EFL CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC CHALLENGES IN HOLDING PROPER CONVERSATIONS

The case of LMD Third Year students of English at Ouargla University

Memoire Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Magister Degree in Applied Linguistics

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DEDICATION

To my father and mother whose love and care flamed out my keenness on pursuing this work.

To my uncle Mohammed Fateh who showed a lot of care and interest in my modest work.

To the two fellow human beings who have resided over the peak of my heart and have dwelt my eyes' pupils: Sally & Hassina Laouar

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"The English language is nobody's special property. It is the property of the imagination: it is the property of the language itself." (Derek Walcott)

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"And that I am, I am not; unless she is and never she is not!" Mohammed Kantaoui.

ABSTRACT

This present study aims at identifying, describing and explaining the linguistic and cultural challenges that confront learners of English, especially at conversing with each other or with their teachers at Kasdi Merbah University. It is a study targeting Third Year License students of English. It is also an attempt to look first at classroom interaction in the module of Oral Expression or any lecture where the participants (teacher(s) and learners) hold conversations. In addition, we shall know what relationship there is between language and culture. The study also tackles the maxims of conversation and the violation of these maxims.

With an exhaustive review of literature about language and culture in the first chapter, a fine platform is ready to discern the linguistic and cultural challenges in holding conversations after tackling conversation underpinnings in the second chapter. In the third chapter, we will look at the educational background of students in Ouargla. We will account for the English lessons they used to learn in their middle as well as secondary schools. In fourth chapter, we shall analyse the eleven conversations chosen from New Headway. The conversations are of different linguistic and cultural features that will reveal the ability of the students to converse properly. In the last chapter, we shall analyse the students' questionnaire.

List of Tables

List of Abbreviations

FL: Foreign Language

SL: Second Language

CP: Cooperative Principle

GCIs: Generalised Conversational Implicatures

PCIs: Particularised Conversatioanl Implicatures

CA: Conversational Analysis

Content

Introduction

Numerous are the challenges and difficulties that face learners of English as a second or foreign language. These challenges and difficulties are various. They could be linguistic such as the onerousness of memorizing new vocabulary or of pronunciation. They could, as well, be cultural such as the learners' attitudes towards the culture of the target language or their ignorance as to how to take to this new different culture. Thus, some learners may not be able to overcome these difficulties as to improve their uptake of memory so as to quicken and strengthen their ways of memorizing new vocabulary in the target language; they may as well lack the ability to develop a positive stature towards the culture of the target language.

Indeed, some challenges may appear really plausibly ordinary like the confusion which results from the first contact with this new culture. Learners of English as a second or foreign language are aware of their cultural beliefs, values, traditions and customs, and often are they prone to make comparisons between their mother culture and the target language culture. Hence, wherever a serious difference in beliefs or traditions between the two cultures is encountered by those learners, a quite negative attitude by some of them is developed towards the new culture.

The linguistic and cultural challenges appear so blatantly in the classroom interactions such as conversations between learners and teacher(s). Learners may not know the way of conversing in the target language, or they may be affected by their mother culture and, hence mother language.

Holding conversations in a foreign language requires from all participants to be quite knowledgeable about the culture of this language's people. Still, their knowledge about the culture of the people's language is not sufficient to holding conversations properly; therefore,

they are also supposed to be aware of some internal properties of conversation (maxims) which once violated the communication breaks down.

In addition, all the underpinnings in this study are somewhat interrelated. We may not treat conversations that are held outside the classroom, but we will hint to some universal rules that govern holding conversations in any setting. The treatment, for the utter most part would be devoted to classroom interaction where participants are teacher(s) and learners or learners and learners. Though the conversations may lack authenticity in that they are targeted towards learning the foreign language, we shouldn't want to seek a better choice due to its absence. It is not dubious that these conversations share something in common which may not at times be present in conversations held by native speakers, which is a complete consciousness of every word uttered unless some of the students in the class are said to have attained some feature of native-speakership. And this surely, in the eyes of the researcher, adds up to the study limitations.

We may not treat in the literature review so patently the cultural and the linguistic challenges, for we sense it so convenient to deal with them within the analysis of the questionnaires. There would, no doubt, be some of especially the cultural challenges apparently treated in the part of Culture Teaching and Culture and Language; however, these should seem to the reader to be universal. In our study, we seek the particular, hence the Algerian case.

General Overview

Language is a purely human means of communication. It is highly assumed that it is only humans who can relate to language and use it creatively. Children acquire it unconsciously and adults who are native speakers or those indistinguishable from natives speak the language subconsciously.

For students who study English in non-English speaking settings, it is crucial that they experience real communicative situations in which they will learn how to express their own views and opinions, and to develop their oral fluency and accuracy which are very essential for the success of FL communication. However, one may never be able to connive at the fact that students are to encounter some linguistic and cultural challenges in varying degrees when conversing with one another.

Culture is an essentially existential component of all human beings. Those human beings, being in different communities, geographically farther from or nearer to each other, are prone to develop a culture that is pertinent to each and different to all others, again in varying degrees. And culture is bound up with its language where each affects the other in a way.

Conversation is one of the most effective activities that people of different communities utilize as a means for communicating their ideas clearly. Thus, students need to know what comprises this essential activity in learning English. They also need to know the nature of intonation, and stress (both word and sentence) is marked, and pronunciation in general (word pronunciation as in dictionaries, contracted forms, weak and strong forms, and all aspects of connected speech) so as to communicate in a better way.

1. **Aim of the Study**

Through the present research, and by looking at the students' backgrounds with regard to the English language in middle and secondary schools, we aim at looking to what extent the third year students of English at Kasdi Merbah University can hold conversations effectively and properly; effectively with regard to some linguistic items and properly with regard to the English language native speakers' culture. Eventually, we will come to know what linguistic and cultural challenges these students encounter in so doing. Thus, our implicit aim is to contribute to an overall understanding of how and to what extent these challenges do impede the students from carrying out proper conversations and also seek to show the effectiveness or otherwise of the background information they had had in middle and secondary schools as well as the last two academic years at university.

2. **Statement of the Problem**

To researchers like Seelye, "Culture embraces all aspects of shared life in a community". Taking into account this definition of culture, it is assumed that the components of culture –among which language is pertinent- set a real challenge to learners of English as a foreign language, for all aspects of life of any particular English-speaking community are wholly patterned and infused in their culture. It has always been noticed that students who try to do a certain conversation in English do encounter this problem of culture thing. Does one not see how language is intertwined with culture while doing the shopping, sitting to dinner-tables, booking a ticket, booking a seat in a cinema-house, and in all aspects of the various English-speaking communities? How will students be able to discern that while holding conversations on different occasions?

And with regard to language-contained matters, students face linguistic challenges too. Intonation, stress marking (both word and sentence stress) pronunciation of words as they are transcribed in dictionaries of the English language, connected speech (assimilation, linking, elision), contracted forms, and weak and strong forms of auxiliary verbs and some prepositions are all linguistic difficult challenges. Up to the present moment, students of English at Kasdi Merbah University have not been able to hold conversations effectively and properly due to the latter challenges.

3. **Research Questions**

1- What are the most flagrant linguistic and cultural challenges encountering these students?

2- Were these students exposed to holding conversations well enough in middle and secondary schools?

3- How were these students seeking to develop their conversational skills?

4. **Hypotheses**

1- It is assumed that the linguistic challenges are intonation, the use of tenses, and pronunciation while the cultural ones are in language use itself in different contexts with the idiomatic expressions pertinent to each context.

2- The number of conversations in the course books of middle and secondary schools seems fairly enough for developing conversational skills.

3- It is assumed that these students seek to develop their conversational skills depending on other factors rather than those were given to them in class.

5. **Means of Research**

The data will be collected through a test of eleven conversations set to the third year students. It is intended for discovering the linguistic and cultural challenges these students encounter, and also to see to what extent the study of conversations and English in general is efficient to make of them good communicators presently. The results and their interpretation go directly after each conversation; hence scrutinizing the linguistic and/or the cultural challenges through accounting for the errors committed while doing the test on script or when acting the conversations out.

Another means will also be used; a students' questionnaire which contains fifteen questions. Its analysis and the interpretation of data will be merely descriptive and aims at determining at most the language-contained linguistic challenges as well as the challenges that the class atmosphere involves.

The cultural challenges will not be very focused in this study. Since the study of this present research is merely descriptive, the researcher will not afford the brunt of suggesting solutions to these problems, for the ultimate purpose is to raise consciousness about these serious challenges encountering students in Kasdi Merbah University.

6. **Structure of the Study**

The present memoir comprises five chapters. Chapter One tackles the issue of culture and culture teaching. The pivotal focus in this chapter is to give various definitions to culture, to account for the relation between culture and language, and to emphasise the need for culture teaching and learning.

Chapter Two deals with conversation: what the Cooperative Principle is, Grice's four maxims of conversation, teaching conversation, classroom interaction, etc.

Chapter Three tackles the students' background with regard to the English language learning as a whole. The researcher is to look at what linguistic and cultural items they

did study in middle and secondary schools. Maximally, attention will be paid to the actual lessons given during class and not what the course books contain. The latter will be given less attention.

Chapter Four is devoted to the eleven conversations chosen from the book "New Headway English Course". Thirty students will be tested in these conversations to see what challenges there could show up. Then, the results are analysed and interpreted at once.

Chapter Five is devoted to the conducting of the questionnaire. About fifteen questions are set to the thirty students to respond to them. Then, the results of this questionnaire are interpreted.

CHAPTER ONE

CULTURE AND CULTURE TEACHING

INTRODUCTION

English has become the most predominant language in our modern world. It has been given so much importance with regard to its teaching and learning. This is so because of the rapidly increasing development, economic power, political authority, and supremacy of some of the English-speaking countries. Hence the need for teaching and learning English is augmenting.

It is never dubious that the teaching of any particular language is by necessity carried out while culture is there. Culture is an indisputably clear shaper of language. This, as a result, made educators have a rethink about considering the status of culture in the process of teaching in a particular language classroom. Hence, culture would have to seem a necessary constituent of language instruction.

In this chapter, we will try to account for culture and to demonstrate how much culture teaching and learning is crucial in developing its relative linguistic makeup of students in general and their communicative competencies in particular.

1.1. Definition of Culture

It is rather difficult to define what 'culture' is, as Nemni (1992) and Street (1993) declared "This is not an easy question to answer, particularly in an increasingly international world"(cited in Clouston, 1997: 3). The reason simply resides in two facts. Firstly, culture for a long time had been the central concern of a large category of researchers from linguists, ethnographers, scholars, anthropologists, to educators, and social scientists. Each one defines it according to their field and discipline, which resulted in an infinite and unlimited number of interpretations that reflect different theories for understanding and valuing human activities. This variety allowed Krober and Kluckhohn (1954: 3) to find over three hundred definitions in their study mainly when it comes to its relation with language.

Secondly, and besides considering culture as a "broad concept" (Seelye 1984, cited in Hall 2001:1) "complex" (Clouston, 1997:4), and "that needs to be handled carefully" (Kerr, 2004: 1). There is another relevant element that contributes largely in almost impossibility of obtaining a unique definition of culture, which is its "dynamic nature" (Thanassoulas, 2001:8) and its permanent change in relation to who perceives it and when it is perceived as brilliantly advocated by Harklaw (1999, cited in Hall 2001: 4) "Culture is an elusive construct that shifts constantly over time and according to who is perceiving and interpreting it."

Though the myriad of definitions attributed to the word culture, and differences in the description of its nature, its variant traits and dimensions, so that it can be an ideology, a philosophy, a belief, a product, a practice or an action, etc, it can be learned, acquired, created, shared, passed, inherited or transmitted; all the researchers admit its humanistic aspect assuming that it is 'man made' (Taibi, 2002:20).

Similarly, the transmissible aspect of culture reveals that it may be passed through language, which reflects in fact the kind of relation between the two: language and culture. Kramsch (2004:1) advocates this relation and stresses the fact that "One of the major ways in which culture manifests itself is through language. It is because of that mediatory role of language that culture becomes the concern of the language teacher…." She also adds to that "…culture is often seen as mere information conveyed by the language, not as a feature of language itself, […]. If, however, language is seen as a social practice, culture becomes the very core of language teaching…. (Ibid. p8)

A position shared also by the linguists Peterson and Coltrane (2003:1) "…language is not only part of how we define culture, it also reflects culture".

According to Roohul-Amini (1989) "Culture has multifarious meanings. Culture means farming." (p. 15). It is used everywhere as rural culture, urban culture, American culture and so on. Today, in every field, in humanities, every research requires a general view of culture. It is used in archaeology, linguistics, history, psychology, sociology and etc. It is even said that man is an animal with culture. That is to say, the factor which

differentiates the human being's behaviour from the behaviour of animal is culture (Mesbahe Yazdi, 2005). Human beings are being rational in that they exercise their existence on mental capacities like thinking, analyzing, criticizing, deducing, inducing and so on; things which animals cannot do. In general, from the sociological perspective, culture is the total of the inherited and innate knowledge, comprising or forming the shared foundations of social action. Likewise, from the anthropological and ethnological senses, culture encompasses the total range of activities and ideas of a specific group of people with common and shared traditions, which are conveyed, distributed, and highlighted by members of the group (Collins English Dictionary 1991, 1994, 1998, 2000, 2003). Thus, ideas, ideologies, and doctrines are various in today's world where there are different groups of people out there of different stances towards life. Learning the target language, hence, requires maximum knowledge about the culture of its people.

There are about two or three hundred and even more definitions for culture. With respect to the definition of culture, Edward Sapir (1956) says that culture is a system of behaviours and modes that depend on unconsciousness. That means that cultures are unconscious constructs which are built in us innately, and that when we act out any pattern of behaviour, we act it out according to a predisposed underlying modulator called the instigator of culture. Rocher (1972, 2004), an anthropologist, believes that "Culture is a connection of ideas and feelings accepted by the majority of people in a society" (p. 142). Thus, there should by necessity be a natural agreement between the individuals of

one society what patterns relate to their pertinent culture and which do not, and that those relating are readily accepted by that society whereas those otherwise are not. This means that any idea that should conjure up in the minds of these individuals has to be in tandem with the norms of that society so as to be allowed to exist within it. Undeniably, culture is shared within social groups and is conveyed by non-genetic ways (The American Heritage, Science Dictionary 2005). Taylor (1974), an anthropologist, says in his Primitive Culture that culture in a complex definition includes beliefs, arts, skills, moralities, laws, traditions and behaviours that an individual, as a member of a society, gets from his own society. It is not that they accept these beliefs or arts or whatever, but rather these are built into them from childhood in a rather unconscious and then subconscious way, i.e. they were ready and prone to accept anything they are fed. That has to be said, for there could be those people who, later on in their life, changed their beliefs or arts, and one may even encounter those who, not only they leave their culture to another peacefully, but rather they disdain theirs. Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952), consider civilization and culture the same and they believe the two terms have been used synonymously. For them, they both indicate different levels of the same subject. Each society has its own special culture either simple or complex. If culture is taken seriously, it seems that people require not only sufficient food but also well cooked food. Goodenough (1996) claims that culture is a systematic association of people who have a certain way of life. Therefore, culture is the only distinction between humans and animals. Of course,

animals live in association but it is a special kind. There are, indeed, a lot of sharing

characteristics between human beings and animals such as associative life, responsibility

towards children and so on .But culture is for men only. T.S. Eliot (1961) considers

culture as a capital and means for developing all cultures and knowledge in order to

terminate all human sharing problems by helping economical stabilization and political

security.

On the light of this relation, focus will be made on defining culture as perceived in the

language classroom..

1.2.Definition of Culture in the Language Classroom

The number of ways culture is defined does not prevent educators to have a

precise view when it comes to its relation with language. Valette (1986) explains it as

follows "There are two 'major components' of culture in the language classroom. One is

the anthropological or sociological culture… The other is the 'history of civilization'

which traditionally represents the cultural element in foreign language teaching. It

includes geography, history and achievements in the sciences, the social sciences and the

arts. (p. 179)

1.3. Language and Culture

An understanding of the relationship between language and culture is important

for language learners, users, and for all those involved in language education. For

language teachers and learners in general, an appreciation for the differences in opinion

regarding the relationship between language and culture can help illuminate the diversity of views held towards the use of language. Moreover, insights into the various views can assist not only second language learners but also first language users, as the way we choose to use language is not just important for some of us. Such insights also open the door for a consideration of how both language and culture influence people's life perceptions, and how people make use of their pre-acquainted linguistic and cultural knowledge to assess those perceptions. For all language users, the recognition of how their language affects others can greatly impact the direction and motivation for both language study and interpersonal relationships, and it can also add great insight and value to language education, program planning, and curriculum development.

We will try to consider the connection between the two through the three plausible relationships forwarded by Wardhaugh: language structure determines language usage, cultural values determine the way we use language, and the claim that a relationship between the two does not exist.

The relationship between language and culture is a complex one due largely in part to the great difficulty in understanding people's cognitive processes when they communicate. Below, Wardhaugh and Thanasoulas each defines language in a somewhat different way, with the former explaining it for what it does, and the latter viewing it as it relates to culture.

Wardhaugh (2002, p.2) defines language " A knowledge of rules and principles and of the ways of saying and doing things with sounds, words, and sentences rather than just knowledge of specific sounds, words, and sentences." Here Wardhaugh tackles both the linguistic competence, where all individuals know how to use the rules of grammar and pronunciation, and the communicative competence, where these individuals know how to use language in real life through the appropriate ways of saying and doing in accordance with that society's cultural norms.

While Wardhaugh does not mention culture per se, the speech acts we perform are inevitably connected with the environment they are performed in, and therefore he appears to define language with consideration for context, something Thanassoulas (2001) more directly compiled in the following … "language does not exist apart from culture, that is, from the socially inherited assemblage of practices and beliefs that determines the texture of our lives" (Sapir, 1970, p. 207). Here Thanassoulas tries to make clear the idea that it is of much impossibility that culture and language should be at all separated; our acting out of our mother tongue is usually stamped by some cultural spots which we are not really conscious about when communicating with especially our fellow human beings from the same environment. No doubt, it may sometimes happen that when a person encounters another and they are of different cultures, it is either they would want to show their differences in culture and each takes pride in his, or that someone may drift to another's culture for the reason of the latter's dominance. In a sense, it is 'a key to the cultural past

of a society' (Salzmann, 1998, p. 41), a guide to 'social reality' (Sapir, 1929, p. 209, cited

in Salzmann, 1998, p.41). This means that it is through language that ancestors pass down

beliefs and traditional practices to their descendants. And if we are to discuss a

relationship between language and culture, we must also have some understanding of what

culture refers to. Goodenough (1957, p. 167, taken from Wardhaugh, 2002, p 219)

explains culture in terms of the participatory responsibilities of its members. He states that

a society's culture is made up of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to

operate in a manner acceptable to its members, and to do so in any role that they accept

for any of themselves.

