

The Role of Culture in Teaching And Learning English as a Foreign Language

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دور الثقافة في تعلم وتعليم اللغة الانكليزية كلغة أجنبية

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المخلص:

اللغة هي وسيلة التعبير والتي من خلالها نعبر من مشاعرنا وأحاسيسنا وأفكارنا وحاجاتنا ورغباتنا باستخدام الكلمات والرموز اللغوية. إن اللغة هي الوسيلة النطقية للتفاهم والتواصل. من جانب آخر إن الثقافة هي سمة أي فئة اجتماعية والتي يمكن أن تتجسد باللغة والدين والعادات الاجتماعية والفنون. من هنا فإن الوسيلة المعبرة عن الثقافة هي اللغة حيث أن تعلم لغة جديدة دون التأقلم مع ثقافتها يبقى غير مكتملا. إن السؤال المطروح هنا هو هل من الضروري الإلمام بثقافة اللغة كي نتعلم اللغة الانكليزية لغة رديفة أو أجنبية؟ تهدف الدراسة إلى تعريف الثقافة وعلاقتها باللغة والدور الذي تؤديه في تعلم وتعليم اللغة الانكليزية كما تسلط الدراسة الضوء على كيفية تدريس الثقافة في دروس اللغة الانكليزية. **الكلمات المفتاحية:** تعلم، ثقافة، تعليم، اللغة الانكليزية.

Abstract:

Language is a means of expression. We express our feelings, emotions, thoughts, needs, desires etc. in words, symbols and gesture which is considered as language. Language can be defined as verbal, physical, biologically innate, and a basic form of communication. Culture is the characteristics of a particular group of people, defined by everything from language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts. Thus culture finds its expression in language; so, learning a new language without familiarity with its culture remains incomplete. An important question arises here, is it necessary to learn about the culture of the target language to acquire English as a foreign or second language? There are great discussions by many scholars and researchers on this topic for decades. This study aims at defining culture, its relationship with language and what role it plays in teaching and learning English as a foreign or second language. This also shed light on how to teach culture in English language cla

Key words: Learning, Culture, Teaching, English, Language.

Chapter One

Introduction

Currently, English is the most widely spoken language in the world. Due to its spread, starting with the colonization period and continuing with the economic and political power of the U.S.A. ,it has been used for different purposes around the world such as education, commerce, tourism, and science. People all around the world continue to learn English to reach their different aims. A critical question arises in terms of English language teaching at this point, that is, whether to teach 'culture' along with English or not. The question of teaching 'culture' along with English has been discussed by some scholars from the fields of applied linguistics and sociolinguistics for nearly two decades. There are four views regarding the issue.

The first one states that 'target language culture' should be taught along with English to acculturate language learners into the cultures of English speaking countries (Byram, 1990; Byram &

Flemming, 1998). The second view states that there should not be any teaching of the 'target language culture' together with English in the countries where English is an institutionalized variety (Kachru, 1985, 1986; Kachru & Nelson, 1996; Canagarajah, 1999). Other two views also reject the idea of teaching 'target language culture' along with English. However, while one of the views supports the teaching of 'local culture' in English language teaching (Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996; McKay, 2003), the other view holds the position that English has become a lingua franca and it should be taught in a culture-free context (Alptekin, 2005; Jenkins, 1996, 2000, 2002, 2005; Seidlhofer, 2001).

1.1 The Concept of Culture

The word "culture" has many different meanings. For some, it refers to an appreciation of good literature, music, art, and food.. However, for anthropologists and other behavioral scientists, culture is the full range of learned human behavior patterns. The term was first used in this way by the pioneer English Anthropologist Edward B. Tylor in his book, *Primitive Culture*, published in 1871. Tylor says that culture is "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society." Of course, it is not limited to men. Women possess and create it as well. Since Tylor's time, the concept of culture has become the central focus of anthropology. Culture is a powerful human tool for survival, but it is a fragile phenomenon. It is constantly changing and easily lost because it exists only in our minds. Our written languages, governments, buildings, and other man-made things are merely the products of culture. They are not culture in themselves. For this reason, archaeologists can not dig up culture directly in their excavations. The broken pots and other artifacts of ancient people that they uncover are only material remains to reflect cultural patterns--they are things that were made and used through cultural knowledge and skills. In other words, Culture is the characteristics of a particular group of people, defined by everything from language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts. Cultures are what make countries unique. Each country has different cultural activities and cultural rituals.

