



Local Culture in the Foreign Language Classrooms: An Exploratory Study of Teacher's Preparedness in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

Language learning needs a favourable setting. Cultural factors are among those that affect the outcomes. English language learning is not an easy task especially when the learning environment is not conducive. Learning of any language can't take place without a conducive teaching-learning environment. An environment includes the very culture in which the learning is to take place. Studies support the notion that foreign language teaching can be boosted by the incorporation of the foreign (British) culture in the target language classroom. But, the question if the local culture is also crucial in the target language classroom is quite of a new origin, and pedagogues have started investigating into the process. The present study is a modest attempt towards answering some such questions formulating the basis and the research hypotheses: advantages of Arabic culture in a foreign language classroom, why and how to integrate the local culture and teachers' preparedness in this direction. The study is of descriptive type which includes 2 main samples: three types of teachers and two groups of students. The findings of the study will be useful in offering recommendations for local culture based teaching for motivating the students further.

Keywords: culture; cultural factors,; learning environment; pedagogues; local culture; target language.

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1. Introduction

There has been an academic zeal among modern teachers and innovative researchers to explore into the possibility of inclusion of local culture in a foreign language setting. Many modern researchers, enthusiastic pedagogues, socio-linguists and English teachers have long perceived that the elements related to cross cultures can't be ignored in the teaching/learning process of a language especially in a second language setting.

The issue of culture integration was noticed when a researcher claimed, "...language does not exist apart from culture." [1]. The authors in [2], 'Culture and communication are inseparable because culture and communication go along, and communication is not possible without a language. Peck (1998) cited in author [3] contended that foreign language instruction can never be easy without the study of culture. However, it should be noted that such ideas are proposed in defence of teaching language within the context of the same culture. The hunch of the present study stems from the same notion if the learner's culture is also important in the process of second language learning.

1.1. Culture: The concept

Culture can be defined from individual's viewpoints. Culture includes various dimensions of society. It includes the way of life, dress code, food types, local customs, values, traditions etc. Broadly speaking, culture is a 'an environment created by humans' [4]. A culture is something that a group shares pertaining to the elements of culture: style, dress, customs etc.

The anthropological perspective of the definition of culture is endorsed by many linguists including Lado [5] who writes in *Linguistic Across Cultures* (1952) that culture is nothing but the "ways of people." The bond between culture, first or second language and other cultures has also been understood by a lot of scholars. In this connection, the author in [6] found those three ways in which language and culture are connected with each other.

1.1.1. Teaching of Culture in EFL Classroom

Culture is an inseparable part of language learning, and learning language is essentially a social phenomenon. It has been defended that the target students cannot be proficient in the target language unless they know about cultural perspectives. (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1996, cited in [7]. Author in [8], [9]... revealed the adult learners' perceptions of the incorporation of their L1 in foreign language classrooms. Reference [10] has clearly talked about the close relation between language and culture.

1.1.2. What cultural aspects to incorporate

Keeping the Saudi socio-cultural context in view, it is imperative for a teacher or curriculum designer to select and implement appropriate learning material. The significant cultural elements to incorporate in a language classroom should correspond to the culturally influenced beliefs and perceptions, especially as expressed through language, but also through cultural behaviors and the language of the users and his belongings to the

culture in which he lives in [11].

It is imperative to incorporate good cultural aspects into the curriculum of the target EFL learning program. However, it should always be in the focus that one hand, impart of knowledge is the target, on the other, teaching of culture as an integral part of a hidden curriculum is also important. Therefore, the integration of local culture and active/involved learning is the prime focus in order to attain the goals conceived by the educational planners and policy makers in KSA.



A national festival called 'Al-Jenadriyah' is held every year in the capital city, Riyadh, KSA. It first held in 1985. It is famous for a lot of cultural programs and dances that continue for two weeks. It is organised by the National Guards of Saudi Arabia. The main attractions are: camel race, local music and dances of the Ardah and the Mizmar. It is estimated that around one million people usually visit the festival venue. The festival is normally organized during the month of February -March.

By incorporating such familiar topics, the students will only find out the appropriate words and structure which they can get with the help of their teachers or peers. Local culture teaching will not stop the use of comparative material, but the focus will be put on the teaching of skills from familiar (easy) to unfamiliar (difficult) topics. The process will surely enhance the communication skills of the target learners without putting double burden of both foreign language and contents.

1.2.3. Language skills and elements: teaching of English in KSA

Thus skills of a language (Listening, reading, writing and speaking) and elements (vocabulary, grammar, spelling etc.) are the target areas of language teaching. The focus of teaching on either skill or elements depends on the teaching and the approach of teaching. The integrated approach of teaching emphasizes the teaching of English as a whole. In this case, Reading is the most important skill which includes sub-skills and all the elements. Thus, in the present context, teaching of reading has been considered to be focus to be taught by the Integrated English pedagogy.

1.2.4. Advantages of culture based Vocabulary

Every language has specific vocabulary with particular features. However, the meaning is linked to the local culture as well. The contextual usage of a particular word is more important than the routine teaching through translations and literal meanings usually available in dictionaries because the context may enable the learner to understand a concept better. Online resources can be of great help to make comparisons between the two cultural settings.

A reading lesson should aim at achieving the vocabulary targets, however images may be used for additional help to create a familiar environment. A target text may have too many difficult words for the target learners, therefore, a teacher chooses a variety of techniques such as translation, images, or explaining the new vocabulary in context with the help of web material.

In order to assure the familiar vocabulary, the context based teaching is one of the strategies of teaching reading

Ahmed: Have you been to Makkah?

Ali: Not yet. But, I am excited to be there.

Ahmed: Have you seen the Jeddah fountain yet?

Ali: Yes, luckily. I have been to it two times.

Ahmed: What about the cruise experience?

Ali: Unfortunately I haven't had this experience.

Ahmed: Have you ridden a camel in a desert?

Ali: Yes, I have already ridden once with my friends.

2. Literature Review

There are many aspects of teaching English as second or foreign language (ESL/EFL). The approaches of teaching also vary. If we consider teaching English through integrated approach to realise an overall objectives of communication, two aims become more important: reading and vocabulary. Reading alone can include the teaching of elements like sound, vocabulary, meaning, grammar *etc.* and skills such as listening, writing and speaking. However, the teacher has to decide as to which element/skill is more focused a particular point of teaching as per the lesson plan or scheme of work (SOW).

The following are some of the important reviews in the present context:

In the distant past, the educational goals in general were fixed on educating people who were exposed to history, sociology, literature, fine arts etc. as the group of such people were expected said have culture in their life. Things have changed a bit and the focus is now on the aim of foreign language teaching is to develop students' ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in various situations, the teaching of culture should facilitate intercultural communication and perception [12].

It has been rightly described about the major goal for the teaching of culture: "All students will develop the cultural understanding, attitudes, and required skills required to function appropriately within a unfamiliar culture, and to communicate with people of that culture" [13]. A researcher in [14] added that in language classes where intercultural understanding is one of the goals, students know about their own culture and also be able to assimilate foreign culture. In such classes, students learn to recognise cultural patterns of behaviour and communication. In addition, the learners should understand the socio-cultural implications of language and language use. In order to achieve some of the important goals of language teaching, classe interactions should be well organized and planned [15]. An important study [16] stressed on the integration of local culture in order to facilitate the foreign language learning by means of good culture based strategy.

An Overview:

Based on the above review, it can be stated that culture teaching is important, however local culture based teaching is still a new area that needs to be well researched. The opinion and ideas related to the realistic and contextual teaching is closely related to the proposal of local culture integration in the foreign language classroom. But, the teachers should be well prepared. And, if they are underprepared, they must be professionally developed to integrate local culture in order to justice to their teaching.

The prime purpose of the present study is to explore the possibility of integration of local culture in English language classrooms in especially preparatory program of Saudi universities. This study includes a questionnaires for teachers as well as the students of the sample college.

