

Persian EFL Learners' Cross-Cultural Understanding and Their L2 Proficiency

Azadeh Nasri Nasrabady (Islamic Azad University)
Abbass Islami Rasekh (University Of Isfahan)
Reza Biria (Islamic Azad University)

■ ABSTRACT ■

The totality of language learning comprises three integrated components: linguistic, cultural, and attitudinal (Wilkes, 1983). Positively sensitizing students to cultural phenomena is urgent and crucial. A positive attitude toward L2 culture is a factor in language learning that leads to cross cultural understanding. This research examined, through a survey analysis, how three groups of students (one high school group and two university student groups) viewed the role of their foreign culture (i.e., American and British cultures) in achieving cultural understanding. The focus was upon how EFL learners approach the target language culture as well as their own culture.

Key Words

culture, cultural competence, motivation, cultural awareness, attitude

Introduction

The social-psychological factors of attitude and motivation have been thought to have important bearing on language learning success (Larsen- freeman, 1991). As Prodromou (1992) states the learner's attitude toward the target culture has an impact upon the acquisition of the language. A positive attitude toward the target language culture i.e. respecting other people and their way of life is a factor in language learning that leads to cross cultural understanding. Before students can learn about culture they must be receptive to the concept of learning about cultures other than their own. According to Karimpour (2000) negative attitude i.e. viewing everything through the eyes of our own culture and its values usually emerges either through false stereotyping or undue ethnocentrism. English as a foreign language (EFL) learners' negative attitudes toward second language (L2) culture may lead to decreased motivation and interaction and because of decreased L2 input and interaction it may lead to unsuccessful attainment of L2 proficiency.

Lado(1988) has divided the unhealthy attitudes in two groups: 1) "pedantic cultural attitude" 2) "quaint nativism attitude" (Tsai Yu-Hsin, 2001, p.7). He believes that these two phenomena are commonly found among students encountering a foreign culture. According to him, those who have pedantic culture attitudes consider the second or foreign language as the only correct or prestigious way to view the world and differences between this culture (L2 culture) and another language and culture are indicators that the other is incorrect or inferior. On the other hand those who have "quaint nativism attitude"

consider everything in native culture as more beautiful, interesting and desirable and correct than in second or foreign culture. Both of these attitudes are neither proper nor healthy and can result in cultural misunderstanding (Tsai Yu-Hsin, 2001).

The study of different cultures aids students in getting to know different people. This knowledge is necessary for understanding and respecting other peoples and their ways of life. Kincheloe and Staley (1985) highlight three points on the significance of cultural awareness: First, cultural awareness makes students less fearful and prepares them to deal with different people and places. Second, it allows for the possibility of increased tolerance. Third, as students see themselves and their own cultures more objectively, feelings of ethnocentrism and self-righteousness are decreased or avoided.

Unfortunately, the concept of culture and its role on language learning process are not taken seriously by most teachers in Iran. Some teachers and even textbook writers try to create a monocultural environment. They deliberately exclude information about American and British cultures from textbooks because they think that introducing a foreign culture to learners can create other problems like cultural alienation. They don't pay attention to the fact that knowledge of the grammatical system of a language (grammatical competence) is not sufficient for successful attainment of L2 proficiency. It has to be complemented by culture-specific meanings (communicative or rather cultural competence) (Byram, Morgan et al., 1994). It is obvious that every language has a setting in that people who speak it belong to a race or races and "language doesn't exist apart from culture"(Sapir, 1970, p.207).

This research examined, through a survey analysis, how three groups of students (one high school group and two university student groups) viewed the role of their foreign culture (i.e., American and British cultures) in achieving cultural understanding. This study addresses two major research questions:

- 1) What is Iranian EFL learners' attitude toward their L1 and L2 cultures
- 2) Is there any significant difference in EFL learners' attitudes toward their L1 and L2 cultures among three groups of participants?

The focus of this study was upon how EFL learners approach their target language cultures as well as their own culture.

Review of Related Literature

Learners' attitudes toward the L2 culture like all aspects of the development of cognition in human beings developed early in child hood and are the result of parents, and peers' attitudes and contact with people who are different in number of ways. These attitudes may be the results of affective factors of one's experiences. These attitudes form part of one's perception of self, of others, and of the culture which one is living.

Gardner and Lambert (1959) tried to examine the effect of attitudes on language learning through an extensive and systematic study. They were able to identify two factors which were responsible for French proficiency of Anglophone students of French in Montréal: aptitude and constellation of attitudes towards French Canadians including motivational intensity and integrative motivation. Gardner and Lambert (1959) believed that there is an indirect relationship between attitude and successful SLA. Attitudes affect motivation, which in turn affects SLA. After studying the interrelationships of a number of different types of attitudes, they defined motivation as a construct made up certain attitudes. The most important of these attitudes is group-specific i.e. the attitudes of learners toward the members of cultural group whose language they are learning. Thus in Gardner and Lambert's model, an English speaking Canadian

positive attitude toward French Canadians -a desire to understand them and to communicate with them- will lead to high integrative motivation to learn French.

Later much work has been done to study the relationships between learning and attitude of learners; for example, attitudes of learners' parents towards speakers of TL, attitudes of peers' learners, attitudes toward their learning situation, teachers' attitudes towards their students, and one's attitudes towards one's ethnicity were all studied for their influence on SLA (Larsen-freeman,2001). For instance, Oller (1983) and his colleagues conducted several large-scale studies of interrelationships between attitudes and language success (Larsen-freeman,2001). They looked at the relationship of Chinese, Japanese and Mexican students' achievements in English to their attitudes toward self, their native language group, the target language group, their reasons for learning English and their reason for traveling to the United States. They were able to identify a few meaningful clusters of attitudinal variables that correlated positively with attained proficiency. Each of the three studies (studies of Chinese, Japanese and Mexican learners) yielded slightly different conclusions, but for the most part, positive attitudes toward self, the native language group, and the target language group enhanced proficiency.

Making a comparison between the students' native culture and foreign language culture is a new issue in the field of language teaching. Some writers (Kramsch, 1993; Baker, 2003; Valdes, 1986) consider both cultures to be closely related to each other. They state that mother language culture plays a role that promotes better understanding of foreign culture. For instance, Kramsch (1993) argues that in a foreign culture, we construe events by contrast and analogy with our own culture, as well as by contrast and analogy with the foreign culture. She reveals that:" by constructing both their own and the foreign values, by organizing and extending the range of convenience of these constructs, students can find bridges to other culture, anticipate foreign events and discover alternatives to their own cultural patterns"(p.437). She also suggests that before we make L2 students understand the attitudes and values of a foreign culture, we have to make them aware of their own attitudes and values in interpreting foreign event.

Baker (2003) also believes that cultural comparison is the best way for teaching culture. He emphasizes the interpretation of culture based on cross-cultural understanding. This cross- cultural understanding involves comparisons and contrasts with the learners' native culture and their target language culture.

This paper tried to measure the EFL learners' attitudes toward their L1 and L2 cultures and to see whether EFL learners are aware of the differences between the L1 and L2 cultures.

