

# The Position of Culture in Teaching English as Foreign Languages

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**Abstract:** *Language is the powerful thing in human being life without language we have no communication, language is the best bridge for all human being over the world, in this article we will distinguish and provide facts on this issue.*

**Keywords—** language, social environment, culture, communication.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Language is a means of expression. We express our feelings, emotions, thoughts, needs, desires. In words, symbols and gestures which are considered as language. Language can be distinct as verbal, physical, biologically innate, and a basic form of communication. Culture is the characteristics of a particular collection of individuals, defined by everything from language, religion, social habits, music and arts. Thus, culture finds its expression in language from these opinions we can say that, learning a new language without familiarity with its culture remains incomplete. A significant question arise here, is it necessary to learn about the culture of the target language to obtain English as a foreign or second language? There are great deliberations by several scientists and researchers on this topic for many decades. The aim of this article is defining culture, its relationship with language and what role it plays in teaching and learning English as a foreign or second language.

Currently, English is the most widely spoken language in the world. People all around the world continue to learn English to reach their different aims. A critical question comes into existence in terms of English language teaching at this point, according to this, there are four views regarding the issue. The first state is that 'target language culture' should be taught along with English to acculturate language learners into the cultures of English speaking countries (Rahim Uddin Choudhury April 2014). The second view states that there should not be any teaching of the 'target language culture' together with English in the countries where English is an institutionalized variety (Kachru, 1985, 1986; Kachru & Nelson, 1996;). However, while one of the views supports the teaching of 'local culture' in English language teaching (Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996; McKay, 2003), the other view holds the position that English has become a lingua franca and it should be taught in a culture-free context (Jenkins, 1996, Seidlhofer, 2001).

The word culture has many different meanings. For some it refers to an appreciation of good literature, music, art, and

food. English Anthropologist Edward B. Tylor in his book, Primitive Culture, published in 1871. Tylor said that culture is "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society." In other words, Culture is the characteristics of a particular group of people, defined by everything from language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts. Cultures can make its countries unique. Each country has different cultural activities and cultural rituals. Culture is more than just material goods, that is things the culture uses and produces. Culture is also the beliefs and values of the people in that culture. Culture also includes the way people think about and understand the world and their own lives.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 The importance of culture in teaching language

Today's period many scientists and researchers add a new skill for teaching language to general four skills. This skill is culture now we will speak about it.

According to Wei (2005:56), language has a dual character: both as a means of communication and a carrier of culture. Language without culture is unthinkable, so is human culture without language. A particular language is a mirror of a particular culture. Brown (1994:165) describes the relation between language and culture as follows: 'A language is a part of a 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'. According to Tomalin (2008), the international role of the English language and globalization are the two main reasons to teach culture as a fifth language skill, in addition to listening, speaking, reading and writing. 'What the fifth language skill teaches you is the mindset and technique to adapt your use of English to learn about, understand and appreciate the values, ways of doing things and unique qualities of other cultures. It involves understanding how to use language to accept differences, to be flexible and tolerant of ways of doing things which might be different to yours. It is an attitudinal change that is expressed through the use of

language.' Tomalin (2008) further argues that teaching of culture in ELT should include cultural knowledge, cultural values, cultural behavior, and cultural skills (the development of intercultural sensitivity and awareness, using English language as the medium of interaction).

## **2.2 Cultural influence to teaching foreign languages**

To comprehend the significance of culture we require to know to what extent cultural background awareness influences language learning and teaching, and how can we take advantage of that influence. If we consider the role of culture in language learning and teaching, it is necessary to demonstrate the functions it may perform in the components of language learning and teaching, such as listening, speaking, reading, and translating.

## **2.3 Cultural influence on listening**

In foreign language learning particularly in training their listening ability to understand better, learners often complain that although they spend lots of time in learning and practicing their ability of listening comprehension, their result and progress is not satisfactory. Moreover, when they meet new listening materials, they still cannot understand them. The reason for this may be various, but some of them have been identified. Troubles could be in their small vocabulary, weak grammar, and vague pronunciation. However, a relatively more important reason is that they lack the necessary cultural background knowledge of the language they have learned. Listening is closely related to the culture. On the contrary, it will be difficult for us to understand, if the materials we are listening to are related to the cultural background knowledge we are not familiar with. Sometimes the materials may be easy and we can get the pronunciation of each word from the tape, but the lack of necessary cultural background knowledge may hinder our thorough understanding. Culture is one of the best and new challenges for us to hinder our progress of listening. Therefore, we should have kept mind that the existence of culture and attempt to take advantage of it.

## **2.4 Cultural influence on speaking**

Similar to listening, the ability of speaking is not a matter only concerned with intonation and pronunciation. Individuals need to read a lot to understand the cultural background knowledge of the target language, from this way they can communicate lucratively with the others. Consequently, in the training of oral English, teachers should emphasize the practical use of the language, and try to use the materials, which come from the on a daily basis. This can help people use appropriate sentences in proper context.

## **2.5 Teaching culture in EFL classroom**

It should be said that, it is not a simple task to teach culture. Teachers can show the way rather than regulate a specific way of seeing things, which has the inclination of cultural imperialism. Making students aware of the important individuality in the target culture help them realize that there

are no such things as superior and inferior and there are variations among people of distinctive cultures, as well. Kramsch (1993) Argues that a foreign culture and one's own culture should be placed together in order for learners to understand a foreign culture. Learners' interaction with native speakers or text will require them to construct their own meanings rather than having educators simply transfer information about people and their culture, and therefore non-native speakers should have opportunities to make their own meanings and to reflect on both the target culture and their own. Kramsch (1996) refers to this as establishing a "sphere of interculturality". Furthermore, what educators should always have in mind when teaching culture is the need to raise their students' awareness of their own culture (Straub, 1999) and 'the target culture', to cultivate a degree of intellectual objectivity essential in cross-cultural analyses. Teachers and program developers are asked (Rahim Uddin Choudhury April 2014) to take the learners' cultural background into consideration in choosing materials and pedagogical approaches for particular contexts of teaching since ignoring the students' norms and expectations – that is, what students bring to the classroom- is denying the learners' experiences and thus a lack of consideration of variations in cultures of learning can lead to frustration and subsequent failure in language classrooms.

## **3. CONCLUSION**

By way of conclusion, it is very understandable from the above discussion that culture and language are intricately interwoven so that one cannot divide the two without losing the significance of either language or culture. If any one of them is separated the other remnants incomplete. In EFL or ESL class room the students should be taught English with the culture associated with it so that the students can acquire the target language with cultural background and appropriate in real life situations. It is observed that many students, who have excellent academic performance in English subject, sometimes, find it very difficult to correspond with native speakers or in real life situations. The teachers should keep in mind the importance of culture and must have an aforementioned knowledge of the cultural knowledge of the chapter or lesson he is going to teach the students.

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