

# The Effect(s) of Culturally Motivational Films on the Attitude of Iranian Students

Taher Alavi

Allame Tabatabaee University, Iran

Email: neta.7529@gmail.com

Siamak Moradi

Tarbiat Mo'alem University, Iran

Mohammad Shahin Taghaddomi

Tarbiat Mo'alem University, Iran

**Abstract**—This study is an attempt to investigate the effect of adding culturally motivating films to the classroom program to see its effect on the students' attitudes toward the foreign culture/language in language learning. To achieve this end, a quasi-experimental method was chosen to deal with this issue. Two intact classes (each class comprising of ten students) were selected to form experimental and control groups. A questionnaire was given to the subjects of both groups in order to assess their attitudes toward the foreign culture before administrating the treatment. After the administration of the treatment, an alternate form of the same questionnaire was given to the students of both classes to evaluate the possible changes occurring in their attitudes toward the foreign culture as a result of the treatment. At the end, the result showed that a significant change occurred in the students' attitudes toward the foreign culture, logically as a result of the treatment.

**Index Terms**—motivation, attitude, quasi-experimental method

## I. INTRODUCTION

For many years, language was thought of a separate phenomenon from culture. In our country, Iran, avoiding the effect of cultural invasion on our culture, classroom activities were bereft of any instruction of foreign cultures and this decontextualized method of teaching plagued the field for many years (hence, they deculturalized all the English textbooks). For so many years language policy makers in Iran did not allow the material developers to include any points related to foreign cultures in our school English textbooks (this view still exists in our educational system- high school English text books). In other parts of the world, after the affirmation of the incapability of this view, many scholars developed a contextualized view toward language teaching. From that time on, culture, as an integral part of context, took an important role in language teaching.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Motivation, in general, is "the driving force in any situation that leads to action." In the field of language learning, motivation refers to "a combination of learners' attitudes, desires, and willingness to expend effort in order to learn the second language." Integrative motivation, the center of discussion in this article, includes the "positive attitudes toward both the target language community and the language classroom and the commitment to learn the language" (Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics, 3rd edition).

Gardner (1985) proposed that "the motivated individual is one who wants to achieve a particular goal and experiences satisfaction in the activities in achieving this goal." He (1993) believes that motivation influences language achievement and asserts that "integrative motivation reflects a positive interest towards the other language or group in general." Since learning a language involves associating with another cultural group, he concludes that the motivation to learn the language could involve attitudes toward that community.

Factors that contribute to motivation and engagement are believed to play an important role in students' academic achievement; therefore, it is important to identify such factors and evaluate their significance and level of contribution. Previously conducted researches have shown that a variety of factors influence students' motivation and engagement including the nature of pedagogy they receive (Teven & McCroskey, 1997), relationships they have with their teachers (Kelly & Hansen, 1987), parents' attitudes and expectations for their children (Dandy & Ne Helbeck, 2000), peers (Wigfield & Tonks, 2002), class climate (Qin, Johnson & Johnson, 1995), school culture & structure (Anderman & Machr, 1994), sociodemographic status (Becker & Luthar, 2002), gender (Martin, 2003), and age (Martin, 2001).

The multidimensional nature of motivation and engagement provides the opportunity for researchers to approach it in

different ways, for example Hitochi Horiuchi (2008), a Japanese researcher, conducted a research on international cultural relations and discussed why and how they are relevant to teaching/learning culture in current US college Japanese language programs. Following National Standards Collaborative 1999, he defined culture as "generally understood to include the philosophical perspectives, the behavioral practices, and the products – both tangible and intangible– of a society." He claimed that "International Cultural Relations motivates such a culture teaching/learning and gives a preferred framework to it."

Kramsch (1991) defines culture as "both something you perform and something you learn about" (p. 228). He goes on by suggesting that "Cultural competence can be best developed in a structured learning environment, where conscious parallels can be drawn, where language can be explicitly linked to its meaning in a particular sociocultural and historical context, where disparate linguistic or cultural phenomena can be brought together and attached to more abstract principles of both base (C1) and target (C2) language and culture" (p.229).

Eisenclas et al. (2003) discuss that "Intercultural Communication(IC) is not learned via exposure or osmosis; it needs to be taught explicitly" (p. 398). They believe that "teaching IC involves more than mere transfer of information. It requires students to conceptualize culture and their own place as agents or carriers of culture." They state their goal, in teaching culture, as giving "students the tools for critical understanding of the social conventions that operate in both the target and the base cultures" (p. 398).

