

Bridging Cultures: The Effect of Islamic Cultural Content on Seventh Graders' Motivation and Performance in English

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Abstract:

The study investigated the impact of Islamic cultural content on the achievement and motivation of seventh-grade students in a school in Irbid. Using a one-shot quasi-experimental design, students were taught this content over four weeks. The research aimed to answer two questions regarding the statistical significance of the cultural content's effect on students' academic achievement and motivation in English. Results indicated a strong positive effect on students' listening and reading skills and heightened motivation, particularly in curiosity. The findings suggest that integrating Islamic cultural content significantly enhances English language learning outcomes. Consequently, the researchers urged the Ministry of Education to incorporate this content into English materials to further support student engagement and achievement.

Keywords: Achievement, EFL, Motivation, Culture.

تجسير الثقافات: تأثير المحتوى الثقافي الإسلامي على دافع وأداء طلاب الصف السابع في اللغة الإنجليزية

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المخلص:

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف تأثير المحتوى الثقافي الإسلامي على تحصيل ودافعية طلبة الصف السابع في اللغة الإنجليزية في مدرسة مختارة من مديرية إربد للتربية والتعليم. استخدمت الدراسة تصميم المجموعة الواحدة شبه التجريبي، حيث درس الطلاب المحتوى الثقافي الإسلامي لمدة أربعة أسابيع. تم التأكد من صدق وثبات أدوات القياس المستخدمة. تم طرح سؤالين رئيسيين: الأول حول وجود تأثير ذي دلالة إحصائية على تحصيل الطلاب في اللغة الإنجليزية، والثاني حول تأثير المحتوى الثقافي الإسلامي على دافعية الطلاب. أظهرت النتائج تأثيراً إيجابياً قوياً على تحصيل الطلاب في مهارتي الاستماع والقراءة، بالإضافة إلى تأثير قوي على دافعتهم لتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية، خاصة في مكون الفضول. بناءً على النتائج، أوصت الدراسة بإدخال المحتوى الثقافي الإسلامي في مواد اللغة الإنجليزية للصف السابع.

الكلمات المفتاحية: لتحصيل، اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، الدافعية، الثقافة.

Introduction

In Jordan, Arabic is the official language, while English is widely recognized as a foreign language. Given the cultural and religious significance of Islam in the region, reducing English language instruction could create a disconnect for Muslim learners from global interactions. Proficiency in English is essential not only for personal development but also for understanding and defending Islamic beliefs. The relationship between language and culture is integral; students' behaviors reflect cultural influences, and language serves as a medium for cultural expression (Deters, 2009).

Teaching the target language (English) alongside its cultural context is vital for developing learners' skills while also enhancing their understanding of their own cultural identity. Byram (1997) emphasized the importance of integrating both first language culture and target language culture to foster intercultural communicative competence. Podromou (1988) further noted that even native speakers teaching a foreign language should possess knowledge of their students' native cultures to effectively bridge cultural gaps.

Incorporating Islamic cultural content into English language instruction is crucial for Muslim learners. AL-Farouqi et al. (1993) highlighted that a lack of Islamic knowledge could lead to misinterpretations of Arabic terms. Furthermore, familiarizing learners with Islamic cultural specifics can help avoid spelling errors, such as confusing "Mecca" with "Makka" or "Mohammed" with "Muhammad."

Motivation is closely linked to academic achievement. This study explores whether integrating Islamic cultural content can enhance students' motivation and lead to improved learning outcomes. Motivation is a key factor in effective language acquisition, as it drives learners to engage with educational material. Gardner (1985), along with other researchers, has defined motivation as the set of conditions that propel individuals toward achieving their goals.

Motivation can be fostered when learners encounter familiar and relevant tasks, which can increase their engagement and lead to higher achievement levels (Lepper, 2005). A decline in motivation often correlates with a decline in academic performance (Harter & Connell, 1984). Therefore, leveraging first language culture can be an effective strategy for teaching a second language.

