

Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce Öğretiminde Kültürel Farkındalığın Önemi

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Özet

Dil ve kültür arasındaki ilişki hem dil öğretmenleri hem de bilim adamları için sürekli önem arz eden bir konudur. Kültürü bilmek aynı zamanda yabancı dil öğrencilerine de yabancı bir toplumu tanıma konusunda pek çok imkânlar sağlamaktadır. Bu makalenin amacı İngilizce'nin yabancı dil olarak kullanıldığı sınıflarda, İngilizce'yi öğretirken aynı zamanda da kültürün öneminin belirtilmesinin ve kültür bilincinin artırılmasının yararlı olacağını göstermektir. Derleme türünde bir çalışmadır. Dolayısıyla bu makalede geçmişten günümüze bu alanda yapılan çalışmalar incelenmiş, kaynaklar taranmış, değerlendirilmeleri yapılmış ve önerilerde bulunulmuştur. Çalışmanın bazı temel başlıkları olarak da yabancı dil öğretiminde kültür ve kültürler arası anlayış; kültür ve dil öğretimi ilişkisi; kültürlerarası iletişim becerileri; sözel olmayan davranışların kültürdeki yeri ve öğrencilerin diğer kültürlerle karşı tutumları ele alınmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kültür, kültürel farkındalık, yabancı dil olarak İngilizce, İngilizce öğretimi

The Importance of Cultural Awareness in Teaching English as a Foreign Language

Abstract

The relation between language and culture has always been an important issue for both language teachers and scholars. It is clear that learning about culture also provides lots of benefits for EFL learners to understand the target language community. The aim of this paper is to state that the importance of culture and increasing of cultural awareness will also be useful while teaching English in EFL classes. This is a literature review study. Therefore, research made from past to present on this issue were examined, necessary literature review was researched, and some suggestions were submitted. Some basic headlines of the research are: culture and cross-cultural understanding in language teaching; relationship between culture and language teaching; cross-cultural communication skills;

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the role of non-verbal behavior in culture and attitudes of the learners towards other cultures.

Key Words: Culture, cultural awareness, English as a foreign language, teaching English.

Introduction

Understanding a language, as we all know, involves not only a knowledge of grammar, phonology, and lexis, but also certain features and characteristics of the culture, which are the system of values, attitudes, beliefs and norms that the users of that language agree on. When people communicate internationally, they communicate interculturally as well. When they communicate interculturally, they are very much likely to encounter factors of cultural differences. Such things as the place of silence, tone of voice, appropriate topic of conversation, and expressions as speech act functions such as apologies, suggestions, greetings, complains, refusals, etc. are usually not the same across cultures. Different cultures reflect their own cultural presuppositions with varied information and arguments. The fact that no society exists without a culture reflects the need for culture to fulfill certain biological and psychological needs in human beings.

It is obvious that “a language is a part of culture” and “a culture is a part of a language”. These two are interwoven so that one cannot separate these two without losing the significance of either language or culture (Brown, 1994:164). The presentation of an argument in a way that sounds fluent and elegant in one culture may be regarded as clumsy and circular by members of another culture (Smith, 1985:2). Culture may mean different things to different people. In the anthropological sense, culture is defined as the way people live (Chastain, 1988:302).

As the use of language in general is related to social and cultural values, language is considered to be a social and cultural phenomenon. Communication between interlocutors, which is difficult to achieve even in the most culturally homogenous setting, becomes more difficult in cross-cultural encounters. Since every culture has its own cultural norms for conversation and these norms differ from one culture to another, some of the norms can be completely different and conflict with other cultures’ norms. Consequently, communication problems may arise among speakers who do not know or share the norms of other culture. To solve the communication problems in the target language in the EFL classrooms, the learners need to learn the target culture within the syllabus depending upon the curriculum and the teachers should be sensitive so as not to cause learners to lose their motivation and concentration. Needless to say, pure information in foreign

language classrooms is useful but does not necessarily lead us to become more critical thinkers as the citizens of other communities. Students may know the rules of language but will be unable to use the language since knowing the rules does not mean that they may use a language. Therefore, what should be done is to help the learners gain cultural awareness of the target language. To do this, culture of the target language should not be regarded as a support to language teaching but that it should be placed on an equal footing with foreign language teaching. Regardless of different points of view, culture has taken an important place in language teaching and learning studies. It has been widely recognized that “culture” and “language” are used as a main medium through which culture is expressed.

