Integration of culture in Second Language Learning

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Abstract: "Learn a new language, learn a new culture" The research highlights the importance and need of integrating culture in a language classroom. The purpose of integrating culture in the classroom is to make students` learn a language quickly, providing understanding and mastery of a language`s communicative system. Language learning is also a cultural learning. One can only get linguistic competence if he has cultural awareness too. This cultivated the way for the language teachers to impart the knowledge of culture in language classrooms because cultural awareness leads the learners to think critically, respond accurately and to understand paralinguistic signs too. The aim of this research is to explore the impact and technical integration of cultural elements into the language teaching and learning to provide major information to teachers and learners for establishing an effective connection between the language they are learning and its culture using different classroom practices and strategies which comprise intercultural explorations, use of texts, films, short stories and other multi-media resources, contrastive case studies of cultures, group encounters and role plays.

Keywords: Language`s communicative system, linguistic competence, paralinguistic.

1. Introduction

Language and culture are inseparable entities. And to teach or learn a language, cultural awareness is must. Language learning consists of several major elements including grammatical competence, communicative competence, language proficiency, cultural competence, effective cross cultural communication and to understand the paralinguistic signs of other language too as well as a change in attitude and these are must for scholars and laymen alike. Cultural competence includes the knowledge of the conventions, customs, beliefs, and systems of meaning of another country which is actually an integral part of language learning, and many teachers take it as their goal to incorporate the teaching of culture into the language classroom, language syllabus and curriculum.

To communicate in another language also takes one to encounter cultural differences. These differences exist in every language which involve the place of silence, tone of voice, appropriate topic of conversation, and expressions as speech act functions (e.g. apologies, suggestions, complains, refusals, etc.). Keeping it in mind, it can be stated that language and culture are interrelated. Both these entities are interwoven and cannot be separated without losing the significance of either language or culture (Brown1994:164). Furthermore, Smith (1985:2) 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. Peck (1998), emphasizes that "without the study of culture, foreign language instruction is inaccurate and incomplete"

Language learning is a cultural learning and in one form or another, culture has, even implicitly, been taught in the foreign language classroom.

Culture in language learning is not an expendable fifth skill, tacked on, so to speak, to the teaching of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. It is always in the background, right from day one, ready to unsettle the good language learners when they expect it least, making evident the limitations of their hard-won communicative competence, challenging their ability to make sense of the world around them. (Kramsch, 1993: 1)

The ways people communicate and interact, their language patterns, nonverbal modes all are determined by culture (Klop& Park, 1982). And effective communication is more than a matter of language proficiency and that, apart from enhancing and enriching communicative competence, cultural competence can also lead to empathy and respect toward different cultures as well as promote objectivity and cultural awareness.

Language is a social and cultural phenomenon and the use of language is also related to social and cultural values. Cultural norms of different cultures may vary from one another so one has to adapt to social and cultural conditions too because communication gap may create

problems among speakers whose cultural and social norms are different from each other. To solve the communication problems in the target language in the language classrooms, the learners need to learn 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.

The learning of a language means to communicate cross culturally and to develop an outlook of the target language and its notions because it is considered that language learning is dependent on cultural awareness. The research aims at finding out the practical usage of techniques to integrate culture in a language classroom and to develop a connection between language and culture, to explore the extent to which culture is to be integrated in the syllabus and taught by the teachers to come up with the most effective practical strategies for a language classroom.

The present study helps the learners to develop an understanding of social variables such as age, sex, social class, and place of residence to keep it in mind that such factors influence the ways in which people speak and behave. It can influence syllabus and curriculum designers to limit the extent to which they include or exclude culture in preparing material for language classrooms. The study provides the way to teachers and learners that how to establish a good connection between language and culture in context of Pakistani language learning classrooms. The teachers always face problem in employment of effective strategies and techniques to integrate culture in language classrooms. The present study comes up with the most effective practical strategies to integrate culture in a language classroom. The present study addresses the affective as well as the cognitive domains to consider culture as a variable rather than a static entity.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The role of culture in the foreign language classroom has been the concern of many teachers and scholars and has sparked considerable controversy, yet its validity as an equal complement to language learning has often been overlooked or even impugned. Up to now, two main perspectives have influenced the teaching of culture. One pertains to the transmission of factual, cultural information, which consists in statistical information, that is, institutional structures and other aspects of the target civilisation, highbrow information, i.e., immersion in literature and the arts, and lowbrow information, which may focus on the customs, habits, and folklore of everyday life (Kramsch, 1993: 24). This preoccupation with facts rather than meanings, though, leaves much to be desired as far as an understanding of foreign attitudes and values is concerned, and virtually blindfolds learners to the minute albeit significant aspects of their own as well as the target group's identity that are not easily divined and appropriated (ibid.) All that it offers is 'mere book knowledge learned by rote' (Huebener, 1959: 177).

