



The Effect of Extra-Curricular Activities on Socio-Cultural Competence of EFL Students

Abdolreza Bagherzade Nimchahi,¹ (Corresponding Author)

Instructor of English Language, Islamic Azad University, Neka Branch, Neka, Iran

Parvonkhon Jamshidov,²

Professor of English Studies, Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan, Dushanbe, Tajikistan

Ali Salimi Khorshidi,³

Assistant Professor of English Language, Islamic Azad University, Neka Branch, Neka, Iran

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¹ rezabgn@gmail.com

² pjam07@mail.ru

³ mjzaret@gmail.com



Abstract

This study considers the enhancement of socio-cultural competence of EFL students by means of extra-curricular activities. We highlight didactic characteristics of culture-related extracurricular activities that can be taken into account for the enhancement of socio-cultural competence. In this study, both control and experimental groups included 80 language learners (each group 40). The control group was given the questionnaires, pre- and post-tests along with the experimental group. Then, extracurricular activities were given to the experimental group which itself was divided into four mini groups. Ten participants were asked to prepare a self-video clip each week (four clips as whole). Another group of ten testees were asked to use social networks such as Facebook, What's app, Telegram and the likes chatting with native speakers at least two hours a day involving themselves in English practice after taking pre-test and they were also given the subsequent post-test after a month. The third mini group, including ten participants, had to write a letter each week to a native speaker e-pal (four letters as whole). Finally, the fourth mini group including ten participants participating at least once a week in ACD (American Corner Dushanbe) sessions which are related to social cultural events such as festivals, charity activities, etc. After that, research questionnaires were distributed among samples using SPSS software for data analysis. We come to the conclusion that culture-related extra-curricular activities result in the enhancement of the level of language proficiency as well as contribute a lot to bringing up citizens, intellectually, culturally and multi-culturally developed professionals with deep awareness of intercultural values.

Keywords

Curriculum, Extracurricular Activities, Socio-cultural Adaptation, Competence



1. Introduction

The relationship between language and culture has long been of interest to philosophers, sociologists, and linguists. Concerns about the origin of language and the relationship between language and thought, thought and culture, and language and culture are familiar to those interested in various fields of human sciences. In recent years, because of the expansion of the focus on teaching in theoretical and practical aspects, this topic has also been replaced by secondary or foreign language teaching, and the researchers of these domains have studied the importance of training these two in parallel. Sociocultural competence can help the learners to understand another person more.

According to Vygotsky (qtd. in Lantolf, 2000), the child is completely dependent on other persons, normally the parents, who initiate the child's actions by instructing him/her as to what to do, how to do it, as well as what not to do. Moreover, research in the field of language learning has focused mostly on social inequality, cultural identity, social class, and language and power relationship. Organizing culture-related extra-curricular activities in universities is aimed at developing future professionals' socio-cultural and intercultural skills and it gives a new opportunity for all interested learners to increase their cultural awareness in the widest sense.

Thanks to extra-curricular activities held in the English language university students can receive invaluable practice of communication in English which will enhance their chances of employability in future and adaptability to globalizing world. We believe that a socio-cultural component must be included into university English language course and cultural elements must be taught on a regular basis. Events organized in the frames of this approach will stimulate students' interest in cultural phenomena, creativity, self-actualization, and improve their communicative competences. Due to the importance of socio-cultural concepts in language learning, this research intends to study the effect of extracurricular activities on socio-cultural competence to the language learning context.



2. Review of the Literature

Lai (2009) examined language learning strategies in the language of 418 Taiwanese students learning English. His goal was to study the relationship between language learning and strategies based on linguistic skills. His research showed that these learners use compensatory strategies more than other strategies and use less emotional strategies. Chen (2005) examined the reasons for not using auditory comprehension strategies in Taiwanese learners who were learning English as a foreign language. His purpose was to discover the obstacles that Taiwanese learners had during their education. Cognitive and metacognitive strategies do not use auditory strategies. The results of his research language indicate that when Taiwanese students are trying to use effective strategies for listening skills, they face multiple obstacles that affect the emotional state, the habit of hearing, Information processing capacity, language skills, and strategic ability. Their beliefs are related to language learning and the nature of auditory content.