Malinowski (Stern, 2009) views culture, though a somewhat more interactive

design, stating that it is a response to need, and believes that what constitutes a culture is

its response to three sets of needs: the basic needs of the individual, the instrumental needs

of society, and the symbolic and integrative needs of both the individual and the society.

The basic needs mean all the requirements that serve as the foundation for survival (food,

shelter, etc); the instrumental needs mean renewal of personnel and charters of behaviours

– with society providing education and social control systems; and integrative needs mean

the intellectual, emotional, and pragmatic control of one's destiny and chance – with

society providing magic, religion, and science.

For both Goodenough and Malinowski, culture is defined by benevolence and

expectation. While each person holds their own individual roles and subsequent needs as

part of a culture, the various needs of the common ones are associated with Sapir and Whorf. This claim is the basis for much research on the relationship between language and culture and therefore will be covered in the detail following an acknowledgement of the other two, beginning with a brief consideration of the 'neutral claim'.

The neutral claim that a relationship does not exist between language and culture, when considering language for its communicative powers and its role in the culture that uses it, would appear to be one for a philosophical debate. While it can be argued that it is possible to analyse a language and/or culture regardless the other, the reasons for such an analysis seem highly suspect. The fact that language is used to convey and to understand information would imply a relationship in which both the language giver and receiver assume one or more roles. In considering such communication in its most minimal of forms – i.e. the immediate setting – it would be difficult to conclude that culture would in no way have an impact on the interaction even on the smallest of scale.

The second proposed relationship suggests that people in a culture use language that reflects their particular culture values. This is the opposing view of Sapir and Whorf in that here it is the 'thoughts' of a culture which are reflected in the language and not the language which determines the thought. This claim implies that cultures employ languages that are as different as the cultures that express them and therefore linguistic functions differ in terms of, for example, a culture's level of technological development. However, Wardhaugh (2002, pp. 225-226) argues that we must assume that all languages

possess the resources to allow any speaker to say anything provided that a speaker is willing to use some degree of circumlocution. When needs for lexical items arise, Wardhaugh (2002, p. 225) explains, we can assume that cultures possess the ability and are free to create or to borrow them as needed, and that cultures that have not done so, have not yet experienced the need. Wardhaugh also notes that people who speak languages with different structures (e.g. Germans and Hungarians) can share similar cultural characteristics, and people who have different cultures can also possess similar structures in language (e.g. Hungarians and Finns). Examples like these indicate that the second relationship between language and culture is quite viable.

The first of the three proposed relationships above is the basis for the Whorfian hypothesis; the belief that the structure of the language determines how people see the world. The idea that language, to some extent, determines the way we think about the world around us is known as linguistic determinism, with 'strong' determinism stating that language actually determines thought, and 'weak' determinism implies that our thought is merely influenced by our language (Campbell, 1997). Strong linguistic determinism, and the idea that difference in language results in difference in thought, or linguistic relativity, were the basic propositions for the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis. The hypothesis claims that we see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation (Sapir 1929b, p. 207, taken from Wardhaugh, 2002, p.220).

Alptekin (1993: 136, cited in Taibi, 2002: 20), claims that "language and culture are inextricably tied". Malinowski (1923) also maintains that "language is essentially rooted in the reality of the culture". Even the famous linguist Edward Sapir, who in the 1920's (cited in Hinkel, 1999: 2) stated that "language and the culture of its speakers cannot be analysed in isolation", sooner contradicted his first statement by 1921 and firmly claimed, that "language, race and culture are not necessarily correlated" (1921:215, cited in Thanassoulas, 2001:8), to finally admit, later on that "language and our thought-grooves are inextricably interrelated, are, in a sense, one and the same" (ibid, 217-218). Along after and exactly by 1970, Sapir came to insist that "language does not exist apart from culture" (op. Cit, 7).

By the same concern of defining the connection between language and culture, Kramsch (1991: 217 cited in Thanassoulas, 2001:7) affirms that "culture and language are inseparable and constitute a single universe or domain of experience". One may want to understand from this latter statement about the relation between language and culture that they enshrine a deep bond for each other. This bond makes them flow into the very everyday experiences of the individual-proper, i.e. all comportments and attitudes of a certain member of a certain community are but the influence of this firm bond language and culture create in the interplay. Many other ethnographers such as Buttjes (1990), Ochs and Schieffelin (1984), Poyatos (1985), and Peter and Boggs (1986) (all cited in Buttjes, 1990:55, cited in Lessard-Clouston, 1997:2) all assume that "language and culture are

from the start inseparably connected". This second account about the relation between language and culture implies that they are innately injected into the mind of the baby. Thanassoulas (2001: 8) on her side claims that "Language is intertwined with culture [...]. In the past, language and culture were lumped together as if they automatically implied each other".

This interrelatedness may be easily identified in the definitions of both culture and language. Since and by the way of defining each independently, many incorporated and mentioned the one as being an integral part of the other. For instance, when defining culture, Goode, Sockalingam, Brown and Jones (2000, cited in Peterson and Cotrane, 2003:1) all referred to language as an important component of culture. Similarly, a permanent allusion to culture is largely noticed in the many definitions of language. The secret is in the essence of language itself as well as its general role, so that, at each time language is assigned, it is immediately related to the 'milieu' (environment) in which it evolves "…is a social institution, both shaping and shaped by society at large" (Armor-Thomas and McNicol, 1998, cited in Thanassoulas, 2001:6). Fairclough also joins Eleanor and denotes that " Language is not an autonomous construct but social practice both creating and created by the structures and forces of the social institutions within which we live and function" (1989, Ibid). which means that, language does not exist in vacuum, but appears in a specific social setting characterized by particular regulations, a spread of a set of beliefs, ideas, customs, thoughts in which language is looked at as either part or subpart

of these elements which by the end constitute culture, as noted by Douglas-Brown (1994, cited in Hall, 2001) "A language is part of a culture, and culture is a part of language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture. (p. 10). This last definition might imply that it is difficult to talk of language without talking of culture, for they are but one thing! And should one want to have them two distinct things, then one has to be careful not to reduce of the significance of either.

A fact also stressed by Byram (cited in Pulverness, 2002: 2) as "Language is regarded as a cultural phenomenon, embodying the values and meanings particular to a specific society, referring to the traditions and artifacts of that society and signaling its people's sense of themselves – their cultural identity". This is a rather consequential definition that we should come to see our identities reflected in our languages which dictate what moves we act on in a rather subconscious way. Although some might consider languages as ordinary entities, their power in showing who we really are is patent to all beholders.

Being not only an ingredient of culture, language is also the mirror, or as described by Duranti "an important window on the universe of thoughts" (1997:49, cited in Thanassoulas, 2001: 8), since it reflects and transmits beliefs, thoughts and ideas. Thus, if one seeks to know about the thoughts of a person of a different culture, it is through their language(s) that give views and philosophies about life.

In return, all the mentioned elements belong and constitute culture, a fact highly apparent in many definitions of the latter for example the one provided by Sapir (1921:218, cited in Ibid:9) "culture may be defined as what a society does and thinks. Language is a particular how of thought". According to this definition, culture enshrouds both thoughts and deeds of a certain society. Similarly, Bruner (1996:3, Ibid.9) implies that even though thoughts and ideas are confined in humans' minds, they originate and take their significance in the culture in which they are created. Kramsch (1993) who asserts that "culture is the ways of thinking, speaking and viewing the world […]";moreover, specifies concerning the means by which all these patterns may pass from one person to another. "One of the major ways in which culture manifests itself is through language. Material culture is constantly mediated, interpreted and recorded among other things – through language […]. Culture in the final analysis is always linguistically mediated membership into a discourse community that is both real and imagined. Language plays a crucial role not only in the construction of culture, but in the emergence of cultural change." (Ibid. p.23) and adds "Language use is indissociable from the creation and transmission of culture" (Ibid.9). An opinion shared by Montgomery and Reid-Thomas (1994; cited in Tavares and Cavalcanti, 1996:1) "Culture and language are interrelated and language is used as the main medium through which culture is expressed".

Humbold (1907, cited in Salzamana, 1998: 39, cited in Thanassoulas, 2001:8) assumes that "language is the outward manifestation of the spirit of people". Durkheim then went further this surface perception and clarified "language is not merely the external covering of a thought; it is also its internal framework. It does not confine itself to expressing this thought after it has once been formed; it also aids in making it" (1912, ibid:7), which provides language with a more effective value and relevance than that of being part of culture or just reflecting it.

This interdependence (Durkheim 1947), interpenetration (Duranti, 1997, cited in Thanassoulas, 2001: 7-8) connection (Hinkel, 1999) or transfusion at constant work between both language and culture, seem to go unnoted and undetected by many people though it clearly impregnates even their everyday language as mentioned by Thanassoulas (Ibid.7) "By the very act of talking, we assume social and cultural roles, which are so deeply entrenched in our thought processes as to go unnoticed". This invisibility may be caused by the fact being almost implicit as stressed by the same author who continued "culture… is inextricably and implicitly related to language". (Ibid,9). She is supported by Lyons (1981:325, cited in Hinkel, 1999:4) who notes that "There are certain aspects of the interdependence of language and culture that are not widely appreciated as they ought to be". Variation in systems of meaning, ways of perceptions and manners of conceptualizing the world by speakers belonging to the same language community openly reveals that these systems are governed by what Howell and Vatter (1976:376 cited in

Thanassoulas, 2001:9) name as the 'Grammar of Culture' which floats on the language surface and by which it is transmitted.

All that had been said concerning the fusion of language and culture, Agar (1994, cited in Barro et al, cited in Byram, 1998:79-80) brilliantly and briefly summarized it as "Lingua-culture" just to show the kind of link binding them together and that both form almost a unique entity. Thanks to the force of the relations specifying both, that culture evolved and got its way in FL/SL teaching classroom, and so has been included as a vital constituent in the language syllabus, thus "Learning a language is never independent from a learning of its culture". Be it implicit or explicit "It is impossible to teach a foreign language without its culture" (Alptekin, 1993:136 cited in Taibi, 2002:20) a fact not really admitted, despite its importance, in the early decades but may be easily tested through the foreign language teaching historical background.

1.4. The Historical Account of Culture and Language Teaching

A commonly wrong and widely spread assumption among some teachers concerning the historical relation existing between language and culture and its recent incorporation in the language classroom is the historical background of language teaching. While the reality is far from this and once exploring the historical background of language teaching, it will be clearly proved that both culture and language, despite their flow

through different historical steps with many ups and downs, they went together right from the first day of language teaching/learning.

This interrelatedness is in fact apparent and easy to detect in the origins of the language teaching itself which goes back to the days when the only academically taught languages were Roman, Greek and mainly Latin. This latter (Latin language) represented along nine years of age the only "best entrance ticket to the universal culture of the European educated elite" (Kramsch, 1994:3). A period where people learned a foreign language in order and for the unique objective to accede to the great literary works as stated by Clouston (1997:1) " In the past people learned a foreign language to read and study its literature" and confirmed by Allen (1985, Ibid.) "…prior to the 1960's, the lines between language and culture were carefully drawn. The primary reason for second language study in the earlier part of this century was access to the great literary masterpieces of civilization". (p. 138)

1.5. Teaching/Learning Culture in FL/SL Classroom

For some, the notion of teaching/learning a language, be it foreign or second, is restricted to the supplies with a host of vocabulary, syntax and/or grammatical structures and rules governing it. The whole is intended for specific ends mainly to enable the learner both, on the one hand, to understand the language through reading and listening and/or to produce it by speaking and writing. That means to be confined to the teaching/

learning the four 'language skills' (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) and to adhere

to them along the teaching/learning process. As admitted by some authors this limitation

and this perception of language teaching/learning from this unique narrow perspective

seems insufficient so that even linguists claim it like Widdowson (1978) who certifies "

The aim of a language teaching course is very often defined with reference to the four

'language skills': understanding speech, speaking, reading and writing. These aims,

therefore, relate to the kind of activity which the learners are to perform […] however it is

unsatisfactory. We may readily acknowledge that the ability to produce sentences is a

crucial one in the learning of a language. It is important to recognize, however, that it is

not only ability that learners need to acquire. Someone knowing a language knows more

than how to understand, speak, read and write sentences." (p. 1)

This statement raises one of the more important and complex questions

concerning the teaching/learning of languages, as far as the English language is concerned

in our work, and overtly reveals that, the strict knowledge of the four skills (reading,

writing, speaking, and listening) is far to be sufficient and remains poor to meet all

learners' needs. However, one of their 'duties' is to cover other areas than the focus on the

forming and composition of a sentence and to stagnate on its surface structure simply

because "teaching of a foreign language is not tantamount to giving a homily on syntax

structures or learning new vocabulary and expressions…" (Thanassoulas, 2001:1). And as

advocated by Peck (1984:2) "Language learning should be more than the manipulation of

syntax and lexicon" mainly when it comes to a mere communicative era, where the 'functional' aspect of language reflecting the different social meanings and systems that control it and regulate the linguistic attitudes and behaviours, is stressed more than ever, and more than the form of the sentence which, once isolated from its communicative token, or used as an independent unit, becomes useless and meaningless. Therefore, a foreign language learner is asked to look deeper, and adequately handle it for best communicative effect as advocated by Bryam (1998:3) "language learners need to go beyond the acquisition of a linguistic system…". He is totally approved by Widdowson (1978:2), who states in his turn that "When we acquire a language we do not only learn how to compose and comprehend correct sentences as isolated linguistic units of random occurrence, we also learn how to use sentences appropriately to achieve a communicative purpose." In this respect Hymes aligns himself to them to assert "… Being competent in communication involves more than just an understanding of the syntax and range of expressions within a language" (1972, cited in Baker, 2003:1).

Consequently, language teaching/learning is no more devoted to the unique teaching/learning of the pure linguistic systems but is largely expanded to include the cultural aspect of language and to stress the communicative goal as explained by Hymes (Ibid.) "Language teaching has also changed to incorporate this link between culture and language…". The incorporation of the cultural element is not done by chance but was obligatory, unavoidable and a necessity at the level of the language classroom practice.

"Without the study of culture, foreign language instruction is inaccurate and incomplete. For foreign language students, language study seems senseless if they know nothing about the people who speak it or the country in which it is spoken" (Peck, 1984:2). Helen Wilkes claims that language learning is comprised of 3 integrated components which are "linguistic, cultural and attitudinal" (Ibid.4).

Furthermore and even in the opposite case, if culture is not openly and consciously involved in the language teaching/learning process, it nevertheless remains present as an integral part, though passively, on the light of what had been denoted earlier with regard to the link binding it with language. Any attempt to separate the one from the other or to deny its existence will be unfruitful. Therefore, and since both are inexorably tied as such that cannot be separated and the one can never go without the other, it implies that culture is part of language teaching/learning and so "Language teachers are so much teachers of culture, that culture has often become invisible to them" (Kramsch, 1993: 48, cited in Baker, 2003:4). Higgs also recognizes that the "unbreakable bond between language and culture that motivates our profession's implicit commandment that 'thou shall not teach language without also teaching culture" (1990:74, cited in Clouston, 1997:3). Simultaneously, and since teaching logically implies learning, "In learning another language, students are exposed to, and inevitably learn something about, one or more other societies in their cultural practices." (Byram and Fleming, 1998:1). He also adds "learning a language as it is spoken by a particular group is learning the shared

meanings, values and practices of that group as they are embodied in the language"
(ibid:2). This means that language naturally contains culture, in a sense incarnates it and
vice versa.

Approaching the role of both the foreign language learner and the source of
culture, that is the language community, Byram explains teaching and learning as follows
"the learning and teaching of foreign language has traditionally been predicated on the
distinction between native speakers and non native speakers. Non-native speakers are
supposed to learn the rules of the native speakers' standard of grammar, vocabulary and
idioms. In turn the native speaker is supposed to provide the norm against which the
native speakers' performance is measured. (Ibid. 16)

In this way, culture is disseminated in the language classroom involuntary so
that even ignored, it cannot be dispelled whatever efforts to do so as highlighted by many
scholars among Valdes (1986, 1990) Byram and Fleming (1998), Kramsch (1993) (all
cited in Baker, 2003:3) who assume that "… Whether culture is consciously or
unconsciously part of the teachers' pedagogic aims, the transmission of culture is
unavoidable. The content of what we teach will always be in a way or another linked to
culture", and as Valdes (1990:20) points out "every lesson is about something and that
something is cultural".

Cultural importance in the FL/SL teaching/learning process, attained higher
degrees as such that even those who questioned the aim of incorporating it in the language

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classroom come to accept that a teaching of any language instills automatically culture like Guest (2002, cited in Baker, 2003:4) who specified English language as his field study "…accept that in teaching English we will also be transmitting the values of English culture."

1.6. The Importance of Culture in Communication

Communicative competence is a target in itself as far as teaching foreign languages in general and the English language in particular are concerned. Considering that it should be one of the actual substantial pedagogical goals, so it deserves to be dealt with apart and consecrated a much more intention that to be a subpart of a section for its importance.

Being more than a transmission and exchange of 'pure information', to communicate requires to scrutinize behind words and sentences and not to be restricted to their direct or surface meaning so to obtain an effective discourse values-laden. Thus, culture is the best and only mediator which meets these conditions considering that, it assumes a vital role since it "…enhances or even inhibits communication" (Thanassoulas, 2001: 3). By providing a background and significance to items principally because "People do not communicate by expressing isolated notion or fulfilling isolated functions any more than they do so by uttering isolated sentence patterns" (Widdowson, 1978:1). Moreover and even before the acquiring of the abilities of producing and so to communicate, it involves other specific implications and further needs since it implies firstly understanding which calls in its turn for an immediate link with culture as specified by Kramsch (1993) "After all, communication requires understanding, and understanding requires stepping into the shoes of the foreigner and sifting her cultural baggage, while putting [the target] culture in relation with one's own."