The indispensable relation between language and culture has always been a concern of L2 and foreign language teachers, scholars and educators. Whether culture of the target language is to be incorporated into L2 teaching has been a subject of rapid change throughout language teaching history. In the course of time, ELT practitioners have swung against or for teaching culture in context of language teaching. For example, during the first decades of the 20th century researchers discussed the importance and possibilities of including cultural elements into L2 curriculum (Sysoyev & Donelson, 2002); the emergence of Communicative Language Teaching in the late 70s marks a critical shift for teaching culture, for the paradigm shift from an approach based largely on form and structure to a plurality of approaches causing an unintended side effect: the negligence of culture (Pulverness, 2003).

The manuscripts and articles of some scholars such as Byram (1989; 1994a; 1994b; 1997a; 1997b) and Kramsch (1988; 1993; 1996; 2001) focus on the close and mutual relationship between L2 teaching and target culture teaching. People involved in language teaching have again begun to understand the intertwined relation between culture and language (Pulverness, 2004). For L2 and foreign language students, language study seems meaningless and aimless if they do not know anything about the target language community or the country in which the target language is spoken. Acquiring or learning a new language means more than the manipulation of grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. As Bada (2000: 101) states that “the need for cultural literacy in ELT arises mainly from the fact that most language learners, not exposed to cultural elements of the society in question, seem to encounter significant hardship in communicating meaning to native speakers.” In addition, nowadays the L2 culture is presented as an interdisciplinary core in many L2 curriculums and coursebooks (Sysoyev & Donelson, 2002). Human beings cannot be

independent of culture; studying an L2, in a sense, is trying to figure out the nature of another people (McDevitt, 2004). If as McDevitt holds human nature is related to the culture, then studying L2 involves the study of L2 culture. Actually, the conditionality of the previous sentence could be proved inappropriate. The relation between language and culture, for instance the interaction of language and culture, has long been a prominent issue thanks to the writings of some philosophers such as Wittgenstein (1980; 1999), Saussure (1966), Foucault (1994), Dilthey (1989), Von Humboldt (1876), Adorno (1993), Davidson (1999), Quine (1980) and Chomsky (1968). On the one hand, the most famous linguists dealing with the issue of language and culture are Sapir (1962) and Whorf (1956). They are the scholars whose names are often used synonymously with the term "Linguistic Relativity" (Richards et al, 1992). The core of their theory is that a) we perceive the world in terms of categories and distinctions found in our native language and b) what is found in one language may not be found in another language due to cultural differences.

Kitao (2000) giving reference to several authors lists some of the benefits of teaching culture as follows:

- Studying culture gives students a reason to study the target language as well as rendering the study of L2 (Stainer, 1971).
- From the perspective of learners, one of the major problems in language teaching is to conceive of the native speakers of target language as real person. Although grammar books give so-called genuine examples from real life, without background knowledge those real situations may be considered fictive by the learners. In addition, providing access into cultural aspect of language, learning culture would help learners relate the abstract sounds and forms of a language to real people and places (Chastain, 1971).
- The effect of motivation in the study of L2 has been proved by experts like Gardner and Lambert (1959, 1965, 1972).

