put its purpose into inquiry if it is used as a learning tool or assessment tool. In the light of assessment, the e-portfolio is seen as one of the most commonly used methods of web-based assessment, is praised for its ability to integrate learning and assessment, in which this connection makes teachers, learners, curricula and institutions share benefits concerning assessment and accountability. Accordingly, there should be a flexible coupling of the right pedagogy with the right technology.

The one who tends to develop an electronic portfolio needs to be knowledgeable about its technical underpinnings. Because e-portfolios draw heavily on software, the developer may use different generic types of software. Helen Barrett is considered one of the prominent figures who search for electronic portfolio implementation and development, and she identifies seven generic means of software which can be categorised as the following:

1. Relational databases
2. Hypermedia card software
3. Multimedia authoring software
4. World Wide Web(HTML)
5. Adobe acrobat (PDF files)
6. Multimedia slideshows
7. Video (digital and analog)

(Barrett 2000, p.01)

There are many concepts that are wrongly perceived by the portfolio developers. For instance, it is important to make a clear distinction between a digital portfolio and an electronic portfolio. The first, all artifacts have been collected and transformed into computer-readable form. The second, the developer contains artifacts that may be in analog (e.g., videotape) or computer-readable form (Barrett, 2001). As a matter of fact, having digital competence on the part of students is crucially needed. Another key issue is the use of hypertext links for the arrangement and easy access to data.

Remarkably, there is a built-in assumption, which has been much less carefully explored, that e-portfolios are comprehensive tools to assess not only the linguistic aspects, but they are also used for assessing all that can be learned, regardless of whether it is quantitative or qualitative. Also, it can be used in psychology, notably in the psychology of learning. In language learning, culture is an inseparable aspect of language which needs to be well instructed, and in light of this argumentation, there should be a tool specifically designed to assess cultural understanding. The electronic portfolio under the current technological advancement is seen by some educationalists as a contributing strategy to assessing extra-linguistic knowledge. Socio-cultural knowledge may be a part of extra-linguistic knowledge. E-portfolios might settle the affective deficiencies that are related to cultural understanding.

### **2.12 Definition of Culture**

It is highly difficult to arrive at a plausible and satisfying working definition of the concept of culture since it pertains to various fields. Noticeably, the key areas of concern that have tackled the concept of culture as a serious subject matter over time are mainly linguistics, anthropology, sociology, philosophy, and theology, to a lesser extent. Indeed, despite the

dissenting definitions and opinions about culture among specialists, they share one fact and only one fact: culture is produced by individuals. The official international body UNESCO, which was specifically founded to promote cultural matters, defines culture as “a set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional features of a society or social group, encompassing all the ways of being in that society; at minimum, including art and literature, lifestyle, ways of living together, traditions and beliefs”(UNESCO, 2001). In light of this definition, it could be noticed that the stated disciplines are comprehensively taken into account, including cultural practices that can be concrete and abstract.

So it is interesting to start reviewing culture from a linguistic perspective, since it is transmitted through language, including all the linguistic modes. Some linguists and applied linguists tackle culture as a human product that can be imparted via language. According to Kramsch (1998), as a major proponent of this view, culture is seen as:

The membership in a discourse community that shares a common social space and history, and common imaginings. Even when they have left that community, its members may retain, wherever they are, a common system of standards for perceiving believing, evaluating and acting. These standards are what is generally called their ‘culture’”.

(Kramsch, 1998, p.10)

Kramsch argues that culture is not guided by place and members of the community keep the same cultural beliefs even outside the original context of this culture. From an ethnolinguistic perspective, language is considered inseparable from culture. To explain this issue, Jourdan and Tuite (2006, p.5) explain that “ethnolinguistic inquiries tend to cluster around two grand approaches to the relationship between culture and language, which have long been regarded as mutually exclusive: language depends on culture; language organizes culture”. Based on this ethno-linguistic standpoint, the two aforementioned approaches draw on the fact that language is a part of culture and it is one way to show and transmit cultural artifacts. In this respect, it is worth reminding that ethno-linguistics takes its fundamentals from cognitive science and anthropology.

From sociological perspective, culture is viewed as a social fabric produced by members of society with a special regard to their socio-economic status. Specialists, in dealing with sociological studies, categorized each cultural pattern as pertaining to a certain group of individuals sharing the same socio-economic conditions. Therefore, every



sociologist “operates with such notions as social institution, role, status, group, function, social structure, culture, social class, kinship group, bureaucracy, and stratification” (Stern, 1983). Based upon this evidence, culture within the sociological framework has been conventionally put into several forms, notably popular culture, high culture, and mass culture. Popular culture, pop culture in brief, is widely liked by people. High culture pertains to the aristocratic class and the elite, and among the cultural practices of such a form are art, sports, and hunting. Mass culture remains the pervasive form that individuals would like to endorse.

From an anthropological perspective, culture has been studied in terms of variety of perspectives. Anthropology deals with culture in a way much deeper than sociology (Stern, 1983). Talking about different communities, of course, there should be talk about cultures, and this is due to the fact that the elements making up these cultures, of course, have some similarities and differences. In terms of similarities, anthropologists restrict this conception to the concept of cultural universals<sup>1</sup> regarding world cultures as sharing components such as arts, sports, jokes, ,etc. In terms of differences, this area is considered as the crux of modern cultural anthropology. Cultural anthropology and linguistic anthropology handle cultural practices produced by people and the ways in which these practices differ from one culture to another.

### **2.13 Elements of Culture**

An obvious starting point in any attempt to determine the scope of culture is to say that it is an all-inclusive phenomenon, and this is due mainly to the fact that all that is human-made may be considered as a cultural fabric. According to Hofstede (1980, p.13), "culture is like a black box which we know is there but not what it contains". By doing so, there seems little reason, therefore, to regard the notion of universality as drawing a conventional scope of culture, despite the fact that there are big differences among cultures. Considering the fact that the terms of individuals, societies, and communities are omnipresent wherever there is talk about culture, it might be said that sociologists are primarily concerned with determining the real elements that make up culture. To keep the lines open to a wider conception of this issue, a large body of literature tackled elements of culture as pertaining to two main categories: material culture and non-material culture.

### 2.13.1 Material Culture

It would seem reasonable to argue that any cultural background can be known by its visible elements before delving deeply into its spiritual features. In this vein, material culture comes to include the utensils, perceptible and physical objects produced or used by members belonging to a certain society, community or any area with limited geographical boundaries. Material culture is mainly concerned with buildings, monuments, tools of production, written extracts, archeology (public places and historical sites), clothes, occupations, and other elements. It is the subject matter of an interdisciplinary field called Material Culture Studies. One can reflect on material culture and recognise the fact that it is related to what has been typically categorised as culture with a big C; including all that is concrete and visible. The concept of material culture seems, through the extant research within multidisciplinary studies, to be clear to determine, locate and understand.

### 2.13.2 Non-Material Culture

Non-material elements of culture pertain to the abstract ideas, values, and behavioural norms that people belonging to a certain community share jointly with each others. It is worth considering that these abstract cultural beliefs concern the inner world of human beings and may not be noticed after a period of time. What is more important is that the non-material elements of culture are set by members belonging to the same culture, community, or society to design a shared pattern of life. In this realm, Newman (2011, p.45) argues that “non-material culture tells us how our society works, what is possible, what to value, how to conduct our everyday lives, and what to do if something breaks down”. That is, nonmaterial cultural aspects include beliefs, values, rules, norms, morals, language, etc. It can be said that the aforementioned aspects can come under the banner of culture with the small c.

In terms of the changeability of culture over time, the non-material elements of culture seem to be changed through a causal relationship with the material ones. Pursuing this line of reasoning, Kendall (2010, p. 58) has said that “When a change occurs in material culture, nonmaterial culture must adapt to that change”. For instance, the powerful influence of technology has created an increasingly unprecedented interconnectedness, which contributed to the advent of some cultural elements, such as cellular texting, which does not take time to spread out within cultures. It may undoubtedly take dozens of years to be removed. From a sociological perspective, the concept of ‘cultural lag’ has been

introduced by Ogburn (1957) to mean the time period between the introduction of a new item in material culture and its acceptance as part of nonmaterial culture.

### 2.14 Language and Culture

An obvious comment in any attempt to explain the relationship between language and culture is to say that they are two facets of the same coin. This contentious issue has been debated among linguists, anthropologists, sociologists, educationalists, and others over time, seeing constant ebb and flow in their fields. A plethora of studies, pertaining to various domains see language and culture as being impossibly separated, and this binary system can be reflected more specifically in communication mechanisms. Some have gone further and embodied these two concepts in metaphors. For instance, Jiang (2000, p.328) introduces the iceberg metaphor in which the apparent part is language, with a small part of culture; the greater part, lying hidden beneath the surface, is the hidden part of culture. He adds, "Language and culture make a living organism; language is flesh, and culture is blood. Without culture, language would be dead; without language, culture would have no shape" (Jiang, 2000, p.328). While others see language separated from language. This standpoint is associated with the study of English as an international language, which sees language as an instrument of communication that can be used for any subject matter by individuals anywhere in the world (Risager, 2005, p.189).

To talk about the relationship between language and culture, there should be extra attention attached to English. The latter has become an unprecedented linguistic phenomenon under the current ideal circumstances, notably the globalisation process. Pursuing this point, the concept of languaculture, coined by the American anthropologist Michael Agar in 1994, denotes the absolute inseparability of language and culture. Through this concept, he emphasizes the semantic and pragmatic variability of linguistic practice within intercultural communication, supporting it with rich points<sup>2</sup> which signal the communication misleads (Risager, 2006).

Within language and culture studies, the social aspect of life is often brought to the forefront as a key point of reference. Individuals use language to manage their social and interaction in accordance with the different contexts they get involved in. In this sense, Widdowson (2007, p.27) states that "the language we produce or receive in the process of communication is part of the continuity of our individual and social lives and is always related to the context in our heads of what we know and believe". It is worth highlighting,

in the light of Widdowson's quotation, that despite the variety of registers and the sociolinguistic differences, individuals keep societal interaction. From sociological, anthropological, and linguistic perspectives, society is often mentioned wherever the talk is about language and culture.

### **2.15 Culture and Communication: Interrelated Binary**

It is a commonplace to say that the concept of communication imposes itself as a difficult term to determine its landmarks, and this is due vaguely to the interdependence of many scientific domains. Many specialists pertaining to many sciences tried to lay out workable and multidimensional definitions since the concept draws on many disciplines, such as linguistics, cultural studies, communication studies, anthropology, sociology, etc. The Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics (2002, p.89) defines communication as "the exchange of ideas, information, etc., between two or more people. In communication, there is at least one speaker or sender, a message which is transmitted, and a person or persons for whom this message is intended (the receiver)". Explicitly, this definition draws heavily on the linguistic perspective in the sense that communication can be described as a process since interlocutors engage in speaking, listening, understanding, and evaluating. Clearly, language seems to be the most commonly used medium to get messages across, despite the fact that it is not the only way through which communication can be done. By language, communication may take different forms, either written or oral, even through non-verbal cues. But what should be ensured is that whatever the mode or the way of communication is expressed, it carries socio-cultural norms verbally or nonverbally.

Up to this point, communication is considered a successful process if it is devoid of misunderstandings. Importantly enough, there are several factors that might guide communication activity. Among these factors, culture, or cultural norms, beliefs and values, play a leading role in every context, and more specifically within the language learning context to keep communication going from the interlocutors' perspective, bearing in mind that the language itself is a cultural practice. In a strict linguistic sense, Widdowson (1978, pp.2-3) argues that in order to conduct effective communication, communicators need to pay attention to language use and usage.

It would be impossible to address the concept of communication without referring to the underlying concept of communicative competence. The latter has been coined by

Hymes (1966) and sees further elaborations by many scholars, pertaining to different fields, notably communication studies, psychology, and linguistics. Based upon these disciplines, culture may be illustrated in many forms. To engage in communication, Knapp, Seidelhofer, and Widdowsson (2009, p.13) state that “culture manifests itself in various semiotic modalities: verbal, visual, and musical.” Therefore, cultural exchanges exist wherever communication takes place.

### 2.16 The Place of Cultural Understanding in Language Education

Culture pedagogy has seen several elaborations that have made its importance grow rapidly over time. Diachronically, studies show that attention switched from the traditional concept of ‘*landeskunde*’ or ‘*kulturrekunde*’, which emphasises the factual knowledge of the geographical areas and histories of the countries, to an era influenced by anthropological stamps in the 1980s. Then, with the advent of intercultural theory, there should be a break with the monolingual philosophy of learning culture. In fact, instead of saying learning culture, learning about culture has become a valuable way to broaden learners' cultural horizons. In light of these phases, the importance of teaching and learning culture is getting higher than before, in parallel with the increasing calls for profiling of international citizenship by educational programs.

Under the current interconnectedness, improving communication skills has become the main preoccupation of language teachers. English, as a lingua franca, has become the global language. This has led academics to an unprecedented insistence on linking language to cultural contexts, and this started with the advent of the communicative approach. Indeed, if you are a language teacher, “whenever you teach a language, you also teach a complex system of cultural customs, values, and ways of thinking, feeling, and acting” (Brown, 2000, p.64). That is, cultural development is another area that language teachers need to work on. Being unaware of the cultural and social conventions that characterize the foreign cultures may evoke some cultural shocks that can inhibit learning in the classroom context, and provoke misconstruction in both intercultural understanding and communication. From a communication perspective, Alptekin (2002) said:

As various communicative features underlying the sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies in the target language culture are different from those in the learner’s own culture, it is suggested that teachers develop target language communicative competence in learners by integrating language and culture (p58).

In language education, mediating language and culture requires much more emphasis on context in order for the teacher to embody this inseparability. By doing so, learning situations have become more authentic. Kramsch (1993, p.13) states that the educational challenge, searching for dialogic pedagogy, is to teach language in contextualized situations where the text matches its context. Importantly, foreign language teaching aims at providing the individual learner with the necessary communication skills by the right transmitting of information in verbal and non-verbal ways. Byram (1997, p.03) argues that “even the exchange of information is dependent upon understanding how what one says or writes will be perceived and interpreted in another cultural context; it depends on the ability to de-centre and take up the perspective of the listener or reader”. It is worth mentioning that foreign languages are taught and learnt to reach a high degree of proficiency. Importantly, cultural awareness is an integral part of language proficiency.

### 2.16.1 Communicative Competence

It is widely known that communicative competence is one of the main central theoretical concepts of communicative language teaching (CLT in brief) (Savignon, 2002, p.01). This concept was coined for the first time by the American sociolinguist Dell Hymes in 1966 as a reaction to Chomsky’s (1965) linguistic competence, whose main tenet is that speakers, during speaking, need to be familiar with various social and cultural contexts (Hymes, 1989). The growing need for communication and high expectations make it necessary for language learners to acquire a range of sub-competences coming under the cover of communicative competence. It is stated that:

Given that communicative competence is the goal of a language classroom, instruction needs to point toward all its components: organizational, pragmatic, strategic and psychomotor. Communicative goals are best achieved by giving due attention to language use and not just usage, to fluency and not just accuracy, to authentic language and contexts, and to students’ eventual need to apply classroom learning to previously unrehearsed contexts in the real world.

(Brown, 2002, p. 69)

The components or sub-competences issued from the concept of communicative competence have been a subject of study among scholars (Hymes 1971; Savignon 1971; Van Ek 1975; Wilkins, 1976; Canale & Swain 1980; Canale 1983; Bachman 1990).

Among the existing models that deserve to be labeled as comprehensive works are Canale and Swain (1980), Canale (1983), and Bachman (1990; 1996). To start with, the model that took into consideration both language learning and assessment was attributed to Canale and Swain (1980), regarding the fact that Hymes (1966) as a sociolinguist did not take into consideration foreign language teaching. It recognizes communicative competence as having three components: grammatical competence, strategic competence, and socio-cultural competence. The cultural aspect falls into the third competence. Canale (1983) developed this model by adding discourse competence. This sub-competence is mainly concerned with the ability to combine language structures into different types of cohesive texts (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995, p.07). Then Bachman (1990), within the scope of language assessment and testing, launched a new conceptual framework referred to as Communicative Language Ability (CLA), which includes three competences: language competence, strategic competence, and psycho-physiological mechanisms. The first two competences are frequently comprised in precedent works, but the psycho-physiological mechanisms should be explained. They are defined as “the neurological and psychological processes involved in the actual execution of language as a physical phenomenon (sound, light)” (Bachman, 1990, p.84). The cultural dimension might be found in the sociolinguistic aspect of language competence. It can be said that the concept of communicative competence maintains a direct connection between language and culture and seeks every time to emphasize the contextual factors of speaking.

One of the main pivotal shortcomings that have been launched by the communicative view is that culture is neglected to a certain extent. For what concerns the cultural load of the teaching materials, Holme (2003) considers that this view “treats cultural content as marginal or even irrelevant to successful language learning... in its pure form, the communicative view makes unwarranted assumptions about the learner as a user of the target language”. What is more, the cultural load introduced in language learning resources serves only for discourse purposes.

### **2.16.2 Intercultural Competence**

Culture pedagogy, which is considered as a debatable issue among linguists and academics, can be embodied as an interdisciplinary approach in the sense that it draws on many disciplines, such as anthropology, communication studies, and psychology. In light of the aforementioned disciplines, the concept of intercultural competence has recently been brought to the fore regarding the growing necessity of intercultural communication,

especially in this globalised world. In educational settings, language learning classrooms, communication skills should be imperatively and systematically taught without dissociation from their cultural contexts. In fact, communicative competence has become insufficient for intercultural understanding and there should be a burgeoning awareness of cultural diversity. Therefore, intercultural competence seems to be another newly taught competence to enhance intercultural literacy in foreign language programs.

Intercultural competence, the construct which is widely endorsed in western educational programs, has been adopted for the sake of “facilitating concrete practical encounters within the EU and improving cooperation across European borders” (Kramsch, 1997, p.307). Comprehensively defined by the UNESCO report (2013):

Intercultural competence refers to having adequate relevant knowledge about particular cultures, as well as general knowledge about the sorts of issues arising when members of different cultures interact, holding receptive attitudes that encourage establishing and maintaining contact with diverse others, as well as having the skills required to draw upon both knowledge and attitudes when interacting with others from different cultures (p16).

In language education, the focus has started to switch from linguistic awareness to cultural awareness. As autonomy drives the learning process, knowing more about the cultures does not restrict the cultural dimension of language learning absolutely to the target cultures, but the local culture should be a reference to involve the language learners in critical comparison. In light of the latter, language learners have to be critical thinkers in which they spot and reflect on cultural similarities and differences in order to draw critical comparisons. Moving from culture-as-nation to interculturality, as it is commented by Kramsch and Zhu Hua (2016), has not ensued from nothing but from the global interconnectedness that has been increased through business, diplomacy, tourism, and so many other fields.

Since many fields are tackling the concept of intercultural competence, their studies have shown clear-cut similarities and differences. Deardorff (2009) has identified five kinds of models that are looked upon as contemporary models: compositional, co-orientational, developmental, adaptational, and causal processes. The compositional models are theoretically weak, especially for having disconnected the components of



competence. The co-orientational models put emphasis on intercultural understanding in terms of interaction or its variants (empathy, perspective taking, clarity, and overlaps of meaning systems). The developmental models insist that developing intercultural competence can be realized through continuous interaction among phases. The adaptational models embody the adaptation process as a prerequisite for acquiring competence. The causal path models consider competence as a theoretical linear system where the affective variables influence competence through interaction (Deardorff, 2009).

Byram's model (1997) is the most influential model of intercultural competence that devotes a considerable space to language and culture mediation in the teaching and learning context. It is Byram who determines the four main components of the intercultural competence: knowledge, awareness, attitude, and skills. Even so, he tackles the issue of assessment of intercultural competence by introducing the portfolio as a comprehensive tool that can measure the aforementioned components (Byram, 2002).

### **2.16.3 Intercultural Communicative Competence**

With the pressing need for intercultural communication, the notion of intercultural communicative competence has become widely endorsed within applied linguistics studies in order for individuals to accomplish communication with high expectations. In language learning classrooms, more specifically English language classrooms, teachers are finding themselves exhorted to pay sustained attention to the cultural dimension rather than learning other programmed aspects of the syllabi. The reasons behind sensitizing cultural understanding seem to cope with international policy requirements. These requirements are political and educational to a great extent (Pennycook, 2013). Other considerations which look very apparent come in order for learners to gain insight into the target language society. Foreign language teachers are seen by some specialists as "gatekeepers' who equip their learners with the four competencies of communication with a view towards enabling them to gain access to educational or economic opportunities within the target language setting" (Alpetkin, 2002, p.58). In foreign language teaching, intercultural communicative competence is seen as a tolerant concept commensurate with the communicators' needs.

The concept of ICC has been coined by the British educationalist Michael Byram (1997) to mean carrying out communication across linguistic and cultural boundaries. This concept is mainly concerned with foreign language teaching context in order to involve

language learners in global citizenship education, especially with the increase in blurring boundaries and relentless interconnectedness. UNESCO (2014, pp.15-16) recommends for a global citizenship education, which aims to “empower learners to engage and assume active roles, both locally and globally, to face and resolve global challenges and ultimately to become proactive contributors to a more just, peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure, and sustainable world”. That being said, becoming culturally aware of factual information is not seen as enough. Individual learners need further linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discursive dimensions of language use to maintain a sense of understanding, tolerance and peace.

It has been asserted in a wide range of contexts that meaning misconstructions which can lead to cultural conflicts pertain always to socio- pragmatic failures. Indeed, ignoring the socio-cultural norms of a certain culture or community may trigger some unfavorably attitudinal situations which make intercultural speakers linguistically unable to conduct such interaction. In this vein, Byram (1997, p. 41) argues that the foreign language speaker may experience some intercultural situations feeling a degree of powerlessness with regard to a native speaker. Undoubtedly, this issue may provoke uncertainties about not having enough linguistic knowledge and skills to meet the specific requirements of the interaction.

#### **2.16.4 Cross-Cultural Competence**

Presently, cultural diversity is increasing rapidly, and there should be systematic ways for individuals to get properly immersed within it. Thus, another competence that has become crucially needed to be trained within educational settings, notably foreign language classrooms, is cross-cultural competence. Sometimes referred to as global competence, transnational competence or cultural competence, cross-cultural competence is required to manage cross-cultural encounters and meetings. In this vein, it is a pre-requisite to review briefly the cross-cultural communication. Richards and Schmidt (2002) define it as:

The exchange of ideas, information, etc., between persons from different cultural backgrounds. There are often more problems in cross-cultural communication than in communication between people of the same cultural background. Each participant may interpret the other’s speech according to his or her own cultural conventions and expectations (p136).

According to this definition, speech interpretation is of high importance, but what deserves further assertion are the non-verbal cues that are differently perceived by communicators coming from different cultural backgrounds. This new type of communication is said to be growing in accordance with the powerful influence of new technologies. The latter helps reduce cultural conflicts and misunderstandings by showing, via accessible different online forms and tools, a burgeoning awareness of diverse cultures.

Acquiring cross-cultural competence means being able to manage communication while mastering its cultural specifications. To achieve such a challenge, the individual should be equipped with solid knowledge, notably the differences, positive attitudes towards others, and the skills that make him/her cope with different cross-cultural contexts. Not only are the differences the preoccupied subject matter of cross-cultural communication, but also the similarities are of paramount importance. Cross-cultural competence is different from intercultural competence in terms of scope, in the sense that the first deals with more than two cultural backgrounds.

With the undue need for cross-cultural communication, a clear interest should be attached to the language used across the current cultural diversity. One of the common cross-cultural problems is linguistically. The socio-cultural norms of speaking play a leading role in avoiding shocks and misunderstandings. English, being labeled as a lingua franca, needs further analysis rather than other aspects. It is ubiquitously used regardless of the field where it is used. Misunderstandings may be issued from the misconceptions of these socio-cultural norms. As a result, a pragmatic failure can be noticed in these situations. To review such issues in language education, “the most difficult type of pragmatic failure the language teacher has to deal with occurs when pragmatic principles, such as politeness, conflict with other, deeply held values, such as truthfulness or sincerity (Thomas, 1982, p. 06). Occasionally, such cases of pragmatic failure are mostly found in meetings where a high level of formality should be used. Despite the aforementioned pragmatic patterns pertain straightforwardly to cultural knowledge, they might affect other aspects, such as attitudes and skills.

### **2.17 Approaches to Teaching Culture**

Despite one of the fundamental objectives of foreign language programs is the improvement of the learners’ communication skills, culture is taken for granted in terms of methodology. Even though there is a large body of literature attached to cultural teaching,

systemic knowledge is remarkably emphasized over cultural knowledge. In light of this critical issue, Stern (1992) points out that “the cultural component has remained difficult to accommodate in practice” (p206). Additionally, in order for ELT professionals to teach culture, knowing what cultures to teach, cultural concepts, and purposes may be thought as other parallel sub-issues related to cultural pedagogy. By implication, reviewing the common approaches to teaching culture adds further accuracy, more specifically in terms of terminology that links culture to communication.

Before getting into details, it is worth reflecting on the concept of approach as it has been the subject under scrutiny in the history of language teaching. In language education, approach refers to a set of correlative principles or ideas about the nature of language learning which will be consistent over time (Anthony, 1963). Perhaps like any integrative area of language education, cultural teaching has been categorized into two main approaches: the mono-cultural approach and the comparative approach.

### **2.17.1 The Mono-Cultural Approach**

This approach takes into consideration only the cultural background of the language being taught and learnt in the classroom. Buttjes and Byram (1991) refer to this approach as ‘one way flow of cultural information’ for its restrictive focus on the target language culture. Within this framework, not all the aspects target-language cultures are included, but aspects which do not have a close relationship with the discursive context or the culturally-appropriate features of the target language are not in the aiming position. The mono-cultural approach has mainly to do with the factual knowledge that pertains to geographical areas, religious beliefs, public and public institutions, and so forth, in order for foreign language learners to reach a certain degree of proficiency. The thing that should be ensured is that the local culture, within this approach, is not referred to often, or it is considered absolutely disregarded.

With the paradigmatic shift in the science of education, and under the flow of communication studies within the current interconnectedness, the move switches towards the improvement of communication skills. Education has become constructivist par excellence. In fact, this approach has received marginal attention within the constructivist framework considering the fact that learning is built on experience. Of course, being familiarized with another cultural milieu by experience helps widen the cultural horizons.

### 2.17.2 The Comparative Approach

In parallel with the growing interconnectedness, and with the advent of new language learning theories, a comparative approach to cultural understanding has been endorsed, taking into account cultural diversity. By virtue of this fact, proponents of this approach, cultural educationalists, have had beliefs recovered from the political and ethnographic attempt to create an ideal citizenship through foreign language programs (Risager, 2010, pp.9-10). As the term denotes, the adjective comparative refers to spotting similarities and differences. It is an integral part of what has been referred to as comparative education, as stated by Stern (1983). From a cultural perspective, comparison is done by going back to the learners' own culture as the reference point. In fact, some features of critical pedagogy, such as critical thinking and self-criticism, are implicated. Byram and Planet (2000) have clarified that:

The essence of the comparative approach is to provide a double perspective but not to evaluate to see which is better. A double perspective comes from juxtaposing phenomena from the learners' own environment with those from another society and culture. Learners can then see that their own way of doing and interpreting things is not 'natural' (i.e. the only possible way) but 'cultural' (i.e. a way which they have learned from those around them without realizing that it is learned).

(Byram & Planet, 2000, p.189).

Teaching culture by the comparative approach poses a daunting challenge for language teachers, recognizing the fact that their roles need to switch from being teachers to being ethnographers, but this can be considered a far-reaching challenge. Pedagogically speaking, this means using highly specialized techniques and procedures in response to demanding considerations. It should be noted, in this line of reasoning, that the interdependence of culture and communication necessitates the adoption of a comparative approach to instill a sense of cultural understanding in foreign language education. Language teachers, as cultural pedagogues, should act as involvers, enablers, and guiders, because in such sensible contexts, learners are prone to ethnocentrism, which may have long-term humpty-dumpty effects on their attitudes.

To some cultural educationalists, the comparative approach to cultural understanding might be discerned as a comprehensive concept that includes different positions in which

cultures or sub-cultures are going to be compared. In light of this explication, some academics, such as Byram (1997), Corbett (2003), Bennett (2005) Risager (2007) and others, consider the presence of different approaches which may come under the cover of this comparative reasoning. Cultural understanding is seen as comprising three main approaches. By virtue of necessity, they should be briefly highlighted: the intercultural approach, the multicultural approach and the transnational approach. Firstly, the intercultural approach seeks to maintain a sense of mutual or interpersonal understanding between individuals coming from different cultural backgrounds, and this is in accordance with systematic skills, knowledge, and a positive attitude embodied as competence. Secondly, the multicultural approach focuses deeply on the cultural variety or sub-cultures found within the target language culture. Lastly, the transnational approach, attributed to Risager (2010), considers cultures around the world as being overlapped, especially with increasing internalisation. She points out that the language teacher, within the transnational paradigm, should be a highly skilled specialist in the target language society (p5). The last approach seems to be less welcomed by the language teaching community.

### **2.18 Assessment of Culture as a Field of Study**

It would be a mistake to assume that assessment in language education focuses absolutely on the systemic aspects of linguistic knowledge. Over time, the endorsement of the concept of communicative competence in language learning studies has shed light on other issues that help learners to use language for communication with high expectations. Under the cover of the unprecedented communicative influence, a remarkable emphasis is placed on the cultural dimension rather than merely learning the way language is produced and received. From an assessment standpoint, this provokes linguists and academics to initiate studying and thinking about the systematic procedures for assessing cultural understanding within language classrooms.

The growing imperative for the inclusion of language and culture as inseparable items, made it necessary to adopt new pedagogical patterns which keep learning the linguistic knowledge going along with cultural knowledge. Evaluations, including assessment and testing, are essential in language pedagogy. It is through assessment that teachers can explore the teach-ability and the learn-ability of culture in the language classroom. Starting from this, assessment of culture has become a preoccupation in order for educationalists to embody systematic procedures through which cultural knowledge can be assessed. To optimize this cultural understanding in language classrooms, Byram (1997,

p.87) states that there should be clear objectives set before learning for which assessment focus on these procedures. To set objectives, backgrounds might vary from one language to another, considering their status and the linguistic influence all over the world.

English, as a case in point, has been referred to as a linguistic phenomenon that has become a lingua franca within this increasing cultural diversity. The teaching community should take into account the cultural context in terms of teaching methodology, materials to be used and the assessment procedures to measure cultural understanding. Evaluation and assessment see newly elaborated theoretical and methodological underpinnings, especially under the powerful influence of technology. Gipps (1994, p.167) has seen that there is a paradigm shift from a psychometric model of assessment towards an educational model of assessment. What may be generalized from this paradigm shift is the fact that there is nothing exact, and assessment should not be subjugated to the absolute belief of science. Byram (1997, p.88), in light of Gipps' argumentation, says that the emphasis on quality over quantity in assessment is the hallmark of this paradigm shift.

It should be recognised that for cultural studies and cultural learning, assessment is given a least attention (Byram & Morgan, 1991, p.135). Within the educational model, assessment of culture may not be limited only to factual knowledge or what has been traditionally referred to as 'lundsckunde'. Effectively, the need for intercultural and cross-cultural communication makes it necessary to go further than assessing only factual knowledge. Byram (2002, p. 23) says that "what we need is to assess the ability to make the strange familiar and the familiar strange (*savoir être*), to step outside their taken for granted perspectives, and to act on a basis of new perspectives (*savoir s'engager*)". Hence, tests are not seen as sufficient to acquire competence within the cultural learning framework. There should be comprehensive assessment tools that provide a rich amount of information about cultural issues in language education.

### **2.18.1 European Language Portfolio for Assessing Culture**

The European language portfolio (ELP) is a self assessment method created by the Council of Europe to optimise assessment performance from an autonomous perspective. It is said that "ELP can contribute to the development of an assessment culture in which self-assessment can help to bring the learning process into a closer and more productive relationship with tests and examinations than has traditionally been the case" (Little, 2005, p. 324). On the basis of this saying, ELP maintains a sense of productivity on the part of

learners. Productivity seems to be much closer to autonomy. As the given words imply, the foreign language learner becomes responsibly able to monitor the assessment by collecting linguistic and extra-linguistic information, then reflecting upon this information by launching evaluative statements. It is not used only for assessment purposes, but also as a learning tool to mediate language and culture. It is noted:

ELP encourages learners to reflect on values, goals, learning paths and learning outcomes from a lifelong perspective. It promotes learner ownership and values language and intercultural competence gained within and outside of formal education. It helps to enable learners to take charge of their learning.

(Schärer, 2012, p. 45)

It is important to ensure that ELP fosters learners' metacognition by activating a series of higher-order skills. This is done by "helping L2 learners to notice the form in which they are receiving—and giving themselves – feedback, to organize, personalize, and integrate it into the ongoing business of planning and monitoring their learning" (Little, 2009, p. 06).

Compiling ELP is substantively grounded with some theoretical, conceptual and methodological underpinnings. There should be three basic elements: a language passport, a language biography and a dossier. The language passport provides an accessible overview of the learner's linguistic ability, including an experiential account of learning the foreign language. The language biography has to do with directly linking the foreign language to its culture in order to draw a reflective account. In this element, "this reflection is a matter of filling in a form or recording one's thoughts under a series of headings; sometimes it is entirely open" (Little, 2007, p.09). The dossier is the means through which the portfolio owner seeks to document different aspects of proficiency gathered in various ways (written work, audio cassettes, videos, and so on). For overall assessment purposes, the ELP "introduces the notion of self-assessment, which is considered significant both as a means of recording what has been experienced and learnt, and as a means of making learners become more conscious of their learning and of the abilities they already have" (Byram, 2002, p.24). ELP is widely acknowledged as fostering communicative abilities, considering the fact that it is one of the main CLT by-products.