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English among other languages obeys to the same charges, Pulverness (2002:2) describes it "In teaching English for communication and neglecting culture, we may actually be giving learners access to an impoverished means of communication, effective for survival and routine transactions, but lacking much of the cultural resonance that makes it fully meaningful for native speakers". Wu and Stephens (1991:29, Taibi, 2002:28) hold that most of students' errors "stems from their lack of cross-cultural awareness rather than weaknesses in knowledge of language". Stagitch (1998:73, cited Ibid) assumes that "in the teaching of a foreign language, understanding the culture context is the most effective way to learn real meaning and to read, write, and speak competency"

1.7. The Aim of Culture Teaching/Learning

Culture holds its relevance from the role it performs in the language classroom when it affects the learning process by providing meanings and values required to facilitate learners' understanding and so improves their language learning. However, culture teaching aims to achieve far beyond this function mainly because as soon as, incorporated in the language curriculum, it may create, as it may solve problems, and may generate positive as well as, negative effects. The reason lying behind those effects is the meeting of the target and first culture that learners bring to the language classroom, and that predisposes them to either accept or reject the new culture. Possible effects are the preconceived judgements, stereotypes, attitudes and feelings toward the foreign community, their customs, traditions, beliefs, ways of life and so forth; adding to the fact of learners' tendency to rely on subjective rather than objective reasoning, which may lead to a misconception and misunderstanding of the target group. Being prejudicial on the target culture it may alter students own culture and values since what may be taught about any other culture; may be reflected on the native one.

To remedy this phenomenon, culture teaching points to raising learners' awareness as a pedagogic objective in its own right by means of stimulating their intellectual curiosity and inciting their critical thinking, so that they question facts that had been for long taken for granted, starting first by referring to elements in their own culture and analyzing their role as citizens in society "In order to question and reinterpret, L2 culture, L1 observers must first become aware of what it means to participate in their own culture and what the contents of culture are." (DES, 1999:3, cited in Byram 1998:4). And as stated by Reynolds Skilbek "It is to develop pupils' understanding of themselves and their own way of life" (1976: 2, cited in Thanassoulas, 2001:10).

To come to the understanding of the native culture, which is intended to expand to the target one, both comparing and contrasting facts by the same time of observing differences as well as similarities, if any, are key instruments in order to come to accept the diversity as advocated by Taveres and Cavalcanti (1996:20, Ibid:13) " The diversity should then be understood and respected, and never over- or underestimated." Any charge in learners' attitudes toward the target culture, imply to accept the culture itself. Furthermore, to be conscious that there is no superior or inferior culture but each group is unique and specific, and each society stands with its positive as well as negative aspects and no one is best qualified to judge them either from within or outside but only to respect and accept them. It seems even that comparisons as well as contrast are the best and most efficient tools to reach this state of empathy and consideration and so an immediate outcome "cultural learning will only be truly meaningful if it is comparative and contrastive…" (Pulverness, 2003:3) "Cultural understanding and cross cultural comparisons are necessary components of language pedagogy"

Cultural awareness may be achieved through a careful selection on the a part of teachers of the texts to be implemented in the language classroom, exercises and activities,

and which must be neutral and containing no racist or things that may harm learners' sensitivities or beliefs "The challenge to those teachers who are interested in transcending the often narrow limits of language teaching is to make cross cultural awareness a central issue in teaching at the same time as developing students' linguistic competence" (Pulverness, 2002:5).

Conclusion

Culture teaching in the foreign language classroom is a splendid domain, which is incessantly captivating researchers' intention and interest, irrespective of the difference of their fields. This variety will offer the possibility to find out a diversified and a rich literature to refer to on one hand, and on the other hand, it can cause the dilemma of selection, as what points to mention and which to omit despite their importance.

The second point is related to the aim lying behind culture teaching itself, which exceeds the generally apparent foreign language learners' progress, to cover a more humanistic area, as to raise the awareness by bringing different cultures as close as possible, to erase the geographical boundaries and judgements so as to lead to empathy and the acceptance of differences between and similarities among of people. This aim is claimed, mainly by the Western World but not perceived from the same perspective in the Eastern World.

CHAPTER TWO

Conversation and the Classroom Interaction of Learners of English as a Foreign Language

Introduction

1- Conversation

1.1. The Concept of Conversation ………………………………………………....

1.2. Cooperative Principle…………………………………………………………

1.3. Conversational Implicatures………………………………………………….

1.4. The Four Maxims of Conversation…………………………………………..

1.5. Ways of Failing to Observe Maxims…………………………………………

1.6. Grice's Theory Criticism………………………………………………………

1.7. Conversation Analysis (Turn, Pair, Sequence)……………………………..

1.8. Turn Taking……………………………………………………………………

2- Teaching English Conversations to Learners of English as a Foreign Language

Introduction

Social interaction is the primordial means through which the business of the social world is transacted, the identities of its participants are affirmed or denied, and its cultures are transmitted, renewed, and modified. Through processes of social interaction, shared meaning, mutual understanding, and the coordination of human conduct are achieved.

In our daily life, we interact with one another on different topics. We hold conversations to fulfill a certain need, whether that need is essential or rudimentary. In every particular community there are some related ways of holding such conversations; these ways may be called conventional cues of addressing among individuals. They are thus culturally bound. However different those cues might seem from one community to another, it admits of no doubt that there are certain aspects to holding a conversation in any named community which are quasi-universal. These aspects are often manifest contextually. Context plays a crucial role in approaching any kind of conversation. The participants have to be aware of what importance the context implies so as to hold their conversations safely and they are never prone to cause offence. In one culture, participants may find very easy to converse quite properly, though personal differences are not to be neglected. Nevertheless, when cultures are different, there would be a high probability of misunderstanding which in turn might cause offence to some participants. Therefore, participants are expected to have some considerable amount of knowledge and background about each or one another, for what may sound common in a culture might be offensive in another.

In this chapter, the researcher is to tackle the concept of conversation where various definitions are given, the four maxims of conversation, principles of conversational cooperation, topic choice, turn taking, and repair tactics.

Then, we look at conversation in the context of teaching students of English as a second language. Within teaching, we are to observe and analyse teacher-learner interaction, learner-learner interaction, setting up negotiation tasks, problems that may rise in the classroom of teaching conversations like learners' attitudes towards the culture of the target language and culture shock.

1-1 The Concept of Conversation

As noted by Goffman (1974:36), two different approaches can be taken to the definition of conversation. One can define it as casual talk in everyday settings; alternatively, the term can be "used in a loose way as an equivalent of talk or spoken encountered" (46:14, cf 153: 1075-76).

The word conversation originally means "having dealings with others", also "manner of conducting oneself in the world". If we take the first definition, we understand that conversations are bits of social interactions imbued with purpose. Part of what we seek from holding conversations is achieving a certain aim. Also, that definition implies that we interact universally (using the general word 'others') where different cultures come to the interplay. Further, the word 'dealings' shows that there are certain aspects of conduct that govern holding conversations, and are to be respected.

The second definition alludes to the personal locus of every individual on their own. The individual, by this token, should know how to position themselves in the world. They should know who they are when coming to any social interaction, and never should they forget who the others they are addressing are.

In the dictionary of Merriam-Webster, the word conversation is defined as follows: an informal talk involving two people or a small group of people.

This definition, though ordinary and general, has quite a few implications. First, it ascribes informality to the word conversation whereby that means whenever we encounter the

word conversation, we should deem it ordinary and mundane. Second, it uses the word 'talk' not 'speech' whereby that means there is a certain partaking in the social interaction, and should also mean that there is turn-taking between the individuals involved. Third, it implies that the social interaction could be between two individuals or more whereby the exclusion of monologue. But, all in all, there seems a problem with this definition in the point of informality. Are all the so-called conversations informal? And if bits of social interactions are formal, don't they deserve to be called conversations? And is the word 'informal' used up there free from any ambiguities? How is 'informal' used: linguistically where there seems little regard attended to the grammar of the interaction, or socially where there could be understood that the participants are peers?

The research is not going to answer these questions systematically one by one, but the response would manifest itself in the process of pursuing the research gradually but separately.

In the encyclopaedia Britannica Company, the word 'conversation is defined as follows: an oral exchange of sentiments, observations, opinions, and ideas. This definition takes us to look at conversation from a different perspective. First, it realizes that the conversation is an oral action. That means that the conversation is a spoken act, not a written one. Second, the word 'exchange' implies the involvement of interaction and turn-taking. Third, 'sentiments, observations, opinions, and ideas' are all person-bound aspects where mutual understanding or common background is demanded to the effectiveness of the interaction.

1-2. The Cooperative Principle

Grice (1975) proposes that participants in a conversation obey a general 'Cooperative Principle' (CP), which is expected to be in force whenever a conversation unfolds: "Make

your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged."

The cooperative principle thus helps a lot in creating sense and worth in conversing. It seems that it would always be the task of participants to help each or one another in any talk (formal or informal). We, as human beings, do not really converse for no clear purpose, however minute and valueless that purpose might seem. Arguably, a purpose in the head of a speaker may enjoy some ambiguity to the hearer; still, there will always be worth in conversing. The cooperative principle conclusively aids all participants to have very clear and meaningful conversations.

1-3. Conversation Implicatures

The capacity of interlocutors to make sense of the utterances they exchange, in spite of some missing elements, is that such elements are often implicated and such implicatures are made possible by cooperation between speaker and hearer.

Expecting to observe the CP enables language users to realize when a certain assumption has been suspended and why interlocutors have chosen to disregard an accepted set of conversational postulates.

Grice views pragmatic interpretation as heavily relying on inferencing processes: the hearer is able to hypothesise about the speaker's meaning, based on the meaning of the sentence uttered, on background or contextual assumptions and last but not least, on general communicative principles which speakers are expected to observe.

"To imply is to hint, suggest or convey some meaning indirectly by means of language" (Thomas 1995: 58). In his explanation of implied or additional meaning, Grice distinguishes between two kinds of implicatures:

- Conventional Implicatures, which convey the same extra meaning regardless of context and which are always lexicalized;

- Conversational Implicatures, which convey different meanings according to different contexts, i.e. are calculated afresh each time the speaker and the hearer interact.

Let us try and clarify these two kinds by giving examples. Conventional implicatues are carried by a restricted number of words: but, even, therefore, yet. Grice gives the following convincing examples:

He is poor but honest.

An utterance stating that honesty appears contrary to expectations in relation to financial underprivileges .

John is an Englishman. Therefore he is brave.

An utterance which triggers entailment built on the argumentative of reaching a conclusion based on a set of premises:

Premise 1: All Englishmen are brave.

Premise 2: John is an Englishman.

Conclusion: John is brave.

Now, we take examples about Conversational implicatures:

A: Is that scotch over there?

B: Help yourself.

A's utterance is literally a request for information (on the nature of the liquor), yet B interprets it as a request for a drink. Nothing in the literal meaning of A's

utterance could lead B to that interpretation, which can only be derived by means of conversational implicatures.

Any implied meaning risks being misunderstood by the hearer as the speaker intended it to be uptaken, since a speaker may imply something that the hearer may fail to infer

appropriately. Consider the following exchange excerpted from Koncealovki's movie, 'Tango and Cash':

Tango (to Cash, his partner who is driving recklessly through rising flames): who taught you to drive like that?

Cash: Stevie Wonder.

Cash's reply may fail to be inferred correctly, i.e. the implicature may have been misread if the interlocutor did not know that Stevie Wonder is blind and that only somebody driving with their eyes shut could be daring and irresolute enough to get their way through the flames.

1-4. The Four Maxims of Conversation

While Austin (1962) was mainly concerned with explaining the distinction between what speakers say (locutionary act) and what they mean (illocutionary act), Grice tried to explain how the hearer gets from what is said to what is meant. In other words, how hearers move from the level of expressed meaning to the level of implied meaning. Before going further into Grice's theory, it would be appropriate to begin by explaining the concepts (imply and infer). To imply, as we have already seen, is to hint, suggest or convey some meaning indirectly by means of language. The implicature is generated by the speaker/writer and may (or may not) be understood by the hearer. To infer is to deduce something from evidence (that may be linguistic, paralinguistic or non-linguistic) and the inference, unlike the implicature, is produced by the hearer/reader. (Thomas, 1995: 58)

In recent years, there has been a tendency to reject the classic dual distinction between 'what is said' and 'what is implicated'. Instead, a three-level approach to meaning is favoured by authors like Levinson (2000). He makes a distinction between sentence meaning, utterance type meaning and speaker meaning (2000:

21-27). However, there is considerable terminological confusion that has to do with the still unsolved problem of finding demarcation lines between 'what is said ' and 'what is meant' (Meibauer, 2005: 579).

Grice (1975: 45) argues that our oral exchanges do not consist of a series of disorganised remarks. There is a set of assumptions guiding the conduct of conversation. These assumptions (or maxims) arise from basic rational considerations and may be formulated as guidelines for the efficient and effective use of language in conversation. In other words, conversation is not chaotic and without rules. On the contrary, there are tacit rules that we all assume when we engage in conversation so that it flows smoothly and communication does not fail. There are cooperative efforts and each participant recognizes in them a common purpose or, at least, a mutually accepted direction. Grice (1975) identifies four basic maxims of conversation underlying the efficient co-operative use of language, which together form what he called the Co-operative Principle that we have already seen and explained.

The four maxims that Grice distinguishes are the following (1975: 45-46)

1. The maxim of Quality enjoins speakers not to say anything they believe to be false or lack adequate evidence for. In other words, speakers are expected to be sincere and tell the truth. It is subdivided into two related   sub-maxims: Do not say what you believe to be false; do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

2. The maxim of Quantity requires speakers to make their contribution as informative as required, but not more or less informative than is required. In Schwarz's words (1996: 5) speakers should provide all the information that is relevant to the ongoing conversation and they should respect the established

common ground by providing the information that the hearers need. It is subdivided into two related sub-maxims: Try to make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes of the exchange; Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

3. The maxim of Relation (Relevance) enjoins speakers to say something that is relevant to what has been said before. Grice finds here several problems "exceedingly difficult" in their treatment: questions about what different kinds and focuses of relevance there may be or how they shift in the course of a talk exchange, etc. (1975: 46)

4. The maxim of Manner asks speakers to make their contribution such that it can be understood. To do so, speakers not only need to avoid ambiguity and wordiness, but also have to take the characteristics of their audience into account (Schwarz, 1996). It includes the super-maxim 'be perspicuous' and various maxims such as: avoid obscurity, avoid ambiguity, be brief, be orderly. In short, these maxims specify what participants have to do in order to converse in a maximally efficient, rational, cooperative way: they should speak sincerely, relevantly, and clearly, while providing sufficient information.

Grice continues with his theory and points out that a speaker can certainly observe all the maxims (1975: 48), as in the following example:

Jerry: Hi How are you? We are interested in a single room. How much will that be?

Receptionist: A single room is £ 200 a night (p.25)

The receptionist has answered clearly (manner), truthfully (quality), has just given the right amount of information (quantity) and has directly addressed Jerrry's goal in asking the question (relation). The receptionist has said

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precisely what he meant, no more no less and has generated no implicature. That is to say, there is no distinction to be made here between what he says and what he means; there is no additional level of meaning.

1-5. **Ways of Failing to Observe Grice's Maxims**

In everyday language, however, people fail to observe or fulfill the maxims on many occasions. Maybe because, for example, they are incapable of speaking clearly (they are nervous, frightened, have a stammer, etc.) or because they deliberately choose to lie. In his first paper (1975: 49) Grice distinguished three ways of failing to observe a maxim: flouting a maxim, violating a maxim, and opting out a maxim. Later on, he added a fourth category of non-observance: infringing a maxim. Several writers since Grice have argued the need for a fifth kind of non-full observance − suspending a maxim, as Thomas points out (1995: 72)

The five ways of non-observance of the maxims will be analysed in this paper, although there will be a greater emphasis on flouting because it is the one that generates an implicature and the one Grice concentrated on. The other ones will be discussed because they bear some importance to this present paper.

1- Flouting a maxim: There is a qualitative difference between flouting and the rest of the cases: flouting does not reduce the quality of the communication. However, the other cases of non-observance of the maxims impoverish communication. Jokes, for instance, are cases of flouting, although characters in jokes (e.g. in dialogues) may violate one or more maxims towards one another.

Thomas (1999: 88) points out that, according to Grice, to flout is so blatant that the interlocutor is supposed to know for certain that an implicature has been

generated, even if we are not sure what that implicature is. A flout occurs when a speaker blatantly fails to observe a maxim, not with any intention of deceiving or misleading, but because s/he wants the hearer to look for a meaning which is different from, or in addition to, the expressed meaning. There is a deliberate intention of generating an implicature. Grice (1975: 49) called this additional meaning 'conversational implicature', that is, inferences go beyond the semantic meaning of what is being said by determining the pragmatic meaning of the utterance.

Relating to this, Levinson (1983: 104) notes that "implicatures are not semantic inferences, but rather inferences on both the content of what has been said and some specific assumptions about the co-operative nature of ordinary verbal interaction". In a later work, Levinson (2000: 29) stated that implicatures help to overcome "the slowness of articulation", as becomes clear from his slogan "inference is cheap, articulation is expensive". This new tendency of understanding implicatures in terms of economy is not a fundamental point for the study but illustrates how important implicatures are to succeed in conversation.

. A speaker flouts the maxim of Quantity by blatantly giving either more or less information than the situation demands.

> Doctor: I'm just checking your glands right now. You take all these pills?
>
> Amanda: Yes. They're different diets. Then I have my antidepressants and my sleeping pills. (p.28)

. A speaker may flout the maxim of Quality in several ways:

1- First, they may simply say something about which they do not have enough evidence for.

Jerry: She can be difficult. But you'd love her. She's a knockout.

Dobel: A knockout I'm sure, but impossible.

2- Secondly, speakers may also flout the maxim by exaggerating, as in hyperboles.

3- By using metaphors and as in this example:

Jerry: What happened? I thought she was finally settled.

Amanda: What happened is she's Madam Bovary. (p.6)

4- The maxim of Quality can also be flouted through conventional euphemisms, irony (an apparently friendly way of being offensive), banter (an offensive way of being friendly) and sarcasm that is like irony but intended to hurt.

