Cultural Hybridation for Identity Construction: the case of the Algerian Secondary School EFL education

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Abstract

Viewed through the concept of cultural hybridity, the approach to language learning and communication triggers cultural contacts among language users. It places the Algerian learner in the position of a multi-language user (mother tongue, national language, school languages). This creates cultural diversity fostered by the existence of a diversity of understandings of the local, regional, national and international environments.

Compared to a monolingual speaker, a language learner who becomes multilingual is expected to respond differently to a variety of situations. This suggests that his/her understanding is deepened thanks to "**cultural dialogues**" and that he/she becomes more aware to accept **the other** by recognizing and sharing **the difference** with the other. But, a question arises: does this diversity of culture lead to what H. Bhabha calls the "**third place**"? In other terms, does this offer opportunity for the learner to see his/her local world through lenses of the "Global Village" without the risk of acculturation?

The challenge is therefore to define and construct a learner's identity through EFL learning. Within this perspective, Guy Oliver Fauve (1993), believes that local allegiances should be reconciled with global affinities. For him, our world is a world of globalization; therefore, the big challenge remains in the capacity to foster "a vision of the whole that accommodates the diversity of the parts" (ibid:vii). Put differently, the function of culture is to preserve the individual's identity without neglecting the difference with the other's.

Key words: cultural dialogue-identity construction-cultural contacts-interculturality

With regard to cultural hybridity, foreign language learning can be seen as an obstacle or a facilitator to interaction and communication with the other. If put into confrontation with his/her identity, a learner may see the target culture though lenses of

confrontation. In this case, the target culture could be considered as aggressive and could be the cause of disturbance, especially when based on stereotypes. In other terms, when language learning is grounded in "**Us** versus **them**" binary structure (or Periphery versus Centre), confrontation becomes inevitable. But when it is based on compromises, and **the arbitrary nature of things,** it may lead to the strengthening of identity and the construction of the individual's openness to the world.

It is interesting at this point to ask what type of cultural material and which approach the Algerian textbook designers have been favoured to help them to deal successfully with language learning for the purpose of dragging the learner to the "**third place**". The premise of our examination of cultural materials and process of learning revolves around a major concern. We would like to inquire into the type of culture inserted in the Secondary School English Course and the ways through which it is taught. It interests us, here, to find out whether the designers have limited themselves to "**us vs them**" and "**either/or**" dichotomies which acknowledge and negotiate the "difference" support, in the words of Peters (2005) "forms of rejections and discrimination against the 'other' perceived as an essentialized and frozen identity rather than a hybrid and living entity", or whether the designers have shifted to "**both/and**" dichotomy which embraces the negotiation of affinities.

Said differently, we would like to see whether the Algerian English language textbooks suffice themselves with cultural diversity or whether they broaden their perspective to critical learning and multiculturality, which lead both to the "third place" in agreement with what Derrida (2006) calls the theory of "**différance**" in opposition to that of the "**difference**".

This paper will take up the discussion of this problematic cultural issue. To this end, we have selected a very specific issue in course design: the construction of the cross-cultural competence in the Algerian Secondary School English Course following Jaime S. Wurzel's perspective of multiculturalism which involves "the balance between the need to protect sameness and continuity and the need to accommodate change" (Ackerman, p.85 cited in Wurzel 1988:10).

Our analysis will be put back down on the author's educational intervention process. Our practical criteria of analysis will be borrowed from Jack Zevin's social studies paradigm which is based on alternative approaches to world studies.

Review of literature

According to Jerome Bruner (1963) learning can serve the future in two different ways. It can be based on what psychologists term **specific transfer of training** or it can go beyond the mastery of the structure of the subject matter. In the first case, it helps learners to perform in real life the tasks they have originally learned at school whereas, in the second case, learning embraces **non specific transfer** or **the transfer of principles and attitudes.** This type of transfer is, according to Bruner, "at the heart of the educational process".

The second way through which education can construct an autonomous individual is part of what Paulo Freire calls "education for critical consciousness". The author distinguishes the adaptation process of the individual from the process of integration. When the educational process does not permit an individual to make choices and transform reality, or makes him take decisions under external prescriptions, he is said to be adapted or "adjusted". On the opposite, when he uses his critical capacities to make his own choices, he is said to be "integrated". To use Freire's words, (1973:4) "the **integrated person** is a person as **subject**. In contrast, the **adaptive person** is a person by **object**, adaptation representing at most a weak form of self-defence."

