

The Study of Culture on Foreign Language Teaching

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Abstract—Foreign language is included of several components, including grammar, communicative, language proficiency, for learners, the knowledge of the conventions, customs, beliefs, is indisputably an integral part of foreign language learning. Teaching a foreign language is not only learning structure or learning new vocabulary and expressions but mainly incorporates, cultural elements, which are not integrated with language itself. This paper shows that effective communication is more important than language proficiency. Culture promotes objectivity and cultural perception. In fact, most teachers and students lose sight of the fact that knowledge of grammatical system of a language has to be complemented by understanding of culture specific meanings.

Index Terms—Acquisition, culture, language, communication

I. INTRODUCTION

We all know that language teachers cannot avoid conveying impressions of another culture. Language only involves knowledge of syntax, phonology and lexis is but also it cannot be separated from the culture in which it is deeply embedded. Any listening to the utterances of native speakers, any reading of original text, or any use of the language to convey messages will introduce attention to cultural elements. In fact culture should be highlighted as an important element in language learning. To communicate internationally inevitably includes awareness of cultural implications and differences. By failing to draw students' attention to these cultural elements and to discuss their implications, the teacher allows misconceptions to develop in the students' mind. However, as we use the language, we must be aware of cultural norms for conversation and these norms differ from one culture to another. Some of the norms can be entirely different and conflict with other cultures' norms. When students misunderstand the culturally determined bases for the reactions and behavior of other people, students can develop contempt for hostility toward speakers of the language they are learning. To solve the communication problems in the target language in the EFL classrooms, they should learn the target culture within syllabus, and teachers motivate them to discuss these differences.

II. WHAT IS CULTURE?

Culture has been and continues to be defined in many

ways. Peck [1998] has described culture as "the accepted and patterned ways of behavior of a given people". Culture is our continent, our collective identity. Larson and Smally [1972; 39] described culture as a blue print that guides the behavior of people and is incubated in family life. It governs our behavior in groups, makes us sensitive to matters of status, and helps us to know what others expect of us and what will happen if we do not live up to, their expectations. Thus, culture helps us to know how far we can go as individuals, and what our responsibility is to the group. According to Tang [1999] culture is language and language is culture. He suggests that to speak a language well, one has to be able to think in that language, and thought is extremely powerful. Apparently culture is an ingrained set of behaviors and modes of perception becomes highly important in the learning of a second language. A language is a part of language. The two are intricately interwoven, so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture [Brown 1994/177].

A. Why Teach Culture

Communication in some classes is seen as the application of grammatical rules in oral or written practice. In fact learning about the target culture is as a threat to the native values. It should not be forgotten that students should try to achieve deep understanding of the culture since many learners who live in abroad face with some serious problems in comprehension, interpretation, body language, translation and production. Since these problems cause person not to understand and accept the point of view of another individual whose values have been determined by a different culture. He faces with some misunderstanding.

As a matter of fact students should realize that there are many ways of looking at things, many ways of doing things and expressing things. The study of another culture helps the students to respect and understand to other view points and other forms of manner.

B. Culture and Language

The relevance of teaching with language is based on belief that language and culture are interconnected.

The predominant view is that culture cannot be taught without language and similarly, that language cannot be taught without culture. The native language is learned along with the ways and viewpoints of the social groups, and these ways and viewpoints find expression through the language. In Peck's (1998) words, "without the study of culture, foreign language instruction is inaccurate and incomplete" (p.1).

Canale(1983)maintains that it is necessary to teach about the target culture in social studies classes so that students are not only taught how to meet their communicative goals, but are also taught the sociocultural knowledge of the

second language group that is necessary in drawing inferences about the social meanings or values of utterances. Therefore the reasons for familiarizing learners with the cultural components should be as follow:

- Develop the communicative skills
- Use of more authentic language
- More motivation to learn language
- Develop intercultural and international language

III. DEVELOPING CULTURAL AWARENESS IN EFL CLASSROOMS

As is mentioned, 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. In teaching a foreign language we need to be sensitive to the fragility of students by using techniques that promote cultural understanding.

The use of dialogues in the early stages of language learning EFL classrooms which can help students to overcome cultural "fatigue" 'As students become familiar with the dialogue and act it out, they learn through role playing how to interact with all kinds of people, as they did in their own culture in childhood games. Numerous other techniques-readings, films simulation, games, culture assimilators, culture capsules and culture games can be used for language teacher to assist them in the process of acculturation in the classroom (Chastain; 1988).

A. What are the Goals for the Teaching of Language?

While teaching culture through the language teaching Seely (Cf. Rivers/1982; 323-4) suggest that students should be able to demonstrate that they have acquired certain understandings, abilities, and attitudes;

- That they understand that people act the way they do because they are using options the society allows for satisfying basic physical and psychological needs;
- That they understand that social variables as age, sex, social class, and place of residence affect the way people speak and behave;
- That they can demonstrate how people conventionally act in the most common mundane and crisis situations in the target culture;
- That they are aware that culturally conditioned images are associated with even the most common target words and phrases;
- That they are able to evaluate the relative strength of

generality concerning the target culture in terms of the amount of evidence substantiating the statements;

- That they have developed the skills needed to locate and organize material about the target culture from the library, mass media, and personal observation;
- That they process intellectual curiosity about the target culture and empathy toward its people.

Another important point that needs to be addressed is that if we wish the learners to master another language, we need to help the learners become communicatively competent in that language as much as possible. For Canale and Swain (1979) and Canale (1983), the main goal of this communicative competence is to provide students with meaningful interactions in authentic or real life situations with native or native-like speaker of target language. Along with this approach to language teaching, Canale and Swain (1979) and Canale (1983) maintain that it is also necessary to teach about the target culture in social studies classes so that students are not only taught how to meet their communicative goals, but are also taught "the socio cultural knowledge of the second language group that is necessary in drawing inferences about the social meanings of values of utterances.

IV. CONCLUSION

Language and culture are inextricably intertwined. At the very least, students should be given the insights which will enable them to acquire the necessary cultural knowledge for participating in the second culture setting.

Both learners and teachers of a second language need to understand cultural differences, recognize openly that people in the world are not all the same beneath the skin.

Culture is one of the two main areas (the other being communication skill) in second language education in which the greatest need and potential for improvement exist. The profession should remedy is record in transmitting cultural understanding. We should try to transmit the knowledge generated by anthropologist, sociologist, and other experts in the second culture to language teachers. As the teaching of culture, improves so will the image of language teaching.

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