In achieving high motivation, culture classes have a great role because learners prefer culturally based activities such as singing, dancing, role playing, doing research on countries and peoples, etc. The study of culture increases learners' not only curiosity about and interest in target countries but also their motivation. For example, when some teachers introduced the cultures of the L2s they taught, the learners' interests in those classes increased a lot and the classes based on culture became to be preferred more highly than traditional classes. In an age of post-modernism, in an age of tolerance towards different ideologies, religions, sub-cultures, we need to understand not only the other culture but also our own culture. Most people espouse ethnocentric views due to being culture bound, which

leads to major problems when they confront a different culture. Being culture bound, they just try to reject or ignore the new culture. As if it is possible to make a hierarchy of cultures, they begin to talk about the supremacy of their culture. This is because they have difficulty in understanding or accepting people with points of view based on other views of the world. This issue is also highlighted by Kramsch (2001). People who identify themselves as members of a social group (family, neighborhood, professional or ethnic affiliation, nation) acquire common ways of viewing the world through their interactions with other members of the same group.

- Besides these benefits, studying culture gives learners a liking for the native speakers of the target language. Studying culture also plays a useful role in general education; studying culture, we can also learn about the geography, history, norms, etc. of the target culture (Cooke, 1970). McKay (2003) explains that culture influences language teaching in two ways: linguistic and pedagogical. Linguistically, it affects the semantic, pragmatic, and discourse levels of the language. Pedagogically, it influences the choice of the language materials because cultural content of the language materials and the cultural basis of the teaching methodology are to be taken into consideration while deciding upon the language materials. For example, while some textbooks provide examples from the target culture, some others use source culture materials.

Pulverness (2004) stresses this point by stating that just as literature ostracizes the familiar object to the self. As it is mentioned above, most people are so ethnocentric that when they begin to study another language their restrictedness in their own culture prevents them from seeing the world through different ways of looking. Overcoming the limits of monocultural perspective and reaching the realm of different perspective could be facilitated by studying another culture.

Bada (2000), on the other hand, reminds that awareness of cultural values and societal characteristics does not necessarily invite the learner to conform to such values, since they are there to “refine the self so that it can take a more universal and less egoistic form” (p.100). Besides, we are reminded of the fact that English language is the most studied and used language all over the world, whereby the language has gained a lingua franca status (Alptekin, 2002; Smith, 1976). Alptekin (2002), favoring an intercultural communicative competence rather than a native-like competence, asserts that since English is used by much of the world for instrumental reasons such as professional contacts, academic studies, and commercial pursuits, the conventions of the British politeness or American informality proves irrelevant. As in the same manner, Smith (1976)

highlighting the international status of English language lists why culture is not needed in teaching of English language:

- there is no necessity for L2 speakers to internalize the cultural norms of native speakers of that language
- an international language becomes de-nationalized
- the purpose of teaching an international language is to facilitate the communication of learners' ideas and culture in an English medium (qtd. in McKay, 2003).

So, while developing cultural awareness in the EFL classrooms, it should be kept in mind that the native language is learned along with the ways and attitudes of the social group and these ways and attitudes find expression through the social group. Learning to understand a foreign culture helps learners of another language to use words and expressions more skillfully and authentically; to understand levels of language; to act naturally with persons of the other culture while recognizing and accepting their different reactions and to help speakers of other languages feel at home in the students' own culture. The social rules of language use require an understanding of the social context in which the language is used, and hence, the language learner ends up with the inevitable culture-specific context of the foreign or second language class. As Alptekin (2002: 58) states it, "learning a foreign language becomes a kind of enculturation, where one acquires new cultural frames of reference and a new world view, reflecting those of the target language culture and its speakers". Similarly, applied linguists such as Halliday (1975: 38) have suggested that learners should acquire knowledge about how to use the language in order to function successfully in socio-cultural contexts. Thus, language teachers are inevitably supposed to be equipped with target language communicative competence, so that the students can gain access to educational or economic opportunities within the target language setting.

