Laila Abouhalim  
Advanced 2  

Morocco is one of the most famous tourist destinations that attracts people from countries in Europe, America, and Asia. People come to learn our languages, to explore our culture, and sometimes just to live more affordably. But what is for sure is that they find our culture interesting—a culture that was built through a complicated history and in a geographic space bordered by two other countries.

Thanks to globalization, we young Moroccans have been exposed to many new cultures that are different from our own, and we have also expressed our passion for these other cultures. As a normal process of adaption, many of us teenagers have gone crazy for Indian movies, Korean dramas, Korean pop music, and Japanese manga. These fans talk all day along about their interests. They stay home in front of their computers, and they don’t interact with their family members, as if they don’t have any interest in anything else.

I myself am one of those fans. While I’m watching what I like, I don’t just watch; I try to learn about the daily lives of people from other cultures and adapt my behavior to be like theirs. I feel so amazed by their cuteness, their doll-like looks, and their romantic scenes; but, at the same time, I’m in love with my own Moroccan culture, and I like being Moroccan.

I have felt alarmed lately when talking with other Moroccan teenagers who have a passion like mine, or maybe even more than mine. These adolescents say that they feel as if they were born in the wrong country and that being Moroccan isn’t pleasant for them. Why so?

The obvious reply is that they don’t like our culture. They don’t feel the beauty of our Arabic and Tamazight languages; they don’t like our cooking or our traditional clothes; they have never been to the Old Medina; and they don’t know anything about handicrafts—they simply hate being Moroccan.

I know that Asian culture is in fashion all around the world, but are some of us losing our identities as Moroccans? Are we blind to the values in our own society?

I love to learn about other cultures, and because I have had the opportunity to live abroad, I value being Moroccan even more now. I love how people give their seats on buses to their elders; I love how we dance and have a fun at family gatherings; I love how we do our best in our studies; and I love how we give our pocket money to needy children during Eid.

I’m not saying that our culture is the best; we have so many things we need to improve and many problems to solve. Looking at other cultures to see what they have done to develop their own countries can be a solution to some problems, but our traditions, our clothes, our languages, our customs, and our daily lives are so precious because they are our identities—they are us. When the young generation loses its identity, Morocco will never be as attractive to others because no one wants to visit a copy of another country.

So my message to teenagers is: there is nothing bad about loving other cultures, but never lose yourself or your love for your own country. That’s the only way we can all have a better tomorrow.

Have We Lost Our Love of Morocco?

Send your writings to alcstudentvoice@gmail.com.
An Interview with Si-Khalid Mesbahi

Student Voice: Where are you from? Are you originally from Fez?
Si-Khalid Mesbahi: Yes, I am from Fez.

SV: Tell us about your life as a student. Where did you study? What did you study?
KM: I initially went to a French school. After a year, my father changed his mind and enrolled me into a bilingual school where I could learn both Arabic and French. This school, which has a different name now, was known at the time as Ecole de l’hippodrome. It was named after the racetrack which was nearby. After primary school, I went to Sallah Eddine Al Ayoubi junior high school, then to Ibn Hazm senior high school where I got my baccalauréate in 1979. During my high school years, I joined the ALC as a student. It was located in another villa a few dozen meters from the current ALC building. I then joined the department of English at Sidi Mohammad Ben Abdellah University in Dhar El Mehraz. I got my B.A. degree in June 1983 and in September of the same year, I managed to get a teaching position in the same department. While teaching English as a foreign language, I was also doing my post graduate studies. I graduated in June 1986.

SV: Have you ever lived outside Morocco?
KM: Yes, I have, but I wouldn’t consider that living abroad. I instead had many short stays, for two to three months at a time, in Europe. Many young people used to do the same. I did it to discover the world. I had many different summer jobs, and I liked the feeling of earning my own money. I also spent the summer of 1986 at the University of East Anglia in Norwich, England, where I was doing my bibliographical research.

SV: How long have you been teaching at the ALC?
KM: I joined the ALC-Fez in October 2010, but I had already worked for the ALC-Tetouan while I was working there more than twenty years ago.

SV: How long have you been a teacher?
KM: I started in October 1983. I have been teaching for thirty-three years.

SV: When did you decide to become a teacher? Why did you choose teaching?
KM: When I got the teaching position at the school of arts in Dhar El Mehraz, my decision was made. I became a teacher. After a year of teaching English, two of my former professors at the university encouraged me to sit for the post graduate entrance exam, so I did. I then spent the following two years as a post graduate student and a teacher at the same time.

SV: What do you enjoy most about teaching?
KM: Teaching is a joy, especially when you see your students improving and gaining self-confidence. My greatest joy was when I started having my former students as colleagues at the school of arts and humanities in Meknes.

SV: Describe your teaching style in three words.
KM: Patience, fun, and discipline.

