

## RAISING CULTURAL AWARENESS IN EFL CLASSROOMS

**Nilufar Kurbanova**

EFL teacher, Chirchik State Pedagogical University

Email: [miss\\_alisa85@inbox.ru](mailto:miss_alisa85@inbox.ru)

[kurbanova.nilufar@cspi.uz](mailto:kurbanova.nilufar@cspi.uz)

### ABSTRACT

Culture is significant in foreign language teaching and learning studies, regardless of viewpoint. It is well known that culture is expressed through language. While "pure information" is useful, cultural awareness leads to critical thinking. Most often, students grasp the language norms but can't utilise it properly because they don't know the target culture. This article aims to help foreign language teachers and students connect with the target language and culture.

**Keywords:** culture; teaching culture; foreign language; cultural awareness; culture-based activities, approaches.

### INTRODUCTION

We all know that understanding a language requires knowledge of grammar, phonology, lexis, and cultural traits. International communication requires intercultural communication, which may expose us to cultural differences. Every language has distinctions in silence, tone, topic, and speech act functions (e.g., apologies, suggestions, complaints, refusals, etc.). Given the aforementioned, language and culture are intertwined. Language and culture are intertwined and cannot be separated without losing meaning (Brown 1994:164). Smith (1985:2) adds that a fluent and beautiful argument in one culture may sound awkward and circular in another. Language is a social and cultural phenomena since its usage is linked to social and cultural values. Every culture has its own conversational conventions, which can conflict with those of other cultures. Thus, speakers unfamiliar with foreign cultures may have trouble communicating. To tackle communication challenges in the target language in EFL courses, learners must understand the target culture within the syllabus, and teachers must be attentive to their fragility to avoid demotivating them.

What's culture? Cultural definitions vary. Anthropologists describe culture as how people live (Chastain 1988:302). Trinovitch (1980:550) defines culture as "...an all-inclusive system which incorporates the biological and technical behaviour of human beings with their

verbal and non-verbal systems of expressive behaviour starting from birth," which is acquired as the native culture. "Sociolization" prepares the individual for the society's language and non-linguistic norms. According to Brown (1994:170), culture is profoundly ingrained in our being, but language—the means of communication among members of a culture—is its most visible and accessible representation. Thus, changing cultures can alter a person's worldview, self-identity, and ways of thinking, acting, feeling, and communicating. Tang (1999) believes culture and language are one. He suggests that one must think in a language to speak it well, and thought is powerful. Language defines a nation and its people. Language and culture are intrinsically intertwined, thus we can consider shifting from debates about include or excluding culture in foreign language curricula to ones concerning deliberate immersion vs non-deliberate exposure. Culture is a lifestyle (Brown, 1994:163). It shapes our thoughts, feelings, and relationships. A group's "glue" is it. It governs communal behaviour and is instilled in families. It controls our group behaviour, makes us sensitive to status, and helps us understand what others expect of us and what will happen if we don't meet their expectations. Thus, culture helps us understand our own limits and community obligations. Why culture? Cultural orientation may be overlooked by certain teachers. Grammar is used in spoken and written communication. Learning about the target culture is sometimes seen as a threat to native values, and linguistically relevant material is ignored. Since having close contact with the target culture and its speakers is rare for all language learners in our country, learners cannot appreciate the importance of learning the cultural aspects of communication until they visit a foreign country and experience the difficulties. TV serials may teach non-verbal features of target culture, which may be inaccurate or unhelpful for communication. It should be remembered that if the learner's survival abroad depended on learning cultural aspects, the problem could be minimised. However, if the learner or professional has trouble understanding, interpreting, translating, or producing written and oral texts, the problem becomes even more serious. Thus, analysing the original culture is as crucial as knowing the target culture. Conversely, cross-cultural awareness issues are 3 nonverbal communication. The communicatively competent learner's performance depends equally on paralinguistics and proper behaviour. It is overlooked that culture-bound hand-signals, postures, mimics, and other behaviours can also cause misinterpretation. Teaching culture through language in EFL classrooms is automatic. Our students' dialogues or models' styles of address, greetings, formulas, and other utterances and the reading's allusions to culture constitute cultural knowledge. Speaker