Methodology Participants

The research was conducted at three levels of language proficiency (high school level, university in both BA and MA levels) because the researchers wants to measure the differences between EFL learners' attitudes toward L1 and L2 culture in three different levels (elementary, intermediate and advanced levels). This doesn't mean that the language proficiency of all high school students are lower than that of BA and MA level. The researchers had to select participants in three different because of the limitation of the number of advanced students in high school and BA levels. The sample group consisted of 140 students (50 students for each group of high school & BA and 40 students for MA group). Each group was pre-tested using an established general English language proficiency test (The Nelson proficiency test). Measurement of standard deviation was used as a criterion for subject selection. Therefore 30 learners were selected for each group. In this way three approximately homogenous groups with regard to their L2 proficiency were obtained.

Materials

A questionnaire was used as instruments for data collection. 32 questions were given to participants in order to see what their attitudes toward the foreign and first language cultures were. We used Likert scale (1931) which measured a person's attitude, feeling or beliefs about the items in question measured. Therefore all participants were asked to express agreement or disagreement responses to a five point scale. In front of each question there were five choices from which students had to choose one.

Since there was no standard form of attitude questionnaire, the researcher made this questionnaire herself. It better to mention that 15 questions were a translation of a questionnaire made by in Tsai Yu-Hsin (2001) which was not a standard questionnaire. Prior to using the questionnaire a pilot study was undertaken in order to assess the suitability of the questions selected and the Likert scale chosen. Fifteen students were chosen randomly to undertake the initial questionnaire (5 students from each level).The students had some difficulty in understanding two of the questions and they couldn't decide on what exactly their attitude was, so those questions were omitted. Further analysis of the data from the pilot study led to word changes in some statements in order to provide clarity, especially for the high school students.

The subjects who participated in the study were informed that the data collected from the questionnaire would be used to conduct research and would not serve any other purposes. This was done in an attempt to secure the most honest and accurate responses from the students involved.

Cronbach's coefficient alpha formula was used for estimating internal consistency and reliability of the questionnaire. It should also be noted that Alpha of 0.89 for the questionnaire indicates a good degree of internal consistency in scale.

Results and discussion

To investigate the first research question, the questionnaire items were divided into three categories; a) learners' attitudes toward the relationships of L1 & L2 cultures; b) learners' attitudes toward L2 cultures (American & British cultures); c) Learners' attitudes toward learning L2 cultures (American & British cultures). The Participants' responses were examined according to each of these categories and were tabulated by percentages.

a) Learners' attitudes toward the relationships of L1 & L2 cultures

This part of questionnaire was designed to measure Persian EFL learners' attitudes toward the relationships between L1& L2 cultures.

Table1. EFL Learners' answers for question 1

| Do you agree that learning English culture and customs helps you identify or understand Persian culture better? | High school group | BA group | MA group | Total |
|---|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Strongly Agree | 3(10%) | 2(6.7%) | 8(26.7%) | 13(14.4%) |
| Agree | 10(33.3) | 14(46.7%) | 17(56.7%) | 41(45.6%) |

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|----------|-----------|
| Neutral | 7(23.33%) | 4(13.33%) | 2(6.7%) | 13(14.4%) |
| Disagree | 5(16.7%) | 10(33.33%) | 2(6.7%) | 17(18.9%) |
| Strongly Disagree | 5(16.7%) | 0(0%) | 1(3.33%) | 6(6.7%) |

The answers of the first question show slightly over 60 percent of all respondents agreed that studying English led to a better understanding of their native culture. On the other hand, nearly 26 percent saw no positive impact upon their knowledge of their mother culture.

Table 2. EFL Learners' answers for question 2

| Do you agree that you should forget or discard Persian culture in order to absorb and learn English language and cultures? | High school group | BA group | MA group | Total |
|--|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Strongly Agree | 3(10%) | 1(3.3%) | 2(6.7%) | 6(6.7%) |
| Agree | 9(30%) | 2(6.7%) | 4(13.3%) | 15(16.7%) |
| Neutral | 0(0%) | 1(3.33%) | 0(0%) | 1(1.1%) |
| Disagree | 10(33.3%) | 13(43.3%) | 7(23.3%) | 30(33.3%) |
| Strongly Disagree | 8(26.7%) | 13(43.3%) | 17(56.7%) | 38(42.2%) |

As high as 75 percent of respondents in three groups disagreed with the question regarding the "abandonment" of their mother culture as a necessary step toward greater English language learning. It cannot be ignored, however, that close to 21 percent of the participating students supported the notion that they should put their native Persian culture a side in order to learn English language and cultures.

Table3. EFL Learners' answers for question 3

| By comparing Persian and American cultures, which culture do you think is superior? | High school group | BA group | MA group | Total |
|---|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Persian culture | 10(33.3%) | 4(13.3%) | 5(16.7%) | 19(21.1%) |
| American culture | 6(20%) | 2(6.7%) | 3(10%) | 11(12.2%) |
| Both of them have the same value | 1(3.3%) | 2(6.7%) | 2(6.7%) | 5(5.6%) |
| Comparing these two cultures is very difficult | 2(6.7%) | 3(10%) | 4(13.3%) | 9(10%) |
| Both of them are respectable | 11(36.7%) | 19(63.3%) | 16(53.3%) | |

Question 3 was designed to measure whether EFL learners have "pedantic cultural attitude"(Lado, 1988). As it was mentioned in the introduction those who have pedantic culture attitude consider second or foreign language as the only correct or prestigious way to view the world and differences between this culture (L2 culture) and another language and culture are indicators that the other is incorrect or inferior.

There was a discrepancy between the three levels in answering the question of cultural superiority; in the high school group 33.3 percent gave votes for superiority of their mother culture. Some 13.3 percent of BA group expressed a belief in the "greatness" of Persian culture over American culture.

And 16.7 percent of MA students believed that their native culture is superior to American culture. Close to 51 percent of respondents agreed that both Persian and American cultures are respectable.

Table 4. EFL Learners' answers for question 4

| By comparing Persian and English culture, which culture do you think is superior? | High school group | BA group | MA group | Total |
|---|-------------------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| Persian culture | 8(26.7%) | 5(16.7%) | 4(13.3 %) | 17(18.9%) |
| English culture | 9(30%) | 3(10%) | 6(20%) | 18(20%) |
| Both of them have the same value | 1(3.3%) | 1(1.1%) | (0%) | 2(2.2%) |
| Comparing these two cultures is very difficult | 2(6.7%) | 3(10%) | 4(13.3%) | 9(10%) |
| Both of them are respectable | 10(33.3%) | 18(60%) | 17(56.7%) | 45(50%) |

Compared to the previous examination of attitudes toward American culture, the percentage of votes to Persian culture expressed by three groups was lower. In high school group it reduced to 26.7 percent. It should be noted that among three groups of EFL learners more students (about 20 percent) considered British culture superior to Persian, while only about 12.2 percent thought of American culture as a superior culture (in question 3). It seems that Iranian EFL learners are more interested in learning British culture than the American one. 50 percent believed that both Persian and British cultures are respectable.