EFL teachers can enhance students' English proficiency while maximizing the use of English in the classroom by integrating aspects of their first language culture. Auerbach (1993) argued that the value attributed to the first language significantly influences second language acquisition. Mattioli (2004) identified five functions of first language culture in EFL classrooms: vocabulary instruction, giving directions, teaching language rules, and engaging with individual

learners. Incorporating students' lived experiences can help create a supportive learning environment.

Islamic culture is the dominant cultural framework in Jordan, and teaching English through this cultural lens can motivate students, facilitating their learning process. The interconnectedness of motivation and achievement underscores the necessity of cultural expressions in language education, which carry the identity and values of cultural learners. Fostering an understanding of Islamic culture in education can contribute to spiritual and intellectual growth. The Quran highlights the importance of education and the role of individuals as representatives of God on Earth (Al-Baqarah, verse 151). This study posits that when EFL learners are motivated through Islamic cultural content, they are more likely to achieve success in learning English. Learners often wish to express their religious values in English, which can enhance their understanding of the language.

The study aims to present EFL content that embodies Islamic culture in its themes, vocabulary, objectives, and aspirations. By aligning educational content with Islamic principles, it is hoped that learners can reach their full potential. The researchers designed a teaching module specifically for seventh-grade students, adhering to the traditional methods endorsed by the Jordanian Ministry of Education and incorporating themes from Islamic literature, including the Five Pillars of Islam.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the efforts of the Jordanian Ministry of Education to improve English language instruction, many students continue to struggle with language proficiency. Scholars, including Al-Mahrooqi (2012), have noted that students often graduate with insufficient English skills, necessitating remedial coursework before pursuing higher education. The effectiveness of a learning system is measured by its ability to meet educational objectives, and achieving success requires that the curriculum reflects the dominant cultural context, which in Jordan is Islamic. This research identifies the problem as the need to investigate the impact of cultural Islamic content on seventh-grade students' motivation and achievement in English.

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to incorporate Islamic cultural content into pedagogical settings to enhance student motivation and improve academic performance in English language learning. The primary objectives are to assess the effect of this cultural content on students' achievements and their motivation to learn English.

Questions of the Study

To explore the study's hypothesis, two research questions are posed:

1. Is there a statistically significant effect of cultural Islamic content on the achievement of seventh-grade students, and to what extent?
2. Is there a statistically significant effect of cultural Islamic content on seventh-grade students' motivation, and to what extent?

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will provide valuable insights into the role of Islamic cultural content in EFL education. It aims to contribute to existing research on language learning by emphasizing the importance of integrating the native culture into language instruction. This research will also offer practical guidance for educational policymakers, suggesting modifications to EFL textbooks that enhance student achievement and motivation without creating cultural confusion regarding Islamic teachings. By focusing on the benefits of incorporating Islamic culture in English language education, this study seeks to promote a more culturally relevant and effective learning environment for Muslim students in Jordan.

Review of Related Literature

This section is divided into two parts: the first part introduces a theoretical review of related literature about achievement, culture, and motivation. The second part includes a review of related studies classified under three major headings: the relationship between motivation and achievement, the relationship between culture and language learning, and the relationship between motivation and achievement. This chapter concludes with remarks summarizing the findings.

Part One: Achievement, Culture, and Motivation

Academic Achievement

Academic achievement is defined by the *Encyclopedia of Psychology and Psychoanalysis* as reaching a level of competence in academic studies, whether in school or university. Achievement can be assessed through various methods, including achievement tests and teacher evaluations (Jassim, 2004). Khattab (2006) adds that achievement represents the results obtained by students through their studies in previous years. Zangani and Maleki (2007) assert that a significant challenge for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students is their inability to communicate, which negatively impacts their academic success. Orgunsiyi and O (2009) emphasize the importance of language development in relation to academic achievement. Williams et al. (2012) demonstrate a strong correlation between the level of English language learners and their academic success, indicating that proficiency in English greatly influences academic performance.

