

MATERIALS FOR TEACHING CULTURE: LITERATURE, NEWSPAPERS, TV

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Abstract

The topic of teaching and learning culture has been a matter of considerable interest to language educators and much has been written about the role of culture in foreign language instruction over the past two decades. ESL students whose success in a new environment is conditioned not only by their mastery of the new language, but also, and especially, by their ability to negotiate the new culture. Media sources significantly affect students' of attitudes and dispositions towards themselves, other people and society especially in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. Building on the argument that learning a second language cannot be separated from the acquisition of the culture that it embodies, this paper argues that the design and adaptation of written media should reflect multiple perspectives and avoid prejudices in order to engage students in a process of uncovering and confronting cultural biases and facilitate cultural learning. The paper presents prejudices and other cultural biases learners have about target culture and discusses the positive effects of media on students. The paper suggests that media sources should be integrated into ESL curriculum in order to avoid prejudices, to enhance students' critical thinking and language skills and cultural biases, and to have a better understanding of new culture.

Keywords: Culture, literature, TV, Internet , newspaper, cultural events, teaching culture

Culture is often neglected in English as a Foreign Language (EFL), and ESL teaching learning, or introduced as no more than supplementary diversion to language instruction. Yet changes in linguistic and learning theory suggest that culture should be highlighted as an important element in language classrooms. Efforts linking culture and language learning are impelled by ideas originating in sociolinguistic theory. From a sociolinguistic perspective, competence in language use is determined not only by the ability to use language with grammatical accuracy, but also to use language appropriate to particular contexts (Tsenk,2002). Thus, successful language learning requires language users to know the culture that underlies language.

The National Center for Cultural Competence defines culture as an "integrated pattern of human behaviour that includes thoughts, communications, languages, practices, beliefs, values, customs, courtesies, rituals, manners of interacting and roles, relationships and expected behaviours of a racial, ethnic, religious or social group; and the ability to transmit the above to succeeding generations" (Goode et al., 2000). This means that language is not only how we define culture, it also reflects culture. Thus, the culture associated with a language cannot be learned in a few lessons about celebrations, folk songs, or costumes of the area in which the language is spoken. Culture is a much broader concept that is inherently tied to many of the linguistic concepts taught in second language classes.

The topic of teaching and learning culture has been a matter of considerable interest to language educators and much has been written about the role of culture in foreign language instruction over the past four decades. Linguists have long recognized that the forms and uses of a given language reflect the cultural values of the society in which the language is spoken. Various scholars in the field of foreign language education (Kramsch, 1988, 1995, 1998; Galloway, 1999) have explained how Galloway, 1999) have explained how important the teaching of culture is to the foreign language learner. Besides, various professional associations have made significant efforts to establish culture learning standards (Standards, 1996; AATF, 1995).

All of these indicate that linguistic competence alone is not enough for learners of a language to be competent in that language (Krasner, 1999). In fact, students cannot truly master the language until they have also mastered the cultural contexts in which the language occurs. A glance at most textbooks, on the other hand, is ample to show what educators must first combat and eradicate: stereotypes. As (Byram & Morgan et al. 1994): Culture is often a polarized comparison of the native and culture targets in an 'us and them' format, where one appears better or higher than the other. Teachers are usually uncertain of specifically what their goals are as concerns culture and may not have fully refined their own view of the target culture. Few teachers test to ensure that students are reaching cultural goals, and, even if they do, tests are apt to be poorly designed. A down view of the target culture. Few teachers test to ensure that students are reaching cultural goals, and, even if they do, tests are apt to be poorly designed (testing only concrete facts and discrete information with multiple choice or true/false questions). Culture in the foreign language classroom is likely to be sketchy and shallow - in other words, not enough of it is taught, and the wrong type of information is taught.

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