Being a subject is being capable of crossing boarders "to establish a sphere of intercuturality" (C.Kramsch cited in B.Kumaradivelu 2008:132-133). To do this, the individual should learn to take both an insider and outsider's view of his first and second language. This sphere of interculturality constitutes "the third place". This capacity to "decentre" (Byram, 2002) gives him the capacity to interact across cultural boundaries to build the third culture which is situated at the intersection between culture one and culture two.

The process of individual construction is "produced in the articulation of cultural differences" (Bhabha 1994:1) which are considered in-between spaces, or in what Derrida (ibid) calls cultural

"différance". This cultural dialogue "takes you 'beyond' yourself in order to return, in a spirit of revision and reconstruction, to the political condition of the present. This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains differences without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (H.Bhabha, 199412).

In their book entitled <u>Deconstruction and Différance</u>, Lucie Guillemette and Josiane Cossette (2006) refer to Derrida and structuralism and post structuralism to highlight the importance of the critical perspective which bypass dualisms and opens the way to infinite shifts in meaning through deconstruction. This process of deconstruction permits to bypass rigid conceptual oppositions of dualisms or binary structures based on signifier/signified relationship.

The authors refer to dualisms as frozen structures which are never equivalent; structures in which the signifier refers always to a definite signified. They point out the fact that because they are always hierarchically ranked, these dualisms privileges one pole (us) over the other (them). By contrast, "both/and" dichotomy extinguishes the struggle of dualisms and opens the way to new terms that are located beyond dualisms.

To opt for the construction of the individual as subject who never takes meanings for granted, a subject who questions and problematizes them to explore them interculturally, deciders have no other option than that of opting for an educational policy based on "both/and" dichotomy, instead of "us vs them" dichotomy.

Method and material

To escape monoculturalism which supports ethnocentrism and makes individuals see themselves lying at the centre of everything, and view therefore other ways of behaving and thinking as either inferior or strange, Jaime S. Wurzel (1988) insists on the necessity to rely on the contrasting process to see different patterns of cultural information before beginning the questioning process.

He adds that individuals have to go beyond cultural awareness and cultural conflict of ethnocentric views to bypass "us/them" dualism which makes the world be perceived as divided into two entities. For him, the answer to the problem can be found in the

educational intervention process which contributes to the development of a multicultural perspective which helps a person to question **the arbitrary nature of things** and the cultural differences to enrich his/her own cultural perspective. As put by J. S. Wurzel (1988:10), "to be multicultural is to be aware and able to incorporate and synthesize different systems of cultural knowledge into one's own."

For him, individuals gain the opportunity to examine and understand their own cultural patterns by confronting them to other cultural perspectives. The type of confrontation he refers to gives time to compare cultural differences of values communication, styles, social behaviours, patterns of thinking to reduce cultural conflicts between culture one and culture two. The author insists on conscious adoption of a new behaviour which should be attained rather through cognitive choice, escaping then cognitive imposition which leads to the negation of the individuals' native culture.

Another important aspect which constructs learners' multicultural identity lies in his experience of self-discovery and cultural expansion which both trigger the individual's questioning of basic premises about him/her to make knowledge personally relevant to him/her. This aspect is coupled with inquiry learning which develops tolerance towards the other and rejects absolutes for the benefit of the development of multicultural style of thinking which bypasses "us/them" binary category and dogmatism.

Finally, J. S. Wurzel (1988:9) explicates the process of educational intervention in the following words: "As students learn variations of behaviour in relation to group identity, they also learn to understand the arbitrariness of context in establishing cultural rules and the extraordinary ability individuals have to adapt and expand their cultural knowledge. It also demonstrates that ethnicity and nationality are not the only variables in the process of communication and cross-cultural relations."

To sum up the process above, we would like to refer to strategies that help learners to work pedagogically in a critical postcolonial multicultural approach that relies on (1) **cultural critique** and (2) the **hybridization of discourses**. Because target culture, local culture, and national culture relations are dynamic and do not follow a

static process and that the exercise of power by the target culture is continually contested by learners, "**Cultural critique** is the possibility given to students to analyze their ethnic identities, criticize social myths that oppress them, generate knowledge based on the plurality of truths"; **discursive hybridity** refers to the possibility of constructing language and discourses that cross cultural bounders and challenge prejudiced discourses and metaphors, so as to decolonize them." (Billings and Henry (1999) Canen, A. and Oliveira, cited in Peters, 2005).