Culture is more than just material goods, that is things the culture uses and produces. Culture is also the beliefs and values of the people in that culture. Culture also includes the way people think about and understand the world and their own lives.

Culture can also vary within a region, society or sub group. A workplace may have a specific culture that sets it apart from similar workplaces. A region of a country may have a different culture than the rest of the country. For example, Canada's east coast Maritime region has a different culture than the rest of Canada, which is expressed by different ways of talking, different types of music, and different types of dances. A family may have a specific set of values, because of this ,people every time follow their religion to have or find new culture.

1.2 Importance of culture in language teaching

According to Wei (2005:56), language has a dual character: both as a means of communication and a carrier of culture. Language without culture is unthinkable, so is human culture without language. A particular language is a mirror of a particular culture. Brown (1994:165) describes the relation between language and culture as follows: 'A language is a part of a culture and a culture is a part of a language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture'.

In a word, culture and language are inseparable (cited in Jiang, 2000: 328). When it comes to the realm of teaching and learning, as Gao (2006) presents it, the interdependence of language learning and cultural learning is so evident that one can conclude that language learning is culture learning and consequently, language teaching is cultural teaching (p.59). Gao (ibid) further states that foreign language teachers should be aware of the place of cultural studies in foreign language classroom and

attempt to enhance students' cultural awareness and improve their communication competence. Wang (2008), likewise, asserts that 'foreign language teaching is foreign culture teaching, and foreign language teachers are foreign culture teachers'. According to Tomalin (2008), the international role of the English language and globalizations are the two main reasons to teach culture as a fifth language skill, in addition to listening, speaking, reading and writing. 'What the fifth language skill teaches you is the mindset and technique to adapt your use of English to learn about, understand and appreciate the values, ways of doing things and unique qualities of other cultures.

It involves understanding how to use language to accept differences, to be flexible and tolerant of ways of doing things which might be different to yours. It is an attitudinal change that is expressed through the use of language.' Tomalin (2008) further argues that teaching of culture in ELT should include cultural knowledge (knowledge of culture's institution, the big C), cultural values (the 'psyche' of the country, what people think is important), cultural behaviour (knowledge of daily routines and behaviour, the little c), and cultural skills (the development of intercultural sensitivity and awareness, using English language as the medium of interaction).

Chapter Two

2. 1 Cultural Influence on Foreign Language Teaching

To understand the importance of culture we need to know to what extent cultural background knowledge influences language learning and teaching, and how we can take advantage of that influence. To account for the roles culture plays in language learning and teaching, it is necessary to demonstrate the functions it may perform in the components of language learning and teaching, such as listening, speaking, reading, and translating.

2.2 Cultural influence on vocabulary

Language is the carrier of culture and vocabulary is the basic ingredient of language. The cultural difference will inevitably be exhibited on the vocabulary, and the explanation of vocabulary will also reflect the national or cultural difference. Take colour as an example. In Chinese, white, denoting a colour, often associates with "pure, noble and moral goodness", and the bride is dressed in white during the wedding in most western countries. In China the bride must wear red in the traditional wedding, definitely not white. Because red means "happiness, good luck, flourishing and prosperous" in the future and people only wear white in funerals when one's family member or relative is dead. White in China, is associated with "pale, weak and without vitality". Thus, learning a language implies not only the knowledge of its grammar rules and the denotative meanings of words but it involves much more, such as the culture phenomena, the way of life, habits and customs, history and everything that is contained of culture. In a word, culture is a comprehensive composite with abundant implication, and each factor in it may be exhibited on words. Learning vocabulary, while paying attention to cultural factors, is vital and crucial.

