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Incorporating Culture into a Foreign Language Classroom

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Dedication

To our prophet Muhammad (peace and prayer upon him)

To our sisters and my brothers

To our special friends with whom we spent the best
moments

To all people who know us.

To anyone who respects and loves us .

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iii
Contents

Dedication	
ii	
Acknowledgement	
iii	
Contents	iv
Abstract	v
Introduction	1
1. Definitions of Culture	1
2. Integrating Language Teaching and Culture	
3	
3 . How Develop Students Awareness of Culture in EFL	4
4. Students Attitudes towards Teaching Foreign Culture	6
4.1 Attitude within Personal Factor	7
4.2 Attitude within School Factor	8
4.3 Attitude within Social Factor	
9	
4.4 Attitude within Family Factor	9
5. Cultural awareness	10
Conclusion	

Abstract

The integration of culture into foreign language education is a necessity in order to teach students in the best manner possible and allow them to learn a second language correctly and successfully. Culture is the driving force behind learning other languages. Culture can be defined as “anything and everything humankind has invented” and varies from country to country and household to household. Students need to learn about foreign cultures for a number of reasons such as understanding others’ viewpoints, personal encounters with foreign cultures, and to put the language into context.

Presently, with the spread of English as a global medium of communication, the question of the relationship between teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) and culture has been a focus of study as well as debate for scholars (e.g., Byram, 2008; Corbett, 2003; Kramsch, 1993; Risager, 2006; Schultz, 2007). Some scholars believe that the teaching of culture has to present not only cultural facts in a structural way but should present understanding processes, values, beliefs, or attitudes (Kramsch, 1993). Applied linguists and language teacher practitioners have become increasingly aware that a second language (L2) or foreign language (FL) can hardly be taught without addressing the target culture of the community in which it is used (Hinkel, 1999). On the other side of the debate, other scholars argue that culture can be a type of neo-colonization and linguistic/cultural imperialism, which may have a negative impact on learners' native culture, identity, and worldview. Concerns of cultural hegemony are accentuated for the English language, which has rapidly become the lingua franca of globalization (Abu Alyan, 2012:2)

1. Definitions of Culture

Culture is a worldwide concern. "[T]he idea of culture is famously hard to characterize" (Stern, 1992: 20). Due to its unpredictable quality, one single definition may not cover every angle culture involves. Defining the word culture in few words may cause damage to its profound, unclear quality. Also, such definition might not do justice to the real importance of the idea, even misrepresent it (Rodrigues, 2000:56).

Culture was seen from different points of view; that various researchers here and there from a similar field take a glance at it from different perspectives. The outcome is an assortment of definitions, which demonstrate that culture has

opposed any sort of understanding among researchers from various orders (Byram, 1989).Trinovitch (1980:550) defines culture as

...an all-inclusive system which incorporates the biological and technical behavior of human beings with their verbal and non-verbal systems of expressive behavior starting from birth, and this“ all-inclusive system ”is acquired as the native culture. This process, which can be referred to as “socialization ‘,prepares the individual for the linguistically and non-linguistically accepted patterns of the society in which he lives.

According to Brown (1994:170)

culture is deeply instilled piece of the very fiber of our being, however dialect the methods for correspondence among individuals from a culture-is the most noticeable and accessible articulation of that culture. Thus a man's reality see, self-personality, and frameworks of reasoning, acting, feeling, and conveying can be upset by a change starting with one culture then onto the next

Geertz (1973) defines culture as “a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about attitudes toward life” (as cited by Kachru & Smith, 2008, p. 31). Geertz’s definition of culture illuminates that language and its uses are crucial part of human behavior that represents “symbolic action in regard to the social structure and interactions within the group”. Further, for Geertz, behavior articulates culture and determines how language is used to express meaning (Hinkel, 1999). Therefore, through language analysis, anthropologists try to have access to cultural frameworks, and therefore, achieve understanding of the conceptual world in which members of a certain group live (Abu Alyan,2012:58).

Similarly, Byram (1989) refers to culture as: ‘the whole way of life of the foreign country, including but not limited to its production in the arts, philosophy

and high culture in general” (p.15). For Byram, the term comprises a wide area of cultural phenomena, ranging from whole way of life, literature, arts, popular music, to issues of customs, norms and values, and beliefs. Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) define culture as “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one human group or category of people from others” (p. 4).(Ibid.).

