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The American University in Cairo
School of Humanities and Liberal Arts

CULTURE IN AFL NOVICE CLASSROOM: TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS, TEACHING
TECHNIQUES, AND ASSESSEMENT

A Thesis Submitted to
The Department of Applied Linguistics

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

By
Amera Mohamed Eid Abdalhafez

Under the supervision of Dr. Dalal Aboelseoud

December/2018

ABSTRACT

The teaching of cultural content in the foreign language classroom has received a great deal of attention throughout the past few decades. The role of culture in the L2 classroom has been investigated and studied from different perspectives. This study investigates teachers' perceptions of teaching culture in the Arabic as a foreign language novice classroom, in addition to how Arabic as foreign language teachers introduce and assess culture. The aim of this study is to explore the current teaching practices regarding cultural content in the novice classroom, in order to determine what is needed for better teaching practices that can improve the Arabic as a foreign language learner's intercultural communicative competence.

The data collected for this study consisted of an online questionnaire, observations of Arabic as a foreign language novice classroom, and teachers' interviews. Qualitative and quantitative analysis of the findings revealed that Arabic as foreign language teachers have positive perceptions about teaching culture in the novice classroom. Although they consider teaching culture to be as important as teaching language, they use relatively few techniques for introducing culture such as culture notes, tasks and projects. For cultural resources, they rely mainly on the textbook cultural content or the spontaneous cultural content.

Moreover, there are many challenges that affect teaching culture at the novice level, such as the availability of ready-made cultural content and activities, and also the time factor. In regard to assessing culture, however, while Arabic as foreign language teachers do assess the language use appropriateness, they struggle in assessing the cultural perspectives, and they have limited techniques for assessing cultural knowledge.

Keywords: AFL Classroom, Teaching Culture, Teachers' perspectives, Culture, Arabic, ICC

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USED ABBREVIATIONS

IC: Inter cultural

FL: Foreign Language

NL: Native Language

TL: Target Language

MSA: Modern Standard Arabic

ECA: Egyptian Colloquial Arabic

AFL: Arabic as a Foreign Language

ICC: Intercultural Communicative Competence

T AFL: Teaching Arabic as a Foreign Language

I. Introduction

In L2 classrooms, teaching culture is as important as teaching language, especially if teachers are targeting an effective L2 learning. However, since culture is a broad term to be defined, and all of its different aspects could be included in the L2 classroom, Kramsch (2001) stated that “Cultural awareness must be viewed both as enabling language proficiency and as being the outcome of reflection on language proficiency” (page. 8). Moreover, Brown (1994) stated that “A language is a part of a culture and a culture is a part of a language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture” (page 165).

There have been many debates, theories, and efforts in the history of the development of the field of foreign language teaching. In line with the literature, we can see that teaching a foreign language has undergone many changes in the process of attaining its current shape. If one examines this literature over its history, one can see clearly how language learning has changed from learning the language as a set of “grammatical rules” by the grammar translation method, to the audiolingual method, which views language from the behaviorists’ point of view as “stimulus and response” (Rifkin, 2003, p.167), to the communicative approach, which introduces the other elements of the learning process, such as the basic communication processes.

As revealed in the history of language learning, there was an abstract view of the language, and the old views ignored the fact that language and culture were two sides of the same coin. Fortunately, teachers have come to a point at which knowledge of the interconnectedness of language and culture has become axiomatic, as cited in Hinkel (1999).

Cutshall (2012) claimed that “the true content of the foreign language course is not the grammar and vocabulary of the language, but the cultures expressed through that language”. Currently, the literature that deals with teaching foreign languages is more concerned with the role of culture in the language content and classroom practices. It is not a trend as much as it is a return to the reality of the culture as a main component in linguistic knowledge, and as one of the skills that should be taught and evaluated in classroom practices.

Since teachers cannot separate language from culture, teachers should admit the importance of both in the communication process. Language consists of codes that reflect many things about the speaker, such as his culture, region, beliefs, music, and diet.

Language use affects cross-cultural communication. M. Gass & Selinker (2008), noted that teachers have some expectations about students, and the effect is similar to what happens when people from different culture or languages speak or interact, as they often have certain expectations and produce stereotyped reactions. For example, we may find ourselves making judgments about other people based on their language. It turns out that many stereotypes of people from other cultures (e.g., rudeness, unassertiveness) are based on patterns of non-native speech” (page, 3).

A. The Rationale of the Study

Arabic as a foreign language is very challenging, both for teachers and novice students, especially when the students are deprived of the benefits of observing, exploring, and speaking the language within the target culture. This occurs when students attempt to learn the target language outside of the Middle East (e.g., in western settings), or in those regions in which the dominant culture is not Arabic, or even in native Arabic settings that do not allow students to communicate or live within the culture of the target language.

Moreover, there are some non-language factors that affect second language acquisition, such as age, aptitude, motivation, attitude, and socio-psychological factors which could affect the language L2 learning process. This means that there are other dimensions with which the FL teachers must deal in their L2 classrooms. In other words, teachers not only have to introduce linguistic and cultural content, but also, they must put in consideration other factors which could affect the course content, activities, and classroom practices. As a result, the challenges of teaching novices occur due to various factors. In addition, the lack of success with the L2 may be related to the learner (Gass & Selinker, 2008).

B. Statement of the Research Problem

These are not the only factors that affect the L2 learning process. There are also other factors related to the teacher, the teaching materials, and the teaching methods. With all of these challenges, the teachers' ability to pay attention to the cultural component, think of it as a fifth skill, or even invest some of their class time on it. By exploring the teachers' perceptions about teaching culture, many of the factors that affect the teaching of culture will be revealed, which will pave the way for better understanding of classroom practices and challenges.

Teachers in language classrooms are the main players whose actions and beliefs could affect everything in the learning process. Teachers' perceptions play a very important role in the language classroom for all of the subjects, as these perceptions turn into actions and are reflected in the teachers' classroom practices, which are the main factors in the learning process.

Sercu & Bandura (2005) in their research on teachers' beliefs found that "teachers' perceptions directly affect the way in which they shape their teaching practice" (page 75). Moreover, it has been the subject of numerous studies in different fields, and they are essential for improving the learning experience for all learners.

However, teachers are not expected to defend or advocate specific social behaviors or beliefs. Their neutrality is a controversial issue because the question arises: are teachers truly able to separate their religion, culture, and identity from their professional activity?

In fact, language teachers are considered the “spokespeople” of their native language and culture, or at least this is how language learners might see them. Their main role is to introduce and explain their native language and culture, in addition to giving the language learners the opportunity to explore the new culture. White (2011) stated, “By default, it has consistently fallen on the foreign language professor to impart his or her knowledge of the target culture during foreign language instruction” (page 1). Metcalf (n.d) stated, “Teacher neutrality has been defined in such a way as to place upon the teacher the responsibility of being restrained in his expression of personal opinion.” When teachers introduce their native culture, there can be many challenges for both students and teachers.

The ways that teachers introduce and assess culture affect their L2 learners. The teaching techniques should introduce the knowledge, and the assessments should test this knowledge, but can teachers assess everything that is said or introduced in the classroom, in order to determine what the students know and understand? (“How do you know your students are learning?” n.d.). Teachers need to know the importance of what they have introduced, and how they introduced it.

Since the cultural component has great importance in the language classroom, it should be assessed alongside the language component. There are many techniques that teachers use to introduce and assess culture, such as culture capsules, cultural notes, tasks, and projects, but what should teachers do about assessments? How can teachers assess culture? And what should they really assess of the classroom culture content?

In the last two decades, assessing individuals' intercultural learning in language education received a great deal of attention through the language standards, which aim to guarantee a good quality in all aspects of language learning and teaching. For example, the National Standards for Foreign Language Education was first published in the USA in 1996; and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages appeared in 2001.

Byram (1997) stated that there should not be a generalizable syllabus, neither cultural nor linguistic, as learners have from different backgrounds, ages, institutions, purposes and so on. It is the same case for assessment of their success, as it should take account of the students' origins, as well as the culture and language they are learning. This illustrates that cultural content and assessment vary in the ICC.

Moreover, Borghetti (2017) stated that the importance of assessing intercultural competence can be advocated for a number of reasons:

- ICC development could be one of the educational aims of language learning and teaching, so it is logical to assess language students' intercultural learning.
- Since "teaching involves assessment" according to Rea-Dickins (2004, page. 249), then ICC assessment could increase students' self-awareness of their learning and learning strategies and encourage them to assume responsibility for their intercultural learning.
- Current national and international language education policies address the issue of assessing intercultural competence because assessment is "part of the process of passing the values which are fundamental to the society from one generation to the next" (Byram, 2009, page 222).

- Due to the 'washback' effect which refers to the impact of testing on curriculum design, teaching practices, and learning behaviors (Sercu, 2004), assessing ICC can take on a strategic function as curricula planners and teachers have not yet fully considered ICC conceptual principles.
- Lessard-Clouston (1992) claimed that assessment of ICC communicates to students that intercultural learning is important, and possibly has an effect on their motivation towards intercultural learning.
- Hamp-Lyons (1997) stated that assessment has an effect on the test-takers from a socio-political, an educational, or a personal point of view.
- Assessing intercultural competence is important for different social actors, not only teachers and learners.

This study will attempt to explore AFL teachers' practices and perceptions at the novice level regarding these issues.

C. Purpose of the Study

This study explores AFL teachers' perceptions about teaching culture in the AFL novice classroom. It highlights the importance of introducing cultural components in the development of Arabic learners' intercultural competence.

The study examines teachers' current views about their use of cultural components in the classroom, their views about which factors affect the teaching of culture, which teaching methods they employ, and which activities and tasks they use in the classroom. This will enable AFL teachers to better understand the challenges that teachers face when introducing and assessing culture in the novice classroom.

This study helps to explore the challenges of teaching culture at the novice level in order to enable other teachers or researchers to introduce ideas that may help to overcome these challenges and enable AFL students to experience the best classroom practices in order to enhance their intercultural competence.

Moreover, this will help teachers to recognize the challenges involved, so they can more appropriately plan their classes to balance the linguistic component with the cultural component. As a result, this research could fill in some important gaps such as exploring the actual AFL teachers' perspectives, practices towards cultural assessment, and teaching techniques. This research will be examined in the light of a variety of studies, and research in the field of foreign language learning and teaching.

D. The Research Questions

In order to improve the teaching practices of culture in AFL novice classrooms on a day-to-day basis, this research explores teachers' perceptions about teaching culture in the novice AFL classroom by answering the following main questions:

- What are the teachers' perceptions about teaching culture in a novice AFL classroom? (Exploratory question)
- How do Arabic teachers introduce culture in the novice Arabic classroom? (Descriptive question)
- How do teachers assess culture in the novice Arabic classroom? (Descriptive question)

E. Structure of the study

The present study, "Culture in AFL Classroom; Teachers' perceptions, Teaching Technique, and Assessment" is presented in five chapters.

The first chapter provides an elaborate introduction to the topic of the study. It provides the rationale for the study, the statement of the problem, the justification of the problem, and the need for such a study. This chapter also discusses the aims and objectives and the scope and limitations of the work.

The second chapter deals with an extensive description and discussion of the literature related to teaching culture in the language classroom, especially in the AFL classroom, the relationship that culture has with other concepts of language learning, such as communication, assessment, and teaching techniques, is also examined. In addition to the challenges that teachers face in teaching culture are also discussed.

The third chapter deals with the study's methodology. This part deals with the required information about the study's participants and the tools involved.

The fourth chapter provides a detailed analysis and discussion of the results of the questionnaires given to the teachers, an analysis of the teachers' interviews, a description of the classroom observations, and the findings derived from those observations.

The fifth chapter presents the findings of the study, the pedagogical implications, limitations and delimitations of the study, and suggestions for further research.

F. Definitions of Constructs

Culture: The definition of culture used in this study is the one provided by the National Standards: "the philosophical perspectives, behavioral practices, and products of a society," and the definition provided by the National Center for Cultural Competence: the "integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, languages, practices, beliefs, values, customs, courtesies, rituals, manners of interacting and roles, relationships and expected

behaviors of a racial, ethnic, religious or social group; and the ability to transmit the above to succeeding generations.”

Intercultural Communicative Competence: The definition of intercultural communicative competence used in this study is the one provided by Deardorff (2006): “the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes.”

“Intercultural communication competence is comprised of knowledge, skills, and motivation needed to interact effectively and appropriately with persons from different cultures” Wiseman (2001).

Cultural knowledge: “learning the code system, we acquire knowledge about the subtle differences within a given group and gradually gain a sense of familiarity” according to Hansen (2003)

G. Significance of the Study

On a practical level, this study will help AFL teachers to understand recent actual perceptions of teaching culture, and whether culture is presented in the novice classroom. Moreover, this study will discuss the ways in which culture can be assessed, so teachers can improve their classroom practices. Moreover, teachers will have the opportunity to explore the recent challenges of teaching culture, so they can address them appropriately in their classroom planning.

On a theoretical level, this study may lead researchers to better understand the most commonly used techniques in teaching culture, the challenges these techniques present, and the reasons that they are challenging, from the teachers’ point of view.

H. Availability and Accessibility of Past Research

Past research is available at the AUC library and via the Internet.

I. Plan for Obtaining Permission to Use Subjects/Facilities

An IRB was successfully obtained

J. Technical Skill Needed to Perform the Study

All of the technical skills were acquired during the Research Methods course.

K. Risk of Things Going Wrong with Contingency Plans

For avoiding the self-report procedure, interviews or observations are used for more reliable results.

L. Potential for Novelty of the Possible Findings

The novelty of the possible findings might apply to this exploratory study.

II. Literature Review

A. Introduction

This study attempts to explore AFL teachers' perceptions about teaching culture in the AFL novice classroom. Another aim of the study is to investigate how culture is introduced and assessed in FL classrooms, with a focus on the AFL novice classroom. This chapter discusses the relevant research regarding culture in FL classrooms, starting with a historical background, teaching culture, teachers' perceptions, teaching techniques, and the challenges of teaching culture. Moreover, culture in AFL teaching, in addition to cultural assessment, will be discussed.

B. Culture

1. Definition:

Recently, the teaching of culture in foreign language classrooms has had three main issues; first, the definition of culture; second, culture in the 21st century language standards; and third, issues regarding teaching culture in the foreign language classroom.

It is difficult to define culture, especially since it has many dimensions. The Cambridge English Dictionary defines culture in a general way: "the way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time". Brown (2007) defined culture as "the 'glue' that binds a group of people together" (p. 188). In the field of teaching a

second language, teaching culture is a process of “...teaching people how to use somebody else's linguistic code in somebody else's cultural context” as stated in (Kramersch, 1995, p. 85).

