



IRAQI
Academic Scientific Journals



العراقية
المجلات الأكاديمية العلمية



ISSN: 2663-9033 (Online) | ISSN: 2616-6224 (Print)

Journal of Language Studies

Contents available at: <http://jls.tu.edu.iq>

TEACHING CULTURE

Inst. Afraa Husam Sami *
College of Education for Women-Tikrit University
afraa.husam27@tu.edu.iq

Inst. Elaf Subhi Abdullah
College of Education for Women-Tikrit University
E.mail: Inst. E-mail: elafsubhi1979@tu.edu.iq

<p>Keywords:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Teaching- Culture- Educational activities- Curriculum- Cultural functions <p>Article Info</p> <hr/> <p>Article history:</p> <p>Received: 16- 3-2021 Accepted: 17-4-2021</p> <p>Available online</p>	<p>Abstract</p> <p>The current study offers a foreword about the process of teaching culture and about the effective educational activities which can be used within the curriculum of the EFL. Particularly, this foreword introduces an approach to teach culture and language. The selected approach here induces students motivation and stimulate commitment which can assist cope absence of awareness of expressive intercultural as one of the EFL learning issues. The goal of the present work is to produce a milieu in which students can create their grasp of outputs, performs, and perspective of the foreign culture. Awareness of foreign language culture must be regarded as a prominent factor of English as a foreign language learning and teaching. So, to increase students' learning, tutors need to contain the culture in teaching EFL. The process of teaching culture is deemed an essential skill in the teaching and learning of language.</p>
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* Corresponding Author: Inst. Afraa Husam Sami , E-Mail: afraa.husam27@tu.edu.iq
Tel: +9647709580835. Affiliation : University of Tikrit –Iraq

تدريس الثقافة

م. ايلاف صبحي عبدالله

م. عفراء حسام سامي

كلية التربية للبنات _ قسم اللغة الانكليزية _ جامعة تكريت

الخلاصة:	الكلمات الدالة: -
تقدم الدراسة الحالية مقدمة حول عملية تدريس الثقافة والأنشطة التعليمية الفعالة التي يمكن استخدامها في منهاج اللغة الثانية.	- تدريس - ثقافة - الفعاليات التربوية
على وجه الخصوص ، تقدم هذه المقدمة أسلوباً لتعليم الثقافة واللغة. النهج المختار هنا يحفز المتعلمين ويحفز الالتزام الذي يمكن أن يساعد في التغلب على غياب الوعي بالتعبير بين الثقافات كأحد قضايا تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. الهدف من العمل الحالي هو إنتاج بيئة يمكن للمتعلمين من خلالها إنشاء فهمهم للمخرجات والأداء ومنظور الثقافة الأجنبية. يجب اعتبار الوعي بثقافة اللغة الأجنبية عاملاً بارزاً في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في تعلم اللغة وتدرسيها. لذلك ، لزيادة تعلم المتعلمين ، يحتاج المعلمون إلى احتواء الثقافة في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. تعتبر عملية تعليم الثقافة مهارة أساسية في تعليم اللغة وتعلمها .	- منهج - الوظائف الثقافية معلومات البحث تاريخ البحث: الاستلام : ٢٠٢١-٣-١٦ القبول : ٢٠٢١-٤-١٧ التوفر على النت

Introduction

Foreign language learning is comprised of several components, including grammatical competence, communicative competence, language proficiency, as well as a change in attitudes towards one's own or another culture. For scholars and laymen alike, cultural competence i.e., the knowledge of the conventions, customs, beliefs, and systems of meaning of another country, is indisputably an integral part of foreign language learning. And many teachers have seen it as their goal to incorporate the teaching of culture into the foreign language curriculum. It

could be maintained that the notion of communicative competence, which in the past decade has blazed a trail in foreign language teaching, emphasizing the role of context and the circumstances under which language can be used accurately and appropriately (Straub, 1999: 2).

Kramsch (1993: 1) states that to learn a foreign language is not merely to learn how to communicate but also to discover how much flexibility the target language allows learners to manipulate grammatical forms, sounds, and meanings. And to reflect upon, or even flout, socially accepted norms at work both in their own or the target culture.

What most teachers and students seem to lose sight of is the fact that the grammatical competence has to be complemented by an understanding of culture-specific meanings (communicative or rather cultural competence) (Byram, Morgan et al., 1994: 4).