. if speakers flout the maxim of Relation, his/her utterance doe not have any relation with the previous one. They expect the hearers to be able to imagine what the utterance did not say and make the connection between their utterance and the preceding one.

Jerry: What do I do? I'm trapped in a situation here. What do I do? Say something.

Shrink: Our time is up. Suppose we continue at our next meeting (p.29)

Shrink has blatantly refused to make what she says relevant to Jerry's previous comment.

. Speakers flouting manner appear to be obscure and deliberately ambiguous, but they intend or expect to be recognized by the hearer. A 'failure' t be brief or succinct' occurs (Grice, 1975: 55) and the speaker communicates more than what s/he literally says. In the following example,

Jerry wants to communicate his wish not to work for Harvey any longer, but does not find it easy and approaches the matter in a roundabout way:

Jerry: We should talk.

Harvey: Yeah. That's the way I am. I always like to settle business before the meal.

Jerry: Harvey… there is no question that you were there for me from the start.

[…]

Jerry: And, and you've done a very professional job. And I've paid you… I mean the sliding scale. You know, even though it slid toward you. Now…now I see myself moving in a whole new direction.

Harvey: Meaning?

Jerry: Basically, I'm interested in more serious things. A novel maybe some plays, maybe not even comedy.

Harvey: The dollars are in the jokes. Funny is money. I mean, you know, as a hobby, later, when you're rich someday, if you want to try a book… fine.

Jerry: Harvey…. (p. 45-46)

Violating a maxim is the unostentatious non-observance of a maxim". If a speaker violates a maxim s/he will be "liable to mislead" (1975: 49). Thomas (1995: 73) talks about an intentionally misleading implicature that is generated. Thomas (1995: 74) points out that these types of utterances are typically found in activities such as trials, parliamentary speeches and arguments. In the following example the maxim of Quality is violated:

Brooke: They make a nice couple. He's charming and very attractive…
Are you okay?

Jerry: Yeah. (p. 12)

Jerry is violating the maxim of Quality because he is not OK. He has been drinking alcohol and now he feels sick.

Opting out a maxim: when "the speaker is unwilling to cooperate in the way the maxim requires" (1975: 49). According to Thomas (1995: 74) the speaker wishes to avoid generating a false implicature or appearing uncooperative. Different cases of opting out occur in public life, when the speaker cannot, perhaps for legal or ethical reasons, reply in the way normally expected (priest, counselor or a police officer). An example of opting out of the maxim of Quantity is the following in which Dobel does not provide the information that Jerry asks:

Dobel: She's cheating on you!

Jerry: How do you know?

Dobel: 'Cause I know. (p. 31)

Infringing a maxim: the speaker fails to observe a maxim with no intention of generating and implicature and with no intention of deceiving. In other words, the non-observance of the maxims is a result of imperfect linguistic performance rather than any desire on the part of the speaker to generate a conversational implicature. This could occur because the speaker has an imperfect command of the language (a child or a foreigner), s/he is nervous, drunk or because of some cognitive impairment. (Thomas, 1995: 74)

Example of the infringement of Quality:

Brooks: Is this a woman's hair?

Jerry (a bit drunk): Is this… is this a woman's hair? I mean it could be… I suppose. Possibly from, uh, the taxi. It was… I mean, I think, you know, all the people in and out, I probably sat up in… I guess, the woman's hair. I am exhausted. (p. 14)

Suspending a maxim: the speakers do not observe the maxims because there is no expectation on the part of any participant that they will be fulfilled (hence the non-fulfilment does not generate any implicatures). This category may be culture-specific. Instances of the suspension of the maxim of Quality can be found in funeral orations and obituaries, of the maxim of Manner in poetry, of the maxim of Quantity in the case of telegrams, telexes an and some international phone calls and of all the three maxims in the case of jokes. It is difficult to find any convincing examples in which the maxim of relation is suspended. (1995: 76-78)

Levinson (1983) wondered if the four maxims are conventional rules that can be learnt as 'table manners' are learnt. But, at the same time, he explains that, according to Grice, the maxims are not arbitrary conventions but describe rational means for conducting co-operative exchanges. According to Levinson, if this is so, we would expect them to govern aspects of non-linguistic behavior too. Grice (1975) was attracted to the idea of maxims as general interactional principles governing both non-verbal and verbal behavior. That is why it should be noted that the specific expectations or presumptions connected with some of the maxims have their analogues in the sphere of non-verbal exchanges (1975: 47):

Quantity: if A needs four screws, B is expected to hand four, rather than two or six.

Quality: if A needs sugar to make a cake, B is not expected to hand A salt.

Relation: if A is mixing ingredients for a cake, B is not expected to hand a newspaper.

Manner: A expects B to execute his/her performance with reasonable dispatch.

Levinson (1983: 103) states that in each of these cases the behaviour falls short of some natural notion of full co-operation, because it violates on or another of the non-verbal analogues of the maxims of conversation. Thus suggests that the maxims derive from general considerations of rationality applicable to all kinds of co-operative exchanges, and if so they ought, in addition, to have universal application. However, the reason for linguistic interest in the maxims is that, as mentioned before, they generate inferences beyond the semantic content of the sentences uttered.

1.6- Grice's Theory Criticism

  Grice never fully developed his theory of implicature and, according to Thomas (1995: 87-88) there are many gaps and several inconsistencies in his writing:

- How do we know when the speaker is deliberately failing to observe a maxim and that an implicature is intended?

- How can we distinguish between different types of non-observance (e.g. a violation from a flouting)?

- Sometimes the maxims overlap or are difficult to distinguish one from another.

- Grice argued that there should be a mechanism for calculating implicature, but it is not always clear how this operates.

- Different cultures, countries and communities have their own ways of observing and expressing maxims for particular situations.

An obvious objection to Grice's (1975) portrait of conversational conduct is that "no one actually speaks like that the whole time!" as Levinson suggested (1983:102). That is a very pertinent remark that he immediately develops and clarifies by referring to Grice's own views. He argues that Grice would readily admit that people do not follow these guidelines of the maxims to the letter and he never meant that the maxims should always be observed. Instead, hearers assume that the principles are nevertheless being adhered to at some deeper level. It is only by making the assumption contrary to superficial indications that the inferences arise in the first place (1983: 102). In the following example, apparently, B's utterance is uncooperative but then we try to interpret it as co-operative at some deeper (non-superficial) leve:

> A: Where is Busy?
>
> B: her lights are on.

According to Levinson (1983: 103) Grice's point is not that one always adheres to the maxims on a superficial but rather that, wherever possible, people will interpret what we say as conforming to the maxims on at least some level. This is a rational idea and very culturally bounded. It is true that in daily conversation, and mainly among close people, one tends to communicate without following the conversational principles. Speakers tend to play with words and usually adhere to deeper levels of meaning that the hearers are supposed to interpret and infer. The problem with this is that, depending on the culture or the person (not everyone is as talkative or informative as expected), the responses might be interpreted as rude or unkind.

Carreto (2004) makes a summary of these concepts reviewed by Levinson and the new ones he proposes in his work *Presumptive Meanings: The Theory of Generalised Conversational Implicature* (2000). Her intention is to give a succinct account of the Generalised Conversational Implicatures (GCIs) as Levinson deals with them (2000) with the difference that the distinction between semantics and pragmatics is clear-cut, while she states that 'semantics and pragmatics are end-points of a continuum' (2004: 66) Levinson (2000) recognizes Grice's Cooperative Principle as point of departure and identifies two types of implicatures: Generalised and Particularised Conversational Implicatures (PCIs). On the one hand, GCI is a conversational implicature generated by default, that is to say, in all cases except in those where there is contrary evidence to it. Carretero (2004) provides an example: Some of my students went to the lecture (GCI: ' Not all my students went to the lecture'). On the other hand, PCIs take place in specific contexts. From this difference, Carretero infers that GCIs are closer than PCIs to the 'semantics' end of semantics-pragmatics continuum and have a stronger tendency to universality. However, they share two important properties: defeasibility (they can be cancelled or suspended) and reinforceability (they may be strengthened by explicit mention (2004: 69)).

In the 1990s, Salvatore Attardo used the Gricean conversational maxims to develop a& linguistic theory on humour. In this study, Attardo (1994: 271-292) discussed jokes and humour in the light of Grice's CP and concentrated on jokes and humorous utterances as the violation of the different maxims proposed by Grice.

"In Grice's discussion of the maxims, one of the possible cooperative uses of the maxims is their flouting, i.e. their patent (Grice has "blatant") violation, which

allows the hearer to infer that a given maxim is being violated only insofar as another maxim is being obeyed."(1994: 273).

Attardo (1994) suggests that the first step to take to solve the puzzle of the processing of non-cooperative texts such as jokes will be to look at an alternative set of maxims proposed to account for the "non-cooperative" behaviour of jokes (1994: 286). He highlights an idea that is different from Grice's "flouting". He states that "one flouts a maxim when on follows another maxim; here one violates a maxim because on follows a different Cooperative Principle". (1994: 287).

1.7- Conversation Analysis: turn, pair, sequence

Conversation Analysis (hereafter abbreviated as CA) developed as a field of study in the 1960s through intense collaboration among the late Harvey Sack, Emanuel Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson. Arising within sociology, CA emerged from the "cognitive revolution" that swept across the social sciences in the 1960s (7, 174) and placed a new emphasis on participants' orientation to indigenous social and cultural constructs. It seeks to describe the underlying social organization – conceived as an institutionalized substratum of interactional rules, procedures, and conventions – through which orderly and intelligible social interaction is made possible. Analysis of this substratum requires an integrated analysis of action, mutual knowledge, and social context.

By looking at CA, one would discern that all one's social behaviours are causally driven by one's deeply rooted-in cultures, infinitesimally different postures of personalities, and the dogmatic or quasi-dogmatic social systems. There are a lot of symbols within each society or community with which individuals find no problems in communicating provided that the preexisting common knowledge is

present pending the process of communicating. In addition, any bit of conduct is governed by shared norms underlying almost all mentalities of a particular society or community.

Followers of CA are strong believers in considering the proper object of the study of language use to be the set of techniques or methods that actual participants use in constructing and interpreting actual talk.

The main object of study of this paper is conversation, and more specifically, the study of two linguistic aspects of conversation: implicature and presupposition. This implies that the context of situation and study of the use of language in communication should be tackled.

According to Tsui (1994: 18) retrospective classification is an important dimension in the characterization and classification of conversational utterenaces. Tsui argues (1994: 17-19) that conversation is a cooperative achievement between, at least, two participants: one produces an initiating utterance with the intention of soliciting a particular response from the other. However, whether it will indeed succeed in getting the expected response depends on the other participant who can deliberately produce an unexpected response. When this happens, the discourse value of the initiating utterance may not be the same as intended by its speaker. For example:

[Labov and Fanshel (1977: 75)]

A: would you mind taking the dust rag and dust around?

B: No. (does not move)

A's utterance is intended to be a request which prospects a non-verbal action from B of dusting the room. However, it is reclassified (deliberately) as an elicitation by B which prospects only a verbal response. This kind of reclassification is retrospective in focus and is often used as a conversational strategy or as a means of generating 'conversational implicature'.

(Amanda and Jerry are arguing because she has told him she slept with another man)

Amanda: Don't be so middle-class! I did it as much for you as for me.

Jerry: Oh, thank you. For me? Thank you so much for thinking of me. I really appreciate that… (p. 38)

In the previous example, Amanda's comment on Jerry's complaints is clearly not complimentary at all. However, Jerry, by saying 'thank you so much and 'I really appreciate that', which is commonly used to respond to a compliment, is reclassifying Amanda's comment as a compliment, hence generating irony.

Tsui (1994: 19) points out that there is no way in which one speaker can put an absolute constraint on what the next speaker will say. But this does not mean that one utterance can be followed by any other utterance in conversation. As Firth (1935: 31) states: " the moment a conversation is started, whatever is said is a determining condition for what, in any reasonable expectation, may follow. What you say raises the threshold against most of the language of your companion, and leaves only a limited opening for a certain likely range of responses."

Stubbs (1983) proposes that after the production of an initiation, the next speaker makes a systemic choice of whether to support or reject it. According to Stubbs, to

support would be to produce an utterance which fulfils the structural production set up by the preceding utterance and to reject would be to break the discourse expectation. If the choice is to support the preceding discourse, then another system of choices is set up: the choice of questioning or not questioning the presuppositions of the preceding utterance. Stubbs (1983: 100) calls the former 'canonical support' and the latter 'query'. This last part has much to do with the observance and non-observance of the maxim of relation (Grice, 1975: 46) in terms of contributing or not with the previous discourse in conversations.

The descriptive units that conversational analysts have been using in describing conversational organization are: turn, pair, and sequence. A turn is seen as everything one speaker says before another speaker begins to speak. A pair is made up of two turns made by two different speakers. A sequence is made up of more than one turn and any pair embedded inside another pair is called insertion sequence. (Schegloff, 1972). According to Tsui (1994: 7-8) sequence is the least well-defined descriptive unit. Sometimes, a sequence is actually a pair and at other times it is made up of three or four turns.

Regarding conversational organisation and in particular adjacency pairs, Tsui (1994: 11) indicates that an utterance made by one speaker is responded to by another utterance from another speaker. And when the expected response is not forthcoming, interlocutors often give an account of why is not forthcoming. This kind of conversational organization is clearly captured by Schegloff and Sack's (1973) concept of adjacency pair. They explain that an organizational pattern recurrent in conversation is that of two adjacent utterances, which are produced by different speakers and are related to each other in such a way that they form a pair type. According to Schegloff and Sack's (1973), utterances are related to form

pair types so that a particular first pair part sets up the expectation of a particular second pair part. For example, a 'question' expects a 'reply' and they form a pair type; an 'offer' expects an 'acceptance' or a 'decline', and each of the latter forms a pair type with the former. So strong is this expectation that if the second pair part does not occur, its absence will be noticeable and noticed by participants.

1.8- Turn-taking

In a seminal paper first published in 1974, Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson formulate these observations in more technical, organizational terms; the participants display an orientation to minimization of overlap, while at the same time, they also orient to minimization of gap. Sacks and his colleagues account for this fine organizational balance by a description of the systematic that conversationalists orient to when they coordinate the organization of turn taking.

The basic organizational problem that participants have to solve each turn anew is to determine when the speaker will complete the current turn. The recipient is not only figuring out what the turn is about and what the speaker is doing with it, he also has to be alert for the moment it might become his turn to speak. Recipients anticipate such organizationally relevant moments by building expectations as to what the utterance underway is going to look like. Turns are produced linearly in real time, but in the course of a turn's production, a recipient can make an informed guess about the structure of the whole unit by inspecting – in its environment of use – the part that is already there. The turn so far provides cues as to how the unit underway is constructed and when it will possibly be complete.

When people engage in conversation, they take turns speaking. Turns almost always begin and end smoothly, with short lapses of time between them. Taking

into account the dynamic and fast paced nature of conversations, it is remarkable that there are so few occasions when conversation breaks down through simultaneous speech or interruption.

In fact, the time between the exchange of turns is often too short to be explained as the result of the hearer's waiting for the speaker to finish before the hearer starts to speak. This is even more significant if one considers that pauses across turns are sometimes even shorter than pauses within a turn itself. Duncan (4, 5) suggests several cues that the speaker employs to indicate the end of a turn or invite the hearer to take a turn. These cues include falling pitch at the end of a sentence, the drawl of a syllable at the end of sentence, the termination of a gesture, specific phrases at the end of syntactic units, and changes in gaze direction, such as the speaker's looking away from the hearer as an utterance begins and toward the hearer as the utterance ends. Goodwin (6) elaborates on the role of gaze in turn-taking by also considering the gaze of the hearer and the coordination of the gaze of conversational participants. He claims that the speaker's look away at the beginning of turns occurs to avoid overloading information in the planning of an utterance. Because of research by Duncan, Goodwin, and others, gaze behaviour has come to be seen as the only cue to turn – organisation and has been used as such in the design of embodied conversational agents.

In the Journal of Psycholinguistic Research, Vol. 27, No. 5. 1998, Stephen J. Cowley, by means of a fiery criticism, states "the belief that conversations are to be conceptualized as sequences of discrete actions is not universally held. For a majority, turn-taking serves not an explanatory role but an operational one. Since the concept supports analysis of conversational substance, it can be used in

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investigating how physical properties of speaking and silence contribute to conversational events."

For Stephen, turn-taking is no more than a convenient label for different ways of acting. Like temporal, prosodic and visible properties of talk, speakers alternate can be shown to correlate significantly with a range of communicative factors. He seems to criticize Sacks et al.'s claims to have unearthed evidence for the contention that, from a participant's perspective, turn-taking is central to conversational reality. And far from being "data-driven," the postulating of this device reflects both bias and careless observation. Since there is no turn-taking mechanism, it is mistaken to theorise conversations as sequences of specifiable types of units.

Thinking in terms of turn-taking may appear innocuous. This is, first, because it fits the schooled individual's bias that conversations are 'essentially' trains of word-based forms. There is still no doubt that transcription-based analysis suppresses much of human communication. This, in turn, fosters the fallacious view that conversations can be "explained" by taxonomies of structures, rules, speech acts, social actions, discourse processes, etc.

Indeed, Sacks et al (1974, p. 698) themselves considered conversational events to be structured similarly to waiting in a queue or crossing at an intersection. Since taking turns in a bank or at traffic lights is usually to conform, rather mindlessly, to social practices, their usage frees speaker alternation from connections with meaning and the consequent close investigation of particular events. At best, Sacks et al. (1974) used metonymy to extend the sense of turn to fit their goal of presenting talk as social practice.

2- Teaching English Casual Conversations to Learners of English as a Second or Foreign Language.