It is obvious that these definitions illuminate the interfusion between language and culture and how they interchangeably impact each other. The role of language, as a social behavior, can delineate the cultural framework and conceptual worldview of a certain social group. The main objective of providing different definitions of culture from various disciplines is to articulate the link between language and culture from one hand and to show how intercultural communication can be immensely affected by various languages, worldviews, and cultural differences (Ibid:61).

2. Integrating Language Teaching and Culture

In tandem with the development of the communicative approach in language teaching and learning, the important role of culture as an interlinked part of language and the necessity of incorporating culture into language teaching and learning have been recognized worldwide. Without the study of culture, teaching language is inaccurate and incomplete. When a language is taught for its educational values, understanding the cultural contents associated with the language is significant (Lado, 1964). Hence, there has been a large body of research on culture in language teaching and learning. These studies, however, have examined different levels of learner outcomes in learning culture in a cursory manner, which often does not constitute their main focus (e.g., Byrd, Cummings Hlas, Watzke, & Montes Valencia, 2011; Chen, 2013; Georgiou, 2011; Gomez Rodriguez, 2012; Pitkowska, 2015; Salem, 2013). Moreover, these studies have not

considered constructing a comprehensive framework of learner outcomes in learning culture (Nguyen,2017:1).

According to Stainer (1971:29) studying culture renders the study of the second language meaningful. Culture learning, thus, can create motivation for language learning. In addition, students who increase certain social learning can grow more uplifting states of mind towards and come to be more tolerant with different cultures. They gain the learning of different cultures, as well as increment their comprehension of their own culture.

Therefore, culture needs to be integrated into the teaching of language knowledge and skills so that learners can learn to speak and write in culturally suitable ways (Crozet and Liddicoat, 1997).

Kramsch (1962:31) put the main functions of language in three aspects:

1. Language is the essential vehicle of communication.
2. Language reflects both the identity of the individual and the culture of his history. Thusly, it helps forming both identity and culture.
3. Language makes conceivable the development and transmission of culture, the coherence of social orders, and the compelling working and control of social gathering.

3 . How Develop Students Awareness of Culture in EFL

A few inquiries are raised with regards to the part of culture in language classrooms : "When should teachers teach culture? How should culture be taught? Why is it necessary for students to learn about the target culture at all?" (Fleet, 2006:5).

Both learners and teachers of a second language need to understand cultural differences, to recognize openly that everyone in the world is not “just like me”, that individuals are not all the same underneath the skin. There are genuine

contrasts amongst gatherings and cultures (Brown, 1994:167).

Language cannot be isolated totally from the culture in which it is profoundly inserted and nd characteristic exercises will bring social components into the classroom (Rivers,1981:315).

Byram (2008) emphasized that EFL instruction ought to give chances to creating intercultural awareness of otherness over the educational modules. Such trend to build an understanding of others and self is highly valued in educational circles. hindrances that avoid intercultural awareness .A few hindrances that avoid intercultural understanding focus on verifiable learning and presenting tests that do not evaluate intercultural comprehension, and ignore the importance of the capacity to comprehend the point of view of the other.

Culture plays an essential role in language teaching with the goal of promoting communicative competence for learners. Language competence and culture are intimately and dynamically connected (Rodriques, 2000), as the ability to communicate in a language requires knowledge of seeing, explaining and acting properly in accordance with the culture associated with the language (Omaggio & Hadley, 1986). Culture hence needs to be a central focus in language teaching, so that students will be able to communicate to the fullest extent (Hendon, 1980). If the main goal of communicative language teaching is to provide learners with meaningful interactions in authentic situations with native or like-native speakers of the target language, it is necessary to teach about the culture so that learners can know how to meet their communicative goals (Canale & Swain, 1980). According to Brown (2001), learners who are exposed to the culture associated with the language can better engage themselves in the authentic and functional use of the language for meaningful purposes (Nguyen ,2017:2).

In addition, if culture is integrated with the study of language, learners are to derive lasting benefits from their language learning experience (Omaggio &

Hadley, 1986). According to Stainer (1971), studying culture renders the study of the second language meaningful. Culture learning, thus, can create motivation for language learning. Moreover, learners who gain certain cultural knowledge can develop more positive attitudes towards and come to be more tolerant with other cultures. They not only acquire the knowledge of other cultures, but also increase their understanding of their own culture (Lado, 1964). Therefore, culture needs to be integrated into the teaching of language knowledge and skills so that learners can learn to speak and write in culturally appropriate ways(Ibid.)