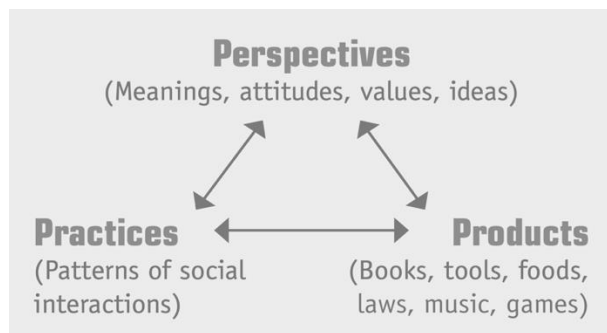
In the L2 classroom, culture is divided into two main categories. The first is the “big C” Culture, which refers to the most visible cultural aspects, such as holidays, art, literature, and food. The “little c” culture, on the other hand, is “the more invisible type of culture associated with a region, a group of people, language, etc.” (Bilash, 2011).

Some examples of “little c” culture include communication styles, verbal and non-verbal language symbols, and cultural norms, such as what is proper and improper with regards to social interactions and behavior, and so on. In fact, both types of culture should be incorporated into the second language classroom.

2. Culture in the 21st century language standards:

In the National Standards, culture is presented as the philosophical perspectives, behavioral practices, and products of a society (Cutshall, 2012, p. 33). The figure below shows the “Cultural Framework” which may sometimes be referred to as “3 Ps”:

Figure 1. Cultural Framework “3 Ps”



Practices are patterns of social interactions and behaviors, and they involve the use of products. They represent the knowledge of “what to do, when, and where” and how to interact

within a particular culture. For example: gestures and other nonverbal forms of communication, traditions related to holiday celebrations, the use of forms of discourse (e.g., use of formal vs. informal forms of address), meal times, table manners, playing behaviors, socially appropriate behaviors for interviewing, dating, weddings, funerals, etc. Products are the tangible or intangible creations of a particular culture, and they reflect that culture's perspectives. Tangible products include: paintings, a cathedral, a piece of literature, a pair of chopsticks, musical instruments, food, sports equipment, toys, household items, pottery, and political cartoons.

Examples of intangible products include: an oral tale; a dance; language; a sacred ritual; a system of education; a law; literary styles/genres; social, economic, and political institutions (e.g., the educational system of a country).

Perspectives are the philosophical outlooks, meanings, attitudes, values, beliefs, ideas that underlie the cultural practices and products of a society. They represent a culture's view of the world. For instance: the importance of family, the value associated with personal privacy, the value of sports/entertainment over education, and the importance of individual freedom; and independence. Within a specific culture, a cultural product is required or justified by the underlying beliefs and values (perspectives) of that culture, and the cultural practices involve the use of that product.

In language standards, culture was defined as an “integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, languages, practices, beliefs, values, customs, courtesies, rituals, manners of interacting and roles, relationships and expected behaviors of a racial, ethnic, religious or social group; and the ability to transmit the above to succeeding generations” by the National Center for Cultural Competence as stated in (Goode, Sockalingam,

Brown, & Jones, 2000, p. 1), which mean that these cultural aspects should be incorporated in the language classroom content.

Based on this Cultural Framework, the culture's goal area includes two standards (2.1 and 2.2.):

Standard 2.1: Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied.

Standard 2.2: Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied.

The first standard focuses on understanding the cultural practices and perspectives that are revealed through the practices; the second standard focuses on understanding the products of the culture and the perspectives that are revealed through the use of these products as stated in Cutshall (2012).

3. Issues regarding teaching culture in the foreign language classroom:

In spite of the strong relationship between culture and language, there are some controversial issues regarding teaching culture in the foreign classroom. One approaches language and culture as two sides of the same coin, and the second approaches culture to be a fifth skill.

The first approach views language and culture as two sides of the same coin, since language was defined as “signs that convey meanings” by Patrikis (1988) as stated in Tran-Hoang-Thu (2010, page 4). Language is also “a system of signs that is seen as having itself a cultural value” (Kramsch, 1998, p. 3).

Therefore, human beings, who have different ages, social classes, societies, and beliefs, have different meanings to convey. These meanings reflect and express humans' different life

experiences. From a linguistic perspective, culture could be seen as existing in the background of all the language skills, vocabulary, and grammar. In a foreign language classroom, the target culture and language are developed in parallel. Brown (2001) claimed that “A language is a part of a culture and a culture is a part of a language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture.” (page, 177). Cutshall (2012) claimed that “the true content of the foreign language course is not the grammar and vocabulary of the language, but the cultures expressed through that language”. (page, 32).

Kramersch (1993) states that “Culture in language learning is not an expendable fifth skill ‘tacked on’ to the teaching of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. It is always in the background, right from the beginning, ready to unsettle the good language learners when they expect it least, making evident the limitations of their hard-won communicative competence, challenging their ability to make sense of the world around them” (page 1).

In other words, language consists of codes that reflect many things about the speaker. This could mean that culture, while not ignored, might not be seen as a separate component in L2 classroom. This approach could suggest that culture is embedded within, and assessed through, the language.

The second approach views culture as a fifth skill, which means that culture should be dealt with as a separate area. It has its own representation in the language syllabus and balances the cultural component of the textbooks or the language course content. As a result, culture has its own role as an independent component, and has representation in the assessment as well, such as cultural projects and tasks.

This view is of great importance for the learners. For instance, Peterson, Eterson, and Coltrane (2003) stated, “Teachers must allow students to observe and explore cultural interactions from their own perspectives to enable them to find their own voices in the second language speech community.” (page, 1) In other words, time should be set aside to include culture as an essential component of the L2 learning process.

As a result, many language programs today pay attention to their learners’ intercultural competence by creating a learning environment that enhances and promotes those abilities. This can be done through choice of teachers, teaching techniques, curricula, course materials, and assessments.

C. Historical Background

Currently, the literature that deals with teaching foreign languages is more concerned than ever before about the role of culture in the language content and classroom practices, because of the paradigm shift in language teaching that has come about as a result of a new and different outlook on culture that will be explained through a review of the literature.

1. The History of language learning and Culture

Traditionally in language learning, language was viewed in an abstract fashion. Fortunately, we have come to a point in which knowledge of the interconnectedness of language and culture has become axiomatic, (Ando, 1997; Harumi, 2002; Eoyang, 2003; Tanaka, 2006; Janzen, 2008; Tochon, 2009) as cited in Mekheimer (2011).

In the sixties, in the USA Lado’s (1957), Brooks’ (1964) and Nostrand’s work (1997) started the cultural pedagogy. Lado defines culture as “a structured system of patterned behavior (Lado, 1957, p.111). He suggests comparing units of two cultures from three levels: form,

meanings, and distribution. In other words: what is the cultural action, what does it mean, and on what occasions does it happen?

Brooks (1968) has suggested a distinction between formal culture and deep culture, where the formal culture refers to literature, fine arts, history, etc., whereas deep culture represents patterns of social interactions, values, attitudes, etc. This later developed as Capital C (Big C) and little c (small c) culture, as stated in Frank (2013, page 4). Nostrand (1967) presents his emergent model, which has developed comprehensive classification categories for intercultural communication. According to Hardy (2001) “in Nostrand’s model, the goals for cultural learning go beyond identifying key aspects of culture to include procedural knowledge that would enable students to observe and analyze cultural elements and patterns” (p.350).

Kramsch (1993) states that famous scholars “searched for a common universal ground of basic physical and emotional needs to make the foreign culture less threatening and more accessible to the language learner” (p.224). Meanwhile, the study of language began to emphasize the context of society and its culture under the influence of Hymes’s communicative competence (Driven and Putz, 1993). In fact, since the sixties, more attention was paid to the different aspects of culture, and this was presented in teaching foreign language culture.

Risager (2007) stated that “a shift has taken place from a structuralist to a more functional and pragmatic interest in the linguistics since the 1970s” (page 11). Stern, Stern, Tarone, Stern, & Yule, (1983) has mentioned some major trends of development in the seventies, such as the new methods, and the new approaches to language curricula (page, 109). Moreover, cultural learning in the foreign language classroom became connected with the native and target societies, as the communicative approach brought an emphasis on the situational context of foreign language teaching.

In the eighties, the dynamic of culture and its contribution to the foreign language learning was considered further. Damen (1987) explains that "culture learning is a natural process in which human beings internalize the knowledge needed to function in a societal group" it may occur in the native context as enculturation or in a non-native or secondary context as "acculturation", as stated in (Lázár&Huber-Kriegler&Lussier& S. Matei&Peck, 2007, page 8). Robinson (1988) views culture as a dynamic, and he stated that "culture is not only located in cultural products and forms, but in the active lives of those who share those forms".

Moreover, many scholars were advocating integrating culture in foreign language teaching. For instance, Byram (1988) in his cultural studies, presented a model for cultural learning which is known as Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC).

This was looked at from different angles such as behavioral, social, pragmatic, or educational, and it represents the ability to use the language to communicate appropriately and effectively in a variety of social situations.

The ICC communicative competence model is constructed of four competence areas: linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic. Two of them focus on the functional aspect of communication, and the other two reflect the use of the linguistic system as stated in (Tarvin, 2015). Bagarić (2007) stated that "Recent theoretical and empirical research on communicative competence is largely based on three models of communicative competence: the model of Canale and Swain, the model of Bachman and Palmer and the description of components of communicative language competence in the Common European Framework (CEF)" (page, 94).

2. Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)

Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) is the ability to communicate in the target language and culture, and it is different from IC Intercultural Competence which refers to the person ability to communicate within his target language and culture. According to Parmenter (2003), “the concept of communicative competence has been transformed into the concept of ‘intercultural communicative competence’ (ICC)” (page, 20).

Moreover, Lázár and Čaňková, (2007) stated that “Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is seen by many language teaching professionals as an extension of communicative competence” (page, 9)

In the nineties, globalization had a huge impact on foreign language learning and teaching. English’s growing importance as an international language (EIL) demanded changes in the cultural dimension of FL classrooms.

In fact, English began to be used as a lingua franca, where speakers and non-native speakers of English are engaged in intercultural context, and they need strategies for understanding cultures and languages when they communicate, as stated in (Crozet and Liddicoat, 2000).

Recently, the development of technologies, starting with the visual tools, computers, the Internet, and continuing with social media, phone apps and applications, plays an important role in foreign language learning and teaching. Dema & Moeller (2012) claimed that that using technology “gives foreign language teachers various opportunities to create better and more effective instructional materials to teach not only the language structure, but also the target culture” (page, 82).

D. Teaching Culture

1. Teachers' Perceptions

Teaching is a complex process that has many elements, but teachers are the primary element. In fact, “no matter what kind of class a teacher teaches, he or she is typically confronted with the following kinds of tasks: selecting learning activities, preparing students for new learning, presenting learning activities, asking questions, conducting drills, checking students’ understanding, providing opportunities for practice of new items, monitoring students’ learning, giving feedback on students’ learning, reviewing and re-teaching if necessary” (Richards & Lockhart, 1994).

For this reason, the teacher is seen as the center of the learning process; he or she is the one who manages the other elements of the learning experience. In a language classroom, the teachers’ role is vital, due to the linguistic knowledge and the cultural experience that they provides to his students.

Since language teaching traditionally has been described in terms of what teachers do—such as their actions and behaviors in the classroom—and how this affects their learners, it is important to examine the teachers’ beliefs and thinking processes that affect the teachers’ own actions in the classroom.

In fact, this view of teaching involves several different dimensions, such as the cognitive, the behavioral and the affective (Richards & Lockhart, 1994). This assumption leads to the idea that what a teacher knows and believes is reflected in the framework of classroom actions. Sercu & Bandura (2005) in their research on teachers’ beliefs found that “teachers’ perceptions directly affect the way in which they shape their teaching practice” (page 75).

2. Teaching Culture in FL Classroom

Due to the importance of teaching culture, many studies have explored the issue in different language, either as a fifth skill or as a main component of linguistic studies.

The 3Ps include: what we eat, how we greet each other, the clothes we wear, the games we play, in addition to the ‘popular culture,’ such as movies, popular music, and television” as stated in (Cockey, 2014, page .4). In fact, culture is a broad term, and each of its various aspects can be included in the L2 classroom.

In her article, Özüorçun (2014) discussed the teaching of culture as a fifth skill through comparing the Turkish and American cultures. Her argument for teaching culture and language suggests that, “in many situations, it is difficult to simply translate one language into another language especially when either of the languages lacks these words or expressions.” She supported her article by giving examples of the misunderstandings in cross-cultural situations, expressions, and words between the United States culture and the Turkish culture.

For instance, “Turkish people raise their eyebrows with a slight upward tilt to signal “no,” but Americans, in contrast, use the same gestures and body movements to indicate surprise or pleasure” as stated in (Ashton, 2000).

Moreover, there are words that are used in only one culture. For instance, in Turkey, the word “*abla*” is used by siblings to refer to an elder sister, and it is used to refer to the same meaning in Arabic as well. In the United States, the word “*prom*” refers to a graduation party, especially for high school students. As another example, the word “*owl*” has different connotations in different cultures, Hong (2008) stated that, in the United States, the owl is regarded as being wise, but in Hindi and Urdu the owl is regarded as being stupid. In the Arabic culture, owls are believed to be bad omens, and if the owl hoots, people believe that their

misfortune will be greater (Kabil, 2014). These examples highlight the role of culture in the classroom, and how teachers should explain words or phrases with their associated cultural information (Özüorçun, 2014). This clearly supports the idea that language and culture are inseparable.

We should teach culture with language because “my culture is not your culture.” In different languages, there are differences between cultures, there are “particularities of culture,” and there is also the “universality of culture.” For example, Sarigül & Ashton (2005) stated that “the Eskimos categorize ‘snow’ and give it different names according to the different types of snow. Some of the words or expressions for snow are; ‘falling snow,’ ‘snow on the ground,’ ‘fluffy snow,’ and ‘wet snow.’” Other cultures also have various words to represent one thing according to its occurrence. The Urdu language has different words for the word ‘rice,’ which appears to be a single word in English. For example, they have the following words for rice: ‘Chaval’ (uncooked rice), ‘bhat’ (boiled rice), ‘biryani’ (rice cooked with meat), and ‘zardo’ (dish of sweet rice) (Özüorçun, 2014).

The Arabic language has an expansive vocabulary that is used in the world of poetry and literature, as well as the practical life. For instance, In Arabic, there are different words to convey a different stage in the process of falling in love, such as 'hawa', which describes the initial attraction or inclining of the soul or mind towards another, and 'huyum', which is the final stage of falling in love. Another example is the words for 'camel' such as; 'Al-Harib' which is a female camel that walks ahead of the others by a great distance so that it appears to be fleeing, and “Al-Jafool” which refers to a camel that is frightened by anything as cited in (Sayed, 2015). Similar patterns can be seen in the various words for lion, sword, and desert.