English has become the dominant language in our modern world where the most powerful country which is the leading force of the world economy is America whose language is English. People, thus, seek to have the ability to communicate in English very easily. For this reason, further, a ramp of huge numbers of classes around the world is teaching both general and special English. Presumably, the very skill that is demanded from any class teaching English is communicating in a way free from idiosyncrasies and grievous mistakes. The teaching of English conversations to non-native speakers may seem really challenging to most teachers in that the process of teaching is not mere spoon-feeding the learners of bunches of common phrases often used in conversations by native speakers. The real challenge that confronts these teachers lurks beneath the fact that every teacher needs very determinedly to bring about the cultural aspect of English into the class. Still, the difficulty amounts to higher degrees when one knows that the teacher(s) is not a native speaker; however, let us presume that he enjoys compellingly high flair for the English language conversations. It is very feasible to note here that absorbing the essence of English conversations is deeply crucial to the manifest improvement of English and a Second Language pedagogy as stated by Crystal and Davy 1975: 4) "…we are clear about one thing: no progress will be made towards an improved ESL pedagogy without a clear understanding of the realities of English conversation."

Until recently, most research into language focused on written texts or on examples of what were considered to be well-formed instances of language. However, eventually, the interest in casual conversation as the primary form of

language use has increased dramatically. This interest in the study of conversation is leading to new approaches in the classroom and to the development of innovative teaching materials.

For the improved ESL pedagogy called for by Crystal and Davy, it is necessary to investigate in some detail the nature of casual conversation and the areas of casual conversation which cause difficulties to learners. It is also necessary for teachers to experiment with different methodologies for teaching casual conversation and to contribute to the development of pedagogic approaches. Now, we will succinctly account for classroom interaction, aspects of classroom interaction where we tackle the negotiation of meaning and the role of feedback, and then we treat types of classroom interaction where we look at teacher-learner interaction and learner-learner interaction.

CHAPTER THREE

The Student's Educational Background

The Students' Educational Background

The students that the researcher targets in this study have studied very little about holding conversations. They attended classes of the English language at middle schools for about four years, and they spent three years studying English at secondary schools. The amount of actually practiced conversations in all course books in middle and secondary schools was small and of little significance, though the course books themselves are

somewhat full of dialogues and lessons about pronunciation (phonemic symbols and intonation). Teachers rarely asked their students to practise conversations in front of their classmates. Therefore, it could be thought that this small amount of conversations may not have been sufficient so as to make students competent at having conversations without errors and idiosyncrasies. Again, these students didn't have regular lessons in studying conversations, for the allotted time of sessions in middle and secondary schools was divided between grammar, writing, reading, and doing exercises on these, whereas listening and holding conversations was given little time.

We may also wonder as how these students would be able to hold proper, approximately native-like, conversations while the teachers who taught them in middle and secondary schools are themselves non-native speakers. Further, it rarely, or almost never, happened that these teachers availed specific time for watching videos by native speakers where, then, students have a discussion about.

Again, we may want to wonder whether those students had role-plays in conversations in front of their peer classmates where, then, the teacher, after observing and detecting their errors or mistakes, was to correct them or at least to point to them explicitly or implicitly. In addition, there is a blatant discrepancy between what the course book contains of conversations and the actual conducting of the lesson by the teacher(s). That is to say, a number of important conversations with regard to both language and culture is overlooked.

In the university, holding conversations is of much dearth. These university students attended Oral Expression classes for about two academic years. These classes commonly involve discussions, conversations, and presentations. So, the students did not have much familiarization with the way of conversing where to show both competences with regard to native speakers of English: sociocultural competence and linguistic competence.

Starting with pronunciation, the researcher will tackle the linguistic items these students were exposed to in middle school. Word stress and sentence stress are of such an importance that the second English course book of middle school is imbued with them. With regard to word stress, these students were taught that suffixes are of three types in relation to the behaviour of stress. There are suffixes which do not make the stress move from one syllable to another. For example, (-ment) in "development", "improvement", "commencement", and "pronouncement", the same syllable is kept stressed as in the verbs. (-ness) is also a suffix which doesn't affect the placement of stress as in "inquisitiveness, gorgeousness, manliness, and readiness". (-ful) is again a suffix which does not affect the placement of stress as in "beautiful, wonderful, bountiful, pitiful, and sorrowful". On the other hand, there are suffixes which either affect the placement of stress or they themselves hold the stress. For example, (-ic), (-eous), (-ity) do move the stress from one syllable to another as in "magnet/magnetic", "economy/economic", "academy/academic" and "advantage/advantageous", "herb/herbaceous", "miscellany/ miscellaneous", and "active/ activity", "domestic/domesticity", "eccentric/eccentricity" respectively. Some suffixes which hold stress are (-ee), (-eer), (ese) as in "train/trainee", "employ/employee", "interview/interviewee", and " mountain/mountaineer", "engine/engineer", "auction/auctioneer", and "Japan/Japanese", " Nepal/Nepalese", "Sudan/Sudanese" respectively.

In addition, these students were taught as how to mark stress on one particular two-syllabic word differently by paying attention to the part of speech of that word. The rule goes "If the same two-syllabic word were a noun and a verb, its pronunciation is different in each case. For instance, the word "conduct" is both a noun and a verb. When it is a verb, the second syllable is stressed (conDUCT), and when it is a noun, the first syllable is stressed (CONduct). And some other rules these students were also taught.

As for intonation, which sets a great challenge to non-native teachers who were not trained in the homeland of the target language "Britain or America, for example" , students were given general rules. One would ask "How were these teachers going to teach their students intonation and about intonation authentically?" "Were these students to listen to the audios by native speakers and hence model their pronunciation on theirs?" "Were they able to know the different tones of English regarding declarative sentences, interrogative ones, and exclamatory ones?" "And what about mother tongue interference: were they able to practise English as pure English?" That these students were simply taught that (Yes/No Questions) are pronounced with a rising tone, and that the answers to those are pronounced with a falling tone was not really sufficient, for it was only a matter of theorizing. They were asked to practise the following: Is he fat? No, he isn't, Are you slim? Yes, I am. The question that rises in the mind of the researcher is "Could the teachers pronounce those with perfect marking of stress and good intonation that they would then ask their students to repeat? Or, in other words, "Were these students right in practising those examples, and if not, did the teachers correct their errors?

They were also taught about the pronunciation of final "s". They were given words, verbs mostly, ending in "s" as a morpheme, and then were asked to classify them with accordance to /s/, /z/, or /iz/. In addition, they were taught how the morpheme "ed" behaves in the ending of regular verbs and that it has three possibilities: /d/, /t/, or /id/. In theory, some of them could do well because it was a matter of memorizing the letters at the ends of words before "s". However, in practice, when speaking or holding conversations, they used to confuse sounds.

They, further, studied the pronunciation of strong and weak forms of some auxiliary verbs like (does, can, must, etc). They came to know that some auxiliaries are pronounced weak if they happen to be at the beginning or middle of the sentence, and they are pronounced strong

if they happen to be at the end or are emphatically uttered. Also they are pronounced strong when uttered with 'n't'. For instance, in the following examples, "does" is pronounced weak: "Where does it hurt?", "Does she speak French?", "Where does he live?" However, in the following examples, "does" is pronounced strong: Yes, she does., No, she doesn't., He does know the answer! So, in all these cases or such like, these students were presumably taught how to pronounce 'does'. We can assume that the teacher in middle school and secondary school used to practise pronouncing the auxiliary "does" before his students.

In addition, these students were taught how to pronounce "must" in different positions. They came to know that what applies to pronouncing "does" applies to pronouncing "must". Hence, "must" is pronounced weak when happening to be at the beginning or middle of the sentence as in these examples: "Must you get up early tomorrow?" "Must they have a book each?" "You must respect your teachers." "You must eat less quickly." In contrast, "must" is pronounced strong if it happened to be at the end or is negated as in these examples: "Yes, he must." "You mustn't make noise in class." Similarly, "can" has weak form and strong one. "She can cook well", "I can speak Italian perfectly well", "Can you help me?" are all examples to show how "can" is pronounced weak, while "Yes, she can.", "They can't come now." are to show when "can" should be pronounced strong.

These students studied the use and function of some of common modal verbs in everyday English. They all know that an infinitive form should follow the use of a modal. For example, in "I must go now", "She can drive well.", "You shouldn't speak to him that way!" all verbs that follow (must, can, shouldn't) are written in their infinitival forms. The same apply to the rest of modals. They were also taught that these modals have primary and secondary functions. For instance, "can" has one primary function which is "expressing ability" and all the other functions are secondary. "I can climb mountains.", "He can speak Russian well.", "He can play the piano beautifully." are all instances of expressing ability. Hence, "She can't

drive in big cities", "They can't come today" are instances of expressing lack of ability. However, "Can I help you?", for example, does not express ability or lack of ability; it expresses offer. "Can you help me?" is used not to ask whether somebody has the ability to help or not, but rather it is a somewhat polite request. So, "offer and request" are instances of secondary functions of "can". They do not have to do with the literal meaning of can but with what cultural aspects are attributed to them by the native speakers of the English.

These students were also tutored that "could" is not always the past of "can", for it is a modal verb that, as well, has primary function and secondary functions. For example, "He could walk when he was three." "Picasso could paint when he was three." are to express ability in the past, and here, "could" is the past of "can". Nonetheless, "Could you help me?", "Could you pass me the salt?", "Could I speak to you for a minute?" are instances of secondary functions.

They were also schooled in using the short forms of some grammatical forms such as (are, am, is, have, has, had, would). Knowing that native speakers often use short forms in their speech, these students came to know how English is really behaving authentically and naturally. However, were they taught how to discriminate between ('s) short form of third person, of (to be) and ('s) sign of possession case and ('s) of have with third person singular? Were they taught how to discriminate between ('d) short form of (had) and ('d) short form of (would)?

They were schooled in using prepositions of location, possessive adjectives, possessive pronouns, and demonstratives. We should pose this question, "To what extent were these students really schooled into these linguistic items?" The researcher presumes that they were given formal lessons about them, but were they enough? That is what we will know after analyzing the data concerning the use of prepositions of location and demonstratives in the environment where these students' conversations took place.

Passive voice was among the formal lessons given to these students. No doubt that they were taught how to transform active sentences into passive ones in written exercises more than spoken ones. It is true to assume that students can get easily trained to do exercises on passive voice in writing, for they have time to think. However, in speaking, it seems a bit difficult. That we know from the daily life of native speakers, say in Britain, that they do use passive voice in their common communication makes us wonder how these students are going to model their speech on that of native speakers.

Some common expressions were among the lessons these students saw in middle school. They were taught how to communicate verbally and nonverbally by talking about their emotional and moral attitudes. For example, they seem to have learnt how to enquire about whether someone is satisfied or not. Thus, expressions like "Is it all right?" "OK Sir/Madam" "How do you like it here?" "Is it what you expected/wanted/needed?" are used. In addition, expressions like "Great!" "That's all right, thank you." "This is just what I expected/wanted/needed." "Oh, that is very nice/fantastic" are used to express pleasure and satisfaction. And should one want to express displeasure and dissatisfaction, they should use "She's late again." "She did it again." "Terrible!" "Horrible!" "This is not what I expected." Expressions like "Are you keen on?" "Are you fond of?" "Are you big on?" "Do have any liking for?" "Are you passionate one?" are used to enquire about someone's likes. And to express likes, expressions like "I love it" "I'm mad/crazy about it" "I'm so keen on…" "I have a liking spot for…" "I am so passionate on…" "I have a fiery enthusiasm about…" are used. Again, expressions like "No, I don't. Actually I hate it" "I can't stand it!" "I just abhor it" "I dislike it really" are used to express dislikes. Indispensable expressions like "That's a great pity" "What a pity" "I'm sorry to hear…" are used to talk about disappointment. They were also taught how to use "… I'd love to", "I'd like to", "…would like to. But are they now able to use these expressions correctly in questions and answers? They were also taught how

to give opinions and to ask for advice, but are the ways to do so really processed in their minds? Do they practise giving opinions and asking for advice subconsciously or do they focus on the linguistic items that serve that?!

They were taught how to put the verbs in the correct tense. Sometimes the text targeted was a conversation, and they had to know the concept of time when writing the verbs in the correct tense like the dialogue in the course book of middle school Fourth Year "On the Move" (p. 69). This kind of exercise is often related to the linguistic items of the formal lesson. For example, if the lesson were about the use of (be going to), the exercise, be it a dialogue or simply direct sentences, should be in tandem with that linguistic item. Hence, the teacher is supposed to explain the nature of (be going to) and its proper use in English with regard to both linguistics and culture, and they should make sure that the students get a clear image about that so as to move to consolidating that by exercises. For the (be going to) item, it would be better if the teacher makes comparison between it and the use of the present continuous and also (will). That, in turn, would give students a clear idea as how native speakers naturally come to use such seemingly similar linguistic items in different ways which are necessitated by contexts. These linguistic items will be used by the researcher in an exercise in a form of a conversation taken from "New Headway" so that he would see whether the students targeted were capable of using them properly in their conversations and thus come to closer to approximately native-like holding of conversations. Though one would want to argue that even if the use of the linguistic items by these students were somewhat awkward, communication among them would be successful by taking into account that they shared the same culture. Nonetheless, that would not seem to apply to native speakers of English, for the notion of expressing time differs.

They were also taught how to use conditionals, mostly in written forms. Now, they seem to know that conditional type zero is used to express definite or scientific facts and it is mostly

used about natural phenomena. In addition, they seem to know that conditional type one is used to express plausibly real present and a plausibly realized future. They, again, know that if one wants to express an unreal event in the present, they should use conditional type two. And if intending to express an unreal event in the past, they have to use conditional type three. Albeit, one may ask, ' Are these students now able to use all these types of conditionals as proper as one would want to see, that is, using them subconsciously?'

They were also tutored in the use of "wish" which is an important linguistic item in everyday English communication between native speakers. In secondary schools, this linguistic item was tackled in rather a flashy way, for the researcher thinks that it should be given its due right of ample time so as students be trained in it as well as possible. Now, they seem to be able to discern the different tenses used with 'wish' and for what purposes. For example, they know that if the past tense is used with "wish", it is to express an intent and a wantonly desire to change the present situation or it is a sincere hope that the case weren't as it is presently. They also know that if the past perfect is used with 'wish', it is to express regret. Further, they seem to know that "would" is used with 'wish' if the second pronoun is different from 'I', whereas if the same 'I' were used again as (I wish I…..), then the modal "could" is used instead. Again, a question rises, "Are these students now able to use "wish" in a proper way with no difficulty; when using it, does it seem naturally used?"

They were also taught about question tags in different tenses. For example, in the present simple, we may ask a question tag as "You are from Algeria, aren't you?" "She is a nurse, isn't she? "They are really poor, aren't they? "You don't speak Italian, do you?" "They live in a suburb, don't they?" etc. The same applies to other tenses. Now, are these students able to subconsciously use question tags when having conversations? We are to see by a small test about that and via a go at spontaneous conversations.

They were also tutored in the ways to make suggestions. They must have come across certain culturally-linguistically-bound expressions which are tactfully used by native speakers to make suggestions politely. For example, "Why don't we" and "Let's" are two common expressions to make suggestions. Are these students well-equipped with other common expressions to use them when communicating if the context allows or necessitates their use? That is what we are going to know from the conversations the researcher has chosen to set as tests.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CONVERSATIONS CHOSEN AND THE TEST

Description of the Conversations Chosen for the Students' Test and the Conducting of the Test-proper

The researcher has (eleven) conversations chosen from the 'New Edition of New Headway Intermediate Student's Book' to test the students in. The conversations are of different nature with regard to linguistic items and cultural aspects. They have been selected to account for the behaviour of English linguistically and culturally in Britain, for the book "New Headway" is written in British English. These conversations mirror the everyday English used there and how the British subconsciously and naturally communicate in their mother tongue. They are set to students to know what linguistic and cultural challenges they would encounter, and to see whether the background information they had in middle and secondary schools as well as at university in Oral Expression, Grammar, and Phonetics sessions were enough to make them communicate effectively and model their communication on that of the British as well as they can. However, quite logically, these conversations would not be able to amalgamate all the linguistic and cultural aspects of the British. Consequently, the researcher will be engaged only with the available aspects in these conversations.

The researcher has some bits of conversations chosen from "New Headway" of intermediate level and set them to Third Year's thirty students of the English language in Kasdi Merbah University. Some of these conversations entail linguistic items, while others cultural items.

These students are given time to look at these conversations, one by one, and then, they are asked to practise them in pairs in front of their peer classmates. The researcher is an observer in that instant, where he looks at the way these students hold the conversations. He, along the

practice of these conversations, takes notes on different levels, linguistically and culturally: pronunciation (intonation, stress, weak and strong forms of auxiliary verbs and some prepositions and quantifiers, aspects of connected speech (assimilation, linking, and elision), rhythm). Some of these conversations also entail some "memes" of the British culture in holding authentic conversations. For example, the students are asked to say where some of these conversations often take place whether in a shop, at home, in the post office, at school, on a certain means of transportation, in a bar or café, etc.

The Tests and the Results and Their Interpretation

In Conversation One, which is a breakfast-time conversation between Emma and her father, the focus is on completing some lines using the appropriate auxiliaries, and the use of contractions in its acting out, weak forms of some words, and the intonation. Here is the first conversation:

Dad: Good morning! ……………….. you have a nice time last night?

Emma: Yes, I…………. I went round to Bill's house.

Dad: ……………………. you want breakfast?

Emma: No, I………….., thanks. I'm not hungry.

Dad: ……….you had any coffee?

Emma: Yes, I ……………... I don't want any more, thanks.

Dad: ……………..Bill coming round tonight?

Emma: No, he…………………… He's going out for dinner with his family.

Dad: OK. ………………..you leaving for school soon?

Emma: Yes, I……………………… I'm going right now. Bye!