Alten (2004) studied the relationship between nationality and language learning strategies in this regard from three different nationalities (Turkish, Chinese, Hungarian) and his findings showed that in terms of applying the strategies in general, a very small difference is among the three nationalities, so that this difference is not significant. But on the priorities of learners in choosing language learning strategies, there were significant differences between learners of each nationality.

Yu and Wang (2009) conducted a cultural-social study on language learning strategies, and their subjects were high school students in North China. The results of their research showed that Chinese learners use more memory and cognitive strategies at this level than other strategies.

Haifa-al-Vanani (2010) examined the language learning strategies among Arabic learners (at the University of Qatar). In his research, he concluded that Arabic students use English language strategies more than moderate (medium to high). His findings also indicate that Arab students use less meta-cognitive strategies than other strategies and emotional strategies to learn English.

Yildiz (2015) examined the role of extracurricular activities in the success of students' learning of English. He studied the case of 15 students from a preparatory school in Iraq by means of questionnaires and quizzes. He found that there are many



advantages of extracurricular activities on students' self-confidence, motivation and learning of English.

Makarova and Reva (2017) conducted a comparative study of the impact of extracurricular activities on foreign language learning in Canadian and Russian contexts. Based on questionnaire the authors surveyed 119 university students from both countries. The results of this study revealed that students view language-related extracurricular activities in universities as a motivating tool to learn language and practice it. Students from both countries reported a positive impact of extracurricular activities on building their self-esteem and developing their communication skills. They also revealed that these activities helped them overcome shyness and nervousness

Nikoopoor et al. (2011) also found that English language students in Iran preferred to use meta-cognitive strategies more than other strategies, and apply less memory strategies than other strategies.

Tajeddin and Teimournezhad (2014) examined the relationship between the use of language learning strategies and exercises or patching tests. Also, most Iranian studies have been conducted on Iranian learners about a profile of English learning strategies among Iranians, and the results have shown that Iranian students use meta-cognitive strategies more than other strategies.

VakiliFard and Khaleghizadeh (2013) in a research entitled *Farsi Learning Strategies: A study on the relationship between nationalities using strategies among non-Iranian Persian learners* was identifying the strategies of language learning in countless languages in the field of second language education. The influence of factors such as age, sex, motivation, intelligence, and level of language skills on their application has been studied. This study aimed to investigate the relationship between nationality and strategies using non-Iranian learners. According to the Oxford Language Learning Strategy (1990), 156 non-Iranian male and female non-Iranian students at the International University of Imam Khomeini (RA) at Qazvin have been studied. Student stats and statistical tests showed that the average overall use of strategies among different nationalities has little difference, which is not meaningful. Descriptive statistics, however, indicate that the order of priority of Persian students differs from the nationalities of Persian students of different



nationalities. In addition, the findings show that in general, Persian-speaking students of different nationalities use metacognitive and social strategies more than other learning strategies.

Sahraei and Khaleghizadeh (2012) in a research entitled "Second Language Learning Strategies", tried to find an index for Persian language. The present study is an applied one and identifies the strategies for learning Persian language (as a second language) among Persian foreign students were learning Persian. Language learning strategies are the functions that students use to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable and effective, making learning transfer possible in new situations. Based on various research, the use of these strategies in learning language control has a significant effect. Language learning strategies have been identified and studied in the field of English language instruction and language learning as well as in different languages, but in Persian they have studied cognitive and metacognitive strategies (and mostly among Persian speakers). Therefore, it was considered necessary to identify learning strategies in the field of Persian language teaching (as a second language).