Moely et al. (1992) categorize academic achievement into three types: high achievement, where a student performs well compared to peers; intermediate achievement, where performance is average; and low achievement, where a student performs below expectations. Academic achievement serves as a benchmark for determining learners' educational levels.

Culture

Culture is defined differently by various researchers. Rushing and Frentz (1978) describe culture's heroes as expressed in myths, often depicted in literature. Hofstede (1998) identifies four categories of culture: symbols, rituals, values, and heroes. Symbols encompass verbal and nonverbal language, while rituals refer to social activities. Values reflect the emotions shared by a culture's members, and heroes are individuals who exemplify cultural behaviors.

Spencer-Oatey (2000) notes that culture comprises shared attitudes, beliefs, and norms that influence behavior and interpretations within a group. The interaction between language and culture is critical for language educators. The integration of cultural content into second language (L2) curricula has been emphasized by Byram (1994), who argues that understanding culture-specific meanings is essential for effective communication. Brady and Kennedy (1999) maintain that curricula reflect cultural values that transmit society's foundations to future generations.

Clouet (2006) highlights that culture and language learning are intertwined in EFL teaching, and Kramsch (1993) asserts that culture is a fundamental element in language learning, affecting learners' communicative competence. Bada (2000) notes that EFL learners without cultural knowledge face numerous challenges in the classroom.

The Use of L1 Culture Versus L2 Culture

Research has examined the role of culture in foreign language teaching. Some studies highlight the importance of integrating native culture (L1) into second language instruction, while others stress the necessity of incorporating target culture (L2) for enhancing language acquisition.

Cooke (1970) suggests that studying the culture of target language speakers fosters appreciation among learners. Stainer (1971) emphasizes that cultural studies provide motivation for learning the target language. Liu (2014) indicates that understanding target language cultural content significantly impacts English language curricula. Gay (2000) argues for teachers to recognize cultural intersections and bridge gaps between cultural systems. Damen (1987) posits that language learning materials should reflect cultural contexts to aid language acquisition.

Hashim and Langgulung (2008) advocate for a cultural Islamic curriculum in Arab Muslim countries, emphasizing educational reform grounded in cultural education. Al-Mahrooqi (2011) states that familiar cultural content enhances reading comprehension. Bilgileri (2012) notes that incorporating native cultural references aids EFL learners in developing reading skills. Tavakoli et al. (2013) underline the significance of cultural familiarity in language comprehension.

Badequnzhu (2013) asserts the importance of L1 culture in EFL learning, while Cheung (2001) highlights its effectiveness in raising motivation. Lamb (2004) argues against linking English solely to Anglophone cultures, recognizing its role as a global language. El-Dali (2012)

clarifies L1 culture's influence on language production, indicating a strong relationship between cultural context and EFL learners' language proficiency.

Islamic education is linked to worship and encompasses a shared set of behaviors based on the Quran and Sunnah. Hassan (1989) describes Islamic education as a lifelong process that prepares individuals to fulfill their roles in society. Ashraf (1985) states that Islamic education aims for balanced growth across various aspects of human development. Emad (2013) discusses the Islamization of knowledge, emphasizing the integration of cultural Islamic perspectives into education.

Motivation

Motivation is defined as the energy that drives individuals to pursue specific goals. It is an internal process essential for effective learning (Baron, 1998). Broussard and Garrison (2004) describe motivation as the underlying reasons for behavior. Deci et al. (1999) identify intrinsic motivation as stemming from the inherent satisfaction of an activity, while Williams and Burden (1997) classify motivation into intrinsic and extrinsic forms.

Intrinsic motivation arises from learners' interest in a topic, while extrinsic motivation relates to external rewards. Motivated learners are more successful in various settings, achieving higher test scores and completing tasks effectively (Peipei, 2009). Santrock (2003) notes that motivated learners demonstrate significant progress in academic achievement. Dornyei (2006) defines achievement as the attainment of knowledge indicated by test scores, highlighting the correlation between motivation and academic success.

