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EPISTEMIC AND CULTURAL BELIEFS OF IRAQI EFL LEARNERS AND LEARNING CHALLENGES

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to explore the epistemological and cultural beliefs that act as challenges in the learning of English by Iraqi undergraduate learners. English is a compulsory component of education from early school years in Iraqi Arabia, and a great deal of workforce and financial resources are invested by the Ministry of Education in this sector in a concerted effort to ensure that Iraqi students attain language proficiency. The study employed a mixed-method research design and was conducted with 85 Iraqi EFL learners at Um Albneen secondary school. It used a questionnaire and interviews to obtain insight into the factors that inhibit the English learning experience. Findings revealed that the respondents' resistance to the learning of the culture of others stems mainly from the epistemic and cultural barriers embedded in English language learning. Implications of the study will provide the basis to policymakers, educationists, institutions and learners for contextualizing the English language curriculum of Iraq.

Keywords: Epistemological Beliefs, Cultural Beliefs, Iraqi EFL, English Learning

Introduction

For the emerging economies, education is an engine of social change, social mobility, and the vanguard of growth and development. Without access to the appropriate and high-quality education system, development initiatives of countries would be futile. Various academics have stressed the direct relationship between economics and education (Camilleri, &Camilleri, 2020; Fägerlind&Saha, 2016), in which schooling is related to the well-being of the people and the economic development of nations. One of the essential functions of education is the creation and development of human capital, which constitutes the primary agency of change and social transition.

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At present, educational institutions of the world are challenged to promote equitable learning outcomes to students, since achievement gap is still an issue (Darling-Hammond & Friedlaender, 2008; Nadelson et al., 2020; Perry, 2009; Speed et al. 2019). They are advocating educational equity calls to address inequity in student learning, which is attributed to issues relating to gender, race, family income, and cognitive disability. Embracing educational equity in schools is a way of supporting transformative education (Godhe, Lilja& Selwyn, 2019; Vossoughi, Hooper &Escude, 2016). Meanwhile, the linguistic ability of students plays a crucial role in the development of countries' workforce, for they will become the leaders of the next generation; hence, investment to their development should start in examining the interplay of their socio-economic status and how they relate to their social and cultural capital. Linguistic ability is highlighted in this study.

Today language and education research actively recognize the relationship between language courses and the learners' lived experiences. It is now understood that the identities that learners come to the classroom with a bearing on the learning experience. This identity is a complex result of their personal background, intrinsic language skills, attitudes, and social capital. In other words, our learners have a rich repertoire of resources that they apply in the learning process. These are also the ingredients that go into the making of their epistemological and cultural beliefs, which in turn, shape their identity. Further, learners' knowledge, beliefs and actions in the classroom help in determining the learnt output. Epistemological and cultural beliefs with which the learners of a foreign language come to the classroom, especially in learning environments that may be novel for the learners, do affect the learning outcomes. An example is the EFL classroom of KSA where nonnative English language teachers far outnumber the native-speaking teachers, a phenomenon prevalent around the world (Matsuda and Matsuda, 2001). Such teachers are faced with the additional challenge of establishing credibility before the learners who carry the epistemological belief that they may be better taught by a native speaking teacher than otherwise. This fact is borne out by many studies that indicate that nonnative speakers do not enjoy the power and status that is naturally accorded to native speaker teachers (Miller 2007, Pennycook 2001). At the same time, it is true that such beliefs are partly propagated by the teachers themselves who marginalize the nonnative varieties and accents of English and

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encourage their learners to target the native speaker's prosodic and paralinguistic proficiency as the only means to enter what is called the 'inner circle'.

Administrators, policymakers and educators in KSA recognize and appreciate the role of English in taking the nation forward. To this end, their commitment to achieving this goal is stated in Vision 2020 and after that in Vision 2030, the policy documents of national development. Huge and generous grants are periodically awarded, including sponsorships for students to study abroad, high-end digitization of education both on and beyond campuses, and tangible and intangible perks to academia keen to aid in this venture. Nevertheless, much research and pedagogical innovation have been invested with theories of language teaching and learning, the role of acculturation with the target culture, improvisation, and technological intervention in order to enhance the learning outcomes, which, on the contrary, leave the teachers with severe concerns daily as to why they experience classroom problems and poor output as they do. Therefore, this study attempts to find a solution to the collective disappointment with the KSA EFL learning scenario by exploring the epistemological beliefs and cultural barriers that have a direct bearing on the English learning beliefs of undergraduate students in KSA. This is, thus, a unique study as EFL research so far has worked within the scope of existing theories, indeed including theories pertaining to the target culture, to the best knowledge of the researcher.

