

## The Integration of Culture in a Second or Foreign Language Classroom through Reading process.

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### **Abstract**

In the past, there was focus on the sentence solely without context. However trends in pragmatics and discourse analysis brought an interest into context. On this premise, the aim of teaching has changed from teaching learners the grammatical aspects of the sentence into enabling learners to communicate effectively; hence the cultural aspect of language has become important in order to interpret a particular text. Therefore, the present paper endeavors to develop learners' cultural competence through the reading process by giving some pedagogical instructions that may serve teachers in the classroom. The cultural system is, hence, integrated into the foreign language classroom through reading process on the authority of interactive communication.

**Key words:** discourse analysis, culture, reading skills, cultural competence

### **Introduction**

Learners in second and foreign language environments lack opportunities to be engaged in daily life situations of interaction and communication with native speakers who have authentic use of language extracted from cultural nature and identity. Moreover, some of the apparent principles of second or foreign language contexts that prevent culture learning are outsized classes of big number of learners, restricted incessant contact hours and little chances for intercultural communicative and interactive purposes with native speakers who represent the genuine use of language.

Discourse analysis approach would serve a lot in the integration of culture inside a classroom drawing on the use of reading skill that is studied under the scope of discourse analysis.

### **Discourse Analysis**

Discourse analysis is a general term for a number of approaches to analyze written, vocal, or sign language use, or any significant semiotic event. It is a method of analysing the structure of texts or utterances longer than one sentence, taking into account both their linguistic content and their sociolinguistic context; analysis performed using this method. We highlight the need of this approach to integrate culture. Since it forms the framework, there is a need to define it.

Taylor (2013) defines discourse analysis as 'the close study of language and language use as evidence of aspects of society and social life.' (P. 7). While, Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000) postulate that "it is minimally the study of language in use that extends beyond sentence boundaries." (p. 4). Such approach entails a more cognitive and social perspective on language use and cultural communicative exchanges that involve written as well as spoken discourse.

From the above definitions, we may notice that the discipline focuses on the cultural aspect of the language which is needed to communicate effectively either in the classroom or outside it. This is reasonable since sometimes we find that students employ linguistic forms that do not symbolize native structures and may, therefore, create disruptions and breakdowns in interaction or culturally unsuitable expressions in communication. Therefore, we need to focus on cultural aspects of a language whereby the interlanguage components, which is pinned there, may play a chief role in effective communication with other learners of different cultural backgrounds (Murcia and Olshtain, 2000; Taylor, 2013).

It should be firm that the central aim is not to initiate a fashionable approach to integrate culture in a second or foreign language classroom, but rather to bestow instructional objectives where the milieu of investigation, that is discourse analysis, may operate for pedagogical suggestions. Put simply, the chief target is to afford learners with cultural worldviews and experiences that would advance them to be aware of tackling the cultural contexts of English native speakers. It is also crack down on the cultural competence and supplies a quantity of implications, stopping at the aspect of reading process that would optimize the cultural competence of learners (Crowell, 1994; Darder, 2015).

### Review of the Literature

Studies listed in discourse analysis such as Brown & Yule (1983), Nunan (1993), Salkie (1995), Celce-Murcia & Olshtain (2000), Taylor (2003), Scollon, et al. (2012), make a clear delineation succinctly that instructors and students can raise their own cultural competence inside second or foreign language environments through performing and interpreting integrated issues that require different language functions, schemata, implicatures, speech events and acts, context, lexical density, cohesion and coherence, information structure, negotiating meaning, intercultural communication and other aspects that fall under the scope of discourse analysis, all of which are used on the authority of appropriate language use whereby learners can effectively and appropriately communicate and interact in academically and non-academically cultural settings of diverse societal backgrounds.

The process of reading is also an area that is covered by discourse analysis which takes learners higher in acquiring cultural competence the more they read about other cultures the more get acquainted with different societal or cultural perspectives, norms, mores, and strong attitudes which may play a pivotal role in producing socially apposite utterances for successful interaction.

### 1. Meaning of Culture

Our way of thinking about culture will be interested in the deep rudiments of culture linked to thinking, teaching, learning, and making meaning. Culture is defined as "the systems of values, beliefs, and ways of knowing that guide communities of people in their daily lives" (Trumbull, 2005, p. 35).

Darder (2015) also postulates that culture "is derived out of the lived experiences of different social groups and the practical activities of ownerships, control, maintenance of instructions within the historical contradictions inherent in the capitalist state." (p. 28)

Integrating culture in a foreign language classroom is so important for making learners communicate effectively in different contexts. What is cultural competence?

## 2. Cultural Competence

Cultural competence is the ability to interact effectively with learners of different cultures (Moule, 2011, p. 23). Cultural competence is composed of four constituents: (a) Consciousness of one's own cultural beliefs about life and underpinnings, (b) stance in the vicinity of cultural discrepancies, (c) acquaintance of diverse cultural practices and perspectives, and (d) cross-cultural proficiencies. Developing cultural competence gives rise to an aptitude of comprehending, communicating, realizing, and effectively interacting with people across cultures (Ibid). The characteristics of the mores, conventions, ethnicities, values, and systems of meaning of another realm, are incontrovertibly intrinsic parts of foreign language learning (Lange & Paige, 2003). All the above aspects can be operated in the foreign language classroom all the way through reading process, where a learner will be able to extract cultural values, recognitions of new cultures and the strength to carry out and behave appropriately in contexts of other cultures that may help learners to have interactive communications (Lottgen, 1997).