Somewhere else in Saudi Arabia Ajam Abwaku-Chibok (2000) related the issue of motivation to cultural and religious factors. In his research, he investigated "four factors namely motivation, social and economic advancement, struggle between English and religion, and language anxiety." In the end, he claims that "teaching and learning of English has been driven by examination success at the expense of the long- term goal of achieving complete means of communication in reading, writing, listening and grammar." He goes on and adds that "Since motivation is low among many students partly because of language anxiety and the struggle between English and Arabic, many students seem to want to pass so as to climb to the next level/social ladder, which a pass in English language provides." He retains that these circumstances "make proper English language teaching and learning impracticable." He holds that there is a direct relationship between the students' attitudes toward English culture and their motivation in learning the language. Finally, he rightly concludes that a change is needed to help the students take advantage of the foreign culture (English culture) instead of guarding against it.

In response to recent calls for a more integrative approach to the study of motivation and engagement (see Bong, 1996; Morphy & Alexander, 2000; Piatrich, 2003), the present study employs the medium of the media (culturally motivational films) as the treatment and then assesses the influence of such films on the students attitudes toward the foreign culture, and, accordingly, on their integrative motivation.

### III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study is mainly concerned with the relationship among cultural instruction, students' motivation, and their attitudes toward the foreign culture. In this paper, the main concern was with the effects of culturally motivating films on students' attitudes toward the foreign culture/language and their motivation in learning the language.

### IV. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEM

The recent trends in language teaching and learning assert that culture and language are so closely interwoven into each other that one cannot be conceived without the other. Studying English as a foreign language, Iranian students are deprived of a direct contact with this foreign culture. One of the available sources for teachers to provide the students with sufficient cultural information seems to be the media, namely standardized cultural educational films. Incorporating such films into the classroom can be a good choice to make the students familiar with the distant foreign culture.

### V. METHOD

A quasi-experimental method was chosen to deal with this issue. Having considered the situation, non-randomized pre-test/ post-test control group design was chosen. For this purpose, two intact classes (each class comprising of ten students) were considered to form experimental and control groups. One class was randomly assigned to the treatment and the other class to a placebo. The treatment was exposing the first class to a standardized cultural-educational episodic film for a term (sixteen sessions/ten minutes per session). To keep both groups unaware of the experimental condition they were in, decision was made to expose the control group to a culturally neutral episodic film (for the same period of time). It is noteworthy to add that, topnotch films were chosen as culturally motivating films, and for culturally neutral film, various animations were chosen.

#### A. Procedure

For the purpose of beginning on the same footing, a questionnaire (see Appendix1) was given to the subjects of both groups in order to assess their attitudes toward the foreign culture before administrating the treatment. Using the mean of both groups, the t-test was calculated; no significant difference was observed at the significance level of 0.05. After

the administration of the treatment, an alternate form of the same questionnaire was given to the students of both classes to evaluate the possible changes occurring in their attitudes toward the foreign culture as a result of the treatment. After comparing the calculated means of both questionnaires, again through t-test at the significance level of 0.05, a significant change occurred in the students' attitudes toward the foreign culture, logically as a result of the treatment. It is noteworthy to add that a combination of two piloted and validated questionnaires was used.

### B. Instrument

For the purpose of this research, different attitude questionnaires were reviewed, and after some investigation, finally, the researchers agreed upon using a combination of two previously used, and of course validated, questionnaires with some levels of omissions and modifications (see Appendix 1). The detailed SPSS default calculated data is given in the (appendix 2).

TABLE 1:  
PRE-TEST

Group 1	Mean=27.20	SD= 1.751	$\alpha= 0.05$	$t = - 0.866$
Group 2	Mean=27.80	SD=1.317		

TABLE 2:  
POST-TEST

Group 1	Mean= 27.30	SD=1.947	$\alpha= 0.05$	$t = -3.236$
Group 2	Mean=29.80	SD=1.476		

## VI. DISCUSSION

Using a non-randomized pre-test/ post-test control group design, the present study found that the effects of the treatment (culturally motivational films) on the attitudes' of the subjects toward the foreign culture were significant. The findings have shown that familiarizing the students of a foreign language (in this research, Iranian students) with the foreign culture can be helpful in motivating them.

Despite all the emphasis put upon cultural awareness techniques in language teaching in recent approaches toward language teaching, the target culture has not found its right place in Iranian foreign language classes yet. This research can be an evidence to make the people in charge reconsider the lesson plans and incorporate some cultural techniques, in one way or another, into their classrooms in order that they can take better advantage of the resources that they have at hand as teachers.

## VII. CONCLUSION

Recent trends in language teaching are based on the belief that culture can be a source of motivation for second and foreign language students and can help them obtain better attitudes toward the language they are learning. The present study sought to examine the effect(s) of introducing culturally-motivated films into the classroom the students of which are learning English as a foreign language (Iranian students). The results have shown that such films can be helpful in familiarizing Iranian foreign language learners with the foreign culture and helping them hold better attitudes toward the foreign culture.