3. Methods of the study

3.1. Statement of the Problems

Culture has an effect on language therefore, while teaching a language, integration of culture is perhaps imperative. The idea of integration of the local culture is a novel idea which the researchers have started taking interest in. Because of importance and an immense need in the field of research, the present attempt is made to explore if the local culture is significant during the process of teaching English as a foreign language. The focus of this research is to identify as to what elements of the local culture can well be integrated with, and what cultural aspects of the English culture should not be integrated in the Saudi Arabian context.

3.1.2. Objectives

Objectives of the present research were:

- 1-To study the scope and benefits of integration of Arabic culture into English classroom.
- 2-To explore if the local culture motivate the target learners.
- 3-To identify what aspects of local culture should be integrated and why.
- 4-To study as to how should Arabic culture be taught effectively in the English classrooms.
- 5-To elicit if the EFL teachers are prepared to integrate local culture into target classrooms.

The study exclusively aims to answer the following research questions:

3.1.3. Research Questions

- 1-Is integration of Arabic culture into English classroom beneficial?
- 2-Does local culture motivate the target learners?
- 3-What aspects of local culture should be integrated and why?
- 4-How should Arabic culture be taught effectively in the English classrooms?
- 5-Are EFL teachers prepared to integrate local culture into target classrooms?

3.1.4. Research Methods

This study attempts to identify to explore the possibility of integration of local culture in English language classrooms and teachers' preparedness in especially preparatory program of Saudi universities.

A descriptive survey was chosen because it provides an exact account of the case or situation. This design was chosen to meet the objectives of the study, namely to determine the knowledge and views of the respondents: the teachers and students.

3.1.5. Research Setting

The study was conducted at preparatory year students of the King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah-KSA. English is an important subject taught for 20 hours a week by expert teachers with the books published by Cambridge University.

3.1.6. The Study Population and Sample

In the present context, the study population comprised all the students of preparatory year English at KAU, Jeddah-KSA.

A convenient sample of 50 subjects (two groups of first year students of English) was selected from JCC, Jeddah-KSA. In order to compare, two more samples were selected based on purposive sampling: one from within the university and the other from the Arab/middle East regions.

3.2. Data Collection

3.2.1 Data collection instrument

Questionnaires: A questionnaire is a printed self-report form designed to elicit information through written responses. The data elicited from a questionnaire is somewhat similar to that of an interview, but the questions tend to have less depth. It is more formal and easy to tabulate and then analyse.

As mentioned, the proposed study falls under the category of descriptive-qualitative research taking clues from the case study methods as well. The sampling is related to 'purposive type' based on convenient sampling technique. Three types of samples (as mentioned above) were administered tools/questionnaires to elicit data were analysed qualitatively focusing each and every minute details.

This study employed questionnaires on the concerned teachers of JCC, KAU, Jeddah (KSA) and 25 teachers teaching English in different colleges of King Abdulaziz University Jeddah-KSA. In addition, 25 teachers of English especially from the Middle East and EFL/ESL nations. The selection of the EFL/ESL teachers from different regions via the social and professional networking sites such as LinkedIn, Research gate and Facebook. Data elicited from different tools were analysed qualitatively (as it is descriptive research), however, some quantifications was done to analyse the data and interpret the results.

Two self-developed questionnaires were administered:

1- Teachers' questionnaire: it was administered on here samples: JCC, KAU teachers, teachers of English at KAU, and teachers of English teaching around the Middle East. The teachers' questionnaires consisted of sections A, B, C and D. Section -A (15 items) aimed at gaining data on the importance of local culture. Section -B (5 items) elicits information related to bicultural context while section- C gathers information on the actual practice in the classroom. Section D deals with the aspect of teachers' preparedness. The questions are multiple choice type having three options, however, there is an option to comments on those issues that are not included or if the respondents want to share something in particular.

The questionnaire for the teachers was conducted, tested against the content validity norms, administered to the concerned teachers.

2- Questionnaires for students:

The students' questionnaire was also developed in accordance with the construction procedures of the questionnaires. The content validity was tested by consulting a few experts in the field to assure if the tool was able to measure the same what it was made for. The questionnaires of the students were in basically in English,

but a translation was provided so that the essence of the items might not be missed by the respondents.

Students' questionnaires has three sections (a total of 20 items). Section -A was meant for status and problems of English language teaching, section-B is designed for preference for cultures while section-C elicits information on cultural examples in the EFL classrooms. All the questions are of multiple choice except one for free response at the end of each of the section.

Two groups of the students were administered the questionnaire: one group was taught by the researcher himself by incorporating local cultural material and comparative approaches. On the other hand, the other group was taught by regular traditional teaching methods.

3.2.2 Data Collection Procedure

Questionnaires were personally distributed by the researcher to all the samples chosen except those who were contacted via social networking sites.

It took almost two months to take back the responses from the teachers, but the students were facilitated to fill in the classrooms. Some teachers could not return back the questionnaires.

3.3. Validity and Reliability

3.3.2 Validity

Like reliability, the issue of validity of the tools is also of crucial importance. Validity is the degree to which a tool that measures what it is intended to measure. In other words, it refers to the extent to which a tool covers the factors included in the study. For the purpose of measuring the required content validity, questionnaires included different kinds of questions revolving around the focus area- importance of local culture in an EFL classroom, and teachers' preparedness.

Questions were based on information gathered during the literature review to ensure that they were related to the topic and focus of the research.

Content validity was further ensured by consistency in the administration of collection of the questionnaires. The questionnaires were distributed to different types of subjects by the researcher himself.

All the subjects (students) completed the questionnaires in the presence of the researcher. This was done to check t from seeking heck the respondents. Teachers were requested to be sincere. In order to confirm if the responses were given by the teachers themselves, some oral sessions were held except in the case of distant subjects.

3.3.1 Reliability

Reliability is in more than a sense, the degree of consistency with which a research tool measures what it is

developed for. Two different questionnaires were answered by three groups of the teachers and two groups of students revealed consistency in responses. Therefore, testing the reliability was handled by minimizing the sources of error in the process of measurement (if any).

3.4. Ethical Considerations

There are many ethical considerations, but the most crucial academic issue is plagiarism and similarity index. Plagiarism can be roughly conceived as a process of using the writing of other writers or authors without proper referencing or citations [15].

Research in education in particular demands high level of academic honesty apart from researcher's expertise and qualification. In order to ensure that the research and its outcome is worth and valid, one has to follow important ethical standards with special reference to conducting researches: self-determination, anonymity, confidentiality and informed consent etc. which the present researcher did.

Since the study was concerned with the researcher's institution, it was not difficult to get written consents from the administration. Subjects' (the teacher's) consent was obtained before they filled in the questionnaires. Subjects were informed about the purpose of the study, the procedures that would be used to collect the data, and assured that no risks were involved. In addition, anonymity and confidentiality were maintained during the whole process of study. In this study anonymity was ensured by not revealing the subject's name on the questionnaire and research data.

3.5. Limitations

The following are the limitations of the present study:

The study has been conducted on a limited number of sample chosen from a college. Sophisticated statistical techniques have not been employed for data analysis. Incorporation of local culture in an English classroom, being a novel idea for many teachers, initially surprised which might have an effect on the findings. In addition, the study is limited to the preparatory year students of KAU-Jeddah. However, implementation of the findings will be open to any such institutions in the Kingdom or even outside.

4. Analysis of the teachers' questionnaires

4.1. Responses of group-1 teachers

Based on the data elicited from the JCC teachers' responses on the questionnaires Appendix-C, part wise analysis of the questionnaires follow:

4.1.1. Importance of Local Culture in EFL Context

The analysis of item.1 shows that more than 54% current teachers of JCC don't use first language in the classroom. It may be because of the fact that sometimes administration gives an impression that L1 in the L2

class is like a forbidden fruit. While the fact is that the British council is even of the opinion that bilingualism can be used as a strategy.

Data on item.2 support the idea that local culture helps in understanding. 45% teachers opine that English teaching can be supported by the local culture while 18% falls under the state of confusion may be because they are trained in this novel area of ESL/EFL research. They say that they integrate local culture to explain the learning scenario. Besides, 63% teachers are of the view that contextual teaching should be focused in the given situation of Saudi Arabia. It is interesting to note that more than 80% teachers are in favour of contextual teaching.