Whichever direction is used in teaching it, culture is very important in communicating in a foreign language. Thanasoulas (2001) stated that “culture and communication are inseparable because culture not only dictates who talks to whom, about what, and how the communication proceeds, it also helps to determine how people encode messages, the meanings they have for messages, and the conditions and circumstances under which various messages may or may not be sent, noticed, or interpreted... Culture...is the foundation of communication.” Moreover, Chlopek (2008) stated that “to learn a language well usually requires knowing something about the culture of that language. Communication that lacks appropriate cultural content often results in humorous incidents or, worse, is the source of severe miscommunication and misunderstanding.”

Schulz (2007) stated that “Cultural knowledge and culturally appropriate communication skills play an important role in all three modes of communication: interpersonal (implying, of course, culturally appropriate interaction); interpretive (implying sufficient knowledge of the target culture to understand culture-specific meanings); and presentational (implying selection of culture-appropriate contents and use of style and register, i.e., the conscious or subconscious understanding of what can be said to whom, how and in what circumstances),” (page10).

3. Studies on Teachers’ Perceptions Concerning Teaching Culture in FL Classrooms

In reviewing the literature on teachers’ perceptions concerning teaching culture in language classes, Sercu (2005), has investigated language teachers' perceptions about the 'cultural' dimension of their work. Her study included different aspects of teaching culture in the foreign language classroom, such as: ideas on the role of culture in learning and teaching a foreign language, exploring the importance teachers assign to possible objectives of cultural teaching, teachers’ self-reporting of how often they practiced different activities related to target

language culture during their teaching time, teachers' familiarity with and the extent to which they deal with different cultural aspects in the foreign language classroom.

Rostami (2016) attempted to uncover Iranian English teachers' and learners' perceptions of teaching culture. The participants in his study were eight language teachers and 30 language learners from Iranian institutes. He used attitude questionnaires and interviews as tools in his study. The results of his research revealed that the language teachers and learners had positive attitudes toward the teaching of culture. Also, the language learners expressed that they preferred dialogue-based methods of learning about a culture over other ways, such as reading-based methods.

Derin, Zeynep, Pinar, Özlem, & Gökçe, (2009) conducted a study about Turkish EFL teachers' opinions on the intercultural approach in foreign language education. 200 Turkish teachers of English participated in their study. This study revealed that "providing knowledge and skills that the students need for foreign language learning did not appear to be the most important priority for their English teachers", this show how the teachers' perceptions affect the classroom practices.

Barzegar & Afghari (2015) studied school teachers' and university professors' perceptions about teaching culture in Isfahan, Iran, where they found that the school teachers and university professors were interested in teaching culture when teaching English as a foreign language (page, 105).

Israelsson (2016) investigated teachers' perception of the concept of intercultural competence in teaching English. The participants in her study were six English teachers of different upper secondary schools in Sweden. Of these, five taught English to upper secondary, and the other two adults taking upper secondary courses (komvux). The results suggest that the

intercultural dimension in English teaching has not been fully endorsed by the teachers due to various factors within the macro- and micro-contexts. The EFL teachers regard ICC as significant, and include it in their planning, but they do not seem to implement it as an explicit task in their actual classroom practice.

Alhashemi (2017) explored female teachers' perceptions of teaching culture in EFL classrooms at a Saudi university. The results indicate that the teachers' perceptions lean more towards promoting multicultural competence, and they support the study of the target culture.

Saglam and Gonen (2012) investigated teachers' perspectives about teaching culture in FL classrooms in a Turkish EFL context. The participants were 60 teachers who were asked about various aspects of culture and about integrating it into their classes. The results of this study revealed that the FL teachers were generally aware of the importance of teaching and integrating culture in the foreign language classroom, and they had some degree of knowledge about the aspects of the target culture. Moreover, there are some differences between teachers from different backgrounds about which aspects of the target culture to give priority, and the way in which they deal with the target culture is highly affected by the curricular considerations and limitations.

4. Techniques Used to Teach Culture

The language syllabus is the main tool that links students' expectations with teachers' goals. It also reflects the teachers' perspectives and beliefs. When cultural content in the language classroom is investigated, the focus is on the course planning, as represented in the language syllabus and as later reflected in language assessment. Teachers start their courses by selecting a textbook, or by planning their language program content.

The way the teacher divides the components of the textbook or the course materials through the semester is reflected clearly in the syllabus, since the general planning reflects not only the balance of the representation of the language skills, but also reflects the teaching philosophy and the teacher's perspectives. For instance, a communicative language course will be full of tasks, projects, and presentations. A teacher-centered classroom will clearly be different from a student-centered classroom.

When we explore how culture can be taught, we find that there are two main ways to learn culture. According to Bilash (2011), culture can be absorbed through cultural knowledge and cultural experience. First, cultural knowledge can be gained in the language classroom through a variety of tools and resources (such as guest speakers, videos, internet clips, radio reports and shows, literature, etc.), through which the students can be exposed to a large variety of culturally significant elements. Second, culture can be obtained through cultural experiences, which require personal, tangible interactions with the culture. These interactions can occur through one-on-one contacts with native speakers and trips to regions where the language is spoken (Bilash, 2011).

Moreover, Peterson & Coltrane (2003) suggested some useful ideas for presenting culture in the classroom, such as using authentic materials, proverbs, role-playing, ethnographic studies, literature, and the students' own cultural knowledge. To implement these ideas, different techniques could be used. Hughe (1994) presented a list of techniques, eight "vehicles" for teaching culture. According to Morain (1983), "The acceptance of 'Little c' culture stimulated the development of new teaching techniques". Morain mentioned some techniques that were created to teach culture, such as culture capsules, culture clusters, mini-dramas, culture assimilators, micrologues, cultoons, and audio-moto units. Chastain (1988) described methods of

teaching culture, and he made a distinction between in-class and out-of-class situations. The table below shows examples of the different techniques.

Table 2 1: Techniques for teaching culture e- Hughe 1994

Culture Capsule	Brief lectures built around one minimal difference between the target culture and the students' own culture.
Culture Cluster	Three or four closely related culture capsules, presented in order on consecutive days, and ending with a dramatic simulation, on the fifth day, which involves the students participating actively in a summary of the linguistic and cultural knowledge of the culture cluster.
Mini-drama	Several brief scenes depicting a cross-cultural misunderstanding.
Culture Assimilator	A programmed learning format that is presented with a written description of a cross-cultural encounter which engenders confusion or outright hostility in the participants.
Micrologue	The teacher selects a culturally valid text that can be read aloud to the students in one minute. After listening, the students answer questions orally.
Cultoon	This depicts a cultural misunderstanding through a one-to-four frame cartoon. Students study the cultoon while listening to the teacher read a script that describes the situation. The class discussion unravels the clues, and this leads to cultural awareness.
Audio-moto Unit	A ten-minute listening activity built into a single, culturally valid, dramatic incident. The students respond physically to taped commands, and all of the vocabulary, situations, and physical responses contribute to the cultural insights.

Recently, some techniques for teaching culture have been introduced through the internet. For example, WebQuest was designed to use learners' time well, as stated in March (1998). Another web-based activity is Culture Quest, which involves students in inquiry-based classroom projects. It allows students to explore other peoples and cultures, and it promotes better understanding and appreciation of the different cultures.

5. The Challenges of Teaching Culture

It is challenging to teach a language, and it becomes even more challenging when adding cultural components. Recently, the teaching of culture has been surrounded by many challenges for teachers and learners. Damen (1987) mentioned some reasons for the limitations of teachers' efficiency as cultural guides:

- Teachers do not know which elements of “culture” to teach.
- Few textbooks on methodology have been available to assist teachers in determining how to teach culture.

Language teachers cannot naturally teach their native culture because it is difficult to define culture and to decide which aspects of culture to teach. Moreover, most of the energy and time in the classroom is used for the grammatical and lexical aspects of the language, and culture still remains the weakest component (Lafayette, 1988).

Soontornwipast & Nilmanee (2014) investigated the factors that influence the teaching of culture and its challenges, and their study revealed some significant difficulties and problems in the teaching of culture such as: the teacher’s limited knowledge of the foreign culture, and the learners’ lack of interest in learning the foreign culture, in addition to the time factor.

E. Culture and AFL Classroom

1. Cultural AFL Textbooks

Richard (2012) stated that textbooks are a key component for any language program. In many language programs, the textbook is chosen by the language program itself, but in other language programs the textbook is selected by the language instructor. In both cases, the teachers are responsible for using the chosen textbook and for working with its language and cultural content. The teacher’s role is vital since there are no perfect textbooks or best teaching methods. There are, however, better classroom practices. This highlights clearly the crucial role which the teacher plays, since he or she is the one who has the primary responsibility for developing, improving, and creating the course, syllabus, and supporting materials.

When talking about textbooks, we are talking about ready-made language and culture content, but a language teacher should not look at this content as sufficient by itself. According to Cutshall (2012), “It is important for educators to realize that following a textbook and reading over the cultural points that pop up in the occasional sidebar is not sufficient to impart cultural knowledge to their students” (page 33).

To consider some examples of cultural content in a textbook, we can explore the cultural content of the *Al-Kitaab* textbook by Kristen Brustad, Mahmoud Al-Batal, and Abbas Al-Tonsi. This book is one of the most well-known books at United States universities, such as Georgetown University. I chose this book mainly because it has many editions, which means that it was revised and developed. In the case of the Arabic language, there are many varieties and different subcultures. This book includes MSA, ECA, and Shami Arabic, which means that it introduces a variety of different cultural components.

According to Brustad, Al-Batal, and Al-Tonsi, the “*Al-Kitaab* Arabic language textbook program uses a communicative, proficiency-oriented approach with fully integrated audiovisual media to teach modern Arabic as a living language.” In fact, this book series focuses on developing skills in Modern Standard Arabic and it gradually introduces readers to Egyptian Arabic, the most widely spoken dialect in the Arabic-speaking world. Moreover, this book has a companion website that contains extra interactive activities. It is also supported by videos for the cultural and linguistic components. The *Al-Kitaab* series includes “*Alif Baa*” and “*Al-Kitaab*” Part One, Part Two, and Part Three. These AFL textbooks suggest the culture components and sometimes the way they are represented and introduced in the classroom.

Language teachers face a big challenge when they move from the textbook’s cultural content to adding daily language instruction, as they must decide what to teach, in what

language, and which culture or variety to be targeted. According to Cutshall (2012), “Choosing what we share with students when we pick a theme or topic has to be something that is going to provoke discussion and conversation and the best way to do that is through the culture” (page 33).

Textbooks are one of the decisive factors in cultural learning. It is often expected that the second or foreign language textbooks should introduce the target culture (Cortazzi and Jin, 1999). However, Diego (2010) indicates that “learners might expect their target language textbooks can be a teacher, a map, a resource, a trainer, an authority, a de-skinner, and an ideology.” Cortazzi and Jin found that a target culture was not always included in the L2 textbooks after they examined a range of textbooks from all over the world. Neff and Rucynski (2013) point out that "because no textbook perfectly integrates language and culture, teachers need to build up supplemented activities to make cultural learning a consistent component of their language classes." As stated in (Abushihab, 2016, page 51).

Trisha (2016) studied the role of textbooks in second language acquisition, and he stated the reasons for its importance. These reasons are as follows: it creates balance among the four skills, presents guidelines for teachers, and gives a specific curriculum, layout and design, if a comprehensible input to the students can be provided (page 6). The course textbook suggests some cultural content, and teachers should observe that there are two main factors that affect this cultural content, regardless of its quality. First, there are current events including festivals, feasts, and new trends that the textbook does not deal with. Second, the culture might be presented as a monoculture, which means that the textbook highlights the standard language, or the main common varieties, but does not shed light on the minority Arab cultures.

2. Studies Concerning Teaching Culture in AFL Classroom

Brosh (2013) investigates how the exposure to proverbs in the AFL classroom transforms the AFL students' perceptions and values they hold dear regarding cultural diversity, and how this facilitates a new understanding and insights into the foreign cultural concepts for the learners, thus enhancing their intercultural competence. The participants in this study were 34 undergraduate students (26 males and 12 females) who were enrolled in Arabic intermediate-level classes in an English-speaking higher education institution.

The students were asked to use a proverb that is related to that cultural aspect in a presentation, then in five-page paper, and to explain the proverb's words and meaning, usage, along with a translation into their mother tongue, English. This was followed by answering two open-ended questions about how this activity has enriched their understanding of the Arab culture and their cultural experience beyond the classroom.

The results of this study revealed that the students' positive acceptance of the use of the proverbs was a powerful educational technique for enhancing the development of intercultural competence. Students were able to develop their cultural literacy, and to reflect autonomously on differences and similarities between their own familiar culture and the foreign one. Moreover, comparing, analyzing, and investigating the proverbs in the AFL classroom has created an alternative cultural framework for participants to evaluate and interpret their cultural experiences and concepts.

Shoman (2011) proposed a framework for developing Intercultural Communicative Competence and proficiency of Advanced Arabic Learners. The participants of his study were AFL study-abroad advanced-level learners. They were enrolled in "a proposed course" that interrelates Egyptian culture to Arabic language varieties used by Egyptians.

The results of this study demonstrated a significant development in three elements of participants' ICC abilities (knowledge, attitude, and skills). Awareness development did occur, but the difference was not significant. Moreover, there was a significant development in participants' abilities to recognize, as well as produce, Arabic varieties used in Egypt.

Eldin (2015) investigated teaching culture to Arabic language students in the classroom. His study suggests a practical framework that can help the AFL learners to develop a critical awareness both of their own culture and of other cultures by integrating them, which can empower them to experience language and cultural learning at a deep level. He proposed 6 strategies to help AFL students to become more effective as intercultural and international communicators. The suggested strategies are stated as:

- Students should understand their own cultural values and assumptions about other cultures.
- Developing competence in language, social relationships, and respect for other cultures.
- Students should be guided to understand the nonverbal cues and the cultural context in which communication unfolds.
- Students need to realize that developing a global attitude is imperative.
- Awareness of how language would be understood by your host culture is imperative.
- Understanding the media discourse in the culture or country that you want to reach is vital.

Eldin (2015) stated that developing cultural awareness will help Arabic language learners to interact communicatively by using the target language (page, 119).

F. Cultural Assessments

1. Assessment and AFL:

The Arabic language is one of the top ten used languages in the world, (ethnologue.com, n.d.) and it is the fourth most popular language, based on the number of people who speak it, if all its dialects are included as a single language.