Culture and Cross Cultural Understanding in Language Teaching

Trivonovitch (1980:550) defines culture as "...an all-inclusive system which incorporates the biological and technical behavior of human beings with their verbal and non-verbal systems of expressive behavior starting from birth, and this "all-inclusive system" is acquired as the native culture. This process, which can be referred to as "socialization", prepares the individual for the linguistically and non-linguistically accepted patterns of the society in which he lives. During the process of linguistic socialization, the individual acquires the contextually and culturally appropriate use of language according to the social norms. Brown (1994: 170) states that culture

is deeply ingrained part of the very fiber our being but language –the means for communication among members of a culture- is the most visible and available expression of that culture. And so a person’s world view, self-identity and systems of thinking, acting, feeling and communicating can be disrupted from one culture to another.

It should not be forgotten that if the learning of the cultural aspects were necessary for the learner’s survival abroad, the problem could be minimized, but when the person faces problems in the comprehension, interpretation, translation and production of written and oral texts, either as a learner or a professional, the problem gets even more serious. That is to say, an analytic look at the native culture is as important as the learning of the target culture. On the other hand, problems that arise from the lack of cross-cultural awareness are not limited to the verbal side of communication. The paralinguistic aspects and appropriate manners of behavior are equally important factors in the communicatively competent learner’s performance. Culture-bound hand-signals, posters, mimics, gestures and another ways of behavior can also cause limited communication. Therefore, the cultural component is crucial in language teaching in order to develop the communicative skills, to understand the linguistic and behavioral patterns both of the target and the native culture at a more conscious level, to develop intercultural and international understanding, to adopt a wider perspective in the perception of the reality, to make teaching sessions more enjoyable to develop an awareness of the potential mistakes which might come up in comprehension, interpretation and translation and communication.

Relationship between Culture and Language Teaching

Each culture has a unique pattern and the behavior of an individual. Foreign language will mean, therefore, changing the learner’s behavior and imposing a new way of life and new values of life into his already settled behavior pattern (Lado, 1963: 110). So, there is a close relationship between the language and culture. This relationship of language and culture is widely recognized, communicative behavior and cultural systems are interrelated as there is relation between the form and content of a language and the beliefs, values and needs present in the culture of its speakers. According to Hymes (1974: 112) linguistic relativity claims that cultural reality in part results from linguistic factors.

In EFL classrooms as we teach the language we would automatically teach culture. The forms of address, greetings, apologizing, turn-takings, formulas and other utterances found in the dialogs or models our students

hear and the allusions to aspect of culture found in the reading represent cultural knowledge. Gestures, facial expression, sign language, body movements and distances maintained by speaker's foster cultural insights. Students' intellectual curiosity is aroused and satisfied when they learn that there exists another mode of expression to talk about feelings, wants, needs and when they read the literature of the foreign country. For understanding culture, it is necessary to see how such patterns function in relation to each other and to appreciate their place within the cultural system. If language learners are to communicate at a personal level with individuals from other cultural backgrounds, they will need not only to understand the cultural influences at work in the behavior of others, but also to recognize the profound influence patterns of their own culture exert over their thoughts, their activities and their forms of linguistic expression.

The teaching of the target culture has to serve the development of cross-cultural communication. The achievement of this goal is possible with the preparation of an organized inventory that would include both linguistic and extra-linguistic aspects of the target culture. This way the language could build bridges from one cognitive system to another (Seelye, 1968: 22). The culture of people refers to all aspects of shared life in a community. A language is learned and used with a context, drawing from the culture distinctive meanings and functions which must be assimilated by language learners if they are to control the language as native speakers control it.

Culture-specific Non-verbal Behavior

Kluckhorn (1961: 29) distinguishes between five different important orientations ranging from people and nature over time sense to social relations. A more recent representative of this line of thinking is who defines culture as a dimensional concept. His theory is based on a broad empirical survey and defines a given culture as a point in a five-dimensional space: (Hofstede, 2001: 27)

1. Hierarchy: This dimension describes the extent to which different distribution of power is accepted by the less powerful members.
2. Identity: Here, the degree to which individuals are integrated into a group is defined. On the individualist side ties between individuals are loose, and everybody is expected to take care for himself. On the collectivist side, people are integrated into strong, cohesive in groups.
3. Gender: The gender dimension describes the distribution of roles between the genders. In feminine cultures the roles differ less than in masculine cultures, where competition is rather accepted and status symbols are of importance.