SV: How is teaching at the ALC different from teaching at other schools?
KM: It’s very different. Firstly, there is a difference of size. The classes in my school are considerably larger. We always have about 130 to 150 students in each group. While we have lots of interaction with our students here at the ALC, in my school, we mostly provide students with lectures. This means that most of the time, students listen and take notes. We still do have discussions in such an environment.

SV: What is the role of a teacher in the classroom?
KM: I think that the teacher plays the role of the facilitator. He has to make the learning process easy for students. He also has to meet their needs and help them improve and gain self-confidence.

SV: What qualities do good teachers have?
KM: A teacher should be patient and friendly, but should not accept a lack of discipline. In addition, he should also be well-organized and should try to balance his class. Sometimes, you may have a class of excellent or good students and students who are less good and who need help. The role of the teacher, in this case, is to help the less good ones to catch up with the good ones.

SV: What qualities do good students have?
KM: To be eager to learn and be inquisitive.

SV: If you weren’t teaching English, what would you be doing?
KM: My dream job was to be an interpreter working for an international organization.

SV: What’s your favorite word in the English language?
KM: It’s make believe. It is the word I don’t like at all.

SV: What word or phrase do you overuse?
KM: I do my best not to overuse a given expression or word. When I was a student, we used to nickname our teachers with those overused expressions. I, therefore, do my best in order not to be known by a special one.

SV: What is your motto?
KM: Never stop learning.
A Guide to Moroccan Culture

A Dinner Invitation

Kawtar Jrifa
Advanced 2

In Morocco, people can be very welcoming and generous. For them, it’s such a pleasure when a guest arrives, but there are some rules to this. Some behaviors can be seen as rude.

For example, if someone invites you to have dinner at his or her house, and you accept enthusiastically, they might think that you are an arrogant person who might refuse their hospitality because you might think you’re better than them.

When you arrive and the dinner has been prepared, but you don’t feel like eating much, that’s considered bad form. The host might judge you as an arrogant person and never invite you to dinner again.

I can judge from my own experience. I was once invited to my grandmother’s for lunch. I had no appetite, and I couldn’t eat a lot. I think she thought I didn’t like what she had prepared for me, and she was pretty upset.

To conclude, ignoring some cultural restrictions can lead to a big misunderstanding. It’s better to be aware of which behaviors are considered suitable and which aren’t.

Making Small Talk

Abdelhak Tamimi
Advanced 2

Small talk is appropriate when you meet new people, but the problem is how to choose the appropriate topic to talk about. As you know, what is normal for us Moroccans is not normal for others.

For example, yesterday, I read an article that talked about religion and politics being rude in polite conversation in the United States. In contrast, here in Morocco, it’s considered acceptable to discuss religion or politics.

I remember one day I met a Frenchman on the train. After introducing ourselves, I asked him about his religion. He asked why I wanted to know about his religion, and he told me that it wasn’t any of my business. I felt really ashamed when he responded like that. From that moment, I have been trying to choose and select my questions more carefully before asking other people.

In conclusion, when talking with others, it’s a good idea to be aware of which topics are considered typical and to avoid those topics that aren’t polite.

Congratulations to the Fall 2016 ALC-Fes Merit Scholars

Every ALC-Fes Merit Scholar receives a 100-percent reduction in tuition for one term because of his or her outstanding academic performance.

Beginning 2 Rym Maknassi Salim
Beginning 3 Malak bennani Rtel
Beginning 4 Rim Lakhder
Beginning 5 Zineb IdriSSI
Beginning 6 Khadija El Guarti
Beginning 7 Meryem Aamoud
Intermediate 1 Ahmed El Bekraoui
Intermediate 2 Ikram Mrabet
Intermediate 3 Hanae Ezzaouya
Intermediate 4 Achraf Joubiti
Intermediate 5 Maria Meftaha El Ghissassi
Intermediate 6 Imane El Markhi
Advanced 1 Karima El Hanafi
Advanced 2 Anas Badaoui
Advanced 3 Lamiae Yammouri
Advanced 4 Kaoutar Bourak
Advanced 5 Manal Bezzazi
From One Moroccan to Another

Aabir Brahimi
Intermediate 6

To the Citizens of Fez:

In my opinion, the most serious problem that we are living with now has to do with personal freedom. We still don’t totally respect others, even though we are known as a community that brings together many different cultures and religions. People should be allowed to think as they want, to wear what they like, and they mustn’t be forced to hide because of others. So, a law must be passed that protects those minorities without applying a secular government.

This discussion has, for decades, been forbidden, but now, it has become acceptable. Many people are against this open talk because they think that it will negatively affect Moroccan culture and Islam. That is not true! Both Morocco’s history and Islam have always respected others and given people a lot of space to behave with liberty. Besides, if we are able to receive more tourists and, at the same time, discover more about other countries, we will absolutely win the respect of foreigners and leave behind war and negative feelings to help establish peace and love around the world.

Respectfully,
A Fellow Citizen of Fez