3. Language and Culture

Language is one of the branches of anthropological linguistics that links the language and culture (such as traditions, beliefs, and family structure) into a community. Of course, the anthropology of language is also related to the sociology of language and ethnography in some areas, including the views expressed in this area of linguistic relativity, so that some scholars believe that people's vision and understanding of them are entirely or to some extent determine their mother tongue structure. This theory is often described as the hypothesis of Sapir and Wurff, suggested that language as part of culture and culture as the part of language. The two are intertwined in such a way that they cannot be separated from each other; in other words, culture and language are indescrivable. He says that language is both a means of communication and a culture of culture. Language without culture is inconceivable, and so is human culture without a particular language, in fact, is the essence of certain culture. Naida believes that language and culture are two symbolic systems. Everything in the language means the meaning of a social, explicit or implicit



reference. Each language has a semantic meaning, but it also relates to another meaning that is related to culture, and culture is much broader than language (Brown, 2012). For example, it can be pointed out that if a language has a lot of words to create the exact distinction of meaning in a particular field (kinship, camel, snow, etc.), it indicates that the distinctions for the word has particular importance for their people. Culture has a significant role in linguistic classification, for example, in English, a term is used to refer to human organs and animals. While Spain uses two separate words. Culture also intervenes in the formulation of meanings. The cow played in Spain is a symbol of courage and victory over irrational power, while in another country, the cow might be a very insignificant man who only jeopardizes his life for entertainment. Alternatively, in a country like India, sanctify and honor the cattle (Lado, 2013).

3.1. Educational Approaches to Teaching Language and Culture

Culture in the second language has been started for some time, but it has not been widely discussed. While referring to these topics is very useful if the broader dimensions of culture are not taught alongside these subjects, students will not be helped to gain a richer linguistic perspective. Especially if the goal of language teaching is to enable learners to appear in the cultural context of the target community. The reality is that knowledge of what, where, who, and whom and how to say that it is in fact the same language communication ability is far beyond the learning of linguistic forms or knowledge of a few social situations (Peterson & Coltrane, 2003). Cultural activities and goals should be carefully included in the curriculum. Students also need to understand the fact that cultures are not unique. Some suggested ways to teach culture in language classes are presented below:

Authentic materials: Using the real resources of the community culture that speaks the language helps learners to have credible cultural experiences; resources such as film, weather reports, television programs, websites, photographs, magazines, newspapers, a menu of food in the restaurant and travel brochures.



Proverbs: Discuss the proverbs of target language and compare them with proverbs in mother tongue.

Role-play: For example, a situation where, due to cultural differences, misunderstandings are created.

Culture capsules: Bringing objects of cultural value to their classroom or their images, and discussing and asking questions about them.

Student as cultural resources: If possible, a person who is the target language of his mother language and who has grown up in that community will be introduced to the classroom. In other countries, more students are exchanged with immigrant students, but in Iran, this is usually not easily provided.

Ethnographic studies: If possible, going to the target community and interviewing people in different fields can be very influential.

Literature: Providing texts in different cultural areas of the language is intended to familiarize students with that culture better by reading them.

Broadcasting the film: The film simultaneously faces students with language and cultural issues.

Chastain has proposed methods for presenting cultural information in language classes as follows:

Culture aside: The teacher no longer focuses on a particular topic, but when it comes to classroom issues, it explains it.

Slice-of-life technique: The teacher chooses the corners of everyday life in a second language and briefly and very briefly explains the maximum message in the classroom. For example, it brings the difference by bringing the calendar to the class.

Culture assimilation: Provides short text to students in which there is a misunderstanding of cultural point of view, and, at the end, there are several



answers to the question that students are responding to. The teacher examines these responses and discusses incorrect answers.

Culture Capsule: The teacher explains the cultural phenomenon in the target language in the classroom, and learners compare it with their mother tongue and discuss it.

Culture cluster: The teacher explains a set of several cultural clauses in the classroom and students discuss it.

Minidrama: Students perform a serious cultural work as a comedy show in class.

Audio-motor unit: Teaching culture as a practical and physical answer to the orders of the teacher (Total Physical Response / T.P.R.), in which students conduct teacher instruction.

Critical incident: Students see the cultural patterns of people and their reactions to cultural problems and their value.

Micrologue: The teacher reads the very short texts that have a cultural message for students.