In other words, helping learners to "decentre" is facilitating a clash between the familiar meaning from the native culture and the unexpected meaning of the target culture, meanings that are generally taken for granted, through the use of strategies related to role-play, to questioning, challenging, and problematizing so as to lead to the sphere of interculturality, a third culture, a "third place".

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To conduct our study under the theoretical perspective explicited above, we shall borrow our theoretical paradigm for textbooks analysis from Jack Zevin's (2000) social studies approach which highlight **the use of cognitive and inquiry learning**, together with **the search for identity within the scope of an openness to the world of multiculturality.** In this respect, Zevin's social studies approach insists on the necessity to use lower and higher levels of instruction, which follows three directions in order **to develop learners' personal identity.** These directions are:

(1) The promotion of social science (here through language study)
(2) The promotion of reflective inquiry
(3) The promotion of citizenship transmission.

The appeal to alternative approaches to the organisation of world studies educational course content springs from the fact that they differ from the traditional Western History Approach to world

studies which was organised from a European or American viewpoint and espouses a linear sequence.

The Western History Approach is labeled Eurocentric and ethnocentric, because of the growing recognition that cultures, peoples and critical events other than those of the Western history have been seriously neglected. By contrast, alternative approaches' focus is within a world of global perspective. Zevin (2000:28) clarifies this scope in the following words:

The idea of viewing people in systems, of factoring in or out different aspects (such as the political, economic, social, or cultural) and analysing the roots and consequences of human actions, runs through all of the human sciences. How and why decisions are made and actions are taken is a common thread through nearly all social investigations, whether these are on a personal, group, national, or international level. The ways we perceive and know are also very much part of the questions social sciences ask in designing studies and interpreting results.

Among several accepted approaches to the organisation of world studies educational course content, four alternatives have emerged: the **geographic**, the **international relations**, the **cross-cultural,** and the **integrative/global history** approaches.

The alternative approaches, cited above, have been clearly defined by Jack Zevin (ibid, 2000:210) in the following terms:

Four major themes have emerged: a geographic approach, which stresses human and physical interactions among the world's regions and climates; an international relations approach, which stresses the relations between and among the political systems of the world; a cross-cultural approach, which invites comparisons among cultures that have evolved different or (or similar) solutions to fundamental human problems; and an integrated or global history approach, which focuses on social, economic, and political change working toward increasing global interdependence.

Through the *geographic approach*, learners know about, understand, and discuss physical earth features and human development in various regions of the world in a specific perspective. It offers learners the possibility to compare and contrast political

systems, cities types, agricultural resources and innovations, technological and cultural issues so as to reflect on successes and failures of peoples' achievements.

The *international relations approach* relates to global citizenship which gives the learner the role of a world citizen who understands his own individual identity within a world citizenship. On these bases, the student learns his role and that of his country in the welfare of the world within the larger scope of a global policy.

The third approach, termed the *cross-cultural approach*, helps learners to construct their openness to the world by understanding that alternatives can be put ahead to solve common problems all around the world. This openness to the world can be attained through comparisons of world peoples' values, traditions, customs, ideas, literature and art, music, under the political, economic, philosophical, geographical, environmental, and aesthetic scope.

An integrative world or global history approach is concerned with diversity and universality: "how and why individuals, groups, and peoples have created distinct lifestyles and societies to solve problems of security, well-being, making a living, organisations, and creativity."(ibid: 209) It evolves around interdependence, development, change, cooperation. Lower level instruction relates to two types of strategy: comparison and contrast, on the one hand, and drama-building, on the other hand. The first type is conducted through deductive and inductive cognitive processes, whereas the second type is carried out through written source materials which trigger personal responses.

The alternative approaches to world studies help textbook designers to build a frame of reference from which reflective thinking is constructed all along the course. Reflective thinking is carried out through **lower** and **higher**-**order skills** which are described below in detail:

Lower-order cognitive skills are implemented thanks to three types of strategies: **comparison and contrast strategies, deductive strategy, and drama building strategy.** The first starts with a definition provided to students by giving them a label or term, and

have them apply the concept to examples to determine whether they fit the definition.

