

Evaluation of the Significant Effects of Cross-Cultural Teaching on Students' Learning in Selected Colleges of Technology in Oman

Introduction and Statement of the Problem:

Teaching in a diverse culture is not easy. Students come from different backgrounds with different set of skills, abilities and values and beliefs system. In general, students and teachers feel that they have neither the formal language skills nor cultural knowledge to interact effectively with others especially that they are in a mixed-culture setting. Hence, the need for a closer examination on how cross-cultural teaching-learning process can be improved.

This is where the “cross-cultural” pedagogy comes into play in the learning environment. The term "cross-cultural" emerged in the social sciences in the 1930s, largely as a result of the *Cross-Cultural Survey* undertaken by George Peter Murdock, a Yale anthropologist which has eventually evolved ever since as a part of the teaching-learning process.

Cross-cultural teaching involves both formal and informal training of individuals with an objective to improve cross-cultural competencies and teach the necessary skills and attitudes effectively in a host culture (Fan and Lai, 2014). Furthermore, **cross-cultural** approach deals with the comparison of different cultures. In cross-cultural communication, differences are understood and acknowledged, and can bring about individual change, but not collective transformations. In cross-cultural societies, one culture is often considered “the norm” and all other cultures are compared or contrasted to the dominant culture.

In the Middle East countries, **Cross-Cultural Pedagogy** has become a common trend where diversity of culture, attitudes, practices, beliefs, and ideas are shared to the learners. It has become a phenomenon where an academic institution becomes like a theatre where myriad of teacher-actors play their part. Moreover, this so called mixture of culture in the academic institutions is not only confined in the Middle East. In fact, developed countries in Asia such as: Japan, Singapore, China, and South Korea also adopt the same cross-cultural teaching program most particularly in their language schools. The main reason for this is undeniably connected with globalization where professionals and individuals must learn the world lingo which is English.

Furthermore, the popularity of cross-cultural teaching is still at its peak and still revolutionizing the teaching-learning process which eventually creates various effects that can be positive or negative. This is actually the area where the setback emanated – ignored effects that most of the educational managers have not attempted to identify and study to at least help the learners get what is necessary for development and help the education programs of the government substantiated with factual benefits of the existing phenomenon.

In Oman, this cross-cultural approach is not new anymore. Since it started to open the opportunities to foreign workers, the system of mixed-culture in the academic institutions has become the trend in its operation. So many changes have transpired within a short period of time and so many new ideas have been disseminated in the four corners of the classrooms. Eventually, this system has created various effects on the institution, on the learners, and in the country in general. Hence, this research study aims to answer the following questions:

1. How does cross-cultural teaching affect the foundation students in terms of:
 - 1.1 Language skills development;
 - 1.2 Language comprehension;
 - 1.3 Attitude / Behavior; and
 - 1.4 Test Performance
 - 1.5 Class participation / performance?

2. What particular language variety from cross-cultural teaching has the most significant effect on:

- 2.1 Learners' Language Development;
- 2.2. Learners' Comprehension;
- 2.3 Learners' Attitude and Behavior;
- 2.4 Learners' Participation and Performance; and
- 2.5 Test Performance?

3. Is there a difference of various language styles in cross-cultural teaching on:

- 3.1 Learners' Language Development;
- 3.2. Learners' Comprehension;
- 3.3 Learners' Attitude and Behavior
- 3.4 Learners' Participation and Performance; and
- 3.5 Test Performance?

4. Is there a relationship of various language styles in cross-cultural teaching on:

- 4.1 Learners' Language Development;
- 4.2. Learners' Comprehension;
- 4.3 Learners' Attitude and Behavior
- 4.4 Learners' Participation and Performance; and
- 4.5 Test Performance?

5. Is there a significant correlation between Students' foundation level on:

- 5.1 Learners' Language Development;
- 5.2. Learners' Comprehension;
- 5.3 Learners' Attitude and Behavior;
- 5.4 Learners' Participation and Performance; and
- 5.5 Test Performance?