EFL and Learners' Epistemological Beliefs

Early research (for example, Perry, 1968) viewed epistemic beliefs as a unified phenomenon of progress from naive to mature beliefs. Schommer(1990) suggested that personal epistemology is a system of multi-dimension with independent beliefs about knowledge. Later Schommer - Aikin (2004) conceptualized that epistemic beliefs may have limited adherence to logic, a great influence on thinking, and that there is a lot of resistance to change. Unlike earlier models of the belief system, the one proposed by Schommer is asynchronous in its development. Accordingly, an individual may have a belief in the complexity of knowledge, and at the same time, she/he might believe in the unchanging nature and character of knowledge. Schommer - Aikinalso stated that personal epistemology

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could not be imagined in a vacuum, and that it is instead a system embedded along into systems like family, culture, classroom, teachers etc.

For Daif-Allah &Aljumah(2020) they emphasized the importance of cognitive beliefs in the achievement of academic success of the learners. Cognitive beliefs significantly influence judgments of learners about their learning, and goals, as well as the strategy they adopt to achieve what they aspire for. They have suggested that the voice of learners should always be heard, and instructors should, therefore, pay heed to the opinion of the learners in like manner, Massri (2019) argued that the academic performance of the learners gets affected by the kind of beliefs they have. While positive opinions enhance learning and academic achievement, pessimistic beliefs lead to demotivation and frustration.

Corollary to this, Kaşlıoğlu&Ersin (2018) stated that cognitive beliefs of the learners have a significant effect on learning behaviours and performance of the learners. The confidence level of the learners depends upon their expectation. The higher the level of expectation, the higher is the level of confidence, and similarly, a low level of expectations results in a low level of confidence and demotivation (Alghanmi&Shakuri, 2016). Alharbi (2019), Abahussain (2016), Horwitz (1988) and Yang (2018), independently studied the correlation between cognitive beliefs of the learners and their performance in a language. All of them in their respective studies found a direct and robust relationship between cognitive beliefs of the learners and the kind of strategy these learners use for language acquisition and academic performance. Additionally, previous studies have also highlighted how epistemological belief becomes a predictor of self-regulated learning strategies in middle school students (Apperley & Parikka, 2018; Duschl, 2008; Metallidou, 2013; Pérez & Saavedra, 2017; Sandoval, Greene, & Bråten, 2016; Sheehy, et al, 2019).

In the context of classroom learning, Spataro et al. (2018), Alsalmi (2014) and Al-Nasser (2015) studied the relationship between the belief system of teachers and learners. They found that, mismatch in the beliefs of the teachers and the learners adversely affects the performance of the learners, and results in a lower level of satisfaction with the particular class. This mismatch also leads to an attitude of reluctance among the learners to participate in the communicative tasks. Madjar et al. (2017) studied the relationship between epistemic beliefs and their orientation towards achievement goals. The authors studied three sets of

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high school students numbering 256, 149, 250 in several studies. They found that epistemological beliefs and achievement goals formed distinct personal profiles, and that these were differentially related to strategies of learning.

For pre-service education, Arslantas (2016) conducted a study on 353 teacher candidates who were studying in their 4th year in the Faculty of Education. This study revealed a significant statistical relationship between epistemic beliefs and achievements in the field of academics. Similarly, Daif-Allah (2012) argued that identification of beliefs of the learners is of paramount importance for an effective classroom teaching of English as a foreign language.

Similarly, Feucht and Bendixen (2010) found that there exists a consensus among the researchers that epistemological beliefs influence the teaching practices in the classrooms. Chan and Elliot (2004) found that the teachers who are of the opinion that knowledge is complicated and sophisticated tend to adopt practices which are learner-centred. Epistemological beliefs influence various aspects of teaching and learning. Tanaseand Wang (2010) studied how epistemological beliefs function in controlling the classrooms and interaction between teachers and learners. Other studies concluded that epistemological beliefs influence the motivation of the learners (Kuhn & Park, 2005), their decision-making skills (Tsai, 2002), as well as the teachers (Tanase& Wang, 2010)

Many studies support the claim that the belief system of the learners plays an essential role in their learning. The learners with mature epistemic beliefs were found to possess a better level of comprehension in comparison to the learners with naive epistemic beliefs (Schommer, 1990; Ryan, 1984), higher academic performance (Schommer, Crouse, & Rhodes, 1992; Kember, 2001; Chen &Pajares, 2010; Lodewyk, 2007; Many, Howard, &Hoge, 2002; Schommer‑ Aikins, Duell, &Hutter, 2005; Peng& Fitzgerald, 2006; Schommer-Aikins& Easter, 2006; Stroeger, 2006; Strathopoulou&Vosniadou, 2007).