4. Uncertainty: The tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity is defined in this dimension. It indicates to what extent the members of a culture and society feel either uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured situations which are novel, unknown, surprising, extraordinary, or different from usual.

5. Orientation: This dimension distinguishes long and short term orientation. Values associated with long term orientation are thrift and perseverance whereas values associated with short term orientation are respect for tradition, fulfilling social obligations and saving one's face.

Values are considered to be core concepts that define "culture" by many researchers (Kluckhohn, 1951; Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961; Hofstede, 1980; 2001; Schwartz, 2006). The concept of values and the link between culture and values are changeable. Culture is a conveniently inclusive term that is used to describe what a group of people share including both tangibles and intangibles such as histories, traditions, social norms, symbols, ideas, values, attitudes, and achievements. The popular definitions of culture often include the notion of shared norms, symbols, values, and patterns of behaviors among a group of people (Samovar, Porter, & McDaniel, 2007). Culture is surely more than "shared values," yet value is often considered integral to culture. Three major approaches to universal value orientation frameworks, Hofstede, Inglehart, and Schwartz, have to be discussed individually and compared to understand the role of cultural values. Kluckhohn (1951: 78) claimed that the culture is considered impact the behaviors that we engage in our daily lives at biological, social, cultural, and idiosyncratic levels and that they are interdependent. Values would have similar qualities. Values can be held at different levels (idiosyncratic, social, cultural, and biological) and these different levels are interdependent; as one is altered, the others might be affected. On the other hand, Inglehart and Wellzel (2005: 34-42) argue that the collective values that are shared by a society such as self-expression values could maintain and nurture democracy in a society. This introduces the next point of the definition of values. Our values are impacted by the society and its culture (Nanda & Warms, 1998), while our values may also impact us individually and collectively. The first part of this statement refers to the impact of culture on values, while the latter part emphasizes the impact of values on our behaviors and on our society. So long as the culture and values are conceptually defined closely, it is difficult to examine the link between them. More recently, Schwartz (2006: 139) also noted that "cultural value emphases shape and justify individual and group beliefs, actions, and goals" and argued that "studying value emphases directly is an especially efficient way to capture and characterize cultures.

On the one hand, according to Hofstede (2001: 25-30) nonverbal behavior is strongly influenced by cultural background. The identity dimension, for instance, is closely related to the expression of emotions and the acceptable emotional displays in a culture: "individualist cultures tolerate the expression of individual anger more easily than do collectivist cultures. The same holds for the expression of fear, which is easily recognized in individualist cultures but which only some observers in collectivist cultures are able to identify" (Hofstede, 2001: 40-42). In uncertainty accepting societies, the facial expressions of sadness and fear are easily readable by others whereas in uncertainty avoiding societies the nature of emotions is less accurately readable by others. Argyle (1975: 34) reports a cross-cultural study about the recognition of emotional expressions from English, Italians, and Japanese. Subjects from each culture had to identify the emotional expressions from people of each of the three cultures. English and Italian subjects were able to recognize the emotional expressions from their own and each other's culture, as well Turkish people. A recent study applied by Sunar, Boratav and Ataca in 2005 showed that display rules among Turkish students had regulated expression of emotions depending upon culture, social roles and context. Also they stated that the emotions most likely to antagonize the other (anger, contempt, disgust) were hidden more from higher status interactants, the emotion most likely to reduce one's status (fear) was hidden most from lower status interactants, and all emotions were downplayed more in public contexts.