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This research only covers four (4) Colleges of Technology in Oman. Two high performing colleges and two low performing colleges based on the data of the colleges of technology governing body. It doesn't cover other colleges and/or universities within the Sultanate. More so, it focuses on two macro skills, such as: Listening and Speaking for test and validation. For the quantitative approach, the respondents will be Omani students, Foundation Levels 1-4, selected through cluster-random sampling; while for the qualitative approach, teacher respondents from various nationalities will be selected through stratified-random sampling. The number of respondents per level is set to 40% of the total groups in all levels; hence, if there are 100 groups from levels 1-4, 40 groups will be selected which is 10 groups per level. The statistical data will only compute the significant effects of cross-cultural teaching (language style); the relationships of the categorical variables of the study; the differences of the effects of various language styles; and the correlations of the set variables.

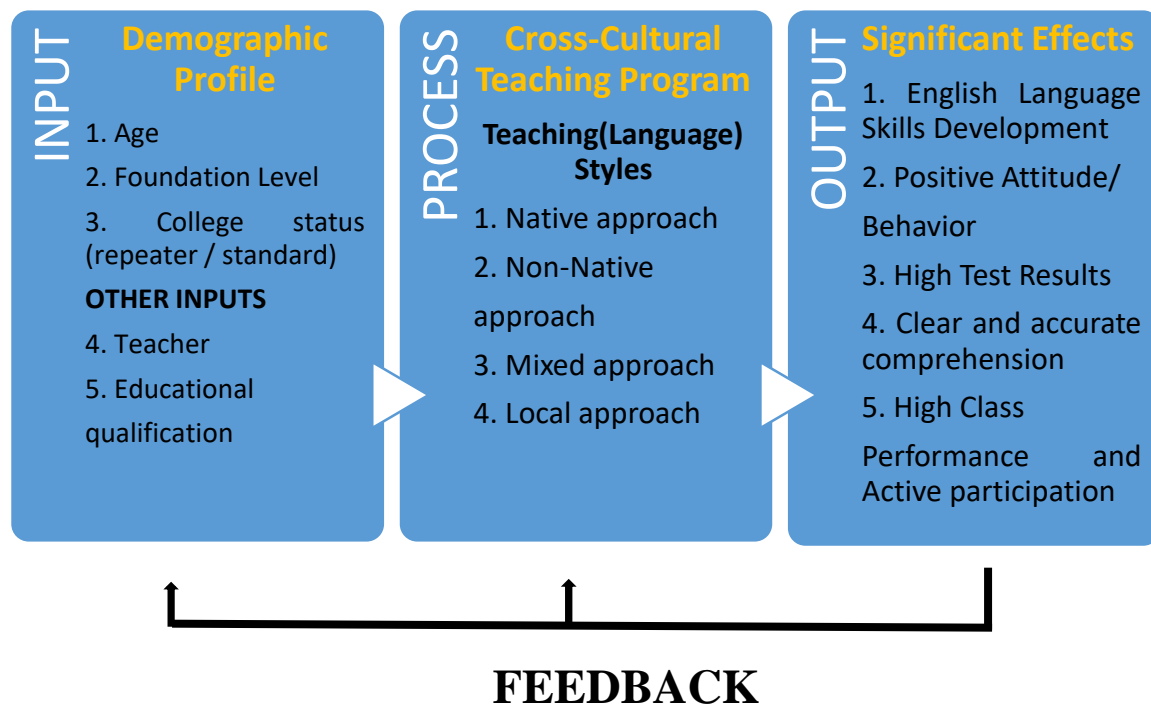
Hypotheses of the Study

1. There are no significant effects of cross-cultural teaching (language styles) to students' language comprehension, language development, classroom performance, and attitude / behavior;
2. There is no significant relationship between the language style of the teacher and the learners' understanding and language improvement, classroom performance, and behavior.
3. There is no significant difference amongst various language styles in terms of effects to learners' understanding and language development, class performance, and behavior.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework covers the **Input-Process-Output-Feedback** model where the specific variables which are under evaluation and observation are set.

Figure 1: The Research Paradigm



LITERATURE REVIEW

This part includes the definition of cross-cultural teaching, its scope, significant effects, and impacts. The local and foreign literature included in this research provide a clear understanding of the cross-cultural system in academic institutions. Hence, it is imperative in this research to include ideas related thereto.