The Results and Their Interpretation

13 students answered in a perfect way; all their answers were correct. They used the appropriate auxiliary verbs to complete the conversation. 4 students were below average, and the rest (13 students) had marks which range from medium to very good. That would explain why the teaching of grammar was not integrated in teaching natural conversations. Consequently, students are prone to make such errors and this fact will, more patently, be reflected in their holding conversations with their peers or teachers. One will always come to encounter these errors without being instantly rectified by their initiators, which would simply mean that these errors are fossilized. For example, 12 students used "had" instead of "have" in the answer to the question "Have you had any coffee?" This may imply the interference of their first language (Algerian-spoken Arabic), for it is known that the present perfect is, by nature, past, and is recognized as such in Demotic Arabic. 3 students used "had" instead of "did" in the answer to the question "(did) you have a nice time last night?" These think that when the question is in the past tense, the answer should be in the past tense of the main verb and they forget all about the auxiliary verb(s), though in the question "Do you want any breakfast?" they answered correctly " No, I don't…". This is maybe because the answer is negative, for if it were positive, we would guess the answer as "Yes, I want…"

The students were then asked to act out the conversation in pairs while the researcher observes and takes notes. Fifteen pairs acted out the conversation and the notes are as follows: In terms of the contracted forms, they were six instances in the conversation (don't, I'm, don't, isn't, He's, I'm). 10 students could really act out the conversation well, for their use of contracted forms was rather subconscious. They were somewhat indistinguishable from native speakers. 16 students could act some of the contracted forms and with others they used the long forms, especially with "I'm" pronouncing it as "I am" and "He's going" as "He is going". 04 students hardly pronounced the contracted forms. The one that was pronounced properly was "don't". As for these latter, it would be understood that maybe there was a lack

of practice of contracted forms in middle and secondary schools, or maybe each item of the auxiliary verbs was taught separately in a rubric of rigid rules of grammar; a grammar skinned away from communicative aspects. These students thus were taught the rules of grammar (auxiliary verbs in this case) deductively and as though stripped of context.

Regarding the weak forms in conversation one, there are four weak forms which should be pronounced swiftly and unclearly (do you, have you, for dinner, are you). These weak forms are pronounced by native speakers subconsciously and with no effort worth mentioning, but as for the case of non-native speakers, to whom English is a foreign language, would exert some effort to pronounce them properly. Thus, 26 students didn't pronounce them as weak forms, and so they gave them the same status like the other words ignoring that these are auxiliary verbs or prepositions which ought to be pronounced weakly whenever they happen to be at the beginning or middle of the sentence or question bar the case of emphasizing. However, if they were at the end of the sentence, they should be pronounced strongly.

Only 02 students did pronounce them all correctly, for they learnt in a private school. Therefore, they have already had an idea about what words in English are applicable to both the weak forms and the strong forms, and they have had a clear idea about when these are pronounced weakly or strongly. The other 02 students had two instances right and the others *wrong*.

As for the intonation, both rising and falling intonation are on equal footing in conversation one. It is commonly known that intonation is one of the *toughest* linguistic items for a learner whose first language is not English. It needs much of the nature thing. However, it is not impossible for a learner of English as a second or foreign to model their pronunciation on that of native speakers in an approximate way.

It is known that Yes/No questions entail a rising intonation and that statements which are definite a falling intonation. In Conversation One, we can see rising intonation on questions and a falling one on answers which are definite.

Only 06 students of the thirty could issue good balanced intonations. Two of them, as mentioned before, studied in private schools of foreign languages; therefore, they may have learnt how to wear good accents with regard to intonation. The other four students said that they used to watch films and that could help them ameliorate their pronunciation.

Conversation Two is made up of a text about a lawyer. Students were required to fill in the gaps with missing words from their own after listening to the text three times. It was intended to test their memory retentiveness, ear-trainedness, and their use of correct auxiliary verbs when completing the conversation. In addition, it was meant to look at the pronunciation of weak forms and strong forms of (does and has), the contracted forms involved, and also intonation. Here is the conversation between A and B:

A: …………………………….married?

B:………………………………………………………………..

A: What……………………………….do?

B:………………………………………………………………..

A:Where ………………………………..live?

B: ……………………………………………………………

A: Has…………………………….any children?

B:……………………………………………………………….

A: What ……………………….his wife do?

B:……………………………………………………………

A: Which sports………………………….play?

B.…………………………………………………………….

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A: Where ……………………working at the moment?

B: …………………………………………………………..

A: ………………………………paid well?

B: ………………………………………………………….

The Results and Their Interpretation

07 students were able to fill in the gaps well. They proved their memory retentiveness by which they could retain all the information about the lawyer in the text, ear-trainedness by which they could listen well and no word, however swiftly was uttered, could elude them, and good knowledge about the appropriate use of auxiliary verbs. Again, the two who studied and improved their English in private schools were among those. The other five students' interpretation of doing well in filling the gaps was due to their claim of watching films and their claim to have known the use of these auxiliary verbs from middle and secondary schools.

As for the 23 remained students, it seems that they still have difficulties with the usage of auxiliary forms (is, are, do does, have, has). 14 students' answers imply that they know how to use forms like (is, are, am) with the present continuous as in "Where is he working at the moment?" whereas they have no knowledge whatsoever as how and when to use (do and does) with action verbs in the present simple in questions, and how and when to use (have and has) with the past participle of verbs to form the present perfect as in "Has he got any children?". They have little knowledge when to use (is, are, am) to form passive voice sentences as in "Is he married?" and "Is he paid well?", for the fact that some of them used (does) instead. The 09 remained students could do well with the present continuous sentences and the ones which require the use of (does). However, the sentences that require the use of (is) to form the passive were not correct as the students chose to use (does). Now, was it a

piece of luck with the correct use of (does) in the present simple sentences? It seems difficult to know. In addition, only five of the nine students used (has) with "………he got any children?" which is correct. As for the four remained ones, they didn't seem to know anything about the use of the auxiliary verb (have) in the present perfect.

After filling the gaps together, students were then asked to act out the conversation. There were fifteen pairs to act it out, and the researcher was instantly an observer. The notes collected about their acting out the conversation are about the pronunciation of the weak and strong forms of (does and have), contracted (reduced) forms, and intonation.

Only five students acted out the conversation as though subconsciously in terms of the pronunciation of (does and has). When they should be pronounced weak, as in (Where does he live?) and (Has he got any children?), they pronounced them in their weak forms. There is no sign so as to pronounce (does) in its strong form, for the conversation do not contain Yes/No questions where the answer would be (Yes, he does.) or (No, he doesn't.), (Yes, he has.) or (No, he hasn't) Again, the reason why these five students could do the conversation quite well in terms of the pronunciation of (does and has) is that two of them have attended private schools for two consecutive years and the others have learnt from watching movies. The rest, i.e. 25 students, didn't pronounce (does and has) in their ordinary or casual ways of pronunciation when located in the middle of the sentence. They pronounced them in their natural ways, as are addressed in the dictionary in their strong form. These 25 students studied only in comprehensive schools, so they received only formal lessons about the usage of (does and has and the other auxiliary verbs). Further, they claimed to have been non-frequent watchers of movies and that they would rather prefer reading to listening.

The contracted forms found in the conversation are (He's, He's got, and She's). As we noted earlier that contracted forms are used by native speakers in a rather natural way. We would simply be safe to say that the contracted forms uttered by native speakers as natural and

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simple as is the digestion of food in our stomachs. They are natural and spontaneous. Nonetheless, we, as non-native speakers, would wantonly seek to pronounce as such, and consequently, we fail ample authenticity in so doing. It may plausibly be argued that this capacity of spontaneous and natural speech by native speakers can be attained by non-native ones via much determination and endeavour. The constant, non-stop, listening to native speakers on TV or the Internet may avail some of the non-native speakers of that natural acumen.

Six students seemed to pronounce the contracted forms in a somewhat natural way. These, again, are the ones who either attended private schools or kept on watching a lot of movies. They claimed that it was not the middle or secondary schools which were to teach them the way to master weak and strong forms in their speech. In addition, they continued, most of their teachers in middle and secondary schools used not to have videos or audios played for them to listen and imitate so as to model their pronunciation on that of the natives'. Moreover, they asserted, their teachers in those schools used to pronounce out the words and sentences to them, which were by then rather unauthentic, and they used to repeat. Thus, they continued, it was the private schools and movies which boosted their English with regard to different aspects about English, not only pronunciation, but also grammar and vocabulary.

The other 24 remaining students pronounced the auxiliary verbs, where they ought to be contracted, in full, especially (Has) in (Yes, he's got two). Also, the auxiliary form (Is) or the verb (Is) was sometimes pronounced weakly and other times strongly. Thus, observing very closely, the researcher could notice that some students sometimes pronounce them strongly as in (He is a lawyer) where they were supposed to pronounce it (He's a lawyer) while at times the same students pronounce it *naturally.* They would say (She's an interior designer). So what? Is that another piece of luck that they pronounce them naturally? But since one notices

the majority having not done them (the contracted forms) naturally, it is safe to say that they weren't trained on natural conduct of conversations in schools (middle and secondary).

The conversation is a mixture of Yes/No questions and WH-questions. So, the intonation varies. It is known that the former receives a rising intonation at the end of the sentence while the latter a falling intonation. It is also known that the statements which are definite receive a falling intonation.

Only six students could issue the intonation types well and beautifully, approximately native-like. These students again are the ones who either attended private schools or constantly kept on watching movies. Therefore, they seemed to be familiarized with at the least the two types of intonation (rising and falling). They said that when watching movies, they could discern differences in various tone-units and came to know that these units had particular targeted purposes. It was not their teachers of middle and secondary schools, nor was it the ones at university, who truly taught them the approximately correct issuing of intonation. On the contrary, they added, most of these teachers had not had by then the authentic issuing of intonation, but rather, a fake or ugly one! In addition, in middle and secondary schools, teachers used to give very little time for practicing the different tone-units in the course books. So, they did not really have much acquaintance with the intonation nature. During the two past years, the focus in Oral Expression session was maximally on presentations, so they did not do a lot of conversing, and hence they did not have much information about intonation. In the Phonetics session, they were exposed to formal study of intonation on the blackboard only, and no exposure to videos or audios took place. Thanks to movies and to some private schools that they came to know about the nature of intonation and eventually knew how to issue correct, approximately authentic, tones.

Conversation Three is one between two girls (Sandy and Nina) talking about a new student from Seoul. Five questions have been removed from this conversation to test the students

whether they can fill in the gaps with them and resume the conversation to its prime state. The questions were mostly about the physical appearance, the character, the use of "like" and the use of "would like". The students were required to read the whole of the conversation twice and then were given the five questions written on the blackboard to fill in the gaps. Then, they were asked to act out the conversation. The focus was on the weak forms of verbs (do, does, would, was), weak forms of prepositions (from, at, to) and the weak form of the possessive adjective (her). Here are the questions they had to use to fill in the gaps in the conversation: What's she like? What does she like doing? What does she look like? What would she like to do? How is she now? And here is the conversation:

S = Sandy   N = Nina

S: Our student from Seoul arrived on Monday.

N: What's her name?

S: Soon-hee.

N: That's a pretty name! ……………………………………………………………?

S: She's really nice. I'm sure we'll get on well. We seem to have a lot in common.

N: How do you know that already? ………………………………………..?

S: Well, she likes dancing, and so do I. And we both like listening to the same kind of music.

N: ……………………………………………………………………………….?

S: Oh, she's really pretty. She has big, brown eyes and long, dark hair.

N: Why don't we do something with Soon-hee this weekend? What should we do? Get a pizza? Go clubbing? …………………………………………………………..?

S: I'll ask her tonight. She was a bit homesick at first, so I'm pretty sure she'll want to go out and make some friends.

N: …………………………………………………………………………………?

S: Oh, she's OK. She called her parents and she felt much better after she'd spoken to them.

N: Oh, that's good. I can't wait to meet her.

The Results and their Interpretation

First, concerning the filling in of the gaps, twelve students (12) answered well; eighteen (18) wrongly. All of the latter confused between the two questions "What's she like?", which should be used to ask about character, personality and temperance, and " What does she look like?", which is used to ask about the physical appearance. The other questions were done safely by all the students. What could the reason be that eighteen students did not know how to differentiate between the two confused questions? Were they confusing themselves? Not really, for one may come to think that the students were not trained enough in these kinds of questions. They said that they hadn't had enough practice about these types of questions.

The twelve students who answered well, when asked why you could answer well, two reasons were given. Some of them said that they were trained in such questions and contexts in private schools and had a lot exercises about them and that these questions show up a lot in movies. Others said that it just happened to them to remember these types of questions when they studied them in middle and secondary schools, for, they continued, they used not to practise them or hear them on television.

When the conversation was being acted out by these students, the researcher was focusing on the pronunciation of weak forms of auxiliary verbs (do, does, would, and was), the prepositions (from, at, to), and the possessive adjective (her) which happened only twice (her name, her parents).

Five (05) students acted out the conversation well, but for the pronunciation of (from and at), which were not pronounced naturally as they should be (weak) due to their location in the middle "Our student <u>from</u> Seoul arrived on Monday" " She was a bit homesick at first". None did pronounce it naturally like native speakers of RP or AGE. All the other items were

pronounced naturally, and the reasons seem to be the same which are mentioned in the previous conversation.

The other (25) students' acting out of the conversation fluctuates between good pronunciation of some items and unnatural pronunciation of others, especially the prepositions (from and at) and the possessive adjective (her), and also (was). Only seven (07) out of (25) who pronounced (was) in an approximately *authentic* way. And only (12) of them did so with the possessive adjective (her) in "What's her name" and "She called her parents". The reasons why they happened not to do those items naturally are the same ones mentioned in the previous conversations.

Conversation Four was meant only for acting out. It is a conversation between Antony and his grandmother who is worried about the boy who intends to travel. So, she breaks out giving him pieces of advice or instructions so as to have a safe stay there. She, thus, uses the auxiliary (must) in both positive and negative forms.

First, the students were asked to listen to the conversation once only. Then, they were requested to act it out. By then, the researcher's task was to notice the pronunciation of (must and mustn't) and also the pronunciation of /l/ in some words like (look, will, well), for the sound /l/ in English is of two natures (dark or clear). Attention was also paid to the contracted forms of (must not, will not, you are, that is). Here is the conversation:

G = Grandma   A: Antony

G: You must look after your money.

A: Yes, Grandma! I will.

G: You mustn't talk to strangers.

A: No, Grandma! I won't.

G: You mustn't go out when it's dark.

A: No, Grandma! I won't.

G: You mustn't drink too much beer.

A: No, Grandma! I won't.

G: You must make sure you eat well.

A: Yes, Grandma! I will.

G: You must have a bath regularly.

A: Yes, Grandma! I will.

G: You must phone us if you're in trouble.

A: Yes, Grandma! I will.

B: You mustn't go anywhere that's dangerous.

A: No, Grandma! I won't.

The Results and Their Interpretation

Only three students did pronounce (must) naturally in all the turns of the grandmother , i.e. in its weak form because they watch movies and/or attended private schools. One can say, *while improvising*, that the word (must) would seem to some to be adequately pronounced strongly by looking at the function of obligation. So, attention would rarely be paid to it when pronounced naturally weakly in some contexts when it happens at the beginning or in the middle. But as for the pronunciation of (mustn't), all students did it well and pronounced it strongly.

Concerning the pronunciation of /l/ in the words (will, well, trouble) which occurred in the conversation, a small group of students did them well. These words in English should naturally be pronounced with dark /l/, but most students pronounced it in clear /l/; 11 students

only did it well due to the interference of the mother tongue while using the target language. It is taken for granted that /l/ in Arabic is pronounced clear. There is simply not any so-called dark /l/ in the students' mother tongue. Second, the reason may be thought of as lack of practice: students rarely or very rarely have conversations with one another. Added to that is the lack or paucity of listening to English on TV or the Internet.

With regard to the contracted forms (mustn't, won't), almost all students acted them out well, except for two students who pronounced (mustn't) in full (must not). However, as regards (You're), only 12 students pronounced it naturally in short form. As for the other 18 students, it might have seemed like the possessive adjective (your), and it is actually a homophone with it, so they decided to pronounce it in full (You are). Almost all students pronounced (That's) naturally in short form.

Conversation Five was intended for writing the verbs in their correct forms and for its acting out. It is a conversation about a couple, Jack and Annie, who decided to move to Spain, for they got tired of English weather. In this conversation, they are having a conversation with their friend, David.

The focus will be on the linguistic and communicative competences of the thirty students at putting the verb in the correct form and. Also, we will take a close look at the contracted form of (will) after having the conversation acted out by all the students. Here is the conversation:

David: Will you keep in touch with friends?

Annie: Of course we will. When we……………………….. (1) (get) there, we …………… (2) (give) you a call.

David: And how will I contact you?

Jack: Well, as soon as we…………………… (3) (find) a place to live, we ………………… (4) (send) you our address.

David: I can always email you.

Jack: Yes, email's brilliant for keeping in touch, but you …………………………………… (5) (have to) wait until we…………………………………….. (06 (set up) our computers.

Annie: And David, I promise, you………………………………….. (7) (be) our first guest when we ……………………………………………… (8) (move) into our new home.

David: Excellent. I'll look forward to that!

    (1) We get
    (2) We'll give
    (3) We find
    (4) We'll send
    (5) You'll have to
    (6) We've set up
    (7) You'll be
    (8) We move

The Results and Their Interpretation

As for the use of the verbs in their correct forms, the majority of students did not do well. Only 05 students could answer correctly except for the verb (set up), which is supposed to be conjugated in the present perfect.

All of the verbs in the conversation vary in conjugation. Some need to be put in the present simple, while others in the future simple (the use of "will"). The only verb that should be put in the present perfect is (set up).

The results above must surely indicate how far students are away from the mastery of communicative grammar. The grammar that these students were taught in middle and secondary schools was one that would build linguistic competence and would slightly relate to the communicative competence. For example, in second year in the middle school, they were taught about the use of the present simple, the past simple, and the present continuous with no reference to context, i.e., teachers did not use to ascribe situations in real life where these linguistic items would show up naturally and in a way logical. Instead, students were given

sentences with time expressions only to account for what tense there to be used. Consequently, this way could build their linguistic competences as context-free. Moreover, when studying in the middle school, these students were not familiarized with authentic materials in learning such as the use of technology (watching authentic conversations, shows, debates held by native speakers). In addition, most of the conversations in their course books, most of which are undoubtedly authentic, were read out only by the teachers who happened to be non-natives. This will have affected the students' future English as being so remote from authenticity. Again, these teachers could not think of building in their students a sense of awareness towards holding conversations. Thus, their performing of the conversation above (Conversation Five) was unnatural and awkward.

Concerning the contracted form of (will), twenty-three (23) students did it well. The other seven (7) students' performance was partially good, for they had difficulty in pronouncing (You'll) and hence they chose to pronounce it in full.

Conversation Six was meant for testing the ability of the thirty students to use question tags. Also, it was intended to see to what extent the schooling into question tags during middle and secondary schools can prove solid now. This conversation is between Karen and her assistant. The researcher chose not to give the question tags options as is originally in the exercise, so students had to think on their own and decide on the appropriate question tags to use in each gap.

