



INTEGRATING CULTURE AND LANGUAGE TEACHING IN SCHOOLS IN UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract

The article deals with the problem of teaching cultural studies of English speaking countries in schools in Uzbekistan. The author first explains what cultural studies are and what countries are regarded as English speaking and then she discusses what cultural awareness is. She also gives a short review of English textbooks and other materials used in Uzbek schools. Teachers often hesitate whether or not to include cultural studies of English speaking countries into their lessons and the author encourages them to do so. At the end of the article, the author provided some activities for teaching culture.

Keywords: English speaking countries, cultural studies, cultural awareness, English textbooks, lesson plan.

Introduction

Language and cultural learning can be psychologically intense experiences. It's common for learners to get nervous or feel stressed when practicing a foreign language. It's easy to feel stupid when you feel inarticulate, don't understand what's being said, or can't follow what's going on. Similarly, adapting to new cultural surroundings is taxing. It's tiring to be surrounded by strange sights and sounds, disorienting to navigate in unfamiliar places, and stressful to interact with foreign people. At the same time, this psychological intensity can be exhilarating. It's fun to use a foreign language when buying carrots in a marketplace abroad. Travel can be an exotic adventure that pulls us out of our daily routines. Seeing how people live in another country can be an eye-opening experience. And mastering a new language as we do this can be satisfying indeed. In ways big and small, language and culture learning is intense, and can have a big psychological impact on us. The demands of language and culture learning have real-world consequences. Many people fail in their foreign language learning, and outcomes depend heavily on the motivation, aptitudes, personality, experiences, and attitudes of each individual learner (Dornyei 2009;





Dornyei and Ryan 2015). The deep learning perspective reminds us that language and culture learning involve adjustment to boundaries of the self and a degree of personal transformation. When we internalize a new domain of knowledge, we increasingly experience it as a natural part of who we are.

What is the role of cultural awareness?

Even in today's globalized world, adapting to foreign cultural environments is psychologically challenging. Despite technological convenience, spending time in foreign surroundings can provoke stress related to the difficulty of meeting everyday needs, but also more generalized feelings of malaise, loneliness and psychological distress (Furnham and Bochner 1986; Ward et al. 2001). Cross-cultural psychologists have analyzed these cross-cultural stresses, and have attempted to identify personality traits that are key to having a positive experience (Matsumoto et al. 2006). Such work reminds us that while foreign experiences, travel, and living abroad can be exotic and exciting, cultural learning is not always experienced in positive ways—it produces stresses as well as excitement.

Many educators understand that cultural knowledge and insight is necessary to use a foreign language well, that language learning can lead to meaningful intercultural experiences, and that there is a need for greater intercultural understanding in a world marked by increasing conflict and division. Putting this insight into practice, however, can be a challenge. It's easy to get the impression that something is missing from foreign language pedagogy—that we need cultural learning goals in addition to language learning goals. From this perspective, cultural learning represents a new dimension of learning to incorporate, a new set of skills to be practiced, or a new form of understanding to focus on. This additive approach can be found in much language and culture scholarship.

A short review of English textbooks and other materials used in Uzbek schools.

It is very important for foreign language teachers to have enough information about the countries whose language they teach. Today there are quite a lot of books and publications, dealing with cultural studies in the world of linguistics. To gain some information the Internet can also be used. But it is generally known that the hardest work is left upon the teachers who have to select and prepare material for their teaching if they really want to cover various countries and various topics as the textbooks used in our schools, whether primary or secondary, usually do not offer enough.





Concerning the textbooks used in Uzbekistan the situation is becoming better now, although there are still some problems. There is a great variety of coursebooks imported into our country from Great Britain or the U.S.A. and used in elementary or secondary schools. These books are very good because they really show the way of life in these countries and there are also many pictures included to help pupils or students to visualize it. It is a great advantage to use these books to teach the language, but there are also some disadvantages when teaching cultural studies. These textbooks have a lot of cultural activities which can not be appropriate for our students' culture and thus it is again upon the teacher to compare whatever part of the culture of an English speaking country being taught to the culture of Uzbekistan.

It is evident that teachers of EFL cannot know everything and have to study, prepare and design their lessons on teaching cultural studies of English speaking countries. But they have to be aware also of changes in cultures, in societies, ways of living. It is significant that the way of life changes very fast in most countries of the world. E.g. the way of life in America today is totally different from the way of life ten or fifteen years ago.

Teaching culture and language in English classrooms of Uzbek schools

Language and culture learning are complex, embodied processes; they involve much more than gaining factual knowledge or individual skills. They are an integral part of our cognitive architecture, and thus are experienced at deep levels of the self. This chapter will propose that language learning and cultural adaptation place similar psychological pressures on learners, and can be seen in similar terms. Both can be seen as an adaptive process that involves integrating foreignness into our socio-cognitive systems. That is to say, the psychology of language learning and intercultural adaptation are fundamentally similar. This is an unconventional view. The terminology used to discuss the stresses of intercultural adaptation (culture shock, culture stress, adaptation, adjustment, acculturation, marginality), differs from the ways we normally discuss the psychology of language learning (motivation, demotivation, learner anxiety, willingness to communicate, L2 self). By looking at language learning from the perspective of intercultural adaptation and adjustment, however, we gain a more integrated view of language and culture learning, as well as insight into overlooked psychological aspects of the language learning experience. The intercultural adjustment perspective sees both language and culture learning in terms of developing.





Language learning is also demanding. Often, this is simply talked about in terms of effort and time spent learning. Learning a language requires personal commitment and psychological engagement. Just as one must love music in order to become a skilled pianist, learning a foreign language is as much a lifestyle as a purely academic pursuit. Successful learners typically go beyond their class assignments or textbook exercises, take an interest in travel, foreign songs, movies, and so on. They are often driven as much by curiosity as by coursework requirements. For most learners, maintaining motivation and finding ways to keep making progress are an ongoing issue.

With the help of many English language teachers we tried to teach culture through language consolidated into the following categories:

1. Popular games (in which some traditional songs are taught)
2. Festivities and celebrations (including traditions in the target countries)
3. Tales set in English-speaking countries (in which we pay special attention to character's daily life which reflect customs in the target countries)

As the resources come from different English-speaking cultures, they are divided into five subgroups that run into the five inhabited continents: Europe (focussing on the British Isles), North America, Australia, Asia and Africa.

The main aim when using the resources is to make pupils learn about different countries where English is spoken and appreciate, tolerate and compare them with their own. When learners can understand their culture they can understand and learn new culture.

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