4. Students Attitudes towards Teaching Foreign Culture

Larsen-Freeman and Long (1999:56) broaden this view and give five main considerations in language learning: guardians, peers, learning circumstance, teachers, and ethnicity. In this investigation, five variables, in particular individual, social, school, family, and ethnicity factors, were analyzed in a Taiwanese setting.

The importance of gaining communicative competence through language learning has long been widely accepted by the language teaching profession in Europe. The incorporation of elements of the target language culture(s) in foreign language instruction has also received more attention in the region in recent years. Many professionals agree that grammatical and lexical competence alone will not help non-native speakers of English to successfully socialize, negotiate or complain in the foreign language. On the other hand, communicative competence alone will not necessarily help native or non-native speakers of English or any other language to successfully communicate with one another either (Lazar,2014:2).

Both learners and teachers of a second language need to understand cultural differences, to recognize openly that everyone in the world is not "just like me"

‘that people are not all the same beneath the skin .There are real differences between groups and cultures (Brown,1994;167). Therefore, language teachers cannot avoid conveying impressions of another culture whether they realize it or not (Rivers, 1981; 315). While most learners indeed find positive benefits in cross-cultural living on learning experiences, nevertheless a number of people experience certain psychological blocks and other inhibiting effects of the second culture. Teachers can help students to turn such an experience into one of increased cultural and self awareness. It is possible that learners can feel alienation in the process of learning a foreign language, alienation from people in their home culture, the target culture, and from themselves (Chahak and Basirizadeh,2012:1).

4.1 Attitude within Personal Factor

McGroarty (2000:32) states that dispositions influence students unknowingly and in this manner it is hard to distinguish their impact promptly or unambiguously. Nevertheless inspirational states of mind don't really bring language achievement if these dispositions are not joined by powerful systems that empower students to exploit instructional open doors, and on the off chance that they are not plainly introduced to them. Understudies are effortlessly influenced by the mentalities and cases of their associates, teachers, and guardians, as for language think about. Likewise, students are impacted by social and institutional language approaches as reflected in required courses of language examine, both first and second language, in schools.

Brown (2000:143) clarifies that it appears to be certain that students advantage from inspirational states of mind. In actuality, negative dispositions will lead them to diminished inspiration, and, in addition, to unsuccessful achievement of capability. It is essential for teachers to realize that negative demeanors can be changed and that they need to furnish students with a precise comprehension of

different cultures as being unique in relation to their own. Besides, teachers ought to stress that remote cultures are to be regarded and esteemed. Hence, understudies can be directed to a composed and deliberate comprehension and valuation for remote cultures.

4.2 Attitude within School Factor

Poole (1992:593) says that teachers unknowingly bring their own language socialization foundation into their classroom talk styles, and this can make challenges when students originate from various socialization foundations. The significant destinations of formal tutoring are to show perusing and composing, and schools assume a focal part in making and institutionalizing a national composed language.

McGroarty (2000) points out that schools are certainly not the only place which shape language norms. Both print and electronic media contribute to the creation, maintenance, and change of language norms.

In Wright's (1999:197) study, school emerges as a relatively weak predictor of scores whereas inside-school factors, teachers and textbook, were recorded as strong influences. McGroarty determined that textbooks significantly influenced student attitudes toward culture, and there was significant correlation between this influence and attitudes for many learners. These findings suggest that textbook authors should pay particular attention and take serious their responsibilities regarding cultural issues.

4.3 Attitude within Social Factor

Social components shape students' demeanors and conclusions of learning results. The key component which influences language learning is social setting. A

general supposition is that learning happens at two distinct settings: common and instructive setting. Diverse composes and levels of second language capability are related with each kind of setting. Therefore, there can be impressive variety among students inside each setting (Ellis, 1999:76).

Schuman (1978:43) suggests that learners are different in extent to which they acculturate, and social factors determine how much contact individual learners have with the second language.

Essentially, Giles and Byrne (1982:18) built up a hypothesis to clarify the impact of different social factors on language and indicated that understudies must be set up to meet towards the standards of the objective language and this lone happens if certain positive social components were included.