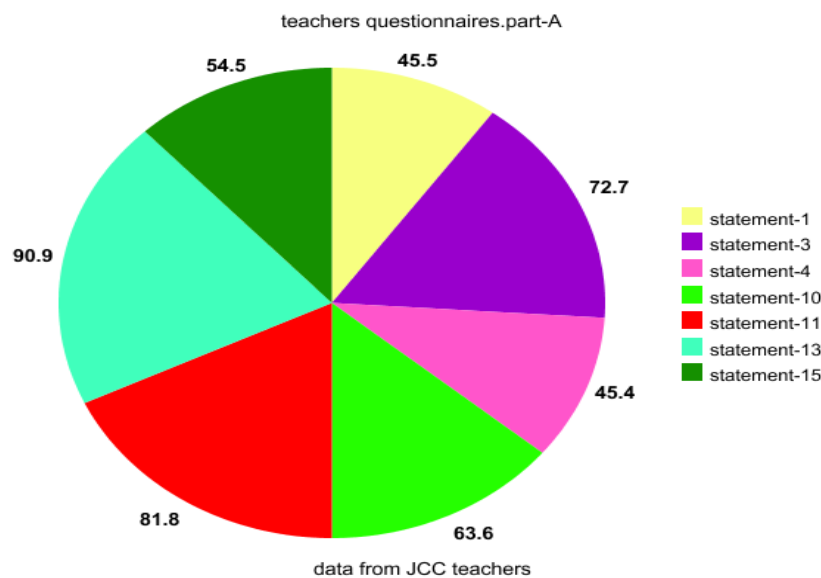


Figure 1

4.1.2. Actual Practice in EFL Classrooms

Around 55% group.1 teachers confirm that they use local culture in EFL classrooms while 27.2% teachers are of the opinion there is no need to integrate local culture in an English class. More than 81% teachers opine that knowledge of British culture is needed to teach English language, and it can be analysed that it is always better to know more than two languages and cultures in order to be more effective in a class. In addition, it deserves to be noted that 81.8% teachers give examples from the local culture in order to facilitate their teaching. The item -24 of this part confirms that the integration of local culture is a motivator. Only 27.3% teachers state that local culture integration doubles the burden of teaching. In other words, local culture may de-burden the pressure of learning both the foreign culture and foreign language.

4.1.3. Teachers' Preparedness

The data elicited from this part of the questionnaire verifies the level of (group-1) JCC teachers' preparedness to integrate the local culture in a foreign language classroom. Around 81% confirms that Local culture is easier than foreign one to integrate with teaching. On the other hand, 27.3 teachers find difficulties in bringing local

cultures in my classrooms. It is interesting to note that 81.81% teachers can integrate technology to integrate local culture in foreign language classrooms.

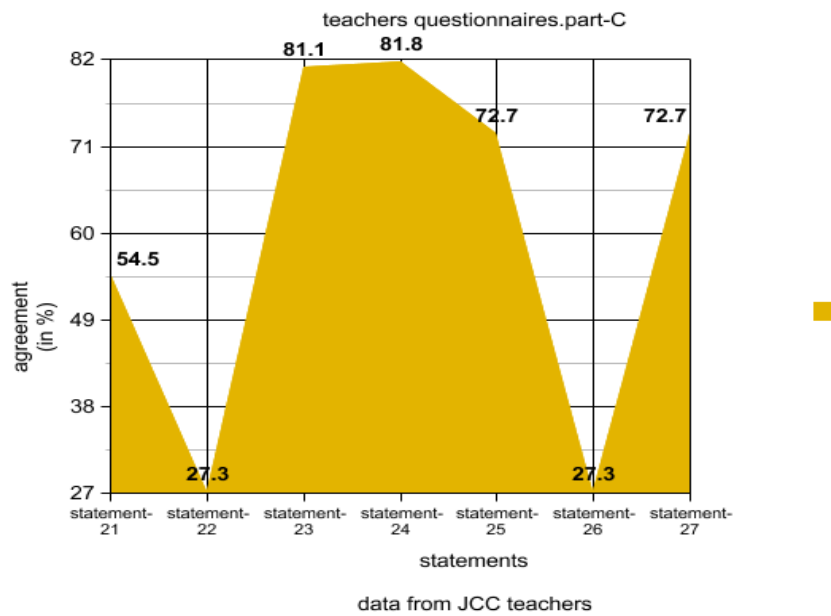


Figure 2

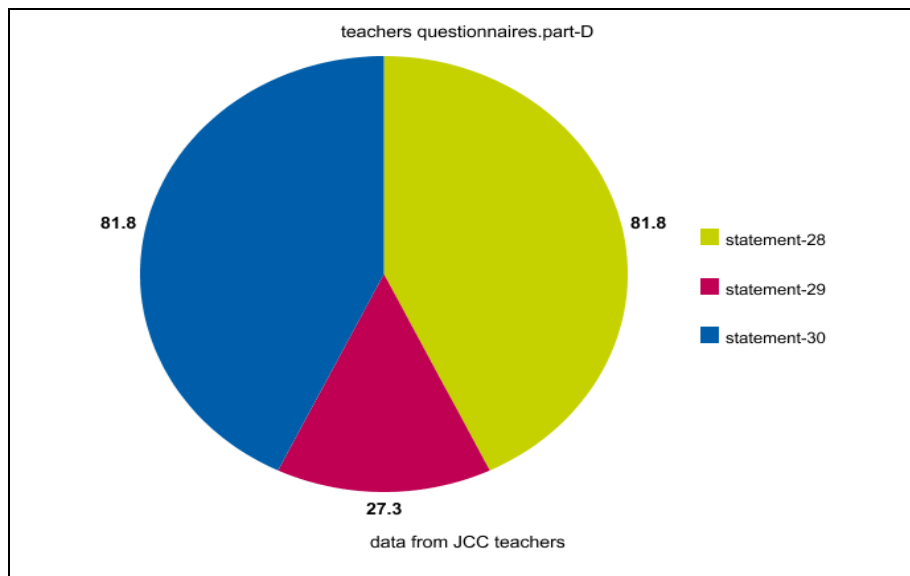


Figure 3

4.2. Analysis of the responses of group-2

4.2.1. Importance of local culture

The analysis of important item.1 (Appendix-B) shows that more than 74% teachers of (group.2) KAU don't use first language (Arabic) in the classroom. It may be because of the fact that sometimes administration gives an impression that L1 in the L2 class is not preferred.

Data on item.2 support the idea that local culture helps in understanding. Around 57 % teachers feel that English teaching can be supported by the local culture while 40% are confused. They say that they integrate local culture to explain the learning scenario. 74.4% teachers are of the view that contextual teaching should be focused in the classrooms of Saudi Arabia. It is interesting to note that more than 80% teachers are in favour of teaching based on real life situations.

4.2.2. Biculturalism

Item 16 explores that according to 31.4 % KAU teachers agree that there is no need to know two cultures, and 25.71% opine that target language culture is enough to teach the target language. More than 31% confirm that cultural differences lead to conflicts in the classrooms. The dress sense, life style etc. differ in target culture from local one as felt by 91.42% teachers. Nearly 31.4% teachers are of the opinion that foreign language includes all the foreign contents.