**2.19 Conclusion**

It is impossible to improve any aspect of learning without measuring it systematically. In fact, cultural knowledge and skills need to be assessed in line with linguistic knowledge. Assessment of culture, which has been underused in many respects, has started to endorse new methods and tools, such as portfolios, journals, observations, and other alternatives in order to improve students' communicative expectations. As it has been aforementioned, it can be said that traditional tests are seen as incomprehensive tools to assess culture in regard to the variety of data of cultural understanding. The scope of assessment is no longer restricted to cultural information or knowledge; it has been enlarged to include some affective considerations, such as attitudes and motivation. The following chapter will be utterly devoted to data analysis and interpretation.

**Notes for Chapter One**

- **Cultural universals:** also referred to as human universals or universality, are "those elements common to all cultures-such as having a language, or having values and beliefs. There is, of course, a tightrope to walk between assuming universality and respecting the inevitable (UNESCO, 2013:15). This concept has been tackled by many anthropologists and sociologists, such as Emile Durkheim George Murdock, Donald Brown, and others.
  
- **Rich points:** coined by Michael Agar in 1994, the concept comes to mean the moments of incomprehension or the cultural shocks in intercultural encounters. It emphasizes the mediation of language and culture, or what is known as 'languaculture' within communication.

## **Chapter Three: Data Analysis and Interpretation**

### 3.1 Introduction

### 3.2 Learners' Questionnaire

#### 3.2.1 Results

#### 3.2.2 Analysis and Interpretation of the Results

### 3.3 Teachers' Questionnaire

#### 3.3.1 Results

#### 3.3.2 Analysis and Interpretation of the Results

### 3.4 Test

#### 3.4.1 Results

#### 3.4.2 Analysis and Interpretation of the Results

### 3.5 Self-Evaluation Checklist: Analysis and Interpretation of the Results

### 3.6 Learners' Interview

#### 3.6.1 Analysis and Interpretation of the Interview Results

### 3.7 Content Based Analysis

### 3.8 Discussion of the Main Findings

### 3.9 Conclusion

### 3.1 Introduction

In the language learning context, the primary goal of conducting any survey research is the recognition of some characteristics, opinions, attitudes, and intended behaviours of a certain population, and that is what this current survey is about. Both teaching and assessing culture have become very important in EFL classrooms. This issue leads the researcher to elicit sufficient data that would be beneficial for surmounting the in-action difficulties. Assessment of culture, as a case in point, remains a debatable issue since it requires certain practical mechanisms that measure the exact nature of data. From many perspectives, the current survey seeks to find out the attitudes, opinions, and performance data that alternative assessment, namely the *Cultural E-Portfolio*, is going to leave for assessment of culture.

After highlighting the contextual, theoretical and methodological underpinnings in the previous chapters, the present chapter would be an empirical chapter par excellence through which the researcher is going to display the collected data, analyse and interpret the results. Through the adoption of a variety of data collection tools, the results are expected to demonstrate what holds well and what needs further improvements in the assessment of culture from the cultural portfolio perspective. The results are going to be exposed in a tabular form (quantitative data) and in commentary-based paragraphs (qualitative data). The reliance on a mixed-method approach would help maintain a broad perception and accurate factual accounts about the teaching and assessment of culture.

### 3.2 Learners' Questionnaire

The questionnaire is aimed at collecting introspective data that enable the researcher to answer the research questions. The merits of the questionnaire are acknowledged because it can handle many learning aspects simultaneously and, indeed, that is what this structured questionnaire is about. Through fifteen questions (see appendix A), the researcher addressed many issues, such as learning culture, assessment, and portfolio assessment. The questionnaire helped the researcher reconsider some procedures that pertain to the methodology and some application details of the electronic portfolio implementation. The questionnaire was administered to 120 first-year EFL students at Hassiba Ben Bouali University of Chlef. The fundamental objectives of using this research tool are:

- To elicit personal data about learning foreign cultures;

- To explore the daily uses of assessment in general;
- To find out how students perceive the portfolio as an assessment tool ;
- To verify the research hypotheses.

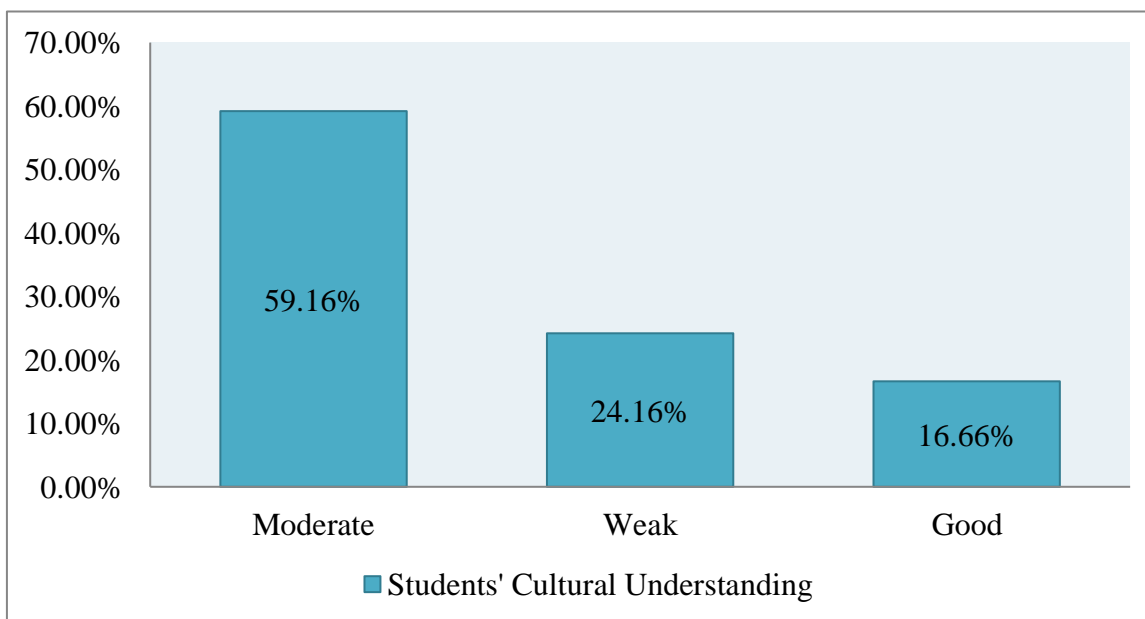
### 3.2.1 Results

*Q1- Are you interested in learning about foreign cultures? (Yes/no)*

This question sought to explore if first-year EFL students are interested to learn about foreign cultures. In this vein, all the respondents mentioned that they are interested to learn foreign culture/s, and this was estimated in the percentage of 100%.

*Q2- To what extent do you consider your cultural understanding? (Very weak/ weak/ moderate/good / very good)*

The question strived to measure the students' cultural understanding from a self-assessment perspective. As a reminder, the respondents were asked to cross out one of the given scales ranging from very bad, bad, moderate, reasonable, and very good. In practical terms, 71 (59, 16 %) respondents considered their cultural understanding moderate, and 29 (24, 16%) recognized that their cultural understanding as imperfect. The rest of the respondents, 20 (16.66%), considered their level of cultural understanding good.



**Graph 3.1: Students' Cultural Understanding**

*Q3- Which assessment tools do you refer to for evaluating your cultural understanding?  
(Tests/ portfolios/ interviews/ journals / diaries)*

This question attempted to explore the nature of the assessment tool by which the respondents refer to assessing and evaluating their cultural understanding. The respondents in this question were asked to select from a set of assessment tools: tests, portfolios, interviews, journals, and diaries. The results revealed that 99 respondents mentioned self-assessment in their questionnaire items. Interviews were mentioned by the respondents twenty times, and journals were mentioned only five times. Other assessment tools were not mentioned at all.

**Table 3.1. Tools used to Assess Culture**

Assessment tools	Number of Occurrences
Tests	/
Portfolios	/
Interviews	<b>20</b>
Journals	<b>5</b>
Self-assessment	<b>99</b>

*Q4 - What are the interesting topics you would like to know about foreign cultures?*

The question addressed the interesting topics which the respondents would like to know about the foreign cultures. They were asked to select from a set of topics, namely history and geography, norms of speaking, political and economic affairs, lifestyle and leisure, religious belief, and sport. For a broader conception, the topic of education was not deliberately mentioned because the respondents were taught before about the educational systems in the previous (the 3<sup>rd</sup> year secondary school textbook *New Prospects*).The following table gives the frequency of each cultural topic.

**Table 3.2: The Cultural Topics of interest**

<b>Topics</b>	<b>Number of Occurrences</b>
History and geography	<b>27</b>
Norms of speaking	<b>65</b>
Political and economic affairs	<b>11</b>
Life style and leisure	<b>93</b>
Religious beliefs	<b>29</b>
Sport	<b>22</b>

*Q5- What are the subjects that you consider as rich sources of cultural knowledge?*

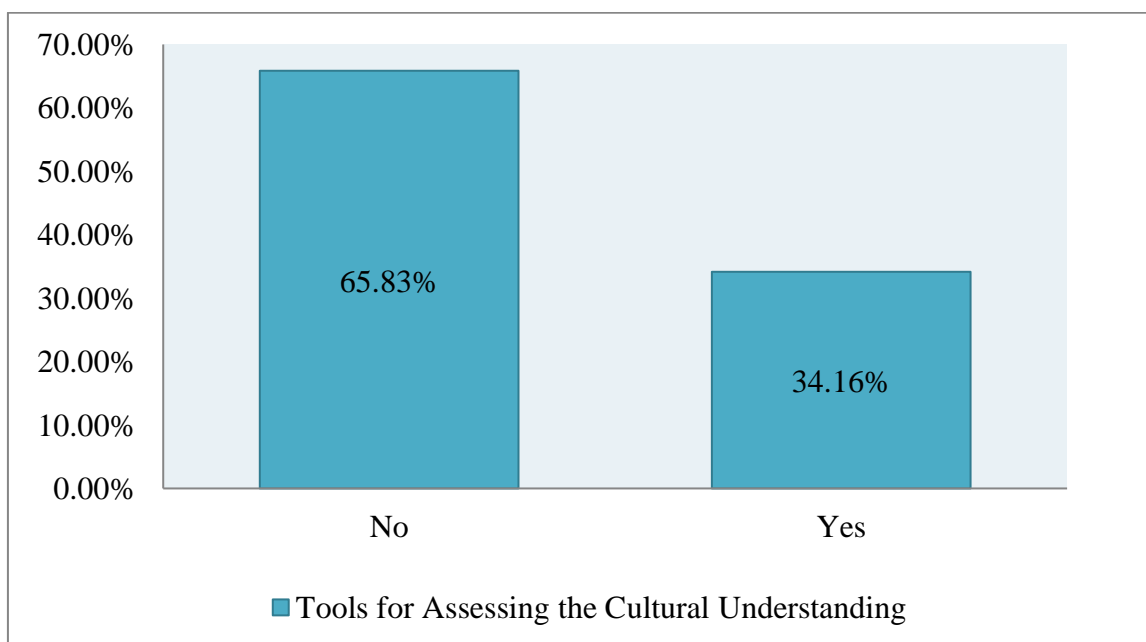
Through this question, the respondents were asked to identify the modules that may help to widen their cultural horizons. To make it easy, they were demanded to select from a set of modular frameworks: literature, civilisation, grammar, listening and speaking, and written comprehension and expression. The following table shows how many times each module was mentioned in the questionnaires.

**Table 3. 3. Modules thought as sources of cultural knowledge**

<b>Subjects</b>	<b>Number of Occurrences</b>
Literature	<b>15</b>
Civilisation	<b>68</b>
Grammar	<b>24</b>
Listening and Speaking	<b>90</b>
Written Comprehension and Expression	<b>32</b>

*Q6: Are you examined by specifically designed assessment tools for culture? (Yes/no)*

The rationale behind this question was to explore whether the respondents were examined or evaluated by tools designed explicitly for assessing culture. The results revealed that **79** (65, 83%) of the respondents said they were not examined by tools specially used to measure cultural understanding. At the same time, 41 (34, 16%) of the respondents said they were assessed using such tools.



**Graph 3.2: Tools used to assess cultural understanding**

*Q7: Do you rely on yourself in assessing your learning? (Always/sometimes/rarely/never)*

This question sought to explore if the respondents were engaged in self-assessment. Phrased in another way, it investigated if they rely on themselves to assess their learning. The respondents were given scales rated from 'always', 'sometimes', 'rarely' and 'never' to be more explicit. In action, 89 (74, 16 %) of the respondents opted for sometimes, 19 (15, 83%) opted for always, 10 (08, 33%) opted for rarely, and **2** (01, 66%) said that they never assessed their own learning.

*Q8- What are the assessment tools that are frequently used by your teachers?*

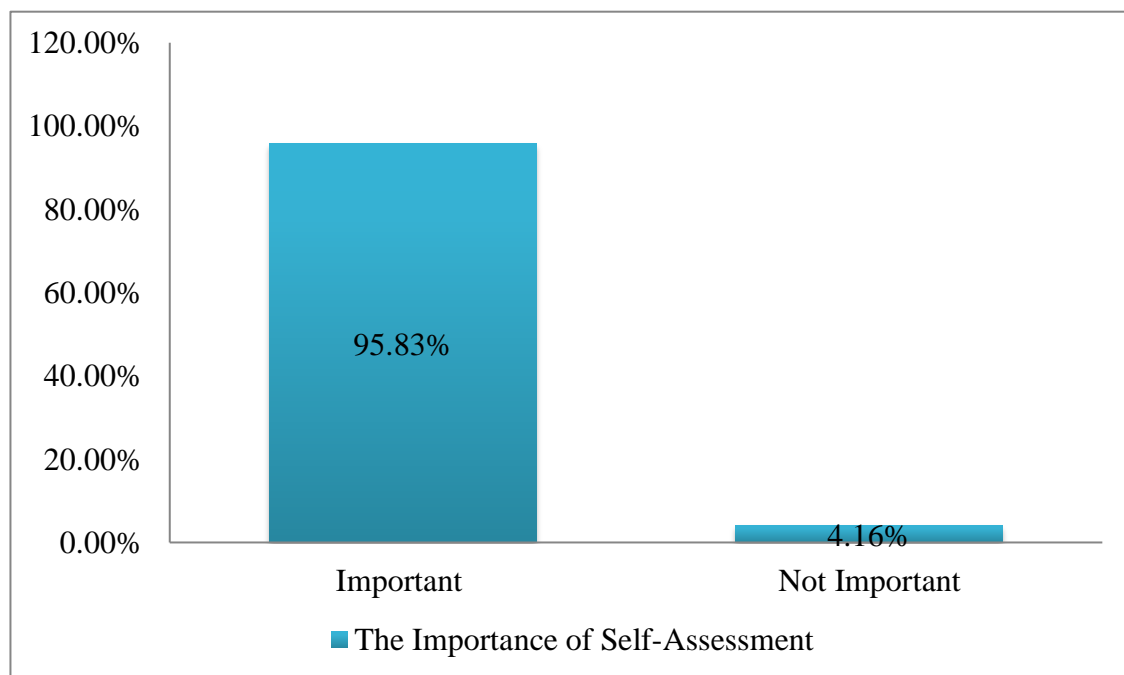
This question tried to explore the assessment tools frequently used by the teachers in the classroom. To know this situation from the respondents' perspective, they were not given a set of tools to select from because a previous question imparted different types of assessment tools. Statistically, the vast majority of the respondents, 108 (90%), asserted



that teachers used to assess and evaluate via tests, and the rest, 12 (10%), said that teachers use projects.

*Q9- Do you think that it is necessary for a student to assess his or her own learning? (Yes/no)*

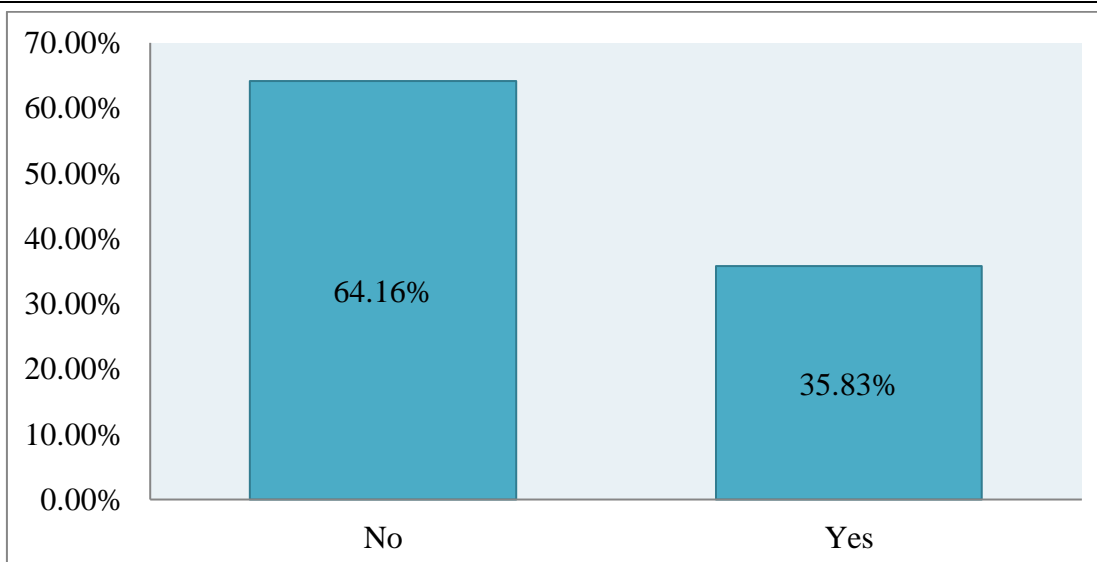
In this question, the respondents were asked to decide if self-assessment is essential for the student or not. Said differently, they were asked if they self-assessment is necessary in their daily learning. In action, 115 respondents (95.83%) considered self-assessment important, and 5 of them (4.16%) did not regard it important.



**Graph 3.3: The Importance of Self-Assessment**

*Q10- What is the meaning of portfolio?*

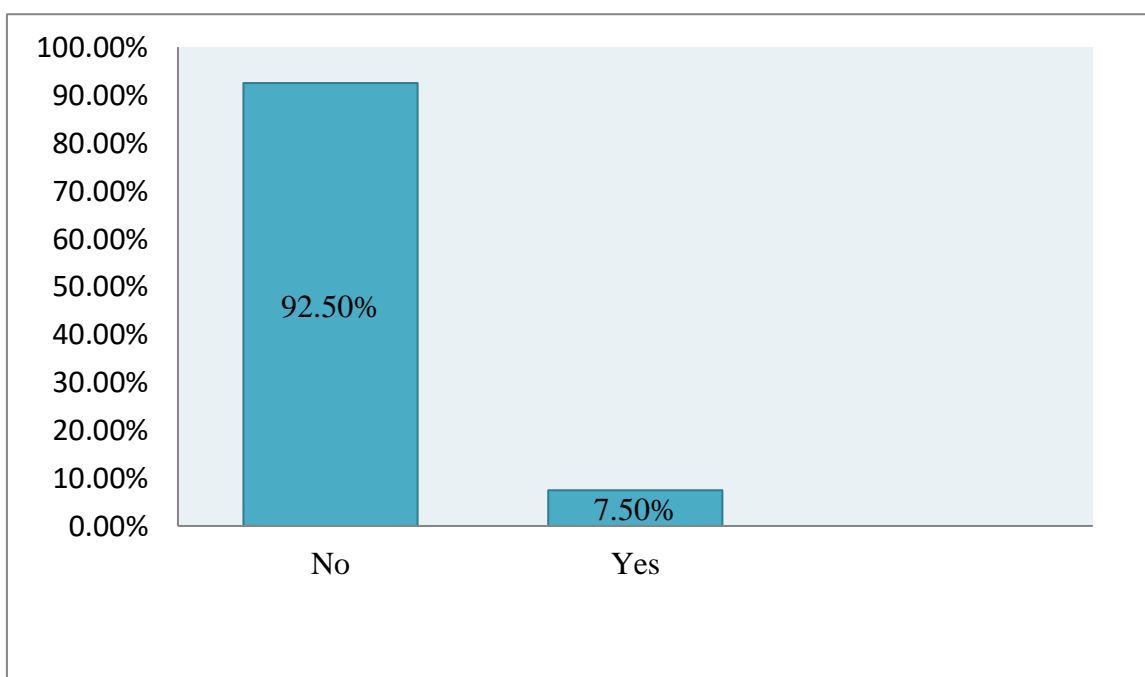
The rationale behind asking this question was to find out if the respondents knew the general meaning. In action, 77 respondents (64, 16%) did not know its meaning. Practically, 43 students (35, 83 %) knew its meaning, and most of them considered the portfolio a file containing documents, experiences, lessons, and other personal work.



**Graph 3.4: Students' perception of the portfolio's meaning.**

*Q11- Do you refer to portfolio as an assessment tool?*

The respondents were asked if they refer to portfolios as assessment tools in the light portfolio discussion. In action, 111 respondents (92, 5%) said they do not refer to portfolio assessment, and 09 respondents (7, 5%) mentioned using this tool for assessment purposes.



**Graph 3.5: The students' reference to portfolios as assessment tool**

*Q12- If yes, what are the benefits of using this tool?*

This question is a sequel to the previous one, by which those who use portfolio assessment were asked to mention the benefits after adopting it. In action, they stated different reasons that the researcher reformulated due to the participants' linguistic complexity. The reasons are shown in the table below.

**Table 3.4. Benefits expected from the portfolio implementation**

<b>Benefits</b>	<b>Number of Occurrences</b>
The portfolio strengthens the link between teachers and students.	<b>4</b>
The portfolio improves personal progress.	<b>3</b>
The portfolio allows the students to go back to their previous achievements.	<b>2</b>
The portfolio allows the students to store their experiences outside the educational settings.	<b>1</b>

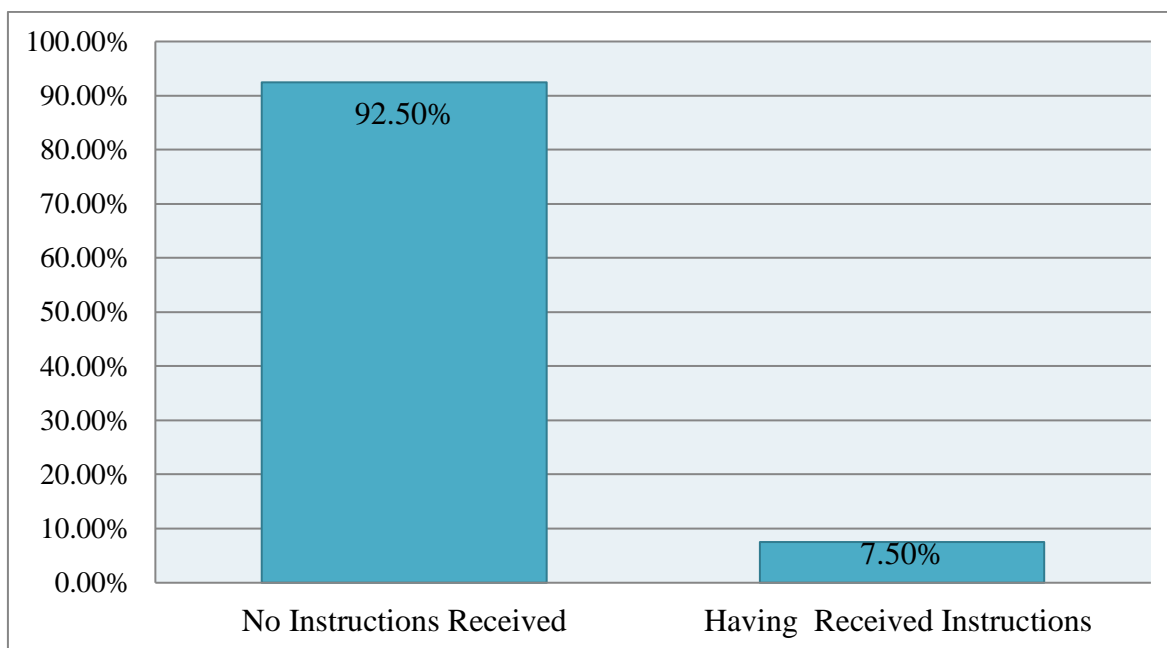
*Q13-Do you think that the portfolio is a useful tool to assess culture? If yes, say how?*

In the same context of the assessment portfolio, the researcher asked the respondents if the portfolio was specifically helpful for assessing cultural knowledge or cultural understanding. Seventy-nine respondents (65, 83%) kept the matter undecided. Thirty respondents (25%) considered the portfolio useful for assessing cultural understanding, and 11 of them (9, 16%) did not find the aforementioned helpful purpose.

*Q14-Have you ever received instructions from your teachers to use the portfolio assessment? (Yes/no)*

This question aimed to check if the respondents, as 1<sup>st</sup> year EFL students, received instructions or guidelines on the use of portfolios, regardless if it is used for assessment or learning purposes. Practically, 111 respondents (92, 5%) ensured that they were not given

any information or instruction about the portfolio implementation. 09 respondents (07, 5%) said that they received instructions from their teachers.



**Graph 3.6: Instructions for the Portfolio Use**

*Q 15- What kind of support would you like to have around the use of electronic portfolio?*

The final question sought to elicit the type of assistance required by first-year students for electronic portfolio implementation. In this issue, answers differed from one respondent to another one, and teachers were implicated in all the answers (answers were reformulated).

**Table 3.5. Learners' Suggestions**

Learners' Suggestions	Number of Occurrences
Teachers should provide learners with explanations about portfolio use.	<b>88</b>
Teachers should give clear samples and examples of previously compiled portfolios.	<b>27</b>
Teachers should facilitate access to different technologies.	<b>11</b>

### 3.2.2 Analysis and Interpretation of the Questionnaire's Results

The current questionnaire has a double-fold aim: it sought to elicit personal data that pertains to the informants' cultural understanding and it looked to highlight the practical issues of assessment inside the 1<sup>st</sup> year EFL classrooms, more specifically the portfolio. In action, the questionnaire revealed interesting data that helped the researcher investigate the cultural understanding profoundly from an assessment perspective, notably the e-portfolio. As a reminder, the questionnaire was conducted in the first semester of the academic year (2019/2020).

It was revealed that learning about cultures catches the participants' interest massively. Starting from the fact that they admittedly considered learning about cultures more interesting, it could be said that the informants know consciously or unconsciously the importance of culture, not only as an inseparable aspect of language classrooms, but as a concept which people look forward to broadening their scope. In parallel with this, the majority of the informants (59, 19%) went a step forward while evaluating their cultural understanding as moderate. Under this evaluative statement, having moderate cultural understanding while first-year students are introduced only to systematic knowledge of the language is acceptable to a certain extent. Their pre-existing knowledge, or what is referred to by Widdowson (1990) as schematic knowledge, might be acquired through out-of-class sources and resources. Although the participants' mainstream conception of culture is not inclusive, the results from the first and second questions are generally accepted.

The issue that calls attention is the assessment basis under which the informants launched these evaluation decisions. Explicitly, it seemed self-assessment, and this was ensured correctly by the majority of students' recognition that they refer to self-assessment as a common way for assessing their cultural understanding, substantiating their argument by the fact that they were not examined via a tool specifically designed for assessing culture. The strong association between the results obtained from questions two and three was identical with the preconceived idea that assessment of culture was attached a minor importance in foreign language classrooms.

In the positive event that the informants would like to widen their cultural horizons, they demonstrated a clear naturalness and openness to learn about foreign culture/s without affective hurdles. Having positive attitudes towards cultures and learning about cultures, "*savoir-être*", as labelled by Byram (1997), needs to be developed by avoiding wrong

assumptions about one's own culture or the other cultures. When the learner finds a cultural load including improper input, this will spontaneously lead him/her to formulate false assumptions. To be progressive, the affective side and moral development need to be in concord with appropriate cultural input. To keep attitudes constantly positive, there should be appropriate assessment tools that fit perfectly with the nature of the data. As mentioned earlier, the commonly used assessment tools, notably tests, do not reveal enough information to assess data of this kind, i.e., attitudes might not be measured via tests.

Above all things, cultural knowledge remains the crux of cultural understanding. The participants, still lacking solid cultural knowledge, tend to explore some cultural topics. This was demonstrated through the results obtained from question four. When the students find it challenging to cope with a particular cultural topic, this will abandon learning culture, and many passive ramifications may ensue from the issue. In order of preference, lifestyle and leisure came as the most exciting topics, and then the norms of speaking came in the second position. Themes relevant for this age and level of the participants include youth, school, leisure, family, friends, travel, and the world of work. Based on the available results, it is very likely to ascribe these topics to the informants' attributes.

To start with, the factor of age could be the most relevant to selecting these topics because all the informants are youth, and they seek enthusiastically to know the lifestyle of individuals, more specifically the youth. Also, socio-cultural factors, such as social networking, could influence the pressing need for speaking norms. On the personal level, even students' personalities or profiles, mainly represented in cognitive styles, play a crucial role in choices of this sort.

Improving cultural understanding needs to be attributed to subjects that make it possible to immerse yourself in cultural contexts. There are undoubtedly specific modules that create favourable situations and spaces to develop their cultural understanding. From a given set of subjects, listening and speaking and civilisation are the most frequently mentioned modules among the informants, and other modules came in varying frequencies. In interpretive terms, they established this fact considering the underlying belief that these subjects are culture-oriented courses, and language and culture, in this context, are likely to be mediated. As for the listening and speaking module, the cultural information is anticipated to be richly consumed, and here not only are foreign cultures concerned, but speaking about their own culture is prevalent in free talks. Likewise, civilisation is also perceived as a subject with a cultural profile since it tackles the societal aspects of

individuals and communities. Other subjects, such as grammar, writing, and literature, are also considered rich sources and resources that may nurture the cultural understanding, requiring some techniques and activities on the part of the teachers.

There should be a reflection on the thinking patterns that governed the participants' selections in question four. Learners perceive cultural understanding as having cultural knowledge. The latter, per se, is not only a static view that involves the acquisition of a certain amount of information about foreign cultures; it is about the know-how to engage with foreign cultures. The high number of occurrences for the listening and speaking modules was not selected on a pedagogical and systematic basis. Nonetheless, the decision remains reasonable, and this, in turn, leads to the possibility that learners find themselves culturally responsive via the nature of learning, such as through free talks and exposure to technological materials that often tackle real-life situations. Pedagogically speaking, culture is preferably taught with special techniques. These techniques can only get along with the nature of the listening and speaking module. For instance, the audio-motor unit technique is strongly associated with listening skills. It is impossible to use this technique with subjects such as civilisation, grammar, and others. In a nutshell, it can be said that culture is taught preferably within the listening and speaking framework.

Perhaps like any emerging pedagogy, the researcher needed to investigate the meaning and theory-based of the portfolio approach. Regarding the results, it was revealed that the majority of the informants (64, 16%) did not grasp the meaning of the portfolio. They failed to provide a simple definition regardless of being an assessment tool or a learning tool. While still new, others (35, 83 %) defined the concept unevenly and justified its use by acknowledging its merits, notably consolidating the link between teachers and learners, fostering ongoing personal progress, and reflecting upon previous experiences. More plausibly yet, ignoring the meaning of the portfolio by the informants does not seem abnormal; it is logical due to their familiarity with testing.

The quasi-absence of portfolio implementation is marked in large-scale academic contexts. Moreover, as 1st year EFL students, the informants did not utilize the portfolio in the previous educational cycles, creating a new assessment culture in the EFL academic context. Furthermore, the informants are not systematically trained to implement portfolios. To confirm this assertion, the overwhelming majority (92, 5%) mentioned that they did not receive instructions or theoretical background related to the portfolio implementation (Q14).

The issue that the researcher would like to explore from the informants' perspective is the appropriateness of portfolios for assessing cultural understanding (Q13). The majority (65, 83%) kept the matter undecided, while some (25%) considered it appropriate. The optional answer 'appropriate' did not stem from a practical or experimental basis; it remains just a speculation.

With a preconceived view, it is worth noting that EFL students are not fully qualified to produce full-fledged e-portfolios. Undoubtedly, they have several deficiencies; therefore, they need step-by-step guidance and ongoing support to overcome difficulties. According to the results of the last question, the participants asked for two kinds of support: pedagogical support and technical support. The former, which is so demanding, necessitates teachers' roles as explainers, information providers, and enablers, in addition to providing students with sample portfolios. If students are trained to implement the portfolio for different purposes, the degree of responsiveness will be positive. The second is the technical support through which the participants insisted on teachers facilitating different technologies. Therefore, they should adapt and adopt practices accordingly with students' cognitive, meta-cognitive and affective needs.

### 3.3 Teachers' Questionnaire

This structured questionnaire is designed to elicit data about the teaching and assessment of culture in EFL classrooms. It consists of only one section holding close-ended and open-ended questions to explore data from a personal perspective (see appendix D). The questionnaire was given to twenty-four EFL teachers who are supposed to be aware of the relationship between language and culture. During the analysis, each question was addressed separately. Data gathered from this questionnaire were qualitatively and quantitatively analyzed. The questionnaire provided data that would be time-consuming and hard to gather via other instruments, such as observations and interviews.

