


Teaching Culture and Language



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- Language is the roadmap of a culture. It tells you where its people come from and where they are going.
 - The limits of a language are the limits of my world.
 - Those who know nothing of other languages know nothing of their own or the world.

What do you think?

- Culture is a difficult term to define, because it includes so much. In your own words, how would you define culture?
- Explain the following statement as you interpret it: **language and culture are inseparably intertwined.**

Language & Culture are intertwined


- All communicative acts have at least 3 components:
 - ▣ Information – some kind of message
 - ▣ Some kind of interaction (conveying /receiving messages either face-to-face or at a distance),
 - ▣ And some kind of code or text (language, including verbal, non-verbal, paralinguistic and visual elements)

Speech Acts Social/Cultural Identity

- Social/cultural identity depends on the community/communities to which we belong and impact how we converse (Apologies, polite requests, compliments, expression of regrets, opinions, disagreements).
- Identity is shaped by gender, age, ethnicity, race, socio-economic status, education, power status in the social hierarchy, religious beliefs ...

Teaching Culture

- Why do we need to integrate culture into the curriculum?
 - Language leads to cross-cultural understanding
 - Language and culture are inextricably linked
 - Students often approach target culture phenomena from within their own native-language cultural framework

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- How do you integrate language and culture in teaching and learning?

Teaching Culture

- Why aren't we integrating culture better?
 - Culture remains a “superficial aspect” of language learning (Lange, 1999)
 1. Lack of agreement over what aspects of culture to teach
 2. Little consensus on how teaching of culture and language should be integrated
 3. Lack of time!?!

Teaching Culture – Some Problems

- Many teachers don't feel they can take the time to teach culture; they believe students will be exposed to culture later on
- Some teachers are afraid to teach culture because they feel they don't know enough about it
- Teaching culture involves dealing with student attitudes

Teaching Culture – Some Common Approaches

- Frankenstein Approach: a taco from here, a bullfight from there
- 4-F Approach: folk dances, festivals, fairs, food
- Tour Guide Approach: identification of monuments, rivers, cities
- By-the-Way Approach: sporadic lectures, bits of behavior to emphasize sharp differences

Culture: Definitions etc. (1)

- Brooks (1971) “Hearthstone culture”: beliefs, behaviors, values [this became known as “little-c”]
- Brooks (1975) “Olympian culture”: great music, literature, art [this became known as big-C]
- Seelye (1993) “all aspects of human life, from folktales to carved whales” = Olympian + Hearthstone culture

Culture and Instructional goals

- Develop interest in another culture/ empathy toward people
- Show that speaking/behavior is affected by social variables
- Help students realize that people think, act, react in response to culturally conditioned images
- Show that behavior is shaped by situational variables and conventions of the culture
- Explore the culture from a variety of sources

Developing a Cultural Awareness

- “Balance” – big C & little c, artistic & scientific, gender-related issues, socio-economic, rural & urban
- Dangers: ethnocentrism & bias
- “Sins of commission”
 - ▣ Stereotyping: exaggerating some aspect/characteristic of a culture or its people
 - ▣ Triviality: reducing the dizzying variety of cultural elements to the silly, out of date, quaint
 - ▣ Political bias: select elements of culture while ignoring others

Models for Cross-Cultural Understanding

- Galloway (1984): framework based on process skills
 1. Convention: recognize, understand how people typically behave in everyday situations
 2. Connotation: culturally significant meanings associated with words
 3. Conditioning: people act in a manner consistent with their cultural frame of reference
 4. Comprehension: analysis, hypothesis formation, tolerance of ambiguity (examine stereotypes)

Strategies for Incorporating Culture

Consider the purpose for the activity

Consider its usefulness in teaching language and culture in an integrated way

Plan carefully

Present culture with related thematic units and grammatical content

Use a variety of techniques (speaking, listening, reading, writing)

Use a variety of resources

Strategies for Incorporating Culture

- Use cultural information when teaching vocabulary
- Use small group techniques (discussion, brainstorming...) for cultural instruction
- Avoid a “facts only” approach
- Use the target language whenever possible
- Test cultural understanding carefully

Teaching culture / understanding cultural practices

1. The Lecture

Most common technique

Keep it brief!