Coaching Cross Cultural Communication Skills

According to Hofstede (1991: 44) learning cross-cultural communication skills always requires the following three steps. These are:

1. Awareness: This first step is for gaining intercultural competence and is being aware of and accepting that there are differences in behavior. The hardest part of this learning step is to accept that there are no better or worse ways of behaving and especially that one's own behavior routines are not superior to others. To realize this step in a learning system with embodied conversational agents, the trainee is confronted with a group of characters displaying the behavior routines of the target culture. With the knowledge of the trainee's cultural background, the agents could also contrast the behavior of the target culture with the behavior of the trainee's culture. Comparing the behavior patterns, the trainee recognizes that there are differences but might not be able to force them.
2. Knowledge: In the second step, the trainee's knowledge of what exactly is different in the behavior is increased, which can be interpreted as getting an

intellectual grasp on where and how one's own behavior differs. For instance, the trainee might have felt a little bit uncomfortable in step one due to a different pattern of gaze behavior. In step two, he will gain the knowledge on how his patterns differ from the patterns of the target culture and what the consequences are. In the learning system, the user is confronted with reactions to his behavior by his interlocutors. For instance, the agents could move away if the user comes too close. Moreover, the agents could replay specific behavior routines of the user and contrast them to the behavior routines of the target culture, pointing out where exactly the user's behavior deviates from the target culture.

3. Skills: Hofstede (2001: 33) again argues that the first two steps are sufficient to avoid most of the obvious blunders in cross-cultural communication. If the trainee has the ambition to blend into the target culture and adapt his own behavior, a third step is necessary: the training of specific nonverbal communication skills. If, for example, avoiding eye contact in negotiations is interpreted as a sign of disinterest in the target culture, it might be a good idea to train sustained eye contact for such scenarios. Again, virtual characters can play a vital role in this learning step due to the above mentioned features.

That's to say, all these three concepts should be taken into consideration for the teachers of foreign language courses to know how to help the learners (coming from different cultures, having varied social norms and traditions, etc,) increase their cultural awareness.

Attitudes toward Other Cultures

It is a well-known fact that every country has its own cultural specifics. It is known that Americans are rich, informal, materialistic, and overly friendly. Italians are passionate and demonstrative. The British, on the other hand, are reserved, polite, thrifty, and drink tea. Germans are stubborn, industrious, methodological, and drink beer. Orientals are reserved, wise, cunning, and inscrutable. That is to say, our cultural milieu shapes the world view in such a way that reality is thought to be objectively perceived through the cultural pattern and a differing perception is seen as either false or strange and is hence oversimplified. If people recognize and understand differing world views, they will usually adopt a positive and open-minded attitude toward cross-cultural differences. In this respect, Brown (1994: 167) states that both learners and teachers of a second language need to understand cultural differences, to recognize openly that everyone in the world is not just like me. There are real and indispensable differences between groups and cultures. We can learn to perceive those differences,

appreciate them, and above all to respect, value and prize the personhood of every human being.

It is also known that the students who are in need of developing cultural awareness and cultural sensitiveness are normally those who are at least disposed toward these goals. Teacher's task, therefore, is to make students aware of cultural differences, not pass value judgments on these differences. He is to acquaint and indoctrinate. Students learning a foreign language have to assimilate many new categorizations and codifications if they are to understand and speak the language as its native speakers do. This does not mean that the native language of the students could not have established such distinctions for them. All languages which have been closely studied seem to possess the potentiality for expressing all kinds of ideas and making all kinds of distinctions (Rivers, 1982).

Another point that should be stressed here is that before learning about culture, students must be receptive to the concept of learning about the target community culture other than their own. To achieve this goal, often teachers have to play a role in breaking down cultural barriers prior to initiating teaching-learning activities. One way to begin teaching culture is to emphasize similarities between people. Such a beginning should be followed by a discussion of differences between members of students' family, between families, between schools, and between cultures. According to Chastain (1976:385) this approach stresses that similarities are present in all cultures and that differences in the expression of these similarities are natural.