The second is a strategy, in which students derive concepts, categories, or definitions on their own, based on a careful examination of evidence.

The third is based on teaching Techniques which appeal to personal play acting, selection of primary and secondary sources that are written from personal points, of view and draw the student into the event or issue, the use of media and artistic works that use plot, character, images, and language to communicate a view point.

It should be noted that for secondary school students a more mature deductive and inductive teaching strategy is usually seen as more appropriate.

Concerning **higher-level cognitive Instruction,** it permits students see the world through the eyes of others. It encounters multiple perspectives, a clash of viewpoints, and strikingly different interpretations to move students out of a narrow, personal, or ethnocentric pattern of thought. By so doing, this type of instruction opens new doors to thinking and decision making. It encompasses three categories of strategies:

(1) Matching or contrasting documents, newspaper accounts, an event, to illustrate subtle or simple differences in reporting data, characterizing events, and describing personalities (Something conflicting or something convergent on a facet of life, such as pro - war and anti-war approaches to famous battles). These approaches to issues and problems require reflective reasoning of a fairly high order, thereby strengthening student critical faculties

(2) Mystery strategy: It is a research process/strategy that begins with some evidence or a set of assumptions with a use of a step by step cognitive procedure towards a defensible conclusion by unknown or missing data gaps. Open-ended problems are the most appropriate didactic situations that are usually used for classroom activities. They help learners to appeal to their experience in order to suggest hypotheses by using extrapolation and interpolation. This approach is quite similar to the discovery approach in that it

encourages the learner to use limited evidence to make hypotheses or generalizations that go beyond the given data.

The objective of this strategy is to promote learners' **reasoning skills and inference and synthesis capacities.** It aims to gather knowledge, piece together clues, compare and contrast examples, develop and test hypotheses by using formal and informal logic and see events from many points of view through the process of evidence interpretation.

Its **techniques** relate to who, what, when, how, and why questions; estimations of the quality of primary sources from given clues; open-ended and thought provoking, divergent questions designed to sustain the learner's inquiry to help him/her to work out his own solution.

(3) Controversy strategy: It refers to morality, justice, and order. Controversies emerge from differences in people's values which determine their aspirations and codes of behaviour in their everyday interactions. These clashes lead generally to compromises between opposed views and attitudes, the choice of one among the alternatives or the appeal to a stand resulting from a universal set of truths. What is worth mentioning is that a the aforementioned alternatives are the result of successful discussions of values, issues, or controversies which incorporate analysis of data, both cognitive and affective domains, and theory and practice before well thought-out decisions or recommendations can be formulated.

Teaching techniques connected with the controversy strategy are varied in number and form. We have listed them according to J.Zevin's classification (2000:131-132). These are: **Simulation** Games in relation to a problem or issue; **debates** which are based on opposite sides exchange; **panels** through which a variety of views is presented by a group of students to their classmates; **investigative Reports** which are carried out through newspaper reporters' role play; **devil's Advocates** technique which allows students to argue unpopular positions for the sake of a debate; **mock Trials** which show role play trials by students who take roles of lawyers, judges, witnesses etc…; **social Science Researchers** technique which involves the collection, analysis, and evaluation of arguments that support different positions

with a written concluding report; **poll Takers/Interviewers** concern the analysis, and development of survey on a particular topic; **councils/Committees/Police makers:** students play roles of police-makers who are asked to settle a dispute, a problem, or issue by using information at their disposal; **role-Reversals:** students are put in the opposing side position in an argument**.**

Results and Discussion

1-Results

a- Content level

SE1, SE2 and SE3 textbooks (Secondary School English Course) depict six broad areas of learning that could serve as a basis for the construction of learners' identity. These wholes are:

(1) Awareness of lifestyles, health and well being;

(2) Awareness of responsibility with respect to the environment, consumer Rights;

(3) Awareness of citizenship and community life;

(4) Awareness of the place of media, literature in daily life;

(5) Awareness of responsibility with respect to mankind;

(6) Awareness of the place of science and technology in the progress of human Life.

To deal with the first broad area of learning (1) *Awareness of lifestyles, health and well being*, the designers introduced learners to a diversity of fields in the three Secondary School textbooks which constitute the EFL Course. In SE1 (*At the Crossroads Textbook*), learners are introduced to medical care, good health, suffering from stress in Unit 3/ **Awareness of Lifestyles**, and discoveries that changed our daily lives, communication, in Unit 4./**Our Findings**.