By the time of completing high school, the gifted students possessed more mature epistemic beliefs in comparison to the non-gifted ones (Schommer and Dunnell, 1994; 1997). Also, students with sophisticated epistemic beliefs focused on the constructive aspects of teaching (Tsai, 2000). Muis and Franco (2009) concluded based on the data collected in their study that epistemic beliefs of the learners influence their achievement of goals which has a

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bearing on the learning strategies of the learners and their academic performance. Though most of the studies support that mature epistemic believes lead to better academic performance, yet there are some studies which have found no such effects prevalent, for instance, Harteis et al. (2010) and Braten et al., (2004) who conducted a study on 80 Norwegian teacher-students. The results of their study showed that happy beliefs had a significant influence on the achievement of goals in comparison to the implicit intelligence theories.

Further, Deryakulu (2004) studied the effect of epistemological beliefs on the strategies adopted by learners, their academic achievement in the context of their understanding of mathematical texts, suggesting that the epistemological beliefs of the students influence their achievements. The participants of his study were 338 students of a university of which 217 were girls, and 121 were boys. The mean age of the students was 20 years. He found that the participants'epistemological beliefs were statistically significant predictors of learners' attitude, concentration, their learning strategies, and motivation; and that the epistemic beliefs influence the achievements of the learners.

EFL and Learners' Cultural Beliefs

In the study of Alrabai (2016) who analyzed the factors that are responsible for the low performance of EFL learners in Iraq, including the social challenges. Though the indicators like the growing economy, efforts of Iraqi education system, and the positive shift in the attitude of EFL students point towards significant progress in the teaching and learning of English; yet other factors like sociocultural, religious, institutional and instructional indicate the contrary. Consequently, Ahmad (2015) found that the proficiency of EFL learners of Iraqi Arabia is below expectations due to certain traditional and cultural factors. In like manner, Lantolf and Thorne (2014) described the language classroom as a collection of variables of culture.

Previously, Al-Saraj (2014) pointed out that the culture of Iraq is religion-oriented and conservative. It is deeply rooted in its strong traditions which makes the society resistant to change. This behaviour also gets reflected in learners even though there is a pressing need for the EFL learners to learn English. Al-Seghayer (2014) pointed out that there is fear in the

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mind of Arabic people that English will erode the Islamic social fabric of their society. This kind of psychology demotivates some of the learners of the language, which in turn hampers their performance.

Moreover, Akasha (2013) researched the context of Iraqi Arabia and pointed out six challenges, including cultural awareness and cultural understanding that plague the EFL environment. According to him, cultural awareness on the part of teachers and students can help students to participate in the learning process easier. He also advocated that the teaching material should be culturally relevant, and such pedagogy shall improve EFL learning and intercultural communication. Hickey (2011) underlined the importance of culture on education, asserting that the positive attitude of learners makes them more committed to learning English. Brisk (2010) argued that its culture governs the lifestyle of society. The culture also affects the psychological makeup of the people. Their culture greatly influences the Arabic speaking EFL students' classroom behaviour. She cites an example of Muslim girls from Sudan who refused to interact with boys of their class, such behaviour which is attributable to the culture of Sudan.

Vygotsky (1978) analyzed the effect of surroundings and circumstances on the learning behaviour of an individual and found that the sociocultural environment and the traditions of a society greatly influence the learning behaviour of its people. Gardner and Lambert (1972) also recognized the importance of a positive attitude in acquiring second language skills, implying that a negative attitude is a stumbling block. Kim (2006) asserted that the sociocultural environment plays a significant role in the motivation level of an individual learner. Ammon (2004) claimed that the way a learner reacts to the culture of the target language influences the attitude of the learner towards the target language itself. Some researchers have pointed out that too much inclusion of foreign culture in English language books prescribed in KSA universities acts as a socio-cultural barrier in the learning process. Nation & Macalister (2009) in a study conducted in Morocco found that most of the teachers were not in favour of including foreign culture in EFL classrooms. Fredricks (2007) emphasized that the motivation level of the learners is much higher when they are taught the target language embedded in their own culture. Shafaei&Nejati (2008) stated the importance

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of knowing the culture of the learners as it is useful in predicting their behavioural pattern related to the target language.