There has been an increase in the number of Arabic language learners around the world. For instance, 73.5 % of Korean students who sat for their second foreign language test in the college entrance exam chose Arabic from a list of nine foreign languages (Herald, 2017). However, enrollment in languages other than English fell 9.2% at colleges and universities in the United States between the fall of 2013 and the fall of 2016. Dennis and Lusin (2016) stated that Arabic language programs have witnessed a change in enrollment in United States higher education language programs.

The Arabic language was one of the top 15 language programs that witnessed this change between 2009 and 2016. The Arabic programs included Algerian, Classical, Egyptian, Gulf, Iraqi, Levantine, Modern Standard, Moroccan, Qur'anic, Sudanese, and Syrian (page 13).

According to Griffith, Wolfeld, Armon, Rios & Liu (2016), "The modern wave of globalization has created a demand for increased intercultural competence (ICC) in college graduates who will soon enter the 21st-century workforce." Moreover, student development regarding the increased intercultural competence (ICC) should be tracked to meet the challenge of producing culturally competent graduates, but the main existing challenge of measuring intercultural competence complicates the tracking initiatives.

If the cultural content is not included in the language content, then how and when should it be presented? The same goes for the language and cultural assessments. If the cultural content was presented in the classroom, but was not a part of the language course evaluation, then how can we assess intercultural competence or awareness? And why should students pay attention to the importance of this competence?

At the novice level, the course content can include a combination of intercultural competence and awareness. Basheer (2011) stated that, “traditionally, assessment occasions focus on measuring students’ morphosyntactic knowledge in isolation, rather than as part of communicating a meaningful message. This practice ignores other equally important aspects of linguistic ability, such as pragmatics.” In the case of the Arabic language, it seems to be more challenging, since local dialects are used for everyday communication, while MSA is primarily used in formal contexts, such as religious speeches, printed political media, and news shows.

In light of the variety of Arabic language programs and their multilingual situation, there is a huge need to “use assessment to promote learning rather than only measure students’ achievement” (Basheer, 2011). This assessment should include both linguistic and cultural knowledge, and it should not be viewed as an opportunity to point out the students’ weaknesses. The use of the term “assessment” in language teaching is not consistent. Bachman and Palmer (2010) conceptualize assessment as collecting information in order to help people make decisions. It is also sometimes conceived as the way instructors gather data about their teaching and their students’ learning, as stated in Hanna & Dettmer (2004).

2. Assessment Types:

According to Lenz and Berthele (2010) the motives of assessments may differ from one user to another. For instance, “they may want to find out whether teaching has been effective, to

motivate learners to study harder, to intimidate them even, to issue diplomas to graduates, etc.” (page,12). Bachman and Palmer (2010) made a distinction between implicit and explicit assessment. In fact, there are three types of assessment: diagnostic, formative, and summative:

- **Assessment for Learning (Formative Assessment)**

This assessment is used to recognize how much learning is taking place, as stated in (McNamee & Chen 2005, p. 76). It provides students with the timely, specific feedback that they need to make adjustments to their learning. It is a continual evaluation that improves the teaching practice, as stated in (Burns, 2005, p. 26).

- **Assessment of Learning (Summative Assessment)**

This assessment is the snapshot which provides the teacher and the learner with information about the student’s achievement, and it often has little effect on learning.

- **Assessment as Learning (Diagnostic Assessment)**

This important type of assessment helps learners to become lifelong learners, and it develops and supports the students' metacognitive skills. For instance, learners can use peer- and self-assessment feedback to make adjustments.

There are many instruments for assessment, which vary in terms of their degree of standardization or formality. Peter and Berthele (2010) gave some examples:

- a flexible set of metacognitive strategies used to consciously reflect on success in a communicative task, e.g., an intercultural experience, a strategy chosen to learn vocabulary, etc.;
- a questionnaire supporting reflection and self-assessment of intercultural encounters;

- a writing task and a corresponding set of discourse-specific criteria for self and peer-assessment relating to relevant aspects of communicative performance (e.g., an oral presentation, a formal letter);
- a generic observation grid of criteria for teacher assessment of oral interaction in the presence of two different languages;
- a list of scaled descriptors of listening comprehension ability at adjacent levels for use in collaborative learner-teacher assessment;
- validated test tasks, complete tests and scoring rubrics produced according to agreed specifications, etc.

3. Studies Concerning Assessing Culture

Lázár, H.Kriegler, Lussier, S. Matei, and Peck (2007) presented one way of assessing the three dimensions of ICC in their work “developing and assessing intercultural communicative competence” in their work where they stated that “It is also important for the readers to refer to the definitions of ‘intercultural competence’, ‘intercultural communicative competence’ and, consequently, of what is to be expected from an ‘intercultural speaker’” (page, 25). They also stated that assessing ICC has three dimensions to be assessed, which are: intercultural knowledge, intercultural know-how, and intercultural being.

4. How to Assess ICC?

Wilberschied (2015) stated that “there is no holistic measure which exists for it [ICC], and it may not be possible to test holistically” (page, 6). Sercu (2012) recommends multifaceted and cyclic assessment. Lázár and Čaňková (2007) stated that “there are choices that have to be

made when deciding on the types of assessment which seem appropriate to evaluate students' ICC" (page, 29). For instance;

1. Assessment of ICC should be more formative than summative. Formative evaluation aims to develop ICC and to keep the learning processes active.
2. Assessment should be continuous and not only administered at one or two fixed assessment points. "Continuous assessment" is assessment by the teacher, and also by the learner of his or her own performances, pieces of work and projects throughout the course.
3. Assessment can be direct or indirect. We refer to "direct assessment" when the student is actually doing or performing, and "indirect assessment" when we use a test, usually on paper, to assess knowledge.
4. Assessment can be holistic or analytic. "Holistic assessment" means making a global synthetic judgment about the learner's performance. "Analytic assessment" requires the assessor to observe closely all dimensions and subdimensions, or each one separately, in order to create different profiles of performance or competence in each area.
5. Assessment can be done by others, but self-assessment, which requires judgments about your own performance, can be an effective supplement to tests and teacher assessment.

In fact, the first step to assess culture is to know when to assess. Lázár, H.Kriegler, Lussier, S. Matei, and Peck (2007) stated that "before starting to teach, it may be important to get information based on the students' experiences and backgrounds such as " Self-evaluation (culture-log) and a self-evaluation profile" (page, 32). For example, when teachers introduce "love" the teacher needs to assess at various points:

- Before teaching: a survey to assess attitudes on love could be used to reveal the students' perceptions.
- During the learning sequence: the teacher's observations in reference to specific criteria as specified in a grid and gathering work from discussions and productions in the student's portfolio, are appropriate methods of assessment.
- At the end of a unit or learning sequence: the teacher may need to know the different types of knowledge acquired by students. Any direct testing method is possible using multiple-choice items, matching items or short answer items.

In conclusion, "culture" has a broad meaning and can be viewed in different dimensions, but it is an essential component of FL learning. As discussed, the teaching of culture has developed throughout FL learning literature to the point that it now has its own devoted time in language classes, as cultural competence is now considered as important as linguistic competence. Teaching culture involves many factors, such as the textbook used, teaching methods, teaching techniques, and assessment. Teaching Arabic as a foreign language is very challenging due to its diglossic situation.

III. Methodology

A. Research Methods

This study employs both quantitative and qualitative research to develop an instrument to answer the study research questions concerning teachers' perceptions about teaching culture at the novice level in AFL classrooms, the ways teachers introduce and assess culture, and the challenges that they may face in teaching culture. The strategy of inquiry utilized here consists of an in-depth analysis of the teachers' surveys and teachers' interviews, as well as observations of some of the Arabic language classes at the novice level (MSA and ECA).

B. Participants

This study targeted three kinds of participant samples; first, a sample of 55 male and female Arabic language teachers of non-native speakers who currently teach, or have taught, MSA or any other Arabic variety around the world.

The participants in the first sample come from diverse backgrounds and organizations. They were asked to complete an online questionnaire posted on Facebook groups, namely:

- جيل جديد من أساتذة العربية
gīl gadīd min ʔsātīdat alluġa al ʕarabiīyah
A new Generation of Arabic Language Teachers as a Foreign Language
- اتحاد معلمي العربية للناطقين بلغات
ittihād muʕalimī al ʕarabiīyah biluġāt ʔuxry
Arabic Language as a Foreign Language Teachers' Union
- تدريس اللغة العربية لغير الناطقين بها TAFLErs
tadris al-luġa al ʕarabiīyah liġajr annaṭiqīna bihā
TAFLErs: Teaching Arabic Language as a Foreign Language

- معلمو اللغة العربية لغير الناطقين بها
muʿalimū al-luġa al ʕarabiyyah liġajr annaṭiqīna bihā
The teachers of Arabic as a Foreign Language

The questionnaire was posted in the mentioned Facebook groups and pages to reach more AFL teachers because these pages are the largest online platform and community for Arabic language teachers of non-native speakers, and was sent to the AUC TAFL Fellows through the AUC email portal.

The second sample was a group of 5 teachers who taught MSA and ECA at the novice level, and their classes were observed for a total of 12 hours.

The third sample consisted of semi-structured interviews. The interviews were held with 6 Arabic language teachers for non-native speakers of MSA from different organizations and platforms. The teachers were invited via email to have either a face-to-face or a Skype interview, according to their convenience.

Some of the interviews were held at the AUC campus and some through Skype. The participants were asked to sign a consent form and provided permission to record the interviews with audio. The data collection procedure for this study started in April of 2018.

C. Instruments of the Study

In this research, triangulation was applied by using more than one method of data collection to shed light on the different aspects of this topic. Triangulation was applied at two levels: data source, and methodology. Murdock (n.d) stated that the advantage of triangulation design in research studies lies in the ability to find agreement and validation of results through applying a variety of research methods and balancing between these methods. Therefore, three instruments were used: questionnaires, classroom, and observations semi-structured interviews.

These instruments were used to elicit the most reliable information possible concerning teachers' perceptions towards the teaching of culture.

1. The Questionnaire

The goal of the online questionnaire was to reach more people than was possible through the other two instruments, to gather information, and to facilitate the collection and analysis of the data about how AFL teachers introduce and assess culture in novice classrooms, as well as to explore the challenges which influence how culture is taught.

This questionnaire was designed as survey using Google Forms, and it was created in both English and Arabic versions to enable the teachers to complete it in their mother tongue, thus ensuring more accurate and reliable results (Appendix A).

The questionnaire included 32 different questions in different forms in order to obtain the best answers in the simplest way, while attempting to minimize the time needed to complete the forms.

Most of the questions were created specifically for this study. The exceptions being the multiple-choice grid, consisting of 14 questions that were adapted for a questionnaire from Sercu's (2005) model of perceptions concerning the role of culture in a foreign language classroom culture. This includes Q2- Q14, while a single question (Q1) was added to make the results more related to the exploration of teachers' perceptions about introducing daily cultural content in the AFL novice classroom. Question 6, about expanding the cultural dimension in foreign language classes, was replaced with Q1, about teaching culture every day in the novice classroom, and Q11, about how the emphasis on the study of foreign cultures can contribute to the student's loss of cultural identity, was also excluded.

2. Classroom Observations

In order to find out how culture is taught in language classrooms, and to explore the challenges which may influence or hinder this kind of teaching, three classes of Arabic 101/102, with five different teachers, were observed at the Department of Arabic Language Instruction (“ALI”) at the AUC. The three classes were taught intensively for at least four hours daily. MSA, ECA and integrated skills classes were observed.

The classes were observed by attending 2-3 sessions in a row. An observation sheet was used (Appendix B) in order to follow the cultural content in the classroom practices. As for class 1, 2, and 3, the classes observed were 2 MSA classes (2 sessions), 2 ECA classes (2 sessions, and 3 sessions), and 1 Integrated Skills (IS) course (2 sessions).

The students studied a total of 10 hours for MSA, 5 hours for ECA, and 5 hours for the integrated skills class. The number of the students was between 3 and 6, including both males and females.

The number of weekly hours of study differed from one class to another, and sometimes from one student to another. However, this difference will not affect the results of the present study, which is investigating teachers’ perceptions about teaching culture, not the perceptions of students themselves.

An observation sheet (Appendix B) was designed to facilitate note-taking and to follow up on what happened in each class. The observation sheet was designed to cover parts of the teaching process which answer the research questions on teaching techniques. It consisted of 18 main points; eight of these were for collecting information about the observed class and the

teacher, while the other ten points were concerned with the teaching techniques used and the cultural component types and tasks.

The table below shows an overview of the general information of the observed classes:

Table 3. 1 The information of the observed classrooms

	<i>Classroom 1</i>		<i>Classroom 1</i>		<i>Classroom 1</i>			<i>Classroom 2</i>		<i>Classroom 3</i>	
	<i>Session 1</i>	<i>Session 2</i>	<i>Session 1</i>	<i>Session 2</i>	<i>Session 1</i>	<i>Session 2</i>	<i>Session 3</i>	<i>Session 1</i>	<i>Session 2</i>	<i>Session 1</i>	<i>Session 2</i>
Subject	MSA	MSA	IS	IS	ECA	ECA	ECA	ECA	ECA	MSA	MSA
Duration	1:15	00:50	1:15	1:15	00:50	00:50	00:50	1:00	1:00	1:15	1:15
Number of Students	3	5	2	2	3	3	2	6	6	2	2
Session topic	Revision	Revision	Speaking	Speaking & Reading	Adverbs Speaking Grammar	Speaking Grammar	Grammar	Vocabulary	Speaking Ramadan	Revision	Revision
Spoken language in the classroom	Arabic 80% English 20%	Arabic 60% English 40%	Arabic 80% English 20%	Arabic 80% English 20%	Arabic 90% English 10%	Arabic 90% English 10%	Arabic 90% English 10%	Arabic 95% English 5%	Arabic 95% English 5%	Arabic 90% English 10%	Arabic 90% English 10%
Course textbook	Al-Kitaab	Al-Kitaab	Free materials	Free materials	Kallimni 'Arabi	Kallimni 'Arabi	Kallimni 'Arabi	Kalaam Gamiil	Kalaam Gamiil	Al-Kitaab	Al-Kitaab

The sessions' topics were a mix of new content for 3 subjects (ECA1, ECA2, IS) while the 2 MSA classes' topics were revision for grammar and vocabulary. The content presented in the AFL classroom plays an important role in the cultural content, especially in ECA classes, which focus more on practical language use and communication, and learners need more support to build their intercultural competence. Five sessions' focus was mainly on the language skills such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening, with the cultural component either embedded or

spontaneous. Moreover, five sessions (3 MSA, 2 ECA) mainly focused on grammar revision, with just one session (ECA) aiming primarily to introduce cultural content.