Part Two: Empirical Studies

Farhat and Sayed (2011) explored Pakistani learners' attitudes towards American culture, finding a negative perception among students. Liem et al. (2012) examined the impact of cultural integration on academic achievement and motivation, revealing that motivation should be understood from a sociocultural perspective. Badequnzhu (2013) found that incorporating learners' culture in EFL classrooms enhances motivation and communication skills. Asif (2013) emphasized the significance of teachers' cultural awareness in language teaching.

Roh (2001) addressed cultural inequality in EFL classrooms, advocating for intercultural equality and the integration of culture and language. Csilla (2002) proposed using familiar contexts instead of solely relying on target culture, affirming that culture and language are inseparable. Majed (2009) demonstrated that cultural knowledge improves listening comprehension among Iranian EFL learners. Ani (2012) investigated challenges faced by immigrant students in language learning, providing guidelines for better support.

Taha (2012) highlighted the effectiveness of using L1 culture in teaching the target language, while Pujol and Corrus (2013) found that learners' first culture aids vocabulary comprehension. Al-Mahrooqi (2013) noted that familiar cultural contexts facilitate reading

comprehension. Yakup (2013) demonstrated the positive impact of cultural-based activities on learners' communicative skills.

David (2010) emphasized the impact of teaching approaches on motivation and language proficiency. Burrow (2010) investigated the relationship between motivation and achievement among exchange students, revealing that cross-cultural motives were significant. Mirdehghan et al. (2011) explored the effects of cultural barriers on English language teaching in Iran, highlighting the importance of addressing cultural dimensions in language learning.

Kitjaroonchai (2012) compared motivation levels between high and low achievers, finding that students exhibited high levels of both integrative and instrumental motivation. Hsiang et al. (2013) confirmed the significant role of motivation in EFL contexts. Hashim and Salem (2015) investigated motivational factors among Umm Al-Quran University learners, finding that high motivation correlated with better academic achievement.

Concluding Remarks

The literature review highlights the interconnectedness of motivation, achievement, and culture. Studies emphasize that integrating students' cultural backgrounds enhances motivation and academic success in foreign language learning. The findings support the notion that L1 culture can serve as a motivating factor in EFL contexts. The present study distinguishes itself by focusing on the role of Islamic cultural content in improving motivation and achievement among seventh-grade students, thus contributing to the existing body of research on language learning.

Method

This section describes the method and procedures used for this study. It includes the design of the study, a description of the participants, instruments, the validity and reliability of the instruments, data collection, data analysis, and finally steps followed in implementing the study.

Design of the Study

The current study employs a quasi-experimental one-shot design, which is suitable for determining the impact of Islamic cultural content on student achievement and motivation. This design focuses on a single group, allowing for the observation of performance before and after the experimental treatment to evaluate the effects of the independent variable on the dependent variable (Pelletier et al., 2000). This approach is particularly effective when establishing a control group is challenging (Zaytoon, 2004).

Participants

The study participants were seventh-grade EFL learners from Irbid Directorate of Education schools during the second semester of the academic year 2014-2015 in Irbid, Jordan. A purposeful selection led to the choice of Taqarob Schools, a private institution with an Islamic

orientation, where the research could be implemented. The sample was randomly selected by drawing one section from three school sections.

Choosing the School and Seventh Grade

Seventh grade was selected as it represents the first year of the preparatory stage, crucial for students as they develop language skills. Their English proficiency levels ranged from high-beginner to intermediate, enabling them to comprehend new vocabulary presented. Taqarob Schools were chosen due to their willingness to participate, as the researchers were not teachers.

Training of the Teacher

The researchers collaborated with an English language teacher to implement the Islamic cultural content. After explaining the study's purpose, the researchers trained the teacher to evaluate student achievement and motivation. A checklist filled out by both the researchers and the teacher was analyzed to assess their agreement, ensuring consistency in evaluations.

Instruments of the Study

To answer the research question, the researchers developed several instruments:

1. Achievement Checklist

An achievement checklist was created to assess differences in student achievement pre- and post-intervention. It evaluated four language skills: reading, listening, writing, and speaking. The checklist included columns for each skill and a final achievement total.