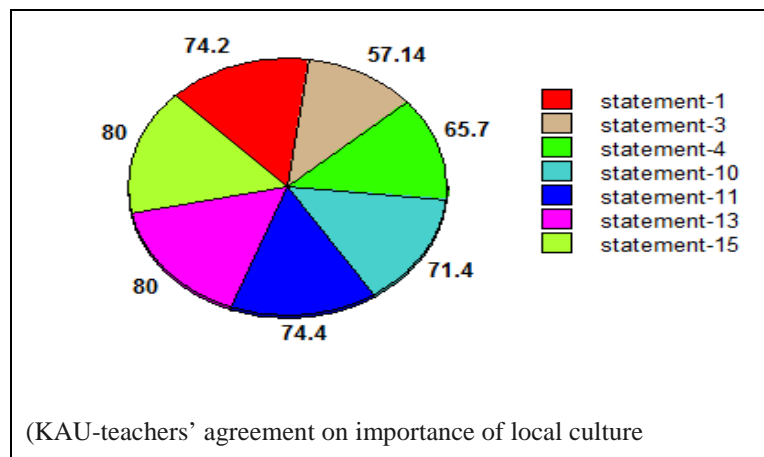
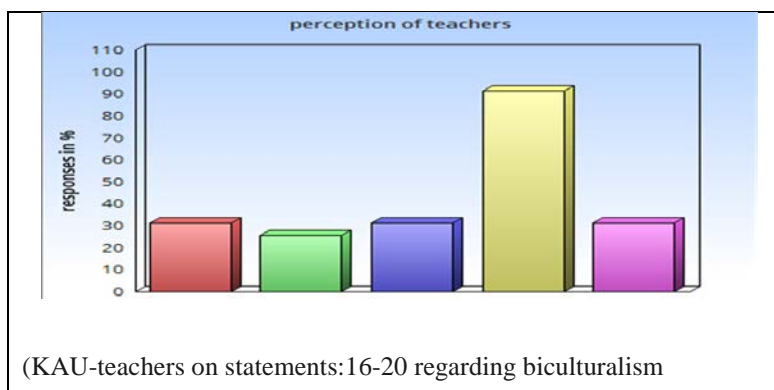


Figure 4



(KAU-teachers on statements: 16-20 regarding biculturalism)

Figure 5

4.2.3. Actual Practice

Around 74.4% KAU teachers confirm that they use local culture in EFL classrooms while 31.4% teachers are of the opinion there is no need to integrate local culture in an English class. More than 57.14% teachers opine that knowledge of British culture is needed to teach English language, and it can be analysed that it is always better to know more than two languages and cultures in order to be more effective in a class. In addition, it deserves to be noted that 68.57% teachers give examples from the local culture in order to facilitate their teaching. An item of this part especially confirms that the integration of local culture is a motivator. Only 62.8 % teachers state that local culture integration doubles the burden of teaching. In other words, local culture may de-burden the pressure of learning both the foreign culture and foreign language, as felt by 57.14 % KAU teachers.

4.2.4. Teachers' preparedness

The data elicited from this part of the questionnaire verifies the level of KAU teachers' preparedness to integrate the local culture in a foreign language classroom. Around 62.8% confirms that Local culture is easier than foreign one to integrate with teaching. On the other hand, 57.14 teachers find difficulties in bringing local cultures in my classrooms. The responses are not clear because if local culture is easier to integrate than the foreign one, how can the respondents find it difficult to bring in the classroom. It is interesting to note that 62.8 % KAU teachers can integrate technology to integrate local culture in foreign language classrooms.

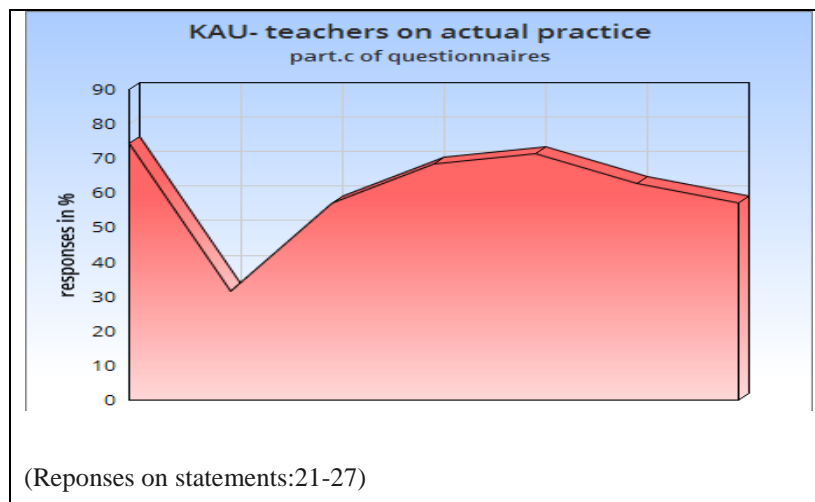


Figure 6

The personal observation and experience of the researcher supports the idea that the KAU English teachers have a preference and liking for British/foreign culture integration. It may be because of the fact that they think the foreign culture is more glamorous than the local one, so they are attracted.

4.3. Analysis of the responses of the teachers of group-3 (N=29)

4.3.1. Importance of local culture

The analysis of important item.1 shows that more than 86.2% current teachers (category-3) don't use first language in the classroom. It may be because of the fact that sometimes administration gives an impression that L1 in the L2 class is like a forbidden fruit. While the fact is that the British council experts are even of the opinion that bilingualism can be used as a strategy.

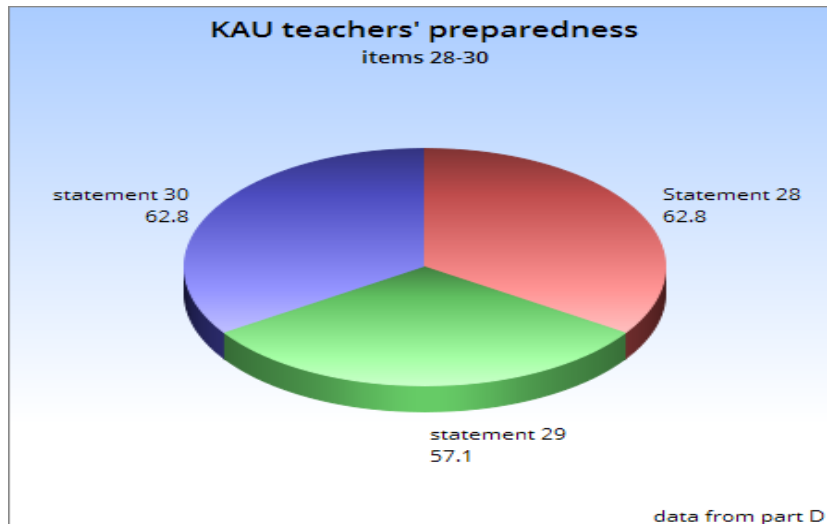


Figure 7

Data elicited from item.2 supports the idea that local culture helps in understanding. 75.86 % teachers opine that English teaching can be supported by the local culture. They say that they integrate local culture to explain the learning scenario. Besides, 63% teachers are of the view that contextual teaching should be focused in the given situation of Saudi Arabia. Item 16 explores that according to 54 % JCC teachers agree that there is no need to know two cultures, and 27% opine that target language culture is enough to teach the target language. More than 63% confirm that cultural differences lead to conflicts in the classrooms. The dress sense, life style etc. differ in target culture from local one as perceived by 81% JCC teachers. Nearly 82% teachers are of the opinion that foreign language includes all the foreign contents. It is interesting to note that more than 80% teachers are in favour of contextual teaching.

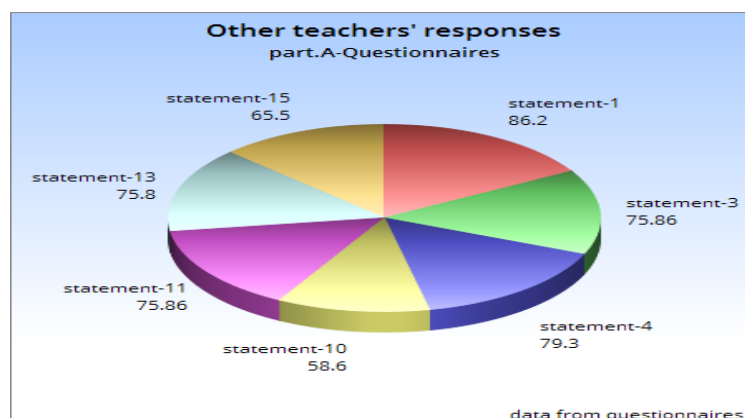


Figure 8

4.3.2. Actual Practice in EFL Classrooms

Around 65.5% teachers (group-3) confirm that they use local culture in EFL classrooms while 17.2% teachers are of the opinion there is no need to integrate local culture in an English class. More than 37.9% teachers opine that knowledge of British culture is needed to teach English language, and it can be analysed that it is always better to know more than two languages and cultures in order to be more effective in a class. In addition, it deserves to be noted that 44.2% teachers give examples from the local culture in order to facilitate their teaching. The item -24 of this part confirms that the integration of local culture is a motivator. Only 55.17% teachers state that local culture integration doubles the burden of teaching. In other words, local culture may burden the pressure of learning both the foreign culture and foreign language.