2.3 Cultural influence on listening

In foreign language learning particularly in training their listening ability to understand better, learners often complain that although they spend lots of time in learning and practicing their ability of listening comprehension, their progress is not satisfactory. To achieve this end, they do everything they can. Some, for example, buy tape recorders to facilitate their learning process in an attempt to improve their listening ability, and spend several hours in it every day. But when they meet new listening materials, they still can't understand them. The reasons for this may be various, but some of them have been identified. Among them are their little vocabulary, weak grammar, and vague pronunciation. But a relatively more important reason is that they lack the necessary cultural

background knowledge of the language they have learned. Listening is closely related to the culture, politics and economy of the target language.

In judging one's listening ability, we are in fact considering his comprehensive ability, including the English level, intellectual range, analytical and imaginative ability, etc. We may have this kind of experience: when we are listening to something where the events involved are familiar to us, no matter what they are, e.g., news, reports, stories, lectures; or art, science, sports or economy, it is relatively easier for us to understand. Even if there are some new words in it, we can guess the meaning in the light of the context. On the contrary, it will be difficult for us to understand, if the materials we are listening to are closely related to the cultural background knowledge we are not familiar with. Sometimes the materials may be easy and we can get the pronunciation of each word from the tape, but the lack of necessary cultural background knowledge may hinder our thorough understanding. Culture is one of its unalienable attachments. It can hinder the progress of listening.

2.4 Cultural influence on speaking

Just like listening, the ability of speaking is not a matter only concerned with pronunciation or intonation. People need to read a lot to understand the cultural background knowledge of the target language; only in this way they can communicate successfully with the others. So in the training of oral English, teachers should emphasize the practical use of the language, and try to use the materials which come from the daily life. This can help people use proper sentences in proper context. Otherwise, even if one may have been well trained in the linguistic aspect of the language, he may make mistakes or have misunderstanding for the sake of lacking related cultural background knowledge.

2.5 Cultural influence on reading

The reading process is not simply the repetition and reappearance of the language knowledge which the students already have, but it is a complicated process under the stimulations of outside information to decode, recognize, analyze, judge, and infer the material through the cognitive system (Larsen-Freeman, & Long, 2000, pp.193-196). So, it is critical for us to catch the nonverbal information, such as: the background information about humanism, history, geography, and the traditional local customs, etc. Linguistic knowledge can affect one's reading, but cultural factors plays a more important role in the reading process, most of the true and serious reading barriers are not only from the language knowledge itself, but also caused by the cultural differences between the target language and our mother tongue. Cultural differences exist in background information, words, sentences, and text structures, all of which are going to become potential barriers in reading matters. Sometimes we find that the students may recognize and understand the meaning of each word in the text, but they are still not so clear about the meaning of the whole sentences or paragraphs.

Chapter Three

Teaching culture in EFL classroom

It is not an easy task to teach culture. Teachers can show the way rather than regulate a specific way of seeing things, which has the inclination of cultural imperialism. Making students aware of the important traits in the target culture help them realise that there are no such things as superior and inferior and there are differences among people of distinctive cultures, as well. (Wang, 2008:4). Kramsch (1993) argues that a foreign culture and one's own culture should be placed together in order for learners to understand a foreign culture. Learners' interaction with native speakers or text will require them to construct their own meanings rather than having educators simply transfer information about people and their culture, and therefore non-native speakers should have opportunities to make their own meanings and to reflect on both the target culture and their own.

Kramersch (1993) refers to this as establishing a “sphere of interculturality”. Moreover, what educators should always have in mind when teaching culture is the need to raise their students’ awareness of their own culture (Straub, 1999) and 'the target culture' (Wei, 2005:55), to cultivate a degree of intellectual objectivity essential in cross-cultural analyses (Straub, 1999, cited in Wang, 2008:4).

