

## Culture of Second Language: Teaching and Learning

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### ABSTRACT

This paper is concerned with the contribution and integration of culture in the second or foreign language education. Some consideration will be given to why and how to teach culture.

In addition, an attempt will be made to incorporate culture into the classroom by means of considering some techniques and methods currently used. The main hypothesis of the paper is that effective communication is more than a matter of language proficiency, but successful communication hardly ever takes place unless second language users have obtained a kind of cultural competency of the language they use. The researcher mentions the concept of second language with their approaches, the teachers and the learners role

## **Section One**

### **1.1 Teaching and Learning Culture**

Rivers, (1968: 323) said that there are certain problems in attempting to teach culture, whether one's own or that of another language group.

1.Students who have experienced a uniform culture often suffer from culture shock when confronted with different ways of thinking, acting, and reacting. It is important to convey cultural concepts disappointly and objectlessly, so that students do not feel that the teacher considers everything in the new culture to be "better" or "worse" than in the students native culture.

2.In attempting to fit complicated cultural systems into simplified framework which is comprehensible to an early level student, we run the danger of imparting or reinforcing stereotypes of attitudes and behavior. Too much emphasis on the different in superficial details (e.g. isolated surprises on encountering certain aspects of behavior) makes another culture seem weird and irrational.

### **1.2 The Concept of Culture**

Goode,etal ( 2000: 98) define culture as the customs, values, laws, technology, artifacts, and art of a particular time or people. Culture in English language teaching materials has been subject to discussion for many years. The reason for the use of a cultural content in classroom is for the supposition that it will promote learner motivation (McKay, 2000: 7).

This means that language is not only part of how we define culture, it also reflects culture. It can be said that cultural content is a key for effective teaching and learning a second foreign language. Necessarily, students cannot master the language unless they have mastered the cultural contexts in which the language occurs (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Projects, 1996: 27).

Rivers, (1968: 322) defines culture in the contemporary teaching of languages include these aspects, but more attention is paid to the every day life style of ordinary citizens and the values , beliefs and prejudices they share with their fellows within their linguistic and social groups, with due attention to intragroup differences (of social class, for instance). This requires the consideration of the assimilated aspects of a culture which individuals are usually unable to

describe in words, although they recognize them as typical and react effectively to their presence or absence.

### 1.3 Aspiration of Cultural Teaching

According to Tomalin & Stempleski (1993: 7- 8) , modifying Seely's (1993) seven goals of 'cultural instruction' the teaching of culture has the following goals and is of and in itself a means of accomplishing them:

1. To help students to develop or understanding the fact that all people exhibit culturally –conditioned behavior.
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 behavior in common situation in the target culture.
4. To help students to increase their awareness of cultural connotations of words and phrases on the target language.

5. To help students to develop the ability to evaluate and refine generalizations about the target language in terms of supporting evidence.
6. To help students to develop the necessary skills to locate and organize information about the target culture
7. Chastain (1988: 299) explains that learning culture is a universal and natural as learning language. A functional knowledge of both is necessary to interact and communicate with other people in one's cultural environment

#### **1.4 Sources and Techniques for Cultural Content**

In the age of globalization with the help of the advanced technology, it is easier to access many sources swiftly. Via internet we can easily search anything anytime. Therefore cultural contents are obtainable for use in our classroom. Kodotchigava (2002:88) discusses the role of role- play in teaching culture for classroom suggesting quick stepfor classroom implementation.

Cullen and Sato (2000) suggest practical techniques and a wide range of sources for teaching culture in the English foreign language classroom using three different parameters,

namely, information sources, activity types and selling- points and also Jordan (1997: 105) lists sources of cultural information:

- 1 Newspaper: There are good sources of cultural information: .
- 2 Video:video tapes is a good visual source of cultural information
- 3 Talks/discussions: some topics may be suitable for giving information to students in a plenary session.
- 4 Role- Plays/dramatizations: these can be used to set off discussions and introspection.
- 5 Culture quizzes/tests.(Jordan,1997:105)