#### 3.3.1 The Results

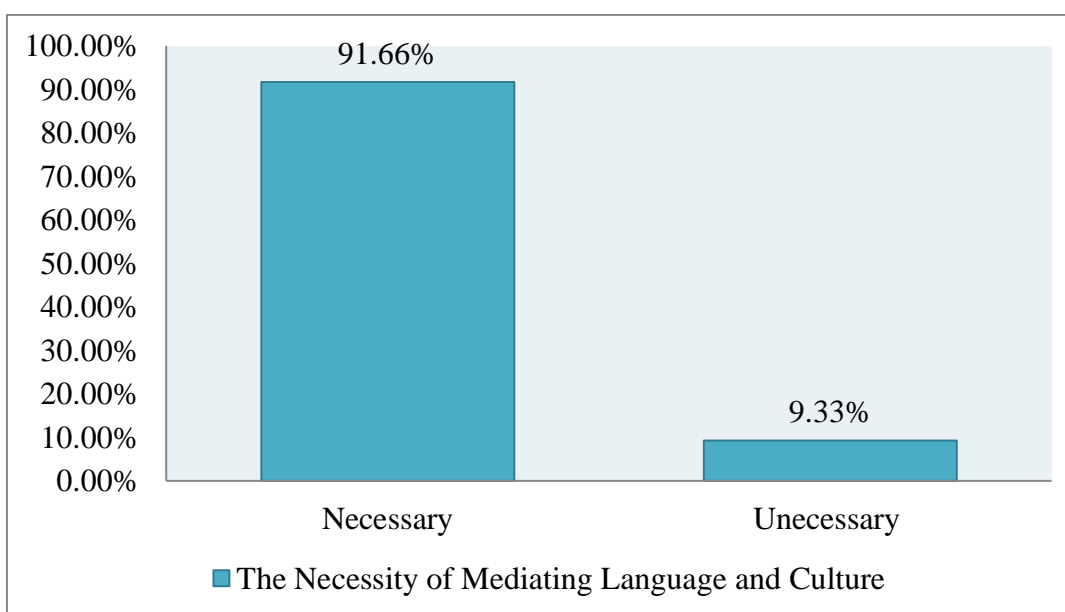
*Q 1: Do you focus on culture in your daily teaching?*

Without mentioning the module or the skill taught by the teacher, the current question attempted to explore the place of culture within the EFL teachers' daily teaching. All the informants pointed out that they focus on culture in their daily teaching.



*Q2: Do you think it is necessary to mediate language and culture in English language teaching? Why (yes/no)?*

The vast majority of the informants, 22 ( 91.66% ), advocated the necessity to mediate language and culture in English language teaching, stating that culture is an integral part of language proficiency because communication, whenever conducted, imparts different cultural cues. The two remaining teachers (09.33%) considered language and culture as unnecessary, mentioning that cultural knowledge can be learnt outside the educational settings.



**Graph 3.7: The Necessity of mediating language and culture**

*Q3: Which culture/s do you emphasise in your teaching? Why?*

Regarding the variety of cultures in the EFL context, this question highlighted the cultures/sub-cultures that EFL teachers focus on. As a reminder, the informants were given a set of choices. It is worth mentioning that the respondent may sometimes tick off more than one choice.

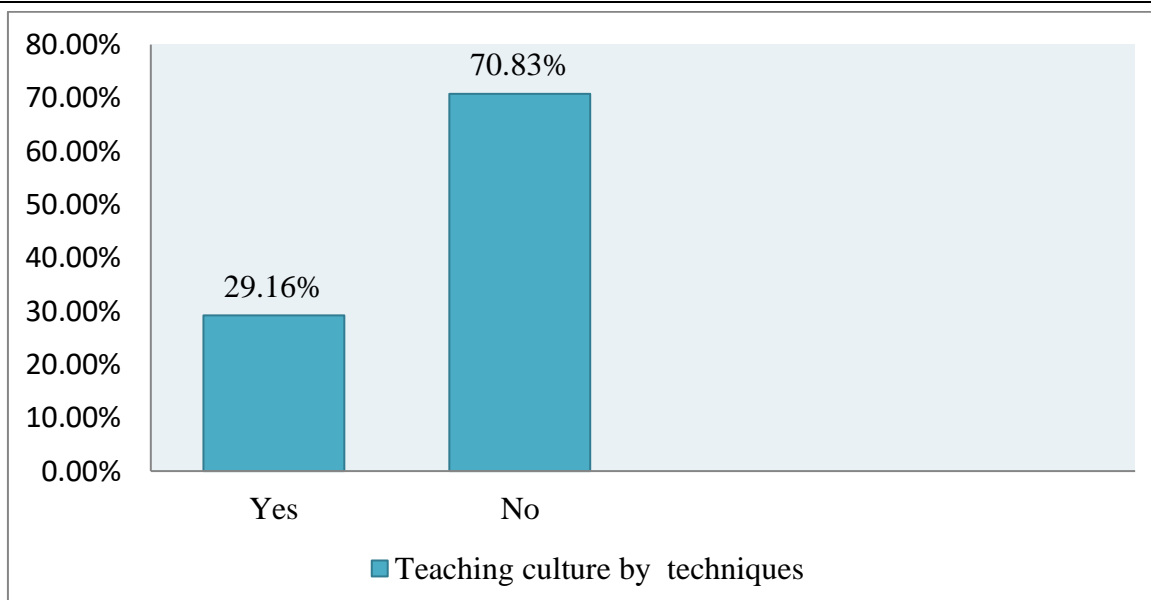
Table 3. 6. Culture/s Emphasised in EFL Classrooms

Culture /sub-cultures	Number of Occurrences
The local culture	13
The English-speaking cultures	15
Non-English-speaking cultures	3
The British culture (including the sub-cultures)	22
The American culture (including the sub-cultures)	24

As a sequel to this question, justifying the given choices varied from one informant to another one. The informants who opted for the American and British cultures or their subcultures reported that they should be tackled since they highlight the native speakers' cultural values and products. The informants who opted for all the English-speaking cultures reported that integrating these cultures into their teaching helped them cope with the increasing cultural diversity, recognising that English has become a global language. In terms of local culture, some informants stated that it is critical for students to engage in comparison and evaluation, while others stressed the importance of maintaining a cultural vigilance.

*Q4: Do you use special techniques when teaching culture? Please say why?*

This question attempted to explore whether culture is taught under special pedagogical procedures inside EFL classrooms. In practical terms, 17 teachers (70.83%) reported that they do not rely on special techniques to teach culture, and the most commonly repeated reason was that techniques must be used within the module that tackles culture directly. The seven remaining teachers (29.16%) reported that they depend on special techniques, such as stereotyping and the audio-motor unit. In the latter, only two teachers succeeded in naming it correctly.



**Graph 3.8: Teaching culture by techniques**

*Q5: What are the difficulties that may be encountered in the teaching and learning of culture?*

The informants were asked to select from a set of difficulties: students' disengagement, shortage of teaching-learning materials, way of assessment, and lack of qualification to teach culture/s. The students' disengagement and the way of assessment were the most frequently mentioned answers. Out of the given choices, 2 teachers went a step forward by recognizing that some cultural facts are difficult to introduce in the literature due to some religious and moral considerations. The following table illustrates the difficulties.

**Table 3.7. The difficulties of teaching and learning culture**

The Difficulty	The Number of Occurrences
The students' disengagement	<b>18</b>
The way of assessment	<b>17</b>
The lack of the teaching-learning materials	<b>11</b>
The lack of qualification to teach culture/s	<b>4</b>

*Q6: What are the subjects and skills you consider as (a) rich source/s to learn culture from?*

This question sought to find out the modules or the skills that create adequate situation to develop cultural understanding. The respondents were asked to opt for a given set of modules and skills. Remarkably, many teachers opted for more than one choice, and the most frequent subjects were listening and speaking, civilisation, and reading. The following table illustrates the number of occurrences for each module or skill.

**Table 3. 8. The Modular sources to learning culture**

<b>Subjects</b>	<b>The Number of Occurrences</b>
Listening and Speaking	<b>15</b>
Civilisation	<b>15</b>
Reading	<b>13</b>
Literature	<b>12</b>
Writing	<b>6</b>
Phonetics	<b>5</b>
Grammar	<b>2</b>

*Q7: Do you think that the assessment of cultural understanding in EFL classrooms is a necessity? Why?*

This question tried to explore if assessing culture has the same importance as teaching it. The majority of the respondents 20 (83.33%) declared that the assessment of culture had become a necessity in EFL classrooms. It was remarked that the arguments were similar to a greater extent since they insisted on the fact that assessment raises students' cultural

awareness, examines the appropriateness of cultural knowledge, and helps them acquire unique skills that are beneficial to international interactions. The remaining four respondents (16.66%) found it unnecessary, claiming that the systemic knowledge is before assessment in the teaching modules.

*Q8: Have you ever used tools specifically designed for assessing culture? If yes, list it/them*

Through this question, the respondents confirmed that there is no module specially set for teaching culture. Providing answers for this question was tackled from the profiles of the modules they teach. In practical terms, 22 teachers (91.66%) said that they used to rely on tests when assessing culture; therefore, there is no specific tool used to assess cultural understanding. The remaining two respondents said that they had already used interviews to assess culture.

*Q9: What do you think about the portfolio as an alternative to assess culture?*

There were two kinds of answers issued from this question: Taking only two of those who used this tool into account, twelve respondents thought that the portfolio could be an alternative assessment that fits perfectly with the cultural understanding skills. The other half (twelve) kept it undecided while mentioning that they never used this assessment tool.

*Q10: In case it works beneficially, what benefits can the portfolio add to assessment of culture?*

This question was seen as a sequel to the previous one. This concerns only the respondents who thought that the portfolio was an effective alternative to assess culture. Six respondents mentioned that the portfolio assessment is beneficial for increasing learners' autonomy. Three respondents asserted that the portfolio helps determine some affective data, such as attitudes and motivation. The remaining three respondents acknowledged the portfolio's merit of retrospection which is very important for assessment.

*Q11: What are the core hindrances confronting portfolio implementation in the EFL context?*

The practical hindrances confronting portfolio use were standardized among the respondents. The following table illustrates the frequency of each hindrance.

**Table 3. 9. The Practical Hindrances Confronting the Portfolio Implementation**

<b>Hindrances</b>	<b>Number of occurrences</b>
Students' lack of knowledge	<b>11</b>
The portfolio assessment is not among the administrative priorities.	<b>12</b>
Students are not motivated to engage in portfolio implementation.	<b>11</b>
Teachers are not familiar with the portfolio assessment.	<b>7</b>

Q12: *What are the pedagogical measures you can suggest for improving the teaching and the assessment of culture in EFL context?*

This question allowed the teachers to suggest or recommend measures to improve the teaching and assessment of culture in EFL classrooms. In this vein, several suggestions were mentioned by the respondents, and the following table illustrates them clearly.

**Table 3.10. Suggestions to improving teaching and assessment of culture**

<b>The Pedagogical Measures</b>	<b>The Number of Occurrences</b>
The need for technology to teach culture	<b>14</b>
Teaching culture via techniques	<b>11</b>
Designing special tools for assessment	<b>9</b>
The need for the intercultural approach	<b>6</b>
Supporting teachers' cultural development	<b>4</b>
Integrating assessment and technology	<b>4</b>

### 3.3.2 Analysis and Interpretation of Results

All the respondents focused on culture in their daily teaching, ensuring that language and culture are inseparable, though they were not asked to highlight the issue. Whether overt or covert, language in their cultural contexts seemed unavoidable through the respondents' answers to question one. This paved the way for question two, which asked if mediating language and culture is necessary in their daily teaching. Indeed, the sliding majority of the respondents asserted this necessity and did not state different arguments. According to the respondents, raising cultural awareness and the need for high expected communication were the significant factors to keep language related to different cultural contexts. The emphasis on the two factors mentioned above results from the growing cultural diversity. Some concepts mentioned by the respondents were related to language and learning, such as English as a global language, globalisation, and cultural diversity.

Teaching culture or teaching about culture remains one of the debatable issues in the EFL context. Regarding the vagueness of culture, the issue of which culture should be taught remains of paramount importance in the improvement of cultural understanding. Through question three (Q3), it seems clear that the respondents do not focus on teaching certain cultures. The British and the American cultures (including the sub-cultures) were the most frequently mentioned, and this seems reasonably logical since they are the target-language cultures. It can be clearly said that the relevance of cultural contexts is a crucial determinant to teaching certain culture/s. For instance, teaching culture through the modules of civilisation and literature puts the English-speaking countries' cultures under scrutiny, and these cultures cannot be tackled via modules that impart systemic knowledge, such as phonetics.

Pursuing the same line of reasoning, some respondents, though few, emphasized all the suggested cultures in their teaching. For instance, grammar, writing, or listening and speaking modules are mainly open to cultural diversity. Pedagogically speaking, there are priorities for teaching cultures, and the approach adopted by the teachers differs imperatively under these priorities. For instance, it is likely to rely on the intercultural approach to teach phonetics since there are two main accents: Received Pronunciation (RP) and the General American (GA). According to the answers, teachers depend on different approaches, and there is not one conventional approach. The intercultural approach seemed prevalent since the American, British, and local cultures were frequently emphasised.

Whatever the approach used for teaching culture, the national culture remains the frame of reference for improving cultural understanding. Regarding the answers, it was mentioned 13 times, coming in fourth place. About half of the respondents perceive the cultural understanding far away from the local culture. Cultural understanding draws heavily on the individuals' own cultural values and beliefs through which the individual needs to integrate the local with foreign worlds in a way that enables him or her to venture into the foreign world (Neuner, 1994). Considering cultural understanding merely as a matter of otherness may not allow learners to explore the similarities and differences between cultures. Therefore, acquiring the cultural skills or the procedural knowledge can be a far-reaching challenge.

Focusing on a certain culture in teaching depends on the nature of the subject being taught by the teacher. Question six (Q6) revealed the modules and skills that are thought to be sources to teach and learn the culture from. In a descending order, listening, speaking, and civilisation came in first places, mentioned 15 times for each one. This was an expected result because these modules draw heavily on different cultural contexts and address various cultural topics. In the second place, reading was mentioned 13 times. A remark worth signaling here is that reading is related to all the subjects, although there is no modular framework named reading. This skill is included within the writing framework (reading focus) and is likely to be integrated with literature since students can acquire cultural knowledge from reading books, novels, stories, etc. The writing, phonetics, and grammar subjects were viewed as potential sources of cultural input. Put differently, they are less resourceful. We may consider the latter as a wrong belief since the grammar, writing, and phonetics modules can provide cultural knowledge and allow students to develop their cultural skills. For instance, comparative and superlative forms in cultural contexts enable students to explore cultural similarities and differences within the modular framework of grammar.

In teaching culture, objectives may not be achieved if they are not based on procedural pedagogical knowledge. One obvious result that deserves objective discussion is that the majority of the teachers do not teach culture following specific techniques or what Chastain (1988) '*modes of presenting culture*'. The objectives of teaching culture are best achieved through special activities and techniques in-class or out-of-class situations. This result indicates that the pedagogy of culture is marginalized to some extent, and teachers emphasise systemic knowledge of English. Remarkably, the remaining seven



teachers who depend on specific techniques are attainable in the modular framework of literature. This point was highlighted by Risager (2007, p.06) when stating that culture is taught according to literature pedagogy through which reading literary novels and books and doing some literature-pedagogical activities contribute to help learners apprehend differences and similarities. Also, the quasi-absence of using techniques may be attributed to the fact that most respondents were formed away from the didactic aspect of culture. Thus, having the necessary qualifications is seen as a prerequisite to teaching culture.

Appropriate culture pedagogy does not hinge merely upon qualified teachers, but there are crucial factors to consider inside classrooms. Question five came to shed light on this issue by giving a set of difficulties. The researcher started this survey with some preconceived ideas, and the results of this question, indeed, added further accuracy to the issue. The majority of the respondents pointed out that the lack of motivation and assessment are among the major difficulties and, to a lesser degree, the lack of teaching materials (technology). It seems from the first glance that the question of motivation and the teaching materials are overlapped, and one comes at the nub of another. The absence of technological material leads automatically to students' disengagement or decreases their motivation. Regardless of the module or the skill, some cultural topics do not catch students' interest. For instance, the subjects of literature and civilisation do not tackle the contemporary topics that provoke students' thinking positively and get them constantly involved. Without being too critical, even the addressed topics cannot be illustrated through audiovisual material.

Assessment of culture is an important issue since it is an integral part of teaching culture. The results yielded that assessment is one of the main difficulties encountered in the teaching and learning of culture (mentioned 17 times). If the objective of teaching culture is to improve cultural understanding, assessment of culture is likely to raise students' cultural awareness and enhance their cultural skills, and it helps them realise that this cultural awareness and skills are acquired in many different circumstances inside and outside the classrooms. Although the question did not dig a little deeper, the respondents seemed outwardly knowledgeable about the importance of assessment to achieve the objective above. Teachers were used to adopt the standardized testing which is considered the official assessment tool in Algerian universities. This result confirms that cultural knowledge has special assessment mechanisms, unlike linguistic knowledge.

Under necessity, the sliding majority of the teachers (83.33%) saw that assessment of culture should be given sufficient attention due to several considerations. First, raising cultural awareness by depending on specific assessment tools may create a favourable situation for learners to explore the cultural differences and the similarities. Moreover, the cultural knowledge acquired inside and outside the classroom should be free of distortion. Indeed, via assessment, students can get appropriate and moral cultural knowledge. Furthermore, since communication draws on other pragmatic and emotional features rather than only cognitive ones, assessment provides extra linguistic data that may set the barriers to good communication skills. In a nutshell, this question revealed that teachers perceive assessment of culture as having equal importance as teaching culture. As a reminder, the remaining four teachers kept the question of necessity undecided and argued that they teach modules where linguistic knowledge is the target focus, mentioning in this realm the modules of linguistics, grammar, and research methodology as the ones that they are in charge of.

Whatever the module or the skill assessed, traditional tests seem to be the predominant assessment tool within the Algerian EFL context. In light of testing, the overwhelming majority of the teachers (91.66%) recognised that standardized tests are a unique tool when assessing culture. This non-concordant result leads us to investigate the purposes of teaching culture. Teaching culture is not simply the introduction of knowledge, more specifically, factual knowledge; it is a complex process that seeks to explore, adjust, and improve behavioural and affective data. Starting from this point, knowledge is considered only one component of cultural understanding, and tests may assess this component adequately. The more important thing in cultural understanding is how to assess affective or moral development. In another way, the difficulty is assessing whether learners have changed their attitudes and become more familiar with ambiguities and complex situations. Accordingly, if we would like to test attitudes, we cannot quantify attitude, but cultural knowledge is likely to be quantified through the typical tests. Following this line of reasoning, Byram, Gribkova, and Starkey (2002) argue that the difficulty lies in the fact that knowledge is only part of cultural competence (*savoirs and savoir comprendre*). Assessing knowledge is thus only a tiny part of what is involved, and what teachers need to assess is the ability to make the strange familiar and the familiar strange (*savoir être*), to step outside their taken for granted perspectives, and to act based on new perspectives (*savoir s'engager*).

Based on the data above, it can be said that the standardized tests are not comprehensive to assess cultural competencies. Accordingly, questions nine and eight suggested to the respondents the portfolio as one of the alternatives to assessment that may fit appropriately with the different kinds of data about cultural understanding. In action, half of the respondents acknowledged the portfolio though they named some general or superficial merits, such as increasing autonomy and consolidating the sense of retrospection. Very few teachers mention that it is beneficial for the assessment of affective and emotional data. Outwardly, the portfolio pedagogical approach is rarely used in the Algerian EFL context for different reasons. One of these reasons is the summation imposed by the canvases and the administration which do not give favourable situations to use the different formative assessment tools. Also, having received no special training for implementing the portfolio increased the ambiguity about its use, priorities, and advantages. The fact that half of the respondents said nothing about the portfolio confirmed this information.

In light of the portfolio talk, teachers did not mention any benefit or advantage related to assessment of culture, except only two teachers who used the portfolio but did not use it to assess culture. Regarding the extant literature, the portfolio is strongly associated with writing skills. Except for the European Language Portfolio (ELP) which tackles cultural understanding, there is an unfortunate dearth of theoretical and practical information. Regardless of the module or the skill assessed, the portfolio design, development, and actual implementation are much more complicated than expected, so it has become a non-tried and non-tested pedagogy because one cannot implement it without being systematically trained.

Since it is rarely implemented, professionals confront hindrances that inhibit them from getting the portfolio properly used. Question eleven highlighted the issue richly by revealing several hindrances which are standardized to a greater extent. In addition to the students' lack of motivation and knowledge, teachers frequently mentioned that the portfolio implementation is not among the departmental priorities. Because the portfolio assessment is a form of alternative assessment and formative assessment, it needs communication on a daily basis. By reviewing the different programmes and canvases, it was explored that testing (taking the oral and the written modes) is the unique form of assessment, thus confirming the preconceived observation that formative assessment is

underused if not excluded. Based on this, we can say that some teachers are not encouraged to pay more attention to assessment for learning and assessment of learning. Even though some of the respondents are aware of the portfolio's theoretical and practical mechanisms, they are less confident and feel reluctant if its implementation will not meet the expectations.

By the last question of the questionnaire, the respondents strived to suggest some pedagogical solutions that may contribute to the teaching and the assessment of culture in EFL classrooms. From these suggestions and recommendations, the EFL teachers hold positive attitudes towards cultural understanding, but there are still some issues to be reconsidered. For instance, the call for the adoption of technological material emanated from the constant lack of motivation. This is not very surprising because technology is said to be used for increasing motivation. After all, whether linguistic or cultural, the authentic input makes the learner actively involved in the learning process. To a lesser extent, some teachers emphasised the need for using special techniques and the cultural approach. A gaze at these suggestions confirms that teaching culture needs exceptional qualifications despite their answers say that using techniques is quasi-absent. Teaching culture is no longer confined to only knowledge, and the pressing need for international communication necessitates the reinforcement of the metacognitive and affective dimensions of the cultural understanding. Unfortunately, such aspects are not given enough attention in many EFL classrooms.

### **3.4 Test**

Since the available assessment method used in the EFL context is testing, the researcher would like to use it to assess culture. This test is diagnostic in nature because it seeks to find out the strengths and weaknesses of cultural understanding. The main objective of using a test is to find out the extent to which testing can be adequate to assess the different data of cultural understanding.

#### **3.4.1 Results**

How culture and cultural understanding are handled in the tests enables the test-takers to adopt cognitive, metacognitive, communication, and socio-affective strategies that fit appropriately with the nature of the tasks. The questions were simplified-complex in that they range from simple to complex. The test-takers were asked to:

- Identify cultural patterns;
- Examine the similarities and differences;
- Compare similarities to and differences from one's own culture;
- Distinguish aspects of the culture, e.g. rules of conduct, famous people, geography;
- Using and understanding appropriate language for a given context;

It is worth highlighting that the test did not focus merely on the target-language cultures, i.e. the British and American cultures; however, it was kept open to include diverse cultures which the test-taker must identify. The reference to the local/national culture is often attempted to draw intercultural and multicultural comparisons.

**Table 3.11: The Test Results**

The Test Results		Task items			
		Definitions	Socio-cultural norms and values	Factual knowledge	Pragmatics
High scores	AF	12	19	11	6
	RF	40%	63,33%	36,66%	20%
Low scores	AF	18	11	19	24
	RF	60%	36,66	63,33	80%

### 3.4.2 Analysis and Interpretation of the Test Results

The current test is aimed at figuring out the extent to which first-year EFL students are culturally aware. It comprises four different tasks, hinging upon four axes: theoretical insights (mainly cultural definitions), factual knowledge, socio-cultural norms, and

pragmatics. These aspects can be considered as the key areas of cultural understanding. As mentioned earlier, the participants were given some highly generalised information to diagnose their strengths and weaknesses within the cultural understanding framework. It is worth mentioning that cultural knowledge is at issue in the current test because it is the basic template for the cultural competences through which it determines the metacognitive and affective components of these competences crucially.

Reviewing cultural definitions is a proper way to introduce students to cultural understanding. Most students demonstrated low scores, although they were asked to match the concept with its definition. Few concepts, such as culture, communication, and civilisation, are correctly defined on a large scale. A clear way to justify this difference is to argue that students embarked on the test without knowledge. The subject matter of the definitions is mainly attached to the modules of civilisation and literature. The test took place after students were introduced to the aforementioned subjects. Even after reviewing their programs, these modular frameworks did not provide knowledge about cultural concepts such as intercultural, stereotypes, and communication. Students were tackling linguistic or systemic knowledge with specific difficulties. For instance, modules like phonetics and linguistics, despite being constantly taught, seem somehow complicated for students, what if specific cultural terms are put forward for definitions without having been taught before.

The second task, which dealt with the socio-cultural norms, was regarded as the exception of the test. In this task, most test-takers (63, 33%) demonstrated a cultural maturity in stating the similarities and differences between the local culture and some English-speaking societies and their individuals. As a reminder, they were given some social norms (behaviours) concerning some English-speaking societies and individuals and were asked to state if the norms were similar or different to theirs. These were expected results since the given norms tackled mainly greeting, non-verbal communication (eye contact), and rules of conduct (eating norms). Having information of this kind is interesting, and it can be learned unsystematically outside of classrooms. What is at issue here is the implication of the local/national culture, which is constantly the reference that motivated the test-takers to get actively engaged in this task. Based on this finding, it can be said that the active construction of knowledge within the socio-cultural context contributes to raising cultural awareness.

Cultural knowledge, which is a prerequisite to understanding any culture, was given a great importance in the test, the portfolio, and whole research. In the current test, the cultural knowledge is looked upon from two facets: the socio-cultural norms, which are people's daily routine, such as the ways and rules of conduct (Micro-social level), and the factual knowledge (Macro-social level). The latter was the subject matter of task three. Essentially, only 11 students (36, 66%) performed well, while the majority of the 19 (63, 33%). On the one hand, this finding demonstrates that students were perhaps unfamiliar with tests of this type, especially within the listening and speaking modular framework.

On the other hand, the severe lack of cultural knowledge made them unable to perform well despite tackling only factual knowledge. In this vein, it should be said that one of the main problems in the assessment of cultural knowledge is how cultural knowledge has been defined and the difficulty for language test developers in taking cultural diversity into account. Because of these two issues, a significant portion of the tests used to assess cultural knowledge focus on facts rather than cultural elements closely related to language and communication.

Delving a little into the students' answers demonstrates that their areas of knowledge are confined. It should be remembered that the given facts are related to common topics, such as geography, history, education, and sports, which the test-takers are familiar with. For instance, the overwhelming majority of them did not answer correctly the topic of history, which tackled Britain's pre-history although the topic was already tackled. The same issue was noticed in geography where the students failed to name the most prominent river and the second-largest city in the USA. This deficit is likely to be attached to the non-availability of such broad social facts within the programmes above, and those who answered correctly, though few, acquired their knowledge outside the classroom.

In terms of gender, there was a disparity among the available answers through which females performed better than males. For instance, answers from the topic of the sport were considered acceptable to a greater extent. This is an expected finding because the sports fact (Wimbledon) is commonplace. Females' answers were more correct than males' answers, and this finding is not expected since males are much more familiar with sports. It is worth saying that this task (the third) determines the students' lack of knowledge, even with familiar topics, such as civilisation and sport. It follows from the second and the third tasks that there are two unexpected findings. The macro-social level of cultural knowledge,

which seems typically recognised by students, needs further improvement. Contrary to this, the micro-social level of knowledge concerns the social identity of individuals, their social environment, and their conduct, which is acceptable to some extent despite it being the most complicated level of knowledge in cultural understanding.

Perhaps less recognised, pragmatics is another essential aspect that contributes to a thorough cultural understanding. Language use according to different contextual circumstances makes an integral part of the cultural discourse. Despite its complexity, the researcher would like to explore the socio-pragmatic dimension by involving the test-takers in different social situations. Generally, poor performance was remarked, and only 11 students (out of 30) obtained high scores. Here, it is worth noting that the participants did not understand what pragmatics or language use entails. Failing to put the appropriate speech act is interpreted as a socio-pragmatic failure though the scope of the given task was limited merely to one situation that addressed apology. There was a cultural disagreement since most of the students dealt inappropriately with the given situation, and this may lead to miscommunication. It is worth mentioning that the given speech act (apology) was not given as an isolated feature of politeness. However, it was given to explore how students, as prospective interculturalists, use the language according to a specific interactive environment or socio-cultural setting.

### **3.5 Self-Evaluation Checklist: Analysis and Interpretation of the Results**

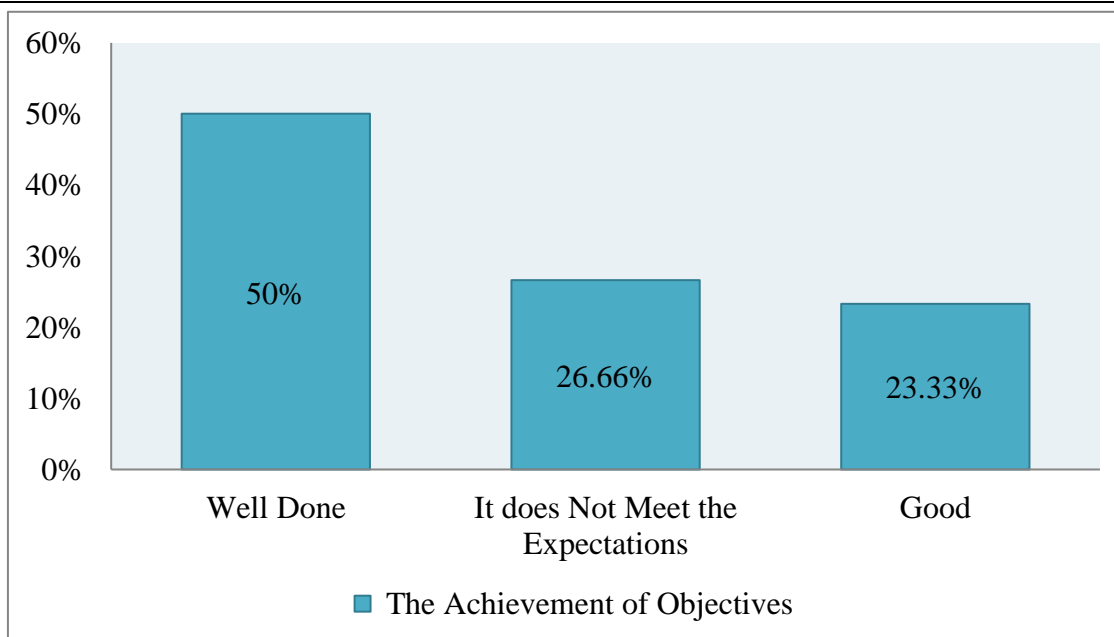
There is a consensus among pedagogues that learners should be active participants in the alternative assessment process. To embody this autonomy, the present self-evaluation checklist was adopted after the e-portfolio implementation to demonstrate students' evaluation skills within cultural understanding. This self-evaluation form revealed interesting data that embody learner-centered assessment and value students' roles as responsible participants in drawing formative and summative decisions. The checklist provided in this self-evaluation form pertains to the different components of cultural competence, i.e., they are related to knowledge, awareness, attitudes, and skills (see appendix E).

The first item or description in the checklist dealt with the objectives set before compiling the portfolios. The cultural e-portfolio, as the name denotes, is wholly devoted to cultural understanding. Half of the students (50%) opted for the scale 'well done', seven students (23.23%) ticked for the scale 'good', and eight students (26.66%) considered that



this item does not meet the expectations. In terms of commentaries, the most frequent comment among the students tackled the time factor. They considered the objectives set at the beginning time-demanding. Others stated that it is so challenging to realize the objectives because learning culture requires solid knowledge already acquired. In the submitted e-portfolios, the objectives were similar to a greater extent. Students focused on knowledge as the overarching objective, as learning culture hinges upon the interrelated knowledge of all the aspects contributing to a solid cultural understanding. At this moment, the factor of time is implicitly related to knowledge in the sense that it requires a great deal of time to experience many courses not only in listening and speaking modules but over the years and through other modules, such as literature and civilisation. The fact that no one stated any goals for addressing technological skills remained a less-than-positive remark in the first item on the checklist.

Through the portfolios, we have noticed that there is a clear progression in terms of output. Since being culturally knowledgeable is a standardized objective, students have become more focused on cultural knowledge because all the related cultural skills emanate from solid knowledge. The students' estimations mentioned above are greatly congruent with the ones included in the submitted e-portfolios through which they connected the content to the stated objective at the beginning. Therefore, the assessment was done on a systematic basis since it is linked to particular objectives.

