

The Notion of Culture and its Importance in Foreign Language Teaching

Nazarova Marjona Namoz qizi¹

¹ Masters student Faculty of Foreign language and literature Uzbekistan State World Languages University, Tashkent

Abstract:

Within the topic of second language teaching, there is debate over whether or not culture should be taught. What the primary objectives of teaching culture are is a further question of equal importance. Many academics today hold the view that teaching culture in second language classes is crucial since language and culture are inextricably linked, and learning about culture must occur at the same time as language acquisition. The initial aim of this study is to describe the significant role that culture plays in the teaching of foreign and second languages. It goes into further detail on what culture is and how to teach it in various ways. Furthermore, a few important and useful topics about incorporating culture into second language instruction will be covered.

Keywords: Culture, second language learning, foreign language teaching, culture items, second language teaching activities.

1. The notion of, Culture “

The notion of, „ culture” is very broad-minded word since it covers a thound of thing which are related to Humanbeing. Culture according to Brown might be defined as: “... the ideas, customs, skills, arts, tools which characterize a given group of people in a given period of time.” He further likens culture to the "glue" that binds a group of people together. Seelye maintains that culture is a broad concept that embraces all aspects of human life. It includes everything people learn to do. It is everything humans have learned. Culture shapes our thoughts and actions, and often does so with a heavy hand.¹

¹.Brown, G.A. (1987) Lectures and lecturing. In Dunkin, M. (Ed.) The international Encyclopedia of Teaching and Teacher Education. Oxford: Pergamum pp.284-289.

2. The Importance of Culture

Although the theory of language teaching today has undergone drastic changes by acquiring a sociolinguistic aspect, but a well-designed socio-cultural emphasis is still missing. Culture, as Vahdany (2005) mentions, “has always been touched but not hugged dearly enough: its relevance and contribution to language teaching has grown blurred and mystic.” There is a lot of discussion among scholars e.g., Chastain (1988), and many others who strongly advocate the idea that the culture of a foreign language must be taught alongside the language itself. This idea has been actualized and reflected in a number of commercially developed textbooks such as Interchange, Top Notch, and Headway series, to name a few. However, the school textbooks used in some developing countries like Iran the role of target language culture has not fully been considered. For instance, the authors of Iranian school textbooks have tried to use only Iranian names, ceremonies, and the like. This decision might have been made on political grounds but it anyhow impedes the teaching of the target culture. Brown (2007) provided a series of principles for teaching a foreign language, one of which pertains to integrating culture into language classroom. He suggests that the language-culture connections must be highlighted by teaching not only the language but cultural customs, values, ways of thinking and acting.

Along the same line, Kumara Vadivelu (2003) suggests raising cultural consciousness to shed light on classroom processes that acknowledge their power and knowledge structure. Although some scholars call “culture” the fifth language skill, Kramersch (1993) goes even further by saying that:

“Culture in language learning is not an expendable fifth skill tacked on, so to speak, to the teaching of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. It is always in the background right from day one, ready to unsettle the good language learners when they expect it least, making evident the limitations of their hard won communicative competence, challenging the ability to make sense of the world around them.”

3. Is culture important in learning language?

According to researches we can say that culture and language learning is absolutely bounded to each other. First, language expresses cultural reality (with words people express facts and ideas but also reflect their attitudes). Second, language embodies cultural reality (people give meanings to their experience through the means of communication). Third, language symbolizes cultural reality (people view their language as a symbol of their social identity).

4. Teaching of culture in foreign language learning classes:

According to cultural instruction, the teaching of culture should help students

- To teach an understanding that social variables such as age, sex, social class, and place of residence influence the way in which people speak and behave;
- To become more aware of conventional behavior in common situations in the target culture;
- To increase their awareness of the cultural connotations of words and phrases in the target language;
- To develop the ability to evaluate and refine generalizations about the target culture, in terms of supporting evidence;
- To develop the necessary skills to locate and organize information about the target culture;
- To simulate students’ intellectual curiosity about the target culture, and to encourage empathy towards its people.