Cartoon: Run and showcase a cartoon that is a cultural point.

The teacher should also consider the culture of students and the target culture in choosing the styles, methods and behaviors of education. Of course, learning culture is not easy, and neglecting some subtle points can undermine the achievement of the desired outcome. For example, Tong believes that since students usually experience the same culture, they will be exposed to cultural shock when they are introduced to a new culture. In this case, the teacher should not deal with a new culture that is better or worse. The teacher should also be aware that, while simplifying complex cultural issues, it may highlight the strange and intangible students with great emphasis on unfamiliar and different points of view (Chastain, 2010).



3.2. Stages and Methods of Socio-Cultural Competence Forming

If we consider the concept of "competence" in terms of the educational process, we can say that competence is primarily the result of training. Through the study of educational material the student acquires a particular competence – specific knowledge, skills – and gains experience (professional quality) and thus demonstrates perseverance, self-reliance and responsibility (personal qualities). In addition, competence in the educational process is the result of integrated learning (the integration of theory and practice, the integration of teaching methods and educational technologies, the integration of academic disciplines).

Competence is characterized by the possibility (the ability, willingness) to apply knowledge and skills in real life, showing the best personal qualities. Socio-cultural competence is a complex phenomenon. It includes the following components: - Linguistic-cultural – knowledge of lexical items with the socio-cultural semantics (e.g., greeting, forms of address, and farewell, in oral and written speech); - Sociolinguistic – knowledge of the language features of social classes, different generations, genders, social groups; - Cultural component – knowledge of cultural peculiarities of English-speaking countries, their habits, traditions, standards of behavior, etiquette and the ability to understand and use them appropriately in the communication process, while remaining a carrier of another culture.

Vorobjev (2003) notes "socio-cultural competence is a complex phenomenon and includes a set of components belonging to different categories". According to Milrud (2004), "sociocultural competence refers to the activity-component of communicative competence". Safonova (2001) believes that "didactic description of the objectives of socio-cultural education by means of a foreign language is to be done in terms of socio-cultural competence". We understand socio-cultural competence as the possession of and the ability to apply a set of multicultural knowledge, skills and qualities in the process of intercultural communication in the specific conditions of life and tolerance towards people of other nationalities.

The formation of socio-cultural competence is carried out in three stages; each stage has its own challenges due to its objectives. The first stage is "motivational", i.e. providing psychological readiness to communicate with all learners. Dyachenko & Kandybovich (1976) and other scientists highlighted the problem of readiness at



different times and from different positions in their research. Thus, readiness is a particular mental state that allows you to perceive a certain situation or to act. The objective of this stage is to interest students in gaining knowledge about different peoples and their cultures, to show how diverse both the world is and the people living in this world, to achieve a positive attitude towards learning about other cultures and to awaken in them the desire to interact with other cultures.

Stepanov (2001) states that the main goal of a teacher is not only to give information on different cultures, but to change trainees' treatment of other cultures. At this stage, the native language is used along with English because the information given in the native language quickly comes to mind. Watching feature films and documentaries describing the way of life, traditions and customs of different nationalities and discussing them appears to be effective. Discussion takes a specific place in the sphere of dialogic communication. The main objective of the discussion is the development of communicative culture in the search for the truth. Awareness of and understanding the problems and contradictions, identification of available information, revision of knowledge, development of skills to argue and justify the point of view, inclusion of knowledge in a new context are the main substantial objectives of discussion.

Astashova (2003) asserts that skillfully organized discussion is the most important form of the methodical development of tolerance. Within the scope of work with trainees by means of directed reflection common cultural values are converted to values of personal character where tolerant relations occupy their rightful place. Adzhieva (2003) believes that the moral value of the idea of a dialogue is in the objective perception of the diversity of the surrounding people, nations and cultures. In the spotlight is the fact that sensible people all around the world, regardless of their nationality or religion, show tolerance of, respect for each other, and appreciate the cultural heritage of the community. The core values of all peoples are the same. Discussing the movies seen helps students to penetrate the essence of the question, and gives them a chance to ask questions and express their opinion. This work makes it possible to achieve the goal – to form a new quality of a person – a willingness to cooperate.



