Thematics Journal of Geography

ISSN: 2277-2995
Vol-8-Issue-12-December-2019

The Ways Of Incorporating Culture Into Efl Classroom

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ABSTRACT: Before stressing about the ways of incorporating culture into English as a foreign language classroom, it should be mentioned that culture plays a great role in teaching and learning language.Due to the usage of authentic materials and effective techniques for presenting culture in the classroom, the teachers almost totally aim their pedagogical goals: clear explanation of the topic and strong, understandable process by students. As a proof of our words, we can emphasize that learner of a foreign language comprehends the topic if it is covered with culture-awareness activities.It has been widely recognized that culture and language is used as a main medium through which culture is expressed. Taking all this into consideration, the intention of this article has been to provide necessary information for the foreign language teachers and learners so that they can establish a good connection with the target language and its culture.

Keywords: language,teaching foreign language,culture, teaching culture, method, cultural awareness,culture based activities, technique.

INTRODUCTION

As it is known that understanding a language involves not only knowledge of grammar, phonology and lexis but also a certain features and characteristics of the culture. To keep in touch internationally inevitably includes communicating through various cultures as well, which probably leads us to encounter factors of cultural differences. One can come across such kind of differences exist in every language such as the place of silence, tone of voice, appropriate topic of

ISSN: 2277-2995
Vol-8-Issue-12-December-2019

conversation, and expressions as speech act functions (e.g. apologies, suggestions, complains, refusals, etc.). Taking the points above into account, it can be stressed that a language is a part of culture and a culture is a part of a language. The two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture. Furthermore, Smith [Smith,1985]. adds that the presentation of an argument in a way that sounds fluent and elegant in one culture may be regarded as clumsy and circular by members of another culture.

But, as the use of language in general is related to social and cultural values, language is considered to be a social and cultural phenomenon. It is obvious that every culture has its own cultural norms for conversation and these norms differ from one culture to another, some of the norms can be completely different and conflict with other cultures' norms. As a result, it poses communication problems among speakers who are not aware of or share the norms of other culture.

In order toovercome the communication problems in the target language in the EFL classrooms the learners need to major in the target culture within the syllabus, and the teachers should be sensitive to the learner's fragility so as not to cause them to lose their motivation.

WHAT IS CULTURE?

As it is known from the etymological point of the word "**culture**" appeared in Ancient Rome where it meant first of all cultivation, processing, "cultivation" of the earth. However, well-known ancient Roman orator Cicero noticed, that along with the meaning of the earth cultivation, there is thenotion of «soul cultivation». And this second sense gradually became the core meaning: the spiritual culture has got recognition. Speaking about the correlation of culture and language, it should be mentioned that language is the road map of a culture. It tells you where its people come from and where they are going. "Language and culture cannot be separated. Language is vital to understanding our unique cultural perspectives. Language is a tool that is used to explore and experience our cultures and the

ISSN: 2277-2995
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perspectives that are embedded in our cultures" emphasized Buffy Sainte-Marie.[Geertz,1973]The role of English as an international language of communication in the modern technological world in the 21st century poses special demands on EFL teachers. ELT researchers have recognized the dialectical connection between language and culture since mid-1980s.W. von Humboldt stressed "Absolutely nothing is so important for a nation's culture as its language."[Underhill, James W,2009]

HOW AND WHY IS CULTURE?

Now that what, why, and the development of incorporating culture in the foreign language classroom have been established, a focus on the how is needed. Better international understanding is a noble aim, but how can the transition be made from theoretical matters to the active, crowded, and sometimes noisy foreign language classroom? One problem in all classroom work is the involvement of students' interest, attention, and active participation. Learning activities which focus on active rather than passive learning are the best.

Traditional methods of teaching culture in the foreign language classroom have been focused on formal culture and passive learning. Students do need both a geographical and historical perspective in order to understand contemporary behavior patterns but this can be done with "hands on" activities. In order to communicate effectively in the target language, foreign language students should be facilitated to feel, touch, smell, and see the foreign peoples and not just hear their language.