Research Purposes

The study generally aimed to identify the epistemological and cultural beliefs that act as obstacles in the learning of English by Iraqi learners at secondary stages. Specifically, it answers the following research questions: (1) What are the epistemological and Cultural Beliefs of EFL Students at secondary schools ?; (2) How do the Iraqi EFL students view the Epistemic and cultural barriers to learning as to 2.1. Misconstrued religious beliefs as learning barrier; 2.2. Epistemic beliefs of taboos as learning barriers

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a dual approach with qualitative data being gathered through personal interviews, and the use of a questionnaire to obtain learner feedback on their epistemological and cultural beliefs that countered their English learning experience. A convenient sample of 85 undergraduate EFL learners who are under the direct tutelage of the researcher at Qassim University was requested to participate in the study. All the participants were male with the median age being 21.8 years and an English learning experience of at least eight years, but in no case, more than eleven years. It was further stipulated that only participants with a CGPA score between 2.5 and 4.0 were included as this range qualifies for 'upper intermediate' proficiency in KSA. Thus sufficient vetting of participants was undertaken to keep a mostly homogenous sample. All participants were assured of impeccable ethical standards, including confidentiality of data that would be maintained throughout. This was an essential step as the researchers understand the highly sensitive nature of the data they study, particularly about the participants.

Questionnaire and Interview

The questionnaire consisted of eight items which were obtained after a twenty-item initial questionnaire was validated by a sample of five students from the same learner group. These final questions pertained to the language-culture issues that the researchers often encountered

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in the course of their real-life classroom experience. The issues that most trouble the EFL learners and indeed hinder their learning of English are as follows:

1. Conflicting Arabic and Native speakers' cultural elements, for instance, the freedom allowed to females in the latter, work culture and environment depicted in textbooks, and portrayal of society as being generally more individualistic than the former, all of which are foreign and unfamiliar to the Iraqi learners. These stand opposed to local culture, where family and tribe are the center of the universe. In this conservative culture, the senior male of the house is the leader, and women are expected to be generally homemakers keeping the family together.

2. Inclination to and deep faith in Arabic culture and religion, global reliance on Islam and its tenets in all matters of socio-political judgement, including views about prosperity, affluence and success, in keeping with the general makeup of the Iraqi society which prides itself in being the center of the Islamic faith.

3. Fear of tabooed words, expressions, ideas, and behaviours, that is, reluctance to learning those language elements or becoming familiar with those cultural components whose equivalents or even homophonous lexical items are tabooed in their native culture, as the Iraqi society is deeply embedded in practice and propagation of propriety, righteousness, and faith.

Data Analysis

Data collected for the quantitative portion is tabulated and adequately evaluated utilizing a concise statistical method, such as the mean, weighted mean and standard deviation. The responses to the questionnaire were sought along the Likert Scale modulated feedback with one denoting 'Fully Disagree', and five denoting 'Fully Agree'. Table 1 below summaries the participant feedback. The mean as a central tendency measure was used to obtain the total of all observations divided by the number of observations. In the meantime, the standard deviation has reflected the data dispersion variability. For the qualitative portion of the analysis, the data were transcribed, and the main topics of the interviews were analyzed. The participants' narratives were coded and analyzed to determine the themes that emerged gradually.

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Results and Discussion

Epistemological and Cultural Beliefs of EFL Undergraduate Students

As shown in Table 1, the results of the study show that the majority of the respondents wholeheartedly agreed that EFL books and teaching resources should be contextualized for them to appreciate their own culture better. Likewise, they highly agreed that native values and cultures should be adequately depicted in EFL books. In contrast, they wholeheartedly disagreed that when teachers are discussing lesson using non-Iraqi concepts in the English language, they will learn better. Consequently, they highly agreed that requiring them to learn a foreign language will distort their culture, values and beliefs, which for them are pristine and superior to the rest of the world. Moreover, they are not comfortable with reading about strange and unfamiliar societal norms such as children moving out of the family home as soon as they turn adults or the concept of young people dating each other. The result of the study implies that Iraqi EFL learners have a strong attachment to their culture and values, which strongly affects their belief to learn English as a foreign language. Such a result corroborates with previous studies that foreign language learning anxiety is cultural-based (Jaekel et al., 2017; Saddhono, 2018; Wright, 1999). For emphasis, the epistemological and cultural beliefs of language learners are factorsof learning a foreign language (England, 2017; Zheng et al., 2016; Srinivasan et al., 2019).