Teachers and program developers are asked (Coleman, 1996; Holliday, 1994; McKay, 2002) to take the learners' socio cultural background into consideration in choosing materials and pedagogical approaches for particular contexts of teaching since ignoring the students' norms and expectations – that is, what students bring to the classroom- is denying the learners' experiences (Dogancay-Aktuna, 2005:100), and thus a lack of consideration of variations in cultures of learning can lead to frustration and subsequent failure in language classrooms (Li, 1998; Holliday, 1994). Mastering in a language requires learners' mastery of the cultural contexts in which important social acts occur because it conveys warm feelings and solidarity among interlocutors (Cohen, 1996; Eisenstein and Bodman, 1986, 1993; Intachakra, 2004) and is categorized in the 'social' use of language (Kumar, 2002:7). Language learners need to understand what native speakers mean when they use the language, even if they do not choose to replicate native speakers' behaviour (Liddicoat, 2000:51, cited in Paul, 2004).

5.1. Guidelines for Teaching Culture

Taking into consideration the dynamic nature of culture some guidelines are formulated by Lessard-Clouston (1997). Lessard-Clouston considers the importance of developing knowledge about target culture together with skills necessary for mastering communication and behavior in the target culture. He claims that cultural awareness is necessary for developing learner’s understanding of the dynamic nature of the target and learner’s own culture. From methodological point of view, teachers must adopt systematic and structured approach as the learners benefit most when the lessons and the cultural aspects of language teaching are well planned and developed (Lessard-Clouston 1997). Culture learning assessment is a part of learning process and provides important feedback to learners as well as to teacher. Teacher helps learners to express and respond to their cultural learning experiences. Learners move through the stages of learning cycle building skills, developing cultural behavior, discovering cultural explanation. The teacher’s role in the learning cycle is crucial as it can to a great deal influence learner’s attitude towards culture learning. Teacher needs to establish a good working relationship with learners, “creating an atmosphere of mutuality and respect” (Ellis 2003:17). Teacher needs to be versatile. There are numerous roles he has to be able to perform:

“to present and elicit cultural information, coach and model cultural behaviors, guide and conduct cultural research and analysis” (Moran 2001:138). He also has to listen to learners and empathize with them. Teacher should share his own cultural experience with learners to help them enter another culture. It is obvious that teacher has a central role in developing cultural awareness of his learners. He supplements learners with core materials to integrate cultural objectives into the learning process. He needs to be aware of the fact that every child is individual and has his own cultural identity. Teacher encourages active reflection and cultural comparison; and develops metacognitive awareness which includes cultural awareness (Ellis 2003:17).

5.2. Techniques for Developing Cultural Awareness

There are many opinions about what techniques should be used in the classroom in order to develop cultural awareness in learners.

Literature and drama have been found to be very effective for making learners sensitive to alternative cultural perspectives (O’Dowd 2004). Planet and Byram (1999) consider importance of learner-centeredness in intercultural teaching. This principle should ensure that learner’s own culture is not dealt with as an abstract concept but the focus is put on learner’s involvement in it. Learners are encouraged to reflect their culture on the basis of their own experience. The fact that these

analyses take place in English lessons and learners use techniques which they would use to explain their own culture to people from other cultures, make this different from culture teaching in other subjects. Planet and Byram warn not to provide learners with ready-made information which they might need in their analysis but instead, with information and sources where they might use themselves. Even though learners were born into the culture and are familiar with it, they need to require a more distant and general look on their culture together with some information in these analyses.

Byram (1999) urges teachers to start with reflecting on learner's own culture and only later introduce the target culture. The principle in which learners are supposed to discover their own knowledge applies even to dealing with the target culture. Technique for developing intercultural competence supported by Byram is comparative approach which, as he suggests, should "provide a double perspective but not to evaluate to see which is better" (Planet, Byram 1999:189). This double perspective can be reached by fronting phenomena from target culture and putting focus on interpreting own ways of doing as not 'natural' but 'cultural' (learned and acquired in home culture). The comparative approach contains evaluation in the terms of improving the familiar, "comparison makes the strange, the other, familiar and makes the familiar, the self, strange – and therefore easier to re-consider" (ibid). Teacher begins each discussion period with a presentation of one or more items in the target culture that are distinctly different from the students' culture.