Table 5. EFL Learners' answers for question 5

| Do you agree that Persian culture is different from American culture? | High school group | BA group | MA group | Total |
|---|-------------------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| Strongly Agree | 13(43.3%) | 16(53.3%) | 21(70%) | 50(55.6%) |
| Agree | 15(50%) | 14(46.7%) | 9(30%) | 38(42.2%) |
| Neutral | 0(0%) | 0(0%) | 0(0%) | 0(0%) |
| Disagree | 0(0%) | 0(0%) | 0(0%) | 0(0%) |
| Strongly Disagree | 2(6.7%) | 0(0%) | 0(0%) | 2(2.2%) |

Table 6. EFL Learners' answers for question 6

| Do you agree that Persian culture is different from British culture? | High school group | A group | MA group | Total |
|--|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Strongly Agree | 12(40%) | 14(46.7%) | 22(73.3%) | 48(53.3%) |
| Agree | 15(50%) | 12(40%) | 8(26.7%) | 35(38.9%) |
| Neutral | 1(3.3%) | 3(10%) | (0%) | 4(4.4%) |
| Disagree | (0%) | 1(3.3%) | (0%) | 1(1.1%) |
| Strongly Disagree | 2(6.7%) | (0%) | (0%) | 2(2.2%) |

From the fifth and sixth questions, we learned that 97 percent of the survey respondents recognized, to varying degrees, that major differences exist between the Persian and American cultures. 92 percent agreed with the idea that British and Persian cultures were in some important ways different. 3.3 percent of students disagreed with the idea.

As reflected in the responses of the first part of questionnaire most learners believe that cross-cultural communication can result in better understanding of not only the foreign culture but also the native culture. Palmer (1995) elaborates this fact with a memorable Goethe's quote that "he who knows no foreign language doesn't know his own"(p.221).Palmer suggested that what is true for language is likewise true for culture. Most of EFL learners agreed that learning American and British culture helps them to understand their own native culture. They states that they respect Both American and British Culture.

b) Learners' attitudes toward the English Cultures

In the second part, the questions (7-16) aim to determine whether or not students held a healthy attitude toward both their mother culture/tongue and the foreign cultures/tongues. A Healthy attitude here means looking at things in terms of the meaning within its own culture and respecting other people and their way of life. The learner's healthy attitude toward the target culture has an impact upon the acquisition of the language (Yu Hsin, 2001). "A successful learner is one who holds a positive attitude toward the target culture." (Prodromou, 1992, p.41)

Table 7. EFL Learners' answers for question 7

| When studying the American language and culture, did you experience an increase in pride for your Persian culture? | High school group | BA group | MA group | Total |
|--|-------------------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| Strongly Agree | 5(16.7%) | 4(13.3%) | 3(10%) | 12(13.3%) |
| Agree | 7(23. 3%) | 5(16.7%) | 2(6.7%) | 14(15.6%) |
| Neutral | 5(16.7%) | 9(30%) | 4(13. 3%) | 18(20%) |
| Disagree | 8(26.7%) | 8(26.7%) | 15(50%) | 31(34.4%) |
| Strongly Disagree | 5(16.7%) | 4(13.3%) | 6(20%) | 15(16.7%) |

The answers of the seventh question show that approximately 50 percent of participants expressed disagreement over the notion that the study of American culture resulted in growing pride for the Persian culture, while 29 percent of the participants in three groups expressed agreement to this issue.

Table 8. EFL Learners' answers for question 8

| When learning the British language and culture, did you experience an increase in pride for your Persian culture? | High school group | BA group | MA group | Total |
|---|-------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| Strongly Agree | 3(10%) | 4(13.3%) | 1(3. 3%) | 8(8.9%) |
| Agree | 3(10%) | 7(23.3%) | 2(6.7%) | 14(15.6%) |
| Neutral | 9(30%) | 10(33.3%) | 4(13. 3%) | 23(25.5%) |
| Disagree | 6(20%) | 6(20%) | 13(43.3%) | 25(27.8%) |
| Strongly Disagree | 9(30%) | 3(10%) | 8(26.7%) | 20(22. 2%) |

From the eighth question we see approximately 47 percent of respondents from three groups expressing various degrees of disagreement over the notion that the study of American or British cultures resulted in a growing pride for their native culture. This percentage was notably contrasted with the 24 percent

of respondents who expressed an agreement with the idea that the study of another culture resulted in a rise in pride for one's own culture.

Table 9. EFL Learners' answers for question 9

| When learning the English language and American culture, did you experience inferiority regarding your Persian culture? | High school group | BA group | MA group | Total |
|---|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Strongly Agree | 5(16.7%) | 4(13.3%) | 2(6.7%) | 11(12.2%) |
| Agree | 10(33.3%) | 6(20%) | 6(20%) | 22(24.4%) |
| Neutral | 7(23.3%) | 3(10%) | 2(6.7%) | 12(13.3%) |
| Disagree | 3(10%) | 7(23.3%) | 14(46.7%) | 24(26.7%) |
| Strongly Disagree | 5(16.7%) | 10(33.3%) | 6(20%) | 21(23.3%) |

According to the learners' answers of this question, 50 percent of participants disagreed with the notion that when they are learning English language and American culture, they experienced inferiority regarding their Persian culture while, 36 percent agreed. About 50 percent of the high school learners believe that they experience inferiority regarding their Persian culture while the number of response decreased in BA (33.3 percent) and MA (26.7) groups.

Table 10. EFL Learners' answers for question 10

| When learning the English language and British culture, did you experience weakness regarding your Persian culture? | High school group | BA group | MA group | Total |
|---|-------------------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| Strongly Agree | 5(16.7%) | 3(10%) | 3(10%) | 11(12.2%) |
| Agree | 11(36.7%) | 4(13.3%) | 8(26.7%) | 24(26.7%) |
| Neutral | 5(16.7%) | 3(10%) | 3(10%) | 11(12.2%) |
| Disagree | 5(16.7%) | 7(23.3%) | 12(40%) | 24(26.7%) |
| Strongly Disagree | 3(10%) | 13(43.3%) | 4(13.3%) | 20(22.2%) |

From questions 10, we learn that 49 percent of participants disagreed with the idea of feeling weakness toward their Persian culture. But it was interesting to mention that 38 percent agreed with the idea of weakness of their native culture over British culture.

Table11. EFL Learners' answers for question 11

| Do you agree that you accept American culture? (i.e. do you accept it as a culture?) | High school group | BA group | MA group | Total |
|--|-------------------|----------|----------|-------|
|--|-------------------|----------|----------|-------|

| | | | | |
|-------------------|---------|----------|----------|------------|
| Strongly Agree | 6(20%) | 8(26.7%) | 8(26.7%) | 22(24.44%) |
| Agree | 15(50%) | 15(50%) | 18(60%) | 48(53.3%) |
| Neutral | 3(10%) | 6(20%) | 4(13.3%) | 13(14.4%) |
| Disagree | 3(10%) | 1(3.3%) | 0(0%) | 4(4.4%) |
| Strongly Disagree | 3(10%) | 0(0%) | 0(0%) | 3(3.3%) |

Near to 78 percent of the participants accept American culture. While only near to 8 percent of the participants expressed disagreements. Most of disagreements were belong to high school group.

