Cucture And Language Teaching

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چکیده: در انگلستان یک مستمع مؤدب با دقت کامل به صاحب سخن خیره می‌شود وگهگاه پلک بر هم می‌زند تا اشتیاق خود را به موضوع صحبت نشان دهد. این‌گونه پلک زدن برای آمریکاییها بی‌معناست. آمریکایی انتظار دارد مستمع سر خود را به علامت‌تأیید تکان دهد و گاهی زیر لب بگوید: آها، آها. در مناطقی از خاور دور هیچ نگاهی به‌طرف مقابل در حین صحبت جایز نیست.

در آموزش زبان خارجی، معمولاً گفته می‌شود که فرهنگ با زبان آمیخته است و در تدریس زبان حذف عامل فرهنگ امکان‌پذیر نیست. اما این مهم چندان در کتابها و کلاسهای آموزش زبان ملموس نبود تا اینکه روش ارتباطی با گرایشی‌جامعه‌شناسانه پا به عرصهٔ آموزش زبان گذاشت. این روش سعی داشته تا آنجا که ممکن‌است زبان را به شکل واقعی و طبیعی آن که توسط گویشوران زبان هدف مورد استفاده‌قرار می‌گیرد در کلاس درس ارائه کند.

با این حال مسئلهٔ فرهنگ به همین جا ختم نمی‌شود. امروزه زبانهای خارجی با اهداف متفاوت و متنوع آموخته می‌شود. آیا همهٔ زبان‌آموزان نیازمند آن‌اند که با فرهنگ‌بیگانه آشنا شوند؟ آیا یادگیری زبان، آن‌طور که شومن مدعی است، بدون ترک فرهنگ خودی و پذیرش فرهنگ گویشوران زبان هدف امکان‌پذیر نیست؟ اصولاً فرهنگ در حیطهٔ آموزش زبان چگونه تعریف می‌شود؟ در کشورمان، ایران، این مسئله چه شکلهایی پیدا می‌کند؟ اینها برخی از سؤالاتی است که مقالهٔ حاضر به آن پرداخته ولی لزوماً جوابی قطعی به آنها ارائه نمی‌شود. بلکه حیطه‌هایی برای تحقیق در مقولهٔ فرهنگ و آموزش زبان خارجی مطرح می‌شود.

کلیدواژه: فرهنگ، آموزش، یادگیری زبان خارجی.

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Introduction

Ask anyone concerned with language teaching what basic theoretical foundation of language methodology is, you will hear psychology and linguistics. As a matter of fact, this has been the case for a long time. What language is and how it is learnt or should be taught are issues directly related to pedagogy. However, how particular people in a specific social setting learn and use language is often ignored. Only recently, since 1970s, when the concept of communication and communicative competence were introduced, the socio-cultural dimention of language gained prominance and became increasingly popular so far. As Stern observes:

> While language teaching has interacted for a long time with linguistics and with psychology, social science and language teaching have only recently come into contact with each other (1991:191).

The new trend, however energetic and promising, has, nevertheless, been more sociolinguistically, rather than socio-culturally, oriented. Giant steps have been taken in both micro- and macro-sociolinguistics to identify the nature of language in use and the people who use it, but our position in language methodology toward culture remained obscure. In Stern's words:

> As a generalization, one can say that language teaching theory today is fast acquiring a sociolinguistic

component but still lacks a well-designed socio-cultural emphasis.

Culture, as a result, has always been touched but not hugged dearly enough; its relevance and contribution to language teaching has grown blurred and mystic.

There are some basic questions with regard to teaching culture in pedagogy:

What is culture? Should cultures be taught along with language or separately? Is it possible to be selective in teaching target language culture? Is culture separable from language? Is teaching culture optional or obligatory? What are the probable reactions of particular language students to a specific foreign culture? How does culture as a variable differ in EFL vs. ESL setting?

In an attempt to treat the above questions, this paper is intended to bring to light the role of culture and its study has played or can play in pedagogy.

What Is Culture?

Culture, according to Brown (1988), might be defined as:

> ... the ideas, customs, skills, arts, tools which characterize a given group of people in a given period of time (p. 122).

These elements, put together, however, may give an incomplete, chopped view of culture.

As such, culture is thought to be more than the sum of its parts. As Condon (1973) states:

It (culture) is a system of integrated patterns, most of which remain below the threshold of consciousness, yet all of which govern human behavior just as surely as the manipulated strings of a puppet control its motions (p.4).

Brown (1988) goes further to consider culture as a way of life:

The mental constructs that enable us to survive is a way of life which we call culture (1988: 123).

According to Stern (1991) culture was frequently interpreted in a dual sense:
a) As the personal development, through language learning, of a cultivated mind: the training of reasoning powers, intelligence, imagination, and the artistic faculties (IAAM, 1929: 20).
b) As the knowledge for the history and the institutions of foreign people and of their psychology as expressed in their ideals and standards, and of their contribution to civilization (Fife, 1931: 20).

No contradiction, however, is seen between the two--both are believed to be included in language teaching in combination. This is implied in the lines below:

Language teaching should lead to a certain widening of outlook brought about by a sympathetic presentment of the life and history of foreign nations (IAAM, 1929: 21).

Later, during 50s and 60s, anthropology introduced a new concept of culture. It was considered to be a way of life including literature, the visual arts, music, and the like.

Closeness of culture and language, nonetheless, was highlighted by Sapir and Whorf hypothesis. They introduced the notion of language relativity and how culture affects language, and this, in turn, forms people's world view. As a result, theorists acknowledged such interrelationship and recommended teaching culture in language teaching:

Language and culture are not separable (Brooks 1960: 25).
Language cannot be separated completely from the culture in which it is deeply embedded (Rivers, 1981: 315).