gestures, body motions, and distances should promote cultural understanding. When they read foreign literature and discover another way to communicate thoughts, wants, and needs, students' intellectual curiosity is satiated. Knowledge how such patterns interact and their role in the cultural system is essential for cultural knowledge. If language learners want to connect with people from other cultures, they must not only understand how culture affects others' behaviour but also recognise how their own culture shapes their thoughts, actions, and language. Cross-cultural communication requires target culture instruction. An organised inventory of linguistic and extralinguistic aspects of the target culture can help attain this goal. Thus, language could connect cognitive systems (Seelye, 1968). Community culture encompasses all facets of existence. Language learners must acquire culture-specific meanings and functions to master a language. Language is essential to culture if culture is "patterned behaviour" and language is a way of human behaviour. As said before, each culture has a distinct pattern and the behaviour of an individual, linguistic or otherwise, displayed through that is unique. Thus, learning a foreign language will change the learner's behaviour and introduce new values and lifestyles (Lado:1963:110). Language and culture are linked. Language and culture are interconnected, as the form and content of a language reflect its speakers' beliefs, values, and needs. It is also known that pupils who need to gain cultural understanding and sensitivity are usually the least inclined to do so. Teachers should educate pupils about cultural differences, not criticise them. To understand and speak a foreign language like a native, students must master many new categorizations and codifications. The students' native tongue could have made such distinctions for them. All related languages

4 examined seem capable of expressing and distinguishing various kinds of ideas (Rivers, 1982). Foreign language classrooms should emphasise these disparities. Thus, the reasons for familiarising learners with cultural components should be to develop communicative skills, understand the linguistic and behavioural patterns of both the target and the native culture at a more conscious level, develop intercultural and international understanding, adopt a wider perspective in the perception of reality, make teaching sessions more enjoyable, and develop an awareness of cultural differences. Some Key Considerations in Developing Cultural Awareness in EFL Classrooms As mentioned, both learners and teachers of a second language need to understand cultural differences, to recognise openly that everyone in the world is not "just like me," that people are not all the same beneath the skin. Cultural distinctions exist (Brown, 1994:167). Thus, language teachers unintentionally portray



foreign cultures (Rivers, 1981;315). Language and culture are inseparable. Listening to native speakers, reading original texts, or looking at photos of native speakers in nature will bring culture into the classroom. In creating cultural awareness in the EFL classroom, remember that the native language is learnt along with the social group's practises and attitudes, which are expressed through the social group. Understanding a foreign culture should help students of another language use words and expressions more skillfully and authentically; understand levels of language and situationally appropriate; act naturally with people of the other culture while recognising and accepting their different reactions; and help speakers of other tongues feel at home in the students' culture. Most learners gain from cross-cultural living, while some face psychological obstacles and other barriers. Students can gain cultural and self-awareness with guidance from teachers. Language learners may feel alienated from their home culture, the target culture, and themselves. We must use culturally appropriate methods to teach foreign languages to fragile students. Role-play in EFL courses helps students overcome cultural "fatigue" and facilitates cross-cultural discussions and oral communication. Readings, films, simulations, games, culture assimilation, and others

Language teachers might employ 5 capsules and culturgrams for classroom acculturation (Chastain:1988). Teachers can also support students through acculturation by providing therapy. If sensitive and perceptive teachers help learners through the second and third stages of culture learning, they may have a better chance of succeeding in both second language and second culture learning. While teaching culture through language, Seelye (cf. Rivers, 1982: 323-4), suggests that students should be able to demonstrate that they have acquired certain understandings, abilities, and attitudes:

- 1 That they understand that people act the way they do because they are using options the society allows for satisfying basic physical and psychological needs.
- 2 That they grasp that social characteristics like age, sex, socioeconomic class, and place of residence affect how people speak and behave.
- 3 That they can demonstrate how people normally act in the target culture's most typical everyday and crisis situations.
- 4 That they are aware that culturally conditioned images are associated with even the most common target words and phrases;
- 5 That they can evaluate the relative strength of a generality about the target culture based on the amount of evidence supporting the statement; and
- 6 That they can locate and organise material about the target culture from the library, mass media, and other sources.

If we want learners to grasp a language, we must assist them become communicatively proficient in it. Successful speaking requires knowing when and how to utilise

correct grammar and vocabulary. Grammatical, discourse, and sociolinguistic competence comprise communicative competence. In other words, all three components are needed if the language course's goal is communicative competence. Sociolinguistic laws of speech depend on social, pragmatic, and cultural factors. Thus, how we express an apology or request in any language may vary on the speaker or hearer's social rank, age, sex, or other social factors. Additionally, pragmatic situational factors may need a speaking act in one culture but not in another. Before studying culture, students must be open to learning about various cultures. Before teaching-learning activities, teachers must often break down cultural obstacles to attain culture goals. Emphasising commonalities between people is one method to start teaching culture positively. After that, discuss contrasts between family members, families, schools, and students.