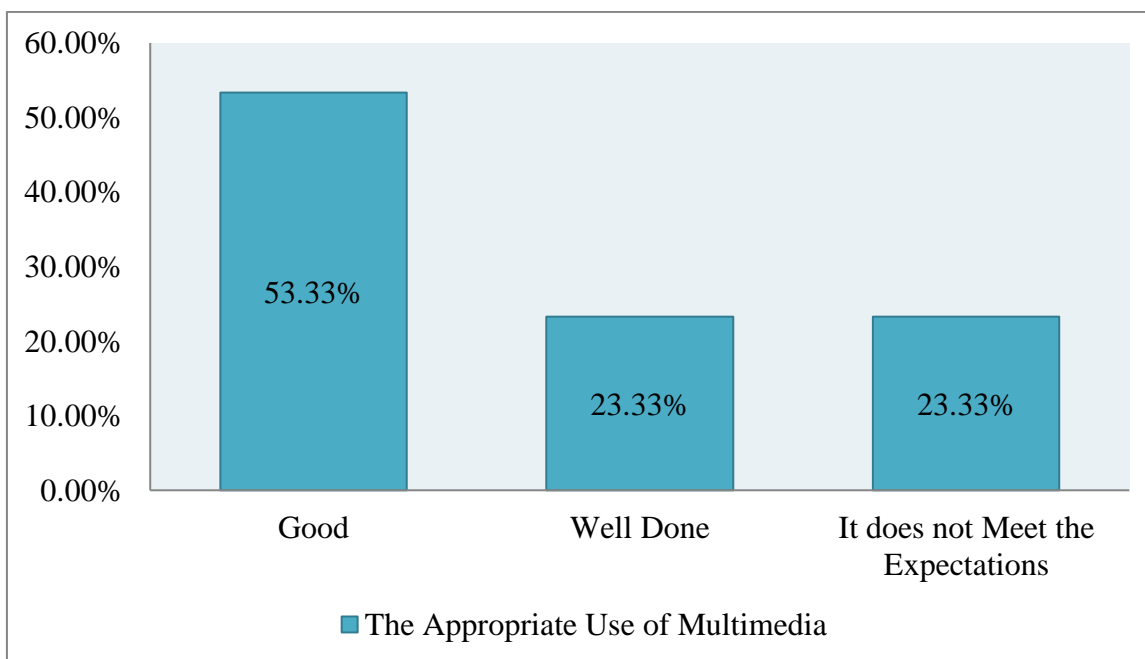


**Graph 3.9: The Achievement of Objectives**

The second item of the checklist concerned the use of technology and multimedia. In action, seven students (23.33%) ticked for “well done”, 16 students (53.33%) ticked for the scale “good”, and the seven remaining students (23.33%) ticked for the scale “it does not meet the expectations”. They reported in their commentaries that they ignore some presentation applications, such as PowerPoint, graphics applications, hypertexts, etc. Regarding the submitted e-portfolios, these self-evaluation decisions and commentaries seemed valid to a greater extent. In terms of technology, this remarkable deficit refers to the lack of training inside the academic context. It should be recognized that students are qualified to use high technologies such as smart phones and software, but academic technologies, such as computing data, multimedia technologies, database applications development, and computer graphics and animation, are ignored to a greater extent. The submitted e-portfolios assure us that few students have the finesse to use multimedia whenever they need it. This disparity among students is likely ascribed to personal diligence.

The finding of technology does not have a complete concordance with the submitted e-portfolios. While more than half of students considered the use of technology and multimedia as good, a considerable number of the e-portfolios revealed a fundamental deficit in coping with the everyday use of technology, except for some students who seemed familiar with it. Considering the results of this item, the self-assessment decisions are not highly reliable though students, through the questionnaire and the interview, called for support in terms of the use of technology. The commonly heard comment among the

students is that teachers are needed to explain the computing data, which cannot be realized only through a module specifically designed to teach educational technology.

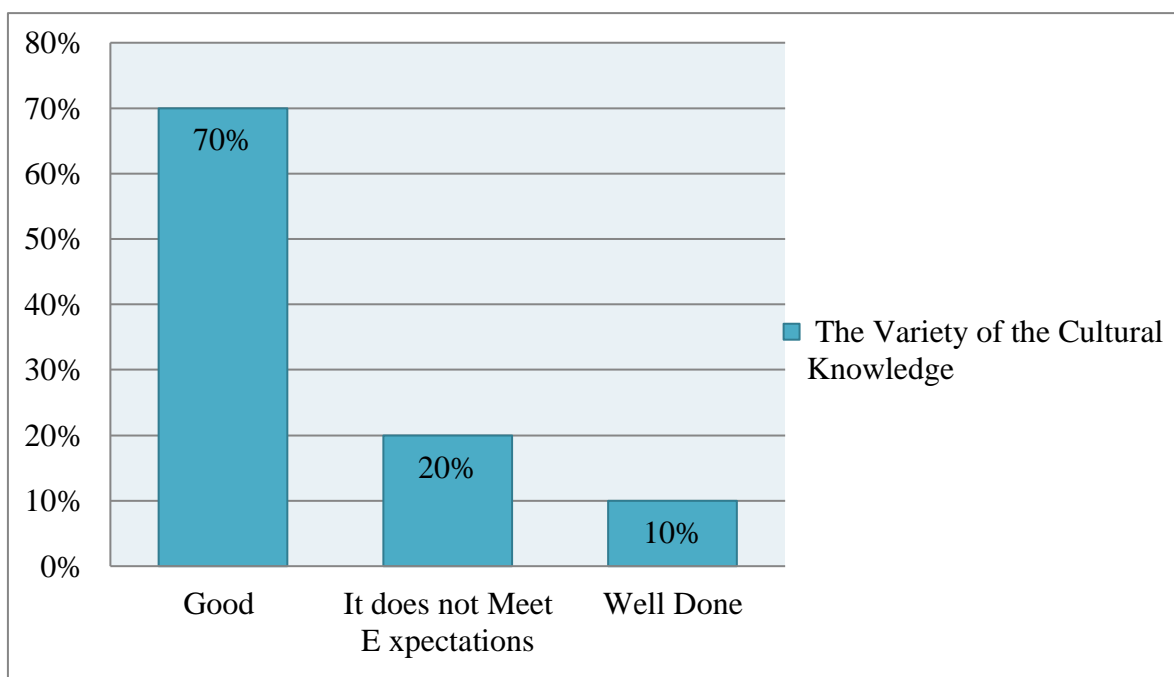


**Graph 3.10: The use of multimedia**

Concerning cultural knowledge, investigating a variety of cultural topics was the target of the third item. The majority of the students, 21 (70%) ticked for the scale 'good', 3 (10%) ticked for 'well done', and 6 (20%) ticked for 'it does not meet the expectations'. The most frequently mentioned topics that need improvement are speaking norms and individual lifestyles. This result is concordant with that of question four of the students' questionnaire through which the same topics were the most interesting for them. The need for the norms that guide the conversation is seen crucial for communication. As a matter of course, the individuals' social attributes and their particular rules of conduct in speaking are interdependent and mutually influencing the communication process. This shortage cannot be covered only through intensive exposure to different technologies and active listening programmes. These findings imply that linguistic and sociolinguistic factors influenced the majority of students' strong assertions about the topics.

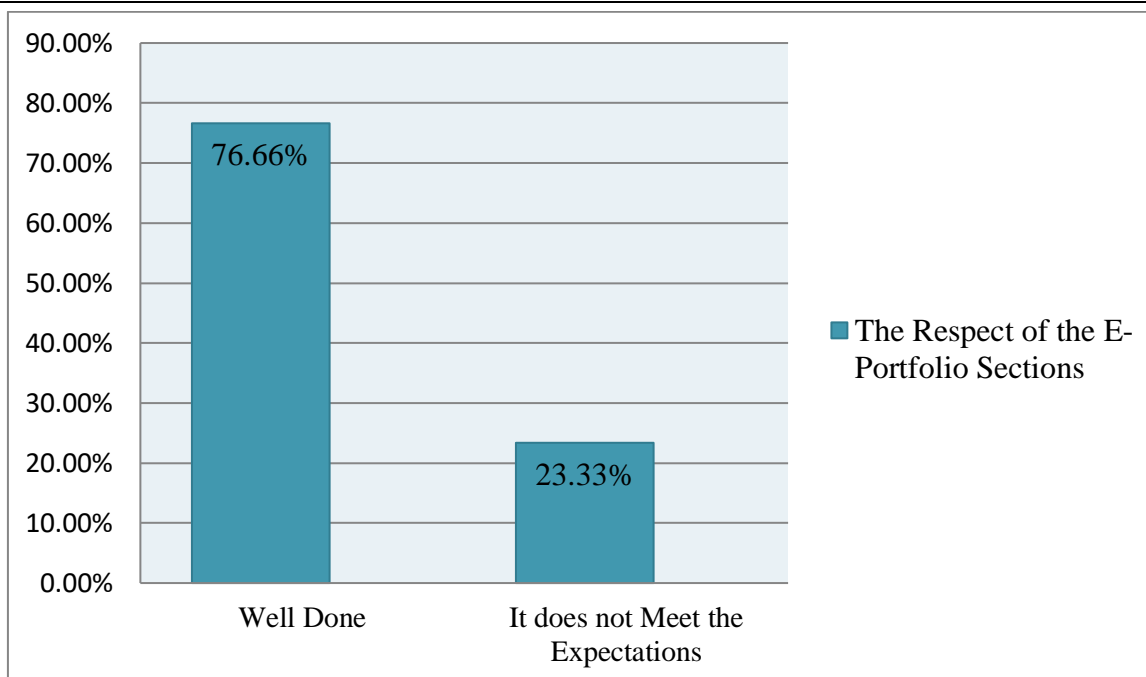
In light of cultural knowledge, the topics mentioned earlier pertain to culture-specific knowledge. Students focus only on the target-language cultures, seeking detailed information about British and American individuals. For a broader assertion, the curricula of different modules demonstrated a little explicit emphasis on cultural knowledge. By referring to the submitted e-portfolios, it was remarked that the subjective culture is poorly

introduced. From a pedagogical point of view, culture-specific knowledge is confined to formal learning, but it also remains in students' diligence outside formal educational settings.



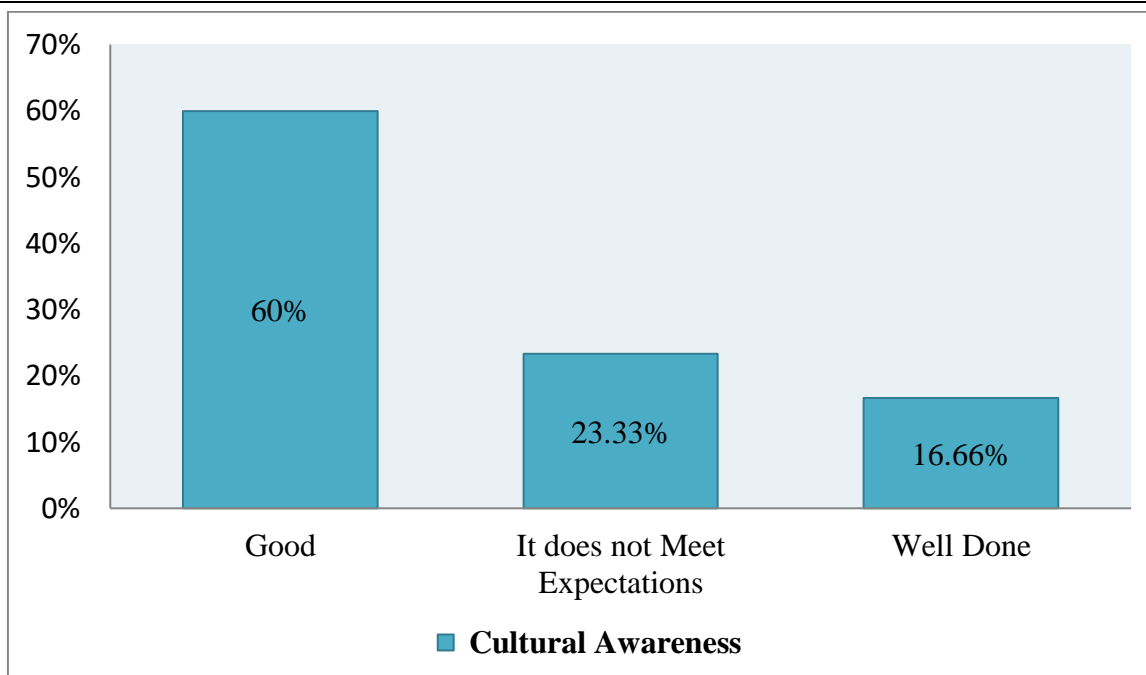
**Graph 3.11: The Variety of the cultural knowledge**

In the fourth item, students were asked to evaluate how they respected the sections that make up the e-portfolio. It is worth remembering that the e-portfolio contains three parts: the first part is theory-based, through which students try to define cultural concepts; the second is devoted to cultural knowledge, and the third one concerns personal experiences and reflection. The results revealed that most of the students 23 (76.66%), strictly respected the parts mentioned above by ticking the scale 'well done'. The remaining seven (23.33%) students stated that this issue did not meet their expectations, arguing in their commentaries that the last part of their experiences is difficult to achieve. These estimations proved to be confirmed where the majority of e-portfolios included the three parts. On the one hand, we have noticed that students consciously or unconsciously understand the interdependence of the three sections. On the other hand, there is a remarkable commitment by the students to compiling e-portfolios of high expectations.



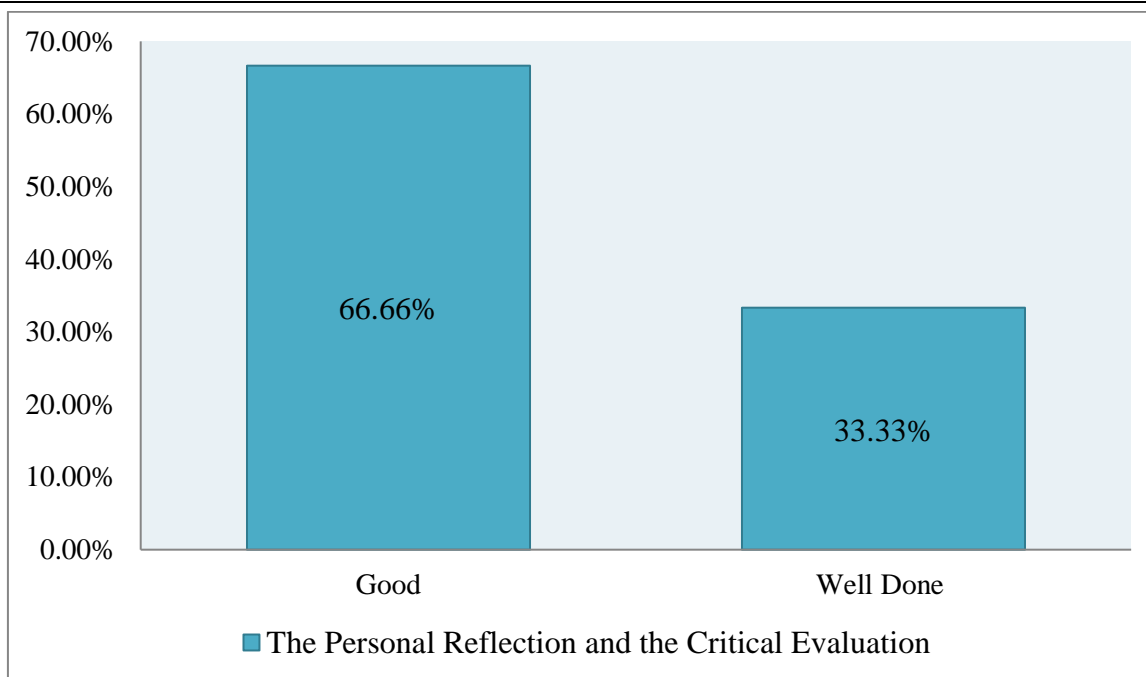
**Graph 3.12: The respect of the e-portfolio sections**

The fifth statement dealt with cultural awareness, i.e., the cultural differences and similarities between local and foreign cultures. In action, 18 (60%) students ticked the scale 'good', 5 (16.66%) students ticked the scale 'well done', and the remaining 7 (23.33%) students considered that their cultural awareness does not meet the expectations. The degree of cultural awareness hinges upon the cultural knowledge being acquired. Regarding students' e-portfolios, awareness was acceptable to a greater extent, and some of them demonstrated a critical cultural awareness ensued from critical evaluation. It should be recognized that students experienced some situations through which they were introduced to cultural-based tasks which encourage them to compare the new culture with their practices, values, and beliefs. Additionally, the intensive exposure to audio-visual materials contributed to making them extrinsically motivated and attaching great importance to these tasks within the framework of listening and speaking. For further clarity, these audio-visual aids, deliberately related to different cultural contexts, pinpoint accurate information that often removes vagueness from certain stereotypes already acquired by the learners. Therefore, the exposure influences positively students' cultural awareness.



**Graph 3.13: Cultural awareness**

Concerning the sixth item, 20 (66.66%) students ticked for the scale 'good', and the remaining students, 10 (33.33%), considered this issue well done. Though limited to some extent, students demonstrated a reflective mindset in their e-portfolios. There were conflicting views on some foreign cultural practices, more specifically, the social and behavioural stereotypes. Regarding the submitted e-portfolios, students retrospectively practiced reflection; they demonstrated a constant reference to past artifacts. In some e-portfolios, it might be said that the connected e-portfolio helped to spot cultural differences and similarities between cultures. The heavy emphasis on reflection-on-action was noticed over reflection-in-action. The lack of reflection may threaten the folio thinking dynamic that is the fundamental postulate of the portfolio pedagogical approach. We have remarked that the students did not balance the two faces of reflection. Critical reflection and comparison between the existing knowledge of culture and new input were referred to by Byram (1997) as 'critical cultural awareness'. The latter is considered a crucial determinant for constant cultural development.



**Graph 3.14: The Personal reflections and the critical evaluation**

In the last item, 18 students (60%) considered themselves proficient e-portfolio users by ticking the scale "good", and 12 students (40%) considered the issue far from meeting the expectations and still in need of further improvements. Students' commentaries to justify this issue vary from one to another. The most frequent commentary (mentioned 12 times) addressed the practical, the technical, and the theoretical know-how. Students expressed their need to learn about the way of portfolio creation or samples that have been implemented before. Another frequently noticed aspect that needs improvement is cultural understanding, mainly embodied in knowledge. Students insisted on the fact that to be culturally knowledgeable is time-consuming. The process of e-portfolio creation should incorporate the mastery of multimedia technology skills, and the mastery of content is crucial for the proficient use of e-portfolios.

### 3.6 Learners' Interview

The interview is thought of as another important instrument that gives prominence to other interesting findings. Fundamentally, a semi-structured interview in nature means blending structured and unstructured techniques, and asking follow-up questions are the main specification of semi-structured interviews. The researcher opted for an interview of this sort to gain an in-depth understanding of students' attitudes towards adopting the e-portfolio tool for assessing their cultural understanding. He made pre-determined questions

for all the interviewees, looking forward to asking some random questions that pertain to their personal replies. As a reminder, the objectives of the interview were as follows:

- To verify the research hypotheses;
- To investigate the practical difficulties associated with the implementation of an e-portfolio;
- To determine the efficacy of the e-portfolio to the assessment of culture.

It is worth recognizing that the students were informed before the interview without appointing the interviewees (eight students). The rationale behind this step is to get them ready for free-flowing conversation. The participants were interviewed individually, and the interviews averaged about 20 to 35 minutes in length because some answers required the interviewer to go steps forward and ask random questions. The interview included seven questions ranging from open-ended and close-ended questions. The generated results were content-analyzed after being orthographically recorded.

### 3.6.1 Analysis and Interpretation of the Interview Results

The interview findings revealed essential data. Firstly, it was asserted by all the interviewees that they never experienced the portfolio implementation before, so they recognized that the cultural e-portfolio, as the first experience, allowed them to experience the portfolio assessment for the first time. This seems logical because the concept is newly introduced in EFL Algerian contexts, more specifically at the university level. Because the interviewees are first-year EFL students, they come directly from secondary school education without having background knowledge about the portfolio approach. Despite this newness, most of the interviewees (six students) reported that their acquaintance with the portfolio assessment was interesting, while the remaining two students remained reticent without clear arguments about this tool. They established their points of view starting from the *Cultural E-portfolio* since they had already got involved in its implementation. Accordingly, the interviewees attributed this interest to the fact that it was electronically executed, and this was effortless and did not require a great deal of time. One commented, “*It was the first time to experience learning by technology*”. Another point worth emphasizing is the adoption of the portfolio for assessing cultural understanding. For the students, learning about cultures is considered a motivating factor for some considerations, such as age, the topics they want to learn, and some personal



attributes. It can be said that learning culture is considered a source of attraction to the *Cultural E-Portfolio*.

Additionally, implementing it electronically seems like it would be encouraging for the participant, but this was only confined to the method of submission, thinking that the digital form extracts time and effort. The way of integrating their data with technological accessories, such as insertions and conversions, needs much more work. Effectively speaking, the sense of comfort with the e-portfolio was necessary to increase commitment, and it encouraged the participants to achieve the objectives set at the beginning.

Implementing the *Cultural E-Portfolio* was not an easy task for the students. They encountered difficulties featuring at different levels. In terms of the three parts composing the portfolio, all the interviewees found the third part, which is devoted to personal experiences and self-reflection, somehow challenging. They claimed that it is challenging to engage directly in conversations with natives, though they were asked to reflect directly and indirectly upon their experiences. In terms of technological know-how, half of the interviewees (four) said that they were less comfortable with some technological accessories. It is worth mentioning, in this regard, that the most frequently reported difficulty is ignoring the way of operating the hypertext links. Students' learning is enhanced by experiencing and using technology that increases the potentiality to better show how they think and what they know. They can illustrate this by using audio, video, text, and reflective practices via connecting artifacts over different periods. To settle the matter of technology illiteracy, one interviewee commented, "*We need to have one-on-one sessions with computing data*".

In light of the already-mentioned difficulties, the use of technology remains under scrutiny. This means that if we begin to notice some students' poor performance on technology, we find that the 1<sup>st</sup> year EFL students do not have a module devoted explicitly to learning academic technology or computing data. Such a finding could suggest that the motivation to implement the portfolio electronically may be negatively influenced, pushing the individual learner to disengage. In this regard, it should be noted that the e-portfolio implementation does not imply documenting facts in a digital format and sending them via an electronic link. The real challenge of the electronic form, however, remains how to adapt and adopt the various applications and techniques to the stored work so that the e-portfolio user can access to their data whenever and wherever they want.

When asked about the improvements added to their cultural understanding after implementing the *Cultural E-portfolios*, six interviewees considered it beneficial to a greater extent. They attributed the utility value of the *Cultural E-portfolio* to widening their knowledge about foreign cultures. When asked about the areas of knowledge, the six interviewees were split on the nature of knowledge that was acquired. Four participants mentioned that the socio-cultural norms of speaking and the individuals' daily practices, which were utterly ignored before, gained ground due to classroom exposure and research. One interviewee said that he reconsidered some pre-existing beliefs which were established under unreal stereotypical images. Another one pointed out that the *Cultural E-portfolio* enabled him to widen his geographical knowledge, specifying Britain. The remaining two interviewees kept the issue vague by saying that the implementation is time-consuming and there should be enough time to decide about it. In essence, there was an overemphasis on cultural knowledge, as if students considered learning about cultures to be confined only to establishing knowledge. Knowledge may be considered the skeleton of cultural understanding, and all the cultural skills emanate from its perspective. Byram (1997), who introduced the framework of intercultural language learning, refers to all the components of intercultural competence as *savoirs*, though competence is not the primary case in our research. Knowledge, referred to as '*savoir-faire*' by Byram (1997), is the subject matter of cultural understanding. These findings concord with those obtained from the questionnaire, the portfolio, and the test. Being culturally knowledgeable means that students have the aptitude to note and distinguish between the differences and the similarities, and reflecting on them to engage in critical self-evaluation.

In parallel with the difficulties mentioned above, the last question of the interview asked the participants to identify which kind of support they would like to have to surmount the encountered difficulties. First and foremost, not only was the *Cultural E-Portfolio* under scrutiny by this question, but the concept of portfolio was the overall target. All the interviewees insisted that teachers should provide them with solid background knowledge supported by sample portfolio projects. For them, the portfolio is something new and needs to be highlighted via documentation and handouts. They also insisted on technology in which teachers and faculty members must provide them with tailored support. By taking another look at the submitted e-portfolios, applying different multimedia technologies was not catastrophically critical. Despite the deficiencies, some students demonstrated a high level of technology literacy. Technology illiteracy may prevent the portrayal of knowledge, especially the audio-visual items that capture interest

and add further clarity. The difficult challenge is not learning how to use technology, because anyone outside of educational settings can easily immerse in the internet and have some guidelines and instructions for use. The best evidence for this is the social networking that unleashed new technological applications. It is academic technology literacy where students need to construct critical analytical skills to assess issues of quality and bias in the knowledge they acquire. There is a remarkable degree of congruence between the difficulties and the needed support.

Another result from the interview (out of the planned questions) is that some students focus on implementing e-portfolios as a process rather than a product. Through analyzing their answers, it appeared that their technical and practical skills were their utmost preoccupation. Here there was a logical correlation between the difficulties above and the support needed by the learners. In light of this result, the process of e-portfolio construction takes time and goes incrementally. Following that, if we would like to review the outcomes, the cultural e-portfolios were acceptable to a greater extent. The cultural understanding as a product does not necessarily require perfection since the students it was experienced as assessment tool for first time. It was used for the cultural understanding, which seemed demanding in terms of cognition, metacognition, and affect.

### **3.7 Content-Based Analysis**

The fundamental objective of this analysis is two-fold: to demonstrate the practical mechanisms used by the participants to compile their e-portfolios and explore the extent to which students deal with cultural uncertainties and ambiguities. The e-portfolio assessment does not aim merely to store artifacts; it is active engagement in a cyclical process that includes collection, connection, reflection, and evaluation. These skills should work interdependently to create the folio process that is the crux of the portfolio's use. Before delving deeply into the obtained results, it is worth recognizing that effective portfolio implementation is strongly associated with the following primary skills: collection, connection, reflection, and evaluation (self-assessment). This content analysis is divided into two sections: a relational analysis and conceptual analysis. It is relational in the sense that it seeks to specify, delineate, or describe the cyclical and relational occurrence of these skills. Conceptual, which is seen as a proper way to evaluate the students' affective and moral development (attitudes), is mainly concerned with the third part of the e-portfolios.

*Relational Analysis*

The first skill to consider in this relational analysis is a collection. As mentioned earlier, the cultural e-portfolio was divided into three sections, and the skill of documentation is better considered within the second section of knowledge. Fundamentally the portfolio in nature means compiling artifacts. As a point of departure for portfolio construction, it can be said that collection was respected to a greater extent. Through the submitted portfolios, it was noticed that the participants documented a considerable amount of knowledge acquired from different sources and resources. The collection phase plays a crucial role in portfolio construction because knowledge is the crux of the upcoming skills that cannot be functional without knowledge and sufficient evidence. For instance, in order for learners to reflect on and draw evaluative decisions, there should be rich knowledge. The collection is regarded as a capstone skill in the portfolio implementation.

Another cardinal skill in portfolio implementation is connection. It is meant to be a connection between relating the past to the present artifacts and interpreting them for reflection. Said in another way, learners are expected to look back at their learning experiences from a new perspective and demonstrate their development over time. The portfolios offered a concrete way for the users to link their learning knowledge and experiences, paving the way to reflection. The participants are expected to link their schematic knowledge to the newly acquired cultural knowledge in terms of cultural understanding. The connection was not tackled as much as expected. More observationally, attempts to connection were confined to certain areas because most of the students were implementing portfolios for the first time.

The concept of connection has a multi-perspectivity which features at different levels in the e-portfolio implementation. In this multi-perspectivity, the content is implicated wherever students would like to connect artifacts. The content can be connected to objectives, knowledge, multimedia, curriculum, and other elements so that it is challenging to engage in comprehensive analysis. In terms of objectives, the connected e-portfolio demonstrated a congruent connection to the pre-specified objectives. Students were connected to their objectives that are similar to each other. For instance, the objective of being culturally knowledgeable was prevalent all over the portfolios; it was successfully reached, more specifically through the second section, where knowledge took different types of evidence. Knowledge was portrayed as pictures, handouts brought from other

modules, and their work documents outside the classroom. Even within knowledge per se, there was a special connection between specific pre-existing knowledge and newly acquired knowledge.

We have remarked that the students connected the contents of their portfolios to the cultural topics tackled in the listening and speaking module. Selecting and choosing cultural topics are strongly associated with the previous test adopted to diagnose the weaknesses. It is worth noting that the connection does not tackle all the curricula, but students tried to combine the portfolio content with other modular frameworks, such as documenting reading comprehension texts and literary works; this makes the scope of variety limited to specific topics. However, the connected e-portfolio made the students focus on their own needs. It seems clear that by the beginning of the e-portfolio implementation, students attached extra importance to cultural understanding, though the primary objective of the listening and speaking module is to listen systematically and speak spontaneously.

Reflection is a related skill that should be mentioned in the portfolio practices. The critical component of the assessment portfolio is the learner's reflection on the individual pieces of work. In practical terms, students demonstrated a sense of retrospection through which they tried to refer to past artifacts. Students adopted a retrospective strategy in their reflective thinking. There was an overuse of retrospection over introspection in the submitted e-portfolios. From a metacognitive standpoint, this kind of reflection is referred to as reflection-on-action (Lam, 2018, p. 43). From an assessment perspective, learners, via a reflection of this type, can take summative decisions. The under-reliance on introspective strategy does not create a situation to take formative decisions. The majority of students demonstrated insightful reflection through which they knew the rationale for engaging in the cultural understanding of why specific cultural issues should be overemphasized as representative works for their e-portfolios. As a rough generalisation, the reflective thinking shown over students' e-portfolios was generally accepted; reflection-in-action needs further consolidation because it influences the nature of assessment decisions students are about to draw.

The last skill which is always seen under scrutiny in the folio thinking process is evaluation. The latter goes in parallel with the output or the production phase. From an assessment perspective, e-portfolio users need to be active participants in assessing their

learning rather than passive dependents on the teacher. Indeed, they are expected to evaluate the cultural differences and similarities within their portfolios and their overall progress via an evaluation checklist at the end of implementation. Without any systematic orientations, students remained relevant in terms of respect, responsibility, and politeness.

Regarding the submitted portfolios, evaluation is likely to exist in the third section, which is mainly devoted to cultural experiences. Noticeably, the less-than-good news was that the evaluation related to cultural understanding was not of high expectations in terms of quantity. However, it remains qualitatively acceptable, i.e., not all the participants engage actively in evaluation, but the available performances reveal positive responses. A significant part of the students found section three difficult, since they are asked to reflect on their personal experiences, then compare and evaluate the situations critically. Students who engaged actively in evaluation demonstrated cognitive flexibility in making judgments about some cultural beliefs.

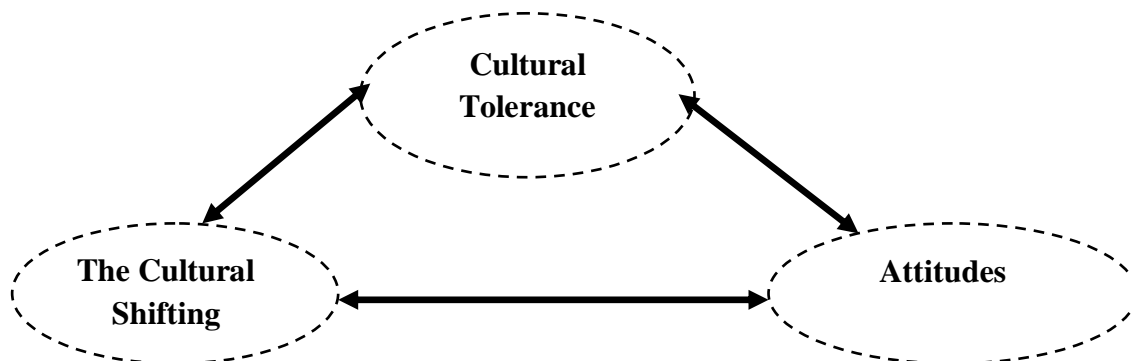
Away from cultural understanding, self-evaluation or any kind of assessment should be coupled with goals determined by the learner at the onset of the assessment process. To this aim, a self-evaluation checklist was introduced after the implementation to embody the self-assessment aspect of the portfolio, and students were informed that the e-portfolio correction takes into account the checklists. By reviewing the given e-portfolios, students made self-judgments and commentaries about their progress flexibly and went a step forward while stating the difficulties faced before drawing assessment decisions. There was a clear interrelation between connection, reflection, and self-evaluation. Decisions seemed systematic because students connect the past learning experiences that typically included some faults to the present ones, which are adjusted. There was a logical sequence in that students' assessment decisions were systematic since they were made on a reflection basis.

The preceding analysis attempted to explore and describe the folio mechanisms used by the first-year EFL learners in their cultural e-portfolios. These mechanisms are likely to work with the portfolio as an assessment tool rather than as a learning tool because the assessment requires the portfolio to be associated with highly specialized skills, which are referred to by Helen (2002) as a folio thinking process. As reviewed earlier, learners relied on metacognitive strategies, such as collecting and selecting cultural artifacts, connecting input and output, and evaluating after reflection. These strategies emphasize the

fundamental purpose of the portfolio as a self-assessment tool rather than a product for specific audiences. Also, self-reflection needs further improvement and consolidation because it is a prerequisite for self-assessment. Except for the skills of connection and self-reflection that should have further consolidation, we can say that the e-portfolios embodied an acceptable interrelation of the four skills that make this assessment tool associated with folio thinking as a habit of mind.

### *Conceptual Analysis*

Before correcting the e-portfolios, the students welcomed the idea that only the third part of the portfolio would be corrected and assessed. As a reminder, the third part of the portfolio asks the students to document their personal experiences then reflect on/in these experiences by displaying some intercultural skills. The fundamental objective by including this part is to diagnose how students deal with cultural disagreements and uncertainties. The latter should be regarded as a practice and a process, not only as an abstracted concept. In the second part of this analysis, tolerance ambiguity or cultural tolerance was featured at two different levels: attitudes and cultural shifting.