The second stage of the formation of socio-cultural competence is "informative". The main objectives of this phase are the collecting and processing of learning material, which is the content of training. The law of the Russian Federation "On Education" states that the content of education should promote understanding and cooperation between peoples and nations, irrespective of race, nationality, ethnicity, religion or social origin and take into account a variety of philosophical approaches. We consider the content of training as a constantly changing and evolving category connected with the process of learning. An interrelation of the activities of teaching (the activity of the teacher) and learning (student activities) is addressed in the material, or in other words, in the content of the subject.

The content of education is not only the subject of what you can hear or see in the lesson that is explicitly expressed or clearly represented by a teacher or a student. It is also what they think, feel and experience, as well as the mental processes that occur in their "heads" when one opens up and the other develops the world of a different culture. We are not talking about the formation by a trainee of a new consciousness, totally identical to the host consciousness of the target language. The task is to enrich the student's consciousness through initiation into the image of linguistic consciousness of his peers abroad – carriers of other conceptual systems of the world. The perception of any material has a bright personality color. A preliminary analysis of the materials is worked up by using one's own experience and available knowledge. Students prepare a monologue speech on the issue, and make up questions. Thus it is not only familiarizing the student with living modern English but also enriching the vocabulary, broadening the outlook, "immersing" in a foreign cultural environment and increasing the motivation for learning a foreign language. Training material, in our opinion, must meet the following criteria: cross-cultural content, modernity, actuality and credibility.

The next step is to organize cooperation on the basis of subject-oriented, motivated communication activities between students themselves and with the teacher. All the complexity of studying a foreign language from the point of view of psychology is that the attention of the trainee is distributed simultaneously to multiple objects: the definition of the content of statements, selection and fixation of linguistic resources, establishing and keeping in mind a logical sequence of statements, its



implementation in the external plan (speaking). During training, the teacher should help the student to organize his/her thoughts, clarify the solution to the problem of communication, find ways for its implementation and create the conditions of natural communication in the target language if that language is not an end in itself but a means of communication.

Material for communication should not require specialized knowledge, but must arouse interest, inducing the expression of one's own opinion and assessment. Pair or group work creates a situation close to the real conditions of foreign language communication in the classroom. An effective form of group work is gaming technology. The game develops creative thinking, fosters a culture of communication and allows you to organize spontaneous communication in class when the learning situation becomes natural.

4. Methodology

In this research, semi experimental plans were used. Semi experimental plans are incomplete plans of real experiment. They are capable of controlling some of internal validity criteria. Although their efficiency is not like experimental plans but their control on variables are more than quasi experimental ones. These plans are used in situations where using experimental plan is not an option. Using semi experimental plans is necessary in human sciences. Then extracurricular activities were given to the experimental group. After that, research questionnaires were distributed among samples and using SPSS software data were analyzed.

Statistical population is 100 male and female English language learners from five different nationalities (Tajik, Russian, Uzbek, Afghan and Iranian) who were between 17 to 25 years old and were studying at MBO Professionals Language Center, Dushanbe, Tajikistan. The population was divided into two groups of control and experimental (each group 50 people). From each group, there were 40 valuable questionnaires, so sample size was set to 80 male and female language learners divided into two groups, control and experimental (40 control, 40 experimental). After choosing these two groups, education was performed in one group purposely by chance and the other group was selected as the control group. The control group was given the questionnaires, pre- and post-tests along with the experimental group.



Then, extracurricular activities were given to the experimental group which itself was divided into four mini groups. Ten participants were asked to prepare a self-video clip each week (four clips as whole). Another group of ten testees were asked to use social networks such as Facebook, What's app, Telegram and the likes chatting with native speakers at least two hours a day involving themselves in English practice after taking pre-test and they were also given the subsequent post-test after a month. The third mini group, including ten participants, had to write a letter each week to a native speaker e-pal (four letters as whole).

