MARRIAGE OF LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

Learning second language is like a nightmare for everybody. Even we afraid of it, we want to know the second language utterly, either fluency of speaking or using appropriate vocabulary. From the past to the present, there are lots of techniques or approaches to learn the second language in the best way. As we know that culture is the integral part of the language. So, in order to be successful in learning, we have to understand and know the target culture. The aim of this article is to give necessary information about relationship between language and culture in learning the second language by given examples.

Key Words: Culture, Teaching Second Language, Cultural Awareness

INTRODUCTION

In learning second language, the first thing which comes to our minds is structural or linguistics forms of the language. We start learning by rules, syntax, and phonology of the language. In order to frame a sentence, we have to memorize a word to enrich our vocabulary. When we finished these strategies, it means that we are ready for communication.

But, generally what happens? We cannot speak in appropriate way even we know everything in language. Why is this happened? For, we do not know exact functions to use in proper time. When misunderstanding starts to increase in second language, our desire for communication starts to decrease. Thereupon, we have to overcome our anxieties.

How we can feel comfortable while using second language? The answer is simple. Apart from learning the linguistic way of the language, we have to learn culture of the language. By this way, communication problems with disappear and we can express ourselves easily.

Relationship between Language and Culture

Language is the way to express our actions, thoughts and ideas. And all of these are related to the culture that we cannot separate it from the language. For, ideas come from our lives. So society where we live is connected to the culture. Culture includes beliefs, social norms, stereotypes which are inherited from our families or ancestors. It has strong effects on human behaviors, even though nobody knows where and how it comes from. According to Brown (2007), culture is the "glue" that binds a group of people together.

Every nation has language with its own culture. Hinkel (2014, invited) divides the culture into two; *visible and invisible culture. Visible culture* includes apart from history or geography, peoples' dress, customs and traditions. *Invisible culture* includes beliefs, norms and values systems even people in that culture not aware of or cannot explain.

While learning a second language, culture is also being learned by learner. It widens learners' horizon and give chance to learn the world. To learn a language, linguistic form is not enough by itself to use and to be successful in learning. Learner has to be aware of culturally to whom they are speaking and using the speech acts correctly. Making request can be diverging in every society. In your native language, requesting something can recognize as a polite while in the target language, it can be understood as a rude. For example; giving your seat to woman in the bus is politeness in Turkey. But for Bosnian woman, it is a rude thing. They cannot accept it because if men give their sit, they get angry that men see them weak to stand on.

Using the rules of the language in correct way does not mean that you know it properly. Learner can have difficulties in using formal and informal situations. For example; "Hey you, close the door", can be linguistically true but when student address it to the teacher is culturally wrong. So the learner has to know both linguistic and cultural way of the language.

Cultural Awareness in Second Language Learning

We mentioned that every language has own culture. But how we will be aware of it? Even learning a second language is very difficult, so how learner can be fully understood the culture. Here, the important role is for the teacher. At first, teacher must try to understand the learners' background of native culture. Even in the same society, culture can be varied. The important factors of the variations are; economic status, education level of families and beliefs. Without knowing learners' own culture, teacher cannot teach them the target culture.

I had an experience when I was teaching at prep school. In English speaking class, I asked students to explain their birthdays. When and how are they celebrating their birthdays? One of my students told me that even in Turkish; I could not explain it because I have never celebrated my birthday. In that case, I could not force him to speak.

In order to increase a cultural awareness, teacher has to explain the target language cultural background before teaching the subject. In textbooks, they can see pictures or read written text about the second language culture. For example, in Turkey, students have to wear uniforms while going to the school. But in English textbooks, they can see and admire that students can wear whatever they want. So, the visual effect is one of the ways for cultural awareness.

Another element is beliefs or religion. For example, it is difficult to translate the difference between New Year and Christmas for Turkish students because our religion does not have it. Most of them will understand that both of them are the same thing if the teacher does not give introductory information.

The target language does not have to include every word in your native tongue. However, translation of the some words can be difficult to understand. For example; In Turkish, we have more relative words than in English. When Turkish student see the word 'aunt', he/she will have to ask maternal or paternal. For, Turkish language has different word for each of them; 'Hala' and 'Teyze'. The other mostly using word is "Kolay gelsin". It is general thing Turkish people are using when they see person who has a work or doing something. In English we can say that 'Take it easy'. But they do not use this word in daily life. When I asked my American friends, they had difficulties to find out the exact meaning. But while living in Turkey, they get used to this word and even we were talking in English, when the times come, they were saying the phrase in Turkish.

Turkish people are seen as a hospitable. Even we have proverbs about it; 'Ev alma, komşu al', translation is 'Do not buy a house, but a neighbor'. Proverbs are the basic thing of the culture and generally hard to translate or explain it. For example; "It is raining cats and dogs." When you translate it in Turkish, very funny meaning comes out "Kediler ve köpekler yağıyor."In fact, it means that "Bardaktan boşalırcasına yağıyor" when it is raining very heavily. If you ask why British people are using that you have to know something about the mythology where the phrase comes from.

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Culture Shock

In order to develop a cultural awareness, the learner has to break barriers of learning second language culture. Initially, most of the learner can be afraid of assimilation. They do not want to learn even the language. Most of the Turkish students use the same phrase; "Why we are learning their language, they must learn Turkish". Learners are afraid of explaining themselves in wrong way. Because they do not how to use the appropriate word while apologizing, requesting or inviting, however, misunderstanding increases their anxiety. According to Brown (2007), there are four steps of cultural acquisition:

First, the period of excitement is for the new things around. Second, culture shock occurs and the learner feels unsecure while making comparison with his/her own culture. He/she start complaining about it or want to escape in hard situation. Third, after solving some problems of the new culture, some of them still remain and at that time "culture stress" comes out. By the time goes, the learner becomes more empathic to the second culture of people. Fourth, expressing near or full recover, either assimilated or adapted to the second culture.

How to Teach Culture in the Classroom?

Teaching culture in the language classroom has many resources and techniques. The way choosing to teach is determined by the teacher, according to the students' age, level and perception. Nevertheless, the basic way of teaching is using textbooks. The target language text books are written by who is brought up in that culture. There are passages which deal about their cultural issues. Or some of them are shown by the pictures. Before teaching the rules or vocabulary, teacher has to explain the importance of the passage why it is in the book or what it is about. It is useful for learner to widen cultural knowledge.

Using authentic materials contributes addition to the textbooks. These are; films, television show, websites, documentary, music or etc. Listening or watching the target language can be useful for their pronunciation also. And visual learning can be enjoyable and more memorable. For example; there is passage about Chinese food. As we know that Chinese people do not use spoon or fork, but rod. When learner hears it for the first time, he/she can be surprised or could not understand how those people are eating. So showing them short movies can be more helpful.

Teaching proverb is another important tool. By this way, learner can find the differences between the native and the target culture. Mostly proverbs are written or come out according to the society or peoples live. For example, in hot countries you cannot find proverbs about snow or ice. Geography and climate also affect it.

Bringing cultural objects into the classroom is also good thing. The learner can see and say comments about it. Teacher can return this conversation into role-play or discussion. Every learner can give his/her opinion in target language. While learning the language, they can know something about the culture.

Conclusion

As we mentioned above, there are different kind of techniques to teach the culture in second language teaching. The important rule is given for teachers. And sometimes they can complain about the lack of time to use it in limited period of classes. But just allowing short times will not corrupt the class. On the contrary, it increases students' motivation.

As teachers, we have to explain that learning culture does not mean that changing your identity, ethic or belief. Knowing the second language will not turn learner into that culture person.

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