### **1.5. Culture in the Classroom**

We must focus on both appropriate content and activities that enable students to assimilate that content. Activities should encourage them to go beyond facts, so that they begin to perceive and experience vicariously the deeper levels of the culture of the speaker of the language .Teachers have talked at great length about the geographical

environment, the history of the people, their literary, artistic, and scientific achievements the institutions of their society and evena about small details of their every day life .These cultural talks, some times suported by the showing of films or slides.In addition to acultural series usualy begins at the elementary stage with discussions of the daily life of the peer group in the other language comunity,their families, their living conditions,their school their relations with their friends, their leisure time activities, the festivals they celebrate, dating and marriage customs.At intermediat and advanced levels,attention may be drawn to geographical factors and their influence on daily living,major historical periods,how the society is organized , production(primary and secondary)transport,major institutions(education, the law, goverment,religion),aspects of city and country life,achievements in science and exploration.These aspects of the culture are sometimes presented through short talks by the teacher,but more frequently through reports on research projects presented by groups of students or by individual students (Rivers, 1968: 324).

## **Section Two**

## **2.1 English as a Second Language**

A second language the one has some specific functions within a multi lingual society or minority groups, and is learned after the mother tongue. It usually functions as a moral medium of instruction an communication. It is also used as the official language of government institutions, of commercial and industrial organizations and mass media. This situation prevails in multilingual communities like Canada, South Africa, Nigeria , Malaysia , India , Pakistan, etc. (Muricia, 2001: 39)

## **2.2 Approaches to Language Teaching**

There are different approaches dealing with language teaching as Murcia, (2001: 5) said that there are nine approaches, these are:

1. Grammar- Translation
2. Direct
3. Reading
4. Audio- lingualism
5. Oral Situational
6. - Cognitive



7. Affective–Humanistic
8. Comprehension- Based
9. Communicative

However, before listing the features of each approach. The researcher would like to explain what do we mean by the terms approach, method, and techniques

An approach to language teaching is something that reflects a certain model or research paradigm.

A method is a set of procedures. A system that spells out rather precisely how to teach a second or foreign language.

A technique is a classroom device or activity and thus represents the narrowest of the three concepts.

#### 1. Grammar- Translation Approach

An extension of the approach used to teach classical languages to the teaching of modern language.

- a Instruction is given in the native language of the students,

- b There is little use of the target language for communication.
- c Focus is on grammatical parsing, the form and inflection of words.
- d There is early reading of difficult texts.
- e A typical exercise is to translate sentences from the target language into the mother tongue (or vice versa).
- f The result of this approach is usually an inability on the part of the student to use the language for communication.
- g The teacher doesn't have to be able to speak the target language.

(ibid: 6)

## **2. Direct Approach**

A reaction to the grammar translation approach and its failure to produce learners who could communicate in the foreign language they had been studying.

1. No use of the mother tongue.

2. Lesson begin with dialogues and anecdotes in modern conversational style.
3. Actions and pictures are used meanings clear.
4. Grammar is learned inductively.
5. Literary texts are used for pleasure and are not analyzed grammatically.
6. The target culture is also taught inductively.
7. The teacher must be a native speaker or have native like proficiency in the target language.

### **3. Reading Approach**

A reaction to the problems experienced in implementing the direct approach reading was viewed as the most usable skill to have a foreign language since not many people travelled abroad, also few teachers could use their foreign language well enough to use a direct approach effectively in class.

1. Only the grammar useful for reading comprehension is taught.

2. Vocabulary is controlled at first.

(ibid: 6)

3. Translation is once more a respectable classroom procedure.

4. Reading comprehension is the only language skill emphasized.

5. The teacher doesn't need to have good oral proficiency in the target language.

(ibid: 6)

#### **4. Audio Lingualism**

A reaction to the reading approach and its lack of emphasis on oral- aural skills.

1. Lesson begins with dialogues.
2. Mimicry and memorization are used on the assumption that language is habit formation.
3. Grammatical structures are sequence and rules are taught inductively.

4. Skills are sequenced listening, speaking, reading, writing postponed.
5. Pronunciation is stressed from the beginning.
6. Vocabulary is severely limited in initial stages.
7. A great effort is made to prevent learner errors.
8. Language is often manipulated without regard to meaning or context.
9. The teacher must be proficient only in the structure, vocabulary, etc. that he/she is teaching since learning activities and materials are carefully controlled.

(ibid: 7)

### **5. Oral- Situational Approach**

A reaction to the reading approach and its lack of emphasis on oral- aural skills.

