

Integrating Audio-visual Aids and Technology into Teaching Culture in the Literature Class: the Case of 2nd Year LMD Level at Ouargla University

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Abstract

The present study aims at assessing the awareness of EFL teachers, at the Algerian University, about seeking to improve their teaching materials for teaching culture in the literature class through depending on audio-visual aids and technology. It investigates the place of multimedia facilities in the FL classroom. The unity of visual aids (radio, television, video, and pictures) with ICTs (the computer, the Internet, and e-mail chat rooms) in the EFL classroom can raise the learners' cultural and linguistic competence. These materials are also effective in teaching literature where the characters behavior, beliefs, and ways of life can be transmitted via films and pictures. In spite of the Algerian teachers' recognition (as the learners do) of the importance of integrating audio-visual materials and technology into teaching culture in the literature classroom, their use has still remained rather limited. This may result from the lack of time, much effort requirement, being unfamiliar with technology devices, and the complexity of designing a cultural syllabus and choosing appropriate techniques for presenting culture-related topics and activities with these visual materials. Hence, the focus in the future is needed to be made on training teachers in the field of computer science (i.e. teachers have to get a diploma in both English and computer science).

Keywords: audio-visual aids, technology, ICT (Information and Communication Technology), culture, literature, FL.

Résumé

Cette étude vise l'évaluation de la conscience des enseignants de l'anglais à l'université algérienne dans le but de l'amélioration des outils d'étude de la culture étrangère au sein d'une faculté littéraire basée sur les moyens audio-visuels et la technologie. Elle vise aussi la recherche des divers médiations des multimédia dans les classes des langues étrangères. L'union des moyens visuels (la radio, la télévision, les vidéos, et les images) avec l'ICT (l'ordinateur, l'internet, et l'email chat) dans la classe d'Anglais peut développer la compétence culturelle et linguistique des étudiants. Ces moyens sont aussi efficaces dans l'enseignement de la littérature dont les comportements, les croyances, et les manières de vivre des personnages peuvent être transmis par les films et les images. Malgré la conscience des enseignants et des étudiants algériens sur l'importance de l'intégration des moyens audio-visuels dans l'enseignement, son utilisation reste encore limitée. C'est peut être due aux facteurs temps, l'effort à fournir au développement des moyens technologiques. Alors, il faut concentrer au future sur la formation des enseignants d'Anglais à l'informatique.

Mots clés: les moyens audio-visuels, la technologie, ICT (l'information et la communication technologique), la culture, la littérature, la langue étrangère.

ملخص:

ترمي هذه الدراسة إلى تقييم مدى وعي أساتذة اللغة الانجليزية بالجامعة الجزائرية بالسعي لتحسين وسائل تدريس الثقافة الأجنبية ضمن الأدب الإنجليزي وهذا من خلال الاعتماد على الوسائل السمعية البصرية والتكنولوجيا. كما تهدف الدراسة إلى البحث عن موضع الوسائط المتعددة في قسم اللغات الأجنبية. إذ أن المزاوجة بين الوسائل البصرية (الراديو، التلفزة، الفيديو، والصور) و تكنولوجيا الإعلام والاتصال (الكمبيوتر، الأنترنت، والاتصال عبر الإيميل) يمكن أن تطور القدرات الثقافية واللسانية لدى الطلبة. وتعد هذه الوسائل فعالة أيضا في تدريس الأدب الأجنبي حيث إن سلوك الشخصيات ومعتقداتهم وحياتهم اليومية يمكن تصويرها للطلبة عبر الأفلام والصور. فبالرغم من إدراك الأساتذة والطلبة الجزائريين لأهمية دمج تقنيات السمع البصري في التدريس، إلا أن درجة استعمالها مازالت محدودة. ويمكن أن يكون هذا ناجما عن عدم توفر الوقت الكافي والحاجة للجهد الإضافي، وكذا عدم الإلمام بتطور وسائل التكنولوجيا، مع صعوبة إنشاء مناهج لتدريس الثقافة الأجنبية، والذي يعتمد على هذه الوسائل الحديثة. ومن ثمّ وجب التركيز في المستقبل على تكوين أساتذة اللغة الانجليزية في مجال الإعلام الآلي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الوسائل السمعية البصرية، التكنولوجيا، تكنولوجيا الإعلام والاتصال، الثقافة، الأدب، اللغة الأجنبية