Local Literature

Rabago (2015) in his article from the book “Leadership and Leadership Styles: A Look on Cross-Cultural Leadership – Oman Education Experience” stated that cross-cultural leadership based on its concept transcends on communication and cultural barriers. He also mentioned that the learners in Oman are being processed within the hands of various people with mixed culture which he emphasized as the ultimate aim of education – to provide quality and effective education emanating from quality leadership based on cross-cultural context.

Globally, teachers need to expand their knowledge of other peoples and cultures. The teacher education program at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) in Oman was able to implement a service learning project that helped students cross cultural boundaries while improving their own English language skills (Thuwayba, et al 2010).

Needles to say, Oman needs English as a fundamental tool for modernization, nationalization and acquisition of Science and technology (Al- Issa, 2007, pp 199-200). This will allow access to the global markets and academic and professional mobility and globalization without compromising their distinct identity on both regional and world stages.

Despite some differences in experiences like culture shock among expats who visit the country for the first time (Rajaeskar & Renand, 2013), therefore, language and culture will always thrive because man can adapt to any kind of environment.

Foreign Literature

Benjamin Franklin once said that there are two certainties in life that all people will face: they must deal with inevitability of death and they must pay their taxes. Another is added to these: People must interact with others from very different cultural backgrounds whether they are well prepared to do so or not. (Brislin & Yoshida, 1994)

A research on cross-cultural training program can be found at all levels of a country’s educational system Among lay people, the type student programs that comes to mind most quickly when cross-cultural training” is mentioned is “ study abroad” experience in another country. Moreover, Kenneth Cushner presents a set of ideas and methods on his extensive work with adolescents, than maintain student attention and prepare them for successful experiences (see Cushner, 1989 for information program evaluation)

CRC (1998) stated that “effective communication with people of different cultures is especially challenging. Cultures provide people with ways of thinking, ways of seeing, hearing, and interpreting the world. Thus the same words can mean different things to people from different cultures, even when they talk the “same” language. When the languages are different, and translation has to be used to communicate, the potential for misunderstanding increases”.

Meanwhile, another researcher citing his ideas concerning cultural diversity into university curriculum He suggests that thinking start with experience with which all people in higher education will be familiar: interactions between professors and student and how there are culturally influenced.(Goodman,1994)

Research on similar teacher education programs suggests that international experiences may contribute to student teachers' development in many different ways, such as improved: flexibility, tolerance, patience, self-confidence, self criticism, politeness, independence and ability to adapt in a different culture (Willard-Holt, 2001; Mahon & Cushner, 2002; Chinnappan, McKenzie & Fitzsimmons, 2013).

Objectives:

In general, this research aims to help the learners attain complete English language skills development, to improve the teachers' pedagogy, to contribute to the colleges of technology's policy-making process on instructions and testing, and to strengthen the Sultanate's programs in relation to educational development.

Some of the **specific objectives** set in this research are:

1. To identify the significant effects of cross-cultural teaching to English language development of the learners, language comprehension, class performance, attitude and behavior, and test performance.
2. To identify whether language style or accent used by teachers in oral examinations has significant correlation to students' understanding, test improvement, and language development, behavioral pattern, and class performance.
3. To evaluate the significant relationship of a comprehensible English language variety to students' language comprehension and development, class performance, positive attitude and behavior, and test performance.
4. To analyze whether there are significant effects of mixed teachers using different language styles or accent against common teachers using the same language styles or accent in listening tests to students' language understanding, test improvement, and language development, class performance, and behavioral patterns.
5. To assess whether the "halo effect" is present amongst the learners in terms of their language style preferences in teaching.

Research Methodology:

The design of this research is a combination of **quantitative and qualitative approaches**. The methodology used in this research comprises of various tools to ensure effectivity, reliability and validity of results.