6 civilizations. Additionally, target language themes should be given in circumstances similar to native ones. Thus, when teaching a culture-specific topic, first language equivalents can boost learning. Culture-based activities assist students understand the target culture. The materials should incorporate target language culture at every level. A cultural series usually begins in elementary school with discussions of the peer group in the other language community's families, living conditions, school, friends, leisure time, festivals, ceremonies, dating, and marriage customs. At intermediate and advanced levels, students may study geographical factors and how they affect daily life, major historical periods, how society is organised, production, transport, buying and selling, city and country life, art, music, dance, and film history, and more. The following topics can be included in the course syllabus: climate, clothing, crime, eating, education, family life, geography, history, holidays, humour, language, leisure activities, meeting people, money, pets, population, religion, social occasions, sports, transportation, vacations, and nonverbal communication. The goal is to raise students' awareness. The parallels are not meant to devalue any of the cultures being studied, but to enrich students' experience and show them that while some culture features are globalised, there is still variation among cultures. Understand and never underestimate its diversity.

## CONCLUSION

To develop cultural awareness in the classroom, we must help students distinguish between the cultural norms, beliefs, and habits of the speech community's majority and individual or group deviations from these norms. Students should be able to share their native culture with foreign-speaking acquaintances while receiving real-world content. Use



their foreign language skills. Present, discuss, or allude to in two parallel streams. As indicated above, language instruction is a long process with no guarantees, thus we cannot expect all learners to behave like natives. We want pupils to recognise sociocultural and sociolinguistic contrasts between their first language and the target language. This insight helps teachers and students understand why pragmatic failure and breakdown can occur.

7 communication. Knowing may help us identify a solution. Smith (1985:6) believes studying English does not change one's identity. Students should maintain their ethnic, religious, and political identities. Students want to use English well and be recognised, but they don't have to change who they are. English can be learned without becoming American or British. Morality and familial loyalty need not change.

## REFERENCES

1. BROWN, H.D. 1994. "Principles of Language Learning and Teaching". The USA: Prentice Hall Regents.
2. BUYUKKANTARCIOLU, N. 2000. The Role of Cross-Cultural Understanding in Foreign Language Teaching. In 2000 Dil Bilimi ve Dil Ogretimi Dergisi, Kazim Karabekir Egitim Fakultesi, Ataturk Universitesi, Erzurum.
3. CHASTAIN, K.1988. Developing Second-Language Skills, the USA: HBJ publishers
4. CYRISTAL, D. 1992. "An Encyclopedic Dictionary of Language and Languages" USA: Blackwell. 1992. "A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics" USA: Blackwell
5. CELCE-MURCIA, M. (edit.). 1991. "Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language" Boston: Heinle and Heinle Publishers.
6. HYMES, D. 1974. Foundations in Sociolinguistics: An Ethnographic Approach, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
7. JIMANEZ, I. 1996. "Proxemics in the EFL Classroom." In Forum vol. 35.
8. LADO, R. 1963. Linguistics Across Cultures. The University of Michigan Press.
9. N.M.Kurbanova "The need to increase EFL learners' cultural awareness" Volume-11| Issue-4| 2023 Published: |22-04-2023 <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7879114>
10. PAYATOS, F.,1983.New Perspectives in Nonverbal Communication. Pergamon Press. England.
11. RICHARDS, J, et al. 1992 "Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics" UK: Longman RIVERS, W.M. 1981. "Teaching-Foreign Language Skills", The University of Chicago Press: Chicago.



12. SEELYE, H.H. 1968. Analysis and Teaching of the Cross-Cultural Context. In Birkmair, E.M.(ed). The Britanica Review of Foreign Language Education. Vol.1.Chicago, pp37-81.
13. SMITH, E. L. 1985. "What is the Difference and What Difference Does the Difference Make" In Forum vol.22.
14. TAVARES, R. and Cavalcanti, I. 1996. "Developing Cultural Awareness in EFL Classrooms"\n Forum, vol.34.
15. TANG, Romana.1999. The Place of "Culture" in the Foreign Language Classroom: A Reflection. The Internet TESL Journal, Vol. V, No. 8, August 1999. <http://itesli.org/Articles/Tang-Culture.html>. (05.03.2006).
16. TRIVONOVITCH, G.J. 1980. Culture Learning and Culture Teaching. In Croft, K. Readings of English as a Second Language. Cambridge.
17. Kurbanova, N. (2023). THE NEED TO INCREASE EFL LEARNERS' CULTURAL AWARENESS AT CHIRCHIK STATE PEDAGOGICAL UNIVERSITY. *Finland International Scientific Journal of Education, Social Science & Humanities*, 11(4), 1904-1913.