Table12. EFL Learners' answers for question 12

| Do you agree that you accept British culture? (i.e. do you accept it as a culture?) | High school group | BA group | MA group | Total |
|---|-------------------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| Strongly Agree | 6(20%) | 8(26.7%) | 6(20%) | 20(22.2%) |
| Agree | 15(50%) | 16(53.3%) | 21(70%) | 52(57.8%) |
| Neutral | 5(16.7%) | 6(20%) | 3(10%) | 14(15.5%) |
| Disagree | 2(6.7%) | 0(0%) | 0(0%) | 2(2.2%) |
| Strongly Disagree | 2(6.7%) | 0(0%) | 0(0%) | 2(2.2%) |

The responses of the twelfth question indicates that nearly 80 percent of the respondents showed varying degrees of agreement as far as the acceptance of British cultures is concerned, with a slightly higher percentage in three groups registering agreement with the acceptance of the British culture(near to 4 percent).

Table13. EFL Learners' answers for question 13

| By comparing Persian and American cultures, what is your attitude toward American culture? | High school group | BA group | MA group | Total |
|--|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Total Reception | 16(53.3%) | 3(10%) | 2(6.7%) | 21(23.3%) |
| Total Rejection | 3(10%) | 3(10%) | 5(16.7%) | 11(12.2%) |
| Neutral | 2(6.7%) | 8(26.7%) | 3(10%) | 13(14.4%) |
| It is very similar to Persian culture | 1(3.3%) | 0(0%) | 0(0%) | 1(1.1%) |
| I respect it as a culture | 8(26.7%) | 16(53.3%) | 20(66.7%) | 44(48.9%) |

Table14. EFL Learners' answers for question 14

| By comparing Persian and British culture, what is your attitude toward British culture? | High school group | BA group | MA group | Total |
|---|-------------------|----------|----------|-----------|
| Total Reception | 18(60%) | 1(3.3%) | 5(16.7%) | 24(26.7%) |
| Total Rejection | 2(6.7%) | 1(3.3%) | 0(0%) | 3(3.3%) |

| | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Neutral | 2(6.7%) | 2(6.7%) | 3(10%) | 7(7.8%) |
| It is very similar to Persian culture | (0%) | 4(13.3%) | (0%) | 4(4.4%) |
| I respect it as a culture | 8(33.3%) | 22(73.3%) | 22(73.3%) | 52(57.8%) |

The results of these two questions show that most of participants respect both cultures. It was interesting that the percentage is different from American to British cultures. (Near to 10 percent). 12.2 percent of student states that they reject American culture while this percentage decreased to 3.3 for British culture . 26.7 percent of participants gave vote to total acceptance of British culture while 23.3 percent of them voted to total reception of American culture. Total acceptance here means accepting all the cultural aspects and values of foreign language culture and total rejection means refusing all the values and cultural aspect of target language by EFL learners.

Table15. EFL Learners' answers for question 15

| Would you believe that you have the same attitude toward American culture as you have toward your native Persian culture? | High school group | BA group | MA group | Total |
|---|-------------------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| Strongly Agree | (0%) | 3(10%) | 1(3.3%) | 4(4.4%) |
| Agree | 7(23.3%) | 7(23.3%) | 6(20%) | 20(22.2%) |
| Neutral | 5(16.7%) | 3(10%) | (0%) | 8(8.9%) |
| Disagree | 11(36.7%) | 10(33.3%) | 15(50%) | 36(40%) |
| Strongly Disagree | 7(23.3%) | 7(23.3%) | 8(26.7%) | 22(24.4%) |

Table16. EFL Learners' answers for question 16

| Would you believe that you have the same attitude toward British culture as you have toward your native Persian culture? | High school group | BA group | MA group | Total |
|--|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Strongly Agree | (0%) | 4(13.3%) | 2(6.7%) | 6(6.7%) |
| Agree | 9(30%) | 5(16.7%) | 8(26.7%) | 22(24.4%) |
| Neutral | 5(16.7%) | 2(6.7%) | (0%) | 7(7.8%) |
| Disagree | 12(40%) | 13(43.3%) | 11(36.7%) | 36(40%) |
| Strongly Disagree | 4(13.3%) | 6(20%) | 9(30%) | 19(21.1%) |

When participants were asked to ponder their attitudes toward the British culture and their native culture, 61.1 percent of the respondents disagreed with equality in attitudes toward the two cultures. The number of disagreement for American culture was higher near to 64.4. It should be mentioned that 31.1 percent of participants expressed agreement for the idea that they have the same attitudes toward British culture(s) as they have toward their native Persian culture. For American culture this percentage decreased to 26.7 percent. The number of agreement with the idea of having mutually compatible attitudes toward both the American and Persian cultures is decreased slightly (near to 5 percent). Three groups revealed, to some degree, the same attitudes toward the mother culture and the foreign cultures.

Table17. EFL Learners' answers for question 17

| Do you believe that acting and living according to American life style is a sign of prestige and brings to one a high social class? | High school group | BA group | MA group | Total |
|---|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Strongly Agree | 3(10%) | 1(3.3%) | 0(0%) | 4(4.4%) |
| Agree | 7(23.3%) | 1(3.3%) | 0(0%) | 8(8.9%) |
| Neutral | 10(33.3%) | 4(13.3%) | 2(6.7%) | 16(17.8%) |
| Disagree | 6(20%) | 14(46.7%) | 18(60%) | 38(42.2%) |
| Strongly Disagree | 4(13.3%) | 10(33.3%) | 10(33.3%) | 24(26.7%) |

Table18. EFL Learners' answers for question 18

| Do you believe that acting and living according to British life style is a sign prestige and brings to one a high social class? | High school group | BA group | MA group | Total |
|---|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Strongly Agree | 3(10%) | 0(0%) | 0(0%) | 3(3.3%) |
| Agree | 10(33.3%) | 1(3.3%) | 0(0%) | 11(12.2%) |
| Neutral | 7(23.3%) | 5(16.7%) | 0(0%) | 13(13.3%) |
| Disagree | 6(20%) | 13(43.3%) | 20(66.7%) | 39(43.3%) |
| Strongly Disagree | 4(13.3%) | 11(36.7%) | 10(33.3%) | 25(27.8%) |

The results of questions 17 &18 show nearly 69 percent of participants disagreed with the idea that American life style is more prestigious and those that have American culture have high social class. 13.3 percent agreed. It was interesting to see that the number of disagreement for British culture decreased (54.4 percent disagreed) and 14.4 percent agreed with the idea that British culture is more prestigious and brings a high social class.

Table19. EFL Learners' answers for question 19

| With regard to history of Iranian civilization would you believe that America doesn't possess a historically remarkable cultural heritage? | High school group | BA group | MA group | Total |
|--|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Strongly Agree | 4(13.3%) | 1(3.3%) | 0(0%) | 5(5.5%) |
| Agree | 2(6.7%) | 2(6.7%) | 0(0%) | 4(4.4%) |
| Neutral | 4(13.3%) | 7(23.3%) | 5(16.7%) | 16(17.8%) |
| Disagree | 15(50%) | 10(33.3%) | 16(53.3%) | 41(45.5%) |
| Strongly Disagree | 5(16.7%) | 10(33.3%) | 9(30%) | 24(26.7%) |

Iran possesses a historically remarkable cultural heritage. Many Iranian ordinary people often identify culture with civilization and cultural heritage. Most of Iranians are proud of Persian ancient civilization. This question was designed to measure students' attitudes toward the concept of culture. The responses of question 19 show that near to 72 percent of the participant disagreed with the statement that says with regard to history of Iranian civilization, U.S.A doesn't possess a historically remarkable cultural heritage and has no culture at all. The results show that 10 percent of participants believed that USA doesn't possess a historically remarkable cultural heritage.