4.4 Attitude within Family Factor

Numerous investigations demonstrate that there is an unmistakable and personal connection between culture, family, and learning accomplishment. In Chen's(2001) investigation, he found that Chinese guardians and understudies had more uplifting states of mind towards instruction and they set higher accentuation on self-change, set higher models, and all the more frequently helped their youngsters to learn (Bachtold, 1982:9).

Students had most grounded conceivable help and consolation from their families all through their school profession. It is all around acknowledged that guardians' desires majorly affect kids' scholastic execution (Vollmer, 1986:64).

In addition, Farkas (1996:53) states that family is the essential vehicle of social transmission, and the impact of culture is passed from guardians to kid through specific aptitudes, propensities, and styles that expands their youngsters' subjective capacities.

Also, Rumberger et al.(1990:83) distinguished four manners by which family impacts understudies' execution in school. They discovered that in examination with guardians in a low financial circumstance, the ones with high financial status will probably be associated with their kids' instruction. Understudies' scholastic accomplishment was enhanced when guardians invested more energy with their kids in planning of school homework and exercises. Likewise, guardians impacted their youngsters' scholastic accomplishment by transmitting the fitting esteems, goals, and thought processes expected to prevail in school. Finally, parents who spoke with their kids and advanced capable conduct in their kids additionally impacted understudy accomplishment.

5. Cultural awareness

Introduced by Tomalin and Stempleski (1993) and expanded upon by Jones (1995), *cultural awareness* is a relatively new term in foreign language education. Tomalin and Stempleski (1993) suggest that the learners be made aware of members of another cultural group: their behavior, their expectations, their perspectives and values. According to them, language teachers should be trained to urge their students to attempt to understand the reasons for the actions and beliefs of the other cultural group/s whose language they are learning to use. Tomalin and Stempleski (1993) design language activities (10 to 60 minutes long) that aim for cultural orientation in foreign language education. Among these activities, to mention only a few, there are exercises about working with cultural products, examining patterns of everyday life and cultural behavior, exploring patterns of communication, and exploring cultural experiences that influence cultural identity (cf. Norton, 1997). As these exercises are oriented towards a selective view of the target culture (which is complex, loaded, and problematic), there is some danger

that such an orientation may lead ESL students to stereotype from the language activities if they develop a partial view of cultural awareness based on pre-designed models (El-Hussari,2005:9).

Jones (1995) uses the term *cultural awareness* with caution, because to him ‘culture’ is “frequently considered by learners to be something to be observed, existing solely as a fixed, stable, self-defining phenomenon” (Jones, 1995, p.18). Hence he suggests strategies which help students explore the concept of ‘otherness’: “what evidence of a way of life, a set of beliefs, or a way of behaving means to them” (Jones, 1995, p.19). In this context, the role of learners is to define what they interpret this “otherness” to be. Jones’s views offer a way for learners to seek more knowledge, avoid judgmental evaluation, and open themselves to the possibility of changes of mind without being unsettled by the experience. They also offer ways into the learners’ explorations of conventions and modes of behavior which can enhance communication, and without which even relatively casual or brief contact with others may be problematic. Thus, the view of developing *cultural awareness* through culture of learning goes beyond the cultural content of ESL textbooks to include what teachers and students bring to classroom interaction as they approach the cultural dimension of text through its socio-cultural context. That is, learning about culture in a language classroom entails a dialogue in which students negotiate meaning of the cultural content of text and context with the teacher who may mediate ways in which students see themselves (Ibid:10).

Conclusion

The majority of teachers incorporate very few activities with a cultural focus in the language classroom. Cultural learning can be difficult to address in the English language classroom. Simple mastery of the linguistic forms of a language is not enough for learners to be considered competent in the target language. Students cannot be considered to have mastered a foreign language until they understand the cultural contexts in which the target language is spoken.

While the idea of teaching culture in the EFL classroom is not new, teachers

need to go beyond introducing traditional holidays, food, and folk songs of the target culture and incorporate a framework that enables students to understand the social aspects of the culture as well. Students who may never travel outside their country or even meet an English language speaker might question why they need to study culture. However, as the world becomes more interconnected, we must help our students understand that it is more important than ever for them to be able to activate their “cultural antennas” to understand not only other cultures, but their own as well.

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