Validity of the Checklist

The checklist was reviewed by a jury of seven EFL and linguistics experts to determine its adequacy for the Jordanian context. Consensus was reached regarding the definitions and categorizations within the checklist, confirming its appropriateness for measuring behavioral indicators.

Reliability of the Achievement Checklist

Reliability was assessed through observations by another English teacher across ten class sessions. The researchers calculated the agreement coefficient, which was found to be 88%, indicating reliability.

2. Motivational Scale

The motivational scale assessed intrinsic motivation using Harter's (1980, 1981) framework. Students indicated their engagement in academic activities, with a focus on cultural influences on motivation. The scale contained 23 items rated on a five-point Likert scale.

Validity of the Motivational Scale

Similar to the checklist, the motivational scale was reviewed by the same jury to ensure clarity and appropriateness for the students. The feedback confirmed the scale's validity.

Reliability of the Motivational Scale

A pilot study with 15 EFL students determined the scale's reliability. Responses were collected twice, and the consistency coefficient was calculated using Cronbach's alpha, yielding a reliability coefficient of 89%.

3. Cultural Islamic Content

The researchers designed a module based on Islamic cultural content suitable for the students' age and language proficiency. This module was crafted to address learners' behavioral and emotional needs and was grounded in the curriculum theory of Beauchamp (1981), emphasizing the importance of clear goals and relevant content.

Data Collection

Data collection occurred in six phases:

1. Content Analysis: Analyze Module 6 from the *Action Pack 7* textbook, identifying objectives for each language skill.
2. Achievement Measurement: Pre-test students' achievement using the checklist.
3. Motivation Evaluation: Assess students' motivation using the motivational scale prior to instruction.
4. Instruction: Teach the Islamic content over four weeks across eight classes.
5. Post-Test: Evaluate student achievement using the post-checklist.
6. Post-Motivation Assessment: Administer the motivational scale again to evaluate changes.

Data Analysis

1. **Achievement Checklist Analysis:** The researchers aggregated students' scores across the four language skills and applied statistical methods (T-Test) to compare pre- and post-intervention results.
2. **Motivational Scale Analysis:** The five-point Likert scale responses were categorized, and frequencies were analyzed to assess changes in student motivation.

Procedures of the Study

The following procedures were executed:

1. Review relevant literature.
2. Develop teaching materials based on Islamic principles.

3. Create an achievement checklist and motivational scale.
4. Moderate the teaching materials and research tools.
5. Obtain permission to conduct the study at Taqarob Schools.
6. Conduct a pilot study.
7. Randomly assign one section to learn the Islamic content.
8. Pre-assess achievement using the checklist.
9. Evaluate motivation before instruction.
10. Instruct the experimental group using the cultural Islamic content.
11. Post-evaluate learners' achievement using the checklist.
12. Administer the motivational scale post-instruction.
13. Analyze data from the motivational scale using statistical methods.
14. Analyze data from the checklist using appropriate statistics.
15. Identify patterns and themes related to the use of Islamic content.
16. Apply statistical techniques to analyze collected data based on study questions.
17. Write up the findings in a formal paper.

This methodology provides a comprehensive approach to exploring the impact of Islamic cultural content on EFL learners' achievement and motivation.

Results of the Study

This section presents the findings from the research, focusing on the impact of cultural Islamic content on the academic achievement and motivation of female seventh-grade students in module six. The results are organized according to the research questions outlined in chapter one.

Results Related to Academic Achievement

The first question addressed whether there was a statistically significant effect (with a significance level of $\alpha \leq 0.05$) of cultural Islamic content on the academic achievement of seventh-grade students. To analyze this, a performance checklist with 20 questions was coded and categorized by the primary language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Frequencies were counted, and mean scores, standard deviations, and T-tests were calculated to determine any significant differences in student achievement before (pre) and after (post) the instruction.

Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations, and T-Test of Pre-Post Measures of Student Achievement

Skill	Measure	Mean Scores	Standard Deviations	T Value	Sig
Listening	Pre	3.50	0.61	8.57	0.002
	Post	4.83			
Speaking	Pre	3.40	0.49	6.37	0.003
	Post	4.62			
Reading	Pre	3.10	0.30	12.21	0.001
	Post	4.81			
Writing	Pre	3.43	0.58	6.49	0.003

	Post	4.67			
Total	Pre	13.43	0.93	23.76	0.001
	Post	18.93			

The data in Table 1 show that all language skills demonstrated significant improvement post-instruction. Pre-test mean scores ranged from 3.10 to 3.50, while post-test scores increased to between 4.62 and 4.83, indicating a notable enhancement in student performance.

Regarding listening skills, the pre-test mean score was 3.50 (SD = 0.61), which increased to 4.83 (SD = 0.37) after four weeks of instruction. The T-test result (T value = 8.57, Sig. = 0.002) confirms a significant difference, suggesting that cultural Islamic content positively influenced listening skills. For speaking skills, the pre-test mean score of 3.40 (SD = 0.49) rose to 4.62 (SD = 0.50). The T-test (T value = 6.37, Sig. = 0.003) also indicated a statistically significant enhancement, supporting the assertion that cultural Islamic content improved speaking skills.

In reading, the pre-test mean of 3.10 (SD = 0.30) increased to 4.81 (SD = 0.40) after instruction. A T value of 12.21 (Sig. = 0.001) confirms a significant gain in reading achievement, attributed to the cultural content. Finally, the writing skill exhibited a pre-test mean of 3.43 (SD = 0.58), which improved to 4.67 (SD = 0.48). The T-test results (T value = 6.49, Sig. = 0.003) indicated a significant positive impact of the cultural Islamic content on writing skills. Overall, most students showed higher scores on the achievement checklist, with the most significant improvements noted in listening and reading skills, while writing and speaking showed relatively less enhancement.

Results Related to Student Motivation

The second question explored whether there was a statistically significant effect (with a significance level of $\alpha \leq 0.05$) of cultural Islamic content on the motivation of seventh-grade students. To address this, the motivational scale was coded, and the 23 items were categorized into four primary components: ambition, challenge, curiosity, and independence. Frequencies, means, standard deviations, and T-tests were calculated to identify significant differences in motivation before and after the instruction.

Table 2
Means, Standard Deviations, and T-Test of Pre-Post Measures of Student Motivation

Motivation Components	Measure	Mean	Standard Deviations	T	Sig
Challenge	Pre	0.42	0.72	5.98	0.002
	Post	1.53			
Curiosity	Pre	0.40	0.69	7.39	0.004
	Post	1.71			
Independence	Pre	0.37	0.68	5.20	0.002
	Post	1.47			
Ambition	Pre	0.40	0.69	4.43	0.002
	Post	1.40			

Total	Pre	0.40	0.66	6.29	0.005
	Post	1.53			

The analysis of the pre- and post-motivation scales illustrated a significant difference. The pre-scale mean score ($M = 0.40$) was notably lower than the post-scale mean score ($M = 1.53$), indicating that cultural Islamic content positively impacted students' motivation to learn English. Table 2 shows that all motivational components achieved significant improvements ($\alpha \leq 0.05$). The pre-teaching mean scores ranged from 0.37 to 0.42, while post-teaching scores ranged from 1.40 to 1.71.

For the challenge component, the pre-scale mean was 0.42 ($SD = 0.72$), increasing to 1.53 ($SD = 0.45$) post-instruction, with a T value of 5.98 ($Sig. = 0.002$) indicating significant growth in challenge motivation. In terms of curiosity, the pre-evaluation mean was 0.40 ($SD = 0.69$), which rose to 1.71 ($SD = 0.32$) post-instruction. The T-test result (T value = 7.39, $Sig. = 0.004$) highlights a significant increase in curiosity.