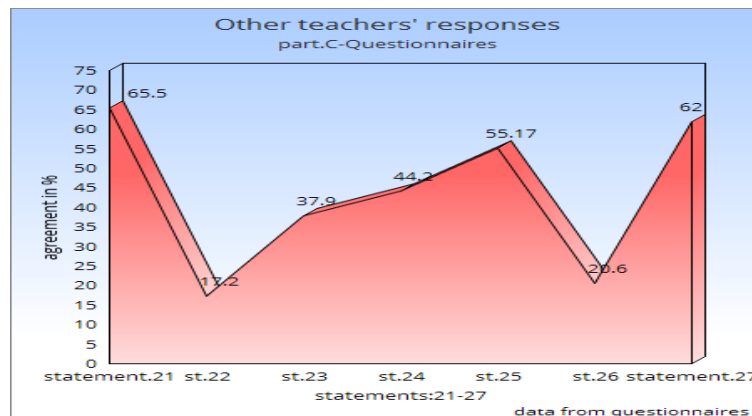


Figure 9

4.3.3. Teachers' Preparedness

The data elicited from this part of the questionnaire verifies the level of teachers' preparedness(group.3) to integrate the local culture in a foreign language classroom. Around 55.17% confirms that Local culture is easier than foreign one to integrate with teaching. On the other hand, 37.9 teachers find difficulties in bringing local cultures in my classrooms. It is interesting to note that 41.3 % teachers can integrate technology to integrate local culture in foreign language classrooms.

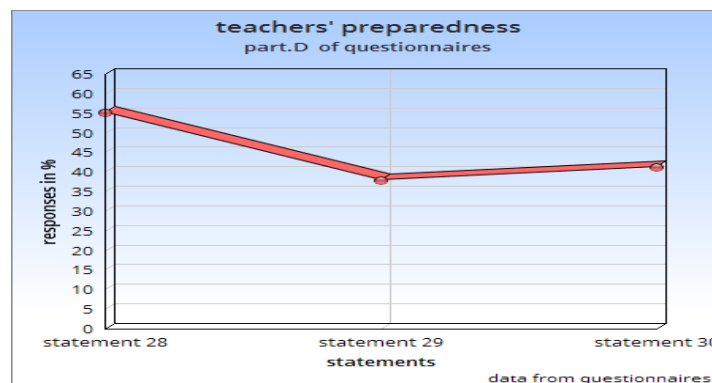


Figure 10

4.4. Comparisons of Three groups

4.4.1. Importance of local culture

Item 15 explores that other teachers (group.3) are in favour of local culture’s integration more than the rest two groups. 54.5 % JCC teachers agree to integrate while KAU teachers’ agreement is 48.58%. It can analysed that the group.3 teachers9 from the Asia and middle east are more exposed and experienced with the concept of teaching English with the help of local culture/literature/history etc. While in KSA, local books are not preferred. Instead books by OUP and CUP are prescribed which include more than 90% foreign elements.

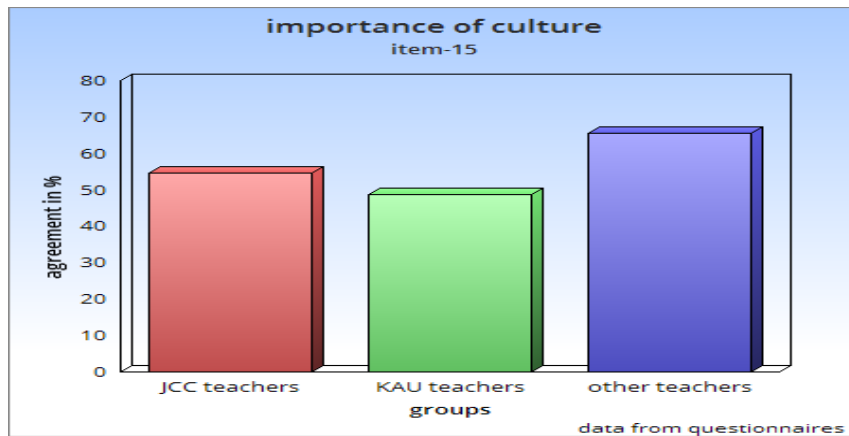


Figure 11

4.4.2. Teaching Foreign language and culture

Item 20 shows that most foreign language books include most of the foreign cultural elements. It is interesting to note that 81.8%JCC teachers confirm that foreign language includes all the foreign contents. While to the researchers’ surprise, only 31.4% KAU teachers agree with the case while the fact is different. In almost all the courses of foundation year English, Cambridge’s books have been prescribed. 60% teachers from group-3 say that English books include foreign elements.

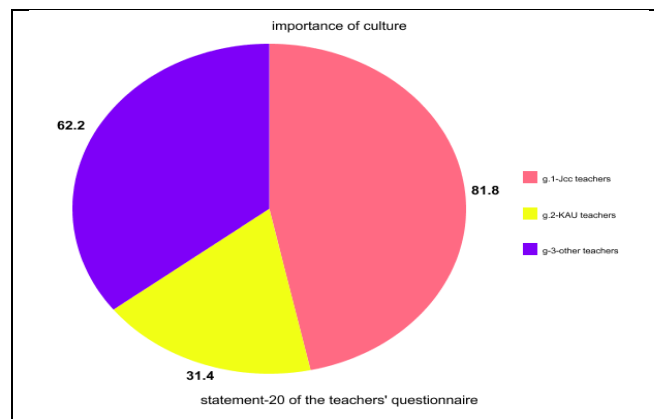


Figure 12

4.4.3. Local culture: a motivator

Item.25 of the questionnaire elicit information regarding the importance of local culture as a motivator. There are different views on the issue that may not correspond to other items regarding the aspects of culture. 72.7% JCC teachers opine that the integration of local culture motivates the learners. While a little less, 71.4% KAU teachers confirm that local culture may be a motivator for the learners of English. But, the third group does not feel in the same way as only 55.17% teachers confirm the effect of the local culture.

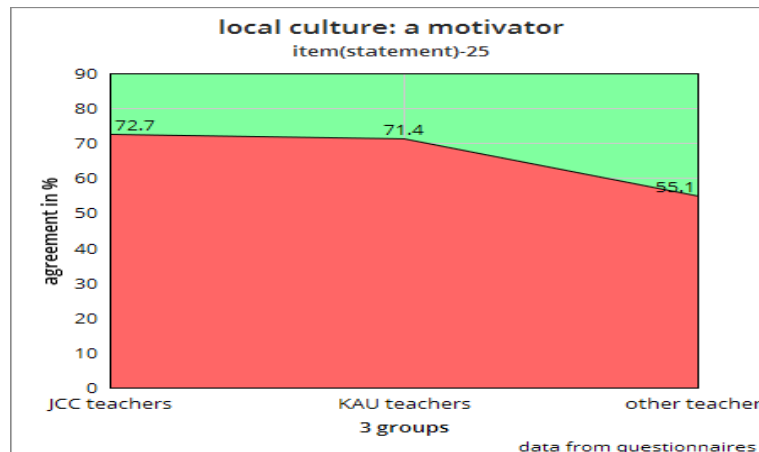


Figure 13

4.4.4. Teachers’ preparedness for culture integration via web

81.8% JCC teachers have been found to integrate local culture in English classrooms in their college. 62.8% KAU teachers are less in favour of the preparedness of integrating local culture as only 62.8% are in agreement. Only 41.3 % group 3 teachers say that they are ready for local culture integration through web. This indicates the fact that the third group perhaps does not enjoy internet facility in their classrooms.