**Figure 3.1: Levels of the Cultural Tolerance**

Delving deeply into the answers revealed that social networks, notably Facebook and Instagram, are the primary sources for the students to converse with foreigners and native speakers. Explicitly noticed, students tried to get involved in critical cultural awareness through interacting with people who have different cultural affiliations. According to submitted e-portfolios, experiences were not merely based on direct contacts with members from foreign cultures, but movies, stereotypes, prejudices, and sportive reports are other sources students referred to for reflecting on/in certain situations.

Attitudes are the most complicated aspects to determine in cultural understanding. The analysis of the spoken and the written modes of communication gives background knowledge about the degree of the individual's sensitivity towards the cultural diversity, not only sensitivity but also initiating to surmount any abrupt ambiguity that might sidetrack the communication or meeting. Through the submitted e-portfolios, students demonstrated a clear openness to cultural novelties. Regardless of the cultural differences and similarities generated by their experiences, students tried to create opportunities to engage and co-operate with individuals with different cultural orientations and perspectives. They tended to be more comprehensible towards sensitive issues by depending on different strategies, such as indirect or implicit. Being more implicit is considered one of the students' communication strategies to remove uncertainties, though implicitness varies from one to another.

Regarding the direct contacts, it was remarked that the lack of linguistic proficiency resulted in some verbal and non-verbal behaviours, such as silence and asking for repetition or clarification. According to the experience, English is a means of communication, and some students used Arabic and French to converse with the interlocutors. The behaviours mentioned above may positively or negatively impact communication, depending on how they are used and posed. For instance, using expressions, such as *Excuse me, would you mind speaking a little more slowly, please? Or what do you mean by ...* enabling the interlocutor to check his/her understanding. On the contrary, another student mentioned that maintaining silence frequently on the part of the interlocutor left a wrong impression on him. It follows from the given findings that mastering the mechanics of language, regardless of the verbal and written modes, contributes strategically to maintaining positive attitudes towards others, since most uncertainties stem from linguistic complexity. In light of linguistic proficiency, some portfolios revealed an acceptable intercultural responsibility while seeing the urgent need for improving their language abilities.

As preconceived, students demonstrated some cognitive and behavioural abilities to reflect on their experiences in the third part of the e-portfolios. Students demonstrated how and why they felt about acting in a particular way, recognizing that there are certain cultural boundaries, and they tried to find out why these boundaries are constructed. For instance, one student addressed football players who cover their mouths with hands during football matches. Also, he mentioned that some gestures made by players when celebrating



goals are so disgusting. He argued that behaving in such a way may provoke intolerant reactions from the adversary or the surrounding environment, and it would be better to ban such behaviours by FIFA. This simple example implies intercultural maturity. The student did not assume that his opinion was the only possible and naturally valuable one. However, he tried the outsider's perspective to adapt it as disrespectful behaviour, primarily addressed the situation without naming any football player or any particular case.

Another important determinant that reveals the degree to which the interculturalist is familiar with ambiguities and certainties is cultural shift or shifting. A shift can be made in language, behaviour, or any nonverbal cue to maintain a sense of continuity in intercultural discourse. It is worth mentioning that this aspect can be achieved merely through direct contact with foreigners. Except in a few cases, the students who engaged in intercultural meetings demonstrated flexibility in cultural shifting to make the strange familiar and act based on the interlocutors' perspectives. The scope of contacts was not confined only to English-speaking contexts; it was extended to include further cultural diversity. Therefore, the shift pertained to different aspects and was not limited to only behavioural patterns.

Since language is the primary medium of communication, it is often the central point of misunderstandings. Regarding the e-portfolios, three students mentioned that language created difficulties and their reactions include (the researcher reformulates extracts due to mistakes and ambiguity):

- *"...when I visited Turkey, I tried to speak English despite I don't speak it very well. In hanging out in Istanbul districts, a worker of the ice cream shop refused to speak with me in English despite he used to speak it well. I could not speak Turkish. I was nervous but I should cope with the situation ..."*
- *"...I wasn't able to understand difficult English and really falling in predicament made me want to learn casual English although it takes time and effort..."*
- *"...I asked a Scottish to confirm if the Scottish people are the most miserable in the UK and they rarely laugh. He surprised me by his reaction when he blocked me from his Facebook account ..., I realized that I should confirm without getting a Scottish involved to avoid bad reactions ..."*

Regarding the experiences mentioned above and extracts, reactions are reasonable and interculturally responsive to a greater extent, except for the last one, who indeed discovered that asking directly such questions may shock the interlocutors and get them in trouble. Considering the passages, they dealt with this strangeness with specific semantic availability. Students dealt positively with the ‘culture shock’, far from negative ramifications, and they seem responsible for their responses to a new environment. It should be said that compiling e-portfolios seemed to be an awareness-raising stage, and students depended on multiple resources inside and outside the classroom that made them react on this basis. Assessing data of this kind is preferably done over a period rather than at one given point in time through a simple test. Byram (1997) argues that assessment of attitudes may be preferably used after ‘deep learning’ that enables students to acquire the skills necessary to interpret other cultural practices, beliefs, and values and relate them to their own. In this case, the design of the *Cultural E-Portfolio* took notice that students’ assessment comes after receiving enough input.

Some behaviours noticed through the e-portfolios illustrated richly how the students tolerated the uncertainties. Remarkably, the discomfort with several themes stems from religious objections. For instance, the way of greeting in the target language society was frequently tackled since it is different in terms of gender (male-female greeting). The theme of food was frequently tackled through which students mentioned that our religion prohibits some food items, such as pig meat and alcohol, while they are essential in some foreign societies. One obvious outcome was that students were conscious of observing and analyzing their own culture as well as foreign cultural products without regard for inferiority or superiority. This issue was best illustrated when students constantly referred to the local culture.

Regarding the challengeable nature of section three of the *Cultural E-Portfolio*, we noticed that students demonstrated flexibility in tolerating uncertainties, though not all experiences directly involve foreigners. A challenge of this kind requires an interactive atmosphere for the learners to improve their intercultural abilities. Accordingly, preparing language learners for intercultural and cross-cultural meetings is intended to avoid misunderstandings that frequently ensue from the lack of cultural skills. The classroom, here, would be the ideal place to introduce activities of this kind to train learners how to tackle situations of this kind. This was consistent with Damen’s view (1987) who argues that the classroom remains a safe place to experiment with culture before engaging in real-

life communication. Aspects such as greetings, complementing, forms of address, thanking, and some paralinguistic behaviours were emphasised in the e-portfolios.

### 3.8 Discussion of the Main Findings

There are several findings from the given analyses that deserve further talk. The data collection tools used in this research revealed significant findings regarding the implementation of the e-portfolio as an alternative tool to assess the cultural understanding of 1<sup>st</sup> year EFL students. The *Cultural E-portfolio* was mainly tackled by four key points: storing students' works, reflection, self-evaluation, and cultural understanding. The latter seemed underused beforehand, and this was observed in terms of both learning and assessment. The participants' answers and comments provided a window into an insightful diagnosis on assessing the culture in EFL classrooms.

It was first hypothesized that relying on traditional testing may be the only way for teachers to assess culture within EFL classrooms. This has been confirmed and proved through the learners' questionnaire, more precisely via Q6, where the overwhelming majority of the participants ascertained the fact that they were not examined by a method specifically designed to evaluate or assess their cultural understanding. From the teachers' perspective, Q8 of the questionnaire added further assertions where the sliding majority of the teachers (91.33%) confirmed the fact that there is not a specific assessment tool used for assessing culture. Indeed, cultural understanding is attached to marginal attention in terms of assessment. Worse still, the modules of culture or the modules which are expected to enhance cultural understanding are not taught in accordance with special didactic techniques and strategies. The issue seemed obvious through the review of different curricula that placed heavy emphasis on the systemic knowledge of language over cultural knowledge, and this was undeniably noticed in terms of learning and assessment. Therefore, improving any aspect of learning requires useful assessment mechanisms that can measure its different elements.

For the second research question, it was already hypothesized that the e-portfolio might be effective to assess EFL students' cultural understanding. Concerning the results, this hypothesis was proved to be correct. The e-portfolio proved to be a comprehensive assessment tool for cultural understanding in the sense that adequate data, in addition to cultural knowledge, can be effectively assessed through it. Via the e-portfolios, we noticed that students demonstrated an acceptable level of interactivity with a prevailing tolerance.

In this respect, we asserted that the affective data might be difficult to assess through traditional assessment, which overemphasizes knowledge. In terms of knowledge, the students broadened their cultural knowledge. The second part of the portfolio that was utterly devoted to cultural knowledge revealed that students expanded the scope of knowledge to include various topics despite the target-language cultures (American and British ones) catching their interest.

Concerning the third hypothesis, it was stated that the 1<sup>st</sup> year EFL students might engage actively in implementing e-portfolios for assessing their cultural understanding. This hypothesis was confirmed and proved to a greater extent regarding the data gathered from different tools. The students' interview asserted the validity of this hypothesis through questions 4 and 5, which delineated clearly that the informants found the e-portfolio more interesting, so implementing and submitting it electronically contributed strategically to their active engagement. Despite the average level of computing data and the incredible difficulties, the electronic submission encouraged the students to get actively involved. In this respect, it is commonly known that technology is acknowledged for increasing motivation in learning. Also, the checklist evaluation reflected the active involvement of the students through their valuable observations and commentaries, and the profound respect for the three sections seems another solid evidence for the active engagement. What is more, students seemed interested during the implementation period through frequent questioning and the need for corrective feedback.

Another contributing issue related to the third hypothesis is that the cultural e-portfolio took, from the beginning, into consideration the motivational factor. We were consultative. That is to say, the content was not made exclusively by the teacher. We merely clarified the structure and the organisation of the portfolio without imposing standardized content on the participants. This step or procedure stimulated an intrinsic motivation and turned students' attitudes towards the portfolio implementation that were difficult to pin down at the early beginning. Aside from this, a related point worth posing is that the electronic nature of the portfolio is considered another endogenous motivating factor that fosters their engagement.

The findings revealed that the listening and speaking module is the perfect locus to improve cultural understanding in language classrooms because learners need to use their linguistic knowledge with other extra-linguistic knowledge (socio-cultural knowledge). This modular framework creates favourable situations to experience culturally-based

contexts and situations with a high degree of authenticity. By doing so, knowing the social values and the norms of behaviour in a given society is best introduced through audio-visual aids. At this moment, authentic assessment tools are seen as appropriate to best suit the cultural needs and experiences. Among these tools is the *Cultural E-Portfolio*, a constantly-renewed tool that comprehensively assesses cultural understanding. Regarding the submitted e-portfolios, it can be said that the first-year EFL students have raised their cultural awareness through the e-portfolio implementation, recognizing the fact that the active listening they used to engage in was the contributing factor to such results.

The results of this research confirmed previous research findings (Djoub, 2016; European Language Portfolio, 1999; Lam, 2010, 2013) and others. These academic inquiries found the portfolio as one of the appropriate assessment alternatives that make learners as active self-assessment agents and foster their autonomous learning skills. Regardless of the skill or area of language, the role of portfolio assessment is to encourage learners' awareness of their skills. For cultural understanding, e-portfolios allow for nuanced and in-depth articulation of cultural experiences within which cultural skills can function in many different circumstances, inside and outside the classroom.

Despite some contextual constraints, the first-year EFL students demonstrated cognitive, meta-cognitive, and affective readiness to make them more familiarised with the portfolio pedagogical approach. From an assessment perspective, the evidence-based storage contributed strategically to get them involved in meta-reflection and self-assessment. Students, in this regard, became familiar with new learning habits by which they became familiar with the documentation of the cultural artifacts about the different foreign cultures, more specifically the target ones, state the cultural differences and similarities, and draw evaluative decisions. What is more, there was a notable development in terms of behaviours in the sense that students became capable of acting flexibly on the new perspective (foreign perspective); being skilful in interpreting other cultural behaviours, beliefs, and practices, and relating them to one's own; and being empathetic to others' thoughts and feelings.

### 3.9 Conclusion

A major issue of the present research was to answer the pre-specified questions. From a practical perspective, the research revealed several findings that were preconceived. In action, getting the portfolio pedagogical approach into implementation in this work needs

to be looked upon from two sides: the familiarity of the participants with this technological tool and the usefulness of the e-portfolio as an alternative form of assessment. The *Cultural E-portfolio* was effective in assessing the different data of the cultural understanding, especially affective data that cannot be plainly assessed through traditional testing. In this respect, there was a clear affective development that was paralleled with the increasing scope of cultural knowledge.

Also, the research findings indicated that the module of listening comprehension and speaking is a fertile ground for widening learners' cultural horizons since the other modules provide a cultural input which emphasizes heavily fact-based cultural knowledge. The nature of listening and speaking activities, namely dialogues, free talks, questions, etc, makes teaching culture more communicative-oriented. Relying on techniques to teach and improve cultural understanding is best used within this modular framework because the techniques require high interactivity and depend on the spoken mode of the language.

Moreover, the findings showed the fact that students have the potential to be active participants in assessment, i.e., they are responsible for engaging in self-assessment and drawing decisions on a personal level. As an assessment tool, the portfolio encourages students to be more independent, expressive, reflective, and resourceful (Lam, 2018). In parallel, it was revealed that the need for consolidating technological skills, the systematic training of portfolio use, and folio thinking are the practical challenges that need in-action embodiment in language learning programs and classrooms. These are the crucial determinants in the e-portfolio pedagogy that will be introduced as recommendations in the upcoming chapter.

## **Chapter Four: Suggestions and Recommendations**

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## 4.14 Conclusion



### 4.1 Introduction

The practical side of this research work revealed interesting findings that deserve objective discussion. It does not mean that the obtained results will be the point of departure to orient teachers and learners towards qualitative practices and specifications for the teaching and assessing culture. However, the researcher is striving to lay out some suggestions and recommendations that are hoped to add value to the workability of e-portfolios and the pedagogy of culture. Because the portfolio proved effective for assessing culture, some areas still need further improvements to promulgate a deeper understanding of the application issues.

This chapter provides teachers and learners with some recommendations that are thought to contribute to the workability of the *Cultural E-portfolio*. As assessment agents, teachers are suggested to keep the e-portfolio implementation associated with the folio thinking process. Moreover, under the powerful influence of technology, integrating assessment and technology, or what is referred to as 'e-assessment,' is considered a necessity, with a special observance to the consolidation of technological skills. Additionally, having some specifications, such as being enablers, motivators, and evaluators may help teachers create a favorable atmosphere to familiarize learners with this emerging pedagogy. As far as learners are concerned, they are recommended to be participants to embody learner-centered assessment within the portfolio pedagogy rather than be submissive to traditional tests.

A cardinal issue worth emphasising in our recommendations is the rethinking of cultural pedagogy. The current chapter suggests an intercultural approach to teaching about culture in EFL classrooms. While relatively demanding in terms of the teaching materials, the latter, notably the technological devices used inside the classrooms, is acknowledged for nurturing intercultural skills and self-evaluation skills. The approach imparts some teaching techniques and strategies that may support the affective and behavioral abilities to immerse much more easily into different cultural contexts, without forgetting to attach a special attention to cultural vigilance that is conducive to cultural misunderstandings.

## 4.2 Towards a Folio Thinking Pedagogy

Folio thinking, as a new practice in education, is directly related to portfolio pedagogy. Despite that the extant literature has not highlighted folio thinking, it has started to preoccupy academics and educationalists not only in the field of foreign language education but also in other fields, such as psychology. So, an obvious starting point in explaining folio thinking is to tackle learning by experience. Folio thinking is seen as the process of exploring, establishing experiences, reflecting upon facts, and extrapolating into the learner's future progress established under what has been experienced over some time. According to Gero and Lindeman (2005, p.96), the “folio thinking pedagogical approach is designed to enhance self-awareness by enabling students to make their knowledge explicit and visible to themselves as well as to others”. It follows that all that can be experienced by learners in different real-life situations, inside and outside educational settings, could be meaningfully connected with their learning to make it outright and shared with peers, instructors, and administrators. Despite the newness of the concept, folio thinking pedagogy is becoming widely endorsed in the western world because it integrates learners’ personal experiences into their daily learning.

Learners are likely to be involved in the folio thinking process through alternative assessment activities, specifically portfolios. However, it should be recognized that this process is not only restricted to developing portfolios, as the name denotes. Though difficult to define, folio thinking pertains to all that can be experienced and documented by learners using several tools, such as diaries, journals, and inventories. The learner needs to have special higher-order skills, mainly embodied in reflection, that enable him/her to launch evaluative statements by looking back at past and present experiences. Cambridge, Cambridge, and Yancey (2009, p.38) point out that “an integrative habit of mind, folio thinking, improve abilities at the border crossing daily”. Constant Connectivity helps the folio thinker to make formative decisions.

The results of this research revealed that the involvement of students in the e-portfolio implementation has helped them realize moral and intellectual development through the use of the collection, connection, reflection, and evaluation. This is consistent with Hamilton and Kahn’s (2009) findings that have ensured the contribution of e-implementation to the embodiment of folio thinking, or what is named as ‘matrix thinking.’ The latter is based on three major areas of intellectual development: the ability

to self-assess, use these assessments to improve and situate particular learning experiences within the context of lifelong learning.

Learners play a central role in the folio thinking pedagogy, and to be folio thinkers, there should be highly specialized skills or what can be termed ‘folio competence.’ The folio thinker should be experiential because learning is a comprehensive adaptation process to the real world (Kolb, 1984, p.32). Moreover, the folio thinker should be critical through logical and scientific reasoning that leads to reliable and valid self-assessment. Furthermore, commitment is the essential specification that folio thinkers have to keep the connectivity going. Because folio thinking is a significant challenge, a proper way to instill this habit is to involve learners extensively in reflective practices because more extensive applications of the portfolios may consolidate learners’ folio thinking skills and customize teachers’ interventions.

### **4.3 Integrating Assessment and Technology**

Teaching and learning have become more accessible and much easier under the spread of different technologies. Inside and outside educational settings, every aspect of learning is easy to digitize and manage quickly and effortlessly. As a result, assessment, as an essential aspect of the teaching-learning process, needs to be tackled technologically. The so-called e-assessment emanates from integrating assessment and technology, which has appeared as a reaction to the increasingly frequent calls for modernizing the teaching profession that has emerged in the 21st century. Assessment and testing, coming under the umbrella term of evaluation, no longer meet the detailed requirements. For instance, the current pandemic situation makes it necessary to assess learners electronically within the framework of e-learning. For further clarity, integrating assessment and technology does not mean throwing away the paper-based assessment, but since they can work in parallel, especially in the piloting stage of the e-assessment. While still practical, traditional ways of assessment, namely paper-based tests, are very demanding in terms of practicality.

Learners’ thinking skills can be enhanced through the integration of technologies and assessment in language classrooms. Concerning the critical aspect of pedagogy, technology makes it easy for learners to ask, analyze, compare, and construct learning. To assess, there should be an objective reflection and logical reasoning. Therefore, critical thinking skills can be easily acquired through technology. For instance, the different folio thinking skills may receive further improvement via technologies because connecting

artifacts through hypertext links are advantageous for assessment purposes. Also, folio thinking skills are also helpful for learning purposes. Furthermore, real-life thinking is another skill that can be acquired in which the learner can connect real-world events and objects with the use of interdisciplinary knowledge (Resnick & Klopfer, 1989).

One of the most critical issues in integrating technology and assessment is the appropriateness of the technologies for linguistic needs. In this respect, Conor-Linton and Amoroso (2014, p.51) note that “advances in the technology of language testing have at times created pressure points between what technology can do and what types of language can be sampled with that technology”. Of necessity, there should be a clear distinction between online assessment and technology-based assessment. Although there are slight differences, the first is an internet-based assessment, for instance, the e-learning assessment, while the second can be conducted without the internet, such as portfolios (CD Rom). Essentially, technology is jointly shared with the types above. It has become a built-in assumption in language assessment and testing that technology is paralleled only with tests, and the notion of ‘computerized tests’ is commonplace in the existing literature. Sometimes, such tests' usefulness is not realized because specific standards, such as reliability and validity, are critical. It can be said that the role of alternative assessment is better realized through the use of technologies, especially the autonomous aspect.

#### **4.4 Embedding E-Portfolios into Curriculum**

Regarding the benefits of alternative assessment, it becomes the departments' prerogative to integrate e-portfolios into learning and assessment despite the uneven perceptions among administrative and teachers. “Depending on your role and responsibilities within a college or university, you are likely to have differing views of the value of an e-portfolio” (Stefani, Mason, & Pegler 2007, p.24). The satisfaction with the e-portfolio implementation remains a question of experimentation. From a professional perspective, one can say that the summation imposed by the administration is a sliding barrier that hinders teachers from engaging in formative assessment. Generally, some practitioners are not comfortable with the assessment portfolio and alternative assessment in general for different reasons, and one of these is the lack of training. The latter is a key reason that led them to stay at the mercy of standardized testing. Now, the teaching and administrative staff are recommended to create a culture of making connections, setting goals, and envisioning a learner-centered assessment; integrate the portfolio into the daily practices

and avoid making it an ‘add on’; enable challenge and collaboration that make the learner intrinsically motivated. In this vein, it is stated:

To create a positive portfolio culture, teachers need to develop a balanced view of formative and summative purposes which can accommodate authentic classroom reality and enhance fluidity in interpreting assessment information to empower learning. Assuming equal status among stakeholders in the portfolio process also contributes to a creation of a portfolio culture (Lam, 2018, p.117).

Due to the remarkable advantages, many international universities and colleges call for embedding e-portfolios into the curricula. In the UK, for instance, there has been a strong push by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) to adopt e-portfolios as assessment and learning tools. Not far from the UK, one major innovation of the Danish Ministry of Education imposed the educational portfolio or ‘log book’ to help them to record and reflect on their learning within the framework of Personal Education Plan (PEP) (Stefani et al. 1, 2007, p.20-21). These previous initiatives may be seen as an incentive to get the e-portfolio tried out. Undergoing a piloting stage can determine the priorities for use and predict the possible difficulties.

A topical issue worth signaling in the e-portfolio implementation is the lack of technological skills or technological illiteracy. To promulgate a deeper understanding of technology, teachers, jointly with the administrative staff, are recommended to provide tailored support to students by deciding how to help students who are less comfortable with technology. It would be beneficial to schedule one-on-one sessions with academic technology advisors or counselors or with the program’s portfolio ‘go-to’ person. In this respect, it should be said that students are expected to know how to use technology, but teachers also need to find ways for students to use technology to learn. Based on this, acquiring digital competence is another challenge that requires a great deal of effort on the part of teachers. Remarkably, the outbreak of the current pandemic of Covid 19 revealed a blatant deficit in computing data.

#### 4.5 Consolidating Digital Skills in EFL Classrooms

It is worth remarking that the concepts of educational technology and information communication technologies are often wrongly understood. To remove this ambiguity, educational technology pertains to the mobilization of different technological sources, resources, and procedures to facilitate and enhance the quality of learning. ICTs, coming under the banner of technology, focus much more on communication. Whenever ICTs are mentioned, terms, such as internet and wireless are implicated. What is commonly shared between the two patterns in the educational context is the digital skills that offer much easier accessibility to teaching, learning, and assessment with reduced time and fewer practical considerations.

To cope with the digital mode in educational settings, learners need to acquire the necessary skills to make this mode work dynamically. Having such skills makes learning more individualized by increasing problem-solving potential, self-monitoring skills, and more experiential. Since the issue is more critical for learners than for teachers, extensive programs should handle specifically computing data. Perhaps less complicated, English language learners are more advantageous than other learners due simply to the consideration that English is the language of technology. In this respect, Goodwyn (2000, p. 71) asserts that “if English is to do this effectively, it must subject ICT education to its values.” These skills have to do with computers, such as presenting and processing information, engaging in information exchange through telecollaboration, creating hypertext links, and other skills. As a matter of logic, mastering excellent technological skills must be preceded by learning about technology, but:

Learning in almost any subject today means not only learning the concepts within that area, but also, how to use technologies in that endeavor. Thus, the traditional lines between learning about technology and learning through technology are beginning to blur. For example, learning science entails learning how to use computers as media for collecting and analyzing data, for modeling phenomena, and for communicating results. For these activities, science students need experience with the technological media scientists use; they need to learn how to think through new media. At the same time, there is a

growing body of research evidence showing that these media uses are effective at supporting learning of concepts, attitudes, and processes.

(Bracey & Culver, 2005, p.02)

Regarding the submitted e-portfolios in this study, many students did not generally demonstrate high technological skills. In light of this finding, we mean by high-tech skills educational technology, such as archiving, hyper-texting, inserting, etc. This is consistent with the findings from introducing the European Language Portfolio electronically at the Open University in the United Kingdom. The participants criticized the e-ELP for its technological complexity, and they asked for technical help by showing the automatic means visually to avoid flawed implementation (Alvarez, 2012, p.138). The acquisition of digital skills is no longer required for educational purposes; the issue is seen as a *sine qua non* for employability. The latter allows for approaching a road between education and the world of work through which different competencies and skills respond to labour market demands. Regardless of the sector or the domain, technical know-how or technology literacy should be integrated into educational programs and not just as teaching aids through which learning is carried out.

#### **4.6 Teachers' Roles in E-portfolio Pedagogy**

It is worth noting that the recent educational reforms advocate a learner-centered pedagogy, but this seems contradictory with the e-portfolio implementation, which still necessitates some teachers' role specifications as having multiple agency during the period of execution. In the Algerian EFL context, the majority of teachers have become accustomed to standardised testing. Portfolios switch teachers' role from agents of assessment to managers of assessment. Additionally, this newly adopted approach is given the least attention concerning other alternative tools. Further away from the pedagogical concerns, it is likely to say that the remarkable lack of technical knowledge leads to the underuse of the electronic portfolio.

##### **4.6.1 Feedback Providers**

Feedback, either delivered in an oral or a written forms, may be among the contributing factors to the success of the teaching-learning process. Teachers launch feedback as evaluative statements about learners' performances and achievements, which make them serve fundamentally for assessment purposes. It is a widely held belief that feedback is

given only to overcome errors. It seems clear that alternative assessment is so demanding in terms of feedback and the constant delivery of feedback emphasizes the formative nature of assessment. For instance, folio thinking, mainly embodied in compiling portfolios, needs specialized observance and mutual responses between teachers and learners. Since it is a learner-based pedagogy, guidelines and instructions help learners maintain a sense of ongoing progress.

In the current research work, it has been noted that the participants were frequently asking questions related to the application details of the e-portfolio, and feedback in such cases are needed to overcome uncertainties. Here, one can note that giving formative feedback maintains the formative profile of the e-portfolio. Whenever feedback is absent, the ambiguities are likely to increase. In a study undertaken to assess writing via portfolios, Lam and Lee (2010) found that the informants expressed concerns that they were uncertain about their writing performances because of delayed summative evaluation. Students expressed their need for grading their drafts because the grades could motivate them to improve their writing. At this point, the teacher should be a feedback provider to surmount some context-specific complexities, adopting and adapting several styles, such as grades, face-to-face responses, e-feedbacks, and so many forms. Indeed, “feedback literacy is a communal practice where students, teachers, and parents are empowered to play a facilitative role in enhancing student metacognitive monitoring capacity throughout the portfolio compilation process” (Lam, 2018, p. 68). Students need to reflect upon feedback to make meaningful use of e-portfolios.

The purpose of assessment is a crucial determinant for the nature of feedback. Regardless of the purpose of the assessment e-portfolio, feedback should be delivered on a formative basis. There are two qualities of information that can be used to assess learning: feedback and feed-forward. The former means information that helps the student learning from formative activities and the latter is future-focused, meaning giving information and recommendations that will help a student enhance activities in the future can be called formative assessment (Irons, 2008). The feed-forward is likely to be provided for summative e-portfolios, and the feedback is more commensurate with formative e-portfolios. Another topical issue that should be highlighted in the portfolio implementation is that feedback is recommended to be pedagogic in terms of purpose. Put differently, feedback is descriptive-based since it focuses on personal experiences and the fact that learners, teachers, and even the administration staff are implicated in assessment.



Since the electronic portfolio is a case in point, electronic feedback may present a difficult issue for teachers and learners. In this line of reasoning, Higgins (2002, p.54) “The use of distance learning and new technologies is becoming more extensive. As a result, face-to-face student-tutor contact time is diminishing, leading to a greater reliance on written correspondence”. Written-based feedback may impart some ambiguities that make students hold negative attitudes towards them. The teachers should develop positive attitudes on the part of learners towards electronic feedback in the context of communicating their e-portfolio achievements. The chief common point here is that different technologies serve only as an enabling means and not as the de facto solution to learning and assessment. Based on this point, other students acknowledged electronic feedback for providing automated responses and formative decisions due to the speed and flexibility of delivering feedback. In this vein, it is worth remarking that the most commonly used means of delivering electronic feedback is e-mail. Irons (2008) states that “E-mail can be an effective (and simple) means of communicating formative feedback to students, either on an individualized basis (for example, using statement banks, see below) or for generic issues relevant to the whole student cohort on a module”. The easy access to the network justifies this growing tendency, and emails can settle daily students’ matters.

#### **4.6.2 Evaluators**

Moving away from theoretical considerations to practical applications of alternative assessment, teachers have a central role in e-portfolio pedagogy. They organize portfolios for two primary purposes: as a learning tool or an assessment tool. They can also adapt and adopt it for different aspects of learning. In light of these prerogatives, although everyone believes strongly in the benefits of portfolio assessment, its design, development, and practical mechanisms are much more complicated than one could think. The talk about it as an assessment tool necessitates extra responsibilities on the part of the teachers, such as selecting evaluation criteria, specifying content, and so many issues. Evaluation, to be helpful, needs to be systematic, i.e., conducted following criteria and pre-planned schemes. Rea Dickens and Germaine (1992) note that “ill-prepared and ad-hoc evaluations are likely to be unreliable, unfair, and uninformative. They are not a suitable source on which to base educational decisions”. Different evaluation tools ensure the decisions launched by the teacher. They may be formative for the sake of improving learning, or they may be summative for learning.

In the e-portfolio implementation, the evaluation criteria should be identical to the context and the specifications of its content. This may make learning and evaluation closely interrelated, and teachers are recommended to tackle the issue with great finesse. Evaluation can be qualitative or quantitative, depending on the subject matter of the portfolio. While relatively complex, portfolio evaluation is a micro evaluation because it requires a great deal of time and effort. Through this kind of evaluation, teachers may use different strategies and techniques, such as questioning, interviews, classroom performances, etc. The micro evaluation is done by teachers jointly with learners, and therefore, learners may participate in criteria selection to evaluate portfolios. Criteria are introduced in rubrics, checklists, inventories, diaries, and even questionnaires on a more general level.

The teachers' roles as evaluators recover a lot from the ongoing observation during the portfolio compilation. They are recommended to engage in formative self-evaluation by observing student behavior and committed introspection into their proceedings. Accordingly, it is said that "this type of evaluation seems to be more appreciated compared to traditional assessments that are based on grades that do not reveal objectively what learners specifically know" (Baiche, 2006, p.121). To substantiate this argument, it could be understood that the portfolio evaluation reveals the realistic profile of the student through which the teacher launches subjective inferences about objective data. Here, of course, objectivity is considered an essential standard for portfolio evaluation. Though it is intended for self-assessment purposes, teachers' evaluative decisions remain crucial for the determination of the portfolio usefulness.

#### **4.6.3 Motivators**

Perhaps, like any emerging area in language learning, learners need highly motivational thinking to implement the e-portfolio. Importantly, motivation is one of the critical aspects of successful language learning, whether intrinsically or extrinsically stimulated. It is said that teachers are responsible for teaching the curriculum rather than doing motivational roles. Indeed, the former cannot be realised if the latter is ignored (Dörnyei, 2001, p.27). The degree of motivation varies according to modules, and teachers sometimes challenge doing motivational roles over teaching the curriculum. Based on this point, it is challenging to change students' perceptions of specific assessment tools, especially if they are time-consuming.

In the Algerian universities, motivation is a topic of interest within the EFL classrooms. Different situation analyses have frequently asserted that the lack of motivation is a sliding barrier to the success of English language education. Starting from this point, and in light of folio thinking within the assessment framework, teachers strive to find innovative ways to involve students in folio thinking by setting instrumental or integrative incentives. For instance, integrating assessment and technology may be a driving motive to turn students into folio thinkers. The best example here is the listening framework, where learners are asked to hear, remember, reflect, and evaluate after an exposure to a video or audio. In this sense, the electronic portfolio seems to be the appropriate tool to motivate learners and towards “a sense-making process of active engagement between the inner world of the person and the outer world of the environment” (Beard & Wilson, 2006, p.02). Therefore, boosting efficacy in terms of motivational thinking is crucially recommended by ELT practitioners.

In essence, teachers are recommended to be agents of integrative orientation in the pedagogy of culture and portfolio pedagogy. Since the e-portfolio is confined to cultural understanding, the target-language cultures are under scrutiny by EFL learners. In this respect, teachers as motivators need to work on raising integrative motivation. In a language learning context, the latter denotes learning the target language close to the native community. Pedagogically speaking, activities, techniques, and affective strategies should develop positive attitudes towards the target societies and cultures. Dörnyei and Csizér (1998, p.215) provide the following so-called ‘Ten Amendments’ for motivating language learners.