Finally, the fourth mini group including 10 participants participating at least once a week in ACD (American Corner Dushanbe) sessions which are related to social cultural events such as festivals, charity activities, etc. After that, research questionnaires were distributed among samples using SPSS software for data analysis. Descriptive analyses will be used to describe the data in order to get the results. The data gathered will be computed employing the SPSS. The results will be interpreted, categorized and tabulated on the computer sheets and calculated into the statistical values. In this study, after the examination of the professors, the questionnaires were finalized and corrected.

After scoring each item, SPSS software and appropriate statistical tests were used to analyze the statistical data. Then, at the stage of compilation of the fourth chapter, the tests and the results were described in the form of tables and charts. We will investigate, develop and implement special culture-related extra-curricular events that imply the reproduction of relevant specific features of a certain professional activity and enhance socio-cultural and intercultural skills of EFL students; systematize and analyze the results obtained; draw conclusions.

5. Results

5.1 Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Table 1. The descriptive statistics of the control group

<i>Group</i>	<i>Pretest</i>		<i>Posttest</i>	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>
Participating in some of extracurricular activities	25.85	6.687	32.27	5.89



Preparing video clips	17.45	4.28	45.89	4.043
Using social networks	18.52	4.35	26.72	6.23
Writing Letter to Electrical Learning with Peer Support	23.25	4.37	33.83	5.24
Participation in socio-cultural events	21.25	3.96	27.87	4.97

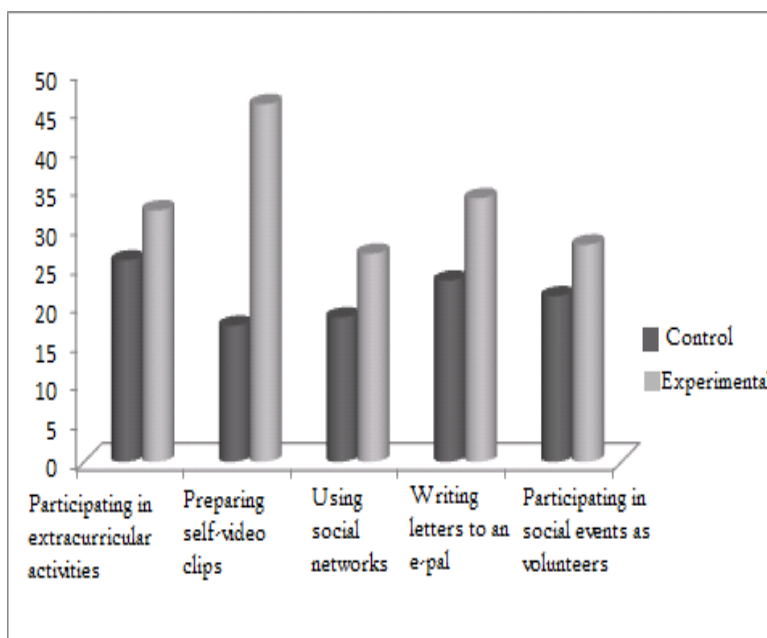


Chart 1. The chart of the mean of the control group variables

According to the Table1 and Chart 1, among the research variables, the highest mean in the pre-test of the control group was related to the participation variable in some extra-curricular activities with the value of 25.85 with a standard deviation of 6.687 and the lowest mean in the pre-test of the control group related to the clip preparation variable The video of 17.45 with 4.28 standard deviation and in the control group's posttest were the highest mean for writing variable in electrical learning with peer support with 33.83 with a standard deviation of 5.24 and the lowest mean in post-test control group related to network usage variable social media with a value of 26.72 with a standard deviation of 6.23.