4.5. Analysis of the students' questionnaires: group-1

There were two groups of the students’ sample: group-1(N=22) and group-2(N=24)

4.5.1. Status of learning English and problems

Around 55% admit that they face problems in learning English language. Approximately 68.2 % respondents opine that the lessons are difficult for me. While 72.72% students are of the opinion that they face more problems in listening, majority of them confirm that they face more problems in listening. In addition, the data also reveal that the ‘Reading’ activity is not easy for them. They accept that they have difficulty understanding difficult words. Most of them are of the opinion that they face difficulties in getting the overall ideas while reading in the class. The hinted that nothing much belongs to the Arab culture in English textbooks.

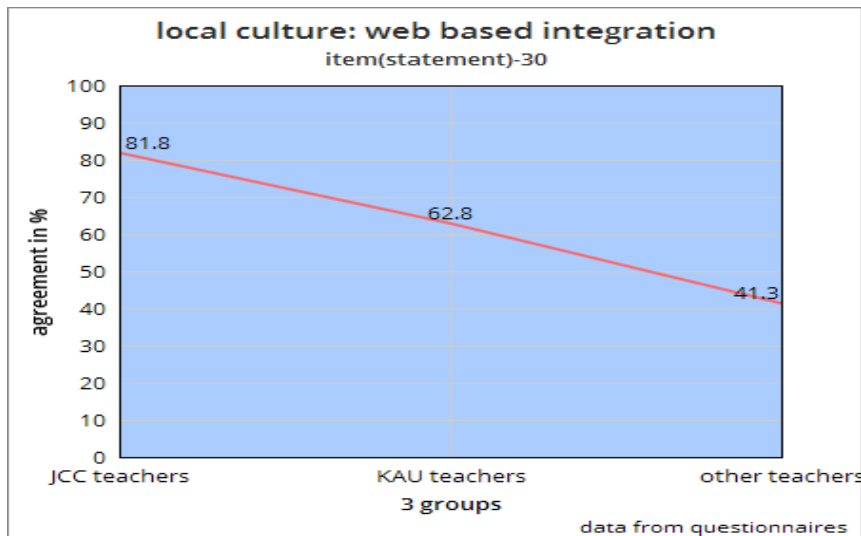


Figure14

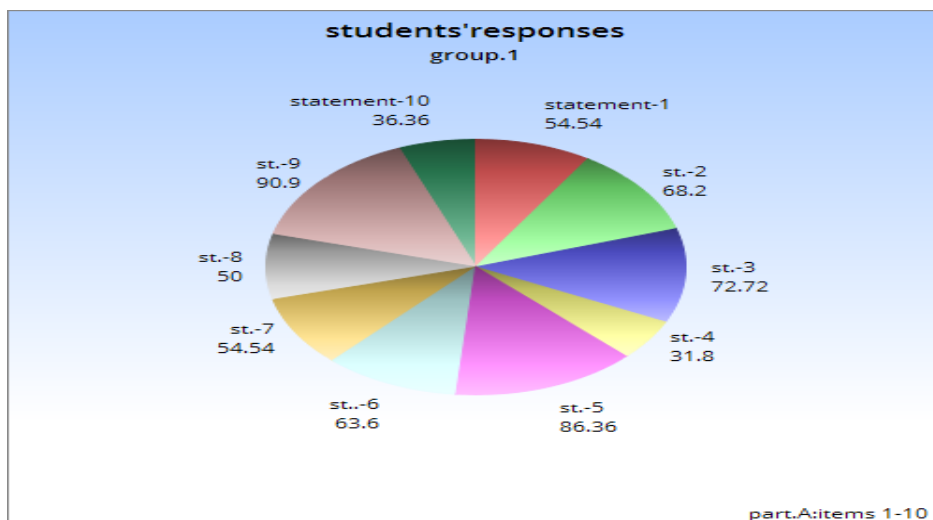


Figure15

4.5.2. Cultural examples in actual classrooms

According to around 68.2% students, the teacher gives example from KSA. Nearly 64% students of the opinion that they are taught about local marriages, wedding ceremonies *etc.* held in Arab countries. Approximately 73% say that the teacher usually compares two or more cultures/countries. Around 64% confirm that they discuss in English about local issues. While around 73% students agree that the concern teacher assigns to write and speak about life style, food habits and nightlife at Jeddah.

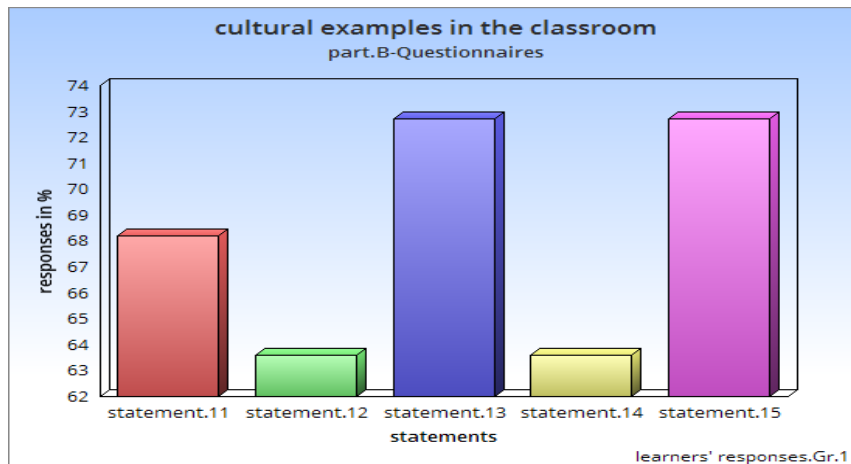


Figure16

4.5.3. Preferences for Cultures

Great number of students (72.72%) agree that there is no need to know about western cultures. While around 64% agree that there should be lessons on *Saudi Arabia* in the text books taught to them. When asked about the preference of local culture on the foreign culture, some 73% confirm that a description of *Taif* is better than a city in Brazil. On the other hand, more than 76% demand that lessons in the books should be included on the local material such as foods, dresses, local dances.

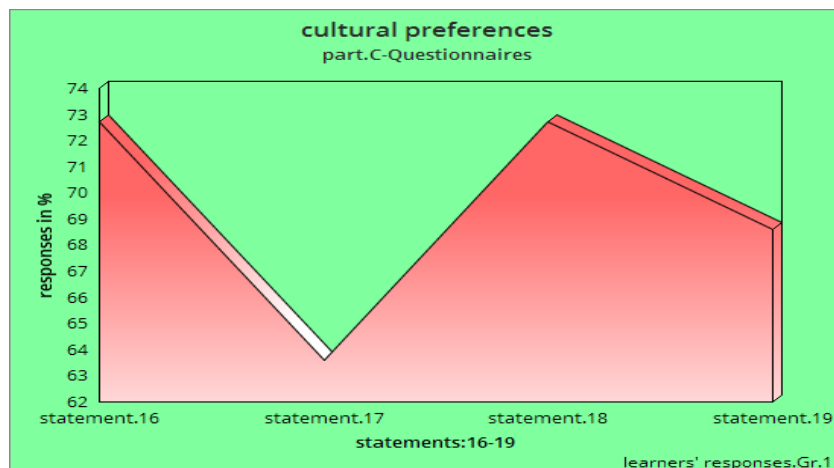


Figure 17

4.5.4. Content preference

Item-20 has many sub items related to content preferences. Sub-item ‘a’ elicits responses on the selection of the content from local culture or foreign elements such as ‘are you from London/Jeddah’?

Around 55% desires the question on Jeddah. Local name is also preferred in the case of entertainment (singing),

but regarding a football player, the responses divided into 50-50. Local leaders' information was desired more than a foreign politician. In short, local information attracted the students more than any.