Introduction:

Technology is becoming increasingly important in humans' professional life, and learners are using it more and more. In the light of this, training in the practical application of technology to teaching FLs is much needed at universities nowadays. Technology with the help of audio-visual aids (pictures, graphs, models, charts, maps, radio, television, record player, video, etc.) can provide a great number of programmes originating from different cultures and different language communities, and deliver them to our homes and classes. Thus, since teaching FL is closely related to acquiring its cultural background, and culture is one of the aspects that a foreign literary text reflects (FL learners can learn various cultural features, thoughts, behaviours, customs, and beliefs, of other societies through these texts), the unity of technology and visual materials factors can ensure a successful teaching/learning environment for such a purpose. The term 'technology,' in this research, refers to the use of systems that rely on computer chips, digital applications, and networks in all of their forms. These systems are not limited to the commonly recognized desktop and laptop computers: the different electronic devices these days include an embedded computer chip of some sort (DVD players, data projectors, interactive whiteboards, etc.), mobile devices that employ a computer at their core (cell phones, and personal digital assistants [PDAs], MP3 players, etc.) can occupy a central role in language teaching/learning in the coming years. So, this research studies the place of technology and audio-visual aids integration into the Algerian University and the degree of their use among FL teachers.

A. Aims of the Study

The present study covers many aims. Firstly, it tries to raise FL teachers/learners awareness of the importance of teaching/learning culture in the FL class and improving the various teaching materials for this purpose. Secondly, it aims at testing the frequency and the ability of teachers use of audio-visual materials for teaching culture. Thirdly, the present enquiry highlights the role of technology in teaching culture in the literature class. Fourth, studying the various techniques and ways of using audio-visual materials in teaching culture is also one of the objectives of this research. Finally, the present study aims at explaining the need to include audio-visual aids in teaching FL and literature syllabus, and to devote enough time for their use over the annual curriculum.

B. Research Questions

The problem that this research raises is do EFL teachers, at the Algerian University, seek to improve their teaching materials for teaching culture in the literature class through depending on audio-visual aids and technology? To tackle this problem, many questions can be dealt with:

1. Do literature teachers use authentic materials for introducing cultural elements conveyed by literary texts?

2. Do audio-visual materials motivate and help FL learners to understand the cultural features in literary works?
3. Are teachers able to use successfully audio-visual aids in their literature classes?
4. Are FL teachers familiar with technology development concerning the invention of new teaching materials?
5. What is the students reaction to technology integration into teaching literature?

Review of Literature

Audio-visual aids and teaching culture/FL are closely related and many scholars agree on this view. They play an effective role in enhancing the students' ability of communication. The teacher can show the learners films and ask them to write about them. With the use of these audio-visual aids, classroom teaching can be converted into a very joyful learning experience¹. The use of audio-visual aids also helps in better retention of the content: usually when we hear something we tend to forget it within a specific time span. However, when it is seen, it can be remembered for a longer time. Hinst (1971) suggests the following diagram to assert the importance of integrating visual aids in the FL classroom:

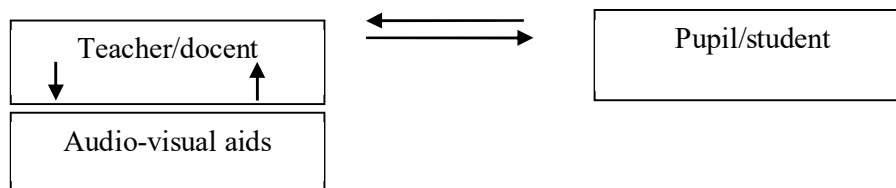


Figure.1: Audio-visual aids in the FL classroom²

Another study, made by Benediktov (1956), shows the effectiveness of films and tape recordings on the mechanics of expression and retention of active vocabulary. Also, Kurz (1959) worked on developing effective teaching methods using silent films, sound films, and filmstrips. Furthermore, a thorough analysis of the experiments in new methods was made by the Ministry of Education, and the schools were encouraged to intensify the use of mechanical aids in teaching³.

Smith (2009) proves deeply the effectiveness of film as a tool for teaching the culture and civilization of countries. He thinks: *"The history teacher could show a seven part series on The Seven Wonders of the World to give a visual context that no textbook with illustrations ever could accomplish."*⁴. Moreover, Fain (2004) argues that including popular culture from fiction, films, and television will make the educational process more meaningful for students. In this way, they can relate the world in which they live to what they learn (ibid: 13). Meinhof (1998) also dealt deeply with the topic of "cultural learning as media literacy" where he believes that news texts are part of what a particular culture thinks of, and show a hierarchy of values rather than a

transparent record of events in the world. He thinks that operas can give us stories of the strains of everyday life in an underlying cycle of conversations and gossip⁵.

The value of audio-visual materials in teaching literary texts has been proved by many researchers. Kyei-Blankson and Traore (2011), for example, conducted an investigation on the effectiveness of integrating audio-visual instruction in analyzing Chinua Achebe's novel, *Things Fall Apart*. They argued that using literature in combination with the multiple technologies in the FL classroom made it easier for the students to understand the material which was initially construed as difficult to grasp⁶. In addition, Dexter- Sigan *et al.*, (date unknown) add that the students are not motivated to learn literature because of their lack of enough background on language vocabulary. So, they believe that only through integrating multiple technologies in the literature classroom, this complexity will be reduced⁷.

However, the successful integration of visual materials into the FL classroom needs some methods and techniques. Brown *et al.*, (1977) suggest a systems approach to teaching FL; they sum up this as follows: "*Educational technology, therefore, is currently viewed as a total systems approach to education, incorporating hardware, course materials, and instructional and management techniques.*"⁸ The systematic approach is based on setting aims as a starting point that is based on the classroom circumstances. It also gives importance to assessment to improve the learning results. Gerlach and Ely (1971) explain deeply the elements of a systematic course of teaching (see figure 2):

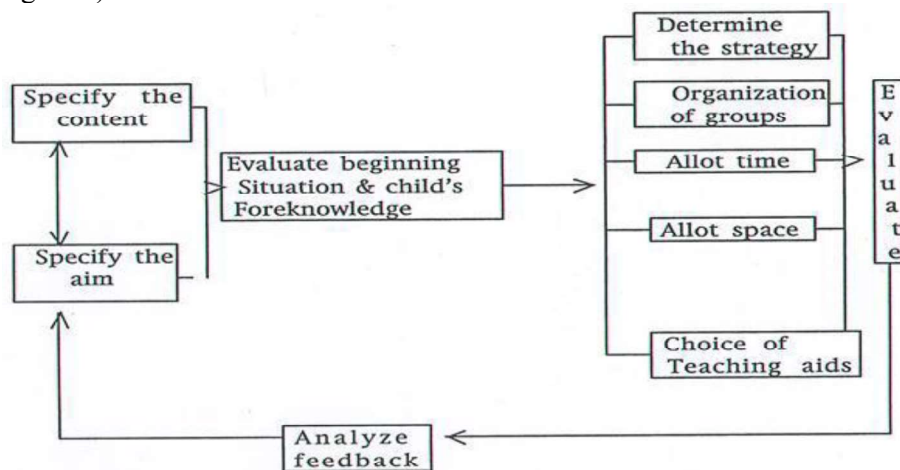


Figure .2: The elements of a systematic course of teaching⁹

So, the approach creates a system of class working with the use of visual materials; it focuses on unifying the role of both the course content and the classroom organization. The allotted time and spaces gain a big part in the approach with feedback analysis. However, the choice of the appropriate