The other perspective, drawing upon cross-cultural psychology or anthropology, has been to embed culture within an interpretive framework and establish connections, namely, points of reference or departure, between one's own and the target country. This approach, however, has certain limitations, since it can only furnish learners with cultural knowledge, while leaving them to their own devices to integrate that knowledge with the

assumptions, beliefs, and mindsets already obtaining in their society. Prior to considering a third perspective, to which the present paper aspires to contribute, it is of consequence to briefly sift through the relevant literature and see what the teaching of culture has come to be associated with.

In the 1960s and 1970s, such eminent scholars as Hall (1959), Nostrand(1974), Seelye ([1974] 1984), and Brooks (1975) made an endeavour to base foreign language learning on a universal ground of emotional and physical needs, so that 'the foreign culture [would appear] less threatening and more accessible to the language learner' (Kramsch, 1993: 224). In the heyday of the audio lingual era in language teaching, Brooks (1968) 'emphasized the importance of culture not for the study of literature but for language learning', as Steele (1989: 155) has observed. Earlier on, Brooks (1960) in his seminal work Language and Language Learning had offered sixty-four topics regarding culture interspersed with questions covering several pages. These 'hors d'oeuvres', as he called them, concerned, inter alia, such crucial aspects of culture as greetings, expletives, personal possessions, cosmetics, tobacco and smoking, verbal taboos, cafes, bars, and restaurants, contrasts in town and country life, patterns of politeness, keeping warm and cool, medicine and doctors. In a sense, his groundbreaking work was conducive to a shift of focus from teaching geography and history as part of language learning to an anthropological approach to the study of culture. What is important is that, by making the distinction between "Culture with a Capital C"—art, music, literature, politics and so on—and "culture with a small c"—the behavioural patterns and lifestyles of everyday people—he helped dispel the myth that culture, (Byram, 1994)) is an intellectual gift bestowed only upon the elite. Admittedly, the main thrust of his work was to make people aware that culture resides in the very fabric of their lives—their modus vivendi, their beliefs, assumptions, and attitudes—rather than in a preoccupation with aesthetic reflections or high-faulting ideas. As Weaver insightfully remarks, the commonly held notion of culture is largely concerned with its insignificant aspects, whereas our actual interaction with it takes place at a subconscious level.

Many, if not most, people think of culture as what is often called "high culture"—art, literature, music, and the like. This culture is set in the framework of history and of social, political, and economic structures….Actually, the most important part of culture for the sojourner are that which is internal and hidden…, but which governs the behavior they encounter. This dimension of culture can be seen as an iceberg with the tip sticking above the water level of conscious awareness. By far the most significant part, however, is unconscious or below the water level of awareness and includes values and thought patterns. (Weaver, 1993: 157, cited in Killick & Poveda, 1997: 221)

Following Brooks, Nostrand (1974) developed the Emergent Model scheme, which comprised six main categories. The first, culture, regarded value systems and habits of thought; society included organizations and familial, religious, and other institutions. The third category of conflict was comprised of interpersonal as well as intrapersonal conflict. Ecology and technology included knowledge of plants and animals, health care, travel etc., while the fifth category, individuals, was about

intra/interpersonal variation. Finally, cross cultural environment had to do with attitudes towards other cultures. As Singhal (1998) notes, '[i]t is evident that one would have to be quite knowledgeable in the culture under study to be able to present all of these aspects accurately to second language learners'.

Since the 1960s, a great many educators have concerned themselves with the importance of the cultural aspect in foreign language learning, with Hammerly (1982), Seelye (1984) and Damen (1987) being among those who have considered ways of incorporating culture into language teaching. In the 1970s, an emphasis on sociolinguistics led to greater emphasis on the situational context of the foreign language. Savignon's (1972: 9) study on communicative competence, for example, suggested the 'value of training in communicative skills from the very beginning of the FL program'. As a result, the role of culture in the foreign language curriculum was enhanced and influential works by Seelye (1974) and Lafayette (1975) appeared.