4.6. Analysis of the questionnaires (group.2 of the students)

4.6.1. Status of learning English and problems

Around 67% admit that they face problems in learning English language. Approximately 68.2 % respondents opine that the lessons are difficult for me. While 75% students are of the opinion that they face more problems in listening, 79.16 % of them confirm that they face more problems in listening. In addition, the data also reveal that the 'Reading' activity is not easy for them. Again 79.16% accept that they have difficulty understanding difficult words. Most of them are of the opinion that they face difficulties in getting the overall ideas while reading in the class. They hinted that nothing much belongs to the Arab culture in English textbooks.

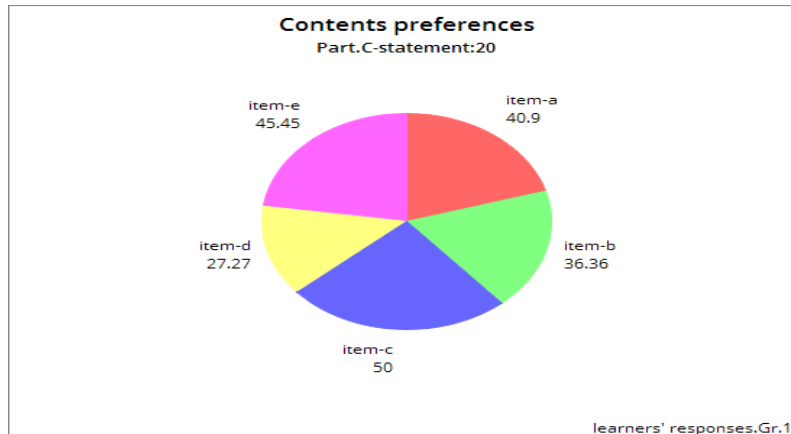


Figure18

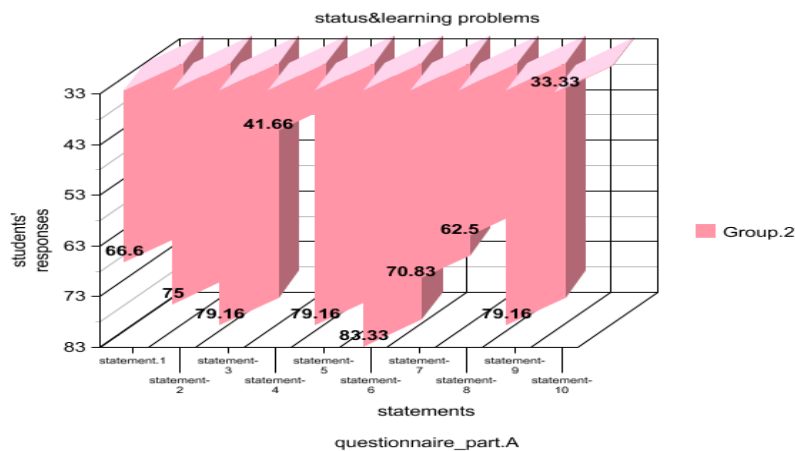


Figure 19

4.6.2. Cultural examples in actual classrooms

According to around 33% students, the teacher gives example from KSA. Nearly 29% students of the opinion that they are taught about local marriages, wedding ceremonies *etc.* held in Arab countries. Approximately 20% say that the teacher usually compares two or more cultures/countries. Around 25% confirm that they discuss in English about local issues. While around 29% students agree that the concern teacher assigns to write and speak about life style, food habits and nightlife at Jeddah.

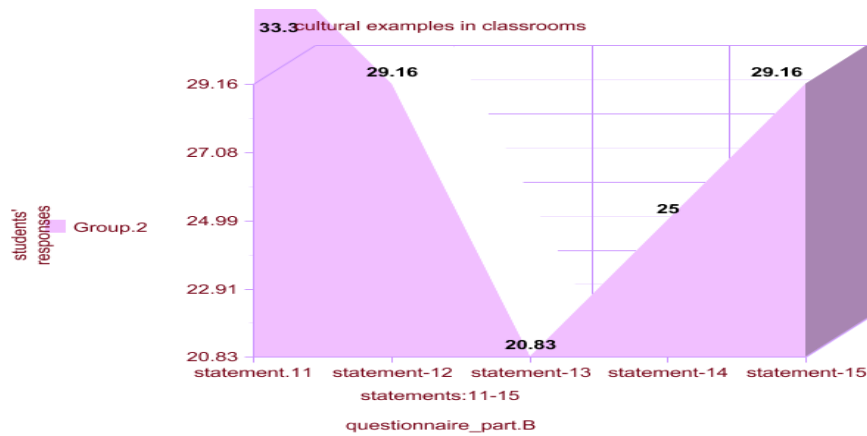


Figure 20

4.6.3. Preferences for Cultures

Great number of students (37.5%) agree that here is no need to know about western cultures. While around 33% agree that there should be lessons on *Saudi Arabia* in the text books taught to them. When asked about the preference of local culture on the foreign culture, some 41% confirm that a description of *Taif* is better than a city in Brazil. On the other hand, more than 54% demand that lessons in the books should be included on the local material such as foods, dresses, local dances.

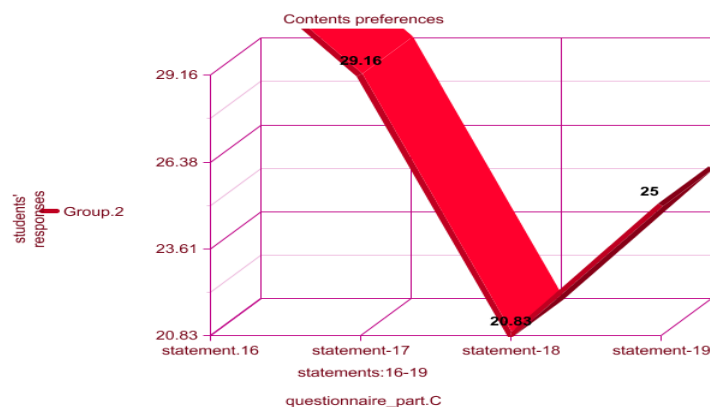


Figure 21

4.6.4. Content preference

Item-20 has many sub items related to content preferences. Sub-item ‘a’ elicits responses on the selection of the content from local culture or foreign elements such as ‘are you from London/Jeddah’?

Around 55% desires the question on Jeddah. Local name is also preferred in the case of entertainment (singing) as 54% students want to see Mohammed Abdo’s name as compared to a foreigner, but regarding a football player, the responses for a foreign name switched to only 37%. Local leaders’ information was desired more than a foreign politician. In short, local information attracted the students more than any.

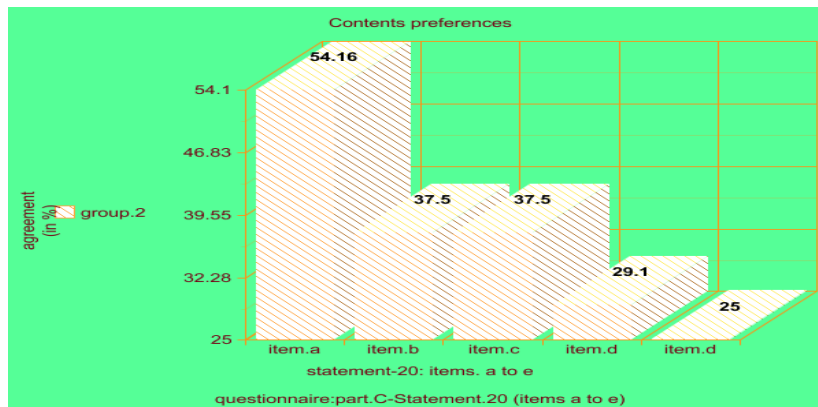


Figure 22

4.7. Comparisons between group 1 & 2

4.7.1. Status and Problems in Learning English

The data (elicited through the questionnaires from the groups of learners) show different trends on different items. However, it can be concluded that most of the students opine that they face difficulties in different items of the questionnaires pertaining to the elements/skills of English language. Two groups differ on certain issues which eventually may not lead to any further analysis at this point of time.