Question tags are used a lot by native speakers in their everyday speech. They are not like direct questions which require either a yes or a no answer, but they are used by the speaker to receive confirmation on the part of the interlocutor, i.e. the speaker expects a yes confirmation and not the opposite.

The students are, then, required to act out the conversation. The researcher's task, by then, is to look at their ability to properly issue the intonation on the question tag tone-unit. Here is the conversation:

K = Karen   A = Assistant

K: Now, what's happening today? I've got a meeting this afternoon, …………………?

A: Yes, that's right. With Henry and Tom.

K: And the meeting's here, …………………………………………………………………?

A: No, it isn't. It's in Tom's office at 3 o'clock.

K: Oh! I'm not having lunch with anyone ,…………………………………………….?

A: No, you're free for lunch.

K: Phew! And I signed all my letters, …………………………………………………?

A: No, you didn't, actually. They're on your desk, waiting for you.

K: OK. I'll do them now. Thanks a lot.

The Results and Their Interpretation

The majority of the thirty students did well with all the question tags except for two (And the meeting's here, isn't it) and (And I signed all my letters, didn't I). Nine students could do the exercise perfectly well, together with those last examples. For the first example, (And the meeting's here, isn't it), the students who failed it might not be able to discern that the ('s) in (meeting's) is verb (to be) used in the present tense, for they thought it related to a possessive case and that it did not happen to them to see such kinds of contraction. As for the second example, (And I signed all my letters, didn't I), the students who failed explained that they knew it was in the past tense, but it did not occur to them to use (didn't); they used (wasn't) instead.

This deficiency is so flagrant in many of our students. They usually confuse some auxiliary verbs for others in use. And this could be explained by the fact that either these students were

not trained well, and did not have exhaustive exercises, in differentiating between the use of auxiliaries, or they were not so much exposed to question tags in their middle or secondary schools.

As for intonation, it is known that question tags are used in English as 'real questions' where one wants to know the answer or simply asking for agreement when the answer is already known. So, when wanting to know the answer, a native speaker will use a rising intonation, and when simply asking for agreement, they will use a falling intonation.

The majority of the students happened not to know this regular rule, and so errors had to occur in pronouncing the tone-units of the question tags. However, only three (3) students did not do the intonation properly. This was so, perhaps, due to the fact that most of the tone-units are rising since the asker sets real questions. The students who thus could pronounce all the tone-units well justified to have been listening so closely to their teachers in, particularly, middle schools where the tag questions were real questions and had to receive rising intonations.

Conversation Seven is also meant to, but nothing else, to test the students' ability to recognize the type of intonations on the question tags. So, they were asked to listen to a simple conversation between Gabriella, aged 4, talking to Karen, her mother. Then, they were to write the type of the intonations after being given the script of the conversation. They were to listen twice, underline the question tags in the script, and lastly, decide on the type of their intonation, together with justifying rising and falling tones. Here is the conversation:

G: Gabriella   K: Karen

G: Mummy?

K: Yes, Gaby?

G: I've got ten fingers, (1) haven't I?

K: Yes, that's right, sweetie. Ten pretty little fingers.

G: And Daddy didn't go to work this morning, (2) did he?

K: No, it's Saturday. He's working in the garden today.

G: And we like animals, (3) don't we, Mummy?

K: Yes, we do. Especially our cats, Sammy and Teddy.

G: Can I have a biscuit now, Mummy?

The Results and Their Interpretation

All the students answered well as for the underlining of the question tags. However, not all of them answered the second part of the question which entails deciding on the type of intonation each underlined question tag enjoys, together with justifying falling intonation and rising intonation.

Only 11 students answered the question completely correctly. They said that the first and third tag questions should receive a falling intonation because they are not a real question as long as Gaby knows the answer. The second question tag should receive a rising intonation since Gaby does not know the answer.

13 students did not answer correctly, bar the underlining of the question tags. However, neither their deciding on the type of the intonation was correct, nor were their justifications.

06 students answered some correctly and some others incorrectly. In particular, the last question tag (third one) was not answered well; most students said that it was a real question and hence should receive a rising intonation. However, their underlining the question tags was totally correct.

One can understand that these students did not receive much training into the lesson of intonation on question tags, though their course books in middle school and secondary schools are imbued with information about practicing the types of intonation.

Conversation Eight was meant for the students to identify the expressions which deal with making suggestions. Then, the thirty students were asked to act out the conversation whereupon the researcher had to take notice of the contracted forms as well as weak forms. The conversation is between two friends, Paul and Mike. Paul is broke and Mike seems to be making suggestions to him. Here is the conversation:

P = Paul   M = Mike

P: I'm broke, and I don't get paid for two weeks. What am I going to do?

M: If I were you, I'd better get a better job.

P: Oh, why didn't I think of that? Thanks, Mike. That's a big help.

M: Well, you'd better get a loan from the bank, then.

P: No, I can't. I owe them too much already.

M: Why don't you ask your parents? They'd help you out.

P: No, I'd rather not. I'd rather work out my problems for myself.

M: You ought to ask your boss for a pay-rise!

P: Good idea, but I've tried that and it didn't work.

M: Oh well, I suppose I could lend you some money.

P: Really? Oh, that would be great! Thanks, Mike. You're a real mate.

M: Yeah, well, OK then, but really, I don't think you should go out so much. That way, you won't be broke all the time.

P: Yeah, yeah. I know. You're right.

The results and their interpretation

There are five expressions of making suggestion in the conversation above (Conversation Eight): "If I were you, I'd……………," "You'd better" "Why don't you…….." "You ought to…." "I don't think you should….."

Only 07 students could identify all the expressions used for making suggestions in Conversation Eight. 12 students could identify four expressions, bar the one that goes "You ought to…." And they argued that this expression does not express making suggestion. They explained that it is used only for obligation. And that they did not take into account context, they were wrong.

The remaining 11 students could identify three expressions only. They did not include "If I were you, I'd…" and "You'd better…" They argued that "If I were you, I'd…" does not really express making suggestions, but rather it expresses conditional.

Conversation Nine relates more to culture than to language where there are nine pairs of conversation comprising two lines only. Each pair contains clues about the elements of the natural or authentic conversation held in Britain: the participants, the place, and the context in general. These pairs of nine small conversations were separated from each other. Then, students were asked to match each to its authentic counterpart, and they were asked to say where each pair of conversation must have taken place. They were given the names of these places and they had to guess depending on the background information they had and also upon the actual language used in each pair. These were the pairs of conversation (A's & B's) and the names of places where those must have taken place.

A1/ Do you think it'll be a rough crossing?
A2/ Excuse me, I think those seats facing the front are ours.
A3/ We're going to Market Street. Could you tell us when it's our stop.
A4/ Can you take us to the airport?
A5/ Can I take these bags on with me?
A6/ That's all right, you can keep the change.
A7/ Excuse me, are we landing on time?
A8/ No, no! He said turn left at the lights, not right!
A9 How do I get to Oxford Circus?

B1/ Of course. Hop in!

B2/ Just sit near the front and I'll call it out.

B3/ Oh, I'm sorry. We didn't know they were reserved.

B4/ Take the Piccadilly Line, eastbound, and change at Green Park.

B5/ Look! You drive and I'll give directions from now on! Right?

B6/ Yes. We're beginning our descent soon.

B7/ I'm sorry. Only one item of hand luggage per passenger.

B8/ Thanks a lot. Do you want a hand with those bags?

B9/ Well, the forecast is good, so it would pretty smooth.

Mention where each conversation takes place.

Bus (……………………………………………………………………….)

Plane (………………………………………………………………………..)

Underground (……………………………………………………………………)

Ferry (………………………………………………………………………..)

Taxi (………………………………………………………………………)

Car (………………………………………………………………………)

Taxi (………………………………………………………………………)

Train (………………………………………………………………………..)

Plane (………………………………………………………………………..)

Results and Their Interpretation

The majority of students could match A's and B's quite well. Only 04 students did not match all the pairs correctly. They made some mistakes. However, as for the mentioning where each pair of conversation has taken place, only 08 students could answer all correctly. This would prove that the majority of informants are not knowledgeable about the culture of the target language's people (The British in this case). When these who did not answer well were asked about the reason behind their failure to answer well, they said that they were not taught about such *stuff* in middle and secondary schools. They said that they faced two challenges: one on the level of the language itself, where they could not understand some words – though they are common in everyday English- and the other on the level of culture, where they claimed

that their knowledge about the nature of life in Britain is extremely limited. They added that most of the things they were taught in middle and secondary schools relate more to language per se than to culture.

By looking at who their teachers in these schools were, one can say that the teaching of language with culture as an integral part was either rare or of little significance, for their teachers were non-native speakers of English. Also, the background of their teachers dictates what and to what extent these students were taught in that way. And that their teachers were not taught by native speakers, where one might conjecture that they were stamped with the foreign culture in their linguistic competences, they would not be able to really contextualize the language in authentic cultural moulds, say, of the British!

 The eight students who succeeded in answering well explained that, first, they knew the meanings of the means of transportation mentioned in the question. Second, most of the pairs are common English in films and shows on TV. Third, they added, private schools did help them be good at doing such exercises about both language and culture. Their teachers in middle and secondary schools did not teach them about that, they decidedly asserted.

Conversation Ten was meant for the putting of "will", "be going to", and "present continuous" to indicate the future time. It is a conversation between a husband Ben and his wife Alice. Ben intends to go shopping and asks his wife about they need from the shop.

The students were asked to use the five verbs correctly with "will", "be going to", or use them in the present continuous. They, then, had to add justifications for their choice. Here is the conversation:

B = Ben   A = Alice

B: I'm going shopping. Do we need anything?

A: I don't think so… Oh, hang on. We haven't got any sugar.

B: It's OK. It's on my list. I……………. (buy) some.

A: What about bread?

B: Good idea! I………………… (get) a loaf.

A: What time will you be back?

B: I don't know. I might stop at Nick's. It depends on how much time I've got.

A: Don't forget we ……………(play) tennis with Dave and Donna this afternoon.

B: Don't worry. I………………… (not/forget). I ………………… (be) back before then.

A: OK.

The Results and their Interpretation

Approximately half the number of students could answer well, 13 students. They put the verbs in their correct forms adding reasonable justifications for their choices. They said that with the first verb (buy) they should use (be going to) because Ben has already decided (written) to do it, so it seems that the decision was taken before the moment of speaking. With the second verb (get) we should use (will) for Ben took the decision at the moment of speaking and context proves so (Good idea!), they added. They ascertained that the present continuous should be used with the third verb (play). They justified that there are two clues why the present continuous is more convenient in that context: first, the decision seemed to be taken before the moment of speaking and was planned to act upon, and second, the use of (this afternoon) which indicates the near future. As for the fourth verb (forget), they stated that (will) must be used, for Alice's sentence before that was a reminder to Ben starting with (Don't forget…). The fifth verb (be) should be used with (will) as well, for the sentence (I'll be back before then) is just a confirmation to (I won't forget), they confirmed.

These students who could answer well said that they were taught about the use of (will), (be going to) and (present continuous) and the differences between them in their second year at university. "We had a lot of exercises on that in tutorials and as pieces of homework", they

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added. "We had a competent teacher who used to avail much time for practice more than the lesson", they claimed.

Those students who did not use all the verbs in their correct forms admitted that they were taught about these as their peer classmates. However, they continued, " We were taught by an incompetent teacher who seemed to lack self-confidence about what he was doing during class as regards explanation, and who used to take us for granted and give no homework as our peer classmates were given by their competent teacher."

Conversation Eleven is a bit long. It is a telephone conversation between Ms Maddox and the bank manager, Mr Sanders. In this conversation, Mr Sanders makes mistakes in information about Ms Maddox, and Ms Maddox corrects him each time he does.

Thus students were required to circle the stressed words in sentence stress wherever Ms Maddox seems to be correcting Mr Sanders. Then, they were asked to act out the conversation in pairs. Here is the conversation:

Mr S: Good morning, Mrs Maddox.

Ms M: It's Ms Maddox, actually.

Mr S: Oh yes. Ms Mary Maddox of…

Ms M: Ms Maureen Maddox.

Mr S: Yes, of course. Now, Ms Maddox. I believe you want to borrow five hundred pounds.

Ms M: No, in fact. I want to borrow five thousand pounds. Haven't you got my loan application?

Mr S: No, I'm afraid not. But I understand you want to open a music shop for your son.

Ms M: No, I want to open a flower shop for my daughter. Don't you think you should read my loan application, Mr Sanders?

Mr S: A flower shop for your daughter. Well, I'll send you a form today…

Ms M: But you sent me a form last week, and I'm ringing because I have some queries about it.

Mr S: Oh, so you've filled in the form…

Ms M: No, I haven't filled in the form. I can't fill it in because I don't understand it. That's why I'm ringing.

Mr S: Oh I see! You want to ask me some questions about the form.

Ms M: Not any more. I don't want to ask you questions about anything!! Goodbye!

The results and their interpretation

The majority of the students answered well; 23 students did concerning circling the stressed words in sentence stress. They explained that these words which are stressed receive more prominence in pronunciation than those which are not.

Those who did not answer well made mistakes with varying degrees, but all in all, they could circle some words which are truly stressed.

As regards the acting out of the conversation, the students were asked to act it out by reading out from the scripts they were given. They were not exposed to listening to it, so most of them made errors in pronunciation. The loci of errors were different. Some made errors in the pronunciation of stress, some in weak forms, and some others in contracted forms.

The errors they made in this conversation reveal how deficient these students in holding conversations authentically are.

Conclusion

Holding an authentic conversation is no difficult matter. It involves different factors to make it attain authenticity or approximacy to authenticity in a non-native speaker. These factors, which are cultural and linguistic, set a clear challenge to non-native speakers, in this case students. One would occasionally always see some of the ill-usages of language by some students either culturally or linguistically. As regards the culture of the native speakers of

English, the British in this case, students were not given much training, or else, knowledge about it by being, for example, exposed to different situations of real life by the British where the latter seemed to live their life in rather a natural way. Most of the students, again, were not tutored about the language of context, for the language of shopping is different to that of telephoning, and that of hosting on plane is different to that of chatting with a friend, and that of parenting is different to that of teaching. All these contexts are important for students to know about due to their distinct features which dictate the type of language used. In addition, students would sometimes encounter the challenge of idiomatic expressions which relate more in maximum to culture rather than to language per se. Although some of the idiomatic expressions are of literal means, especially verbs (phrasal verbs), students would rarely know their meanings since they are not used in their daily school life. For example, phrasal verbs like (get on well with, come up with, end up, come across, and cut off from) are all of crucial importance in everyday authentic communication.

As regards the language itself, these students do not seem to have a very strong basis about its grammar and pronunciation. By looking at the conducted test concerning holding conversations, one is to notice that there are some deficiencies in the mastery of English by these students.

CHAPTER FIVE

STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE

Introduction

The Students' Questionnaire

1- The Sample

2- Description of the Questionnaire

3- Analysis of Results

4- Interpretation of Results

Conclusion

Introduction

The present study is all about eliciting students' opinions or facts about some challenges they face when holding conversations, the teachers' behaviour in the classroom with regard to dialoguing, and the efforts that those students exert to ameliorate their speaking skills and hence, holding a conversation in a good, if not perfect, way. Their views and opinions are crucially important to account for the stated hypothesis and the researcher sees it more appropriate to do that through addressing a questionnaire to those students.

This students' questionnaire aims at finding out whether learners of English as a foreign language face difficulties when holding a conversation, and finding out how the teacher treats his or her students' conversations, and also the efforts that those learners make to improve themselves.

1- **The Students' Questionnaire**

  1.1.**The Sample**

  The thirty students who responded to the questionnaire were chosen among the total number of the LMD Year Three students' population (200) at the University of Kasdi Merbah in Ouargla. The selection of such sample was based on the consideration that third year LMD students have already experienced sessions of Oral Expression with their teacher(s) in the previous

first and second years. So, their responses to this present questionnaire would be of great benefit to mirror or refute the stated hypothesis.

1.2.Description of the Questionnaire

This questionnaire consists of (15) questions which are arranged in a logical way. They are either closed questions requiring from students to choose 'yes' or 'no' answers or to pick up the appropriate answer from a number of choices, or open questions requiring their own answers with justification.

Question (1) is a general question in which students express their own desire or passion on holding conversation by giving a positive answer or a negative one. The researcher expects them to deliver a positive answer. Question (2) has a relation with question (3) in that students when producing a positive answer are required to specify that in question (3). It requests them to express what difficulties they encounter when conversing. In the latter question, the researcher sets four choices with regard only to linguistic challenges. The following question, (4), revolves around the addressee. It requests a response whether or not those students face problems in understanding quickly. Correspondingly, they are asked what factors hinder understanding on their part and the addresser's part. Question (5) tackles the issue of responding quickly on the part of the addressee. Question (6), being of much importance, treats the conversations held between students and their teacher(s), whether or not students are afraid when embarking on a conversation of that sort, for teachers are not their peers. Also, it elicits from them why they feel afraid.