For independence, the pre-scale mean of 0.37 ($SD = 0.68$) increased to 1.47 ($SD = 0.64$) after four weeks, with a T value of 5.20 ($Sig. = 0.002$) affirming significant enhancement. Lastly, the ambition component's pre-scale mean was 0.40 ($SD = 0.69$), which improved to 1.40 ($SD = 0.65$) post-instruction. The T-test (T value = 4.43, $Sig. = 0.002$) confirmed a significant positive impact of cultural Islamic content on ambition. Overall, most students achieved a high level in the motivational scale, with the largest improvements observed in curiosity, while other components also showed significant enhancement.

Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

The present study aimed to investigate the effect of Islamic cultural content on Jordanian seventh-grade students' achievement and motivation. This chapter discusses the results of the study in light of its research questions and presents several recommendations.

Discussion of Results Related to the First Question

The first research question explored the impact of Islamic cultural content on the English language achievement of Jordanian seventh-grade female students. Results indicated that the use of cultural Islamic content, derived from sources like Encyclopedia Britannica (2005) and Bowker's (2000) Five Pillars of Islam, led to higher student achievement compared to traditional content. The familiarity of this content likely contributed to improved understanding and processing, making it easier for students to engage with the material.

Alderson and Urquhart (1983, 1985) suggested that students who encounter familiar content can answer direct and indirect questions more easily. The findings of this study support this notion, as previous research by Al-Shumaimeri (2006) and Afghari and Tavakoli (2004) confirmed that content familiarity positively affects student achievement. Tavakoli, Ahmadi, and Bahrani (2011) also reported that students' familiarity with specific genres significantly influences their academic performance.

In the researchers' opinion, cultural content is crucial for English language acquisition. Teaching materials should incorporate both students' first language (L1) culture and the target language (L2) culture to facilitate comprehension. Familiar content allows students to concentrate on language learning, resulting in better achievement. This perspective aligns with Majed's (2009) findings, which indicated that familiarity with culturally relevant materials resulted in improved performance among Iranian EFL students. Similarly, Pujol and Corru (2013) emphasized the importance of cultural knowledge in enhancing language comprehension and academic success.

The researchers assert that cultural content, particularly Islamic cultural themes, plays a significant role in students' language development. However, studies examining the integration of Islamic culture in English language materials are notably scarce.

Discussion of Results Related to the Second Question

The second research question assessed the impact of Islamic cultural content on the motivation of Jordanian seventh-grade students. Findings revealed a strong positive effect of Islamic cultural content across various motivational domains, including challenge, curiosity, ambition, and independence. Specifically, curiosity was the most impacted component, as students expressed eagerness to engage with new content related to their religion in English.

The researchers believe that incorporating learners' cultural themes enhances motivation in the English language learning process. Familiar content encourages active participation in EFL classrooms, as students relate to its themes, customs, and values. Badequnzhu (2013) noted that integrating learners' culture into second language teaching boosts motivation and communication skills. Furthermore, Asif (2013) found that students have favorable attitudes towards incorporating cultural aspects into foreign language learning.

The researchers insist that utilizing L1 culture in English language materials serves as a valuable resource for helping students understand the target culture. This perspective is supported by Farhat and Sayed (2011), who reported that learners often have negative attitudes toward learning the target language's culture but respond positively to the inclusion of their own culture. The study's findings suggest that Islamic cultural content significantly motivates Muslim students to learn English, a topic that has not been extensively addressed in prior research.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study demonstrates that Islamic cultural content significantly impacts seventh-grade students' achievement and motivation in learning English. A strong cultural foundation enhances learners' motivation and their capacity to achieve high academic standards. The culture of the target language holds considerable importance in second language teaching. Therefore, this study advocates for the inclusion of students' L1 culture, highlighting its significant influence on achievement and motivation.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. The Ministry of Education should adopt the current Islamic cultural content in the student book for Action Back 7.
2. EFL researchers are encouraged to conduct similar studies involving Jordanian students across all grades and various regions of Jordan.
3. EFL teachers should prioritize the use of familiar cultural aspects when teaching the four language skills.
4. EFL researchers should consider studies with larger samples, including male learners, to address the limitations posed by the small, female-only sample in this study.

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