method is affected by the teaching/learning field (the teachers' objectives, the students' level and their age) where teachers have to be eclectic to choose the successful techniques that differ from one type of audio-visual aid to another. Visual materials can be supported by media facilities and the Internet. Computer-assisted language learning (CALL) emerged with the advancement of computer technologies in the early 1950s when the first computer was invented. In the late 50s and early 60s, universities began to create local area networks (LANs) on their campuses. These networks allowed computers to communicate with one another and helped to hasten the transfer and exchange of information. Later, CALL has moved beyond the use of computer programs to adopt the utilization of the Internet and web-based tools. Consequently, access to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has become widespread. In the 1990s, the term 'Technology Enhanced Language Learning' (TELL) appeared in response to the growing of ICT. Through the expanding use of networked computers that provide access to the (WWW), teachers have opportunities for creating better instructional material to teach language and culture¹⁰. Lee (1998) also conducted a research on the effectiveness of acquiring cultural knowledge via on-line newspapers and intercultural exchanges via on-line chat rooms. She believes that one of the main reasons for employing the Internet is to provide increased opportunities to practice and to use the TL in communicative (cultural) situations outside the classroom: this can be ensured either through 'asynchronous communication' provided via e-mail or via the 'synchronous' interaction created through live chat rooms¹¹. Also, Leloup and Ponterio (2003) believe that from a sociocultural perspective, CALL can provide natural, meaningful, and realistic language production and reception between and among native and nonnative speakers of the TL¹².

Hence, instructional technology has become a very necessary tool, after textbooks, in teaching literature. The rapid development of technology led to the appearance of word processors, presentation software, multimedia, hypermedia, drill and practice programs, the Internet, and other procedures which pervaded the world of teaching FL(s). The role of technology devices, mainly films, appears in transmitting literary texts contents easily to the FL learners. With the help of computers, films, CD, DVD, MP3, and the Internet, it becomes easier for the students to get enough background on the cultural aspects of the foreign country and its people's behavior mentioned implicitly in the literary text¹³. In 1995, the first completely virtual university in the world was formed – it is the *Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC)* (see figure.3). So, the educational environment is the virtual space of a computer screen instead of the classroom.

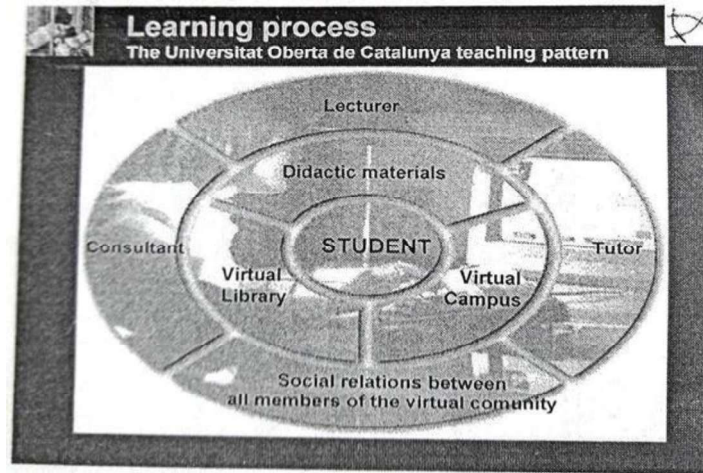


Figure. 3: The first virtual university in the world, *Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC)*¹⁴

Audio-visual materials, especially films, ensure an acoustic and visual image about the characters' behavior and the story setting. Here, Kramsch thinks that the beliefs and intentions of all characters are embedded in the beliefs and intentions of each student, as well as those of the author whilst the classroom discussion¹⁵. So, the proficient literature teacher is the one who is able to integrate the appropriate audio-visual aid to transmit this image to his/her students.