Table 1: Epistemological and Cultural Beliefs of EFL Undergraduate Students

	Statement	Fully disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Fully agree
1	My EFL books aften depict the culture of the native English speakers. This is not a problem as I understand that there are cultures different from ours, what bothers me is the absence of in-depth understanding of their culture and with superficial knowledge I encounter dilemma and conflict vis-à-vis my culture.	3	1	2	13	66
2	I enjoy learning English, but I would connect more with the experience if our native culture and values were depicted in	4	10	7	6	58

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	the books.					
3	I feel involved when the teacher encourages us to participate in discussions that are based on non-Iraqi cultural beliefs and concepts.	63	4	9	6	3
4	I do not work as hard at learning the language as I can because Islam teaches us that hard work helps if coupled with our steadfastness in faith to achieve prosperity and success.	4	8	3	11	59
5	Frequently I feel confused as from childhood I have been told that my culture, values and beliefs are pristine and superior to the rest of the world, yet now I am required to know a foreign language and culture if I have to get ahead in the world.	2	2	1	14	66
6	I believe that learning a foreign language is good as Islam encourages us to do so, but I do not relate to the literature unless I get familiar with the culture, and this is what hinders my learning as this culture is quite different from my native culture.	3	6	3	14	59
7	I am comfortable reading about strange and unfamiliar societal norms such as children moving out of the family home as soon as they turn adults or the concept of young people dating each other.	72	5	6	1	1
8	I cannot bring myself to read or learn about ideas and words which are not acceptable in Islam, in fact, I consciously 'unlearn' these.	0	0	0	0	85

Epistemic and cultural barriers to learning

At the undergraduate and higher levels of learning English, whether for academic, occupational or research purposes, the curriculum is divorced from the content that the learners are exposed to in their school experience. The reason is that the Ministry of

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Education acts as the selector of language textbooks, and it sees to it that these are in tandem with the Iraqi beliefs and customs. So far, it is in the good of the students. Still, the problem arises when with this limited exposure to native English speaking cultures when the learners arrive in the university system, expectations of learning outcomes multiply manifold as it is assumed that soon after these learners would turn out to be fluent users of English whose knowledge and skill is well-rooted in the corresponding culture. Sadly, this is way far from reality. This fact is borne out by the staggeringly lopsided response to statement 1 of the questionnaire where more than 77% of the participants reported dilemma and conflict between their limited or negligible knowledge of a foreign culture and their deep-seated regard for the native culture. In the second phase of the research, personal interviews (in which participation was voluntary) revealed that in the school system, these learners are habituated to a teacher-centric, zero learner participation strategy where they are not expected to participate in any way whatsoever because the syllabus is not communicative. Alharbi (2015) also reported in a study that the learner's role in the Iraqi classroom is really non-existent.

Further, that the EFL classroom is teacher-centered has been reported by many studies (Alrashidi and Phan, 2015; Ahmad, 2014). In other words, the problems of university learners do not start with their entry into the university system. In fact, they begin much earlier with the epistemological beliefs with which they arrive at the university.

This section classifies learning barriers into three broad categories: Epistemic and cultural barriers; Religious barriers; and a subset of these two, Beliefs of taboos as a barrier. A discussion on the questionnaire responses follows with particular reference to these three categories. The other epistemic belief that cripples the learning process of undergraduate learners is their resistance to learning about a culture other than theirs. This is particularly evident from the response of 68% of the participants to statement 2, where they indicate that they would instead study English but would prefer the content to be based on native context.