Some Techniques to Improve Cultural Awareness in EFL Classes

While most learners indeed find positive benefits in cross-cultural living on learning experiences, nevertheless a number of people experience certain psychological blocks and other inhibiting effects of the target language community culture. Teachers can help students to turn such an experience into one of increased cultural and self-awareness. It is possible that learners can feel alienation in the process of learning a foreign language; alienation from people in their native culture; the target culture, and from themselves. In teaching foreign language, educators need to be sensitive to the fragility of students by using techniques that promote cultural understanding. The use of role play activities in classrooms, for example, can help students to overcome cultural fatigue and it promotes the process of cross-cultural dialogs while at the same time it provides opportunities for oral communication. Numerous other techniques such as readings, films, peer discussions, simulation, improvisation, games, culture assimilators,

culture capsules, culture-grams, etc. can be used for language teachers to assist them in the process of acculturation in the classroom. In addition to these techniques, teachers can play a therapeutic role in helping learners to move through stages of acculturation. If learners are aided in this process by sensitive and perceptive teachers, they can perhaps more smoothly pass through the second stage and into the third stage of culture learning and thereby increase their chances for succeeding in both target language learning and target culture learning. While teaching culture through the language teaching, Seelye (cf. Rivers, 1982:323-324) suggests that students should be able to demonstrate that they have acquired certain understandings, abilities, and attitudes that they:

1. understand that people act the way they do because they are using options the society allows for satisfying basic physical and psychological needs.
2. understand that social variables such as age, sex, social class differences, and place of residence affect the way people speak and behave.
3. demonstrate how people conventionally act in the most common mundane and crisis situations in the target culture.
4. are aware that culturally conditioned images are associated with even the most common target words and phrases.
5. are able to evaluate the relative strength of the target culture in terms of the amount of evidence substantiating the statement.
6. have developed the skills needed to locate and organize material about the target culture from the library, mass media, and personal observation.
7. possess intellectual curiosity about the target culture and empathy toward its people.

Rivers (1981: 315) states that whether they realize it or not, language teachers cannot avoid conveying impressions of another culture. Language cannot be separated completely from the culture in which it is deeply embedded. Any listening to the utterances of native speakers, any reading of original texts, and any examination of pictures of native speakers engaged in natural activities will introduce cultural elements into the classrooms. We often ask this question ourselves or our colleagues: How can we teach culture to Turkish foreign language students who usually do not have close contact with native speakers of English and have a little opportunity to discover how these speakers think, feel, and interact with others in their own peer groups? How can we stimulate their curiosity about the target culture when they do not have sufficient time to learn the formal properties of language? Results of a research applied by İltar & Güzeller (1988: 54-58) showed that instead of teaching culture of the target language completely, it

is more useful to take a cross - cultural approach to English language teaching. By focusing the cross - cultural values, the students will become more conscious to the world's cultural beliefs. It is clear that the students will show tolerance to the universe which they live in when they learn different values of various countries. A recent study on the same issue was made by Türkan & Çelik in 2007. Depending upon the results of this study, it has been suggested that intercultural competence should be fostered at every stage of the English language learning experience. In doing so, English language learners get to assume the role of a comparative ethnographer and fully comprehend the role of their own identity during this comparison between their own culture and the target culture.

Perhaps one of the best ways of doing this is to explore culture-based or culture-bound activities. These activities in the materials should involve the cultural values of the target language designed for every level. A cultural series usually begins at the elementary stages with discussions of the daily life to peer group in the other language community-their families, their living conditions, their schools, their relations with their friends, their leisure time activities, the festivals they celebrate, the ceremonies they go through, dating and marriage customs, etc. At Intermediate and Advanced levels attention may be drawn to geographical factors and their influence on daily living, major historical periods, how the society is organized, production, transport, buying and selling things, aspects of city and country life, the history of art, music, dance and films and so on. Therefore, when we create any appropriate context for the students, culture will be valid.

In doing these activities, the aim is to increase students' awareness and to develop their curiosity towards the target culture and their own, helping them to make comparison among cultures. Making any comparison does not mean to underestimate any of the cultures being analyzed, but to enrich students' experience and to make them aware that although some cultural elements are being globalized, there is still diversity among cultures. This diversity should then be understood and never underestimated.