Table 2. The descriptive statistics of the experimental group

Group	Pretest		Posttest	
	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation
Participating in some of extracurricular activities	26.76	6.306	40.90	7.741
Preparing video clips	23.03	4.86	48.63	7.69
Using social networks	22.87	4.26	34.29	6.05
Writing Letter to Electrical Learning with Peer Support	46.2	8.53	55.96	10.31
Participation in socio-cultural events	26.70	5.20	32.6	5.39

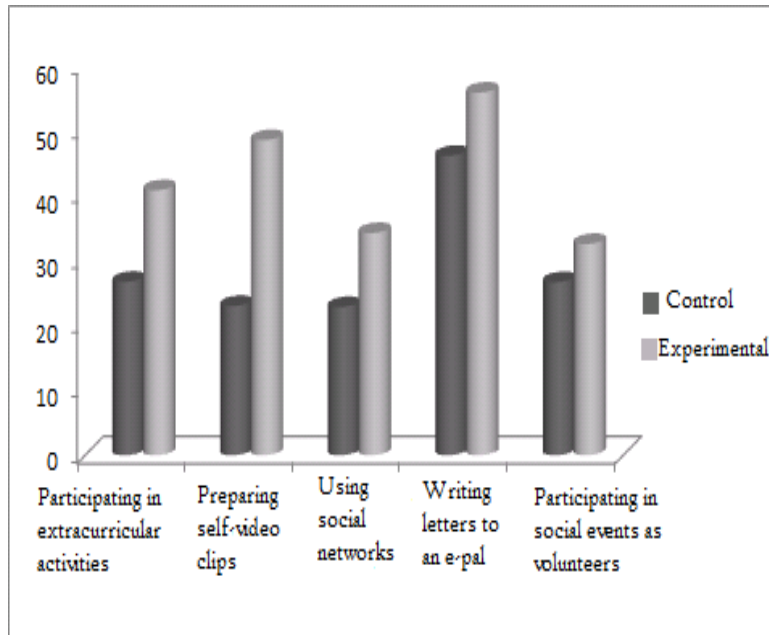


Chart 2. The chart of the mean of the experimental group variables

According to Table and Chart 2, among the research variables, the highest mean in the pre-test of the test group was related to the writing variable in electrical learning with peer support with 46.2 with a standard deviation of 8.53 and the lowest mean in the pre-test of the test group related to the network usage variable Social values with 22.87 with 4.26 standard deviation and in the post test of the experimental group, the highest average was related to the writing variable in electrical learning with peer



support with the value of 55.96 with a standard deviation of 10.31 and the lowest mean in the post test of the control group related to the participation variable in the events sociocultural with a value of 32.6 with a standard deviation of 5.39.

5.2 Inferential Analysis of Data

To use statistical techniques, it must first be determined that the aggregated data has a normal distribution. Because if the distribution of aggregated data is normal in order to test the hypotheses, then parametric tests can be used and nonparametric tests are used if non-normality is used. For this purpose, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to investigate the normal distribution of main variables.

Table 3. Normality Test

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>Type of the distribution applied</i>	<i>Significance level</i>	<i>Error level</i>	<i>Hypothesis confirmation</i>	<i>Result</i>
Participating in some of extracurricular activities	Control	Normal	0.061	0.05	H0	Normal
	Experimental	Normal	0.082	0.05	H0	Normal
Preparing video clips	Control	Normal	0.203	0.05	H0	Normal
	Experimental	Normal	0.143	0.05	H0	Normal
Using social networks	Control	Normal	0.091	0.05	H0	Normal
	Experimental	Normal	0.099	0.05	H0	Normal
Writing Letter to Electrical Learning with Peer Support	Control	Normal	0.093	0.05	H0	Normal
	Experimental	Normal	0.051	0.05	H0	Normal
Participation in socio-cultural events	Control	Normal	0.087	0.05	H0	Normal
	Experimental	Normal	0.058	0.05	H0	Normal

In Table 3, it can be deduced from the results obtained from the Smirnov-Kolmogorov statistics that the expected distribution with the observed distribution for all variables is not significant and therefore the distribution of these variables is normal.



6. Findings

The extra-curricular events create new opportunities in teaching and learning English. This research has thrown up many questions in need of further examination of enhancement of socio-cultural and intercultural skills of EFL students by means of culture-related extra-curricular activities. To carry out the research on enhancement of socio-cultural and intercultural skills of EFL students by means of culture-related extra-curricular events, these hypotheses were formulated:

Hypothesis 1: Participating in some extracurricular activities results in developing sociocultural competence.