- Set a personal example with your own behaviour.
- Create a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere in the classroom.
- Present the tasks properly.
- Develop a good relationship with the learners.
- Increase the learners’ linguistic self-confidence.
- Make the language classes interesting.
- Promote learner autonomy.
- Personalize the learning process.
- Increase the learners’ goal-orientedness.
- Familiarize learners with the target language culture.

Another way to motivate learners to engage in the e-portfolio implementation is to make them familiar with the use of technologies, especially we have remarked that the oscillations in performance for the different technology applications did not enable some students to monitor their progress on specific aspects as well as their overall technology use.

#### **4.6.4 Enablers**

The teaching and assessment practice inside the classroom may be influenced by different factors, such as the teaching method or the teachers' beliefs. In light of assessment, the emergence of the portfolio dates back to the introduction of the communicative language teaching method. From an assessment perspective, this method maximizes teachers' roles over the existing traditional roles that are said to be teacher-centered. In light of these roles, Breen and Candlin (1980, p. 99) state that:

The teacher has two leading roles: the first is to facilitate the communication process between all participants in the classroom and between these participants and the various activities and texts. The second role is to act as an independent participant within the learning-teaching group. The latter role is closely related to the objectives of the first role and arises from it. These roles imply a set of secondary roles for the teacher; first, as an organizer of resources and as a resource himself, second as a guide within the classroom procedures and activities. . . . A third role for the teacher is that of researcher and learner, with much to contribute in terms of appropriate knowledge and abilities, actual and observed experience of the nature of learning and the organizational capacities.

It follows that the teaching qualities, as mentioned above, flow into the enablement inside the classroom. The role of enabler seems of paramount importance in e-portfolio pedagogy, which requires a complex set of cognitive and metacognitive abilities. To this intent, the teacher involves learners in a supportive environment that familiarizes them with the use of e-portfolio. Perhaps the most challenging task in language teaching is to get students involved in practicing something they have never experienced before. Turning them from dependence into independence may require much effort and time because most of the EFL classrooms are mixed-abilities.

Sometimes it is highly complicated to get students involved in certain learning situations due to many considerations, such as ambiguity, attitudes, or complexity. Here, the chief common point is the matter of how teachers find real-life solutions to such situations. By necessity, the teacher should be an enabler. Plausibly explained, “this kind of teacher is confident enough to share control with learners, or perhaps hand it over to them entirely” (Scrivener, 2005, p.25). Regarding the nature of the folio thinking approach, it is highly complicated to engage EFL students, notably those of the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle, in assessment activities depending on higher-order skills. To be agents of enabling, teachers can enable learners in terms of three aspects: the subject matter mainly represented in knowledge; the methodological underpinnings that make up any construct; and the behavioural data that go with any learning situation. (Scrivener, 2005, pp.25-26).

#### **4.6.5 Prompters**

It would seem reasonable to say that being a prompter is not different from being an enabler, but prompting is more effective than enabling in action. In its broadest sense, the teacher prompts learners under challenging situations by providing instructions, solutions and creating sympathetic ground or moral help. It is said that prompting is done with discretion and not adamantly initiated (Harmer, 2001, p. 60). In the portfolio implementation, it seems time-consuming for the students to get familiar with the practical mechanisms of the folio thinking process, so it is among the teachers’ responsibilities to supply the right amount of encouragement. Regarding the nature of implementation, students lacked unavoidably certainty about the adopted methodology or the content. This might influence their commitment or decrease their motivation.

The teacher prompter is the one who provides ongoing encouragement in order for the students to get comfortable with the e-portfolio pedagogy. Inside the classroom, the teacher prompter is participative because learners give suggestions about certain aspects of learning, and the teacher shares the learning issue collaboratively with them. For instance, to compile an e-portfolio, the content should be determined in advance. In this vein, the teacher is recommended to give prompts. That is to say, he/she should not be autocratic by imposing content. Learners’ suggestions should be taken into consideration to keep a sense of dynamism. Interestingly enough, providing such prompts increases learners’ motivation and removes the contextual constraints of the e-portfolio implementation.

#### 4.7 Using Other Alternatives to Assessment

The increasing dissatisfaction with traditional assessment insists on the adoption of other alternatives to assessment. The latter is considered performance-based in which the learners are required to generate rather than choose a response (Herman, Aschbacher & Winters, 1992). Also, alternative assessment is said to be dynamic because the individuals being assessed are required to use different metacognitive skills that improve their assessment skills. In the context of language learning, alternative assessment has proved to be encompassing considering that it is not restricted only to the measurement of linguistic data; it can assess other extra-linguistic data. Regarding cultural understanding, as our case in point, alternative assessment demonstrated precise eligibility to assess affective data that seems challenging to highlight through other assessment tools.

Alternative assessment is performance-based because the teacher refers mainly to students' performances and does not tailor fine-tuned tests that give unclear data about students' profiles. It is endorsed for being based directly on performance-based objectives and not on specific learning situations. Explicitly, it gives a realistic account of language ability over a while than it is stressed in a few minutes by testing. According to Brown and Hudson (1998, pp. 654-655), alternative assessment is endorsed for the following characteristics:

1. Require students to perform, create, produce or do something;
2. use real-world contexts or simulations;
3. are nonintrusive in that they extend the day-to-day classroom activities;
4. allow students to be assessed on what they normally do in class every day ;
5. use tasks that represent meaningful instructional activities ;
6. focus on processes as well as products;
7. tap into higher level thinking and problem solving skills;
8. provide information about both the strengths and weaknesses of students;
9. are multi-culturally sensitive when properly administered;
10. ensure that people , not machines , do the scoring ,using human judgments;
11. encourage open disclosure of standards and rating criteria; and
12. call upon teachers to perform new instructional and assessment roles.

Building an in-depth cultural understanding in language learning classrooms has become a necessity regarding the pressing need for communication-based on academic training. This understanding implies teaching and assessment following deliberate pedagogical procedures. In terms of evaluation, one can say that traditional testing has some clear-cut limitations, especially what concerns communication and culture. Since cultural understanding draws a lot on the affective side, assessment tools need to be used based on priorities. Previous studies proved that testing is solely for the quantification of cultural knowledge, notably factual knowledge. Attitudes, which are at the heart of understanding cultures, are hard to determine and it is rather harder to explore the extent to which they witness improvements over time. Other assessment tools, namely checklists, journals, and observations, are alternatives to providing comprehensive accounts of learners' cultural development.

#### 4.7.1 Journals

Journals are among the performance-based assessment tools that language teachers rarely use. Under the constructivist approach, journals gain popularity as learning tools in language classrooms due to their emphasis on self-reflection. In light of the latter, it should be mentioned that journals, as assessment tools, depend on the folio thinking process. It is a technically sophisticated form through which folio thinking pedagogy is fostered. It is said that the usability of journals is versatile because "they can range from language learning logs to grammar discussions, to responses to readings, to attitudes and feelings about one-self" (Brown, 2002, p.418). In terms of personal experiences, compiling journals may enable students to inspect materials introduced in the classroom, and students are personally allowed to examine their development. Decisions about learning are likely to be taken by dating back to past performances as the reference point.

Using journals in language education, especially for assessment purposes, is often associated with writing skills and used through paper-based or electronic forms (e-journals). There is no difference between portfolios and journals since the learning experiences and artifacts might be stored on an organized basis. Teachers and learners can communicate the content through feedback to keep the implementation dynamic through communication between the teacher and the learner (Trejos, 2008). Stevens and Cooper (2009, pp. 6-7) identify the following specifications that characterize the use of journal educational tasks:

**Written:** writing is the dominant mode to compile journals.

**Dated:** entries are determined by dates.

**Informal:** writings often are not governed by academic norms.

**Flexible:** accessing, formatting, modifying, and other options are quickly done.

**Private:** the journal compiler undertakes it for personal use, not public distribution

**Archival:** by time, the journal can become an archival piece or document.

The practical way of writing journals in language classrooms is not an easy task due to the demanding skills that learners should be aware of, especially for assessment purposes. Pre-service and novice teachers can also use the journals for professional purposes (professional journals) to self-assess their educational development. The following guidelines are recommended to pursue to write systematic journals:

- Specify to students what the purpose of the journal is (response to reading, learning log, grammar commentary )
- Give clear directions to students on how to get started (many students will never have written a journal before and may be mystified about what to do). Sometimes an abbreviated model journal entry helps.
- Give guidelines on length of each entry and any other format expectations.
- Collect journals on pre-announced dates and return them promptly
- Be clear yourself on the principle purpose of the journal and make sure your feedback speaks to that purpose.

(Brown, 2004, p.418)

#### 4.7.2 Diaries

Diaries are seen as an autobiographical narrative written by language learners, usually including all experienced inside and outside the classroom. Teachers, as assessors, consider diaries as a rich source to determine learners' beliefs, assumptions, and feelings (Pavlenko, 2007, p. 165). It is worth noting that diaries and journals, as necessary introspective tools, are versatile through which they are used for different purposes: as assessment tools, learning tools, and research tools. Bailey and Ochsner (1983, p. 189) have stated that:

A diary in second language learning, acquisition, or teaching is an account of a second language experience as recorded in a first-person journal. The diarist may be a language teacher or a language learner – but the central



characteristic of the diary studies is that they are introspective: the diarist studies his own teaching or learning. Thus he can report on affective factors, language learning strategies, and his own perceptions --facets of the language learning experience which are normally hidden or largely inaccessible to an external observer (Qtd in Allwright & Bailey, 1991).

From an assessment perspective, a broader assertion can be drawn about the eligibility of diaries to assess non-linguistic knowledge, such as attitudes and motivation. Assessing cultural understanding can be easy since affective factors play a leading role in this framework. To enhance the self-assessment aspect of diaries, it would be better to attach an assessment checklist, rubric, or a questionnaire. In another way, diaries foster self-assessment. This does not mean that the teacher has a passive role, but the learners' work is preferably discussed in a teacher-learner or learner-teacher interactive framework. Novice teachers can also use diaries for professional purposes.

#### **4.7.3 Interviews**

Regardless of the purpose for which they are used, interviews are often used to elicit qualitative data for alternative assessment. Also, they might be used as a research tool where they are more familiar with ethnographic and cultural phenomena. They are not used only in educational settings but also to winnow competence for employability. In a language learning context, interviews provide teachers with data about the criteria of appropriateness and meaningfulness of language use. They are acknowledged for yielding linguistic and non-linguistic data. Through a series of questions, the interviewer can observe, diagnose, and evaluate at the same time the weaknesses and strengths of certain areas of language learning. Brown (2004, pp. 265-266) states that the interview is used as an assessment alternative to realize the following goals:

- Assess students' oral production,
- ascertain a student's needs before designing a course or curriculum,
- seek to discover a student's learning styles and preferences,
- ask a student to assess his or her own performance , and
- request an evaluation of a course.

Interviews are acknowledged for stimulating verbal interaction. Oller (1979, p.305) notes that "interviews are special cases of information that are examiner-directed." It

follows that the interviewer, as assessor, has the prerogative to orient the interviewee regardless of the type of the interview. Through free-flowing conversations, the interviewer collects verbal and non-verbal cues delivered by interviewees to be analyzed. From a cultural perspective, interviews in language learning contexts are primarily associated with ethnographic issues. Corbett (2003, p. 137) notes that "Interviewing respondents is an obvious way of encouraging learners to use their language skills 'ethnographically,' to gather information about aspects of the target culture." In this respect, interviews can elicit qualitative data, such as motivation, attitude, empathy, that might not be qualified through formal testing.

Interviews appear to be an authentic tool to assess cultural understanding. Based on the spoken model of language, the way of speaking may convey metacognitive and affective messages on the part of the interviewees. The interviewer's responsibility is to adapt and adopt interviews to the target needs, which requires a high degree of flexibility. For instance, using *Language Proficiency Interviews* may reveal interviewees' communication and socio-cultural strategies in international meetings. Also, *The Cross-cultural Interview*, which helps an interviewer to determine the interviewees' attitudes and empathy towards cultural diversity. Interviews, within the cultural context, are generally credited with their adequacy in assessing affective data. To substantiate this information, in a study that examined the effectiveness of different tools for assessing cultural understanding, Byram and Morgan (1994) found interviews to be an effective investigative procedure to determine attitudes. Having recognized the complexity of assessing attitudes, they pointed out that "certainly it was evident that the expression of such attitudes was far more forthcoming in an informal interview than in a formal examination situation" (p167). The oral way contributes strategically to unveil affective data.

#### 4.7.4 Self-Assessment

Another alternative to assessment in EFL classrooms is to get the students involved in self-assessment. The latter means that students get actively involved in the assessment process through reflecting/on specific aspects of learning and drawing assessment decisions from a personal perspective. In this vein, Rea Dickins (2000, p.391) points out that self-assessment allows students "to be able to take responsibility for making decisions about their language learning development". As a result, students can move from formative assessment to self-assessment by doing such tasks, depending on their active participation,

learning assumptions, and their increasing expertise in their learning. It can be said that self-assessment is a developed stage of formative assessment.

Self-assessment can be done by students informally and formally. Informal self-assessment draws on students' real-life interactions without pre-planned, asking these questions: *Does today's video demonstrate enough geographical knowledge about X area or city?* Students can engage in this kind of assessment inside and outside the classrooms. Formal self-assessment is more systematic than the informal one, through which students collect information about their performances and take assessment decisions via designed checklists, inventories, and questionnaires. Through designing such tools, it seems clear that teachers play an enablement role in the success of formal self-assessment. What would be essential in self-assessment is the emphasis on purpose rather than the form of assessment.

As far as learners are concerned, reflections on /in daily performances are the basis for drawing self-assessment decisions. Self-assessment activities need to be designed following strategies that stimulate reflective thinking. Everhard and Murphy (2015, p. 08) have said that "reflection will be considered in terms of being the glue or cohesive factor which links assessment with autonomy". It is through reflection that students can engage in self-assessment. The acquisition of self-assessment skills is linked to the context of learning. Learners are sometimes asked to reflect on their learning, and they are sometimes asked to reflect on a specific learning situation or event. For instance, the obtained findings of this research, reflections have been launched to address a specific context, cultural understanding, and self-assessment or self-evaluation, in this sense, requires specialized skills and advanced meta-cognitive awareness that deal with non-linguistic data. Self-assessment within the cultural understanding context should be noted in critical evaluation and making judgments about other cultural backgrounds. In this respect, Boud (1995, p.15) states that "peer assessment and peer feedback are activities that are commonly linked with self-assessment and, in the right circumstances, can considerably enhance self-assessment". Feedback from the surrounding environment is an integral part of this process.

#### 4.8 The Need for Internet-Mediated Communication in EFL Classrooms

Since cultural understanding draws heavily on the socio-cultural norms of speaking, extra importance needs to be attached to communication since it is directly interrelated with language and culture. Within this globalized world, the influence of technology unleashes a torrent of interconnectedness paralleled with the excessive spread of English around the globe. In the light of interconnectedness, the way people communicate has gained ground due to the intensive use of internet networks that have become easy to access. To this end, communication is one of the critical areas of life that has seen drastic change due to the increasing number of computers and internet use (Greiffenstern, 2010, p.02). Based on the facts mentioned above, communication is mostly internet-mediated, and there should be some cyber-pragmatic rules that consolidate linguistic and cultural skills, especially in language classrooms. It is for this purpose that cyber-pragmatics is seen as a cardinal aspect whenever internet-based communication exists.

Mastering the norms of speaking and the rules of interaction, which differ from one cultural background to another, provides a solid basis for good communication devoid of misunderstandings. Involving language learners in such programs inside educational settings may create further cultural, linguistic, and social interaction, and it is worth reflecting, at this point, that engaging in internet-mediated communication should be governed by norms of formality and politeness. The abundance of social networks makes students addicted to the daily entry, engaging in routine conversation, regardless of the written and spoken modes, away from the interaction norms.

Some universities have started to adopt internet-mediated communication within the Algerian context to widen their linguistic and intercultural horizons. This seems clear through dedicated online interactions, such as the Global Virtual Classroom (GVC in brief). Quite understandably, this initiative is welcomed and needs due attention from the responsible individuals to make it feasible in large-scale universities. Byram (2009, p.130) goes a step forward while asserting that:

Depending upon their age and level of linguistic and intercultural competence, learners can be encouraged to interact with groups of people in other countries with interests in active citizenship. Class to class

exchanges, whether real or virtual, are an ideal medium for this and area well-established tradition in foreign language teaching.

Perhaps less recognized, but no less accurate, pragmatic awareness enables students to develop a socio-pragmatic understanding integral to cultural competence. Since the focus of pragmatics is attached to interaction in various communicative contexts, the success of cross-cultural dialogue has become based on the proper interpretation of socio-pragmatic differences. The reverse side may lead to a socio-pragmatic failure. These differences are recommended to be taught in listening and speaking modules before engaging in real internet-mediated communication. Therefore, it becomes a prerequisite to nurture the pragmatic aspect through adopting deliberate strategies.

#### **4.9 Culture Pedagogy: A Serious Rethinking**

The way culture is taught and learnt in the EFL context is an unavoidable topic of discussion and should be diligently revisited. To raise EFL learners' cultural awareness, rich sources and resources should raise their cultural awareness. In this sense, several modular frameworks are likely to broaden their cultural horizons. Among these modules, one can consider literature and civilisation, writing, grammar, and oral expression modules may create a favorable situation to immerse in foreign cultural contexts. For instance, history, civilisation, and literature are key aspects that make up any culture. Pedagogically speaking, ELT professionals, regardless of the levels being taught, need to teach these aspects according to specific methods, strategies, and materials that increase learners' motivational thinking.

Based on the evidence generated from the practical side, language continues to be taught as systemic knowledge, i.e., phonetics, grammar, lexis, and other systems. Teaching about culture, if it is done, does not meet the future aspiration. For instance, in terms of objectives, culture should be taught and learned to acquire competence and skills, and there is, in action, a quasi-absence of these pre-specified objectives. Kramersch (2001) has argued that "in practice, teachers teach language and culture, or culture in language, but not language as culture". It follows that culture is taught without objectives. Whenever culture is taught, there is a remarkable neglect of communicative needs.

Acquiring cultural competence needs to be grounded in particular techniques and strategies. Up to this point, since teaching is driven by learning, it has been a challenge for

ELT professionals to create motivational and enthusiastic strategies and techniques that enhance learners' cognitive, meta-cognitive, and affective abilities. The status quo ensured that learners focus heavily on linguistic knowledge and this critical issue is the ramification of some teachers' negligence of the cultural dimension. Without being too critical, the teachers' questionnaire revealed that most of them do not rely on techniques to teach culture, even though they mentioned they focus on culture. By necessity, teaching culture has to be attached on a qualification basis.

#### **4.9.1 Teaching Civilisation and Literature via the Cultural Model**

The need for raising cultural awareness in EFL classrooms necessitates constant immersion into cultural contexts, even within modules that tackle merely systemic English. For instance, grammar, writing, and other modules are seen as sources to teach culture under the current cultural diversity, and sometimes they offer favorable situations to use specific techniques, such as drawing comparisons to elicit cultural differences and similarities. The frameworks of literature and civilisation are typically modules where language and culture can be easily mediated. The challenging issue is whether they are taught to stimulate reflective learning in which learners may use specific cultural skills to raise their cultural awareness. Despite being explicitly introduced for literature and civilisation, Carter and Long (1991) have advocated the cultural model to broaden students' cultural knowledge.

The pedagogical role of literature and civilization needs to increase students' knowledge of the world. This means that the modules offer cross-cultural insights through social issues under analysis. Within the cultural model, literature and civilisation are no longer dealt with under the traditional view of a corpus of works and historical events tackled over periods. Language teachers are facing the challenge of making literature and civilisation as sources for the moral development. The latter is achieved through a profound reflection on others' values, assumptions, and cultural beliefs and how they contribute to building up their cultural identity.

It is worth assuring that the different kinds of texts adopted in literature and civilization should not be treated as mere pieces of learning directed at aesthetic purposes, i.e., resources to enrich linguistic eloquence. Said in another way, it should be a source for nurturing cultural skills and competence. The cultural model, in this respect, should not be confined to the modules mentioned above since understanding cultures is an integral part of language proficiency. For instance, the module of listening and speaking needs to be

commensurate with the abovementioned model since cultural information is constantly addressed in classroom talk. Likewise, the module on phonetics highlights linguistic differences. In terms of pronunciation, being aware of the differences within the different varieties of English can be a real cultural awareness. Furthermore, of course, using adequate assessment activities, such as reflective writing and speaking, would be very helpful to prove the primacy of these modules to improve cultural understanding.

#### **4.9.2 The Need for Intercultural Approach**

The intercultural theory has emerged to make foreign language education more communicatively responsive to the current interconnectedness. Intercultural competence is almost always implicated whenever interculturality is mentioned. Learning a foreign language is no longer depended on the mastery of linguistic knowledge, but this mastery should be empowered by being culturally aware of the practices of the target societies and communities, especially within the current non-stopping cultural diversity. Necessarily enough, education has to cope with the global transformations because:

The resulting socio-cultural fabric of our societies, combined with global interconnectedness, necessitate specific attitudes, behaviors', knowledge, skills and abilities to cope with the new cultural, media and emotional landscape when systems have shown limited capacity to embrace diversity. Therefore, the development of intercultural competences facilitates relationships and interactions among people from various origins and cultures as well as within heterogeneous groups, all of whom must learn to live together in peace.

(UNESCO, 2013)

Within this social bonding, curriculum designers, professionals, and educational experts valorize the intercultural dimension of foreign language learning programs. This sustained attention strives to raise the language learners' intercultural responsibilities and literacy in order for them to genuinely communicate with and understand people coming from different cultural backgrounds. This does not mean that the intercultural approach draws heavily on teachers as cultural pedagogues, but learners and other pedagogical practices contribute to intercultural pedagogy. Therefore, the intercultural dimension is seen as a part of language proficiency. Intercultural language teaching, to be successful, must be coupled with the following objectives:

- To teach, enact, and support learners intercultural competence as well as linguistic competence;
  - to create favourable context for learners to interact with people from different cultural backgrounds;
  - to enable them to act on the new perspectives and be convivial with people from other cultures as individuals with other distinctive perspectives, values and behaviors;
  - and to help them to be experiential learners via integrating personal experiences into their formal education.

The intercultural approach to language learning does not hinge merely upon teaching and learning culture but also considers assessment and the teaching-learning materials. The current research results revealed that the 1<sup>st</sup> year students who engaged in the e-portfolio implementation were responsive to teaching and assessing culture. Students do no longer perceive learning culture as a matter of knowledge. They use their own experiences as a source of learning and assessment. The same idea is held by Corbett (2003), who supported the intercultural approach that enriches the language-learning experience and contributes to the educational objectives of better understanding one's community and others. He sees that portfolios "would not be an investigation into some aspect of a target culture; rather it would demonstrate the candidate's ability to conform to the expectations of the target culture" (p.200). Other tools, such as projects and reflective essays, share the same merits as the portfolio.

#### **4.9.3 Teachers as Agents of Interculturality**

The intercultural approach necessitates further responsibilities for the teacher inside the classroom. Teaching culture following specific techniques is not thought sufficient to meet the expectations. Assessment has to have equal importance as teaching because nothing can be improved without being measured. On this basis, it is worth mentioning that the assessment tools should be adapted and adopted in line with the communicative needs to surmount the possible deficiencies, especially the affective side, which seems highly demanding and sensitive in terms of assessment. Assessment is not the only important aspect, but the teaching materials should be considered the keys to successful intercultural language education. Relying heavily on printed resources is no longer considered motivating, and there is a pressing need for teachers to adopt technology in the classrooms.



Teachers need to manage intercultural activities in language classrooms according to particular objectives. This task seems challenging due to several considerations. Inside the classrooms, teachers need to be neutral and objective. Teachers do not act on behalf of any perspective, but their proper role is to catch the students' interests and raise their intercultural and cross-cultural awareness. Teachers need to have a cultural development based on adequate training, supportive content, and a systematic selection of teaching materials on a professional level. Under the conditions mentioned above, it is much easier to teach intercultural competence. This does not mean merely making learners knowledgeable about the target language culture/s, but:

Teachers should be skillful in promoting an atmosphere in the classroom which allows learners to take risks in their thinking and feeling. Such skills are best developed in practice and in reflection on experience. They may find common ground in this with teachers of other subjects and/or in taking part themselves in learning experiences which involve risk and reflection. (Byram, 2002, p.28)

Based on their reflective practice, teachers need to adapt and adopt new pedagogical procedures to enable learners to surmount dismissive assumptions when negative attitudes are noticed, acquire new cultural skills, and raise their critical awareness. This cultural resilience, per se, is remarkably the job of highly professional, competent, and trained teachers. Pursuing the same professional development point, Benmoussat (2008, p 266) has given the following core skills that the intercultural language teacher should master.

- Teachers should have an appropriate communicative repertoire for various social functions and develop further the language skills needed for extended discourse.
- Teachers should have and develop further text skills, i.e.,
- The ability to interpret any piece of prose or variety of spoken language.
- Teachers should have and develop further the necessary skills to engage in intercultural discussions which lend themselves to reflective learning.
- Teacher should cater for what their learners need to know and what skills they need to acquire to discover other cultures for themselves.
- Teachers are called upon to develop an ethnographic stance towards classroom experience; it is now regarded as a significant path to professional development.

#### 4.9.4 Reflective Tasks

Reflection is one of the critical concepts that deserve great importance in the teaching and assessment of culture. Since the communication process pertains to the written and spoken language modes, there should be particular tasks that are adequate for students' needs and potential. Reflective tasks are used to assess levels of understanding of cultural relativity and explore learners' ability to adopt new cultural contexts to analyze instances of communication. These kinds of tasks are used to enhance self-assessment skills by mediating assessment and autonomy. Regarding the nature of cultural understanding, having a reflective mindset can be realized through involving students in deliberate training.

Within the EFL context, developing a solid cultural understanding should be attached to all the learning modules, and it is not only confined to the listening and speaking modules, which rely heavily on the spoken mode of language. Other skills are also worthy of attention, namely writing. Writing is another mode of communication through which writers can impart a cultural background. It is another way to consolidate the folio thinking skills by thinking about past experiences and critically evaluating what the writer would do differently in the future. This can be done through various tools, such as journals, diaries, portfolios, etc. From an experiential perspective, reflective writing strives to describe, analyze, and interpret data about specific experiences, so it is more personal than other types of writing. Improving reflective skills from the writing framework is better practiced within the modular framework of written expression. For instance, paragraphs and essays are categorized as comparison/contrast, descriptive, and narrative types. This is consistent with Byram's (1997) findings which upheld writing essays as a vehicle for reflection upon students' intercultural awareness. Through these types, students are expected to embody how they depict, describe, and convince personally. If the writing topic pertains to culture, this gives them a favourable situation to demonstrate their cultural skills.

As for the speaking skills, tasks need to be tailored accordingly to the students' linguistic and pragmatic needs. Since the cultural dimension falls into pragmatic knowledge, of course, this kind of knowledge is noticeably short in EFL contexts. Since input influences the output directly, listening seems the appropriate source to reflect on/in. For instance, in our study, we remarked that there was a socio-pragmatic failure in the

given test, and this failure cannot be surmounted only via audio-visual aids that expose real-life situations. Teaching pragmatics, namely the speech acts, seems rather demanding for language teachers since no particular module takes practical knowledge into account, except for linguistics, through which pragmatics is tackled on a theoretical basis, often at a conference. Regarding the interconnectedness and the pressing need for communication, there is an emphasis on the discursive attributes of various contexts, and "the internationalization of English also has implications for the teaching of politeness strategies, conversational routines, and other pragmatic aspects of conversational competence" (Thornbury & Slade, 2006, p.284).

#### **4.9.5 Teaching Interaction Skills**

The advances in communication studies are coupled with the pressing need to interact within the global interconnectedness. Preparing learners for international meetings necessitates an overemphasis on interaction skills, considering the verbal and non-verbal modes and their related strategies and skills. The aforementioned modes differ from one to another, from community to another, and from country to another, though they share the same language. Entailing these two aspects of communication is categorized as a symbolic exchange, which means that "while verbal symbols represent the digital aspect of our message exchange process, non-verbal symbols or cues (i.e., the smallest identifiable unit of communication) such as smiles represent the analogical aspects of our message exchange process" (Ting-Toomey, 1991, p.17). Language learners should be aware of these symbols, and ignoring them may turn communication into misunderstandings.

To develop a sense of meaningful and genuine interaction in foreign language classrooms, learners should be involved in activities that engage their interest and attention. The teacher's role is to create an ongoing interactive atmosphere that makes learners active participants in the interaction-oriented activities. Rivers (1987, p.9) has stated that:

Real interaction in the classroom requires the teacher to step out of the limelight, to cede a full role to the students in developing and carrying through activities, to accept all the kinds of opinions, and to be tolerant of errors the student makes while attempting to communicate.

Interactive classrooms are learner-centered and depend heavily on learners' motivational thinking. Many, if not most, foreign language learners are motivated to learn how to interact in the target language (Ur, 1984, p.120). Another motivational factor is culture per se which is acknowledged for increasing motivation in foreign language classrooms. In this respect, if the cultural topics are interesting (related to the exciting topics mentioned by the learners), this increases the potential for intercultural interaction. Therefore, there will be culturally responsive interaction through learners' initiations and responses and teachers' feedback.

Within the cultural understanding framework, interaction is recommended to be fostered on a factual basis, i.e., the exposure to real-life input provides an accurate account of the target situation that, in turn, stimulates authentic input on the part of learners. For instance, teaching speech acts from native speakers through videos and audio would be more realistic than teaching them from handouts. Realism is corroborated for creating and stimulating more extraordinary thoughtfulness, and students interact with a high degree of spontaneity. They observe explicitly verbal language in addition to non-verbal behaviours. Authenticity is often paralleled with the use of technology, and the latter, primarily through synchronous tools (web-based communication), contributes strategically to providing sufficient input (norms of politeness, level of formality, non-verbal cues).

#### **4.10 Cultural Vigilance**

There is an overemphasis on the specifications of a specific background, community, or country when defining culture. Sensitively enough, it is difficult not to be influenced by cultural artifacts that may not go consistently with learners' own cultural beliefs, especially when they are not mature enough. That is, sometimes they do not have the burgeoning awareness to differentiate between actual and wrong behaviour. Another background issue is that this sensitive issue can be detrimental if learners are exposed to inappropriate cultural loads early, such as middle school levels. The most crucial point to keep in mind is that, within the ubiquity of social networks, the dissemination of cultural stereotypes helps widely increase cultural distortion and oversimplification that form false cultural beliefs.

In foreign language classrooms, teachers need to be mediators to surmount cultural misconceptions that may have negative ramifications. It is very often that these misconceptions have to do with cultural differences and similarities between the local culture and foreign cultures and the way students tackle them objectively. The cultural

power introduced in language education materials is the question to keep the lines open to a more comprehensive conception. It is probably true to argue, in this realm, that “at a time when there is much emphasis on the cultural component, to develop cultural awareness and ultimately cross-cultural competence, culture teaching remained peripheral”. (Benmoussat, 2003, p. 227). In such a situation, the teacher becomes an ethnographer, which requires him/her to be culturally trained and qualified. Corbett (2003, p. 96) states that “the construction of ethnographic accounts of cultures is a job for highly trained, dedicated, professional researchers”.

To think about cultural vigilance, language teachers need to pay special attention to the unconscious misuse of materials, cultural distortion, and underestimating some local cultural information. For instance, despite what it has to offer, technology remains sensitively to teachers’ preoccupation regarding its use in education. In this line of reasoning, Kern (2006, p. 200) points out that “it is not technology per se that affects the learning of language and culture, but the particular uses of technology”. This emphasis on use highlights the central importance of pedagogy and the teacher". Being cross-culturally does not mean neglecting our cultural beliefs but instead helps to surmount the communicative predicaments and the misunderstandings that will be resulted from them.

#### **4.11 Strategies to Enhance Cultural Understanding in EFL Classrooms**

Mediating language and culture need good theorizing, adequate techniques, and practical strategies, not only on the part of teachers but also learners should be pedagogically committed to learning. The improvement of cultural understanding is not confined mainly to the four walls of classrooms, and learners’ personal experiences outside the classrooms may crucially enlarge their cultural horizons. In terms of strategies, several studies have shown that strategies used by learners are often associated with autonomy in the sense that the operations, steps, and routines are adopted and adapted by the learner to facilitate the learning process (Wenden & Rubin, 1987). This means that teachers need to act as strategic thinkers who apply strategy-based teaching. The rationale behind adopting learning strategies is to improve learning outcomes.

Learning culture is not only a matter of cognition, but different factors go in line with cognition since learning aims to improve cultural understanding. Extra-linguistic factors, such as social and affective factors, need to be reinforced through some unique strategies, such as communication and socio-affective strategies. According to Byram (1997),

FLT is ... concerned with communication but this has to be understood as more than the exchange of information and sending of messages, which has dominated 'communicative language teaching' in recent years. Even the exchange of information is dependent upon understanding how what one says or writes will be perceived and interpreted in another cultural context; it depends on the ability to de-centre and take up the perspective of the listener or reader. But successful 'communication' is not judged solely in terms of the efficiency of information exchange. It is focused on establishing and maintaining relationships. In this sense, the efficacy of communication depends upon using language to demonstrate one's willingness to relate, which often involves the indirectness of politeness rather than the direct and 'efficient' choice of language full of information (p. 3).

It follows that familiarity with foreign cultural perspectives is likely to be improved by adopting appropriate strategies. The prominent strategies that can be sorted out from the above quotation are the communication and socio-affective strategies that draw heavily on learners' specific higher-order skills.