2. Language and Culture

Language is a social institution which shaped by society at large, or in particular the ‘cultural functions’ in which it plays an important role. Thus, if our basis is that language that should be understood as a cultural practice, then ineluctably we must also deal with the notion of culture in relation to language. Language is not an ‘autonomous construct’ (Fairclough, 1989: vi) but social practice created by ‘the structures and forces of the social institutions within which we live and function’. Certainly, language cannot exist in a vacuum; one could make so bold as to maintain that there is a kind of “transfusion” at work between language and culture (ibid.).

2.1 The Definition of Culture

On a general level, culture has been referred to as ‘the ways of people’ (Lado, 1957). This view incorporates both ‘material’ manifestations of culture that are easily seen and ‘nonmaterial’ ones that are more difficult to observe, as Saville-Troike (1975: 83) notes. Anthropologists define culture as ‘the whole way of life of people or group. In this context, culture includes all the social practices that bond a group of people together and distinguish them from others’ (Montgomery and Reid-Thomas, 1994: 5). According to Peck (1998: 45), culture is all the accepted and patterned ways of behavior of a given people. It is that face of human life learned by people as a result of belonging to some particular group; it is that part of learned behavior shared with others. Not only does this concept include a group’s way of thinking, feeling, and acting, but also the internalized patterns for doing certain things in certain ways....not just the doing of them. This concept of culture also includes the physical manifestations of a group as exhibited in their achievements and contributions to civilization. Culture is our social legacy as contrasted with our organic heredity. It regulates our lives at every turn.

It could be argued that culture never remains static, but is constantly changing. In this light, Robinson (1988) dismisses the above behaviourist, functionalist, and cognitive definitions of culture and posits a symbolic one which sees culture as a **dynamic** ‘system of symbols and meanings’ whereby ‘past experience influences

meaning, which in turn affects future experience, which in turn affects subsequent meaning, and so on' (ibid.: 11). It is this dynamic nature of culture that has been lost sight of and underrated in foreign language teaching and ought to be cast in a new perspective.

2.2 The Goals of Teaching Culture

According to Tomalin & Stempleski (1993: 7-8), the teaching of culture has the following goals:

1- To help students to develop an understanding of the fact that all people exhibit culturally-conditioned behaviors.

2- To help students to develop an understanding that social variables such as age, sex, social class, and place of residence influence the ways in which people speak and behave.

3- To help students to become more aware of conventional behaviour in common situations in the target culture.

4- To help students to increase their awareness of the cultural connotations of words and phrases in the target language.

5- To help students to develop the ability to evaluate and refine generalizations about the target culture, in terms of supporting evidence.

6- To help students to develop the necessary skills to locate and organize information about the target culture.

7- To stimulate students' intellectual curiosity about the target culture, and to encourage empathy towards its people.

2.3 The Importance of Teaching Culture in English Language Classrooms

Language and culture are related to each other especially in language instruction. Brown (1994:165) states that "a language is a part of a culture and a culture is a part of a language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture". Krasner (1999:79) also states that second and foreign language learners should not only study the language but also the culture because linguistic competence alone is not enough for learners of a language to be competent in that language.

Culture is considered a fifth language skill, in addition to listening, speaking, reading and writing, due to the international role of the English language and globalization (Tomalin, 2008:33). So, communication is a key goal when culture is used. Culture and communication are inseparable because culture not only deals with who talks to whom, but about what and how communication proceeds. It determines how people interpret messages and the meanings understood from the messages in different conditions and circumstances. Gao (2006:22) indicates that FL teachers should be aware of the place of cultural studies in EFL classroom and attempt to enhance students' cultural awareness and improve their communicative competence.

Communicative competence is considered as a model of L2 development. Linguistic competence is one of four competencies: linguistic, sociolinguistic (culture and language), strategic, and discourse competence. Sociolinguistic knowledge involves how to give invitations, apologize, make requests. These speech acts are vital in real life communication, and norms differ between cultures. Learning how to use these acts can help L2 students feel that they are more integrated into that target culture (ibid).

In addition, understanding culture may help students know and encourage sympathy towards the people of that target culture so that they will have positive attitudes about the target language. Brown (2000:22) says that L2 learner benefits from positive attitudes towards the target culture; on the contrary, negative attitudes may lead to decrease motivation. This lack of motivation may lead to decrease input, interaction, and output.