Table 20. EFL Learners' answers for question 20

| Would you believe that Persian culture is the best culture in the world and does your belief say that no culture can be compared to Persian culture? | High school group | BA group | MA group | Total |
|--|-------------------|----------|----------|-----------|
| Strongly Agree | 3(10%) | 2(6.7%) | 1(3.3%) | 6(6.7%) |
| Agree | 4(13.3%) | 3(10%) | 1(3.3%) | 8(8.9%) |
| Neutral | 0(0%) | 4(13.3%) | 2(6.7%) | 8(8.9%) |
| Disagree | 15(50%) | 12(40%) | 15(50%) | 42(46.7%) |
| Strongly Disagree | 8(26.7%) | 9(30%) | 9(30%) | 26(28.9%) |

This question is useful to measure how many of the participants have "quaint nativism" (Iado, 1988) or ethnocentrism attitudes. Among 90 participants 75 percent don't agree with the question "Do you agree that Persian culture is the best culture in the world and don't you feel that you can't bear or tolerate other cultures and customs?" Only 17 percent of participants agreed. The number of agreements was higher in high school group.

Table 21. EFL Learners' answers for question 21

| Would you believe that Persian culture has superiority over the American and British culture concerning ethics and a healthy lifestyle? | High school group | BA group | MA group | Total |
|---|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Strongly Agree | 6(20%) | 13(43.3%) | 9(30%) | 28(31.1%) |
| Agree | 5(16.7%) | 8(26.7%) | 11(36.7%) | 24(26.7%) |
| Neutral | 4(13.3%) | 2(6.7%) | 2(6.7%) | 8(8.9%) |
| Disagree | 10(33.3%) | 6(20%) | 6(20%) | 22(24.4%) |
| Strongly Disagree | 5(16.7%) | 1(3.3%) | 2(6.7%) | 8(8.9%) |

The question 21 was designed to measure learners' attitude toward the ethical aspect of both native and target language cultures. Majority of Iranians are Muslims and in Islam obeying ethical rules is an important issue. These rules encompass all aspect of the individual life. Near to 60 percent of EFL learners believed that Persian culture has superiority over American and British culture concerning ethic and healthy lifestyle.

Table 22. EFL Learners' answers for question 22

| If you were able to choose your own culture at your birth which one of these cultures would you choose? | High school group | BA group | MA group | Total |
|---|-------------------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| Persian culture | 8(26.7%) | 14(46.7%) | 12(40%) | 34(37.8%) |
| British culture | 11(36.7%) | 5(16.7%) | 8(26.7%) | 24(26.7%) |
| American culture | 8(26.7%) | 4(13.3%) | 6(20%) | 18(20%) |

| | | | | |
|----------------|--------|---------|----------|-----------|
| Arabic culture | (0%) | 1(3.3%) | (0%) | 1(1.1%) |
| Neutral | 3(10%) | 6(20%) | 4(13.3%) | 13(14.4%) |

The results of this question shows that near to 38 percent of participant prefer their own Persian culture over American and Persian culture. 26.7 percent wish to choose British culture and 20 percent liked to choose American culture at the time of birth. These responses indicate that near to 43 percent of EFL learners like to be a member of English cultures.

Table 23. EFL Learners' answers for question 23

| If you have been asked to live in small towns for six months which town will you choose for living? | High school group | BA group | MA group | Total |
|---|-------------------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| A small town in the north of Iran | 6(20%) | 8(26.7%) | 4(13.3%) | 18(20%) |
| A small town in western England | 10(33.3%) | 5(16.7%) | 7(23.3%) | 22(24.4%) |
| A small town in western USA | 9(30%) | 8(26.7%) | 11(36.7%) | 28(31.1%) |
| A small town in northern Canada | 3(10%) | 6(20%) | 4(13.3%) | 13(14.4%) |
| I can't bear living in a different culture | 2(6.7%) | 3(10%) | 4(13.3%) | 9(10%) |

The results of question 23 shows that 31.1 percent like to live a small town in west of USA and 24.4 percent prefer to live in a small town in England and only 20 percent of them like to live in a small town in north of Iran. The results of these two last questions show that although near to 38 percent of the participants prefer Persian culture over American & British culture in Question 21, most of participants (70 percent) like to live in USA or England. . These responses indicate that Most of EFL learners like to live in the target language culture. This shows that they have a positive attitude toward their L2 cultures.

c) learners' attitude toward learning culture

In this part of questionnaire, the researcher wanted to observe whether these three groups of the learners are aware of the role and importance of L2 culture in the process of L2 learning.

Table 24. EFL Learners' answers for question 24.

| Would you agree that your interest in American culture motivated you to learn English language? | High school group | BA group | MA group | Total |
|---|-------------------|----------|-----------|------------|
| Strongly Agree | 2(6.7%) | 5(16.7%) | 6(20%) | 14 (15.6%) |
| Agree | 5(16.7%) | 7(23.3%) | 13(43.3%) | 25(27.8%) |
| Neutral | 6(20%) | 8(26.7%) | 2(6.7%) | 16(17.8%) |
| Disagree | 12(40%) | 7(23.3%) | 6(20%) | 26(28.9%) |
| Strongly Disagree | 4(13.3%) | 3(10%) | 2(6.7%) | 9(10%) |

Table 25. EFL Learners' answers for question 25

| Would you agree that your interest in British | High school group | BA group | MA group |
|---|-------------------|----------|----------|
|---|-------------------|----------|----------|

| culture motivated you to learn English language? | | | | Total |
|--|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| Strongly Agree | 5(16.7%) | 6(20%) | 5(16.7%) | 16(17.8%) |
| Agree | 8(26.7%) | 7(23.3%) | 16(53.3%) | 31(34.4%) |
| Neutral | 6(20%) | 8(26.7%) | 2(6.7%) | 16(17.8%) |
| Disagree | 9(30%) | 6(20%) | 4(13.3%) | 19(21.1%) |
| Strongly Disagree | 2(6.7%) | 3(10%) | 3(10%) | 8(8.9%) |

The results of question 25 show that 43 percent of participants believed that their interest in American culture motivated them learn English language and in question 26, 52.2 percent believed that their interest in British culture made them learn English language. 30 percent disagreed.

Table26. EFL Learners' answers for question 26

| Would you believe that learning American culture and customs helps you to learn and understand the English language better? | High school group | BA group | MA group | Total |
|---|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Strongly Agree | 6(30%) | 16(53.3%) | 9(30%) | 31(34.4%) |
| Agree | 12(40%) | 13(43.3%) | 20(66.7%) | 45(50%) |
| Neutral | 3(10%) | 0(0%) | 1(6.6%) | 4(4.4%) |
| Disagree | 5(16.7%) | 0(0%) | 0(0%) | 5(5.6%) |
| Strongly Disagree | 4(13.3%) | 1(3.3%) | 0(0%) | 5(5.6%) |

Table 27. EFL Learners' answer for question 27

| Would you believe that learning English culture and customs helps you to learn and understand the English language better? | High school group | BA group | MA group | Total |
|--|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Strongly Agree | 6(20%) | 16(53.3%) | 10(33.3%) | 32(35.6%) |
| Agree | 12(40%) | 10(33.3%) | 20(66.7%) | 42(46.7%) |
| Neutral | 5(16.7%) | 3(10%) | 0(0%) | 8(8.9%) |
| Disagree | 3(10%) | 0(0.0%) | 0(0%) | 3(3.3%) |
| Strongly Disagree | 4(13.3%) | 1(3.3%) | 0(0%) | 5(5.6%) |

Cultural knowledge is useful in the process of language learning. The results of question 26&27 shows 84.4 agreed that learning English culture and customs helps them to learn and understand English language better. And 82.2 percent agreed that learning English culture and customs helps them to learn and understand English language better.