Liven it with visuals / technology

Focus on a specific aspect

Keep students accountable by having them take notes

Use follow-up activities

Make it interactive

Teaching culture / understanding cultural practices

- 2. Native Speakers
 - ▣ Valuable resources (current info, linguistic models)
 - ▣ Helps to build community
 - ▣ Informal dialogue works better than formal presentations
 - ▣ Meaningful context / real stories

Teaching culture / understanding cultural practices

- 3. Audiotaped Interviews
 - ▣ Informal interviews with native speakers
 - ▣ Develop pre- & post- listening materials
 - ▣ Write brief summary of interview
 - ▣ Develop follow-up activities

Teaching culture / understanding cultural practices

- 4. Videotaped Interviews / Observational Dialogues
 - ▣ Natural, authentic linguistic exchanges
 - ▣ Can demo conventional gestures, eye contact, social distance, etc.
 - ▣ Exchange video tapes with a school, bring in a native speaker via video tape

Teaching culture / understanding cultural practices

- 5. Using Readings
- Galloway's (1992) 4 Step Approach to cultural reading of authentic materials
 1. Thinking – pre-reading tasks
 2. Looking – orient students to text
 3. Learning – examine various cross-cultural contrasts
 4. Integrating – reflection & integration

Teaching culture / understanding cultural practices

- 7. Culture Capsules: short description of one minimal difference between an American and a target culture custom (along with photos...)

Teaching culture / understanding cultural practices

- 8. Culture Clusters: three illustrated culture capsules that develop related topics plus one 30 minute simulation, integrating info into capsules and dramatizing it through a skit or role play

Teaching culture / understanding cultural practices

- 9. Culture Assimilators: many different critical incidents or episodes that take place between an American and TC member with some type of conflict or misinterpretation; students presented with explanation of source of conflict; students choose an explanation and receive feedback

Teaching culture / understanding cultural practices

- 10. Culture Minidramas: three to five episodes in which a cultural conflict or miscommunication occurs; students attempt to explain the source of miscommunication
- 11. Technology Investigations, Projects, Role Playing, Simulations

Teaching culture / understanding cultural practices

- 12. Deriving Cultural Connotations: learning to associate culturally representative images with words and phrases
- Word Association [House: large, split-level, brick, windows ...]

Semantic Mapping

Practicing common vocab. in cultural contexts: pictures, documents, charts

What would you say?

- 1. A colleague remarks that covering the textbook takes so much time that there isn't any time left for teaching culture. What suggestions would you make to help alleviate this problem?
- 2. Several students in your beginning English class respond to almost every piece of cultural information by saying, "That's stupid," or "That's so weird." How would you deal with this?
- 3. The language teacher across the hall from you hesitates to teach much about culture for fear of teaching outdated information and asks if you are concerned about this, too. What would you say? How would you help?

Concluding ?'s

- Is English “the” world language?
- What are the implications / issues?
- How important is intercultural communication / competence?
- Themes – globalization, power, communication, identity, perspectives
- Economic, Social, Political, Environmental ?'s

Links

- **Language, Culture and Learning**
- <http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=XRPiONIC2PMC&oi=fnd&pg=PA3&dq=language+and+culture&ots=f7sgp8dREU&sig=C7bKE13pb-88tt4GHcKTZkyhb5g#v=onepage&q=language%20and%20culture&f=false>
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- **Cultural Awareness in Language Teaching**
- http://tojde.anadolu.edu.tr/tojde23/pdf/article_12.pdf
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- **Cultural Component of Language Teaching**
- <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/eppp-archive/100/201/300/zeitschrift/2002/02-05/archive/kramsch2.htm>
-
- **Culture in Language Teaching**
- <http://www.colej.org/vol-2-2/3.pdf>
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- **Culture in Language Learning and Teaching**
- <https://media.startalk.umd.edu/workshops/2009/SeattlePS/sites/default/files/files/CULTURE%20IN%20LANGUAGE%20LEARNING%20AND%20TEACHING.pdf>

Links

- **Defining Language and Culture**
- http://catalogue.pearsoned.co.uk/assets/hip/gb/hip_gb_pearsonhighered/samplechapter/1408205068.pdf
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- **English as an International Language**
- <http://www.stiba-malang.ac.id/uploadbank/pustaka/ENGLISH%20AS%20INTERNATIONAL%20BOOK.pdf>
-
- **Lost in Translation**
- <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052748703467304575383131592767868>
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- **Language and Thought**
- http://anthro.palomar.edu/language/language_5.htm
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- **Bibliographies for Language and Culture Teaching**
- <http://www.carla.umn.edu/culture/bibliography/language.html>
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- <http://apu.libguides.com/diversitytesol>
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