In 1960, an American committee on language and culture expressed the relationships which it regarded as essential in three statements:

1) Language is a part of culture, and must be approached with the same attitudes that govern our approach to culture as a whole.
2) Language converys culture, so that the language teacher is also of necessity a teacher of culture.
3) Language is itself subject to culturally conditioned attitudes and beliefs, which can not be ignored in the language classroom (Stern, 1991: 155).

We can also see the trace of culture in different methods, though its manifestation

varies from one to another:

Grammar-Translation: Culture is viewed as consisting of literature and the fine arts. As a result, literary text constitutes the basic component of textbooks.

Direct Method: Culture consists of the history, geography, and daily lives of people who speak the target language. A situational syllabus is used to convey cultural information to the students.

Audio-Lingual: Culture consists of the everyday behavior and life-style of the target language speakers. Dialogues are often used to demonstrate target language culture.

Suggestopedia: Culture includes people's lifestyle and fine art.

CLL: Curren believes that culture is integrated with language.

CLT: Culture is the everyday lifestyle of people who use the language naturally. It should be studied first and deliberate attempt should be invested to teach it as authentically as possible. There are certain aspects of it that are especially important to communication—the use of nonverbal behavior (Larsen Freeman, 1986).

Teaching culture, however, as Stern (1991) holds, is not as easy. He mentions four problems in this regard:

1) If culture embraces "all aspects of the life of man" (Seelye 1974: 22) culture is everything and becomes unmanageable.

2) In spite of the common assertion that language and culture can not be separated, in effect, the evidence for the integration of culture and language, frequently proposed in the literature, is confined to a small number of observations. The bulk of language teaching is still described in terms which leave it largely unrelated to sociocultural contexts.

3) Sociologists (such a Bottomore 1971) point out that the ethnography of the advanced industrialized societies, whose languages are commonly taught, is inadquately developed.

4) Theorists have not always kept sufficiently distinct the different aspects of culture teaching and cultural background as a means to an understanding of literature (p. 225).

Teaching Culture In FL vs. SL Teaching Context

As we concentrate on the concept of culture, its scope, aspects and their interrelationships, and finally its teaching along with language, we come across several uncertainities and problematic areas. There is, in fact, a lot to be investigated regarding the place of culture in language teaching science.

Consideration of cultural influences on FLvs. SL setting, for instance, is a fertile ground for manoeuvr. While culture in SL context has been given a considerable attention (eg. Schumann 1976, Acculturation Model), its relevance to FL environment has almost been taken for granted.

Acculturation is not irrelevant in FL situation. As Brown (1988:136) contends 'the foreign language context produces diverse

degrees of acculturation since people are attempting to learn a foreign language for a variety of possible instrumental reasons'. He adds that in many foreign language situations, socio-cultural topics added motivation for understanding the people of the second language culture.

Nonetheless, this much is not very revealing. We do not know adequately what the status of target language culture in a specific foreign language context is. What actually happened and/or is happening in this regard is not known to us either. As such, the rest of this paper is devoted to a brief look at TL culture in an EFL situation – Iran.

Teaching English And Its Culture In Iran
Teaching English in Iran has experienced some ebb and flow in its relatively long history. One thing was, however, constant: English has always been taught as a foreign language. This is because we rarely have any direct natural contact with native speakers of English outside classroom.

At the present time the place of English culture in Iran is rather dubious. On the one hand, English speaking countries (such as America, England, Canada, Australia) are considered developed and technologically advanced. Consciously or unconsciously, we, as human beings, have positive attitude toward people who are successful or somehow sophisticated; consequently, it seems that Iranians seeing English as a channel to modern science and technology are considerably open to western language and its culture. Thus, they perceive little socio-cultural distance from TL community and feel strongly motivated to acquire English. This can explain why so many private language institutions are actively involved in language education here.

On the other hand, so far as religion, morality, and politics are concerned, western governments, if not western peoples, are often looked down in Iran. Our explicitly expressed worries about western cultural invasion accounts for such negative attitude. In this respect, we tend to have some defence and inhibition in learning English along with its culture. As a result, there is deliberate attempt to sensor learning materials; parts of the books, tapes, video-films, etc which are not compatible with the cultural values and norms of our society are taken out. We do so, partly, to prevent culture shock.

It is interesting to note that, whereas culture shock in SL context is considered as a natural concomitant of language acquisition and should be experienced, however undesirable, and bypassed through acculturation process, in EFL setting, like Iran, it is despised and is found counterproductive. Therefore, we might cautiously say that FL acquisition does not necessarily involves acculturation process in Schumann's sense.

Yet, more specifically, individual differences are worth consideration. Language learners think of western counteries and cultures differently. Negative or positive attitude toward FL culture can have a great impact on the success of language students in Iran. This issue is open to empirical investigation.

Conclusion

This paper in its journey went though some basic issues regarding culture and its status in language teaching.

First different concepts of culture were explained. Then varied views towards including culture in language education were examined and some problems in teaching culture were located.

Afterwards the question of culture in FLvs. SL setting was raised, and Iran, as a FL context was given a more specific consideration. In general, culture in FL situation is a virgin area for some well-designed empirical studies. Issues such as type and degree of acculturation, if any, can be investigated.

In sum, culture is an integral part of language which should be taught in one way or another. Pedagogy, however, has not yet been quite clear in its attempt to incorporate culture systematically in language classrooms.

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