This again goes to show the ignorance of the fact that language and culture are two sides of the same coin and if they aspire to study and learn the English language, they have to see it as a representative of the corresponding culture. The role of the early EFL teachers is apparent here, and indeed it leaves much to be desired. Numerous studies have indicated

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what some participants reported in the interview session: the predisposition of schoolteachers to take the translation approach in the EFL classrooms, sometimes straightaway narrating the text in MT. Instead, they would serve the best interests of the learners if they constructively communicated to them the fact that they were learning a foreign language (versus a curricular 'subject') and one which would help them 'communicate' with their counterparts in other parts of the world. Knowing about a foreign culture should be integrated into the class activities as a fun based learning experience instead of serving to the young minds an alien language to which they cannot correlate, nor fathom its use anytime in the future. Further, the sense of shame and taboo that the learners attach to foreign culture and its representation is apparent in the participants' response to statement 3 where 74% of the participants responded by expressing the desire for class discussions to be centred around native culture and beliefs. This is again a reflection of the attitude of 'the other' that the learners invariably exhibit to English as a language and its concomitant culture.

1.1 Misconstrued religious beliefs as learning barriers

In a study with a large undergraduate learner group in a Iraqi university, Alrahaili (2013) found that, though learners are keen to learn English, they nevertheless are not conditioned to accept that the common socio-religious values of the related culture. Similar findings are arrived at in the current study. Participants in the study responded with dilemmas about the foreign culture and value systems not being in line with their native culture and values (responses to statements 4, 6, and 7). In personal interviews, participants voiced their subliminal fear that this somehow violated their faithfulness to Islam. Furthermore, some participants (N= 13) disclosed that close members in their families were derisive of their learning English and often claimed that this would destroy Iraqi culture, language and values eventually. A constant bombardment of such negative views adversely affected their motivation and performance. We understand that Iraqi is today struggling to change not only its image but also it's thinking via the modern conception of Vision 2020 and 2030 to firmly place the country at a level footing on par with the most advanced nations of the world. However, with the young people, which coincidentally is also the most significant section of Iraqi society today, steeped in dogmas the challenge is more from within than without. This

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is a vicious circle for the learners as retro epistemic beliefs that are certainly not a true projection of Islam and Sunnah, are instrumental in the poor performance of the learners which in turn steeps them further in negative attitudes to learning English. This finding was also reported by Alsamadani and Ibnian (2015) who established a correlation between high CGPA and positive attitudes to learning of English and vice versa.

1.2 Epistemic beliefs of taboos as learning barriers

Islam lies at the very centre of life in Iraqi Arabia. Indeed it is not surprising as this is the land of its birth. All spheres of life, whether day-to-day conduct, occupations, or education, are governed by its tenets which are time tested. However, there is a deep mistrust to anything that is not Iraqi, causing the common man to shun it as it is construed as a threat to the native culture and beliefs. The responses of the participants to statement 5 and 8 clearly show insecurity in their beliefs as to the preservation of Islam and its values. The participants are unanimous in their aversion to learning anything that exists in the target language and culture but is tabooed in native culture in the firm belief that it will somehow dilute Iraqi culture. They seem to have missed out the simple logic that, if their Islamic roots are firm, they need not fear learning about a foreign culture. Personal interviews showed that, these students were often overly cautious not to repeat or discuss before their elders' words, expressions or behaviours that were considered tabooed in native culture as it would invariably invite reprimand from them. Similar findings have been shown in previous studies (Moodie, 2016; Cho, Yough, & Levesque-Bristol, 2020; Butler, 2019).

CONCLUSION

Diversity of culture, whether in a multilingual learner group or between the learner and target language, has to be considered as necessary in learner behaviour and learning process. In learning situations where an element of the foreign is involved, these considerations cannot be ruled out. The need of the hour, therefore, is to help learners cope with the epistemological and cultural factors that act as barriers to learning, ensuring them from early stages of learning that their language and culture are secure. The study concludes with the observation that, part of the battle is won by recognizing and acknowledging the enemy. The

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academic machinery has a decisive role to play in encouraging the learners to overcome baseless mores, to recognize the need of the hour which is to be competent in English as a communication tool, and to develop a real rather than a false sense of pride in native culture nurtured under the shadow of blanket derision for all that is not Iraqi.

Limitations and Future Research Direction

Having attained the objectives of this study, the study also has its limitations, which can be addressed in future investigations. First, the study is only limited to a small sampling size of respondents without considering whether the institutions are public or private being surveyed, which can be a limiting factor on the test of differences. Second, a simple survey correlational research design was utilized, which restricts the assumptions regarding the data and the variable. A hybrid research design using two or more methods can be more reliable to triangulate the findings gathered. Third, future studies are encouraged whether to replicate or to adapt the context of the study using cross-cultural comparison and approach.

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