The audiolingual method was replaced by the communicative approach, and Canale and Swain (1980: 31) claimed that 'a more natural integration' of language and culture takes place 'through a more communicative approach than through a more grammatically based approach'. In addition, teacheroriented texts (Hammerly, 1982; Higgs, 1984; Omaggio, 1986; Rivers, 1981) now included detailed chapters on culture teaching for the foreign language classroom, attesting to the predominant goal: communication within the cultural context of the target language. (Lessard-Clouston, 1997)

It is only in the 1980s that scholars begin to delve into the dynamics of culture and its vital contribution to 'successful' language learning (Byram, Morgan *et al.*, 1994: 5). For example, Littlewood (cited in Byram, Morgan *et al*., 1994: 6) advocates the value of cultural learning, although he still 'keeps linguistic proficiency as the overall aim of communicative competence' (ibid.).Also, there are many insightful comparisons made between behaviouralconventions in the L1 and L2 societies which are culture-specific and which could be said to impede understanding: the use of silence (Odlin, 1989; La Forge, 1983: 70-81), frequency of turn-taking (Preston, 1989: 128-131, Odlin,1989: 55), politeness (Odlin, 1989: 49-54), and so forth (Byram, Morgan *et al.*, 1994: 8) Furthermore, in the 1980s and 1990s, advances in pragmatics and sociolinguistics (Levinson, 1983) laying bare the very essence of language, which is no longer thought of as merely describing or communicating but, rather, as persuading, deceiving, or punishing and controlling (Byram, 1989; Fairclough, 1989; Lakoff, 1990), have rendered people's frames of reference and cultural schemata tentative, and led to attempts at 'bridg[ing] the cultural gap in language teaching' (Valdes, 1986).

On the assumption that communication is not only an exchange of information but also a highly cognitive as well as affective and value-laden activity, Melde (1987) holds that foreign language teaching should foster 'critical awareness' of social life—a view commensurate with Fairclough's (1989 and 1995) critical theory (see also Byram, Morgan *et al.*, 1994) More specifically, when the learner understands the perspectives of others and is offered the opportunity to reflect on his own perspectives, 'through a process of decentering and a level of

reciprocity, there arises a moral dimension, a judgmental tendency, which is not defined purely on formal, logical grounds' (Byram, Morgan *et al.*, 1994). To this end, the learner needs to take the role of the foreigner, so that he may gain insights into the values and meanings that the latter has internalised and unconsciously negotiates with the members of the society to which he belongs (ibid.). Besides Melde (1990) asserts that the integration of values and meanings of the foreign culture with those of one's "native culture" can bring about a shift of perspective or the 'recognition of cognitive dissonance' (Byram, Morgan *etal.*), both conducive to reciprocity and empathy. What is more, Swaffar (1992) acknowledges the contribution of culture when he says that, in order to combat, as it were, 'cultural distance', students must be exposed to foreign literature with a view to developing the ability to put into question and evaluate the cultural elements L2 texts are suffused with. Kramsch (1993, 1987) also believes that culture should be taught as an interpersonal process and, rather than presenting cultural facts, teachers should assist language learners in coming to grips with the 'other culture' (Singhal, 1998). She maintains that, by virtue of the increasing multiculturality of various societies, learners should be made aware of certain cultural factors at work, such as age, gender, and social class, provided that the formerusually have little or no systematic knowledge about their membership in a given society and culture, nor do they have enough knowledge about the target culture to be able to interpret and synthesize the cultural phenomena presented. (Kramsch, 1988b)