#### **4.11.1 Communication Strategies**

From a communication perspective, interlocutors cannot rely merely on linguistic competence to get the messages across, and the linguistic abilities need to be paralleled with the mastery of some non-verbal cues. "Being competent in communication involves more than just an understanding of syntax, and the range of expressions within a language (...) language teaching has also changed to incorporate this link between language and culture" (Hymes, 1972, p. 270). For learners, the link between language and culture should be paralleled with the use of communication strategies that aim to find psycholinguistic solutions and interpretations to the possible breakdowns happening in conversations, i.e., solutions that reduce language complexity to avoid errors and expression of the communicative goal differently but at the same level of complexity (Faerch & Kasper, 1984). Another aim is to consider that communication strategies play an essential role in negotiating between communicators (Tarone, 1981; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). The term communication pertains to language as well as nonverbal language, which includes everything from using sounds (paralanguage), movements (kinesics), and space

(proxemics), to many aspects of material culture (food, clothing, objects, visual design) and can be understood as the functional aspect of culture.

Teachers are recommended to adopt communication strategies to consolidate learners' communication abilities. They are different and can be verbal, non-verbal, and visual strategies. Verbal strategies entail real-life situations, such as face-to-face conversations, cued dialogues, paraphrasing, e-mail, letters, etc. Non-verbal strategies, which are underused in language classrooms, include body language and facial expressions. Visual strategies depend heavily on audio-visual illustrations. These strategies should be grounded in criteria commensurate with a high degree of authenticity. Tarone (1980, p. 419) offers the following criteria that may govern any communication strategy:

- 1- A speaker desires to communicate a meaning X to a listener
- 2- The speaker believes the linguistic or sociolinguistic structure desired to communicate meaning X is unavailable or is not shared with the listener
- 3- The speaker chooses to :
  - a- Avoid –not attempt to communicate meaning X or
  - b- Attempt alternate means to communicate meaning X. The speaker stops trying alternatives when it seems clear to the speaker that there is shared meaning.

#### **4.11.2 Socio-Affective Strategies**

Socio-affective strategies mean engaging in contact with students, teachers, or other target language users. These strategies provide learners with opportunities to practice inside and outside the classrooms. Social strategies include engaging in conversations with target language users or native speakers, watching TV programmes and other audio-visual resources. The social context in which learning takes place is of utmost importance to the development of the educational endeavour (Harmer, 2003). Affective or emotional strategies are learners' efforts to overcome feelings that inhibit learning, such as thinking positively about specific learning problems, self/peer encouragement, etc. Oxford (1990, p. 143) notes that "saying or writing positive statements to oneself to feel more confident in learning a new language". Plainly stated, learning a foreign language cannot be done without immersing yourself in its cultural context.

Learning culture is facilitated by social interactions and communication with others in a variety of settings. In light of this argument, it might be said that socio-affective

strategies are mostly adopted outside educational settings in informal ways. For instance, social networking, especially with native speakers, maintains a sense of life-long learning. By doing so, learners may get familiar with the target language used, culturally contextualized, and away from the teachers' help. Within cultural understanding, socio-affective strategies are seen as strategically contributing to the development of positive attitudes towards foreign cultures. One of the main problems that hinder teaching and learning culture is the affective one. Using socio-affective strategies helps learners to be strategically competent.

The endorsement of socio-affective strategies in whatever locus may enhance learners' interpersonal skills. Interpersonal skills entail effective communication, empathy, active listening, and cultural awareness. Hayes (1994, p.5) describes interpersonal skills as "the goal-directed behaviours used in face-to-face interactions, which are effective in bringing about a desired state of affairs". For instance, engaging in face-to-face conversations or any authentic situations may reveal many hidden assumptions, such as willingness to communicate, inhibition, impulsivity, and extroversion. These assumptions, which draw on humanistic, social, and clinical psychology, are effective for cross-cultural communication.

#### **4.12 Active Listening**

Active listening is seen as a contributing way to raise cultural awareness in foreign language classrooms. Active listening is a state of mind that necessitates integrating the listening skills: hearing, understanding, remembering, reflecting, and evaluating. "Active listening has been described as a multi-step process, including making empathetic comments, asking appropriate questions, and paraphrasing and summarizing for verification". (Cramer, 1998; Gordon, 2003; in McNaughton et al, 2007, p.224). Put differently, the listener gets rid of the passive nature of listening which is confined only to hearing as an audience and being a part of the conversation. Being a part of the interaction maintains the active listener's openness to others' input.

In culture-based contexts, listening actively to a person or audio may enable the listener to find out the cultural background of the other, then make evaluative decisions based on respect and understanding. Active listening is not merely confined to classroom practices; however, students may engage outside the classrooms, depending on diverse listening materials, such as TVs and social networks. Therefore, it is categorized as an

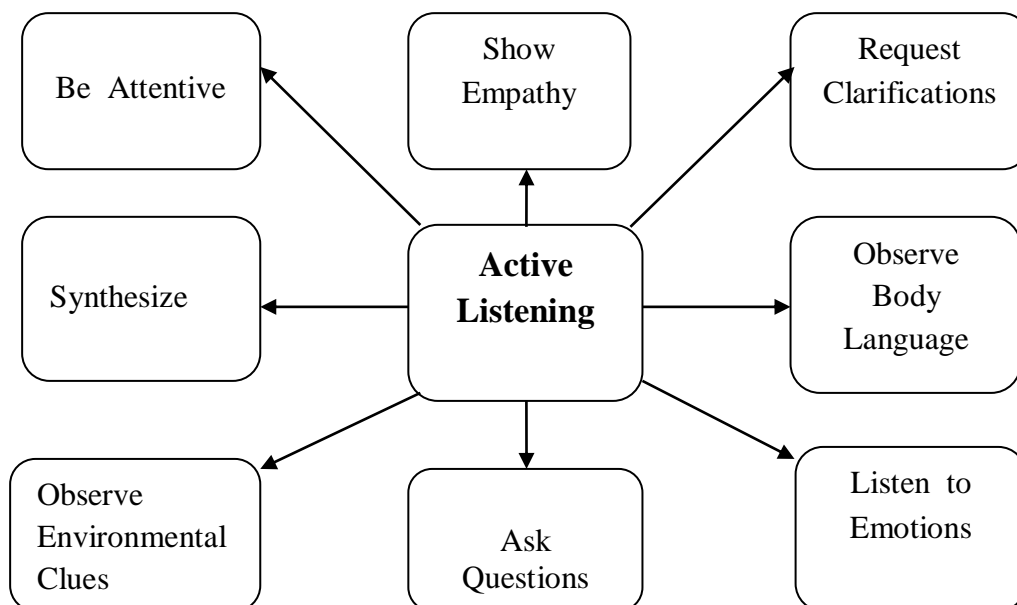


intensive and extensive kind of listening. It is recommended to engage in critical listening because it requires more attention for the sake of:

- Separating facts from opinions and help students to prevent opinions from influencing their understanding of the facts.
- Evaluating speakers' qualifications, motives, and biases that help students to understand how to weight fact and arguments.
- Testing ideas for effectiveness and appropriateness and help students to test ideas they learn.
- Recognizing the speaker's reasoning and help students to understand the speaker's logic or lack of logic.

(Rost, 1994).

Since language is an integral part of the language, active listening contributes to language awareness. In light of the latter, most cultural misunderstandings are triggered by linguistic complexities. For instance, listening to native speakers of English sometimes causes inhibitions because learners do not understand the colloquial vocabulary items. Another issue is the variety of accents, which are related to some cultural attributes, may influence understanding in one way or another. "Many foreign-language learners who are used to the accent of their teacher are surprised and dismayed when they find they have difficulty understanding someone else" (Ur, 1984, p.20). Awareness of accents enables learners to integrate flexibly and to be familiar with active listening contexts.



**Figure 4.1. Active listening skills**

In general, listening is recommended to be taught through authentic materials. The usage of authentic texts, audio, and real-life in listening is credited with developing functional, cultural awareness, i.e., a culture's more pragmatic or survival-oriented features. For example, linguistic complexity was often a sliding barrier for certain students through the analysis of portfolios. Students as active listeners need to be familiar with the content of the authentic materials. Porter and Roberts (1979, p.47) state that "acquiring knowledge of the format and probable content is part of the cultural boundary-crossing entailed in foreign language listening." In this respect, cultural authenticity relies on the degree of authenticity of the materials used for listening.

#### **4.13 Techniques to Teach Culture**

In teaching culture, techniques and activities differ in terms of the demanding requirements, the objectives they are taught, and students' levels and abilities. Notably, there should be a clear distinction between technique and activity. A technique is a procedure, including specific technical details, used by the teacher to make certain aspects of the classroom go well, whereas an activity implies involving learners in doing something to fulfill the course objectives (Richards, 1990). Anthony (1963, p. 63) states that "a technique is implementational - that takes place in a classroom. It is a particular trick, stratagem, or contrivance used to accomplish an immediate objective. Techniques

must be consistent with a method, and therefore in harmony with an approach as well” (Cited in Richards & Rogers, 1986). Since they are aware of the classroom's atomistic details, language teachers are in a good position to select the appropriate techniques and activities commensurate with the objectives.

However, foreign language theories are growing over time, and fresh studies and practices come into reality, imparting new methods, techniques, and strategies to keep language inseparable from culture. Teaching culture is not an easy task because teachers must fulfill cognitive, behavioural, and affective goals. Language and culture can be mediated in the classroom through teaching the four skills and via the written and spoken modes. Culture can be taught through every aspect of the language and via a specifically designed cultural framework. Pedagogically speaking, authenticity, motivation, and others are criteria primarily considered for judging the efficiency of techniques. Stern (1992, pp. 223-232) states some techniques used for teaching culture and presents them in eight groups according to, what he terms, different approaches. They come as follows:

- Creating an authentic classroom environment (techniques include, for example, displays and exhibitions of realia);
- Providing cultural information (for example, cultural aside, culture capsule and culture cluster);
- Cultural problem solving (for example, culture assimilator);
- Behavioural and affective aspects (for example, drama and mini-drama);
- Cognitive approaches (for example, student research);
- The role of literature and humanities (for example, literary readings and watching films);
- Real-life exposure to the target culture (for example, visits to the class by native speakers, penpals, and visits to other countries);
- Using cultural community resources (for example, when a foreign language learning occurs in the target-language community, the everyday environment can be used as a resource).

The quasi-absence of techniques when teaching culture seemed clear through the teachers' questionnaire. This may have pedagogical implications for the cultural dimension of ELT and may indicate the importance of teaching culture via techniques. The techniques

are typically in parallel with specific priorities and objectives. The techniques are adequate to improve cultural skills, raise cultural awareness, and determine attitudes at ease. They are used in teaching different modular frameworks within EFL classrooms. This is consistent with Sercu (2005), who found that the use of different techniques in teaching culture promotes the acquisition of *savoirs*, *savoir apprendre*, *savoir-comprendre*, *savoir-faire*, *savoir-s'engager* and *savoir-etre*. Techniques are more harmonious with technology through which remarkable advantages seem more associated with the affective side, notably motivation and attitudes, than with the cognitive and metacognitive sides. The exposure to audio, videotapes and other audio-visual tools makes learners actively engaged with highly motivational reasoning. A parallel issue to the affective side, integrating technology into teaching culture makes learners immerse in authentic contexts with sustained attention. The techniques are seen as adequate to improve cultural understanding in teaching different modular frameworks within EFL classrooms.

#### **4.13.1 The Audio-Motor Unit**

This technique is specifically used within the listening comprehension framework to consolidate cross-cultural understanding in language classrooms. Simply put, learners react physically to commands given by the teacher, and these commands impart cultural knowledge and situations about foreign cultures (Stern, 1992, p. 226). Actions and feelings, regardless of being shown verbally or non-verbally by the learners, are advocated to enhance cross-cultural learning. Anyhow, it is said to be effective for motivating learners' through integrating technology into the classroom. Additionally, it is a contributing strategy to stimulate motor skills in the classroom. That is why the total physical response method is mentioned whenever we talk about motor skills. This current technique keeps language and culture inseparable and makes learners familiar with different cultural situations and experiences they may face. The audio-motor unit technique aims at enhancing cross-cultural skills, notably those that hinge upon non-verbal cues. It is worth mentioning that this technique is rarely used in the Algerian EFL context.

#### **4.13.2 Stereotyping**

Another helpful technique that is widely endorsed in the teaching about cultures is stereotyping. Stereotypes are general views taken about a group of people or a place that does not reflect a realistic image. Lippmann (1966) considers stereotypes as simplified 'pictures in our peoples' heads. Stereotypes are adopted in foreign language contexts for

the sake of verifying their existence across different cultural backgrounds. Using stereotypes to increase cultural awareness requires a due attention because it can create detriments that can be over-generated. In this vein, Cain (1991) states that “stereotypes are tenacious and do not disappear as simply a consequence of exposure to attractive images and the process of language learning” (Qtd in Byram & Morgan, 1994, p.41). Here, it should be explained that within EFL classrooms, stereotypes are often launched towards foreign cultures. Perhaps less recognized, stereotypes are indeed used to teach about cultures and not to teach culture.

### **4.13.3 Cultural Dilemma**

Another technique that consolidates learners’ cultural skills is the cultural dilemma. This technique comes as a problem-solving situation in which students critically evaluate the cultural differences and similarities found in an actual world situation. Cultural dilemmas aim at improving communication skills and dealing with cultural understandings and shocks whenever being in inadequate situations. This technique is rarely used because it requires the learner to be interculturally competent since the dialogue pertains to intercultural communication. This means that the interculturalist is ready to surmount the misunderstandings in terms of knowledge, awareness, skills, and attitudes.

To integrate cultural dilemmas into classroom activities, teachers may present this technique in various forms. For instance, the teacher can provide learners with stereotypes about particular cultures, and s/he asks them to reflect and critically evaluate them according to their visions. Cultural dilemmas might also be addressed by involving students directly in interviews. No matter how this technique is introduced, what should be of utmost importance are the cultural skills, notably the skills of interpreting, relating, and evaluating cultural differences and similarities. Teachers need to make learning culture familiar with this technique, despite the demand for cognitive and metacognitive abilities to make learning culture commonplace.

### **4.13.4 The Culture Capsules and Clusters**

The most commonly used technique for teaching culture is the cultural capsule. The culture capsule was first coined by Taylor and Sorenson (1961), denoting that the teachers present a specific topic about the target culture/s, and they involve learners in a discussion in which they can elicit similarities and differences vis-à-vis their own culture. Culture

capsules are exercised orally, sometimes depending on audio-visual aids. Within this technique, the teacher can act as an information provider and as an enabler when learners lack the sense of initiation. More than one culture capsule is considered a culture cluster. The included capsules should be related to only one topic. Culture capsules and clusters help learners raise their cultural awareness and improve their skills by acquiring cultural facts, interpreting them, relating them to their local culture, and critically evaluating them.

#### **4.13.5 Micrologue**

Depending on some techniques for teaching culture is crucial in determining students' attitudes and beliefs within the cultural understanding framework. Among the techniques that help to improve students' cultural understanding is micrologue. The latter means that the teacher gives students a text addressing a specific cultural topic and asks them to read it out loud in the classroom. This technique is acknowledged for enabling the integration of language four skills since students submit an oral summary of the passage or text they read and write a piece about the concerned cultural topic. This technique does not require a high level of expertise on the teachers since they previously selected the text and the related cultural topic (Chastain, 1988). Teachers are recommended to use it within the framework of reading comprehension, civilisation, and literature modules.

Using the micrologue technique fosters reflective writing and speaking since learners report what is introduced in the text by using the written and oral modes. This technique is purely topic-oriented. Based on this, cultural topics vary across cultures; it is favorable for teachers to ask learners to use some cultural skills, such as comparison and evaluation. To make learners' performances rich, teachers need to select texts addressing cultural issues already tackled, and these texts should be adopted following the learners' linguistic level. Therefore, linguistic complexity provokes poor learners' performance, and the output is governed by the degree of familiarity. Micrologue embodies culture as the fifth skill of language.

#### **4.13.6 Drama and Mini-Drama (Role-playing)**

Role playing is another teaching technique that depends on real-life situations, such as drama and mini-drama. These two ways are acknowledged for their high efficiency in teaching and assessing norms of interaction. Chastain (1988, p. 398) has stated that "some teachers use mini-dramas or mini-skits to help students visualize cultural content. In this

approach to culture teaching, the students incorporate the culture being learned into their actions as they perform in selected situations". It follows that students turn written-based pieces such as cued dialogues into authentic performances, demonstrating pragmatic, linguistic, and paralinguistic phenomena. By and large, role-playing is a dialogic technique that draws heavily on dialogue (Kramsch, 1993).

Role-playing techniques are so demanding in terms of time and proficiency. The former requires a great deal of time for preparation and play, which makes it rarely adopted in language classrooms. Secondly, role-playing requires a high degree of proficiency through which learners should have the necessary linguistic and pragmatic competence to keep a free-flowing speech. This technique is likely to be practiced within the oral expression and literature frameworks, and the teacher is recommended to question learners about the points of misunderstanding.

#### **4.14 Teacher Cultural Development**

The consolidation of professional skills has become one of the challenging issues in the language teaching profession, and more challenging than this is the way to make teachers ready and adapt to innovation and change. There is no doubt that teachers' daily work, if prone to constant change and innovation, has profound effects on their professional development because it enables them to reflect on/in their profession at a personal level. In this respect, it can be said that even though teachers (in-service and novice teachers) do not receive sufficient training, reflective practice helps them cope with the teaching uncertainties. Thus, teaching is ongoing training and is committed to innovation and change, instills a sense of professionalism and enriches the qualifications under scrutiny in the present study, especially when it comes to the pedagogy of culture.

In teaching culture, adopting rich sources, appropriate approaches, and adequate teaching materials are complementary to meet the communicative needs. The findings of the current research helped to draw the conclusion that the question teaching culture needs to be resolved in terms of qualification and the teaching materials. Regarding that language and culture as two inseparable things, Bouhadiba (2000) considers that the inadequacy of some teachers' training as well as the non-suitability of the teaching materials is influencing negatively the teaching-learning process of English language education.

Teacher cultural development is, of course, an integral part of professional development. Mediating language and culture is no longer confined only to knowledge; it is a complex phenomenon that entails emotional and ideological issues. It is said that:

Foreign language teachers are among the most important mediators. They need to experience a foreign culture as well as analyze it. They need to reflect upon their experience as well as carry out comparative analysis of their own and the foreign culture. And they need to understand the implications of cultural learning, both cognitive and affective, for their practices in the classroom as well as for their teaching in the field'.

(Byram & Morgan, 1995, p.73)

Such monumental tasks hinge upon the knowledge that remains the essence of teaching culture, even if cultural understanding is no longer confined only to knowledge. Factual knowledge, such as geography, history, or sports, is attainable by students without relying on the teacher, but what is essential is the attributes of individuals. In this respect, the teacher should be a knowledge provider who presents and interprets the experiences and identities of people coming from different cultural backgrounds. It should be recognized that not all teachers are aware enough of this kind of knowledge. Since culture is prone to constant change, teachers' cultural repertoire needs to be constantly updated. It has become necessary for teachers of culture to expand their cultural knowledge to enhance the cultural dimension of foreign language education. Deficiencies of this kind open the debate to teaching qualifications, and the primary issue worth signaling here is on what basis modules of culture are attached to teachers.

Though the teachers did not address it, the lack of qualifications to teach culture is another background that unfortunately exists in the Algerian EFL context. The fact that culture is not taught by special techniques would not lead to the acquisition of different cultural skills because techniques are designed to guarantee learners' involvement rather than being passive learners. Being qualified to teach culture does not hinge merely upon using techniques, but it entails highly specialized skills that can be systematically acquired. In this vein, the following skills are seen as imperative within the pedagogy of culture:

- Teachers should have an appropriate communicative repertoire for various social functions and develop further the language skills needed for the extended discourse.



- Teachers should have and develop further text skills i.e., the ability to interpret any piece of prose or variety of spoken language.
- Teachers should have and develop further the necessary skills to engage in intercultural discussions which lend themselves to reflective learning.
- Teachers should cater for what their learners need to know and what skills they need to acquire to discover other cultures for themselves.
- Teachers are called upon to develop an ethnographic stance towards classroom experiences; it now regarded as a major path to professional development.

(Benmoussat, 2008, p. 266)

Explicitly, these highly specialised skills do not pertain to only one component, which is knowledge, but they include other components of cultural understanding, such as the affective side, assessment (needs), communication strategies, etc. Therefore, these skills are acquired through systematic training. There should be periodic national and international conferences, study days, and webinars organized by experts that promulgate a deeper understanding of the teach-ability of culture. Byram, Gribkova, and Starkey (2002, p.28) point out that “the value of being involved in professional networks of this kind is as much in the experience of working with people of another professional, cultural, and national identities as in the products and information acquired”.

Pre-service and novice teachers are recommended to use investigative activities to keep a sense of ongoing cultural development. As a self-assessment tool, the portfolio can also be used by teachers in a professional framework. Richards and Farrell (2005, p.98) have pointed out that:

A teaching portfolio is a collection of documents, works and other items that provides information about different aspects of a teacher’s work. It serves to describe and document the teacher’s performance, to facilitate professional development, and to provide a basis for reflection and review.

Based on the documented data, teachers can take formative decisions on a daily basis. These decisions do not mean they have insufficient or inadequate training, but they keep them from bringing their skills and knowledge up to date. This can be shared jointly with

colleagues to explore issues across a certain culture or cultural topics related to cultural pedagogy, the methods of assessment, and curriculum design.

#### 4.15 Conclusion

Despite the cultural and communicative emphasis imparted by the latest educational reforms in Algeria, the status quo of teaching and assessing culture in the EFL context still needs diligent efforts to meet the aspired objectives. To start teaching, culture needs to be taught accordingly with an intercultural or cross-cultural approach to the set objectives. These approaches are acknowledged for relying on technological materials beneficial in terms of authenticity, easy accessibility, and increasing motivation. Assessment is also another helpful factor to improve cultural understanding. Here it is important to recognize the role of alternative assessment because it is performance-based and makes students active participants in assessment. This kind of assessment is also credited for its ability to explore clearly the students' affective data. In this vein, previous studies indicated that the most difficult of all is to assess whether learners have changed their attitudes and become familiar with unfamiliar issues.

Using the e-portfolio to assess culture has determined the perceived obstacles and the priorities for use. This led the researcher to introduce the *Cultural E-portfolio* model as an encompassing blueprint to assess cultural understanding. In assessment, *the Cultural E-portfolio* does not take only into account cultural knowledge, as is the case with traditional testing. It takes steps forward while considering the cultural conceptual framework (definitions) to maintain a solid cultural understanding. Also, it devotes a part to personal experiences through which data, such as attitudes and reflection, can be easily explored. It is worth reminding that implementing the portfolio electronically made students actively engaged in learning about cultures, especially what is associated with youth culture. Despite the fact that this study has realized its objectives, there are still limitations that need further efforts to surmount. Based on the research findings, the humble recommendations introduced in this chapter are hoped to convey some ideas to the administrative and EFL teaching staffs that the pedagogy culture needs serious rethinking at the personal and collegial levels.

# **General Conclusion**

### General Conclusion

The latest educational reforms that Algeria has engaged in introduced new principles and frameworks for Algerian pupils, students, and researchers to cope with the new global challenges. At the university level, the introduction of the LMD system strives to consolidate teachers' management qualities and de-centre their roles to be more participative than before. From a theoretical perspective, the LMD system is acknowledged for activating learners' roles to be active participants in learning and assessment rather than passive individuals who depend heavily on their teachers. To embody the issue in action, there should be a supportive pedagogical environment to achieve goals. Foreign language education, notably ELE, is one area that has seen new challenges within the latest reforms, especially under the increasing demands for international communication.

Foreign language education is not only aimed at improving the systemic knowledge of the language or acquiring what is referred to as linguistic competence and grammatical competence, but mediating the systemic knowledge with cultural knowledge consolidates the proficiency level that leads to international communication of high expectations. Therefore, the cultural dimension of foreign language programs has become a necessity to surmount communicative lapses and cultural shocks. The way of assessment is posing another demanding challenge because it is impossible to improve any aspect of learning without adopting and adapting adequate assessment methods. Put differently; cultural understanding needs to be constantly assessed and evaluated to achieve the objectives within each modular framework. In line with this, the underlying belief is that alternative assessment creates the opportunity for learners to assess their cultural understanding since the latter draws heavily on personal experiences. In this study, *the Cultural E-portfolio* is one of the main alternatives we have advocated to assess culture within the EFL context.

The fundamental objective of this research work was to prove the adequacy of the e-portfolio as an alternative form to assess the cultural understanding of 1<sup>st</sup> year EFL students at Chlef University. Students are expected to improve their cultural understanding through their day-to-day learning inside and outside the classrooms. In this respect, assessment of culture is underused about linguistic knowledge that is overemphasised. Standardized tests are predominantly used for any aspect of learning in the EFL context. From a cultural perspective, assessment of this kind does not highlight realistically sufficient data, namely affective data, which are very important for cultural understanding.

## General Conclusion

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*The Cultural E-portfolio* would aim to surmount this deficiency by giving a more clear vision of the moral aspect of cultural understanding. What added further relevance was implementing the e-portfolio within the listening comprehension and speaking subject (typically referred to as the oral expression subject). This module was selected for assessing culture due to the following considerations:

- It is the perfect locus to mediate language and culture through immersing in different cultural contexts;
- It gives favourable opportunities to enhance cultural skills, notably those related to critical reflection;
- It is acknowledged for providing authentic input and output more than other modules, more specifically through the use of technology and real-life situations;
- It is more likely to depend on various techniques to teach and learn about the culture.

Students were required to implement the assessment portfolio electronically to improve their cultural understanding. As mentioned earlier, the e-portfolio, *the Cultural E-portfolio*, is structured into three parts without restricting the students to certain content or cultural themes.

The results emerging from this study provided us with interesting information about the assessment of culture in the EFL classroom, specifically from the e-portfolio perspective. These results reflected the assessment practices and helped explore the practices and the factors affecting teaching culture. For 1<sup>st</sup> year EFL students, *the Cultural E-portfolio* proved to be an effective tool to assess culture. It enables the students to compile cultural knowledge about various themes that helps raise their cultural awareness. Also, the affective side, mainly represented in the attitudes, was accurately displayed via the e-portfolio, though the realised performances were not prospective in terms of quantity. Reflection, which is a cardinal skill in cultural understanding, needs further practice, especially reflection-in-action. The data show that the scarcity of formative decisions is interrelated with the heavy emphasis on reflection-on-action that may de-emphasize the formative profile of the portfolio.

## General Conclusion

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From the cultural knowledge perspective, the e-portfolio dictates superiority over testing in the sense that the former keeps the possibility to address various cultural themes, contrary to testing that tackles a limited scope. It seemed clear in chapter three through adopting the two tools. In this vein, the cultural themes found attractive by the learners (questionnaire) were the same addressed in the submitted e-portfolios. This deliberate interconnection implies that students are motivated by specific cultural topics. The e-portfolio implementation corroborated that being culturally knowledgeable requires a great deal of time, without forgetting that the module of listening and speaking contributed strategically to raising students' cultural diversity awareness.

Students engaged actively in the *Cultural E-Portfolio* despite the idea seeming somehow complicated initially, especially since it would be adapted for assessing their cultural understanding. It was found that exogenous and endogenous factors were mediating this high motivational thinking. Most importantly, having kept the content of the e-portfolio undetermined helped the students address their cultural themes of interest. Moreover, the e-portfolio that was electronically executed seems to be a supportive step despite the remarkable deficit in computing data. Students were motivated to experience e-learning. Also, students were responsive to the teacher's reward announced before starting the implementation. Furthermore, the teacher's constant face-to-face feedback and e-feedback helped keep students actively involved in the implementation.

The matter of adopting technology deserves further discussion since the portfolios were electronically implemented. The results showed that many students do not master the academic technological skills required for e-portfolio implementation. The electronic way of implementation is misconceived in which some students think that electronic submission is the prime concern. To be named electronic portfolio, the minor users can do is to adopt a generic tools approach which depends on relatively less expensive equipment that is attainable for the majority of users. Depending on the technological tools used to implement the portfolio, at least medium digital competence is needed to make it under the control of its developer.

To conclude, this doctoral dissertation has attempted to explore how the electronic portfolio, as an assessment tool, contributes to improving cultural understanding. It has given prominence to assessment as an indispensable aspect of improving cultural understanding in the EFL context. The portfolio pedagogical approach proved to be an

## **General Conclusion**

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alternative tool to assess culture compared to tests that may not elicit enough data about culture assessment. The research objectives have been accomplished, and the research questions and hypotheses have been answered and confirmed respectively. The current research work, which was investigative and exploratory, serves as a milestone in further research that would help cover the study issue of electronic assessment from different perspectives. Studies are needed to explore how teachers' assessment of literacy may affect the assessment of culture. For e-assessment, it has become under scrutiny due to the current pandemic of Covid 19, and many issues have emerged, such as the reliability and validity issues of e-assessment, more specifically the e-portfolio that needs to be investigated. Also, the folio thinking process, which is strongly associated with portfolios, needs to be studied from a metacognitive perspective.

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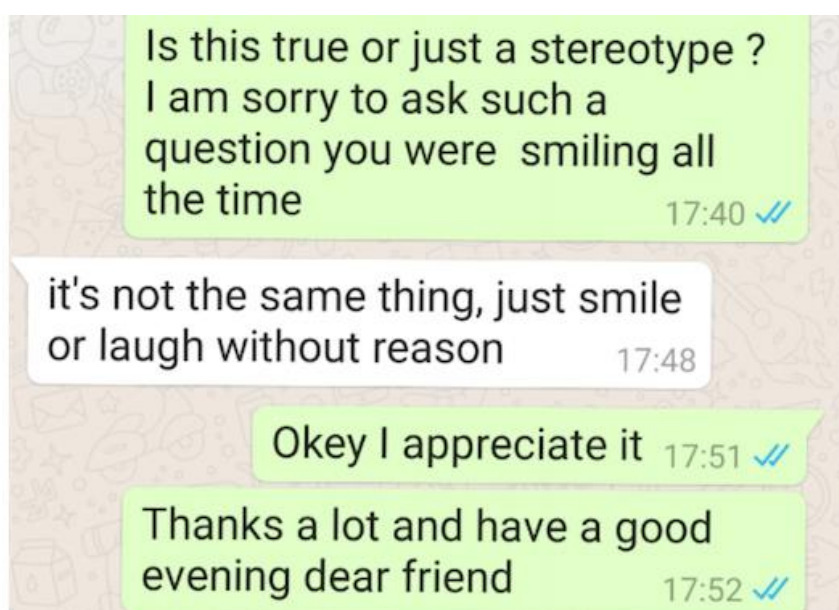
# **Appendices**

## Appendix A : Students' E-portfolios

### 3\_ sometimes stereotype could be stereotype

A photograph of a piece of fabric with handwritten text in black ink. The text reads: "a smile without reason is a sign of idiocy regarded with suspicion in Russia. Yet in". The handwriting is somewhat cursive and the fabric has a visible texture.

i sent it to a friend from russia and this was her response



So you understood the meaning of this proverb, yes? 17:58

Thank you, karim 17:58

Have a good evening too 17:58

---

**- conclusion -**  
after finishing this portfolio i feel more aware about cultures differences ,and how ignorance about the country host's cultures can put us in embarrassing moments and even in awkward situations ,discovering new culture will always open new perspectives and broaden our vision to the world . and helps us in making friend or dealing with partner in business and even to build a connection between humanity races .