## VIII. IMPLICATIONS

The results obtained from this study can be helpful for material developers to consider adding culturally motivating films to English classroom activities and ask the teachers to practice such exercises in the classroom. It has further implications for the teachers to think of employing authentic and culturally motivating films in the class and motivate the students to employ the same strategy at home. It can be considered a strategy to encourage the demotivated language learners to change their attitudes to language learning.

## APPENDIX 1

(Guerini, Federica, 2008) and (<http://www.sil.org/lingualinks/languagelearning>)

- I think I'm a pretty good language learner.  
. Strongly agree . Agree . Disagree . Strongly disagree
- I think that I could learn pretty much any language I really put my mind to, given the right circumstances.  
. Strongly agree . Agree . Disagree . Strongly disagree
- I like getting to know people from other countries, in general.  
. Strongly agree . Agree . Disagree . Strongly disagree
- Speaking the language of the community where I'll be living will let me help people more than I could otherwise.  
. Strongly agree . Agree . Disagree . Strongly disagree

5. I won't really be able to get to know people well if I don't speak their language.  
 . Strongly agree . Agree . Disagree . Strongly disagree
6. There are right and wrong ways to do things in different context (cultures), and I think it's necessary to figure out which is which.  
 . Strongly agree . Agree . Disagree . Strongly disagree
7. You have to understand people's culture and value system before you can be sure whether some things are right or wrong.  
 . Strongly agree . Agree . Disagree . Strongly disagree
8. I find it easy to "put myself in other people's shoes" and imagine how they feel.  
 . Strongly agree . Agree . Disagree . Strongly disagree
9. I think that students would learn more effectively if lessons were in English rather than in Farsi:  
 . Strongly agree . Agree . Disagree . Strongly disagree
10. My ability to speak English will assure my success in the future:  
 . Strongly agree . Agree . Disagree . Strongly disagree

## APPENDIX 2

Pre:

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
marks	Equal variances assumed	.212	.651	-.866	18	.398	-.600	.693	-2.056	.856
	Equal variances not assumed			-.866	16.711	.399	-.600	.693	-2.064	.864

Group Statistics					
groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	
marks 1	10	27.20	1.751	.554	
marks 2	10	27.80	1.317	.416	

Post:

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
marks	Equal variances assumed	2.163	.159	-3.236	18	.005	-2.500	.772	-4.123	-.877
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.236	16.777	.005	-2.500	.772	-4.131	-.869

Group Statistics					
groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	
marks 1	10	27.30	1.947	.616	
marks 2	10	29.80	1.476	.467	

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**Taher Alavi** was born in Nagade, West Azerbaijan, Iran (September 23, 1975). He has got M.A in TEFL/TESL from the university of Allame abatabaee, Tehran, Iran. He got his B.A in the same field from Shiraz University, Iran. He has been teaching English in different local universities and language institutes since 2000. He has been offering different courses in the field of Language teaching methodology, and language testing for language students. At the present time he is the SUPERVISOR in his own language Institute, and teaching English for the advanced level students. So far he has developed a book which was published in Germany. *ON THE EFFECT OF THEMATIZATION ON THE COMPREHENSION OF SENTENCES WITH DIFFERENT VERB CATEGORIES AT INTERMEDIATE LEVEL*. (Germany, VDM , 2011)

He has been able to get the accept of one of his papers due to be published in the journal of JLTR in January 2012. *THE PREDICTIVE VALIDITY OF FINAL ENGLISH EXAMS AS A MEASURE OF SUCCESS IN IRANIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY ENTRANCE ENGLISH EXAM*.

Mr Alavi is the one of the leading members of AzarELTA (English language teachers association in West Azerbaijan, Iran). He is very interested in playing football in his free time.



**Siamak Moradi** was born in 1987, Ahar, Iran. He received his B.A. in English literature in 2009 from Payam-noor University. Now, he is studying M.A. in TEFL at Tarbiat Mo'allam University, Tehran, Iran. He has been teaching English for almost two years in different language institutes, including Zaban Sara and Alavi Sulduz language institute, both located in Nagadeh, West Azerbaijan, Iran. His main interests are post method pedagogy and reflective teaching. And recently he is trying anxiety reducing procedures in his classes.



**Mohammad Shahin Taghaddomi** received his B.A. in English Language and Literature. He is currently doing his M.A. in TEFL at Tarbiat Mo'allam University, Tehran, Iran. He has been teaching English for more than four years; recently, he has been teaching at Zaban Sara Language center (Sanandaj Branch). His areas of interest are Teaching Methodology, Task-based Language Teaching, Teacher Education, and Reflective Language Teaching.