From all the above, it is evident that, much as the element of culture has gained momentum in foreign language learning, most educators have seen it as yet another skill at the disposal of those who aspire to become conversant with the history and life of the target community rather than as an integral part of communicative competence and intercultural awareness at which every "educated individual" should aim. As has been intimated above, the present paper takes a third perspective, in claiming that cultural knowledge is not only an aspect of communicative competence, but an educational objective in its own right. Nevertheless, cultural knowledge is unlike, say, knowledge of mathematics or Ancient Greek, in the sense that it is an all-encompassing kind of knowledge which, to a certain extent, has determined facilitated or precluded—all other types of "knowledge." Rather than viewing cultural knowledge as a prerequisite for language proficiency, it is more important to view it as 'the community's store of established knowledge' (Fowler, 1986: 19), which comprises 'structures of expectation' (Tannen, 1979: 144) with which everyone belonging to a certain group is expected to unconsciously and unerringly comply. A corollary of this third perspective is to view the teaching of culture as a means of 'developing an awareness of, and sensitivity towards, the values and traditions of the people whose language is being studied' (Tucker & Lambert, 1972: 26). It goes without saying that to foster cultural awareness by dint of teaching culture means to bring to our learners' conscious the latent assumptions and premises underlying their belief and value systems (Humphrey, 1997: 242) and, most importantly, to show that our own culture predisposes us to a certain worldview by creating a 'cognitive framework….[which] is made up of a number of *unquantifiable*[my emphasis] ….embrac[ing]

…assumptions about how the world is constructed' (ibid.). But this cognitive framework is, to a great extent, maintained and sanctioned through the very use of language, which is arguably 'the most visible and available expression of [a] culture' (Brown, 1986, cited in Valdes, 1986: 33). As will be shown, though, language and culture are so intricately related that their boundaries, if any, are extremely blurred and it is difficult to become aware of— let alone question—the assumptions and expectations that we hold. It should be reiterated that language teaching is culture teaching, and that, 'by teaching a language…one is inevitably already teaching culture implicitly' (McLeod, 1976: 212), and gaining insights into the foreign language should automatically presuppose immersion in the foreign culture, in so far as these two, language and culture, go hand in hand.

3. Statement of the problem

Language and culture are considered two sides of the same coin but the problem arises about the inclusion or exclusion of culture in a language`s syllabus and curriculum. The present study deals with the effectiveness of the techniques that are used to integrate culture in the classroom whether integrative or instrumental motivation plays a role in a learning a language or only cultural integration is sufficient to learn a language and to check the link of communicative competence with cultural awareness and the methods employed to integrate culture in language classrooms.

4. METHOD

The research includes both quantitative and qualitative research. First, quantitative analyses is used in form of survey while on the basis of the result of that survey, qualitative analyses is conducted. So, holistic approach is opted in the present study. Data is collected from language learners and teachers. Questionnaire is used to collect data the relevant data for study.

4.1 Procedure of the Research

Data is collected from a sample of 20 learners and 10 teachers. A closed-ended questionnaire is used for the purpose in the start about the learners` acceptance to integrate culture in language classroom and its importance, while an open-ended questionnaire is used at the end to know about the success rate of integration of culture and effectiveness of teaching methodologies, techniques and authenticity of language curriculum and syllabus.

4.2 Data Analysis

Questionnaire is analyzed on the basis of survey done in the spoken English class at Lahore to get data about integration of culture in language classroom, effectiveness of teaching methodologies, techniques and authenticity of language curriculum and syllabus regarding inclusion and exclusion of culture. 75% of the teachers were of the view that if learners are exposed to TL culture along with language it will be a cultural shock to them because of wide differences in culture and learning a new language is like swimming in an ocean so one has to be at guard. Practical techniques should be used to make the students understand the link between language and culture and cultural gaps should be lessen as culture and language are both two sides of one coin so students exposed to varied situation faced in one culture can speak and understand language competently. One the basis of data analyzed, it can be stated that culture and language are inseparable so both play a key role in learning a language.

5. Conclusion

The present study opens a way for language teachers and learners about the usage of practical techniques in classroom to integrate culture in context of Pakistani language classrooms and for learner how to learn language with the understanding of a culture. And that the language cannot be taught or learned without knowing the culture. It reveals the extent to which culture is to be included and excluded in syllabus. It exposes the supremacy of cultural learning over motivation to learn a language. The findings of the study help language teachers and learners to learn in a culturally integrated language classroom by using effective and practical techniques and strategies. These findings also help the learner to know that the diversity among cultures is not for underestimating or overestimating one culture but to know and learn it for developing cultural insight to communicate effectively in different situations and not to change one's identity.

The present study enlightens the way for researchers of the future to study in this field and to analyze the effectiveness of strategies and techniques employed by the teachers and to compare the culturally integrated classrooms with other ones analyzing the teachers` efficiency and learners` communicative competence and ability to speak in diverse and complex situations.

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