In SE2 (Getting Through), learners learn about eating and clothing, lifestyles profiles, and traditional and changing manners in Unit 1/**Signs of the time,** and life seen through folktales in Unit 5/ **News and tales.**

New Prospects, (SE2 Textbook) for its part, proposes "the exploration of the past" in Unit 1 entitled: **Exploring the past**. In this respect, two fields are suggested: **ancient civilizations in the world**, (e.g. how Native Americans use to live), and **contacts among**

civilizations; and the impact of advertising on eating, clothing, and entertainment habits) In Unit 4: **Safety first.**

The same diversity is diagnosed for the next broad areas of learning: (2) *Awareness of responsibility with respect to the environment,* and *(3) Awareness of citizenship and community life.* The former highlights the field of nature in Unit5/ **Back to nature, (**natural disasters, pollution (air/water/sound), global warming, renewal energy) **i**n SE1**,** and that of the environment in Unit 3/**Waste not want not,** (the ecosystem, pollution, a conservation plan (the Amazon forest, energy consumption, the world water supply …) **i**n SE2, whereas the latter targets the fields of life in the past, life in schools, and life in the ancient Egypt, in respectively, Different and alike (education in Britain and America) Unit 3/ **Schools,** coping with strong emotion in Unit 6: **Keep cool**, in SE1, SE2, and SE3 Textbooks. To do this, designers dealt respectively with traditional way of life in Africa (Nigeria), life in Coketown, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (through literary classics, united cities, duties and rights of children in life schools, and how life was ruled in ancient Egypt in the pharaoh's age, the Maya civilisation).

Three other wholes complete the course: (4) *Awareness of the place of the media in daily life,* (5) *Awareness of responsibility with respect to mankind,* and (6) *Awareness of the place of science in the progress of human life*. The former proposes the field of communication (internet, e-mail versus snail- mail, letters and messages, newspapers) in Unit 1/ **Getting through** of SE1, and ethical issues, immoral actions, imitations, fraud, punishment, the anticorruption programme are suggested in Unit 2/ **ill gotten gains never prosper** in SE3.

The second broad area of learning focuses on peace, natural and human disasters, and community issues in Unit 2:/ **Signs of the time,** and the rights of the child; rescue actions in natural and human disasters (tsunami, earthquakes, road accidents, in Unit 5/ **News and tales,** and charity, solidarity in Unit 6/ **No Man is an Island.** The three former broad areas of learning have been inserted in SE2 Textbook (Getting Through) and concern respectively, making peace (the league of nations, UN task force), convention on the rights of the

children, rescue actions in natural and human disasters (tsunami, earthquakes, road accidents), and community issues (charity, solidarity). The latter whole is concerned with the rights of the child, writing a charter of ethics, and SE3 Textbook (On the Move).

   b- The Social Science Paradigm implemented in the Algerian EFL Secondary School Course Structure

   This section displays the results on the development course structure followed in Algerian English Secondary School Textbooks. The investigation has been conducted within the social science paradigm as indicated in the methodological sub-section of our work. It depicts the specific approach to the construction of a frame of reference and captures the direction(s) drawn for the course. Accordingly, our inquiry portrays instances of social science orientation in SE1, SE2, and SE3 textbooks to determine which among the **geographic**, the **international relations**, the **cross-cultural**, or the **global history** approaches, predominate.

   The development a course structure based on social studies revolves around (1) **theme**, (2) **time**, and (3) **place**. The former targets the identification of outstanding philosophies, writers and idea, leaders from diverse cultures; the second give prominence to the description of a major period of history; and the latter questions learners about the division of the world into specific regions, and the distinction among physical characteristics and human populations.

   Our investigation into the Algerian Secondary School EFL Course reveals that three approaches have been used around theme: **the** i**nternational relations approach, the cross-cultural approach,** and **the global history/ integrative world approach.** The textbooks designers opted for medical innovation in SE1 Unit3, and Cooperation/

   Interdependence under **the global history/ integrative world approach,** and global interdependence and control: international peacekeeping in SE2 Unit2 under **the** i**nternational relations approach, the cross-cultural approach. The cross-cultural approach** has been used to interact with social change and regression in SE3 Unit2.