Table 28. EFL Learners' answers for question 28

| Would you believe that we can't learn English language and culture while trying to uphold our own Persian cultural heritage and customs? | High school group | BA group | MA group | Total |
|--|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Strongly Agree | 6(20%) | 2(6.7%) | 0(0%) | 8(8.9%) |
| Agree | 5(16.7%) | 6(20%) | 5(16.7%) | 16(17.7%) |
| Neutral | 5(16.7%) | 3(10%) | 3(10%) | 13(14.4%) |
| Disagree | 7(23.3%) | 10(33.3%) | 14(46.7%) | 31(34.4%) |
| Strongly Disagree | 7(23.3%) | 9(30%) | 8(26.7%) | 24(26.7%) |

61.1 percent of participants expressed disagreement with the idea that they can't learn English language and culture by maintaining their own Persian cultural heritage and customs, while 26.7 percent were agreed. The percentage of agreement was different in three groups. 36.7 percent of high school group agreed while, this number decreased for both BA (26.7 percent) and MA (16.7) groups.

Table 29. EFL Learners' answers for question 29

| Would you believe that in order to learn English Language, we don't need to learn American and British lifestyles or cultural aspects? | High school group | BA group | MA group | Total |
|--|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Strongly Agree | 2(6.7%) | 1(3.3%) | 0(0%) | 3(3.3%) |
| Agree | 6(20%) | 2(6.7%) | 0(0%) | 8(8.9%) |
| Neutral | 7(23.3%) | 5(16.7%) | 0(0%) | 12(13.3%) |
| Disagree | 10(33.3%) | 12(40%) | 15(50%) | 37(41.1%) |
| Strongly Disagree | 5(16.7%) | 10(33.3%) | 15(36.7%) | 30(33.3%) |

Near to 74.4 percent of participant disagreed with the statements which said that in order to learn English Language and culture they don't need to learn American and British lifestyles or cultural aspects. While none of the participant in MA group expresses agreement, 12.2 percent of whole participants express agreement with this idea. Most of them were from high school group.

Table 30. EFL Learners' answers for question 30.

| Would you agree that studying American Language & culture involves changing one's lifestyle to an American one? | High school group | BA group | MA group | Total |
|---|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Strongly Agree | 2(6.7%) | 1(3.3%) | 0(0%) | 3(3.3%) |
| Agree | 9(30%) | 4(13.3%) | 5(16.7%) | 18(20%) |
| Neutral | 8(26.7%) | 6(20%) | 1(3.3%) | 15(16.7%) |
| Disagree | 8(26.7%) | 11(36.7%) | 13(43.3%) | 32(35.6%) |
| Strongly Disagree | 3(10%) | 8(26.7%) | 11(36.7%) | 22(24.4%) |

Table 31. EFL Learners' answers for question 31

| Would you agree that studying British language & culture involves changing one's lifestyle to a British one? | High school group | BA group | MA group | Total |
|--|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Strongly Agree | 2(6.7%) | 1(3.3%) | 0(0%) | 3(3.3%) |
| Agree | 12(40%) | 8(26.7%) | 3(10%) | 23(25.6%) |
| Neutral | 6(20%) | 4(13.3%) | 1(3.3%) | 11(12.2%) |
| Disagree | 8(26.7%) | 10(33.3%) | 14(46.7%) | 32(35.6%) |
| Strongly Disagree | 2(6.7%) | 7(23.3%) | 12(40%) | 21(23.3%) |

The result of question 31 & 32 states that 60 percent of the participants for question 30 and 58.9 percent for question 31 disagreed with the idea that when they study British language and culture they feel that they should change their lifestyle and fit it to British or American culture in order to learn English cultural aspects and English language. 28 percent for question 32 and 23 percent for question 31 agreed with this idea.

Table 32. EFL Learners' answers for question 32

| Question 32 | High school group | BA group | MA group | Total |
|---|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Would you believe that Learning American & British cultures will be of no use to you? | | | | |
| Strongly Agree | 1(3.3%) | 0(0%) | 0(0%) | 1(1.1%) |
| Agree | 1(3.3%) | 1(3.3%) | 0(0%) | 2(2.2%) |
| Neutral | 5(16.7%) | 4(13.3%) | 4(13.3%) | 12(13.3%) |
| Disagree | 14(46.7%) | 13(43.3%) | 14(46.7%) | 41(45.6%) |
| Strongly Disagree | 10(33.3%) | 12(40%) | 12(40%) | 34(37.8%) |

Question 32 was designed to gather learners' attitudes toward the role of cultural knowledge in the process of language learning and to see if they are aware of the usefulness of L2 cultural knowledge on the process of L2 learning. Near to 83 percent of participants disagreed that learning British & American cultures and customs are useless. While only 3.3 percent of them agreed.

The results of analysis of questionnaire

In order to investigate the second research question i.e. "is there any significant difference in EFL learners' attitudes toward their L1 and L2 cultures among three groups of participants?" each choice was given a numerical value ranging from one to five. Thus; the total numerical value could be calculated from all responses. The specific responses to the items were combined so that individuals with the most favorable attitudes would have highest scores while individuals with the least favorable (or unfavorable) attitudes would have the lowest scores.

To interpret each learner's score in a Likert scale questionnaire, it's better to compare each score

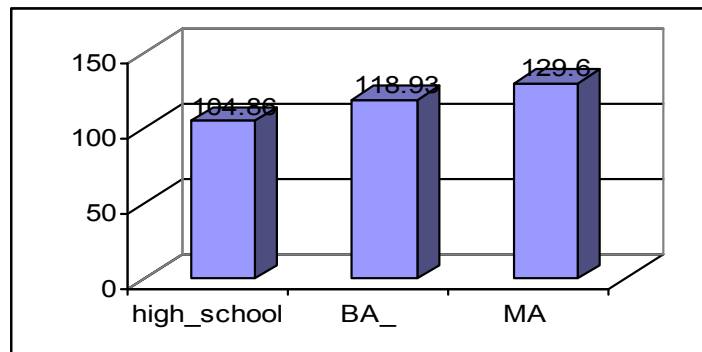
with the mean of Likert scale .If the learner's score is higher than this mean, the learner has more healthy and positive attitude toward L2 culture than those students who get scores lower than the mean. The mean is 99. Scores above 99 shows more positive attitudes. On the other hand those learners that got score below 99 had more negative attitudes. The results shows that most of EFL learners in three groups had positive attitudes, only four students in high school group got score below the mean. The descriptive statistics of learners’ attitude questionnaire for three groups are shown in table 33.