Teaching culture plays a very important role to help students become successful language learners. Teachers should organize and incorporate teaching culture in lesson plans and curriculums. Teachers need to play various roles. They have to be able “to present and elicit cultural information, coach and model cultural behaviors, guide and conduct cultural research and analysis” (Moran, 2001:138).

However, language teachers should have cross-cultural training before joining a foreign language teaching program. This opportunity not only develops understanding about cultural differences but also equips teachers with skills to handle problems faced by learners in communicating a foreign language (Lambert, 1999:67). This sort of training may reduce culture shock and make classroom environment more pleasant, both for teachers and learners.

Thus, foreign language teachers should be foreign culture teachers, having the ability to experience and analyze both the home and target culture (Byram et al., 1994:55).

3. How to Teach Culture

Learners must become familiar with what it means to be part of a culture, their own culture. By exploring their own culture, i.e., by discussing the very values, expectations, traditions, customs, and rituals they unconsciously take part in. They are ready to reflect upon the values, expectations, and traditions of others ‘with a higher degree of intellectual objectivity’ (Straub, 1999:88). Depending on the age and level of the learners, this task can take many forms. For example, young beginners or intermediate students should be given the opportunity to enjoy certain activities that are part of their own tradition, such as national sports, social festivities, or songs, before setting about exploring those of the target culture. Here, we will only be concerned with the latter. ‘Beginning foreign language students want to feel, touch, smell, and see the foreign peoples and not just hear their language’ (Peck, 1998:99). At any rate, the foreign language classroom should become a ‘cultural island’ where the accent will be on ‘cultural experience’ rather than ‘cultural awareness’ (see Byram, Morgan et al., 1994: 55-60). From the first day, teachers are expected to bring in the class posters, pictures, maps, and other things in order to help students develop ‘a mental image’ of the target culture.

According to Peck (1998:100), an effective and stimulating activity is to send students on “cultural errands” to supermarkets and department stores and have them write down the names of imported goods. Moreover, teachers can also invite guest speakers, who will talk about their experiences of the foreign country. Another insightful activity is to divide the class into groups of three or four and have them draw up a list of those characteristics and traits that supposedly distinguish the home and target cultures.

Tomalin and Stempleski (1993: 16) provide a sample of the kind of list for students could produce:

- music
- race
- national
- origin
- geography
- architecture
- customs
- arts and crafts
- clothing
- physical features
- food

In this way, it becomes easier for teachers and students to identify any “stereotypical lapses” and preconceived ideas that they need to disabuse themselves of. In other words, they can query their own assumptions and try to see the underlying significance of a particular term or word in the target language and culture. For example, in English culture, both animals and humans have feelings, get sick, and are buried in cemeteries. In Hispanic culture, however, the distinction between humans and animals is great, and bullfighting is highly unlikely to be seen as a waste of time, as many western spectators are apt to say (ibid.).

Besides, the way language and social variables interpenetrate should inform culture teaching in the foreign language classroom. The main premise is that language varies according to social variables, such as sex, age, social class, location, and the concomitant register differences should not go unnoticed. For example, students can be taught that there are certain words used more by women than by men, and vice versa, and that there are also different dialects which may not enjoy equal adulation and prestige. Through exposure to the foreign civilization, students inescapably draw some comparisons between the home and target culture. ‘Cultural capsules’ attempt to help in this respect, presenting learners with isolated items about the target culture, while using books and other visual aids. Yet a more useful way to provide cultural information is by dint of cultural clusters, which are a series of culture capsules (Tomalin and Stempleski, 1993: 16).

Henrichsen (1998: 78) proposes, among others, two interesting methods: culture assimilators and cultoons. Culture assimilators comprise short descriptions of various situations where one person from the target culture interacts with persons from the home culture. Then follow four possible interpretations of the meaning of the behaviour and speech of the interactants, especially those from the

target culture. Once the students have read the description, they choose one of the four options they think is the correct interpretation of the situation. When every single student has made his choice, they discuss why some options are correct or incorrect. The main thrust of culture assimilators is that they 'are good methods of giving students understanding about cultural information and may even promote emotional empathy or affect if students have strong feelings about one or more of the options'. On the other hand, cultoons are visual culture assimilators. Students are provided with a series of four pictures highlighting points of misunderstanding or culture shock experienced by persons in contact with the target culture. Here, students are asked to evaluate the characters' reactions in terms of appropriateness (within the target culture). Once misunderstandings are dissipated, learners read short texts explaining what was happening in the cultoons and why there was misunderstanding. Nevertheless, much as cultoons 'generally promote understanding of cultural facts they do not usually give real understanding of emotions involved in cultural misunderstandings' (ibid.).