The discussion then centers on why these differences might cause problems. Culture assimilators, developed by social psychologists for facilitating adjustment to a foreign culture, are used as a brief description of a critical incident of cross-cultural interaction that would probably be misunderstood by the students. After the description of the incident, the students are presented with four possible explanations from which they are asked to select the correct one. If they make the wrong choice, they are asked to seek further information that would lead them to the correct conclusion. Culture assimilators are supposed to be a good method to promote understanding of cultural information and emotional empathy (Hughes in Valdes 1986). Among other techniques are culture capsule which draw learner's attention to comparisons between the home and the target culture by presenting isolated items about the target culture.

This technique uses visual aids which illustrate the difference, and a set of questions to stimulate class discussion (ibid). Cultural problem solving covers presentation of a problem for learners to solve and to evoke discussion about culture differences. Participants read or hear briefly about a real life problem. The problem should illustrate the topic or theme of the discussion and can be set out quite elaborately with a number of points to discuss. Both previously mentioned techniques are using discussion which should allow students to express their own ideas. It can be also used to form a way into a topic which can stimulate students' imagination and give a teacher an indication of how much the students already know. The emphasis should be always on the ideas which are being expressed rather than on the accuracy of how the thought is being expressed. Discussion can be approached through brainstorming. Pupils can work in small groups as long as there is a clear and concrete focus of the activity and it is kept short. (ibid.)

Very effective techniques are role play and drama (O'Dowd 2004). In a role play students take on the role of another person. The situation and sometimes some ideas are given in instructions. Role play is a popular method for communicative use of language where students are encouraged to use language imaginatively and creatively. Being based on real-life situations it is always welcome in a role play to use authentic aids from English speaking countries (for example train tickets, and menus). Sometimes it is useful to record the role play on a video or audio cassette for future reference (McKinnon, Rigby 2005).

Drama is similarly useful for directly involving students in cross-cultural misunderstanding. In this technique selected members act out in a series of short scenes a misinterpretation of something that happens in the target culture and is clarified in the final scene. Among other techniques which can be used to teach culture can be mentioned Audio motor Unit or Total Physical Response, primarily designed as a listening exercise which employs a carefully constructed list of oral commands to which students respond. These commands are arranged in such a way to make students act out a cultural experience (Bowen2005).

Chapter Four

Teaching Materials for cultural awareness

Various materials can be used in teaching culture in foreign language classes. Durant(1997) lists nine sources of materials which he considers to be of great efficiency. The sources vary from interaction with members of the target culture, recorded testimony of members of the target culture, visits to the country, the country's media, data from ethnographic fieldwork, historical and political data, surveys and statistics, heuristic contrasts and oppositions to fashions and styles from the target country (Durant 1997). Literature, a very effective source of culture material, is missing here although this list is considered to be quite comprehensive. It is a common issue that materials used in language teaching convey cultural biases. It means that they implicitly express attitudes towards the target and learner's own culture. In order to encourage intercultural point of view, materials must treat culture themes from at least two contrastive perspectives, so called two-dimensions. Unfortunately, one dimensional point of view is still more common as it is very hard for textbooks writers to avoid using culture-bound ideas.

4.1 Foreign Language Textbooks and Intercultural Learning

Textbooks usually play a dominant role among materials used in the lessons. They serve as a rich source of topics, texts, visuals and language as well as help to form syllabus of the course. (Pulverness 2004:28). Textbooks used in English lessons are primarily designed to facilitate foreign language learning but because of interrelation of language and culture, textbooks are expected to include some aspects of target language culture as well. Furthermore, to become fluent in the second language, communicative competence is needed. It covers a cultural understanding of social behavior, routines and discourse nuances as well as society's norms and values (Kramsch 1994). It establishes requirement for foreign language (further FL) textbooks to include accurate representation of the target language culture. Jenkins(2000)suggests that there are two types of textbooks currently used: international or global and locally produced textbooks. International or global textbooks are produced with international market in mind; it means that these textbooks are written to be as universally appealing as possible. They usually focus only on the target culture and international level of encounters.