The Research Method

A. Research Design and Participant Selection:

To answer the research questions and to tackle the problematic, the present enquiry has followed an experimental method. It has been based on both qualitative and quantitative approaches of research. We tried to experiment the impact of using video for teaching a literary work: we described the teaching/learning situation depending on cultural features, and the chosen work is the play of *The Room* by Harold Pinter. The selection of this work has not been haphazard since it contains various cultural features that the students can discover: the characters' inner and external struggles reflect the nature of the social/cultural characteristics of the working-class group in the 20th century. To be clear, even the characters silence and monologue can interpret their cultural behaviour. The chosen level of the study is 2nd year licence at Ouargla University. The choice of this level has two reasons: (1) at 1st year level, literature courses represent an introduction to literary texts without a deep concentration on analysing stories while this is not the case in 2nd year. (2) The module of "theatre" is taught at 3rd year level, and the students might have background on cultural issues in foreign plays, especially that theatre is considered as the main source of social/cultural features. Consequently, the results of our experiment would not be reliable since we needed the students

to be as a white page which we could deal with to fill it with foreign cultural models depending on audio-visual materials.

B. Data Collection:

The research has been supported by questionnaires for both the learners and the teachers. The learners' questionnaire was administered to the students of Ouargla University (the same 2nd year students with whom the experiment has been realized). 100 copies of the questionnaire were distributed, but only 90 of them were given back. The questionnaire was designed to evaluate the role of their visual/aural senses in learning FLs. Also, it dealt with the frequency of using audio-visual material themselves outside the classroom or with their teachers inside it. The teachers were also tested via their questionnaire which focuses on checking their habit of depending on audio-visual aids to teach FL and cultural issues in the literature class. The questionnaire copies were given to literature teachers from different Algerian Universities. This variation results from the intention of reaching acceptable number of the teachers that can ensure reliable results. The questionnaire was administered to 40 teachers of literature, but only thirty-five of them gave back the copies.

Findings

From the results of the students' questionnaire, it is noticed that nearly all the students use audio-visual materials to learn English at home, and just a few of them do not: maybe, they are not affected by technology and prefer reading books. However, the majority of them depends on YouTube and ignores the role of TV and radio. Hence, the Internet has become very necessary in the learner's life where most of them also prefer reading online newspapers instead of the ordinary ones. In order to test their awareness of using songs to acquire the culture of foreign countries, the students were questioned on this point. The majority of them like listening to songs for fun or enriching their vocabulary. However, no one of them is conscious about their role in transmitting foreign cultural features. What could be noticed from the students' responses is that they prefer watching films instead of reading the literary works as they do with pictorial novels/plays instead of the ordinary ones. Thus, audio-visual learning is more supported by the students instead of the traditional one. The graphs below present the results of some chosen questions from the students' questionnaire:

Question 01: What are the kinds of audio-visual aids do you use to learn English at home?

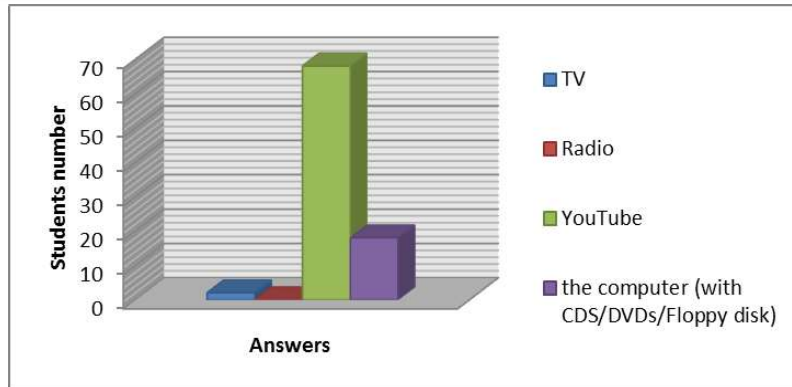


Figure.4: Kinds of audio-visual materials used by the students to learn English at home

Question 02: which kind of newspapers do you prefer?