Table 33. Descriptive tabulation of learners’ scores on attitude questionnaire

| participants | N | mean | SD |
|-------------------|----|--------|------|
| High school group | 30 | 104.86 | 6.92 |
| BA group | 30 | 118.93 | 6.85 |
| MA group | 30 | 129.47 | 7.91 |

A comparison of the mean scores of attitudes questionnaire in three groups is illustrated in figure 1.

Figure 1.The Graph of the mean scores of attitude questionnaire



As it is indicated in Table 33 and figure 1, the means attributed to the three groups aren't the same. One-way ANOVA measurement examines the variation both within and between groups. We used this statistical analysis in order to find out if there are any significant differences between the mean scores of learners’ attitudes toward L1 and L2 cultures. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 34.

Table 34. Analysis of variance of three groups of EFL learners’ scores on attitude questionnaire

| | Sum of squares | df | Mean square | F | p |
|----------------|----------------|----|-------------|--------|------|
| Between groups | 9139.822 | 2 | 4569.911 | 87.021 | .000 |
| Within groups | 4568.800 | 87 | 52.515 | | |
| Total | 13708.622 | 89 | | | |

As it is shown in table 34, there are significant differences between three groups ($P = .000$, $p < .01$). “F” is 87.021 so, the first null hypothesis is rejected which says that There is no significant difference among the three groups of participants in terms of attitudes toward L1& L2 cultures. We can say

that attitudes of learners in the three groups are different because the means are different. Since the overall F statistics is significant, Scheffe's procedure can be used to evaluate all a posteriori contrasts among means, not just the pair wise comparisons. Table 3 summarizes the findings of Scheffe's test procedure.

Table 35.The mean differences

As shown in difference G2, G1 & G3 is statistically 0.05 level of

| Comparison of Groups (I)group (J)group | | Mean difference | Sig. |
|---|----|-----------------|------|
| G1 | G2 | -14.06667* | .000 |
| | G3 | -24.60000* | .000 |
| G2 | G1 | 14.06667 | .000 |
| | G3 | -10.53333* | .000 |
| G3 | G1 | 24.60000 | .000 |
| | G2 | 10.53333 | .000 |

Table 35 the between G1 & and G2 & G3 significant at probability.

Discussion:

This paper represents a very short and foundational excursion into the vast domain of language studies. It nevertheless results in some interesting and revealing findings.

First, most of the Persian learners surveyed in this study showed quite similar perceptions and attitudes toward both mother and foreign cultures. Most of the learners (60 percent) in three groups agreed that learning English culture and customs helped them to identify or understand Persian culture better. This attitude was very close to what most writers have. For example, Kramsch (1993) believes that "by constructing both their own and the foreign values, by organizing and extending the range of convenience of these constructs, students can find bridges to the other culture, anticipate foreign events, and discover alternatives to their own cultural patterns of thought" (p.437). She then goes on to suggest that "before we can make students understand the attitudes and values of a foreign culture, we have to make them aware of their own attitudes and values in interpreting foreign events" (p.439). As reflected in the statistics of the first question, most learners believe that cross-cultural communication can result in better understanding of not only the foreign culture but also the mother culture. Palmer (1995) elaborates this fact with the memorable Goethe's famous quote that "he who knows no foreign language does not know his own"(p. 221). Palmer (1995) suggested that what is true for language is likewise true for culture.

Second, most of the participants were aware of the difference between L1& L2 cultures, as most writers (Hall, 1976; Higherwater, 1981) revealed that it is necessary for the students to be aware of the cultural differences. For instance, Higherwater (1981) notes that "if we can accept the paradox that the real humanity of people is understood through cultural differences rather than cultural similarities, then we can make profound sense of our differences" (p.5). Many individuals do not become aware of their cultural value system until they are exposed to some alternative view of the world (Byrne, 1995). Gillett (1997) argues that people from different cultures do things in different ways. The EFL learners need to increase their awareness of and sensitivity to culturally different modes of behavior. Learners need to recognize different cultural patterns at work in the behavior of people from the target language culture. They need to be aware of how their own cultural background influences their behavior. And they also need develop tolerance for behavior patterns that are different to their own. The results of the first questionnaire (questions 6 & 7) showed that students were well aware of the cultural differences

between mother culture (i.e., Persian culture) and foreign culture (i.e., American and British cultures)

Third, most of EFL learners also had neither superiority nor inferiority in facing or acquiring the foreign culture (see Questions 7-10). They stated that they respect American and British cultures. This attitude was very close to what, for example, Rivers and Temperly (1978) have. They state that "true cultural understanding means an appreciation of basically different attitudes and values which are reflected in the things people do, but which are not necessarily explicitly stated" (pp.31-32). It is interesting to note that while most students were aware of the differences between Persian cultures and those of the United States and Britain (Questions 5 and 6), most of them tended to accept these foreign cultures and they stated that they respect these two culture (Questions 13 and 14).

Fourth, most of learners agreed L2 cultural knowledge is useful in the process of language learning. Most of them were aware of relationship between L2 learning and L2 cultural knowledge. This cultural knowledge can help them to learn L2 better. The dialectical relation between language and culture has been a concern of second language teachers and educators. There should be some kind of relationship between sound words and syntax of a language and the way in which speaker of that language experience the world. Language cannot exist in a vacuum (Duranti, 1997). If the process of L2 acquisition is accompanied with L2 culture learning, learners can be able to use English in such a way as to communicate effectively with English native speakers and also in a way that reflect their own local cultures and personal beliefs (Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996). Medgyes (1999) suggests that a successful bilingual teacher is a more suitable model for learners than a mono-cultural or mono-lingual native speaker teacher.

Fifth, the next finding is that although three groups of learners were almost consonant in views about some questions surveyed, they still showed some noticeable discrepancy in some other questions. For example, in Questions 13 and 14, we discover the considerable percentage differences between the three groups of learners. Attitudes of the high school group toward the L2 cultures were somehow different from two university groups (MA group & BA group).

Fifth, based on the results of each question and also the calculation of the mean of the 5-point Likert scale, we can conclude that most of the Persian EFL learners in these three groups of language proficiency have positive or healthy attitudes toward both L1 & L2 cultures. So, the answer for the first research question is that Iranian EFL learners have positive attitudes toward L2 & L1 culture.

Sixth, the mean scores and ANOVA measurements of students' scores show that there is a significant difference in attitudes of three groups toward L1 & L2 cultures. So, as their language proficiency levels were different, their attitudes were different too. It showed that learners' attitudes toward their L1 & L2 cultures are different between EFL learners in low level of language proficiency (high school group) and those in intermediate level (BA group) & Advanced level (MA group).

Most of Iranian EFL learners display different degree of difficulty in encountering the situations in appropriate ways when they face with L2 cultural aspects. English teachers and textbook writers need to be aware of differences in learners' attitudes toward L2 and L1 culture and refine an effective pedagogical approach accordingly. They can deal with the problem appropriately by a new method in language teaching in which L2 culture are focused and language is taught with due attention to cross-cultural differences found between Persian and English cultures. The teachers need to help learners explore the target language cultures through authentic texts and materials. As EFL Learners recognized the differences between their native culture and the target language cultures more objectively feeling of ethnocentrism will be decreased and avoided.