Question (7) tackles the frequency of those students' listening to English. This question may give hints to the researcher about the competence of those students, for those who listen so often seem to be better than those who listen not very often or not at all. Question (8) exercises on the frequency of those students' practice of conversing with their peer classmates, for those who practice very often tend to be more competent at holding conversations than those who do not. Though the topic of conversation seems not of importance to our present study, the training of the tongue on speech and the attempt to model it on the tongues of native speakers is of considerable benefit to speaking very well. Question (9) tackles the question whether the teacher interrupts his or her students when holding a conversation inside the classroom, for most teachers who adopt the Grammar Translation Method are keen on correcting their students' errors or mistakes. Therefore, those teachers tend to interrupt their students for the sake of correcting their errors or mistakes. Question (10) treats the aspect of linguistics that those students tend to consider most when conversing. The researcher, improvisingly, assumes that it is the aspect of grammar that is considered most when holding a conversation, for those students are grammar-sensitive. However, this assumption remains bare till the results of the questionnaire unfold. Within the same question, students are asked to justify their responses. Question (11) tackles the formality of their speaking when conversing, what affects them to do their speaking either way, and which they come to find easier. The researcher tends to assume that those students use sheer formality when conversing with their teachers, maybe to show respect, whereas with their peer classmates or friends, they utilize less formality or no formality at all. In spite

of the fact that this assumption may imply that if students could do their speaking informally, they would become indistinguishable from native speakers, the urge is so pushing for the researcher to justify that by knowing that those students tend to listen to music. So, the informality they use is due to their constant listening to music and watching, especially American movies. Question (12) treats the issue whether or not those students use idioms when conversing. Knowing that most idiomatic expressions are culture-bound, the researcher would assume that it is rare for learners of English as a foreign language to utilize idioms in a high rate or if they happen to use them at all. A problem that may reinforce the researcher's claim would be that idioms may create problems in understanding by the addressees if they happen not to understand them; therefore, other students who seem to have grasped the meaning and use of some idioms would want not to use them lest understanding shall not take place. Question (13) transports us to another area in General Linguistics. It is Phonetics. The question investigates whether or not those students face problems in issuing the right intonation for a particular tone they want to express. Taking into account that 'intonation lesson' sets a big challenge, not only to students, but for teachers also, the researcher would want to assume that it is highly difficult for learners of English as a foreign language to be able to make any consilience between their native tongues and the English intonations. Thus, for any crookedness in intoning, a breakdown in conversation will take place, or even a serious misunderstanding that might cause problems between participants. Question (14) investigates the probability of failure to interpret the interlocutor's behaviour(s) on occasions. A student as an addresser needs to know whether or not his or her interlocutor has finished

his or her idea and is about to give the turn to the addresser who has been an interlocutor, needs to know whether or not the interlocutor has understood him or her, and needs to know whether or not the interlocutor wants to pursue the conversation. The last question, (15), treats the students' opinions about which of Grice's maxims is violated most when they embark on conversations between each other or one another. This last question is important in that it helps the researcher discover what deficiencies learners of English as a second language have got in maintaining the four maxims of Grice in their conversations. And eventually, solutions could be arrived at though certain recommendations to teachers of Oral Expression. Those students are also required to justify why such a maxim, and not others, is violated most.

1.3. Analysis of results

1- Do you like holding conversations in English?

Option	Number	Percentage
Yes	30	100
No	00	0
Total	30	100

Table 1: Students' Passion on Holding Conversations

We can notice that all students like holding conversations in English.

2- Do you encounter some linguistic difficulties when conversing?

Option	Number	Percentage
Yes	26	86
No	04	14
Total	30	100

Table 2: Students' Linguistic Challenges

We can notice that the maximum of students do face problems with some
aspects of General Linguistics course (86%). They were then asked which
linguistic aspects they face difficulties in. The answers are in Table 3

3- Do you face difficulty in

    a. Pronunciation

    b. Syntax

    c. Vocabulary

    d. All

Option	Number	Percentage
a	4	13.33
b	10	33.33
c	15	50
d	1	01

Table 3: Difficulties in Some Linguistic Components

We observe that half the students (50%) face difficulty in vocabulary. When
they want to express themselves, they sometimes fail to conjure up the
appropriate words to express the idea(s) they want to convey. Few students
find difficulty in pronunciation. They consider themselves to pronounce
English well. With regard to syntax, they do not seem to have much difficulty.

4- Do you face problems in understanding quickly?

Option	Number	Percentage
Yes	5	16.66
No	25	83.33
Total	30	100

We can notice that most students do not have any problems in understanding quickly (83%). Those who face problems in understanding quickly (16.66) are very few.

5- Do you face problems in responding quickly?

Option	Number	Percentage
Yes	12	40
No	18	60
Total	30	100

Table 5: Difficulty in Responding

The results obtained show that most students face less difficulty in responding quickly to questions and comments.

6- Do you sometimes feel afraid of holding a conversation with your teachers

Option	Number	Percentage
Yes	24	80
No	06	20
Total	30	100

Table 6: Holding Conversation with Teachers

The results obtained denote that the majority of students sometimes feel afraid of holding conversations with their teachers.

7- How often do you listen to English conversations?

Option	Number	Percentage
Always	05	16.66
Often	06	20
Sometimes	16	53.33
Rarely	03	10
Total	30	100

Table 7: Listening to English Conversation

The table shows that half the students (53.33) sometimes listen to English conversations. All other percentages are approximate to one another. Those who always listen (05) and those who often listen (06) are of very approximately equal percentage.

8- How often do you practise English with your classmates?

Option	Number	Percentage
Always	10	33.33
Often	02	06.66
Sometimes	13	43.33
Rarely	05	16.66
Never	00	00
Total	30	100

Table 8: Practising English with Peer Classmates

The table displays that most students sometimes practise English with their peer classmates. There is fairly good number of students who always practise English with their peer classmates.

9- How often does your teacher interrupt your conversation with a classmate?

Option	Number	Percentage
Always	20	66.66
Often	01	03.33
Sometimes	07	23.33
Rarely	02	06.66
Never	00	00
Total	30	100

Table 9: Interruption by the Teacher

The table displays the percentage of interruption by teachers of Oral Expression. The majority of students state that the teachers tend always to interrupt the conversation so as to correct mistakes and errors in syntax, pronunciation and word choice.

10- When conversing, which aspect of linguistics do you consider most?

Option	Number	Percentage
Syntax	17	56.66
Pronunciation	04	13.33
Meaning	08	26.66
All	01	03.33
Total	30	100

Table 10: The Linguistic Aspect Considered Most

We can see that the majority of students do consider syntax (the correct construction of syntactic strings (phrases, clauses, and sentences)). Then the importance is given to meaning over the other remaining aspects.

11- Which do you find easier, to speak:

Option	Number	Percentage

Formally	21	70
Informally	09	30
Total	30	100

Table 11: Formality in Speaking

It seems rather easy for students to use formal language than to use informal language or slang.

12- Do you use idioms when conversing?

Option	Number	Percentage
Yes	02	06.66
No	28	93.33
Total	30	100

Table 12: Students' Use of Idioms when Conversing

It is clear that the majority of students do not really use idioms in their conversations, because it either is difficult to conjure up idioms while conversing or it is for communication convenience that the addressee(s) might not be able to understand the message conveyed.

13- Do you face difficulty issuing the right or appropriate intonation for a particular tone?

Option	Number	Percentage
Yes	16	53.33
No	14	46.66
Total	30	100

Table 13: Issuing Appropriate Intonations

We can notice that half of the students do face difficulty issuing the appropriate intonation for a particular tone.

14- What is your attitude towards the culture of the target language?

Option	Number	Percentage
Negative	10	33.33
Positive	20	66.66
Total	30	100

Table 14: Students' Attitudes Towards the Foreign Culture

The table clearly shows that the majority of students (66.66%) do not sometimes fail in interpreting their interlocutor's responses.

15- What maxim of Grice's is violated most?

Option	Number	Percentage
Quantity	10	33.33
Quality	02	06.66
Relation	02	06.66
Manner	16	53.33
Total	30	100

Table 15: Grice's Maxims' Violation

Table 15 shows that the maxim of manner is violated most (53.33%), then the maxim of quantity (33.33%).

1.4: The interpretation of the questionnaire:

The first question is about whether students like holding conversations. The table shows that all students like holding conversations in English. It may be said that they like to develop their skills at holding conversations, so they exert much effort to avail much opportunity for using their English in speaking and not in writing only. They may have friends with whom they

practise English and look at the way they do so. They would correct their mistakes and errors, they would want to look at their use of vocabulary, they would want to scrutinise their constructions of syntactic strings (phrases, clauses, sentences), and they would as well consider their pronunciation. It could also be said that the attainment of native-speakership by any student is an inherent desire, and it would especially manifest itself in the speaking skill and hence, holding conversations. It is that desire that comprises a strong impetus to learn to speak as more indistinguishable as native speakers. Most of them, assumingly, avail no effort to realise that aspiration. In addition to that, assumingly, they do watch videos of conversations held by native speakers so as they be able to model their pronunciation, syntax and even vocabulary on those of native speakers.

The second question is whether students encounter difficulties when conversing. The table shows that most of the students do encounter difficulties when conversing. This may presumably relate to their ignorance about the culture of the target language's people. Most of them, one may profess, do not really have contexts where the culture of the native speakers materializes, and also the lack of such information in the syllabus implemented in Kasdi Merbah University. The difficulty would certainly not be attributed to ignorance or oblivion about culture, but rather to some linguistic elements. Some students in addition, by common sense, feel shy when conversing. This would sometimes or usually result in poor manipulation of the language. This lack of confidence might even hinder creativity, i.e. a student may seem very competent at writing and the utilizing of vocabulary in it, may know what word goes which way, which structure should precede another, whereas when it comes to speaking, he or she is stuck for a move.

Table 3 shows that half the students (50%) face difficulty in using or memorizing vocabulary. One can interpret that this is due their engaging with their mother tongue "Arabic" to bridge their way through the 'hedge' of the target language. The ideas might seem so clear in their

minds, but when trying to put them in words, most fail to do so. Sometimes, one feels that students do have the particular pieces of vocabulary for a certain idea, yet the problem would certainly by then lurk beneath their inability to conjure them up or because of their poor retentive abilities of the memory.

Few students seem to have difficulty in pronunciation. One might suppose that the skill that many students engage with is pronunciation. They always debate about what accent to choose "British or American mainly". That is why they consider themselves doing their English pronunciation well.

With regard to syntax they do not seem to have much difficulty. The lessons given to them at Kasdi Merbah University suffice to claim that they handle their English syntax in a fairly good or acceptable way. It is also because of the emphasis of many teachers on 'good grammar' in writing as well as in speaking. These students, hence, can engineer on their speaking while doing well in syntax. It is, however, reasonable to think that there are realities about grammar which are of sheer complexity that can surely inflict teachers with much deepening of their knowledge and contemplation so as to work out those realities bare. Nonetheless, while speaking in English is, by common sense, simple and done in a subconscious way by all good speakers of a language, the complexity will not show up and would always be connived at. In addition, the syntax that those students use enshrines much formality and would show discrepancies to the syntax used by, for example, an average British or an American ordinary speaker.

Table 4 shows that most students do not have any problems in understanding their addressees quickly (83%). This may relate to two factors. One could be that those students have strong linguistic together with communicative, basis at English and they can easily embark on both types of meaning "the literal meaning and the implicit or the equivocal one". Thus, the communication would be successful. In a sense, those students enjoying both competencies

(linguistic and communicative) may be said to have approximately reached some level of native-speakership. Their communicative abilities can tell them what topic they are talking about, when, where, and whom they are addressing. If so, they will be able to address their addressees so successfully and hardly ever would any of Grice's maxims be violated. The second factor may be because of the similarity of culture. Those students are 'in the same boat' with regard to the native speaker's cultures. If errors or mistakes are committed on both levels, the linguistic and the cultural, understanding, nonetheless, will take place irrespective of whether the two communicators are aware of the errors or mistakes.

Table 5 shows that the majority of students do not face difficulty in responding quickly. Those who face difficulty in responding quickly may have problems in understanding, so they have to possess the question or the statement being uttered by their addressers in a slow pace. Only after that would they be able to respond. Second, it might be said that they suffer from psychological disorders in their brains "either innate or acquired".

Table 6 denotes that the majority of students do sometimes feel afraid to hold conversations with their teachers (80%). There seems to be reasons for this panic. First, it is presumably because of the treatment of some teachers towards their students, for some teachers show contempt, pride and even disdainment. This would certainly develop in many students that sense of negative awe towards their teachers. Second, some teachers are somewhat distant from their students and they very rarely open space or avail time for them to speak with them. Third, one may say that those students lack self-confidence and are not yet grounded in themselves to hold conversations with their teachers since they feel panicked to make mistakes in grammar, pronunciation, or word choice.

Table 7 shows that more than half of these students do sometimes listen to English conversations (53.33%). They would specify time to listen to native speakers on the Internet, television, IPods, MiPads, or any other technological means. They would focus on almost all

aspects of English 'pronunciation, word choice, grammar, and meaning building). Through looking at context, the different ranks of the participants in the conversation, and the tempo-spatial aspects, they would be able to discern a new type of competence 'communicative competence' and be able to model their English on that of native speakers. By availing much time for watching and listening to English, they will also encounter the use of idioms, proverbs, and even quotes which eventually became parables. This, in turn, will help them make better their knowledge about the culture of those native speakers.

Table 8 shows that the majority of students do sometimes practise conversations in English with their classmates. This activity would help them do their English better in the future, for they display no shyness towards one another since they are peers. In the course of their holding conversations, those peer classmates will look at one another's using of English. Some who would seem to do their English better than their peers will be the ones who correct their peers' mistakes and errors. Almost all errors 'phonological, lexical and semantic' will be rectified. The atmosphere between classmates usually seems comfortable and many of them will do their English perfectly without any fear or timidity. They may have much time for each other to have a lot of conversations.

Table 9 shows that the majority of students witness their teacher's continual interruption during class. The teacher usually interrupts their students so as to correct their mistakes and give tips on pronunciation, grammar, and word choice.

Table 10 shows that the maximum of students consider syntax most in their conversations. The interpretation of this could be the following. Those students are not native speakers of English, and they have been taught throughout their education life in a Grammar-Translation Method which emphasises the pivotality of grammar rules and its perfection. They simply want to seem good at handling the English grammar. The focus on meaning would be exercised on most by those students of high competence who could transcend the linguistic

competence to the communicative competence. It might be said that the ones who consider grammar most use careful diction and 'purified language'. They may show dearth in using idioms and clichés. Those latter are mostly used by those who could attain communicative competence.

Table 11 shows that the majority of students find it easy to speak formally rather than informally. One reason could be suggested. They were taught formal English. The grammar that was used in their classes in middle schools, secondary schools, and the English Language Departments in universities, was a 'pure' grammar; so formal. Only few of those can speak slang or informal English much easier are those who increase in listening to English music, watching especially American movies or attending to casual shows on television. It may be argued that those who see speaking informally easier are mostly those who show much fluency, whereas those who see speaking formally easier are those who show much accuracy. And that it is shown to all of us that students at university are mostly exposed to formal teaching and learning, it is far that one would think that informality overrides formality in the linguistic makeup of students. Thus, more students see it 'correct', 'disrespectful', and 'impolite' to do English informally.

Table 12 shows that the majority of students do not use idioms when conversing. Is it that they are unable to? It would be argued so! And if some of these students happened to know some idioms, why then are these not utilized when conversing? And where does the difficulty of using idioms lurk? Purely linguistic? Cultural?

One would first argue that students do not have a considerable amount of idioms in their heads, or if they have any at all. That is because those students were not given a specified course in idiomatic expressions during all their educational time-span. They were neither given courses at middle schools, nor were they given some at secondary schools or universities. Should it happen that some students do memorise some idiomatic expressions,

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their use will peculiarly be daunting. To use idioms in their speech while conversing, those students have got to know, in the first place, whether or not their addressees have some knowledge about those very idioms. This latter could stand as a potent justification why rarity in using idioms exists.

Another would argue that the paucity of using idioms in conversations between these students is due to the cultural component. It is that these students belong to a culture different to the ones of native speakers. Those native speakers lead a life different to all aspects of those students' lives, and occasions where idioms should show up are abundant in the culture of native speakers, and extremely of dearth in the one of those students. And one should not forget that which idioms are innately processed in the minds of all native speakers of a particular community whose first language happened to be English.

Table 13 shows nearly half the number of students do not really face difficulty in issuing the right or appropriate intonation for a particular tone-unit. Owing to many factors, one may say, that those students have no difficulty in issuing the right intonation for a particular tone-unit. The attentive exposure of their ears to listen to native speakers doing their English in movies, plays, documentaries, or shows, might just be one factor. Likewise, they may attend to many occasional settings where English takes on different realities: shopping, seeing a doctor, booking a seat in a cinema-house, etc. Hence, those students may train themselves to issue the appropriate intonation for a particular tone-unit. They would do that gradually till they master them in approximation.

Table 14 shows that the majority of students do not have a negative attitude towards the culture of the English language native speakers. This, one would argue, can certainly help in the easy and accelerating way of learning English. And tolerance between cultures facilitates the cross-cultural understanding. The critical toleration of the new culture would bring forth

positive effects on those students, for they will learn both language and language as a cultural value.

The last table, table 15, shows that it is the maxim of manner which is violated most and also the maxim of quality. This violation may be due to the lack of teaching the native speaker's culture(s) to those students, especially the culture of tactfulness and politeness in socialization, one might argue. It could also be said that students do not really have authentic settings where they can practise their conversations properly. For example, those students, when addressing their teachers, may not use the required register style which denotes that teachers are in higher positions than students. Many students were not, as well, practically taught the levels of register so as to know where to use what!

Conclusion

From the analysis of the students' questionnaire, we could notice that there are certain linguistic and cultural challenges that hinder some students' success in holding conversations properly. The hindrance, however, is relative in that one may find some students facing problems in some linguistic elements while not in others. They also find difficulty in some cultural aspects of the native speakers of English; whereas, in other aspects, they face no difficulty.

It is worthwhile to hint that some teachers constitute a hindrance to their learners' holding of English conversations. The continual interruption exercised by those teachers on their learners' conversations would certainly cause lack of confidence in those learners.

General conclusion

The attempt along this research study was to look at the difficulty in holding good or authentic conversations, which was caused by the linguistic nature of the target language and by the cultural aspects of the target language native speakers. The aim was to analyse those difficulties and look at how native speakers do their casual conversations. Through literature reading, it has long been stressed that there is a high connection between the foreign language to be mastered, especially in holding conversations, and its relevant culture that emanates from the natural environment of that language. It is also implied within this present study that one ought to learn about the foreign culture so as to adequately speak the foreign language and do the casual conversations and the formal ones. Ideally, it seemed essential the researcher tackle the issue of culture and its pertinent relation to language nature, learning, and teaching. This is surely what seems to be corresponding to the cultural challenges met by third year students. It is true to say that, for one to master a particular language, one has to live where its native speakers live so as to learn its culture in a perfect way. And since students of Kasdi Merbah University have had no access to that, their holding conversations in English has a lot of deficiencies. Thus, thanks to the eleven conversations taken as a sample from 'Everyday English' by native speakers, it could be proved that our students lack the sense of practising English conversations authentically culturally and linguistically. Again, thanks to the questionnaire results, it has been proved that there are still some linguistic and cultural difficulties to overcome. Thus, all the hypotheses mentioned before are surely confirmed.

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