3. Interviews with Teachers

In order to create a balance between the different types of data resources, 15 questions were created to complement the information gained from the other two instruments. Proceeding from the questionnaires and observations, questions that needed more elaboration and clarification were added to the interview (Appendix D).

Arabic teachers who work at the AUC, and other organizations who have experience teaching MSA or ECA 101 or 102, were interviewed. They were coded alphabetically to (A, B, C, D, E, F). Their teaching experience ranged between 5 and 25 years, and they have experienced teaching MSA and ECA to the different levels, and they had experience teaching face-to-face, and only 2 teachers have experience in teaching online.

D. Procedures

The data collection process consisted of four stages. The first stage involved collecting teachers' perceptions about teaching culture to novice students through the questionnaire that was sent online to Arabic language teachers for non-native speakers from various backgrounds. The questionnaire was created with Google Forms, and shared with the teachers through email and social media.

The second stage involved observing some teachers of AFL at the novice level. The purpose of this stage was to observe actual applications of integrating culture and the techniques used. An observation sheet was created and used to record the necessary information.

The third stage involved conducting interviews with AFL teachers to find out the challenges of teaching culture, and the ways in which cultural learning is assessed. The interviews were recorded to facilitate the review and recall of the necessary information.

Finally, the SPSS program was used to analyze the questionnaire data after it was coded and classified. The data was added to the variable column then coded according to its type, whether numerical or strings (for letters and words).

In order to have descriptive statistics of the data the frequency counts were explored. The table below shows a sample of the data analysis:

Table 3. 2 Example for SPSS tables

Q 1: What do you think about teaching culture every day in the novice classroom?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	17	31.5	31.5	31.5
	Agree	28	51.9	51.9	83.3
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	7	13.0	13.0	96.3
	Disagree	2	3.7	3.7	100.0
	Total	54	100.0	100.0	

Valid is for the valid variables which are the 54 participants of the study.

Frequency represents how often the answers occur.

Percent is the frequency of the answers in percentage form, as a share of the total answers.

Valid Percent explains any missing cases, and it is divided differently to the total number of cells.

Cumulative Percent is the overall percentage representation of a given answer within the whole data.

A descriptive analysis was used to analyze both classroom observations and interview questions. The interviews were transcribed, and coded.

To know more about the participants of this study, some questions were provided in the questionnaire in order to gather information about teachers, classroom settings and materials, course types, teachers' years of experience, where they teach Arabic, and whether their classes are face-to-face or online. This information was integrated with the data analysis, as shown in the coming chapter, which reveals the results of all instruments as well as the discussion of the results of the study.

E. The sample description:

To know more about the participants in this study, some questions were provided in the questionnaire in order to gather information about teachers who responded. The results are shown below:

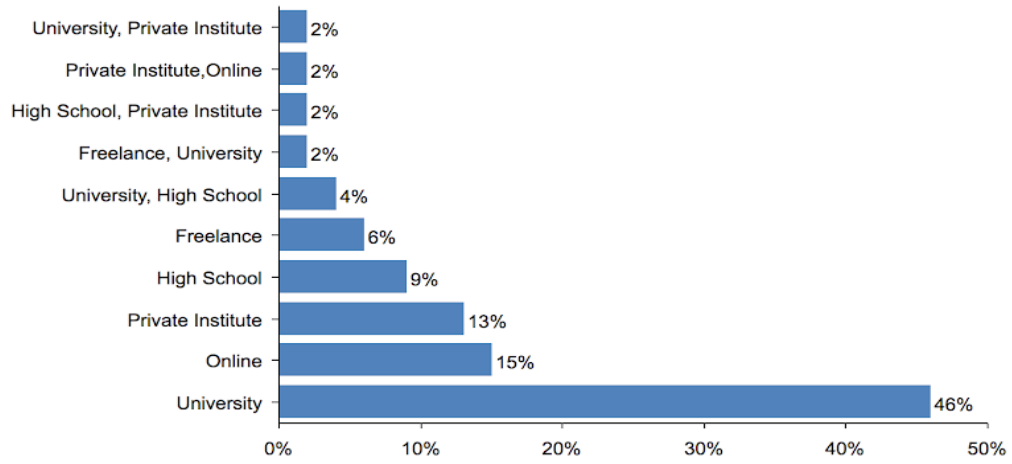
- ***Teaching Experience***

Table 3. 3 Teaching Experience

1 - 2 years	4	7.5%
3 - 5 years	9	16.6%
6 - 10 years	23	42.6%
More than 10 years	18	33.3%

- ***Where are participants Teaching Arabic?***

Figure 3. 1 Where are participants Teaching Arabic?



- **The settings of the Arabic Classroom**

Table 3. 4 The Arabic classes' settings

Online	19%
Face-to-face	26%
Both	56%

- **The type of the Arabic classroom**

Table 3. 5 The Arabic classes' Type

An Arabic Language Program	87%
Individual courses	13%

IV. Data Analysis and Discussion

A. Introduction

In this chapter, the data from the questionnaire, classroom observations, and the teachers' interviews are analyzed and discussed. The quantitative results were gathered from an online questionnaire and analyzed through the SPSS. The qualitative results were gathered from the classroom observations and semi-structured interviews. The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section discusses the teachers' perceptions about teaching culture in a novice AFL classroom. The second section discusses how culture is introduced in the classroom at the Arabic novice level. The third section illustrates how culture is assessed in the classroom at the Arabic

novice level. Finally, this chapter is concluded by a concise summary of the results of the previous sections.

B. Research Question 1:

What are the teachers’ perceptions about teaching culture in a novice AFL classroom?

To address the teachers’ perceptions about teaching culture in the AFL novice level classroom, the data from the questionnaire (grid questions) were analyzed and discussed.

The grid questions consist of 14 questions created by adopting Sercu’s (2005) model of teachers’ perceptions concerning the role of culture, which is covered through Q2- Q14; one question (Q1) was added to explore the teachers’ perceptions about introducing daily cultural content in the AFL novice classroom.

Table 4. 1 Teachers' perceptions of teaching culture every day

Q 1: What do you think about teaching culture every day in the novice classroom?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	17	31.5	31.5	31.5
	Agree	28	51.9	51.9	83.3
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	7	13.0	13.0	96.3
	Disagree	2	3.7	3.7	100.0
	Total	54	100.0	100.0	

As shown in Table 4.1, there is generally statistically significant agreement between the AFL teachers about teaching culture every day in the novice classroom. This reflects the AFL teachers’ awareness of the importance of teaching culture at the novice level, which confirms what Brown (2001) stated about how culture and language are intricately interwoven and cannot be separated.

Table 4. 2 Teachers' perceptions of teaching culture in the FL classroom

Q2: In an FL classroom, teaching culture is as important as teaching the FL.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	30	55.6	55.6	55.6
	Agree	17	31.5	31.5	87.0
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	5	9.3	9.3	96.3
	Disagree	2	3.7	3.7	100.0

	Total	54	100.0	100.0	
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Table 4. 3 Teachers' perceptions of integrated teaching of culture

Q:3 It is impossible to teach the foreign language and the foreign culture in an integrated way.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	5	9.3	9.3	9.3
	Agree	6	11.1	11.1	20.4
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	5	9.3	9.3	29.6
	Disagree	17	31.5	31.5	61.1
	Strongly Disagree	21	38.9	38.9	100.0
	Total	54	100.0	100.0	

As shown in Table 4.2 & 4.3, the different teachers' perception about teaching culture in the AFL novice classroom shows that AFL teachers reflect positively on the importance, frequency and possibility of teaching culture. This agrees with other studies about teachers' perceptions' such as Rostami's study (2016) about "Teachers' and Learners' Perceptions towards the Role of Culture in English Language Teaching", where the findings reflected that all teachers viewed the teaching of culture in foreign language classes positively.

Table 4. 4 Foreign culture & tolerance.

Q 4: The more students know about the foreign culture, the more tolerant they become.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	31	57.4	57.4	57.4
	Agree	16	29.6	29.6	87.0
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	6	11.1	11.1	98.1
	Disagree	1	1.9	1.9	100.0
	Total	54	100.0	100.0	

A closer examination of Table 4.4 shows that 87% of the participants agree about the relation between cultural knowledge and being tolerant. This highlight the importance of introducing cultural content in promoting acceptance. The FL students' awareness of the target

culture's differences from their own, such as behavior, the background of the culture concepts, social norms and daily life practices, help the learner to avoid stereotyping. To illustrate, a real life example can be provided: One of our AFL students clearly stated her frustrations about receiving comments on her body or health, given that in the student's own culture, such comments are seen as "body shaming", or as a private matter. However, in the Egyptian culture, giving comments about one's body shape, like gaining or losing weight, is a way of showing solidarity and giving care. Thus the student's negative reaction was a result of a lack of cultural understanding. This supports the findings of Genc & Bada (2005) about the attitudes of Turkish students of English towards the target culture, where their attitudes towards British and American societies were transformed positively through the culture class (page 78).

Table 4. 5 The relation between Misunderstandings, language, and culture.

Q 5: When speakers of different languages meet, misunderstandings arise equally often from linguistic as from cultural differences.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	19	35.2	35.2	35.2
	Agree	22	40.7	40.7	75.9
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	9	16.7	16.7	92.6
	Disagree	3	5.6	5.6	98.1
	Strongly Disagree	1	1.9	1.9	100.0
	Total	54	100.0	100.0	

A high percentage of the AFL teachers (76 %) as shown in table 4.5 agree that misunderstandings arise equally from linguistic and cultural differences, which reflects the importance of the intercultural competence, or in other words, the importance of enabling the language learner to use the target language linguistically, socio-linguistically, and pragmatically in an appropriate way, as stated in the Council of Europe (2001, page 102).

This highlights the importance of the social-pragmatic theory of word learning, which holds that the process of word learning is inherently and thoroughly social. Moreover, the students' knowledge of the different types of nonverbal communication is an important part of

the foreign culture. These can include facial expressions, body movement and posture, gestures, eye contact, touch, space, and voice.

Knowledge of these areas can increase trust, clarity, and rapport, whereas the lack of that knowledge can generate tension, mistrust, and confusion, as stated in Blatner (2009). As a result, through social-pragmatic learning, the student will become more tolerant of the cultural differences in communication.

Pogosyan (2017) stated that “People can be saying the content they want to communicate, but just not come across correctly, because a lot of what is being communicated is non-verbal. This can lead to intercultural conflict, misunderstandings and ambiguities in communication, despite language fluency” (para, 5).

Table 4. 6 FL teaching and students' cultural identity

Q 6: Foreign language teaching should enhance students' understanding of their own cultural identity.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	22	40.7	40.7	40.7
	Agree	24	44.4	44.4	85.2
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	7	13.0	13.0	98.1
	Strongly Disagree	1	1.9	1.9	100.0
	Total	54	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.6 indicates that AFL teachers agree that teaching a foreign language should enhance students' understanding of their own cultural identity. Dumitrašković (2014) claimed that students “now have to understand and adjust this to their sense of identity and their culture, and this can often lead to uncertainty”. She also stated that students “must feel that they are comfortable in the classroom and can express themselves freely”. The participants’ responses support this claim, as they agree that learning about a foreign culture can change the student’s attitude towards her/ his own culture.

In fact, teachers should consider the dimensions of the cultural values that Hofstede (2001) has identified (individualism-collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity-femininity) as stated in Liu (2016). The Middle Eastern societies are collectivistic, and the teachers should be aware of the different dimensions of cultural values in order to know how to create the space for the language learners to feel comfortable in expressing their identity.

Table 4. 7 The Middle Eastern cultures in the classroom

Q 7: The different cultures of the Middle East should be fostered in foreign language/ culture classes.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	41	75.9	75.9	75.9
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	13	24.1	24.1	100.0
	Total	54	100.0	100.0	

Table 4. 8 The Arab countries' cultures in AFL syllabus

Q 8: All the Arabic-speaking countries' cultures are equally valid to be represented in an Arabic syllabus.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	27	50.0	50.0	50.0
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	13	24.1	24.1	74.1
	Disagree	14	25.9	25.9	100.0
	Total	54	100.0	100.0	

As shown in Table 4.7& 4.8, a high percentage of the participants (85%) agree on fostering the different cultures of the Middle East in foreign language/ culture classes; 57% of the participants do not think that all the Arabic-speaking countries' cultures are equally valid to be represented in an Arabic syllabus. This could suggest that AFL teachers might be selective towards certain Arabic-speaking countries' cultures. Perhaps, they just rank them according to their perceived importance, or perhaps there are other factors that may need more research.

This also could be reflected in the cultural components that will be presented in the language classroom, that is, whether it will be limited to one community that is related to a specific dialect, or whether it will be presented as a shared cultural event in the Arabs/ Islamic

countries, or whether the different Arabic-speaking countries' cultures related to such an event could all be discussed in the classroom.

This also could open a discussion about the awareness that the Arabic teachers themselves have about the different Arab cultures, and to what extent it is important to have knowledge about the variant Arab communities, and whether there is a need to raise the Arabic teachers' cultural knowledge of Middle East.

Table 4. 9 Culture and linguistic accuracy.

Q 9: The study of culture in language classes can hinder progress in linguistic accuracy.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	4	7.4	7.4	7.4
	Disagree	18	33.3	33.3	40.7
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	13	24.1	24.1	64.8
	Strongly Disagree	19	35.2	35.2	100.0
	Total	54	100.0	100.0	

As for whether studying culture can hinder progress in linguistic accuracy in language classes, the results of the survey show that 68% of the teachers either disagree or strongly disagree, whereas almost 24% of the participants neither agree nor disagree as shown in table 4.9.

Through the teacher interviews, teacher (B) stated that “the most difficult thing about teaching culture at the novice level is that “I have to use English”, which means that the cultural component at this level is seen as exceeding the novice students' language abilities. In fact, this is sometimes, but not always, true.

The cultural content for AFL novice students presents information about the target culture that could be used either according to the students' L2 abilities or could open the discussion for topics that may require using the students' L1. This cultural information could be explained through the course content objectives, which would require it to be introduced in L1, since it is a goal in itself. Drawing an example, an AFL teacher may introduce socially

appropriate behaviors, with regards to greetings in the Arabic cultural practices, in the students' L1. However, the cultural information is already impeded in the linguistic items, it could be used and activated through the target language. A good example is the greetings and responses such as “*Assalmu’Alaykum*”. The integration of both L1 and L2 improves the appropriateness of FL cultural uses.