Cultural problem solving is yet another way to provide cultural information (see Singhal, 1998:77). In this case, learners are presented with some information but they are on the horns of a dilemma, for example, in analyzing say, a TV conversation or reading a narrative on marriage ceremonies, they are expected to assess manners and customs, or appropriate or inappropriate behaviour, and to employ various problem-solving techniques—in short, to develop a kind of "cultural strategic competence". For example, students are in a restaurant and are expected to order a meal. In this way, learners are given the opportunity to step into the shoes of a member of the target culture(ibid.).

Indisputably, conventional behaviour in common situations is a subject with which students should acquaint themselves. For instance, in the USA or the United Kingdom, it is uncommon for a student who is late for class to knock on the door and apologize to the teacher. Rather, this behaviour is most likely to be frowned upon and have the opposite effect, even though it is common behaviour in the culture many students come from. Besides, there are significant differences across cultures regarding the ways in which the teacher is addressed; when a student is supposed to raise her hand; what topics are considered taboo or "off the mark"; how much freedom students are allowed in achieving learner autonomy, and so forth(Singhal, 1998:78).

Alongside linguistic knowledge, students should also familiarize themselves with various forms of non-verbal communication, such as gesture and facial expressions, typical in the target culture. More specifically, learners should be cognisant of the fact that such seemingly universal signals as gestures and facial expressions—as well as emotions— are actually cultural phenomena, and may as often as not lead to miscommunication and erroneous assumptions. An interesting activity focusing on non-verbal communication is found in Tomalin and Stempleski (1993: 117-119): the teacher hands out twelve pictures showing gestures and then invites the students to discuss and answer some questions. Which gestures are different from those in the home culture? Which of the gestures shown would be used in different situations or even avoided in the home culture?.

Another activity would be to invite learners to role-play emotions (Tomalin and Stempleski, 1993: 116-117): the teacher writes a list of several words

indicating emotions (happiness, fear, anger, joy, pain, guilt, sadness) and then asks the students to use facial expressions and gestures to express these emotions. Then follows a discussion on the different ways in which people from different cultures express emotions as well as interpret gestures as “indices” to emotions. As Straub (1999: 6) puts it, "by understanding how cultures and subcultures or co-cultures use these signs to communicate, we can discover a person's social status, group membership, and approachability". According to him, it is important to encourage learners to 'speculate on the significance of various styles of clothing, the symbolic meanings of colors, gestures, facial expressions, and the physical distance people unconsciously put between each other' (ibid.), and to show in what ways these nonverbal cues are similar to, or at variance with, those of their culture.

Culture can best find its expression through the medium of literature. As Valdes (1986: 137) notes, literature is a viable component of second language programs at the appropriate level and one of its major functions is to serve as a medium to transmit the culture of the people who speak the language in which it is written. literary texts are an untapped resource of authentic language that learners can avail themselves of. Exposure to literary works can help them to expand their language awareness and develop their language competence. Moreover, trying to interpret and account for the values, assumptions, and beliefs infusing the literary texts of the target culture is instrumental in defining and redefining those obtaining in the home culture. Of course, literature can extend to cover the use of film and television in the FL classroom, for they 'have the capacity...to present language and situation simultaneously, that is, language in fully contextualized form' (Jalling, 1968: 65). A major shortcoming, though, is that the viewer can only be an observer, not a participant. There is only reaction but no interaction. In a sense, cultural knowledge and experience should make us aware that, far from becoming members of the same 'monocultural global village' (Kramsch, 1993: 56), we can actually become observers and participants at the same time and bridge cultural gaps.

4. Conclusions

The teaching of culture should become an integral part of foreign language instructions. Culture should be our message to students and language our medium.

On a practical note, culture teaching should allow learners to increase their knowledge of the target culture in terms of people's way of life, values, attitudes, and beliefs, and how these manifest themselves or are couched in linguistic categories and forms. More specifically, the teaching of culture should make learners aware of speech acts, connotations, etiquette, that is, appropriate or inappropriate behaviour, as well as provide them with the opportunity to act out being a member of the target culture.

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