These textbooks can represent either culture-specific or culture-general orientation. Locally produced textbooks, on the other hand, are written by non-native authors or in cooperation with non-native speaking authors. These textbooks are usually written in accordance with national curriculum and have approval of Ministry of Education of particular country. Being written by local authors, they tend to introduce target culture from local perspective and usually also include some aspects of local culture (Skopinskaja 1992:42).The structure of culture teaching in textbooks should integrate knowledge, socio cultural competence and attitude. These three categories must be interrelated so as to reflect real life situation where "gaining knowledge usually happens simultaneously with the ability to use this knowledge and develop attitudes related to it" (Camillery, Fenner in Newby2000:154).

Cultural information can be conveyed through written or oral texts, photographs, maps, graphs, etc. Gaining knowledge serves as a basis for developing sociocultural competence. There are various approaches to it but as sociocultural competence is a process that must be developed through process approach. Pulverness(2004) claims the importance of the comparative method in the learning process. This method, recommended by many scholars, employs analysis, comparison and contrast to be included in the treatment of culture content in textbooks. Newby(2000) suggests a variety of interactive tasks to develop socio cultural competence and learner's understanding of foreign culture. Learning a foreign language is considered a universal tool for developing better understanding and tolerance to otherness. Contrary to it, foreign learners often develop simplified and stereotyped views of the target culture. Textbooks can challenge simplification by presenting stereotyped attitudes of target and learner's own culture and making them topics of discussions. Similarly, they can ask learners to perform tasks where they have to interact with the members of the target culture. Fenner suggests that learners "aware of equivalent stereotyped attitudes held by members of target culture can assist a process of getting beyond a simplification and developing cultural awareness." (Newby 2000:142)

There are many theorists who point out the extensive benefits of FL textbooks while many other researchers and practitioners possess critical views on this subject. Pulverness (2004) considers textbook's topics and articles to be possible danger for learners as they might restrain teachers from expressing other point of view than that adopted by textbook writers. He urges teachers to go beyond the textbook and provide learners with supplementary resources that would introduce cultural polyphony and will 'add value' to the textbook. It is up to teacher to diversify the range of perceptions to be available in the classroom.

Pulverness claims that these supplementary materials should either compensate for cultural dimensions that are totally missing in the course book or take "students well beyond the usual end-of-unit gesture of now compare this with houses/festivals/occupations etc in your country" (Pulverness 2004:28). Textbooks are also being criticized for being too artificial in their presentation of the target language. Their lack of authentic material leads to an oversimplification of language and unrealistic views on real-life situations. Other possible problems are presented by Alptekin (1993) who suggests that inclusion of foreign subject matter and social construct in FL textbook can lead to misunderstandings due to learner's lack of cultural schemata and should be remedied by explanation given by native-speaker instructor. O'Dowd in his overview of textbooks' criticism names researchers such as Porreca (1984), Clarke and Clarke (1990), Carrell and Korwitz (1994) and Renner (1997) who have demonstrated that many FL textbooks contain examples of gender biases, sexism, and stereotyping. Gray concentrates in his criticism on attempt of FL textbooks to pass off certain western values and communicative styles as being universal. (2002, in O'Dowd 2004:64-65).

While there can be found a wide area of criticism on how culture is dealt with in textbooks, there are also many suggestions and guidelines of how to improve the situation. Cortazzi and Jin claim, in their series of proposals, the need of constant interaction between the cultural perspectives brought by a teacher, learners and a textbook. They demand a broader cultural content in textbooks as well as explicit intercultural elements discussing different cultural interpretations of linguistic and non-linguistic behavior (1999, in O'Dowd 2004:66). Sercu provides a comprehensive list for evaluating cultural content of foreign language textbooks but has its limitation as it does not cover skills (1998, in *ibid.*) Textbook in order to be effective has to include role-plays, project work and other activities which teach how to analyze a cultural document, carry out an ethnographic research and identify cultural values and perspectives encoded in target culture. (*ibid.*).