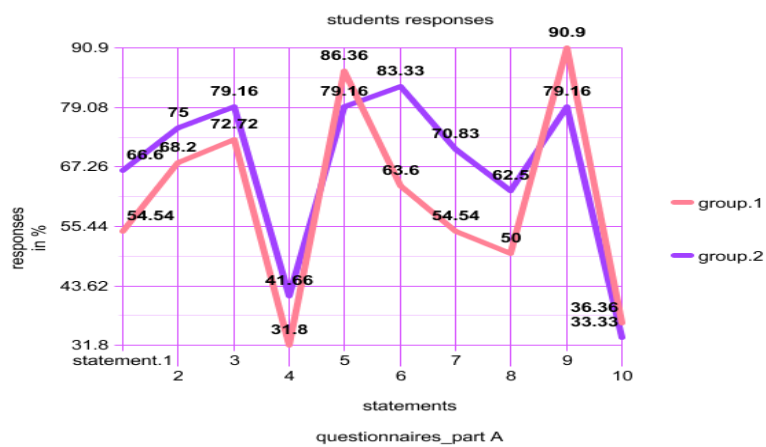


Figure 23

4.7.2. Actual practice in the classrooms

In the area of this section of the questionnaires too, there lies some differences on certain items between the groups. Group 1 seems to have more advantages than group.2.

4.7.3. Cultural preferences

Data reveal that group 1 has a decisive preference for local culture as compared to group.2. The data elicited can be interpreted in many ways. Teacher factor is one of them.

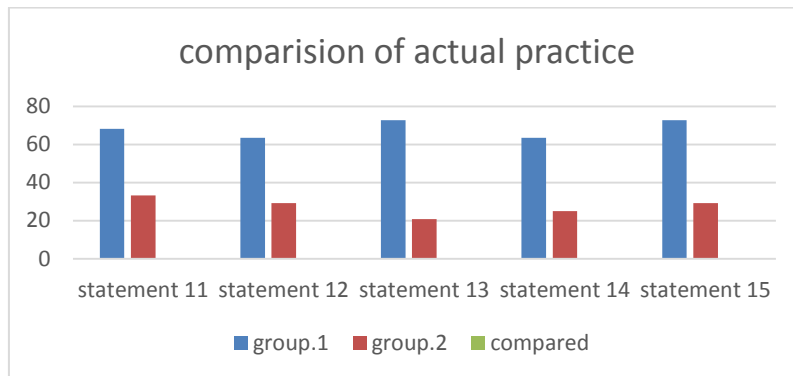


Figure 24

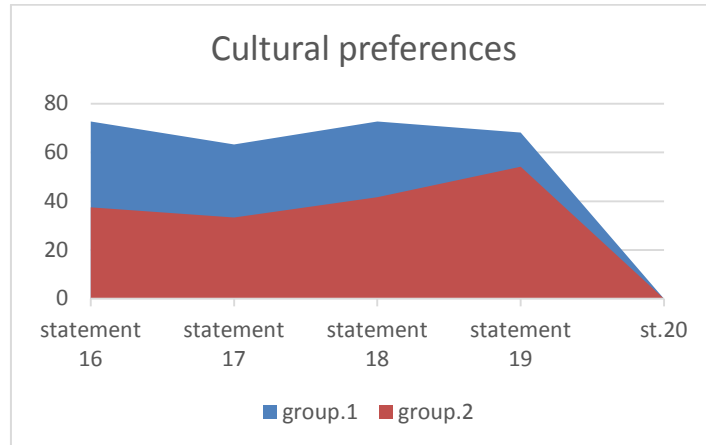


Figure 25

4.7.4. Contents preferences

The data show that group 2 has content preference for all the sub-items except the last one. May be the reason that the teacher gives topics related to foreign personalities and cultures, but the learners would like to attempt questions on the local topics.

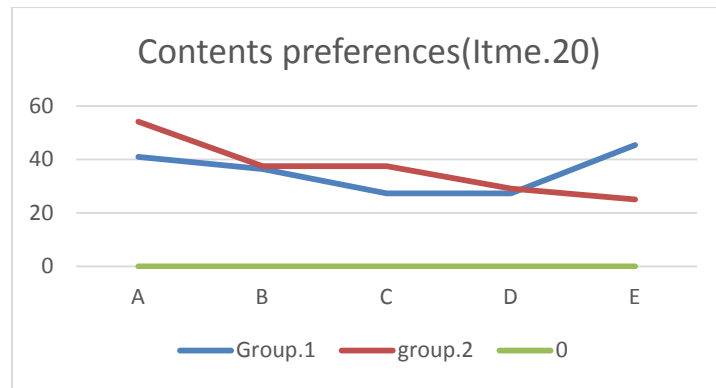


Figure 26

5. Results, conclusions and recommendations

5.1. Results

It has been found that the teachers have positive attitude towards integration of local culture in a foreign language (English) classroom. However, the degree may vary from group to group. Some of the teachers were found interested in using local culture related material, but such materials are not available in the books that have been prescribed. In addition, teachers as a whole are willing to integrate local culture via web, but most of them are not well prepared to do so. A slight difference has been noticed between three different groups of teachers.

As regards students, group one is more positive towards learning English through local culture. Their teacher also uses a lot of local material in the classroom. In a nutshell, most students show their inclination towards local culture.

5.2. Conclusions

On the basis of the analyses and findings, it can be concluded that teaching of foreign language may also be done if the local culture and local language is integrated in teaching. The conclusion doesn't lead to any recommendation that this strategy is the only possible way of doing justice with the target language teaching. Given the situation of the present case study, it is nearly always to create a foreign environment in the pedagogical situations like classrooms where the teaching turns into a less efficient activity. It is a good strategy to incorporate the local language/culture to teach foreign language and culture if feasible. It is mostly known to the language masters, instructors and the pedagogues that by teaching a *lingua franca* like English, the actual and overall aim of the curriculum is to acquaint the learners with the British culture as well (because language is the primary source of any culture). However, it can be well considered as a fact that if nothing is achieved towards the end of the class/instruction, it is better to start with a familiar topic, teach foreign language and achieve both. It can be accomplished by making healthy comparisons between the cultures and contrastive analysis between the two languages: L1 and L2.

The present study has been a modest attempt towards the issues related to a college in Saudi where English is taught as a foundation program, and majors are taught in English only. There seems to be an academic gap between the expected level and the actual one, therefore it becomes crucial to apply some fruitful; strategies for the teaching/learning of the target language. Local context is one of the techniques that can be utilized for the teaching of a foreign language (as in the present case).

5.3. Discussion

Based on the above analysis, it can be put forth that there are multiple reasons of failure in achieving the target of reading. Scanning or skimming to a particular extent can be assured according to the aims of a lesson, but when it comes to reading of deeper meaning, critical ideas, the whole lot of students face considerable difficulty. An exceptional child may do without any difficulties. Just in order to deal with such un-academic scenario, it is proposed to make the reading interesting. A teacher should plan a reading text for pleasure. It will be quite difficult as well because the attitude towards reading is itself missing. But, it is assumed that an interesting subject is likely to catch the learners' attention to some extent.

If the reading text is both familiar and interesting it is far better. But, if there is a text based on foreign experience, it must be very interesting or the target learners may lose the interest and fail to read, consequently the aim of reading is not achieved.

The concept of integration is very common these days. We have concepts like: Integrated English, integrated curriculum, integrated technology, so we can implement integrated cultures and comparative literature in order to familiarise the learners with the target concepts leading to the achievement of the instructional objectives. Such points may lead to difference of opinion, but it remains a fact that individual difference in the methodology integration lies on the target teachers. Their background, philosophy of teaching, experience in the given situation and professional development may be some of those factors that may not be neglected if the planners, policy makers, curriculum designers, pedagogues, instructors and the concerned management is at all serious about the teaching-a process of the learners' development (and not completion of the textual portions).

5.4. Recommendations

It may be recommended that the teachers of English should integrate local culture in an English language class in order to retain the attention of the students as well as releasing the burden of learning two foreign elements: culture and language. Teachers should learn how to integrate local material. It is far better if we have textbooks containing comparative materials: both local and foreign.

Acknowledgement

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