

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? The best way to learn about a foreign country is to read newspapers and magazines from that country.

The modern world has provided plentiful sources so that people from various cultures find the opportunity to have a better understanding from other parts of the world. While some believe that newspapers and magazines are the best sources to meet this purpose, I think that they cannot draw a complete image because they may be biased politically in favor of a dominant party, understanding cultural contexts needs more in-depth observations and it is necessary to have face to face communication to know a foreign country.

First of all, media in general, and newspapers specifically, have always been tilted toward their favored political party. Even in the most liberal societies, with the free flow of information, the political orientation of newspapers can be surmised/it can be easily said that newspapers are playing in whose field. If one is willing to know a foreign country, knowing what is really happening in its deepest societal strata cannot be obtained by turning newspaper pages. Ruled by a dictatorship regiment, a country can suffer from severe censorship. In such situations, by suppressing all other opponents, there is generally one side speaking. Can anyone have the slightest understanding of what is happening in North Korea by reading their published newspapers? Therefore, other people may be easily ill-informed about the true face of that countries.

Moreover, customs, norms and cultural features are truly representatives of a country's identity. There is this culture in my country, named *taarof*, /pleasantries/ which is considered an act of politeness in order to promote equality in a hierarchical culture. By watching this act or even being the other side of this situation, one can have a fully understanding of this concept which is popular among Iranians. Neither the newspapers nor the magazines are able to describe the real concept of *taarof*. As a result, if one fails to understand these cultural structures, there would be more confusion instead of certainty.

Finally, not only do individuals benefit from having their own experience in another culture, but also they can broaden their perspectives by engaging in a fruitful conversation, something that cannot be obtained through mere reading. Making-holding dialogues with people from diverse backgrounds is a door to unknown worlds. Fascinated by the knowledge that is gained, many establish real friendships-can also be established which bring even more comprehension of that society. When you have friends from another culture, the amount of first-hand experiences you may experience as a foreigner is limitless. The more a person goes deep into societal classes, the better he/she will merge into that culture. As a consequence, these people can spread awareness while making an excellent reputation.

To sum up, I believe that only by reading newspapers, one cannot become knowledgeable of another country. I suggest that people look for other sources such as watching famous documentaries to deepen their perception. -Because- because in this way they become well- informed, have more certainty and can raise awareness.