Another point that needs to be addressed is that if we wish the learners to master another language, we need to help the learners become communicatively component in that language as much as possible. Namely, as mentioned earlier, successful speaking is not just to master of using grammatically correct words and forms but also knowing when to use them and under what circumstances. Communicative competence should incorporate grammatical competence, discourse competence, strategic competence, and also discourse competence. In other words, if the goal of

the language course is to enable students to reach a level of communicative competence, then all these components are highly necessary. The sociolinguistic competence of communication refers to rules of speaking which depend on social, pragmatic, and cultural elements. Thus, which linguistic realization we choose for making an apology or a request in any language might depend on the social status of the speaker or hearer, and on age, sex, or any other social factor. Besides, certain pragmatic situational conditions might call for the performance of a certain speech act in one culture but not in another. So, it should be kept in mind that our aim should not be to teach communicative competence, on the contrary, we should try to teach sentences, structures, words, phrases, clause, etc. related to the target community.

It is maintained that culture teaching is inevitably a motivating and engaging component of language teaching and learning. Therefore, it is specifically proposed to language teacher educators, as well as language teachers, in Turkey that they pay closer attention to integrating culture into their classrooms and supplementing the textbooks with the essentials of the target culture. Furthermore, some of the other most commonly applied ways of integrating culture into language education are discussed.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Culture is really an integral part of the interaction between language and thought. Cultural patterns, customs, and ways of life are expressed in language and culture-specific world view is reflected in language. Different languages establish different categories for various aspects of reality. Those categories develop because they are particularly appropriate to the environment, needs, and development of the people.

In developing cultural awareness in the classroom, it is important that we help our students distinguish between the cultural norms, beliefs, or habits of the majority within the speech community and the individual or group deviations from some of these norms. Students should be enabled to discuss their native culture with their foreign friends at the same time that they are provided with a real experiential content. They can make use of their knowledge of the foreign language. There should also be presented, discussed, or merely alluded to in two parallel streams. They should be provided with necessary materials, sources, methods, techniques and strategies to teach the target culture along with the target language. However, the foreign language teachers' task is a very difficult one because of the vastness of culture specific topics. As nearly all of the language teachers are not native speakers of English and they do not know much

about the target language, this creates an even greater problem. Foreign language teachers need careful and systematic guidance on what to teach and how to teach it in terms of culture.

It should also be taken into consideration that language teaching, as mentioned above, is a long process in which performance is not absolute and therefore we cannot expect all learners ever to acquire a perfect native like behavior. The development of an awareness of socio-cultural and sociolinguistic differences might exist between the students' native language and the target language. Such awareness often helps explain to both teachers and students why sometimes there is unintended pragmatic failure and breakdown in communication. If we are aware of it, it might be easier to find the appropriate remedy. In this respect, Smith (1985: 6) advocates that studying English does not change one's identity. Students' ethnic, religious, and political backgrounds should remain the same. Students will certainly want to use English well and be acknowledged as doing so, but this does not require them to attempt a change in their identity. There is no need to become more American or British in order to use English well. One's moral or dedication to family traditions need not change at all. In sum, increasing the cultural awareness in EFL classrooms makes communication successful for the students who want to learn the target language in natural ways. The use of target culture elements in EFL classrooms also encourages the students to learn English effectively.

Students of ELT departments will be the teachers in the future. In order to provide language learners with the cultural aspects of language, without which language learning will be tedious and artificial, EFL students should be trained first to have more culturally-oriented view. Therefore, it is suggested that language teaching departments should include courses to help future-language teachers be interculturally competent in the language that they are going to teach. Courses on non-verbal aspect of the target language and how to teach culture must definitely be a part of ELT students' education. In addition, culturally authentic content will create high motivation in language classes and also help students develop their proficiency in the target language as it provides true-to-life challenge.

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