The theme of **time** has been dealt with the four approaches in the three textbooks. Through the geographic approach learners tackle environmental issues: physical geography: human-land interaction inSE2 Unit3; **the international relations approach** focuses on communication: the challenge of development; new technologies in SE2 Unit1; **the cross-cultural approach** is used to investigate into traditions and values: unstable forms inSE1 Unit2, social change/progression in SE2 Unit1, modes of expression in SE2 Unit5; tradition and values: unstable forms in SE3 Unit1; schools: different and alike: tradition and values: unstable forms in SE3 Unit3; the fourth approach, the **global history/ integrative world approach** helped the designers to introduce learners in the fields of technological inventions in SE1 Unit4 and SE3 Unit5 and SE2 Unit7.

The theme of **place** has been dealt with in one unit only, SE1-Unit5, a unit which gives prominence to environmental issues: physical geography: human-land interaction.

A fairly obvious finding displayed by the above table is that the designers opted for a multifaceted approach coupled with an uneven distribution of instances of social science orientation. Accordingly, we note that the **cross-cultural** and the **global history**/ integrative world approaches predominate. Both approaches are implemented in the three textbooks although unequally distributed. In the cross-cultural approach, the themes range from traditions and values, modes of expression, and social change and progression. The **global history/** integrative world approach has been used by the textbook designers to propose themes ranging from scientific and medical innovations, news and tales, cooperation and interdependence and fiction.

Another important feature in the construction of the frame of reference is the diversity of instances provided in the textbooks. As indicated in the table, instances related to environmental issues, peace, ICT's, storytelling, and cooperation have been the focus of the social science approaches to language learning in the Algerian School.

b-Process level

Educational instruction can be viewed through its three faceted options: the didactic, the reflective, and the affective. Jack Zevin (2000:17) defines the didactic goal as having its focus on the **what**, the reflective on the **why**, and the affective on the **how**. In other terms, the former favours the transmission of knowledge; the second deals with the digestion, the analysis and the application of information. The latter refers to feelings, emotions, and values. He strongly believes that, whatever the choice made in designing a lesson, a unit, or a course, it cannot escape the combination of didactic, reflective, and affective purposes. With regard to these approaches, Zevin states:

These three dimensions should be viewed as related, overlapping parts of a holistic way of understanding the social studies, both holistically and as taught and experienced in classrooms (…) most lessons and interactions contain element of each dimension. However, every lesson is usually given direction by an overall goal that stresses a didactic purpose, a reflective purpose, or an affective purpose. One of these three goals should be dominant in directing the path of a lesson (…). A lesson that tries to do too much at once or has conflicting goals usually loses direction and confuses student (…) It is conceivable that a lesson, unit, or course could shift in direction and character, combining two or three dimensions in complex ways**,** perhaps even demonstrating an almost perfect balance among the three categories.

The typology of categories we mentioned above relate to the critical thinking processes developed in the Algerian English Secondary School course as regards the use of lower and higher-level instructions. The main focus is the investigation into the model chosen by the designers; a model that organizes learning around didactic, reflective, and/or affective strategies.

Our first remark lies in the fact that the three dimensions enumerated above have been unequally distributed in the three textbooks (SE, SE2, SE3). In addition, the designers opted for specific choices for every textbook in order to support their didactic purposes for every secondary school year.

In SE1 Textbook both the didactic and the reflective instructions reflected respectively in the data gathering strategy and the comparative and contrast strategy show 30 and 31 activities distributed among a diversity of sequences. In contrast, the affective strategy represented by the drama-building strategy, seems to be minimized.

Our findings in SE 2 Textbook demonstrate the absence of the frame of reference strategy which promotes the didactic instruction in higher-order skills, and that of the controversy strategy used for the affective instruction. In contrast, the reflective dimension is represented by the project workshop.

In SE3, little attention is given to the didactic dimension whereas the reflective and the affective strategies are completely neglected. The other notable feature is that the activities related to the reflective strategy are concentrated on a single sub-section, and those demonstrating affective interactions are limited to one technique: debates.

Discussion

Results from our analysis of the secondary school textbooks call for certain observations. The first remark which draws attention lies in the organisation scheme chosen by the textbook designers, a scheme which presents a fusion of social studies approaches when dealing with the broad areas of learning based on **theme**, **time**/**chronology**, and **place**. The **geographic, international relations, cross-cultural, and integrative world/global history approaches** have been used in combination to organise the content of the textbooks.

