



Language and Cultural Diversity: Socio-Perspective Realm

Dr. Shreeja Ghanta, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Malla Reddy University

Abstract: The social and cultural aspects of our history influence learners to a great extent. All of us are products of our culture and our attributes are more often culturally determined. As humans we are fragments of our culture and many of our beliefs, goals and morals are culturally determined. The paper is an attempt in understanding social and historical contexts and how they engulf individual's perception and relate to it. The gateway to counter inequality in the classroom lies in understanding and valuing cultural diversities. The study aims to explore diverse aspects of culture in an optimal lens for education as language and culture are interconnected.

"Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated-overpopulated-with the intentions of others. Expropriating it, forcing it to submit to one's own intentions and accents, is a difficult and complicated process" (Bakhtin, 294).

Keywords: Culture, Language, Society, Classroom, Diversity.

I. INTRODUCTION

Culture might be characterized as what humanity does and thinks. Language is of thought. It is important to understand that as rational beings, we can never be culture-free in teaching and evaluating students but we ought to be culture-fair by being sensitive to our own stereotypes. As instructors we ought to comprehend that cultural difference do not defect deficiencies. As we move on to multicultural classroom learning, it is vital to sensitize teachers and learners to cultural phenomena. It is essential to respect other cultures. Language Learning constitutes of three components: Linguistic, Cultural and Attitudinal.

Boas, Halliday and Hymes have broadened the horizon of language to include culture and socio-pragmatics. Halliday and Hasan share the same opinion that language both shapes and represents. Halliday believes that language is the symbolism of cultural transfer and interaction. Halliday describes reciprocity between language and culture:

"The social structure is not just an ornamental background to linguistic interaction...(i)t is an essential element in the evolution of semantic systems and semantic processes"(Halliday 1979, 114).

Halliday observes that through the entity of language mankind 'learns how to mean'. Learning and language development run parallelly with learning being a semiotic process in which language casts as knowledge of experience and state of knowing. A child grows learning s language increasing their comprehensibility at each stage. The stage of language learning process mediates from referential to abstract and metaphorical thought process. Despite of language and culture being interlinked, they are not similar under semiotic views. Language is a means for arbitrating activities and also of portraying, sequencing and reflecting various cultures.

Language cannot be viewed as a single entity apart from culture. Edward Saper in his "Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech", says that "language does not exist apart from culture, that is, from the socially inherited assemblage of practices and beliefs that determine the texture of our lives". The proficiency of L2 Language merely doesn't depend on the grammatical knowledge. The proficiency of L2 language is determined by several factors such as cultural associations which promote communication. Kincheloe and Staley draw importance on cultural awareness. Cultural awareness prepares the L2 learners to deal with various contexts, places and people, which in turn leads to patience. A sense of cultural awareness enables learners to view their culture and themselves objectively. The notion of cultural awareness and its role in language learning is overlooked by teachers and academicians who have reflect mono-cultural environment which in turn leads to discrepancies and cultural alienation among L2 Learners.

The connection between language, culture and identity is intense as culture is inseparably connected to language. Without language, culture can't be totally obtained nor would it be able to be viably communicated and conveyed. Language is a focal element of human character. At the point when we hear somebody talk, we promptly make surmises about gender, qualification, age, profession, and origin. Past this individual matter, a language is an amazing image of public and ethnic character. A language creates as indicated by the specific necessities of individuals who live in a specific purpose of time, who share a lifestyle and culture. Language is firmly interlaced with culture and character. Correspondence and association is lost when an individual can't communicate in the language of their precursors. Then again, knowing the language of one's ancestor's gives sense of place and identity. Often within the classrooms, be it teachers or curriculum tend to overlook L2 learners identity.

Over the years Second language education views that language and culture are interlinked and constitute a domain of socio-linguistic experience. Language learning Researchers and Language teaching methodologists infer that culture can be analyzed, taught and learned through activities on reading news media reports and advertisements. Studies show that various aspects such as festivals, facts and foods create an impact of culture on learners' linguistic acquisition and communication. Researchers have exhibited that several facets of second language learning are influenced by the interpretive propositions and patterns in learners' natal societies. L2 learners' comprehension of conceptualizations in second culture is essentially influenced by their socially characterized presumptions, presuppositions, beliefs, and perspectives. For instance, for students associated in the way of life with a solid custom of reverence to elderly folks, egalitarian terms of address, for example, the use of a first name to address can be a cultural surprise.