TEACHING CULTURE VIA LANGUAGE

It is natural that in EFL classrooms, while we teach the language, we have to automatically teach culture. The forums of address, greetings, formulas, and other utterances found in the dialogues or models our students hear and the allusions to

ISSN: 2277-2995
Vol-8-Issue-12-December-2019

aspects of culture found in the reading represent cultural awareness. Nonverbal communication means maintained by speakers should foster cultural insights. Students' intellectual curiosity is aroused and satisfied when they learn that there exists another sphere of expression to be in communication about feelings, wants, needs and when they read the literature of the foreign country. For depth of cultural comprehension, it is important to see how such patterns function in relation to each other and to value their place within the cultural system. If language learners are to communicate at a personal level with individuals from other cultural backgrounds, native speakers of each nation, they will need not only to understand the cultural influences at work in the behavior of others, but also to recognize the profound influence patterns of their own culture exert over their traditions, customs, thoughts, their activities, and their forms of linguistic expression.

The educating of the target culture has to serve the development of cross-cultural communication. The achievement of this goal is possible with the preparation of an organized inventory that would include both linguistic and extra linguistic aspects of the target culture. With the help of this way the language could build bridges from one cognitive system to another (Seelye, 1968). The culture of people refers to all aspects of exchanged life experiences in a social scope. A language is learned and used with a context, drawing from the culture distinctive meanings and functions which must be assimilated by language learners if they are to control the language as native speakers control it.

If language is described as a mode of human behavior and culture as "patterned behavior", it is evident that language is a vital constituent of culture. As mentioned earlier, each culture has a unique pattern and the behavior of an individual, linguistic or otherwise, manifested through that is also extraordinary. Foreign language will mean, therefore, changing the learner's behavior and injecting a new way of life and new national and universal values of life into his already settled behavior pattern (Lado: 1963: 110). So, there is a close relationship between the language and culture. This correlation of language and culture is widely estimated, communicative behavior and cultural systems are interrelated, as there is

ISSN: 2277-2995
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bondbetween the form and content of a language and the beliefs, values, and needs present in the culture of its speakers.

It should be also admitted that the students, who are in need of arising cultural awareness and cultural sensitiveness, are normally those who are least disposed toward these purposes. Teacher's essential assignment is to make students aware of cultural differences, not pass value judgements on these differences. Students learning a foreign language have to assimilate many new categorizations and codifications if they are to understand and speak the language as its native speakers carry out. This does not mean that the native language of the students could not have established such distinctions for them. All languages which have been closely studied seem to acquire the potentiality for presenting all kinds of ideas and making all kinds of distinctions (Rivers, 1982). Learners should be aware of these distinctions as much as possible in the foreign language teaching classrooms. Therefore, one of the reasons for familiarizing learners with the cultural components is to develop the communicative skills. What is more, to understand the linguistic and behavioral patterns both of the target and the native culture at a more conscious level and to arise intercultural and international understanding should be also stressed. Adopting a wider perspective in the perception of the reality and making teaching sessions more funny to develop an awareness of the potential mistakes that might suggest in comprehension, interpretation, and translation and communication must be outweighed in each EFL classrooms.

SEVERAL TECHNIQUES IN DEVELOPING CULTURAL AWARENESS IN EFL CLASSROOMS

To achieve that goal, cultural activities and objectives should be carefully organized and incorporated into lesson plans to enrich and inform the teaching content. The use of following materials and techniques for presenting culture in the classroom is widely recommended.

1. Authentic Materials

ISSN: 2277-2995
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Using authentic sources from the native speech community, like films, news broadcasts, and television shows; Web sites; and photographs, magazines, newspapers, restaurant menus, travel brochures, and other printed materials, help to engage students in authentic cultural experiences. Teachers can adapt their use of authentic materials to suit the age and language proficiency level of the students. For example, even beginning language students can watch and listen to video clips taken from a T.V. show in the target language and focus on such cultural conventions as greetings. The teacher might supply students with a detailed translation or give them a chart, diagram, or outline to complete while they listen to a dialogue or watch a video. After the class has viewed the relevant segments, the teacher can engage the students in discussion of the cultural norms represented in the segments and what these norms might say about the values of the culture. Discussion topics might include nonverbal behaviors (e.g., the physical distance between speakers, gestures, eye contact, societal roles, and how people in different social roles relate to each other). Students might describe the behaviors they observe and discuss which of them are similar to their native culture and which are not and determine strategies for effective communication in the target language.

2. Proverbs

Discussion of common proverbs in the target language could focus on how the proverbs are different from or similar to proverbs in the students' native language and how differences might underscore historical and cultural background. Using proverbs as a way to explore culture also provides a way to analyze the stereotypes about and misperceptions of the culture, as well as a way for students to explore the values that are often represented in the proverbs of their native culture.