In fact, intercultural communication requires both linguistic and cultural knowledge, and it results from both linguistic and cultural awareness. Galajda (2017) stated that Morreale (2001) claimed that the process of communication requires three major factors to enable people to communicate successfully: motivation, declarative knowledge, and procedural knowledge (page, 24). Intercultural communication is an ability to achieve certain communicative aims, and it is not restricted strictly to linguistic means.

Arabski & Wojtaszek (2011) stated that “language learning is, in fact, a social-psychological process, in which the role of a wider sociocultural context should not be marginalized” (page, 2). In other words, teaching culture does not exclude proficiency and linguistic accuracy, but it should be aimed to unite them in teaching and learning.

Table 4. 10 Culture and the student’s attitude about her/ his culture.

Q 10: Learning about a foreign culture can change the student’s attitude towards her/ his own culture.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	13	24.1	24.1	24.1
	Agree	29	53.7	53.7	77.8
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	11	20.4	20.4	98.1
	Strongly Disagree	1	1.9	1.9	100.0
	Total	54	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.10 shows that 77.8% of the participants believe that learning about a foreign culture can change the student’s attitude towards her/ his own culture. This might in some way

be related to developing a critical attitude towards both the students’ own culture, and the target culture.

Jabeen and Shah’s study (2011), about the role of culture in ELT learners’ attitude towards the teaching of target language culture, found a strongly negative attitude towards the teaching of target language culture. They linked this to factors such as educational and economic background. For instance, L2 students could out rightly reject a specific social behavior or norm that is commonly known about the target culture. The introduction of the cultural component is intended neither for approval or disapproval, but simply for facilitation and a proper understanding of the target culture. Abushihab (2016) stated that “teachers should avoid raising cultural issues that are offensive”, and he added that teachers should “show the differences between the native culture and the foreign one without judging them” (page 55).

The fear of “being judged” could make students develop negative attitudes towards introducing culture in the classroom. This highlights the significance of the way teachers introduce culture. Moreover, AFL learners could reevaluate their own understanding of cultural differences after the introduction of the cultural component. They might find that their understanding of the target culture has changed.

Table 4. 11 Developing a critical attitude and teaching culture

Q11. The most important goal in learning about a foreign culture is to develop a critical attitude towards both target and native cultures.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	3	5.6	5.6	5.6
	Agree	17	31.5	31.5	37.0
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	22	40.7	40.7	77.8
	Disagree	10	18.5	18.5	96.3
	Strongly Disagree	2	3.7	3.7	100.0
	Total	54	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.11 shows the teachers’ responses about whether the most important goal in learning about a foreign culture is developing a critical attitude towards both target and native

cultures. It also highlights an identified need for, firstly, increasing teachers’ awareness of the goals of teaching culture, and secondly, designing activities to assess cultural understanding in a manner similar to the assessments used for language activities.

These results are related to earlier findings, such as Cutshall (2012) who claimed that a strong cultural component present in a language class, can help students to make better connections to other disciplines, and develop the necessary insights to compare to their own native language and culture, to discover ways to better participate with and relate to different communities around the world and at home.

Table 4. 12 Cultural awareness and the advanced levels

Q 12: The development of cultural awareness should be kept only for the most advanced levels.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	4	7.4	7.4	7.4
	Agree	3	5.6	5.6	13.0
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	11	20.4	20.4	33.3
	Disagree	19	35.2	35.2	68.5
	Strongly Disagree	17	31.5	31.5	100.0
	Total	54	100.0	100.0	

As for the AFL teachers’ views about keeping cultural awareness for only the most advanced levels ,66% disagree (35 % disagree and 31% strongly disagree), while 20% were not sure, and only 13% agreed in any degree. This is shown in Table 4.12, above.

The findings provide some support for the assertion that cultural competence and linguistic competence go hand in hand, as Byram, Gribkova & Starkey (2002), and Shukri (2014) have suggested, regarding the use of cultural activities to help in guiding the way students construct language and meaning. It also supports the culture-based activities that Tavares and Cavalcanti (1996) have emphasized using in the English as a foreign language classroom.

Table 4. 13 Teaching culture and motivation

Q 13: Teaching culture motivates students.					
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		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	35	64.8	64.8	64.8
	Agree	18	33.3	33.3	98.1
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	1	1.9	1.9	100.0
	Total	54	100.0	100.0	

There is a statistically significant agreement between the AFL teachers about the relation between culture and motivation. As shown in Table 4.13, there was a broad consensus that teaching culture motivate students, with 98% (Strongly Agree 65 %, Agree 33%) holding this opinion. The findings of this study are parallel to results of Azadipour’s (2012) study of the cultural motivation and its impact on FLL.

Table 4. 14 Combining language and culture and the language skills

Q 14: Combining language and culture helps learners to improve their language skills.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	35	64.8	64.8	64.8
	Agree	15	27.8	27.8	92.6
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	4	7.4	7.4	100.0
	Total	54	100.0	100.0	

Finally, a significant proportion of the teachers (93%) agree that combining language and culture helps learners to improve their language skills, as shown in Table 4.14, above.

C. Research Question 2:

How do teachers introduce culture in the classroom at the Arabic novice level?

Investigating how AFL teachers introduce culture in the AFL novice classroom was conducted by collecting data from the three instruments. The descriptive results came from analysis of questions from the Questionnaire (Appendix A), from collecting data from the observation sheet notes (Appendix B), and from the teachers’ interviews (Appendix C).

The classroom observations intended mainly to discover the teachers' practices for teaching culture in the AFL classroom through the following points:

1. Classroom Materials

With one exception, the classes use a textbook and supplementary materials. The exception is a single course, in which the course materials are designed by the teacher. This shows that the majority of teachers rely on the textbook in FL language classrooms. Using a textbook does not automatically mean better teaching material, as teacher (A) stated;

“every AFL textbook has some issues, and extra materials are needed to support the textbook’s content”

The course material is an essential factor for determining how AFL teachers introduce the culture, since it not only promotes cultural content, but also suggests related cultural tasks and ideas to be introduced in the classroom. It is also one of the external factors affecting language learning. The participants of this study were asked about the main textbooks they used in teaching MSA and ECA at the novice level, and the resources they use in teaching culture. The data collection revealed a number of resources/ textbooks that teachers use in both MSA and ECA. They could be divided into 4 main sections as follows:

Table 4. 15 The used textbooks in teaching MSA and ECA

Q 3: Preferred/used course materials for novice MSA/ variety:		
Textbooks For MSA & ECA	Al-Kitaab	18
	Alif Baa	5
	Lughatuna al-Fusha	3
	Alkitab Al Asasi	1
	Ya Hala	1
	At-Takallum	1
	AFL Textbooks	1
	Arabiyyat al Naas	1
	Kallimni 'Arabi	10
	Kalaam Gamiil	2
	100/100	1
	Kullu Tamam!	2
	Fursa Sa'ida	2
	Al-'Arabiyya bayna yadayk	1
	Textbooks	1

External Materials, Supportive materials & Textbook	Articles	1
	Photos and Games	1
	Movies / ECA	1
	Songs, short clips	1
	Videos	2
	Cartoons	1
General Criterion	Media/ Recorded materials	1
	Some authentic materials from daily life	2
	Any content that has multimedia	1
	Mix of traditional learning materials with good use of the Internet	1
Other Materials	DISTRICT curriculum	1
	Based on Students' needs	1
	The modern technological methods of teaching Arabic	1

Cortazzi and Jin (1999) claimed that as target language culture was not always included in the L2 textbooks, this sheds light on the significance of the use of extra materials in support of the textbooks. In the teachers' interviews, teacher (A) stated that;

“using a textbook is not the best option, especially since every book has an issue; the textbook at least provides me as a teacher with materials and guidelines, but I still have to create my own supplementary materials anyway”.

Neff and Rucynski (2013) point out that "because no textbook perfectly integrates language and culture, teachers need to build up supplemental activities to make cultural learning a consistent component of their language classes", as stated in (Abushihab, 2016, page 51). The table below shows the main resources on which AFL teachers rely while teaching culture:

Table 4. 16 The main culture resources

Q 10: For culture resources, I rely on:	
Textbook Cultural Content	28
Guest Speakers	11
Videos	27
Internet Clips	28

Radio Reports/shows	13
Literature	14
Other	- Teacher as the content might ignore some cultural aspects - Comics

Table 4.16 presents a statistically significant agreement between the AFL teachers, as 50 out of 54 of the AFL teachers rely mainly on using the AFL textbooks in teaching MSA or ECA. Moreover, almost 1/3 of them use Al-Kitaab textbooks in their novice classrooms. The results also display that 25 % of the teachers use supportive materials such as videos, songs, photos, media, articles and self-created games to support the existing selected textbook. The rest of the teachers (about 2%) stated that they rely on their institution textbook or suggested materials.

The result seems to be closely linked to the natural order hypothesis by Terrell and Tracy D (1983) about comprehensible input, where textbooks represent this comprehensible input as stated in (Trisha, 2016, page 4). Textbooks offer a predictable sequence for language learning. Richard (2012) stated that textbooks are a key component for any language program. In AFL classrooms, using a textbook could provide suggested cultural content, and ways for it to be represented and introduced, especially for the language programs where teachers are required to follow the textbook.

Moreover, textbooks determine the time needed to cover target material at a specific level, which means that AFL teachers will prioritize which activities will be covered in the classroom, and whether culture activities will be discussed or not, accordingly.

In general, this clearly shows the importance of textbooks in the AFL classroom, and the teachers' tendency to support the textbook content with other external authentic resources such

as videos, movies, photos, short clips. These materials reflect the language along with the culture.

2. Target Content and Class Focus:

The sessions' topics were a mix of new content for 3 subjects (ECA1, ECA2, IS), while the topic for the 2 MSA classes was revision for grammar and vocabulary. The content presented in AFL classrooms plays an important role in the cultural component, especially in ECA settings, which promote more language use and communication, and where learners need more support to build their intercultural competence. Five sessions' focus was on the main language skills such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening, with the cultural component either embedded or spontaneous. Moreover, five sessions (3 MSA, 2 ECA) sessions focused on grammar revision, while one session (ECA) was mainly to introduce cultural content. Clearly, this reflects that each class has objectives to be achieved, planned activities, especially for the language skills, and time constraints. Having spontaneous cultural content is not ideal all the time, but culture should rather be integrated.

Teacher (E) claimed that:

“culture should be introduced at the novice level in a useful way, such as using one word for teaching pronunciation, writing, culture, and grammar. Using one thing in multiple ways” she further explained, a teacher “could choose what to teach and adapt it according to the students’ level.

3. Classroom language of Instructions:

The language used in classroom instruction was mainly Arabic. ECA and English were used partly for grammatical explanation, translation, and task instructions. In fact, this was one of the challenges about which some of the AFL teachers expressed their concern. Since at the novice level the use of the target language is highly recommended, Teacher (B) stated that:

“All the time I am trying to speak Arabic as simply as I can, and to reduce the use of English”.

The language of instruction in the classroom is important, as it helps learners to be immersed not only in the target language, but also in the target culture, including facial expressions and body language.

Table 4. 17 The Classroom Language of Instruction

Q 4: I give instructions in the classroom in:					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Arabic	7	13.0	13.0	13.0
	English	6	11.1	11.1	24.1
	Mix of Arabic & English	41	75.9	75.9	100.0
	Total	54	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.17 shows that almost 76% of the AFL teachers used a mix of Arabic and English in the classroom, while 11% use English only, and 13% use Arabic only.

According to Esowell (2017), the decision to use either the L1 or the L2 when giving instructions in the classroom remains controversial. Atkinson (1987), Auerbach (1993), and Macaro (1997) agree that the giving of instructions is in fact an occasion that warrants use of the L1 in the L2 classroom.

However, Salaberri (1995) & Gardner (2000) claimed that using the L2 “helps students understand that foreign languages are not just subjects to be studied but are also, and more importantly, a means of communication” as stated in Esowell (2017, page. 11).

4. Cultural Content Type:

Since language and culture are not separable, the cultural content in the observed classrooms was mainly spontaneous and was presented in both direct and indirect fashions. It was embedded in the linguistic components and conceived of as adding additional layers to linguistic content, by giving cultural context for language use. Most cultural content in the L2 classroom comes spontaneously, through the linguistic content itself. This also was supported by teacher (E), who stated;

“There are tactics; when there is a chance, I present culture content that could take 2 to 5 minutes, but if it is important, then I can increase the time to cover it”.

The teacher explained that this cultural content often comes through “a mistake, a word, a question, or something cultural that the lesson is suggesting”. The type of cultural component was variously identified: ideas, symbols and artifacts (5 sessions); ideas and symbols only (3 sessions); unclear (3 sessions).

Culture can be presented by adding cultural dimensions when selecting vocabulary in Arabic. For example, Teacher (F) stated that in order to show differences in language use due to differences in culture she says: “in Arabic we say ...”. She added, “in other words, we introduce the language logic”, thus adding another layer to the meaning, which is the actual use or the cultural connotation. Teacher (E) stated that:

“the world is changing, and we should bring more new culture content to the classroom”

5. Presenting the Cultural Content

The way in which culture was introduced relied mainly on cultural capsules (5 sessions), and whether it was introduced in a direct or indirect way, the content focused on knowledge and practices through use of the different skills.

6. Absorbing Culture

60% of assigned classrooms lacked an assigned cultural task, while in those classes which did have such tasks, these consisted of presentations, speaking tasks, writing assignments, projects, and mini-projects. This could be due to the settings of the class and the class content, as it is not expected that learners will be assigned a daily cultural task.

Table 4. 18 Techniques of teaching culture

Q 12: To help my students absorb the culture content, I use:	
Culture Notes	35%
Culture Project	11%
Culture Task	22%
A combination of 2 or more of Culture Notes, Culture Project, and Culture Task	23%
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We act out scenarios - Talk shows, parts of movies, soap operas, etc. - I'm not sure what is meant by this. Much of my culture content arises spontaneously. If I were to prepare, it would not be through notes, projects, or tasks - Depends on the students' level <p style="text-align: right;">7%</p>
None	2%

D. The techniques used to introduce culture:

These results were gathered to explore what techniques teachers use to introduce culture in AFL classrooms. The majority of the participants (91%) indicated that they use a combination of cultural notes, cultural projects, and cultural tasks. 5% of the responses showed that the

participants were not aware of the teaching techniques at all. 1% expressed that cultural content arises spontaneously, and he/ she added that if it and he/ she has to prepare, it would not be through notes, projects, or tasks. Moreover, 2% of the participants have not stated any kind of tools or techniques they use to introduce culture content.

1. Students’ Reaction to the Cultural Content

The students’ reactions to the different types of cultural content was positive; they were motivated, interested, and participating. Teacher (E) said that:

“at the novice level, students have a number of frequent questions; they are usually interested to know more about religion, and they usually ask about people’s actions and attitudes”

2. The Use of Technology

Technology was not used in 70 % of the classes, and 30% of the classes used either document cameras, screens, or audio and visual materials.