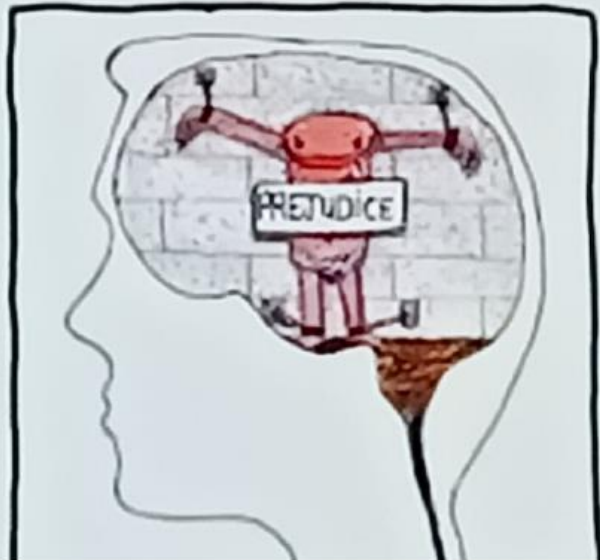
**D\_ Music :**British music is often seen as being better than American music

**E- Tea :**tea is seen as a key part of British culture they even have an expression that says "it's not my cup of tea" which means it's not my business

**F\_ Football :**

is very popular in the United Kingdom, and has some of the best players in the world. they special thing about it it's simply the most entertaining championship and they don't stop during new years holiday

## PREJUDICE: WHEN WE JUDGE INDIVIDUALS BASED ON THE CULTURAL STEREOTYPE OF THE GROUP...



### definition :

culture : according to me culture is all the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people ; culture include :

language , religion , art and music .....ect

- a. Communication : is a simply the act of transferring informaton from one place , person or group to another .evrey communication involves (at least) one sender , a message and a recipient , this may sound simple , but communication is actually a very complex subject
- b. Language : is a system that consist of the development acquiste maintenance and use of complex systems of communication
  - the scientific study of language is called luinguistics .
- c. Art : is a diverse range of human activities in creating virsal an ditory or performing artifacts (art work )

**6- i have been asked many time where "where are you from ? "**

**the most unpleasant experience is that i met a lot of people especially from countries which are not fans of football ,who don't know what's algeria is and where its location and i always answer by that it's the biggest country in africa**

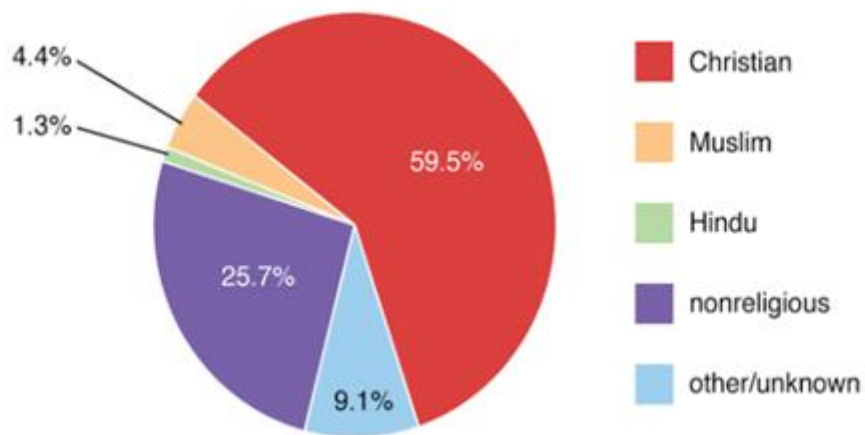
7- do you have an eye for art ? which means do you like art or are you interested in art ?

because i was holding a camera , a man which i think he was a british from his accent asked me this "do you have an eye for art " i taught he was trying to sell me something , then i said i don't really understand what do you mean sorry ,than he explained that there is a sculpture on the mountain rock's that you may be interested to see .





## Religious affiliation (2011)



© Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.

Most of teens like me prefer to watch mavies wather are french , arabic or english but for me i prefer the english movies,all kind of them drama , action , romantic .... Ect

But evrey time i watch a film specially the british films i notice that the accent of the actors change, each of them has his owne accent so i asked my self why !

And then i decided to do my research and this what i have got

I found that there are so many different accents floating arou,d the U.K . it is not too surprising with 300 language being spoken in just london alone .Easily , someone from one town may not be able to understand another person from just an hour away . we have found a handfule of film and tv clips that demonstrate british accents americans might find indecipherable. subtitles not included.

# Americans VS British



**BRITISH VS AMERICAN ENGLISH**

CARETAKER JANITOR	DEAR EXPENSIVE	DRAUGHTS CHECKERS	DRAW TIE
FIRE BRIGADE FIRE DEPARTMENT	LASS GIRL	HOLIDAY VACATION	JUMBLE SALE YARD SALE
DRESS UNIFORM	LOO BATHROOM	MUM MOM	NUGHTS AND CROSSES TIC TAC TOE
PARCEL PACKAGE	PHONE BOX PHONE BOOTH	PLASTER BAND-AID	PITCH FIELD

ESL.COM

**VOCABULARY**

AMERICAN ENGLISH	BRITISH ENGLISH
• Apartment	• Flat
• College	• University
• Vacation	• Holiday
• Schedule	• Timetable
• Airplane	• Aeroplane
• Mailbox	• Postbox
• Cookie	• Biscuit
• Sweater	• Jumper

credited American music style as their inspiration. Oh, The Beatles, you say?  
America has Elvis.

Elvis Presley - The King of Rock and Roll.

Elvis

## Humor

One of the most apparent cultural differences between American and British culture is humor. This is partly because of the differences between the American and British perspective on life. The British tend to be more fatalistic or pragmatic, while Americans are more optimistic, and perhaps in some ways, considered entitled. British humor tends to be more dry, witty, sarcastic or high-brow, which simply means intellectual. American humor, on the other hand, tends to be a little more slapstick. The differences here, though, are often so



## theater

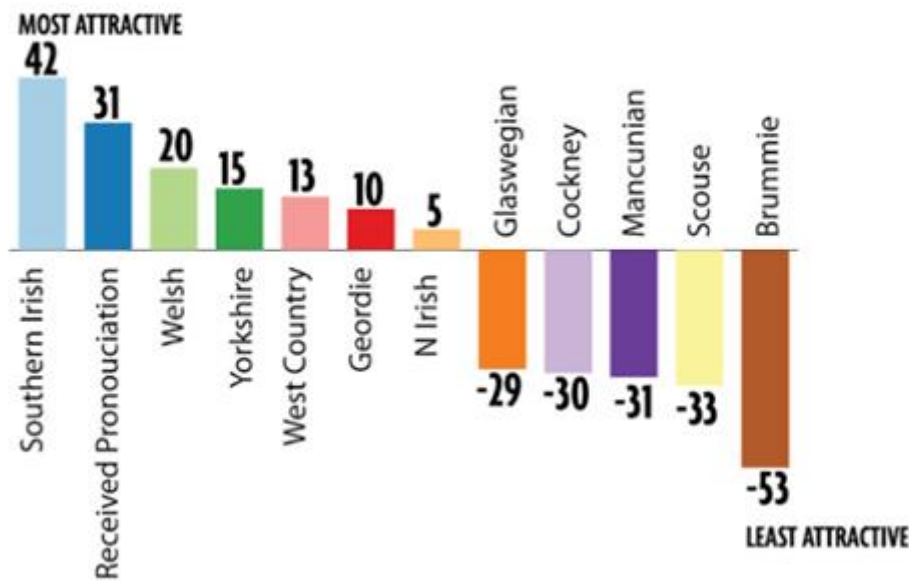
theater of the United States is based in the Western tradition and did not take on a unique dramatic identity until the emergence of Eugene O'Neill in the early twentieth century, now considered by many to be the father of American drama. O'Neill is a four-time winner of the Pulitzer Prize for drama and the only American playwright to win the Nobel Prize for literature



The UK was founded as a Christian country with the Anglican Church being the main denomination. Anglican churches are still the largest group in each of the four countries except in Scotland. UK Christians predominantly subscribe to Protestantism as opposed to Roman Catholicism which is the second largest group in the country. The royal family is a member of the Church of England which is the mother church of the global Anglican Communion. The monarch holds supreme governance of the church although the Archbishop of Canterbury is the most senior cleric of the institution. Britain is, however, becoming less and less of a Christian country with the numbers of people who consistently attend church service on Sunday diminishing with time. Hinduism, Sikhism, and Islam have large followings in the UK. The UK hosts the largest population of Indians outside India and also has the fifth-largest community of Jews in the world. British Jews number are about 300,000 today.

## THE MOST... AND LEAST ATTRACTIVE ACCENTS

YouGov asked whether Brits thought these 12 accents were attractive



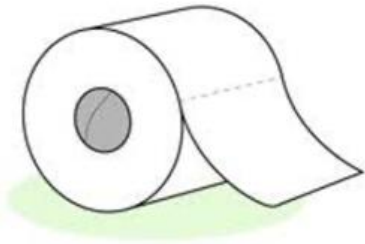
### Cultural experiences

I went with my parents to the "book fair" and suddenly i met an english man named martin luis jr , and he asked me : "can you tell me a little about the algerian culture?" So i explained it to him , then he asked me : "do you know about our british culture ?" , i said yees , i know a little about it , such as premier league and also i know some of the clubs such as manchester united , Mancity , liverpool , tottenham ... and many others , also i know some of the areas there , and i know what's your morning breakfast for example british people like to drink champgne and eat eggs , chicken and meat .

He started to tell me more about their culture like what they prefer to eat and he said : " we like pork in food and drink alcohol a lot because when we cameback from work we became very tired" .

And you don't know that we wait 30 min to enter the stadium because of the preparations by the police , and the best match we have watched was the last one between liverpool and germany united where it

- Culture is the collective programming of the mind
- Culture is us



This is right.  
(good)



This is wrong.  
(bad)



Also , Eye contact can be seen from other prescriptive from British People

The scotish are moste miserable they don't smile a lot

In addition, Hand chaking Doesn't Generalize or doesn't exist With all British people

**-I had also watched a video on you tube talking about the British culture, and I discovered through it that the British have a very strange accent. Also I remarked that the Britons do care a lot about their physical appearance, I mean they wear very expensive and fancy clothes.**

---

**Culture** (/ˈkʌltʃər/) is an umbrella term which encompasses the social behavior and norms found in human societies, as well as the knowledge, beliefs, arts, laws, customs, capabilities and habits of the individuals in these groups.<sup>[1]</sup>

Humans acquire culture through the learning processes of enculturation and socialization, which is shown by the diversity of cultures across societies.

A cultural norm codifies acceptable conduct in society; it serves as guideline for behavior, dress, language, and demeanor in a situation, which serves as a template for expectations in a social group. Accepting only a monoculture in a social group can bear risks, just as a single species can wither in the face of environmental change, for lack of functional



# Objectives:

- The objectives of these portfolio are :
- .Devlopping my culture knowleedge.
  - .Learn about the traditions,manners,and ethics about other cultures.
  - .Avoid the cultural shock.
  - .Use the Portfolio as an effective assasment in devlopping my culture knowleedge.
  - .Use a diffrent assasment and method in devlopping the culture knowleedge.

<i>Difference</i>	<i>UK spelling</i>	<i>US spelling</i>
e → er	theatre, centre, litre	theater, center, liter
ae → e	esthetic, aetiology, archaeology	asthetic, etiology, archeology
s → z	analyse, analysed, analysing	analyze, analyzed, analyzing
u → o	colour, behaviour, harbour	color, behavior, harbor
→ ll	enrol, fulfil	enroll, fulfill
e → e	foetus	fetus
→ a	grey	gray
→ c	Inflexion	inflection
, re → e, er	Manoeuvre	maneuver
s → g	Vaggon	vagon
→ k	disc	disk



### 3-Personal experiences:

- In this part I am going to talk about my own experiences in my life.
- My first experience in real life was when I traveled to DUBAI in vacation with my family (I was about 16yo);although Emirates is an arabic country but the most useful language is the global language french and it is english,that's because there are people and cultures from all around the world,so I had an experience with several cultures there,and I became really interested in learning english and I was excited to develop my knowledge about other cultures of the world .



# -Ethnic minority:

- The analysis of ethnic representation in the USA revealed only examples related to New York. The Big Apple has an extremely diverse population with many nationalities forming their own neighbourhoods. The most common ethnic enclaves are Little Italy, El Barrio and Chinatown .Other nationalities mentioned in the Messages 2 are the Irish, the Polish, Puerto Ricans and Brazilians

## Amiricans VS British



**BRITISH VS AMERICAN ENGLISH**

CARETAKER JANITOR	DEAR EXPENSIVE	DRAUGHTS CHECKERS	DRAW TIE
FIRE BRIGADE FIRE DEPARTMENT	LASS GIRL	HOLIDAY VACATION	JUMBLE SALE YARD SALE
KIT UNIFORM	LOO BATHROOM	MUM MOM	NOUGHTS AND CROSSES TIC TAC TOE
PARCEL PACKAGE	PHONE BOX PHONE BOOTH	PLASTER BAND-AID	PITCH FIELD

ESL.COM

**VOCABULARY**

AMERICAN ENGLISH	BRITISH ENGLISH
• Apartment	• Flat
• College	• University
• Vacation	• Holiday
• Schedule	• Timetable
• Airplane	• Aeroplane
• Mailbox	• Postbox
• Cookie	• Biscuit
• Sweater	• Jumper

.Also I had participate in arab chompionshi which were in jordanie,so I dealt with jordanism culture and I knew their ancient and great history,beside that I met other teams player and I made many new friends and many new culture (egyptian,palastinians,leabnons and so others).



## 4-Conclusion

- No matter what culture a people are a part of, one thing is for certain, it will change. "Culture appears to have become key in our interconnected world, which is made up of so many ethnically diverse societies, but also riddled by conflicts associated with religion, ethnicity, ethical beliefs, and, essentially, the elements which make up culture," De Rossi said. "But culture is no longer fixed, if it ever was. It is essentially fluid and constantly in motion." This makes it so that it is difficult to define any culture in only one way.
- While change is inevitable, the past should also be respected and preserved. The United Nations has created a group called The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to identify cultural and natural heritage and to conserve and protect it. Monuments, building and sites are covered by the group's protection, according to the international treaty, the



These are some funny memes about British and Americans

<p>What Americans think the British are like:</p>	<p>What the British think Americans are like:</p>		
<p>What the British are really like:</p>	<p>What Americans are really like:</p>		

- **Expression:** The British do not always give away their emotions via facial expressions. For example, they may not show it if they have been offended. On the other hand, keeping a straight face can be the punch line to many jokes.
- **Physical Contact:** British culture is generally quite reserved. People are generally comfortable touching those those they know well (e.g. backslapping is common among close friends). However, women tend to be more physically affectionate with one another than men.
- **Eye Contact:** It is best to make direct eye contact that breaks away now and again. Prolonged eye contact can make people feel uncomfortable, and staring is impolite. If talking to a group, be sure to make equal eye contact with all who are present.
- **Patience:** The British are usually very patient and queue for everything, so it is best to imitate this behaviour.

**Stereotype:**

A generalized perception of first impressions. **Stereotypes**, therefore, can instigate prejudice and false assumptions about entire groups of people, including the members of different ethnic groups, social classes, religious orders, the opposite sex, etc. A **stereotype** can be a conventional and oversimplified conception, opinion, or image, based on the assumption that there are attributes that members of the "other group" have in common.

# **PORTFOLIO**

ENGLISH CULTURE  
FIRST-YEAR LICENSE DEGREE



## **SECTION 3:**

**EXPERIENCES :**

## 2- CULTURE AND BEHAVIORS

- When it comes to expressing feeling and opinions the Algerian people like to spin and turn in circles, the British mostly go straight to the point.
- As Algerians we love to live a social life, and it can be seen in our weddings because even the granddaughter of your father's aunt might be within the guests (who knows), yet Britains like to live separately and individually, and when the boy or the girl turns 18 s/he is free and welcomed to leave his parent's house.
- In a lot of movies and viens I saw that the British people when they hate someone they are okay with expressing that hatred, while in Algeria s/he can give you a hug, a ride or smile at your face, but deep in side s/he can't stand even looking at it.
- The handshake in Britain is a common way to greet the others, it is the same in Algeria except men can't handshake women.
- When you look at someone's eyes in Britain that means that you are 100% paying attention to what they are saying, and again it's the same here yet it is considered inappropriate to look into a female's eyes

- **Self-disclosure:** is a process of communication by which one person reveals information about themselves to another.
- **Flow state:** is the mental state of operation in which a person performing an activity is fully immersed in a feeling of energized focus, full involvement, and enjoyment in the process of the activity.
- **Body language:** is a type of a nonverbal communication in which physical behaviors, as opposed to words, are used to express or convey the information. Such behavior includes facial expressions, body posture, gestures, eye movement, touch and the use of space
- **Riot police:** are police who are organized, deployed, trained or equipped to confront crowds, protests or riots.
- **Insomnia:** it is a disorder in which people have trouble in sleeping, They may have difficulty falling asleep, or staying asleep as long as desired.
- **Ethics:** system of accepted beliefs which control behavior, especially such a system based on morals.
- **Civilization:** The social process whereby societies achieve an advanced stage of development and organization
- **Society:** a society is a population of humans characterized by patterns of relationships between individuals that share a distinctive culture and/or institutions

# **1- ENGLISH DEFINITIONS :**

**Glossophobia:** or a fear of public speaking, it is a social phobia or social anxiety disorder, it causes strong fears that are out of proportion to what you're experiencing or thinking about.

**Anxiety disorders:** are a group of mental disorders characterized by significant feelings of anxiety and fear.

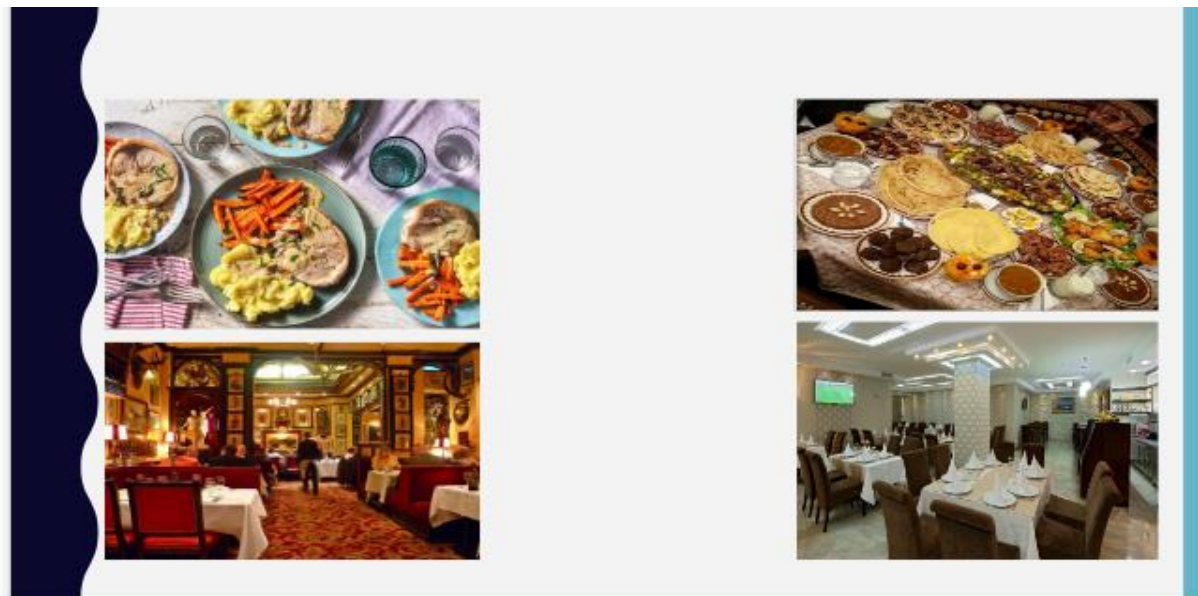
**Near-infrared spectroscopy:** is a spectroscopic method that uses the near-infrared region of the electromagnetic.

**Neuroscientist:** is a scientist who has specialized knowledge in the field of neuroscience, the branch of biology.

**Endorphins:** are natural chemicals in the body that fight pain.

**Football hooliganism:** is disorderly, violent or destructive behaviour perpetrated by spectators at association football events.

**Addiction:** is a brain disorder identified by compulsive engagement in rewarding stimuli despite unfavorable consequences.



***In Great Britain the notion Britishness is used, to underline the British National Identity. People in Great Britain describe themselves as British, English, Scottish or Welsh. As a direct result of the British Empire, British cultural influence (such as the English language) can be observed in the language and culture of a geographically wide assortment of countries such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the United States, and the British overseas territories as well as in the others like Pakistan or India.***





***Culturally acceptable:***

It isn't culturally acceptable in some countries to blow your nose in public places.

***Cultural conflicts:***

We should try hard to avoid cultural conflicts as they are a result of a misunderstanding.

***Cultural stereotypes:***

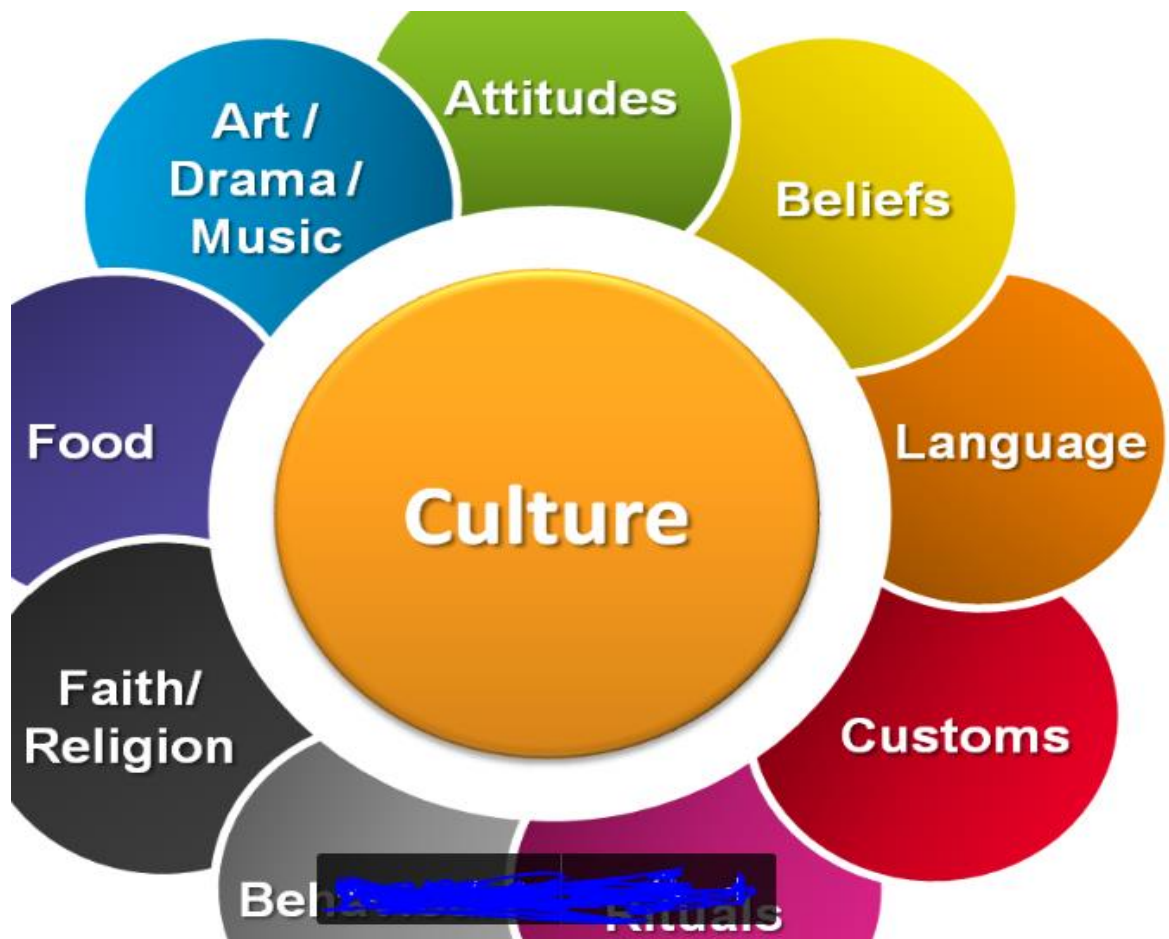
A fixed idea that people have about what someone or something is like, especially an idea that is wrong.  
Cultural stereotypes make our understanding of other cultures difficult.

***Cultural diversity:***

The fact or quality of cultures of being diverse or different.  
Cultural diversity should be considered as a source of enrichment rather a source of conflicts.

***Cultural uniqueness:***

Culture/customs which make a country distinctive/different from other countries.



edward taylor's definition of culture was mentioned by miss ~~the~~ the teacher of civilisation

## Culture

### ■ Definition

Sir Edward Tylor (19th century British anthropologist)

"Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."

"the way people live"

## Appendix B: Test

### Task one:

Match the words in the table to their definitions.

A. Stereotypes	D. Manners
B. Culture	E. Civilisation
C. Communication	F. Intercultural

- 1- [.....] ways of behaving toward people, especially the ways that are socially correct and show respect for their comfort and their feelings.
- 2- [.....] is a popularly held belief about a type of person or a group of people which does not take into account individual differences.
- 3- [.....] the way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time .
- 4- [.....] the process by which messages or information is sent from one place or person to another, or the message itself .
- 5- [.....] relates to or involving more than one culture .
- 6- [.....] human society with its well developed social organizations, or the culture and way of life of a society or country at a particular period in time.

### Task two:

**The following social norms (behaviours) concern some English-speaking societies and individuals. Say if these behavioural norms are similar or different to ours in the national culture?**

1- Some people often avoid extended eye contact because they find it uncomfortable and intimidating.

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.....  
.....

2- In many cultures, it is considered inappropriate to complement babies.

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

3- Some people do not want to force people to accept unwanted invitations.

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

4- A handshake is the most common form of greeting among people and is customary when you are introduced to somebody new.

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

5- Do not discuss business at dinner in someone's home unless the host initiates the conversation.

.....  
.....

6- When yawning or coughing always cover your mouth with your hand.

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.....

7- Do not ask a lady her age because it is considered impolite.



.....  
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.....

8- You usually look the speaker in the eye when listening and this is a signal that you are paying attention.

.....  
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.....

**Task three: Answer the following questions by putting a tick on the appropriate answer**

**1- Who did give England the name “angle land”?**

- a- The German people
- b- The Celts
- c- The Normans
- d- The Romans

**2-Which countries make up the UK?**

- a- England-Scotland-Wales-northern Ireland
- b- England –Scotland- Ireland
- c- England-northern Ireland-Ireland
- d- England –Scotland- Wales- Cardiff

**3-Which sport is Wimbledon famous for?**

- a- Football
- b- Cricket
- c- Tennis
- d- Basketball

**4- The “core” subjects taught at the 4 key Stages in the British educational system are :**

- a- English-mathematics- science
- b- English –literature- mathematics
- c- Foreign languages-literature- arts
- d- English-foreign languages- arts

**5- The biggest river in the USA is**

- a- The Ohio River.
- b- The Hudson River.
- e- The Potomac.
- f- The Mississippi.

**6-The second largest city in the USA is**

- 1- New York.
- 2- Los Angeles.
- 3- Washington.
- 4- Chicago.

**Task four: Read the following passage and answer the below questions**

Mike is doing his holiday shopping in Manhattan and has only about 15 minutes before the department store closes. He needs to get across the entire store to the opposite corner to check out the gift specials at the women’s perfume counter, but in front of him is a stout lady with bags in hand. She is in the midst of a heated conversation on her cell phone and is blatantly blocking the aisle. Mike tries desperately to get around her, but in the process inadvertently knocks over some of her bags, tangles up her cell-phone arm, and causes the lady to drop her phone as well.

Lady: My goodness! What are you doing, young man?

Mike: Very sorry, lady, but you were in my way!

**How likely is the stout lady to consider Mike’s response an apology?**

- (a) Very likely.
- (b) Somewhat likely.
- (c) Not very likely.

**What is your rationale for your choice?**

.....

.....

.....

*Best of luck*

## Appendix C: Students' Questionnaire

Dear learners,

This questionnaire seeks to investigate the practice of assessment in EFL classrooms. Additionally, it tries to focus on learning culture and the way it is assessed. The contribution you may provide will be estimated. Put a tick in the most adequate answer and write comments whenever necessary.

**1-** Are you interested to learn the foreign cultures?

Yes  No

**2-** To what extent do you consider your cultural understanding?

Very weak  Weak  Moderate  Good  Very good

**3-** Which assessment tool do you refer to for evaluating your cultural understanding?

Tests  Portfolio  Interviews  Journals  Self-assessment

**4-** What are the interesting topics you would like to know about the foreign cultures?

History and geography  Life style and leisure

Norms of speaking  Religious beliefs

Political and economic affairs  Sport

**5-** What are the subjects that you consider as rich sources for the cultural knowledge?

Literature  Listening and speaking  Civilization

Written comprehension  Grammar

**6-** Are you examined by specifically designed assessment tools for culture?

Yes  No

**7-** Do you rely on yourself in assessing your learning?

Always  Sometimes  Rarely  Never

**8-** What are the assessment tools that are frequently used by your teachers?

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

**9-** Do you think that it is necessary for a student to assess his or her own learning? Say why?

Yes  No

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

**10-** What is the meaning of portfolio?

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

**11-** Do you refer to portfolio as an assessment tool?

Yes  No

**12-** If yes, what are the benefits of using this tool?

.....  
.....  
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**13-** Do you think *that the portfolio is a useful tool to assess culture?* If yes say how?

Yes

No

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.....  
.....

**14-** Have you ever received instructions by your teachers to use the portfolio assessment?

Yes

No

**15-** What kind of support you would like to have around the use of electronic portfolio?

.....  
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.....

***Thank you!***

## Appendix D: Teachers' Questionnaire

This questionnaire seeks to investigate the teaching and the assessment of culture in EFL classrooms. It would be a real appreciation for the contribution that you may provide by answering these questions and putting a tick in the most adequate answer. Please make comments and illustrations whenever necessary.

**1-** Do you focus on culture in your daily teaching?

Yes

No

**2-** Do you think that it is a necessity to mediate language and culture in English language teaching? Why?

Yes

No

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

**3-** Which culture/s you emphasize in your teaching? Why? (You can opt for more than one choice)

- The local culture
- The English-speaking cultures
- Non-English-speaking cultures
- The British culture (including the sub- cultures)
- The American culture ((including the sub- cultures)

.....  
.....

.....  
.....

4- Do you use techniques when teaching culture?

Yes

No

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

5- What are the difficulties that may be encountered in the teaching and learning of culture? Mention other difficulties out of the given ones (You can opt for more than one choice).

- Students' disengagement
- Shortage of the teaching-learning materials
- The way of assessment
- The lack of qualification to teach culture/s

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

6- What are the subjects and skills that you consider as (a) rich source/s to learn culture from? (You can opt for more than one choice).

Civilisation

Literature

Listening and Speaking

Writing

Grammar

Phonetics

Reading

**7-** Do you think that the assessment of cultural understanding in EFL classrooms is a necessity?

Yes

No

please say why?

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.....

**8-** Have you ever used tools specifically designed for assessing culture? If yes list it/them

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.....

**9-** What do you think about the portfolio as an alternative to assess culture?

.....  
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.....

**10-**In case it works beneficially, what are the benefits that can be added by the portfolio in the assessment of culture?

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.....



**11-** What are the core hindrances confronting the portfolio implementation in the EFL context?

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.....

**12-** What are the pedagogical measures you can suggest for improving the teaching and the assessment of culture in EFL context?

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***Thank you!!***

## Appendix E: Learners' Interview

1. Have you implemented e-Portfolios before?
2. How did you find e-portfolio implementation?
3. What are the difficulties you found when compiling the *Cultural Portfolio*?
4. What are the incentives that made you engage in implementing the e-portfolio?
5. Have you discussed e-portfolio implementation issues with your peers?
6. Do you consider that the cultural e-portfolio as an assessment tool has beneficial consequences for your cultural understanding?
7. What kind of help would you like with the e-Portfolio implementation?

## Appendix F: The Self- Evaluation Checklist

Full name: .....

Put a tick on the available column to evaluate the statements reported on the left. Please specify any aspect needs to be improved whenever possible.

Description	Well done	Good	It does not meet the expectations	Need improvement (Please specify)
I achieved the objectives put at the beginning of the e-portfolio implementation.				
In my e-portfolio, I used different multimedia appropriately (audios/videos/graphic photographs).				
The cultural knowledge which I included over my e-portfolio pertained to various topics.				
I respected all the required items (sections) in my e-portfolio.				
I was aware about the cultural similarities, and differences between our culture and the foreign cultures.				
I relied on my personal thinking to compare and evaluate the cultural similarities and differences				

Overall, I become a proficient e-portfolio user to plan, monitor and revise my cultural understanding confidently and reflectively.				
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أصبحت الحاجة إلى تعزيز البعد الثقافي لبرامج اللغات الأجنبية ضرورة للتعامل مع التنوع الثقافي المتزايد. وبما أن الفهم الثقافي يساهم في التواصل الفعال، أصبح تدريس الثقافة وتقييمها بطرق منهجية ضرورة. تدور هذه الدراسة حول تقييم الثقافة في أقسام اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. الدراسة تسعى لاكتشاف إلى أي مدى تعتبر الحافظة الإلكترونية، كأداة تقييم بديل، فعالة لتقييم الفهم الثقافي للمتعلمين. كما تهدف إلى اكتشاف الصعوبات العملية للتدريس وتقييم الثقافة في السياق الأكاديمي للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. باعتماد الطريقة الاستقصائية تبين أن المحفظة الإلكترونية أداة فعالة في تقييم المعطيات المختلفة للفهم الثقافي.

### Summary

The need to consolidate the cultural dimension of foreign language programmes has become a necessity to cope with the increasing cultural diversity. Since cultural understanding contributes to effective communication, culture should be taught and assessed in accordance with systematic ways. The current study revolves around the assessment of culture in EFL classrooms. It attempts to explore the extent to which an e-portfolio, as an alternative assessment too, is effective to assess learners' cultural understanding. It also aims to find out about the practical difficulties of teaching and assessing culture in the EFL academic context. By adopting a survey method, it was revealed that the electronic portfolio is effective to assess the different data of cultural understanding

### Résumé

Le besoin de consolider la dimension culturelle des programmes de langues étrangères est devenu une nécessité pour faire face à la diversité culturelle croissante. Étant donné que la compréhension culturelle contribue à une communication efficace, la culture doit être enseignée et évaluée selon des méthodes systématiques. La présente étude s'articule autour de l'évaluation de la culture dans les classes d'anglais comme une langue étrangère. Elle tente d'explorer l'efficacité du portfolio électronique dans l'évaluation de la compréhension dans quelle mesure le portfolio électronique, en tant qu'outil de l'évaluation alternative, est un outil efficace pour évaluer la compréhension culturelle des apprenants. Elle vise également à relever les difficultés pratiques de l'enseignement et de l'évaluation de la culture dans le contexte académique de L'Anglais comme langue étrangère. En adoptant une enquête, il a été révélé que le portfolio électronique est efficace pour évaluer les différentes données de compréhension culturelle.