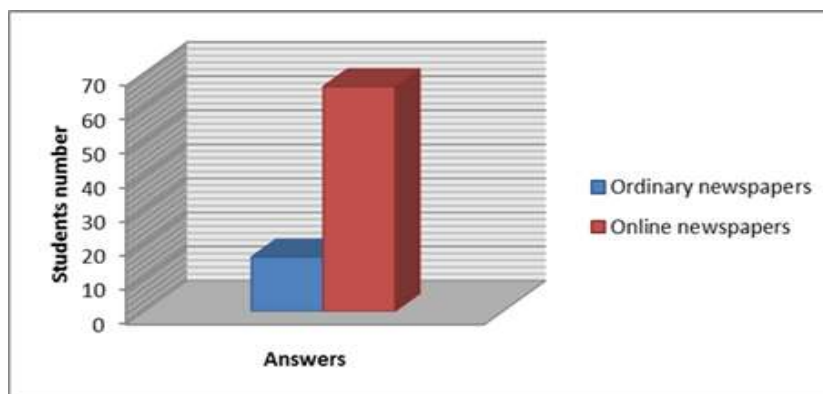


Figure.5: Kinds of the students' preferred newspapers

Question 03: When your teacher asks you to read and analyse a novel/play, do you prefer to read it or to watch it as a movie?

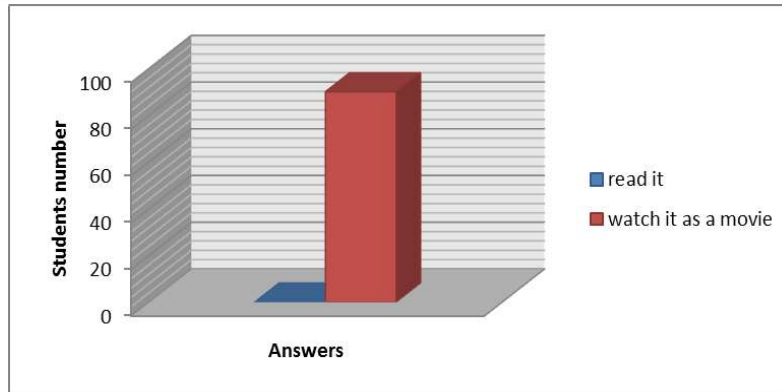


Figure. 06: Reading a novel/play, or watching it as a movie.

The teachers' questionnaire reveals that although the majority of the teachers acknowledge the importance of integrating audio-visual materials into the FL classroom, more than half of them do not use these materials in their courses. In addition, even those who use them, they rarely do so, and most of them depend only on the overhead projector. Most of the teachers still follow the traditional method in teaching literature since more than half of them stated that using audio-visual materials in teaching literary texts is not important. The following graphs explain these results deeply:

Question 01: Do you use audio-visual aids in your classroom?

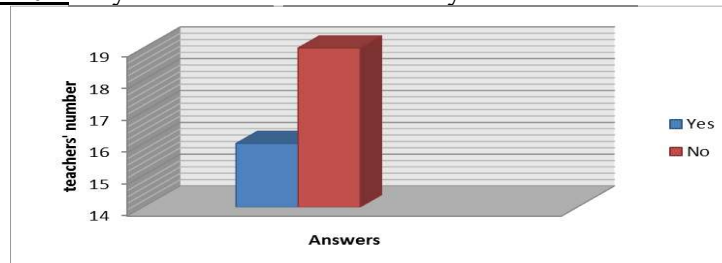


Figure. 07: The teachers use of audio-visual aids in the classroom.