4.2 Other Resources

Use of authentic materials is rewarding and stimulating for both learners and teachers and should be used as far as possible. It is commonly used with higher level students but can be equally used with lower levels. Traditional songs, rhymes, riddles, and other children's lore are ideal for younger children (Ellis 2003). Authentic materials not only include newspapers and literature but also materials such as web pages, TV broadcasts, films, leaflets, posters, basically anything written in the target language and used unedited in the classroom. The same material can be used in classes of various levels provided that the task is graded to learner's abilities and interests (Newby 2000). Using authentic materials is relatively easy and convenient way of improving learner's general skills as well as confidence in real situations. Many aspects of culture, that are not usually found in a textbook, are present in the newspaper but as Blatchford claims it "is mammoth and to tackle one in a foreign language is a great task" (in Valdes 1986:135). There is so much cultural interference and language difficulty in newspapers that students get easily discouraged and teacher's firm guidance in working with this media is essential. Good cultural insights can readily be found in headlines, advertisements, editorials, sports pages, comics, even the weather report. The humor found on the comic pages is especially revealing. Through newspaper teaching, learners are given "lots of practice in the language as well as some instruction in how the newspaper fulfills its social role of informing, advising, helping, and entertaining." (ibid.135-136). Literature, in a foreign classroom where direct contact with the target culture is missing, can serve as rich resource of authentic language showing interaction between culture and language.

According to Valdes, literature "can offer a broad, state of the nation view but can also give students myriad insights into the sensibilities of the British and the texture of life in contemporary Britain" (Valdes 1986:138). She considers literature in foreign language classrooms to be "viable component" (ibid.) at appropriate level. She sees literature as "an unabridged fiction, drama, poetry, or essay written for an educated audience of native speakers of the language in which it is written, purporting to represent life as it really is." (ibid.) From this can be derived the level for which teaching literature is appropriate: from an upper-intermediate to advanced learners. Readers are suggested for lower-level students but in this case teachers should be aware of the fact that these simplified versions of great literary works don't have any elements of literature in them and should be used only for linguistic purposes.

The main role of literature teaching, apart from all the other aspects covered in it, is, according to Valdes, presenting "values that underlie the behavior of characters and points of view of the authors" (ibid.). Students are not supposed to judge these values but to understand them as well as to understand the literary works that contain them. The values of any cultural group are not universal but, as Valdes suggests, there are "certain concepts" (Ibid.) each cultural group can be considered as a "general consensus." (Ibid.) Teacher's role in teaching literature depends on understanding these values and presenting them to pupils by selecting a literary work of interest and proficiency appropriate to students, extracting them and including in teaching process. Poems and plays can also be included in foreign classroom. Both cultural content and meaning can be approached in them.

Poems should be read aloud and explained holistically while teacher's task is to "attempt to overcome students prejudice and lead students to consider all sides of an issue." (Valdes 1986:145) Even though plays might seem easier literature genre to approach as they contain real speech and characters interacting in the plot, it is still demanding task for teacher to guide his students to reveal cultural patterns hidden in the work. Films, filmstrips and slides provide cultural insights as well as welcome variety of classroom activities. Excellent filmstrips on culturally related subjects are available

commercially, and slides that teachers have collected in their travels can be worked into short, first-hand cultural presentations. In general, students find the use of videos motivating and stimulating.

Videos are a useful vehicle for learning more about the topic, for making cross-cultural comparisons and for making the language more memorable. To talk about cross-cultural aspects student write down after viewing four things they noticed which are different from their culture (objects, buildings, clothes, food, etc) and four things that are the same. Put them on board and discuss why the things are the same or different. (McKinnon 2005)

Conclusion

It's very clear from the above discussion that culture and language are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture'. If any one of them is separated the other remains incomplete. In EFL or ESL class room the students should be taught English with the culture associated with it so that the students can acquire the target language with cultural background and correspond in real life situations.

It is observed that many students, who have excellent academic performance in English subject, sometimes, find it very difficult to correspond with native speakers or in real life situations. This might be the result of learning English without proper awareness of its culture. Therefore, the role of culture that it plays in teaching and learning of English as a foreign/ second language can't be avoided while designing course for EFL/ ESL students and in the class room situations. The teachers should keep in mind the importance of culture and must have a prior knowledge of the cultural knowledge of the chapter or lesson he is going to teach the students.

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