3. Role Play

In role plays, students can act out a miscommunication that is based on cultural differences. For example, after learning about ways of addressing different groups of people in the target culture, such as people of the same age and older people, students could role play a situation in which an inappropriate greeting is used. Other students observe the role play and try to identify the reason for the

ISSN: 2277-2995
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miscommunication. They then role play the same situation using a culturally appropriate form of address.

4. Culture Capsules

Students can be presented with objects (e.g., figurines, tools, jewelry, and art) or images that originate from the target culture. The students are then responsible for finding information about the item in question, either by conducting research or by being given clues to investigate. They can either write a brief summary or make an oral presentation to the class about the cultural relevance of the item. Such activities can also serve as a foundation from which teachers can go on to discuss larger cultural, historical, and linguistic factors that tie in with the objects. Such contextualization is, in fact, important to the success of using culture capsules. Exchange students, immigrant students, or students who speak the target language at home can be invited to the classroom as expert sources. These students can share authentic insights into the home and cultural life of native speakers of the language.

5. Ethnographic Studies

An effective way for students to learn about the target language and culture is to send them into their own community to find information. Students can carry out ethnographic interviews with native speakers in the community, which they can record in notebooks or on audiotapes or videotapes. Discussion activities could include oral family histories, interviews with community professionals, and studies of social groups. It is important to note that activities involving the target-language community require a great deal of time on the part of the teacher to help set them up and to offer ongoing supervision.

6. Literature

Literary works can be an effective means to develop the understanding of other cultures because they provide the readers with insights of other cultures without having to visit the real place. Carter points out “Literature, it seems to me, is the surest bridge to understanding. Let students read novels, plays, short stories, and yes, poems from other nations and cultures. Let them immerse themselves

ISSN: 2277-2995
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vicariously in the other lives, and sort of actually living there for an extended period, they'll have about as intensive an understanding as it is possible to get. I remember reading something in a textbook recently, a piece of advice offered by photographer Burt Glinn to would-travellers to the Soviet Union. "Instead of looking at the book I didon Russia," Glinn says, "you would do better to read Tolstoy or Chekov to understand what the Russians are alike." [Herron and others, 1999]

7. Film

Film and television segments offer students an opportunity to witness behaviors that are not obvious in texts. Film is often one of the more current and comprehensive ways to encapsulate the look, feel, and rhythm of a culture. Film also connects students with language and cultural issues simultaneously, such as depicting conversational timing or turn-taking in conversation. Herron's study showed that students achieved significant gains in overall cultural knowledge after watching videos from the target culture in the classroom.

It should be kept in mind that to achieve goal of cultural instruction, cultural activities and objectives should be carefully organized and incorporated into lesson plans to enrich and inform the teaching content.

CONCLUSION

If the aim is to develop cultural awareness in the classroom it is important that we, teachers help our students differentiate between the cultural norms, beliefs, or habits of the many people within the speech community and the individual or group deviations from some of these norms. Students should be capable of discussing their native culture with their foreign-speaking friends at the same time that they are provided with a real experiential content covering with authentic materials. They will succeed in making use of their knowledge of the foreign language. There should also be presented, discussed, or merely mentioned to in two parallel streams.

ISSN: 2277-2995
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It should also be kept in mind that language teaching, as mentioned above, is a long and tiring some process in which performance is not absolute and therefore we cannot expect all learners ever to have perfect native like behavior.

What we are after is the development of an awareness of sociocultural and sociolinguistic differences that might exist between the students' source language and the target language. Such awareness often gives a hand to explain to both teachers and students why sometimes there is unintended pragmatic failure and breakdown in communication. If we know it, it might be easier to find the appropriate remedy.

In this respect Smith (Smith, 1985) advocates that studying English does not change one's identity. Student's ethnic, religious, and political backgrounds should remain the same. Students will certainly want to use English well and be acknowledged as doing so, but this does not require them to attempt a change in their identity. There is no need to become more American or British in order to use English well. The most significant point is that one's morals or dedication to family traditions need not change at all.

The use of authentic materials, proverbs, role-play, culture capsules, ethnographic studies, literature and films for presenting culture in the classroom is widely recommended. Due to its novelty in the field of language teaching, several areas, such as the method, the material, and the assessment technique need to be investigated in order to further develop our understanding of culture in EFL education. Hence, cultural activities should be carefully organized and incorporated into the EFL syllabus to enrich and inform the teaching content.

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