Conclusion and pedagogical implications

Sociolinguistic approaches have been concerned with attitudes which learners have towards their L2, the people who speak it or the culture with which the language is associated. This study was conducted to measure the Iranian EFL learners attitudes toward both their L1 and L2 cultures and to see whether the students have a positive attitudes toward their L1 and L2 culture. Positive or negative attitudes of learners toward their L2 cultures affect their motivation to learn L2. The result of the study shows that most EFL learners had positive attitudes toward their L1 and L2 cultures. Majority of them believe that learning English culture and customs helps them to learn and understand the English language better. Unfortunately, the concept of culture and its role on language learning process are not taken seriously by most teachers in Iran. Some teachers and even textbook writers think that introducing a foreign culture to learners can create other problems for EFL learners like cultural alienation. They don't pay attention to the fact that knowledge of the grammatical system of a language (grammatical competence) is not sufficient for successful attainment of L2 proficiency. It has to be complemented by culture- specific meanings (communicative or rather cultural competence) (Byram, Morgan et al., 1994). It is obvious that every language has a setting in that people who speak it belong to a race or races and "language doesn't exist apart from culture"(sapir, 1970, p.207).

So, foreign language teaching needs to be accompanied with the culture teaching in Iranian context. Teachers should allow learners to increase their knowledge of the target culture in terms of people's way of life, values, attitudes, and beliefs, and how these manifest themselves or are couched in linguistic categories and forms. More specifically, the teaching of culture should make learners aware of speech acts, connotations, etiquette, that is, appropriate or inappropriate behavior, as well as provide them with the opportunity to act out being a member of the target culture. "Equipped with the knowledge that such notions as superior or inferior cultures are nothing but sweeping generalizations emanating from lack of knowledge and disrespect to other human beings with different worldviews, learners can delve into the target language and use it as a tool not only to communicate in the country where it is spoken but also to give a second (or third) voice to their thoughts, thus flying in the face of cultural conventions and stereotypes". (Thanasoulas, 2001, p.7)

The findings of this research may be helpful for teachers as well as material developers in order to improve EFL learners' perception and awareness toward L1&L2 cultures. Iranian EFL Teacher should know that teaching the target language culture is an integral component of the language courses.

❖ References

- Baker, W. Should culture be an overt component of EFL instruction outside of English speaking countries? The Thai context. *Asian EFL Journal*: ISSN: 1738-1460, 2003.
- Baker, W. *An investigation into the relationship between cultural awareness and second language acquisition amongst Thai undergraduate students*. MA Dissertation. Leicester University. 2003.
- Barkan, E. *The retreat of scientific racism: Changing concepts of race in Britain and the United States between the world wars*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press. 1992.
- Buttjes, D. Teaching foreign language and culture: Social impact and political significance. *Language Learning Journal*, 2, 1990. 53-57.
- Bruner, J. *Acts of meaning*. Harvard University Press. USA. 1990. p.3.

- Bruner, J. *The culture of education*. Harvard University Press. USA. 1996. 12.
- Byram, M. Morgan, C. and colleagues. *Teaching and learning language and culture*. Great Britain. WBC. 1994.
- Byrne, J. S. Meaningful Negotiation; A study of the pedagogical value of Auto tuto. in O'Baill D. (ed) TEANGA 15, *The Irish Yearbook of Applied Linguistics*. IRAAL. 1995. 1-19.
- Cortazzi, M. and Lixian J. Culture: hidden resources in the English language classroom. *Proc. of the Fourth International Conference of English Teaching, English Teachers' Association, R.O.C. Taipei; Taiwan, 1995*. 204-219.
- Flewelling, J. Teaching culture in the '90s: Implementing the National Core French Study syllabus. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 49 (2), 1993. 338-344.
- Gardner, R. C. and Lambert, W. E. Motivational variables in second language acquisition. *Canadian Journal of Psychology*, 13, 1959. 266-272
- Gillett, A. How ELT professionals can help other members of staff" in P. Grundy (ed) IATEFL: *Conference Selections IATEFL*, 1997. 55.
- Hanley, J. Beyond the tip of the iceberg: five stages toward cultural competence. *Today's Youth: The Community Circle of Caring Journal*, 3(2), 1999. 9-12.
- Hadley, O. *Teaching language in context*. Boston, Massachusetts: Heinle & Heinle, 1993.
- Hall, E. T. *Beyond culture*. Garden City, New York: Anchor/Doubleday, 1976.
- Hatch, E. & Lazaraton, A. *The research manual: Design and statistics for applied linguistics*. Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle, 1991.
- Highwater, J. *The Primal Mind: Vision and Reality in Indian America*. New York: Harper & Row, 1981.
- Jong, W. d. Open Frontiers: Teaching English in an intercultural context. In *English Language Teaching*. Oxford: Heinemann, 1996.
- Kincheloe, J. L. and Staley, G. Teaching anthropology: Understanding the Concept of Culture. *NASSP Bulletin*, February: 1985. 41-44.
- Karimpour, A. Iranian EFL learners' attitudes toward British and American English and its effect on their listening Comprehension. *Iranian EFL Journal: ISSN: 2000*. 171-175.
- Kramsch, C. J. *Context and Culture in Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993. 205-206.
- Kramsch, C. and Sullivan, P. Appropriate pedagogy. *ELT Journal*, 50/3: 1996. 199-212.
- Lado, R. *Teaching English Across Cultures*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1988.
- Larsen-freeman ,D. Second language acquisition research : Staking out the Territory." School for International Training : *TESOL Quarterly*, 25, summer 1991.
- Larsen-Freeman, D. *Teaching grammar. In Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language, 3rd edition*. Boston, MA: Heinle. 2001.
- Larsen-Freeman, D. *Teaching language from grammar to grammaring*. Boston, MA: Heinle. 2003.
- Palmer, D. Cross-cultural awareness raising in business English teaching. *Proc. of the Fourth International Symposium on English Teaching ETA, R.O.C. Taipei, Taiwan. 1995*. 221-236.
- Peck, D. *Teaching Culture: Beyond Language* .Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute. 1984.
- Prodromou, L. What culture? Which Culture? Cross-cultural Factors in Language Learning. *ELT Journal*, 46.1. 1992. 39-50.
- Rivers, W. M. *Teaching foreign language skills*. Chicago. the University of Chicago press. 1668.
- Sapir, E. *Language. An Introduction to the Study of Speech*. London: Rupert Hart-Davis. 1970.
- Stern, H.H. *Issues and options in language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1992.
- Sysoyev, P. V. Teaching foreign language culture for cultural identity and dialogue of cultures. *Identity, culture, and language teaching*. Iowa City, IA: Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies. 2002. 7-28.
- Tomalin, B. and Stempleski, S. *Cultural Awareness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1993.
- Thanasoulas, D. The Iimportance Of Teaching Culture In Foreign Language Classroom: *Radical pedagogy*, Greek. 2001.
- Valdes, J. M. Culture bound; Bridging the cultural Gap in language teaching. Cambridge; Cambridge University Press. 1986.
- Wilkes, H. Title Pages: A Simple Device for Cultural Consciousness-Raising in the Teenaged Student of French. *Foreign Language Annals*, 16. New York: ACTFL, Inc. 1983.

Yu-Hsin, T. All things being equal: Examining How Students Perceive the Effects Of Intercultural Influences in the Classroom: *Hong Kong Journal of TEFL*, 7. Language Center, Chinese Culture University: 2001. pp.1-22.