TOWARDS AN INTERCULTURAL APPROACH TO TEACHING
CIVILISATION IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

Thesis Submitted to the Department of English in Candidacy for the Degree of Doctorate in Didactics of Literature and Civilisation Texts

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ABSTRACT

It becomes truism today to talk about the role of foreign languages in developing learners’ intercultural communication. Teaching programmes such as civilisation at the EFL department, for instance, is paramount to strengthen this role as it offers students information on the main aspects of life (culture, society, institutions…) with historical background in order to prepare them for potential cross-cultural communication, in which they may encounter linguistic and cultural barriers. Yet, in our specific context- the English Department at the University of Tiaret, it is found that this goal is far from being reached as long as the presentation of the target culture is reduced solely to some factual-information that neither deepen students’ cultural knowledge nor combat their ignorance about the others.

This research aims at contributing to the existence of the solid inextricability link between language and culture by presenting comprehensive account to the didactic situation of teaching and learning civilisation at the English department at the University of Tiaret, and identifying the barriers and challenges that hamper the goal of this programme from being fully realised.

The theoretical bases, selected for the purpose, were put at empirical trial. Relying on the collected data from the various tools used for the purpose, namely the students prior-cultural knowledge test, teachers and students questionnaires along with an experimental test (in two experimental and control groups of 20), the research sheds enough light on the gap between the teaching and learning goal and the teaching practices.

The findings of the research revealed that using a factual teaching approach had to do with many reasons such as the teaching syllabus and the teaching practices as well as some classroom atmospheres that go beyond teachers such as students’ negative attitude towards the programme of civilisation and the overcrowded classroom. For the experimental test, the results confirmed significant improvements in the experimental group performance in term of the target culture knowledge, and intercultural skills through in depth culture teaching techniques.
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