

Abstract

The present study aims to demonstrate that, firstly, language and culture are intertwined to such an extent that they cannot be separated to be studied or taught and secondly, the study claims that teaching English as a foreign language necessitates teaching its culture as it is impossible to teach a language without teaching its cultural matters. Littlewood (1981) asserts: "When we try to adopt new speech patterns, we are to some extent giving up markers of our own identity in order to adopt those of another cultural group. In some respects, too, we adopt another culture's ways of perceiving the world." The study shows that in the situations where cultural matters are not included in the educational program, the educational ends are not reached perfectly, so the language learners in such situations will not be able to communicate well and easily. Grammatical and lexical competence alone will not help language learners to gain fluency and to successfully socialize in the foreign language. Consequently, language learners, in addition to acquiring linguistic competence in a foreign language, should gain intercultural competence, too. As with the results of the study, it may be claimed that teaching English as a foreign language without dealing with its cultural matters will not lead us to English language teaching (ELT) purposes; rather it may lead to misunderstanding and misinterpretation. So, teaching culture should be an obligatory and important part of the curriculum.

Key words: *Foreign language teaching, teaching culture, English as a foreign language (ELT), intercultural competence, grammatical competence.*

Özet

Bu çalışma öncelikli olarak dil ve kültürün, dil öğretiminde ve dil çalışmalarında birbirinden ayrılmayacağını göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır. İkinci olarak ise bu çalışma İngilizcenin yabancı dil olarak öğretiminde kültürün de öğretilmesini gerekli olduğunu ileri sürmektedir çünkü bir dili öğretmek o dilin ait olduğu kültürü öğretmeden mümkün olamaz. Littlewood (1981) yeni konuşma kalıpları edindiğimizde, başka bir kültürün belirleyici özelliklerini benimsemek adına belli bir ölçüde kendi kimliğimizin belirleyici özelliklerini terk ettiğimizi ileri sürmektedir. Ayrıca, yine Littlewood (1981)'e göre başka bir kültürün dünyayı anlamlandırma biçimini de benimseriz. Bu çalışma gösteriyor ki kültürel olguların eğitim programına dâhil edilmediği durumlarda eğitimle ilgili hedeflere gereken düzeyde ulaşılamamaktadır; bu nedenle böyle bir durumla karşı karşıya olan dil öğrencileri iyi ve kolay bir biçimde iletişim kuramayacaklardır. Gramer ve kelime bilgisi tek başına dil öğrencilerinin konuşmada akıcılık kazanmasına ve yabancı dilde başarılı bir şekilde sosyalleşmesine yardım etmeyecektir. Sonuç olarak, dil öğrencileri yabancı bir dilde dil yetisi kazanmanın yanı sıra kültürlerarası yeterlik de kazanmalıdır. Çalışmanın sonuçlarına göre, kültürel olgulara değinmeden İngilizcenin yabancı dil olarak öğretimi bizi İngiliz dili eğitiminin amaçlarına ulaştırmayacaktır. Aksine bu bizi yanlış anlaşılmalara ve yanlış yorumlamalara itecektir; bu yüzden kültür öğretimi müfredatın zorunlu ve önemli olmalı bir parçası olmalıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Yabancı dil öğretimi, kültür öğretimi, yabancı dil olarak İngilizce, kültürlerarası yeterlik, dilbilgisi yetisi.*

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1. Introduction

A language both reflects and affects a culture's way of thinking, and changes in a culture influence the development of its language. (Lyons, 1981) Language is a system of conventional spoken or written symbols used by people in a shared culture to communicate with each other. Here, we are going to demonstrate that language and culture are so interrelated that it is impossible to teach a language without dealing with the cultural matters. Before going further and to avoid confusion, it seems necessary to start with some definitions of the terms used, i.e. "language" and "culture".

For some people, 'culture' refers to an appreciation of good literature, music, art, and food. However, for anthropologists and other behavioral scientists, culture is the full range of learned human behavior patterns. According to Tylor (1871) culture is a complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. Hudson (1980) believes that to anthropologists culture is something that everybody has, in contrast with the, culture which is found only in cultured circles such as opera houses, universities, and the like.

"A society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or to believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members. Culture, being what people have to learn as distinct from their biological heritage, must consist of the end-product of learning: knowledge, in a most general sense of the term." Goodenough (1957).

Language is primarily a mental faculty that allows humans to undertake linguistic behavior: to learn languages and produce and understand utterances. This definition stresses the universality of language to all humans and the biological basis of the human capacity for language as a unique development of the human brain. (Hauser and Fitch, 2003)(Pinker, 1994)

According to structuralism language is a formal system of signs governed by grammatical rules of combination to communicate meaning. This definition stresses the fact that human languages can be described as closed structural systems consisting of rules that relate particular signs to particular meanings. This view of language was first introduced by Ferdinand de Saussure (1966). In the philosophy of language these views are associated with philosophers such as Bertrand Russell.

2. How are language and culture related?

The relationship between language and culture is deeply rooted. The mutual relation between language and culture, i.e. the interaction of language and culture has long been a settled issue. Language is used to maintain and convey culture and cultural ties. Different ideas stem from differing language use within one's culture. People who speak different languages think differently and have different world views.