Stern (1992) distinguishes between three situations in which the teaching of culture can take place:

1. Language classes are places where students are physically and frequently psychologically isolated from the realities of the second culture they are learning. In this instance, educating about culture gives the students background and context while also assisting them in seeing reality. When teaching culture in a country where native speakers of the target language are unavailable.
2. Students learn about culture in a context that gets them ready for a trip or job in a foreign place. The student is more driven to learn and is psychologically more prepared even though they are physically separated from the culture.
3. In the cultural context (for example, teaching immigrants or students enrolled in a target language community), culture is imparted.²

CONCLUSION

As mentioned above, culture should be an indispensable component of every single language curriculum. To do so, the teacher should set clear and realistic goals and consider an appropriate approach as well as suitable techniques and activities for teaching culture. Nevertheless, the teacher must bear in mind that the ultimate goal of teaching culture is to promote intercultural communication among the students. Today, there is a unanimous agreement among scholars that teachers should integrate language and culture into their classrooms and they should not perceive them as two separate entities. Language is seen as part of culture and culture as part of language, which is why they cannot be separated and should be taught together. Although the importance of culture in language classes is known to any teacher and anyone who has something to do with language teaching, teaching of culture is somewhat limited and is not optimally fulfilled. The primary reason behind this is some practical issues including lack of time, the issues of designing a cultural syllabus and choosing appropriate techniques and, finally, the presentation of culture-related topics and activities in teaching material.

REFERENCES:

1. Becher, T. (1981) Disciplinary discourse. *Studies in Higher Education* 12/3:261-274.
2. Becher, T. (1987) towards a definition of disciplinary cultures. *Studies in Higher Education* 612: 109-122.
3. Bellows, K (1994) Classroom norms from various cultural perspectives. Paper presented at Preessional Colloquium on "Academic Listening Across Language-Culture Areas, Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics, March 12,1994, Georgetown University, Washington, DC.
4. Benson, M. J. (1989) The academic listening task: A case study. *TESOL Quarterly* 23/3:421-445.
5. Benson, M. (in press) Lecture listening in an ethnographic perspective. In Flowerdew, J. (ed.) *Academic Listening: Research Perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
6. Bhatia, V.K. (1993) *Analysing Genre*. London: Longman.
7. Bond, M. H. (ed.) (1986) *The Psychology of the Chinese People*. Hong Kong: Oxford University Press.
8. Bond, M.H. (1991) *Beyond the Chinese Face: Insights from Psychology*. Hong Kong: Oxford University Press.

² Stern, H. H. (1983). *Fundamental Concepts of Language Teaching*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.p-112

9. Brown, G.A. (1987) Lectures and lecturing. In Dunkin, M. (Ed.) *The international Encyclopedia of Teaching and Teacher Education*. Oxford: Pergamon pp.284-289.
10. Canagarajah, A.S. (1993) Critical ethnography of a Sri Lankan classroom: ambiguities in student opposition to reproduction through ESOL. *TESOL Quarterly* 27/4:601-626.
11. Flowerdew, J. and Miller, L. (1992) Student perceptions problems and strategies in L2 lectures.
12. Flowerdew, J. and Miller (forthcoming) *Lecturer and Student Perceptions, Problems and Strategies in Second Language Lectures*. Research Report; English Department, City Polytechnic of Hong Kong.
13. Geertz, C. (1973) *the Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books
14. Hammersley, M and Atkinson, P. (1983) *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. London: Tavistock.
15. Hoey, M. (1953) *On the Surface of Discourse*. London: George Allen and Unwin.
16. Hofstede, G. (1983) Dimensions of national cultures in fifty countries and three regions. In Deregowski, J.B., Dziurawiec, S., and Annis, R.C. (eds.) *Explications in Cross-cultural Psychology*. Lisse, Netherlands: Swets and Zeitlinger. pp. 335-355.
17. Johnson, R.K. and Lee, P.L.M. (1987) *Modes of Instruction: Teaching Strategies and Student Responses*.