Question 02: How often do you use audio-visual aids in the classroom?

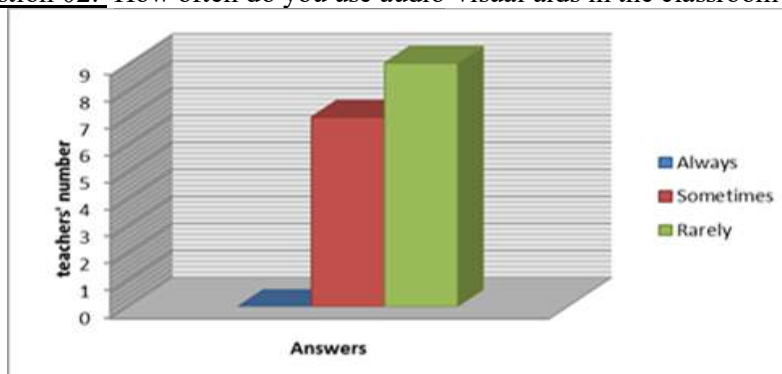


Figure.08: The frequency of using audio-visual materials in the classroom

Question. 03: Which kinds of audio-visual materials do you use?

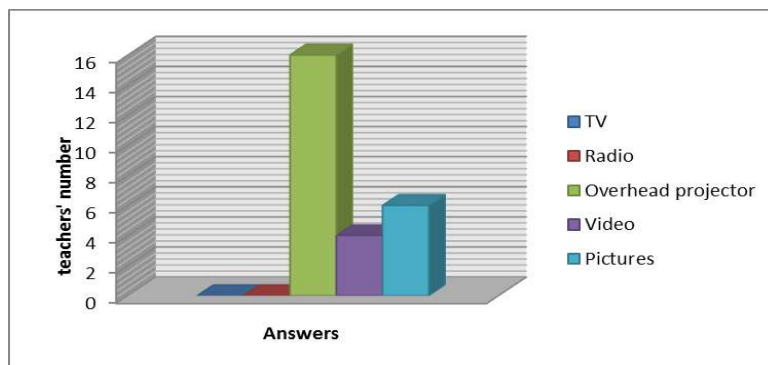


Figure. 09: The kinds of audio-visual materials used by the teachers

Question 04: As a literature teacher, did you try to teach literary works using any kind of audio-visual aids?

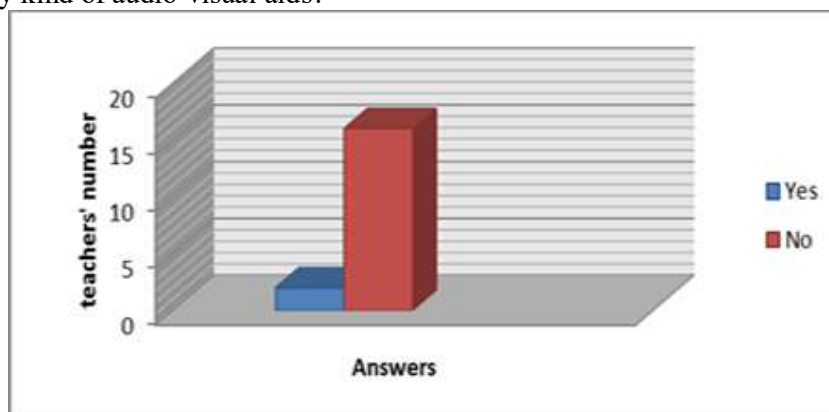


Figure.10: The teachers use of audio-visual aids to teach literary works

Question. 05: Why?