Based on the findings of the study, the first hypothesis is accepted since the significance level is less than 0.05, and there is a significance difference between the control group and experimental one. The results of similar studies are as follows:

Lai (2009) investigated language learning strategies used by 418 EFL learners in Taiwan. He showed that the learners use compensation strategies most frequently and affective strategies least frequently.

Hypothesis 2: Preparing self-video clips results in developing sociocultural competence.

Based on the findings of the study, the second hypothesis is accepted since the significance level is less than 0.05. There is a significance difference between the control and experimental groups. The results of similar studies are as follows:

Altan (2004) investigated the relationship between nationality and language learning strategies. He used three different nationalities of Turkish, Chinese and Hungarian. Findings showed that there is a significance differences among learners' preferences in choosing language learning strategies.

Hypothesis 3: Using social networks enhances sociocultural competence.

Based on the findings of the study, the third hypothesis is accepted since the significance level is less than 0.05. There is a significant difference between control and experimental groups. The results of similar studies are as follows:



Al-Buainain (2010) examined language learning strategies among Arabic language learners (at the University of Qatar). In his research, he concluded that Arabic students used learning strategies with high to medium frequency. The results show that Arabic students preferred to use metacognitive strategies most, whereas they showed the least use of affective strategies in the process of English language learning.

Hypothesis 4: Writing letters to an e-pal improves learners' sociocultural competence.

Based on the results of the study, the fourth hypothesis is accepted since the significance level is less than 0.05. There is a significant difference between the control and experimental group. The results of similar studies are as follows:

Anugkakul (2011) examined the extent of using strategies and their relationship with variables such as gender, nationality, and language proficiency level. He concluded that two variables of gender and nationality had a significant impact on the general use of language learning strategies, and that the Chinese learners used language learning strategies more than Thai learners.

Hypothesis 5: Participating in social events as volunteers enhances learners' sociocultural competence.

Based on the findings of the study, the fifth hypothesis is accepted since the significance level is less than 0.05. There is a significant difference between control and experimental group. The results of similar studies are as follows:

Tajuddin (2004) examined the relationship between the use of language learning strategies and cloze tests. The results indicated that Iranian language learners use meta-cognitive strategies more than other strategies. VakiliFard and KhalegiZadeh (2003) in a study titled "Persian Language Learning Strategies: A Study of the Relationship between Nationalities and Using Strategies among Non-Iranian Persian Language Learners", concluded that Persian language learners of different nationalities use metacognitive and social strategies more than other learning strategies.



7. Conclusions

Participation in extra-curricular activities gives students the opportunity to apply classroom knowledge to “real-world” situations will in turn help them succeed in life after graduation. Students noted leadership positions gave them the opportunity to learn in the “real-world” classroom. Involving students in a variety of culture-related events in foreign language stimulates their cultural awareness, civic commitments and artistic initiative as well as develops their linguistic skills. The statistical sample of this study is 110 foreign Persian language learners with 13 different nationalities in the age range of 17-35. Fifty-five learners were selected randomly for the experimental group and 55 in the control group. In this study, the following results were obtained:

- Most of the participants are female in the control group (58.2%) and 52.8% are male in the experimental group.
- Most of the participants are in the age group of 20-25 years in the control and experimental groups with percentages of 41.8 and 45.4 for control and experimental group, respectively.
- Most of the participants in the control and experiment groups have undergraduate degrees with percentage of 40 and 36.4 for control and experimental group, respectively.

Table 4. The Summary of the Results

No.	Hypothesis	Result
1	Participating in some extracurricular activities results in developing sociocultural competence.	Accepted
2	Preparing self-video clips results in developing sociocultural competence.	Accepted
3	Using social networks enhances sociocultural competence.	Accepted
4	Writing letters to an e-pal improves learners' sociocultural competence.	Accepted
5	Participating in social events as volunteers enhances learners' sociocultural competence.	Accepted



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