Table 4. 19 Tools used in teaching Culture

Q 11: In teaching culture, I use:					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Blackboard	3	5.6	5.6	5.6
	Email	3	5.6	5.6	11.1
	Google Apps	17	31.5	31.5	42.6
	Internet in General	5	9.3	9.3	51.9
	None (Textbook Only)	6	11.1	11.1	63.0
	Other	1	1.9	1.9	64.8
	Phone Apps	3	5.6	5.6	70.4
	Social Media: Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, etc	15	27.8	27.8	98.1
	Zoom	1	1.9	1.9	100.0
	Total	54	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.19 shows that AFL teacher were asked explicitly to state what tools they use in teaching culture. The results show that nearly 28 % use Social Media (Facebook, WhatsApp,

Twitter, etc.), and 31.5% use Google Apps. 11.1% did not use any of the previously mentioned tools. The respondent who marked “other” felt that cultural activities are more effectively implemented in person, stating that, “I use face-to-face interaction, film, reading, role-playing, presentations, etc. I don't see the point in using a remote, electronic medium. I think culture activities are more effectively implemented in person”.

The wide use of technology, technological advances, and the spread of phone and social media apps, are revolutionary from a pedagogical standpoint as well. Dunkel (1987) argued that there could be a potential waste of resources if pedagogy does not take advantage of new technological tools, as stated in Salaberry (2001, page 39).

According to W. Parkay (2013), “Technology enables students to experience events or study phenomena that they could not witness firsthand” (page, 409). Social Media platforms (such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, etc.) are considered one of the main channels used now as a source of information, creating spaces for communication while reaching the target communities. This is especially relevant given the diglossic situation of Arabic, which has different dialects that represent the different cultures of the Arab world. Gonzalez (2009) states that “Technology promotes socially active language in multiple authentic contexts” due to its “accessibility, flexibility, connectivity, speed, and independence of methodological approach” (page. 62).

Exploring whether AFL teachers consider other tools or resources in teaching and presenting culture allows reflection on the teachers’ practices and their needs when teaching culture.

3. In what way culture was presented:

Cultural learning happens in a context, even if this context is just jokes or proverbs. Often culture is taught through linking language to the students' daily life.

4. Time Devoted to Teaching Culture

Since one of the main challenges faced by all teachers in their classrooms is the limited nature of class time, the participants in this survey were asked explicitly about the time they devote to teaching culture.

Table 4. 20 Devoted time for teaching culture

Q 8: Time devoted to teaching culture per class:		
Per class	Between 10-20 minutes = 17 More than 20 minutes = 7	47%
Weekly	30 minutes weekly 1:2 hour weekly 1:2 hour every week/ 2 weeks 3 hours weekly 45 minutes, 2 sessions weekly 2 hours weekly	12%
Occasionally & Depends on Course / program	For MSA, it depends on the topic, and for ECA there is 64 hours of the youth culture, 64 for music and cinema, and 32 hours for daily life situations In MSA classes there is no time devoted for teaching culture, for ECA there are specific classes devoted only for teaching culture 64 out of 688 in addition to extra 64 hours for movies, music, and poetry Based on the subject taught and curriculum to be covered Occasionally Depends Depends depending on the content of the session Depends on the lesson and the curriculum Based on the textbook culture content Culture is introduced through the lesson content, any other culture content is introduced spontaneous, except for the cultural events and occasions	19%
Unspecified &	No specified time No specified time none	

Through other skills & implicitly	No specified time No specified time, but through the other skills I do not know exactly 5:10 through the content No specified time, but it is introduced implicitly No specified time, but through the lesson content Unknown - it's just sort of mixed in Every Class	21%
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As shown in Table 4.20, some teachers either have no exact time devoted to teaching culture, as it is presented implicitly through the other skills, while others have a specific time planned for culture each session, with this time varying between 10 and 20 minutes. For still others, cultural material is presented only occasionally, or through lesson content, curriculum, or the session content.

AFL novice classes are very challenging. AFL teachers' class time is usually loaded with different essential skills that learners need to gain. However, while some AFL teachers might agree in attempting to teach culture on a daily basis, other AFL teachers find the class time too tight to allow this. For instance, in the interviews, Teacher (A) stated that,

“AFL students find culture interesting, I agree with teaching it every day if the class time allows”.

Teacher (E) also thinks:

“the classroom time is very limited”.

Teacher (C) stated:

“I have never had enough time to make cultural activities where learners practice what they have learned, and most of the class time which is dedicated for

teaching culture is just through giving information, I have never had enough time to make it a real activity”.

Whether teaching culture has no exact time, a specific planned time, or is presented just occasionally or implicitly, there is a need to develop cultural activities in order to help the language teacher to use the class time more effectively.

5. Cultural activities outside the classroom

One of the main sources for supporting the teaching of culture is extracurricular activities. Table 4.21 shows that 70% of the AFL teachers organize cultural activities outside the classroom, while 30% do not.

Table 4. 21 Cultural activities outside the classroom

Q 13: create cultural activities outside the classroom:					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	16	29.6	29.6	29.6
	Yes	38	70.4	70.4	100.0
	Total	54	100.0	100.0	

There are many types of cultural activities, and some do need a budget. These might include activities such as oriental cooking night or Middle Eastern music concerts. Others might require organizing and planning, such as Arabic language partners, movie nights, and language tables. AFL teachers who participated in this study were asked (**Q16**) how they engage their students in activities outside the classroom.

Table 4. 22 Cultural activities outside the classroom.

Q 16: Types of cultural activities	
Arabic Language Table	13
Arabic Movie Night	19
Oriental Cooking night	12
Middle Eastern Music Concerts	14
Arabic Language Partner	19
None	1
Other:	visiting tourist and cultural sites Specific tasks they are assigned to accomplish

Table 4.22 shows that cultural activities which do not need a budget, such as the Arabic language partner, movie night, and language table, are very common, whereas activities which do need a budget, such as oriental cooking night and Middle Eastern Music Concerts, are less common.

Table 4. 23 The Budget for cultural activities

Q6: My language program/course has a budget for the course activities:					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	26	48.1	48.1	48.1
	Yes	28	51.9	51.9	100.0
	Total	54	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.23 shows that teaching through an Arabic language program does not guarantee having a chance for extracurricular activities. The survey found that 52% of the teachers who work for an Arabic language program do not have a budget for having any activities outside the classroom. The findings of this study are parallel to that of Schulz (2007) regarding cultural knowledge and culturally appropriate communication skills, and how they play an important role in all three modes of communication (page10).

On the one hand, the existence of a budget for cultural activities reflects whether there is a pre-made plan for introducing cultural elements through the language program alongside the language materials, and if opportunities were created for the AFL learners to explore the target language culture and communicate using the language.

Moreover, this could shed light on whether AFL teachers are relying on these cultural activities as the source for the cultural content that AFL learners should be exposed to, or whether they are balancing extracurricular cultural activities with activities in the language classrooms.

On the other hand, 48% of the participants said that their language programs do not have a budget for cultural activities. This could mean that the teachers themselves have to introduce all cultural content and must and create opportunities within the classroom where learners can communicate through the target language culture and language.

Research Question 3:

How do teachers assess culture, and on what basis?

To answer this question, two questions (12, 13) in the teachers' interviews, and two questions (15, 16) on the questionnaire, are discussed.

These questions were mainly created to explore whether AFL teachers include cultural content in their assessment, and what they assess. Table 4.24 below shows if and where cultural content was included in assessments:

Table 4.24: Culture and Assessment

Q 14: I include the culture content in:					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I do not include it	10	18.5	18.5	18.5
	Separate Activity	1	1.9	1.9	20.4
	The Final exam	4	7.4	7.4	27.8
	The Midterm exam	3	5.6	5.6	33.3
	The Overall Course Evaluation	28	51.9	51.9	85.2
	The Weekly Quizzes	8	14.8	14.8	100.0
	Total	54	100.0	100.0	

Because assessment is a process of measuring and observing learning, and due to the importance of the cultural content, this study explores whether the AFL teachers assess culture or not, and what type of assessment they use.

1. Teacher who Assess Culture

The results revealed that almost 52% of the AFL teachers who participated in this study include culture in their overall course evaluation, 5.6% in the Midterm exam, 7.4% on the Final exam, 14.8% in the weekly quizzes, and 1.9% in a separate activity.

Teachers' interviews revealed that assessing culture sometimes also happened through a cultural project. For instance, one of the teachers (teacher A) stated that:

“At my university language program, the AFL learners have to create a video skit as a final project ... this video should include one of the culture aspects that was covered through the semester... such as marriage, family, and so on. They have to use the language to introduce and reflect a culture issue”.

Teacher (B) added that:

“If there is cultural content that is considered part of the lesson outcomes, and the teacher is investing time in it, and it will provide the learner with useful information, then it should be assessed”.

Some teachers provided examples of how culture was assessed in the weekly quizzes. For instance, Teacher (A) stated that:

“[A] student was exposed to the Arabs' naming customs through the textbook culture content, so in the written exam they were asked about this in an indirect way, by finding out the fathers' name or the family name through the reading passage”.

Teacher (E) explained that;

“the Kinship is an important aspect of the culture, and it is very rich with vocabulary too; in the weekly quizzes I create a section for it in order to help them to build their language and culture and a related way”.

This finding is consistent with that of Basheer (2011), regarding how assessment should promote learning rather than only measuring students’ achievement.

2. Teacher who do not Assess Culture

18.5% of AFL teachers who participated in this study said they do not include culture in any way in their course assessment. The teachers’ interviews show that teachers can have different reasons for not including culture their course assessment. For instance, teacher (F) stated that:

“I never ask my students about cultural information in exams or tests ... this is not because I do not believe that culture should be graded or evaluated, but because it’s actually part of conceptualization of our courses, which are not content courses but are language courses”.

Moreover, teacher (E) clarified how it is not about the overall evaluation, adding:

“if I assigned the students to read about a place on the internet, they would not do this without being asked to, and if they did a good presentation and used the language in a good way, then they have acquired something that I do not think should be measured”.

This reflects that the teacher suggests the type of culture that needs to be introduced and assessed.

3. Teacher facing issues with assessing culture

One interesting finding from the interviews shows that there are some teachers who, although they do teach culture, also consider teaching culture problematic. They felt that it was not clear what to assess, or on what basis. Teacher (D) stated that:

“I have an issue with culture, as I do not know how to assess it”

Then the teacher explained that:

“if I am teaching expressions, then I can assess how he uses them in different situations in an appropriate cultural setting; this is the only way I know for assessing culture”.

Teacher (B) added that

“there are different cultures within the same community”

In addition teacher (E) stated that:

“cultures are changing”.

4. What to assess? And on what basis?

The “3Ps” of culture are “Practices”, “Products”, and “Perspectives”. Practices are defined as the patterns of behavior that are accepted by a society. Products are what a society creates, both tangible and intangible. Perspectives are the underlying ideas, attitudes, meanings, and values that explain why a society performs its practices and creates its products (National Standards, 2006, p. 51).

In this study, cultural knowledge means that “[by] learning the code system we acquire knowledge about the subtle differences within a given group and gradually gain a sense of

familiarity”. In other words, cultural knowledge means becoming familiar with the intra-cultural differences that Hansen (2003) characterized, as stated in Heizmann (n.d, page 4).

The participants were asked to state what they assess in terms of the cultural content they present. Table 4.25 below shows that 79.6% of the AFL teachers assess both cultural knowledge and practices, whereas 14.8% assess cultural knowledge only, and 5.6% assess cultural practices only.

Table 4. 25 Type of cultural assessment

Q 15: I assess the culture:					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Knowledge & Practices	43	79.6	79.6	79.6
	Knowledge	8	14.8	14.8	94.4
	Practices	3	5.6	5.6	100.0
	Total	54	100.0	100.0	

These results are in accord with Deardorff’s (2006) definition of ICC, which is “the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes”.

Teacher (B) stated that:

“when my program plans for an Arabic course, they split the culture content through the week alongside with the language content, and it is evaluated through the appropriate language use”.

This understanding corroborates the ideas of Bruner (1983), which claims that language is learned via its appropriate uses, and it is in line with what Deardorff (2011) stated about prioritizing specific aspects of intercultural competence based on the overall

mission, goals, and purpose of the course or program. In other words, we should have criteria to refer to when we talk about assessing culture.

Teacher (D) pointed out that:

“When I teach my students situational expressions, [since] I am able to test it through usage, then its assessment is feasible, but if I am introducing concepts about the culture such as how men or women think or perceive things, ... it is a built-in knowledge that needs to be assessed apart from the language.... some students get it in their own ways, not the way it is”.

E. Summary of the Results

The results of this study indicate that:

1. AFL teachers have positive perceptions towards teaching culture on a daily basis, they consider teaching culture to be as important as teaching language, and they believe both could be taught in an integrated way, as misunderstandings arise equally often from linguistic as from cultural differences. Culture doesn't hinder progress in linguistic accuracy.
2. Teaching culture reinforces AFL students' tolerance of cultural differences and enhances their understanding of their own cultural identity.
3. Most AFL teachers believe that the different cultures of the Middle East should be fostered in foreign language/ culture classes, but not all of these countries' cultures are equally valid to be represented in an Arabic syllabus, due to the limited knowledge that they have about these cultures.
4. The majority of AFL teachers who participated in this study believe that teaching culture can change the student's attitude towards her/ his own culture, but the majority neither

agree or disagree about whether developing a critical attitude towards both target and native cultures is the most important goal in learning a foreign culture.

5. About 66.5% of AFL teachers who participated in this study believe that development of cultural awareness should not be kept only for the most advanced levels.
6. Textbooks are significantly important in the AFL classroom, and AFL teachers tend to support the textbook content with other external authentic resources, such as videos, movies, photos, and short clips, which reflect both language and culture.
7. The content presented in the AFL classroom plays an important role in the cultural component, especially in ECA settings, which promote more language use and communication, and within which learners need more support to build their intercultural competence.
8. The language used in classroom instruction was mainly Arabic “ECA”; English was used sometimes for grammar explanation, translation, and task instructions.
9. The cultural component type that was presented most often was “ideas and symbols and artifacts”.
10. Culture was introduced mainly by relying on cultural capsules. The cultural content, whether it was introduced in a direct or indirect fashion, focused on knowledge and practices through the use of different skills.
11. 60% of the observed classrooms showed an absence of assigned cultural tasks, while in the rest of the classes, cultural tasks were either presentations, speaking tasks, writing assignments, projects, or mini-projects.
12. Culture can be presented by adding cultural dimensions when introducing vocabulary in Arabic, for example: “in Arabic we say ...”, in other words, the “language logic”. This

adds another layer, namely, the actual use or cultural connotation, to the literal meaning of the vocabulary.