## 3. Reading Skill

Manzo (1990) defines reading skill as "the unlocking and construction of meaning from a coded message through the use of four acquired skills: symbol decoding, vocabulary, comprehension, and reflection." (p.22). Similarly, Nuttall (2008) observes it also as a process of interpreting a written text where reading aloud or decoding stays for taking out meanings from written messages or discourse.

Reading a text employs students to use both bottom-up and top-down processing to comprehend a given text. In bottom up model, "the smallest units of language are identified first, and these are chained together to form the next highest unit; these units in turn are then chained together to form the next highest unit and so on" (Nunan, 1993, pp. 78-79). In the case of reading, the bottom up processing claims that the readers first recognize each letter in a given text as it is confronted. Letters, words, sentences, and paragraphs are blended together to form a comprehensive discourse. (Nunan, 1993)

Besides that, we have another approach that works in relation to the aforementioned approach that is top-down processing. Such model functions in the contradictory way from bottom up model: "readers make of discourse by moving from the highest units of analysis to the lowest" (Nunan, 1993, p. 81). Applying to this approach a reader requires himself or herself to draw on his or her background knowledge of the current topic at hand, knowledge of the general structure of the text, knowledge of language functioning, and mind-sets towards the written discourse and the context it holds. (Nunan, 1993)

## 4. How to Integrate the Cultural System in a Foreign Language Classroom

Teachers and learners, in this connection, must bear in mind the cultural instructions, that will be placed and more satisfactorily conceived as an extremely paramount issue among other important subject-matters of a second or foreign language, will facilitate foreign language students to have knowledge of the construction and functioning of the linguistic system.

Teachers and learners must discard the vision of traditional foreign language classes where the emphasis is put too conspicuously on grammatical structures, items, functions, notions, and stocks of knowledge rather than commonplace functions of language system in certain contexts and on usage (formal correctness) at the price of use (the ability to successfully communicate in the language) (Widdowson, 1978, p. 19).

To a certain extent, they should take the sight of integrating culture in a second or foreign language environment as a foundation stone in language learning and teaching processes which cannot be learnt and taught in isolation of other interrelated components. Say differently, the intended meaning of a single utterance can be linked to a particular cultural context.

Isolating or decontextualising sentences from their authentic and appropriate cultural use would lead to a misapprehension in a given communicative context (Widdowson, 1978).

The academic context made up of learners from different religious, social, ethnic, and educational backgrounds would require a wide range of communication processes and problems that naturally appear within their framework of communication where meticulous topics such as cognitive schemata, world knowledge, intonation and timing, metacommunication, interactive intelligence, and interdiscourse communication offer a broader framework for the analysis of effectual communication amongst students of different parties or discourse systems (McCormack & Pasquarelli, 2009). Therefore, teachers should serve fruitful instructions for pedagogically cultural instructions (Scollon, et al., 2012, p. 88).

### **5. Pedagogical Instructions for the Integration**

The more teachers read about other cultures the more they get ideas to evolve an intellectual or a cognitive image of the target culture through bringing with them some placards, posters, pictures, diagrams, and other charts into the classroom (Byram, 1997). Furthermore, teachers may also ask guest teachers and learners of diverse cultural baggage, who will go on about their cultural experiences.

One more perceptive task is to split up the academic setting into sets and get them read about daily prototypes of life, counting the principles and attitudes of the target culture, in a manner which promotes learners as much as possible to have a new cultural load of knowledge as an alternative factor to meaningfully communicate in different contexts of language use. These activities and strategies will help to cultivate learners' metacognitive self-assurance (Lottgen, 1997).

To be effective and to assist learners arrive at intercultural competence authentic teaching materials must be there in the academic setting such as textbooks, magazines, and journals, where the teaching and the learning of culture takes place as an interactive dialogue between the source and the target culture. The process can direct, both teachers and learners, to creating and inspiring better teaching materials and methods (Hinkel, 1999).

To become creative in the modes students use their knowledge to better interpret and respond to the written ensuing utterances, teachers would also propose models for classroom practices based on the notion of interaction between participants. Hinkel (1999) suggested two related tasks: (1) the systematic study of second language interactive practices, (2) guided by learners themselves for optimizing pragmatic and cultural competence, predominantly, interactional competence (p.151).

Besides that, culture must be taught and read in parallel with students' own culture. Teachers should direct their learners, when reading about different real life like situations, to widen a cultural load of knowledge about a second or foreign language culture, other than such approachable element of cultural competence is unsatisfactory.

Teachers must also assist students to have mastery of some abilities in socially pertinent communications and behaviors in favor of the target culture, where some kind of

cultural awareness could be built within learners such as traditions and conventions that help them to appreciate the differences between the target culture, as well as their individual cultures. Subsequently, it goes without saying that teaching a foreign culture requires teachers to have a systematic method which would give learners opportunities to evaluate and estimate this culture, that is considered as a compulsory factor of a second or foreign culture syllabus (Byram, 1989; Lottgen, 1997).

### Conclusion

Having a cultural load of knowledge enables both teachers and learners to meaningfully, appropriately, and effectively communicate within the target cultural academic contexts, however, achieving so can be throughout the process of wide reading that makes the disparities amongst the source and target cultural perceptions and norms of values apparent. Therefore, creating a better teaching/ learning environment teachers and learners should draw on the determined area of interest that is discourse analysis approach.

We do not say, here, the field is the perfect method that all the tribulations and problems of language use, culture integration, and other issues can be solved, other than will yield to practical tips and responsive instructions that can be put close to each other in the service of appropriate communication.

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