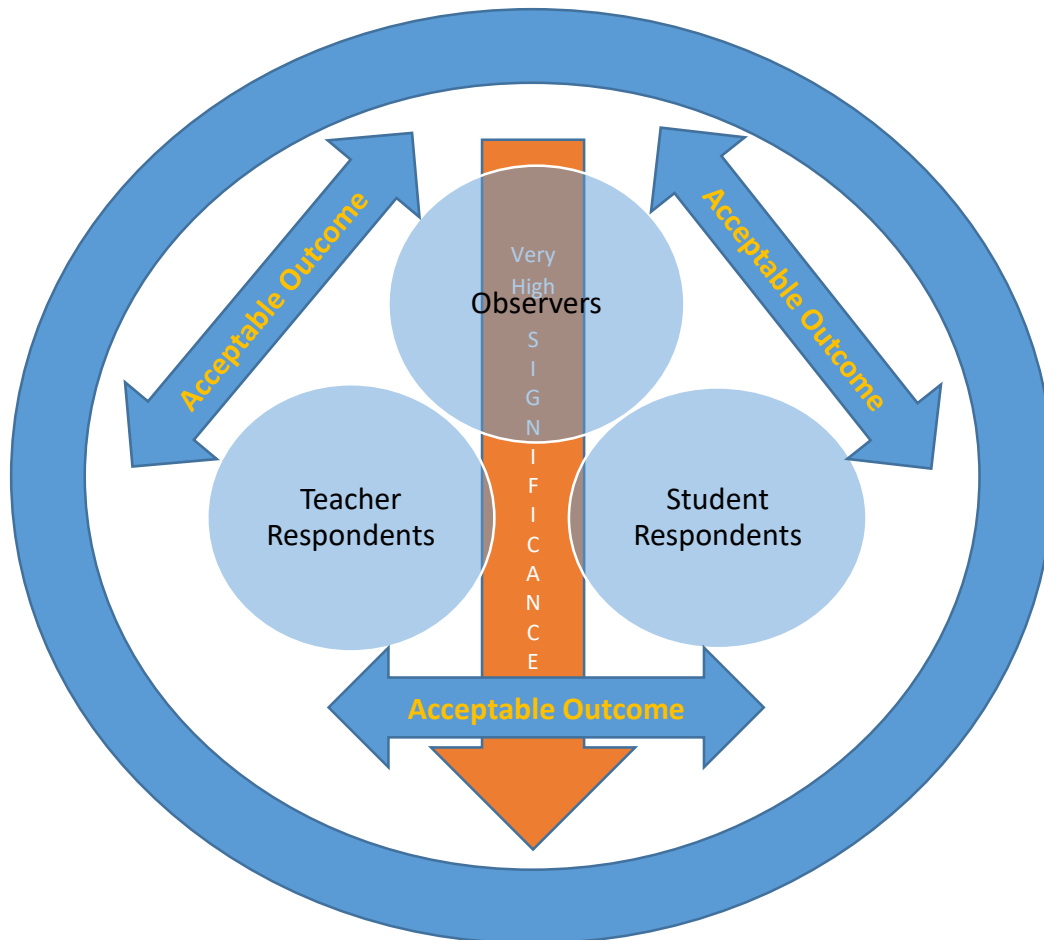
For the **quantitative approach**, the researchers will construct a set of questionnaires on specific problems stated to be distributed to target respondents for an in-depth analysis of the variables involved. Further, class observations and testing will also be conducted to assist in collecting objective results. Another questionnaire is closed-ended questions with multiple choice answer options where group of respondents are targeted. More so, the researchers will use the **cluster-random sampling** where learners' population will be split evenly into groups based on its number and represented by every member from some of the groups selected randomly.

For the **qualitative approach**, the questionnaire to be used is an open-ended questionnaire where the researchers brainstorm, discuss, and analyze the results of open-ended questions. Here, the **stratified random sampling** will be used where some members from each group will be selected randomly.

The results of both qualitative and quantitative approaches will have a result validation using a **three-pronged technique**. Since the questionnaires intend to identify the significant effects, relationships, and correlations in which null hypotheses were given; **Chi Square and Pearson r** statistical tools are adopted for its statistical computations. **Percentages** and **means** will also be used for sampling and testing. In addition, the **one-way ANOVA** will also be used to test the differences amongst the set variables. Lastly, the **p -value** is also considered for the measurement of the significance in terms of the effects.