According to a famous theory by Sapir and Whorf language either provides the means for thought and perception, or, in its stronger form, conditions thought, perception, and world view. Therefore, different thoughts are brought about by the use of different forms of language. One is limited by the language used to express one's ideas. Different languages will create different limitations, therefore the people who share a culture but speak different languages, will have different worldviews. Language is never the entity which has been invented or scripted in isolation. It has certainly evolved gradually with

the continuous development of a culture. A culture is a building made of social behaviors, human emotions, or way of expressing feelings and the language has continually adapted accordingly to accommodate these identified notion and gesture of human activity. Language and culture are closely intertwined in complex ways; indeed, many anthropological linguists argue that they are inseparable.

The meaning of utterances comes not only from the words spoken but also from culturally agreed-upon conventions for how those words are used and interpreted, as well as from how they have been used in the past within a given culture. As a culture changes the language of that culture also changes, and many words and expressions become obsolete. Languages classify things differently and cultures have different systems of values and beliefs that they use language to express. The same concept, event or object may then convey an entirely different message and be described in entirely different ways, depending on one's language and culture. However, a culture is more than a collection of attributes or facts; it is a style of life, an orderly way of coping with the infinite complexities of reality. Recently we have begun to see that the main problem in interethnic communication is not caused by grammar.

Although languages use grammar as the system of expressing ideas, it is the discourse system which produces the greatest difficulty. The grammatical system sends the message while the discourse system tells how to interpret the message. Patterns in language offer a window on a culture's dispositions and priorities. For example, English sentence structures focus on agents, and in our criminal-justice system, justice has been done when we've found the transgressor and punished him or her accordingly, rather than finding the victims and restituting appropriately.

3. Is it necessary to teach the culture of English as a foreign language?

Knowledge of cultural differences helps the students prevent misinterpretation caused by confusing cultural referents. Kramsch (1993) argues against those who regard cultural knowledge as „an educational objective“ in itself that is separate from language. She says if we regard language as a social practice, culture becomes the core of language teaching. She also claims: “Culture awareness must be viewed both as enabling language proficiency and as being the outcome of reflection on language proficiency.” This statement seems to support the idea that students with better linguistic competence appear to have more cultural knowledge or vice versa. Since language is used in social exchanges, the feelings, attitudes, motivations of the learners in relation to the target language itself, to the speakers of the language, and to the culture will affect how learners respond to the input to which they are exposed. In other words, these affective variables will determine the rate and degree of second language learning. “When we try to adopt new speech patterns, we are to some extent giving up markers of our own identity in order to adopt those of another cultural group. In some respects, too, we adopt another culture’s ways of perceiving the world.” (Littlewood, 1981)

Language teachers must instruct their students on the cultural background of language usage, choose culturally appropriate teaching styles, and explore culturally based linguistic differences to promote understanding instead of misconceptions or prejudices. If one teaches language without teaching about the culture in which it operates, the students are learning empty or meaningless symbols or they may attach the incorrect meaning to what is being taught. The students, when using the learnt language, may use the language inappropriately or within the wrong cultural context, thus defeating the purpose of learning a language. For example, in learning Japanese, as a foreign language,

by English learners many of the difficulties that the learners have with Japanese are not due to problems with the language itself but are more the result of cultural differences. Communication between any two people in Japan is heavily influenced by aspects such as age, sex, relationship and relative status. The Japanese generally have an aversion to assertiveness and seek to avoid embarrassment to themselves and their interlocutor.

The psychological process of acculturation can be linked to the analysis of cultural meanings in the adult world through the notion of schemata. Thus students might not understand a given FL text not because of the language deficiency, but because of a missing link in their cultural schemata. This missing link might be a well-known target language nursery rhyme, historical event, or just a geographical name. Language teachers must realize that their understanding of something is prone to interpretation. The meaning is bound in cultural context. One must not only explain the meaning of the language used, but the cultural context in which it is placed as well. Often meanings are lost because of cultural boundaries which do not allow such ideas to persist. In regard with a term or a word, we sometimes encounter two opposite connotations in two different cultures. For instance, an owl in American (or western culture in general) culture is regarded as being wise, but in the Hindi culture, it is regarded as stupid. Thus, owl is used as a metaphor to indicate a stupid man or a fool. Some animals are very closely related to the people and culture of Hindi such as cow, peacock, and elephant. These specific animals are inseparable from Indian myths. When introducing such words, it is a good idea to talk about how a specific word is used and tell the story or myth related to that word.

4. Conclusion

It is impossible to teach a language without teaching its culture. The implications for language teaching are therefore vast and far reaching. As a teacher of language, one must be culturally aware, considerate of the students' culture, and inform the students of cultural differences in order to promote understanding. Teaching culture, as a part of curriculum, would prove to be vital in language learning and teaching, since it has a great deal to offer to the development of communicative competence as well as other skills in the instruction of any language. A culture class is significantly beneficial in terms of language skills, raising cultural awareness, changing attitudes towards native and target societies, and contribution to the teaching profession. It is clear that in a FL course both linguistic and extra-linguistic cultural features should be taught. Failure to teach some aspects of culture could result in miscommunication, misinterpretation, and a major culture shock on the part of the students. A critical goal of teaching culture in a FL classroom is raising students' awareness about the new culture. There exists a causal link between language and the way of thinking. One of the key advances in recent years has been the demonstration of this causal link. It turns out that if we change the way of talking, it will change how people think. If people learn another language, they inadvertently also learn a new way of looking at the world. When bilingual people switch from one language to another, they start thinking differently, too. The importance of gaining communicative competence through language learning has long been widely accepted by the language teaching profession. The incorporation of elements of the target language culture(s) in foreign language instruction has also received more attention in recent years.

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