13. Teaching culture happens in a context, even if this context is just jokes or proverbs.

14. Culture can be taught by linking the language to the students' daily life.

15. In most of the observed classes, cultural content was introduced spontaneously. The language was also used to introduce a direct cultural component, such as talking about cultural occasions.

16. Culture is reflected in all the aspects of the language.

17. Most AFL teachers either have no exact time devoted to teaching culture, instead presenting it implicitly through other skills, or, if they have a specific time planned for culture each session, it usually varies between 10 and 20 minutes per session. However, in other classes cultural content is presented only occasionally or through lesson content, curriculum, or the session content.

18. 70% of AFL teachers organize cultural activities outside the classroom, while 30% do not organize any.

19. Learning in an Arabic language program does not guarantee having a chance for extracurricular activities, as 52% of the teachers in our study who work for an Arabic language program did not have a budget for any activities outside the classroom.

20. Teachers' interviews revealed that cultural assessment usually occurred through a cultural project, though it could be assessed through weekly quizzes as well.

V. Conclusion

A. Introduction:

This chapter summarizes the research in four main points. First, the findings of the study will be addressed; second, the pedagogical implications will be highlighted; third, the limitations

and the delimitations of the study will be discussed; finally, suggestions for further research will be provided.

B. The Essential Findings of the Study

This study sheds light on the teaching of culture at the novice level through exploring three main aspects: teachers' perceptions about teaching culture at the AFL novice level, how they introduce it, and how they assess it. A combination of tools was used to reach the aim of the study.

The findings of this study reveal that the majority of the participants of this study, AFL teachers who teach Arabic at the novice level, have positive perceptions towards teaching culture in general. The participants also generally have an issue with the cultural resources provided to them, as they rely not only on the AFL textbooks, but also on other materials and resources for teaching culture.

When it comes to assessment, however, teachers try to assess the language use appropriateness, but they struggle in assessing cultural perspectives, and they have limited techniques for assessing cultural knowledge.

Moreover, the results demonstrate that there are many challenges that affect teaching culture at the novice level. These challenges include motivation, the availability of ready-made culture content and activities, and the time factor. In addition, AFL teachers used a variety of techniques for introducing culture, including notes, tasks, and projects. They rely mainly on cultural content which is either drawn from the textbook, or arises spontaneously, but fewer actively plan their own supplemental cultural content. In fact, there was no evidence that separate long-term planning for the daily introduction of cultural content was occurring.

C. Pedagogical Implications

Practically, this study highlights the need for teaching culture at the novice level by examining some of the teachers' views. The findings illustrate that:

1. AFL Teachers

- AFL teachers need a special and specific source for cultural content for the novice level, where ready-made materials, activities, and tasks are created. This is because many of the available textbooks do not suggest proper cultural content.
- AFL teachers are in dire need of a practical cultural model to balance the syllabus content with a cultural component that matches the linguistic component. The model being suggested is to balance the cultural component with the language component through ideas, tasks, and content.
- A platform which focuses only on teaching culture must be created for AFL teachers. It should include resources and ideas and should link teachers and learners through a forum where students can connect to cultural advisors, themselves professional teachers of AFL, who represent the various sub-Arab cultures. Such a platform would assist teachers in expanding their own knowledge of the other Arab countries' cultures, which will help in improving the variety of cultural content in the AFL classroom.

2. AFL Textbooks

- AFL textbooks need more cultural content, and also need assessment techniques which target cultural knowledge and practices. These techniques must be more integrated, and have more harmony with the language content, for the sake of teachers who prefer mixing culture and language use. For those who prefer

separate cultural content, a long-term plan of activities and tasks is needed to build up the learners' knowledge in a longitudinal manner.

D. Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

1. Limitations of the Study

In this research, some problems came to light. These were due to difficulty in reaching the projected sample size because of the low number of students in novice classrooms.

- The limited numbers of the classroom observations: only 12 hours were conducted. This is attributed to the limited number of available novice classes in the nearby institutions during the time of the research.
- The limited length of observation of AFL classrooms: classes were observed for only for one week, during the last week of classes. Because of the timing, there was not an opportunity to observe more classes, which would have allowed us to see more classroom practices regarding teaching culture.
- The difficulty of adopting one definition of culture.

2. Delimitations of the Study

In this research, the main focus lay on the teachers' perceptions about the teaching of culture, their teaching techniques, how they assess cultural knowledge, and the challenges of teaching culture. Since the main target of this study is teaching culture at the novice AFL level, other levels were not included.

The literature review concentrated on each of the previous aspects, that is to say the teachers, the novice AFL learners, the language standards, the teaching culture, the classroom assessments, and the teaching challenges. A review was not conducted of specific cultural content or teaching methods, since this study explores only the actual practices.

The study does not take into consideration students' perceptions towards learning culture at the novice level, only that of teachers.

The participants in this study were teachers with different backgrounds. Other Arabic or novice classes was not observed or studied due to time restrictions and the availability of students at the novice level.

E. Suggestions for Further Research

The research questions which this study has answered regarding teachers' perceptions about the teaching, introduction, and assessment of culture at the AFL novice level revealed that further studies are needed to supplement them.

- A critical study of the cultural content in AFL textbooks: what is the cultural content in AFL textbooks?
- How is cultural content introduced and assessed in AFL textbooks?
- What are the available resources in social media platforms for cultural content?
- How do AFL teachers plan their cultural content in the language syllabus, and on what basis?
- How are AFL teachers trained, in the context of their training programs, to prepare, teach and assess cultural content?
- What are the types of training programs that AFL teachers need to develop cultural content?
- What are the technological tools that AFL teachers need/use in teaching and assessing culture?
- Criteria for selecting and designing cultural content.

- Challenges in assessing cultural knowledge and cultural practices at the novice level.

In conclusion, the current study suggests that the presentation of culture in AFL novice classrooms is conducted in two ways., The first is explicit presentation, that is, cultural content in parallel with language course content. The second is implicit presentation, that is, cultural content integrated into language content. At the same time, AFL teachers need content developers to consider the cultural component as a complete task with its own activities and assessments. Finally, this study and further research will hopefully fill the significant gap in the research with respect to the teaching of culture in the AFL novice classroom.

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Appendices

Appendix A

A Questionnaire for AFL Teachers

Questionnaire about Teachers' Perception concerning Teaching Culture in the Arabic Foreign Language (AFL) Novice Classroom.	
1	Years of Experience: (Short answer)
2	I teach Arabic at: (Checkboxes) <input type="checkbox"/> University <input type="checkbox"/> High School <input type="checkbox"/> Private Institute <input type="checkbox"/> Freelance <input type="checkbox"/> Online
3	Preferred/used course materials for novice MSA/ variety: (Short answer)
4	I give instructions in the classroom in: (Multiple choice) <input type="checkbox"/> Arabic <input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> Mix of both
5	I teach Arabic through: (Multiple choice) <input type="checkbox"/> An Arabic language program <input type="checkbox"/> Individual courses

6	<p>My language program/course has a budget for the course activities: (Multiple choice)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
7	<p>The courses I teach are: (Multiple choice)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Face-to-face</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Online</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Both</p>
8	<p>Time devoted to teaching culture per class: (Short answer)</p>
9	<p>The number of the cultural activities conducted weekly: (Short answer)</p>
10	<p>For culture resources, I rely on: (checkboxes)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Textbook Culture Content</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Guest Speakers</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Videos</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Internet Clips</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Radio Reports/shows</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Literature</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other:</p>
11	<p>In teaching culture, I use: (checkboxes)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Email</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Blackboard</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Phone Apps</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Social Media (Facebook, WhatsApp, twitter, ...etcetera)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Google Apps</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other:</p>
12	<p>To help my students absorb the culture content, I use: (checkboxes)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Culture Notes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Culture Project</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Culture Task</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other:</p>
13	<p>I create cultural activities outside the classroom: (Multiple choice)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p>

	<input type="checkbox"/> No
14	<p>I include the culture content in: (checkboxes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> I include the culture content in: <input type="checkbox"/> The weekly quizzes <input type="checkbox"/> The midterm exam <input type="checkbox"/> The final exam <input type="checkbox"/> The overall course evaluation <input type="checkbox"/> I do not include it in any of the above <input type="checkbox"/> Other:
15	<p>I assess the culture: (Multiple choice)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge <input type="checkbox"/> Practices <input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge &Practices
16	<p>I engage my students in activities outside my class through: (checkboxes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> I engage my students with activities outside my class through: <input type="checkbox"/> Arabic Language Table <input type="checkbox"/> Arabic Movie Night <input type="checkbox"/> Oriental Cooking night <input type="checkbox"/> Middle Eastern Music Concerts <input type="checkbox"/> Arabic Language Partner <input type="checkbox"/> Other:
17	<p>I encourage my students to communicate/ connect with the Arab communities in their respective area? (Multiple choice)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

(Multiple choice grid)

Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. What do you think about teaching culture every day in the beginner classroom?					
2. In an FL classroom, teaching culture is as important as teaching the FL.					
3. It is impossible to teach the foreign language and the foreign culture in an integrated way.					
4. The more students know about the foreign culture, the more tolerant they become.					

5. When speakers of different languages meet, misunderstandings arise equally often from linguistic as from cultural differences.					
6. Foreign language teaching should enhance students' understanding of their own cultural identity.					
7. The different cultures of the Middle East should be fostered in foreign language/ culture classes.					
8. All the Arabic-speaking countries' cultures are equally valid to be represented in an Arabic syllabus.					
9. The study of culture in language classes can hinder progress in linguistic accuracy.					
10. Learning about a foreign culture can change the student's attitude towards her/ his own culture.					
11. The most important goal in learning about a foreign culture is to develop a critical attitude towards both target and native cultures.					
12. The development of cultural awareness should be kept only for the most advanced levels.					
13. Teaching culture motivates students.					
14. Combining language and culture helps learners to improve their language skills.					

Appendix B
Classroom Observation Sheet

Class Observation Sheet	
Course	
Instructor	
Course Type	
Level	
MSA / ECA	
Language Spoken in Class	
Course Textbook	
Number of Students	
Session Topic	
Session's target skills	
Culture Component	

<p>Culture Component type</p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="430 191 906 422"> <p>Nonmaterial culture <i>Ideas and symbols</i> includes the values, beliefs, symbols, and language that define a society</p> </td> <td data-bbox="906 191 1421 422"> <p>Material culture <i>Artifacts</i> all the society's physical objects, such as its tools and technology, clothing, eating utensils, and means of transportation</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="430 422 906 527"> </td> <td data-bbox="906 422 1421 527"> </td> </tr> </table>		<p>Nonmaterial culture <i>Ideas and symbols</i> includes the values, beliefs, symbols, and language that define a society</p>	<p>Material culture <i>Artifacts</i> all the society's physical objects, such as its tools and technology, clothing, eating utensils, and means of transportation</p>															
<p>Nonmaterial culture <i>Ideas and symbols</i> includes the values, beliefs, symbols, and language that define a society</p>	<p>Material culture <i>Artifacts</i> all the society's physical objects, such as its tools and technology, clothing, eating utensils, and means of transportation</p>																		
<p>Culture activities type <i>A designed activity for introducing culture</i></p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="430 527 690 646">Culture Capsule</td> <td data-bbox="690 527 1421 646"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="430 646 690 716">Culture Cluster</td> <td data-bbox="690 646 1421 716"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="430 716 690 785">Mini-drama</td> <td data-bbox="690 716 1421 785"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="430 785 690 854">Culture Assimilator</td> <td data-bbox="690 785 1421 854"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="430 854 690 924">Micrologue</td> <td data-bbox="690 854 1421 924"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="430 924 690 993">Cultoos</td> <td data-bbox="690 924 1421 993"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="430 993 690 1062">Audio-moto unit</td> <td data-bbox="690 993 1421 1062"></td> </tr> </table>		Culture Capsule		Culture Cluster		Mini-drama		Culture Assimilator		Micrologue		Cultoos		Audio-moto unit				
Culture Capsule																			
Culture Cluster																			
Mini-drama																			
Culture Assimilator																			
Micrologue																			
Cultoos																			
Audio-moto unit																			
<p>Culture activities' focus</p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="430 1150 894 1220">Knowledge</td> <td data-bbox="894 1150 1421 1220">Practices</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="430 1220 894 1367"></td> <td data-bbox="894 1220 1421 1367"></td> </tr> </table>		Knowledge	Practices															
Knowledge	Practices																		
<p>Culture Task</p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="430 1367 764 1507"></td> <td data-bbox="764 1367 894 1507">Writing</td> <td data-bbox="894 1367 1040 1507">Speaking</td> <td data-bbox="1040 1367 1263 1507">Collecting Info</td> <td data-bbox="1263 1367 1421 1507">Project</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="430 1507 764 1591">Nonmaterial Culture Task</td> <td data-bbox="764 1507 894 1591"></td> <td data-bbox="894 1507 1040 1591"></td> <td data-bbox="1040 1507 1263 1591"></td> <td data-bbox="1263 1507 1421 1591"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="430 1591 764 1661">Material Culture Task</td> <td data-bbox="764 1591 894 1661"></td> <td data-bbox="894 1591 1040 1661"></td> <td data-bbox="1040 1591 1263 1661"></td> <td data-bbox="1263 1591 1421 1661"></td> </tr> </table>					Writing	Speaking	Collecting Info	Project	Nonmaterial Culture Task					Material Culture Task				
	Writing	Speaking	Collecting Info	Project															
Nonmaterial Culture Task																			
Material Culture Task																			

Students' reaction	Motivated/ Demotivate	
	Interested/ Bored / Neutral	
	Receiver / Participants	
The use of technology	Yes	
	No	
The use of CD/DVD of the textbook		
Other Comments		

Appendix C

Teachers' Interviews Questions

1. How many years of experience do you have?
2. Where do you teach Arabic?
3. What levels do you teach?
4. What is the preferred/used course materials for novice MSA/ variety? And why?
5. Do you think that teaching culture at the novice level is challenging? And why?
6. What is the most challenging part about teaching novice learners?
7. What are the challenges that you face in teaching culture at the novice level?
8. What is the way the teacher overcomes this challenge?
9. Do you think that culture should be taught every day?

10. What do you think about a 5 minutes daily culture component?
11. Do you think introducing other Arab countries' culture would be feasible?
12. Do you think culture content should be a main part of the overall course evaluation?
13. Do you assess culture at the novice level and how?
14. Do you consider culture as a separate component in your novice syllabus?
15. How do /or could you, introduce culture?