As for the data gathering and evaluation, a **three-pronged approach** will be used consisting of researchers' observation, teachers' responses, and students' responses. This three-pronged approach is structured systematically for the accuracy and validity of the outcomes. The framework is given below:

Figure 2: Three-Pronged Data Gathering and Evaluation Framework



Implementation Plan, Timeline and Milestone

After approval of the TRC committee, the following will be conducted: (SAMPLE ONLY. This will be updated as the research progresses)

| Academic Year | Implementation Plan | Timeline | Milestone |
|------------------|---|---|--|
| 2018-2019 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drafting of permission letter and Initial construction of the questionnaires. Drafting of Literature Review and Studies. Formulating the conceptual framework, objectives, and research hypotheses. | 3rd Semester (May-July) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approval from the COTs. Initial accomplishment of Chapters 1-3. |
| 2019-2020 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparation of the questionnaires - Quantitative and Qualitative. Finalization of the questionnaires /research tools Initial visit to the COTs Determining sampling Revisions of Chapters 1-3 | 1st Semester (Sept.-Dec.) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Test Questionnaires COTs visitation Sampling Revisions |
| 2019-2020 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dry run of the constructed questionnaire. Initial observations /testing Second observations/testing Final observations/testing Data gathering | 2nd Semester (Jan.-Apr) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> observations/ testing collection of data completion of observations, testing and data gathering. |
| 2019-2020 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arrangement of the collected data. Analysis and computation of the data. Final statistical computation of the data. | 3rd Semester (May-July) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completion of the statistical computation of the data. |
| 2020-2021 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional references for the review of related literature and studies. | 1st Semester (Sep.-Dec.) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-official completion of the final copy. |

| | | | |
|------------------|---|---------------------------------|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completing the Chapters 4-5 of the research study. • Revision of the research paper. • Editing in preparation for the final copy. | | |
| 2020-2021 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proofreading of the final copy. • Printing of the final copy. • Submitting the final copy to the respective recipients. | 2nd Semester (Jan.-Apr.) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Official completion of the final copy. • Final copy is submitted to the respective recipients. |

Academic, Scientific. Innovations Significance

This research study has significant contributions to:

1. Learning-Teaching Outcomes of the Academic Institutions;
2. Policy-Making on Curriculum and Instruction of the Colleges of Technology in Oman;
3. Policy-Making of the Ministry of Manpower and Ministry of Higher Education on Hiring and Selection Process based on cross-cultural setbacks;
4. Test and evaluations on Listening and Speaking Skills of the academic institutions; and
5. Future researches on cross-cultural education.

Benefits to Oman:

This research directly provides benefits to Oman on the following scope:

1. Policy-making on Human Resource Development to enhance Oman's related programs;
2. Strengthening Oman's curriculum and instruction in tertiary education;
3. Enhance Omani learner's English language skills which can help boost the current "Omanization" program;
4. Strengthening the Higher Colleges of Technology's effectiveness in terms of teaching and learning; and
5. Improving Oman's teaching workforce and the learning system of its academic institutions.

Patents Review: (N/A)

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Sample Questionnaire (Data Gathering and Evaluation)

ON TEST RESULTS / PERFORMANCE

5 – Very High Difference

4 – High Difference

3 – Moderate Difference

2 – Low Difference

1 – Very Low Difference

For OBSERVERS / RESEARCHERS

| | Remarks | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|---|---------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Difference of test results amongst various foundation levels from different teaching (language) styles. | | | | | | |
| 2. Difference of test results amongst various foundation levels from native speakers teaching (language) style. | | | | | | |

For Teacher Respondents

| On Test Results / Performance | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 1. What level of difference do you expect if the learners are exposed to various teachers having different teaching (language) styles? | | | | | |
| 2. What level of difference do you expect if the learners are exposed to the native speakers' teaching (language) style? | | | | | |

For Student Respondents

| On Test Results / Performance | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 1. If you are exposed to different teachers having various teaching (language) styles, what level of difference do you expect from your test results / performance? | | | | | |
| 2. If you are exposed to the native speakers' teaching (language) style, what level of difference do you expect from your test results / performance? | | | | | |