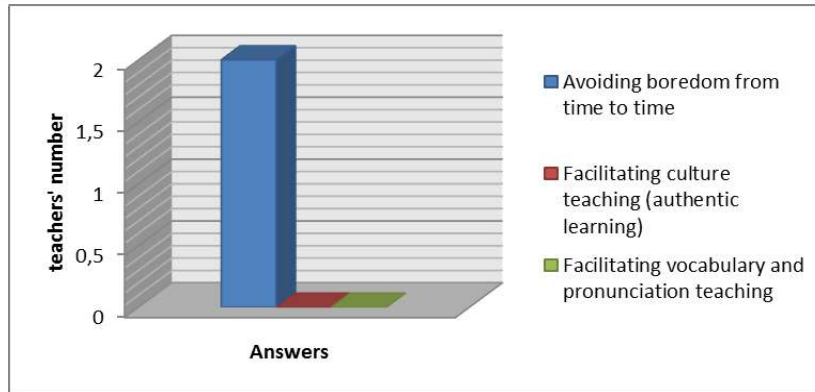


Figure.11: The causes of using of audio-visual aids to teach literary works
Moreover, the questioned teachers said that they do not care about choosing pictorial books for their students, and even those who tried to integrate films in their classes, it was just for avoiding boredom from time to time. When they were asked about the obstacles that ban them from using visual aids, most of them said that it is a matter of time/efforts consumption, and the number of the ensured overhead projectors is not enough (wasting time to wait their turn).

Discussion

According to the research results, it is noticed that literature teachers do not use authentic materials for introducing cultural elements in literary texts. This appears via their reactions when they expressed their preference of preparing a lesson in the traditional class because of the easiness of this process instead of integrating technology. So, for them, it is a matter of much efforts and time consuming. In analyzing the teachers' responses to the questions about having the habit of presenting their literature sessions in the media laboratory, and about using audio-visual materials to teach different literary works, the majority of them said that they follow the traditional method of teaching literature. However, those who use videos of novels and plays consider them just as a way of avoiding boredom from time to time. FL teachers do not try to be familiar with technology development concerning the invention of new teaching materials as comparison with their students. This is proved by their lack of eagerness to vary their teaching methods via depending on the language laboratory where the majority of them deny the presentation of their lessons in it. When they were asked about the obstacles that ban them from using visual aids, most of them said that it is a matter of time/efforts consumption, and the number of the ensured overhead projectors is not enough (wasting time to wait their turn).

Conclusion

After inventing TV, radio, the overhead projector, tape recorders, ICT/CALL have continued the revolution of technology by introducing the computer and

the Internet which have played an effective role in transmitting cultural issues to learners in the FL classroom. In other words, the students have become able to contact native speakers from different countries via e-mail chatting, or through social media communication where they could be provided by an authentic feedback about the FL/FC basic aspects. In order to teach culture successfully, teachers need to set clear and achievable goals. Establishing these goals requires designing a cultural syllabus that is formed by a list of cultural topics and supported by audio-visual materials. That is to say, teachers need to decide on appropriate methodology, materials, and techniques for fostering the students' cultural knowledge and awareness. The students' questionnaire shows that the learners are aware of the importance of these materials for learning English (in spite that they ignore their role in teaching FC where they use them just for acquiring vocabulary and pronunciation). However, the Algerian teachers are less eager to renew and improve their teaching materials and techniques. This results from their belief that the integration of such materials is a matter of time and efforts consuming. In addition, some of them may be afraid of technology so that it would be difficult for them to cope with such a crucial progress. Hence, the focus in the future is needed to be made on training teachers in the field of computer science (i.e. teachers have to get a diploma in both English and computer science). Moreover, it is needed to twin the Algerian University with the foreign ones where English is taught in order to create a direct chat with teachers/students to exchanges both the different cultural behavior and the teaching experiences in the domain of multimedia technology. So, the present study can lead the researchers in the field of teaching culture to work on different topics. Here, the following questions can be asked: what are the ways of motivating EFL teachers in order to integrate audio-visual media into their classes? What are the adequate methods of training FL teachers in computer science? How would be a syllabus with multimedia technology?

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