1. The spoken language is primary.
2. All language material is practiced orally before being presented in written form.

3. Only the target language should be used in the classroom.
4. Efforts are made to ensure that the most general and useful lexical items are presented.
5. Grammatical structures are graded from simple to complex.
6. New items (lexical and grammatical) are introduced and practiced situationally.

#### **6. Cognitive Approach**

A reaction to the behaviourist features of the audiolingual approach.

1. Language learning is viewed as rule acquisition not habit formation.
2. Instruction is often individualized, learners are responsible for their own learning.
3. Grammar must be taught but it can be taught deductively (rules first, practice later).

4. Pronunciation is de- emphasized. Perfection is viewed as unrealistic and unattainable. (ibid: 7)
5. Reading and writing are once again as important as listening and speaking.
6. Vocabulary instruction is once again important especially at intermediate and advanced levels.
7. Errors are viewed as inevitable, to be used constructively in the learning process.
8. The teacher is expected to have a good general proficiency in the target language as well as an ability to analyze the target language.

(ibid: 7)

#### **7. Affective –Humanistic Approach**

A reaction to the general lack of affective considerations in both Audioligualism and the Cognitive approach.

1. Respect is emphasized for the individual (each student, the teacher) and for his or her feeling.

2. Communication that is meaningful to the learner is emphasized.
3. Instruction involves much work in pairs and small groups.
4. Class atmosphere is viewed as more important than materials or methods.
5. Peer support and interaction are viewed as necessary for learning.
6. Learning a foreign language is viewed as a self realization experience.
7. The teacher is a counselor or facilitator.
8. The teacher should be proficient in the target language and the student native language.(ibid:8).

### **8. Comprehension- Based Approach**

An outgrowth of research in the first language acquisition that lead some language methodologists to assume that second or foreign language leaning is very similar to first language acquisition.



1. Listening comprehension is very important and is viewed as the basic skill that will allow speaking reading, and writing to develop spontaneous overtime.
2. Learners should begin by listening to meaningful speech and by responding non verbally in meaningful ways before they produce any language themselves.
3. Learners should not speak until they feel ready to do so.
4. Learners progress by being exposed to meaningful input that just one step beyond their level of concept.
5. Rules learning may help learners monitor .
6. Error correction is seen as unnecessary and perhaps even counterproductive. The important thing is that the learners can understand and make themselves understood.
7. If the teacher is not a native speaker, appropriate materials such as audio tape and videotapes must be available to provide the appropriate input for the learners.

(ibid: 8).

## 9. Communicative Approach

An outgrowth of the work of anthropological linguistics.

1. It is assumed that the goal of language teaching is learner ability to communicate in the target language.
2. It is assumed that the content of a language course will include semantic notions and social functions not just linguistic structures.
3. Students regularly work in groups or pairs to transfer meaning in situations in which one person has information that the others lack.
4. Students often engage in role play a dramatization to adjust their use of the target language to different social context.
5. Classroom materials and activities are often authentic to reflect real life situations and demands.
6. Skills are integrated from the beginning.
7. The teachers role is primarily to facilitate communication and only secondarily to correct errors.

8. The teacher should be able to use the target language fluently and appropriately.

(ibid).

### **1.3 The Techniques of Teaching Language and Culture**

The following are some useful techniques for presenting culture in the classroom:

#### **1. Genuine materials**

Herron, etal(1999:4) said that the using of authentic sources from the native speech community helps to engage students in authentic cultural experiences. Sources can include films, news, broadcasts and television shows, web sites, photographs, magazines and other printed materials. Teachers can adapt their use of authentic material to suit the age and language of proficiency level of the students.

#### **2. Films**

Films and television offer students a chance to observe behaviors which are hidden on texts (Herron,etal, 1999:4)

#### **3. Role Ply**

The role- play must take place after an exposure to authentic conversation. For example, after learning about ways of addressing, different groups of people in the target language culture such as people of the same age and older people, students could role play asituation in which an inappropriate greeting is used .Other students observe the role play and try to identify the reason for the miscommunication. Then they role play the same situation using a culturally proper form of address .(ibid)

#### **4. Proverbs**

Contrasting common proverbs in the target language possibly will focus on how the proverbs are different from or similar to proverbs in the students' native language and how this concept gives insights of the target culture.