The teaching and learning of sociocultural and linguistic customs implicitly permeates teachings of communication, social interaction, the spoken and written language observed in a language group. Second language learners undeniably become learners of the second culture, language cannot be acquired without taking into account of the cultural context. Culture has conventionally been edified through imparting facts or truths such as Civilisation in France. Such courses represent knowledge on the target language such as history, geography, customs and lifestyle. Teachers and learners perspective on culture expands the horizon to incorporate a interpretive view towards culture. The emphasis is stressed on elucidating culture based on cross-cultural perceptions, comprehending distinction between learners' native culture and the culture of the language they are learning. Dunnetet. al. draws light on six characteristics of culture that learners and teachers should be aware of:

It is observed that languages cannot be interpreted or expressed word for word. Words have various connotations and idiomatic uses. For example the word 'serious' can refer to positive, negative or neutral connotations. It is impossible to imagine such concepts to have been explained in a dictionary. The tone of a speaker conveys meaning. The gestures and body language varies from each language culture. Several grammatical aspects are referred to in a language to describe the physical components of the world. Several elements of stereotypes exist in all cultures. Learners and teachers ought to be conscious of these characteristics. Kramsch proposes that second language learning happens in a 'third place' wherein the learners distinguishes between the first culture (C1, native language) and the target language culture(C2). 'Third Place' calls for the language learners' subjective and objective involvement of C1 and C2 from which they should pick their own implications that best mirror their own viewpoints. Thus the notion of culture foregrounds the prominence of individual interpretations of culture instead of cliched thoughts.

Kramsch (1993, 205-206) proposes an assessment of four facets of culture in view of cultural acquisition for teachers and learners:

1. Organizing a circle of interculturality - relating C1 to C2 and pondering on perceptions of C1 and C2.
2. Teaching Culture as an socially integrated process. Teachers will have to move away from the conventional presentation of culture as facts rather as an abstract of culture specific values and attitudes.
3. Teaching Culture as embodiment of age, race, gender and social class.
4. It is suggested that language teachers should possess knowledge on interdisciplinary subjects such as sociology, ethnography and socio-linguistics.

Second Language Learners success can be measured when they could mirror their thought process, their customs and belief besides communicating effectively. Learners will no longer use pseudo-English forms

but instead speak their mind. Teachers, academicians ought to be bilingual rather than monolingual or mono-cultural. The approach is appropriate for second language learners in contexts outside of the central speaking countries than the ideal native speaker. It is essential for learners and teachers to mediate between cultures, to view both cultures and to impart between them in third places. The research draws light of how correlations and intercessions between societies by learners and teachers can be implemented in the classroom.

Classroom teaching and learning should be viewed as an integral part of a society rather than being viewed as an alienated entity. It is within the language classroom culture has to be taught rather than the conventional method of individual course. Second Language Learners acquire or learn English in the language classrooms and thus culture should be highlighted. Writers such as Tomalin and Stempleski view the context in the language classroom as the right platform to foreground on culture. Second language learners are often with conflict of culture and context. Language Classroom is a place for meta-talk wherein concern of differences are identified.

II. CONCLUSION:

Teachers play a role to promote cultural awareness. Teachers ought to be culturally sensitive and considerate of the students culture and educate students on cultural differences. Cultural competence involves a continuous process of inner growth and in order to gain this competence one must involve in self-reflection. Besides facilitating learning of the curriculum, instructors should relate what is being acquired with what is already known. It is imminent to create cultural awareness in the classrooms. Classroom should be looked upon as an integral part of society where repercussions of many forms of resistance on ethnicity, gender, race and language is a daily event rather than portraying it as a self-contained mini-society alienated from the outside world.

Classroom teaching and learning should inculcate cultural values catering to the array of diversities caste around. Thus it is crucial to understand the medium and content of what we are teaching along with being sensitive to what we teach and how learners relate. Instructors should understand that teaching should be viewed as an aid and not a hindrance. Teachers play a gateway in teaching students to harness their cultural emotions through practical activities. It is vital to develop curriculum that draws comparisons on cross-cultural perspectives. Cultural awareness promotes diversity in the use of language.

REFERENCES

1. Hauzel, Z Ruth. *Cultural Diversity and the Classroom*. Lokaratna An E Journal of Folklore Foundation.
2. Baker, W. (2003). *Should Culture Be an Overt Component of EFL Instruction Outside of English Speaking Countries?* The Thai context. Asian EFL Journal.
3. Boas, F. (1911) Language and thought, in Valdes, J. (1986) *Culture Bound*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
4. Byram. M. & Morgan, C. (1994). *Teaching and Learning Language and Culture*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
5. Dunnett, S., Dubin, F. and Lezberg, A. (1986) English Language Teaching from an Intercultural Perspective, in Valdes, J. *Culture Bound*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
6. Goddard, Cliff. (2003). *Thinking across languages and cultures: Six dimensions of variation*. Cognitive Linguistics 14 (2): 434-458.
7. Halliday, M and Hasan, R. (1984) *Language, context, and text: Aspects of language in a social-semiotic perspective* Victoria: Deakin University Press.
8. Hinkel, E. (ed.) (1999) *Culture in Second Language Teaching and Learning*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
9. Kramsch, C. (1993) *Context and Culture in Language Teaching*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
10. Kramsch, C. and Sullivan, P. (1996) *Appropriate pedagogy*, ELT Journal 50/3: 199-212.
11. Perez, B. (1998). *Sociocultural contexts of language and literacy*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
12. Strevens, P. (1987). *Cultural barriers to language leaning*. In L. Smith (Ed.), *Discourse across cultures: Strategies in World Englishes* (pp. 169-179). New York: Prentice Hall.
13. Tomalin, B. and Stempleski, S. (1993) *Cultural Awareness*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.