This eclectic approach to social studies, which combines three types of goals and four dimensions in the Algerian English Language textbooks, shows, however, an imperfect balance among the four categories in terms of approach, and among the three categories in terms of course structure.

There are certain observations that can be made about the distribution of course contents presented in the three textbooks. Clearly, among the approaches used in the course content organisation, the cross-cultural approach is more prevalent. The amount of content presented through this approach is observed to be

nearly half of the whole. The percentage of cross-cultural material is noticeably given more significance in the textbooks. **Themes** such as **progression** and **regression** in social change which show negative or positive changes in society, stable and unstable forms of traditions and values, ideas and styles as modes of expression, are given prominence over other themes in the textbooks. This choice in textbook design shows definitely the cross-cultural orientation of the textbooks orientation.

By supporting the *cross-cultural approach* to broad areas of learning, the textbook designers give favour to the construction of learners' openness to the world through comparisons of world peoples' values, traditions, customs, ideas, literary views and artistic achievements. According to Jack Zevin (2000:214) "Cross-cultural approaches are organised around concepts or themes that invite immediate and direct comparisons of institutions, traditions (…)". It is widely believed that these approaches are ideally suited to help students understand that many common problems have been solved quite differently by people around the globe.

Further, a cross-cultural view encourages students to look at developments, from the perspective of other cultures as well as their own. This helps learners construct their feeling of respect for the difference and for tolerance. In this light, the Québec education program (2004: 463) states: "Young people develop their understanding of the world by sharing different views and by comparing representations and beliefs. They identify the similarities, differences, and tensions that emerge from this diversity. They verbalize personal opinions, feelings and impressions in a spirit of sharing and cooperation."

Values, traditions, customs, ideas, literary views and artistic achievements reflect peoples' realities and everyday situations that directly affect human relationships. These realities and life situations are part of the broad areas of learning that represent issues for interactions between learners who are given opportunities for reflection on the nature and forms of values, traditions, prohibitions, customs, rights, and rules of conduct from a diversity of cultures. By comparing and contrasting life situations and representations from

different groups, learners gain awareness of moral references necessary for reflection and construct their own frame of moral reference.

Teaching broad areas of learning by, first, organising a balanced contents framework as suggested above represents a starting point for the acquisition of the ethical competence. This first step helps learners to put life situations and moral references into perspective to identify their characteristics and their relationships with one another and to understand their relative meaning and validity with reference to a diversity of contexts of use.

A comparative thematic unit triggers learners' thought and generates hypotheses as the result of why and how questions on human behaviours and attitudes which are "shaped by political, social, cultural, economic, emotional, and aesthetic needs" (ibid 216).

Conclusion

We have attempted in this article to show how the Algerian educational policy sees the construction of EFL learners could construct their identity by escaping the Western cultural hegemony and the established universal civilization.

Algerian EFL Secondary School Textbooks designers tried to engage in a variety of broad areas of learning that can be used as a rich frame of reference anchored in the social studies paradigm which represents an appropriate alternative approach to the Eurocentric cultural approach.

We have come to the conclusion that the Algerian Course has given prominence to the use of a diversified set of broad areas of learning, and the use of social studies approaches as different as **the geographic, the cross-cultural, the global/history integrative world, and the international relations**, even though **the cross-cultural approach** has been given more due concern.

We have also noted the ventilation of the **didactic**, the **reflective**, and the **affective** strategies and **critical thinking**

classroom techniques in the three textbooks even though the lion share is given to the didactic dimension.

Our interest in the culture as a means to promote identity comes from the fact that as Samuel P. Huntington states, the decline of power in the western world has provided an opportunity for culture to take a new role, that of legitimating the new leadership and a new world order. Increased communication among people in our global world, the relative rise of new powerful societies from Asia which assert cultural relevance, the resurgence of religion to assert cultural identity for some other societies brought about new categories in civilization.

Encountering this identity crisis, societies tend either to respond to the "soft power" policy of the western world, or to reaffirm their specificities and isolate themselves from the "other". The objective of the Algerian EFL programme is to get free from this danger. On the contrary, by choosing to rely on the social studies paradigm, the Algerian textbook designers open for their learners the path towards what Homi Bhabha calls "the third place" which can construct their openness to a world of diversity.

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