#### **5. Volunteers Cultural Responses**

Native speakers' volunteers are good authentic sources for acquiring cultural awareness. They can be invited to the classroom as expert sources or by the direct interaction

#### **6. Interviews**

An effective way for students to learn about the target language and culture is to send them into their own community to find information via interview native speakers in the community, which they can record in notebooks or an audiotapes or videotapes.

### **7. Literature**

Literary contents are often full with cultural information and evoke unforgettable reactions for readers. Texts that are carefully selected for given group of students and specific goals in mind can be very helpful in allowing students to acquire insight to the target culture .(ibid)

### **8. Newspapers**

Newspapers and magazines are good sources of cultural information: local papers will provide elements of everyday life in society such as interviews, advertisements and other social affairs.

### **9. The Study Abroad**

Talking the advantage of studying abroad is very essential for the second language teacher to interact in

authentic situations and to transfer this awareness to his community (ibid).

### **2.3.1 The Teacher's Role**

Larson- Freeman (1986: 12) said that the teachers role has shifted from the traditional instructor or lecturer to be an organizer ,director,stimuli generator,cooperator and consultant.Teachers in communicative classrooms will find themselves talking less and listining more and becoming activ facilitators of their students learning.The teacher helps to set up the discussion group in class, but because students performance is the goal, the teacher must step back and observe, somtimes acting as referee or monetor.The teacher need to move around the classroom to see what progress learners are making and what problems are coming up he or she can give advice ,encouragement and extra individual help where it is needed.

Many teachers are reflexibilily sticking to traditional second language teaching methods through which they themselves had been little attention paid to the role of culture. This may be due to the teachers' is sufficiently training in

culture or some other criteria as curriculum and materials they are handling. Therefore, second/foreign language teaching would appear something raw and meaningless, only presenting the unrealized body of language.

The teachers with well designed materials, and analyzed situational factors, first initiate appreciating and incorporating culture into the second language classroom by analyzing students' needs and their own needs at the same time.

Through getting familiar with the aspects relating to product (e.g. foods, games, literature and laws) practice (e.g. customs, patterns of social interactions) and perspectives (e.g. beliefs, values and ideas), they can provide better second language situation. Also, if the teachers keep themselves up-to-date with the cultural change/s), as a result of political, economic and social impact they can represent the community whose language they are teaching

Teachers must be culturally aware of the language they are teaching and they must be aware of cultural diversity in multi cultural and multilingual mind while dealing with cultural

contents that English is international language and its culture acts as an aid for motivation.

### **2.3.2 The Learner's Role**

To get culturally aware in the second language classroom, learners should:

1. Work with authentic materials derived from the communities, who use the language.
2. Be able to contact with the native speakers of the language.
3. From the contacts and materials appreciate the similarities and differences between their own and the second language.
4. Get aquasi identity with the people of the second culture.(ibid)
5. Use this knowledge to develop a more objective view of their own customs and ways of thinking.



6. Make the second language teacher promise to take more dependable role in presenting culture.
7. Identify the subtle differences in their own culture of the second language they are leaning and behavioural modification exercises can be given in the class.

(Byram, etal,1998: 3).

### **Conclusion**

Understanding the cultural context of every day language functions means more just being able to produce grammatical sentences. It means knowing that is appropriate to say to whom, and in what situations, and it means understanding the beliefs and values represented by the various forms and usages of the tongue.

Culture must be entirely integrated as a central component of language learning. Second language teachers should identify key cultural items in every aspect of the language that they teach, students can be successful in speaking a second language only if cultural issues are an inbuilt element if the core curriculum. Knowing the solution for

English of second language or foreign language learning teacher given the abundance of past ,current,and future approaches that is to learn more about the various approaches and methods available and to find out wich practices have proved successful .There are also other things the teacher should do to make good dicisions concernings the choice of an approach , method and techniques

1.Assess student needs and examine instructional constraints,time ,class size, materials, physical factors ,then decide what can reasonably be taught .

2.Determine the attitudes and learning styles of individual students to the extent that this is possible, and develop activities and materials consistent with findings.

3.Identify the dicourse genres ,speech activities, and text types that the students need to learn so that you can incorporate them into materials and learning activities.

4.Specify how the student language learning will be assessed.

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