Tikrit University

College of Education for Humanities

English Department

PhD (First Course) 2024-2025

New Trends in Methodology

Cultural and Sociopolitical Contexts

(4)

Prof. Dunia Tahir (PhD)

Introduction

There are some important questions such as:

1- What is the relationship between language and culture?

2- What do you mean by the term culture in language education and applied linguistics?

3- Agar says," culture is in language , and language is loaded with culture" .Explain.

4- As a teacher, what are some ways to incorporate culture , especially the invisible aspects into your instruction?

The goal of this chapter is to discuss the social dimension of L2 learning with reference to the culture and identity of L2 learners in dynamic sociopolitical contexts.

Age and proficiency are significant individual variables that affect every aspect of our lesson or curriculum. While they may be essential variables to keep in mind, however, another cluster of factors also emerges for the language teacher: <u>Second language (L2) culture, identity, and sociopolitical contexts .</u> These domains intertwine in such a way that it is sometimes impossible to disentangle them and examine one without considering the other. Culture underlies all language learners' emotion, cognition and their sense of who they are . Government policies and local politics are equally powerful influences on teachers' and students' daily lives, and finally , educational instructions are products of culture and policy, and indeed often are microcosms of one's sociopolitical milieu.

Language and Culture

Q1: What is the relationship between language and culture?

Culture is a way of life. It is the context within which we exist, think, feel and relate to others. It makes us sensitive to matters of status, and helps us know what others expect of us and what will happen if we do not

live up to their expectations. When learning and teaching an additional language, we must be aware of the complex dynamic relationship between language and culture customs, values, and beliefs that are embedded in language practice.

What do you mean by the term culture in language education and applied linguistics?

In language education and applied linguistic, the term **culture** implies many different definitions and considerations.

The so called "big C visible"

Culture refers to the literature, arts, architecture, history, and geography of the country in which a target language is spoken.

Where as the "big C invisible"

Culture implies the native speakers' core values, beliefs, social norms, assumptions and legal foundations.

On the other hand "little c visible"

Culture includes gestures, body language, use of space, dress, food, leisure life, and daily customs.

While "little c invisible"

Culture is related to popular opinions, view points, preferences, or tastes.

Culture is highly important in the learning of a second or foreign language. Agar's (1994) notion of languaculture highlights the inseparable relationship between language and culture. He says,*" **culture is in language , and language is loaded with culture"**_* . In other words, the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate them without losing the significance of either language or culture. Many researchers in applied linguistics also have emphasized the complex reciprocal development of the two.

Culture, Discourse and Identity

1-What is the role of discourse and identity in understanding culture in L2 learning?

Teaching culture is a complex task. It might be that during casual interactions with speakers of other languages, most people are not aware of the impact of the invisible culture of both interlocutors

Culture is neither monolithic nor static. It is multiple, dynamic, and political. In order to understand the complex dynamic nature of culture, it is helpful to draw on the concepts of **discourse** and **identity**. Sociolinguist <u>James Gee</u> refers to **Discourse** with a capital "D" as "ways of combining and integrating language, actions, interactions, ways of thinking, believing, valuing and using various symbols, tools and objects to enact a particular sort of socially recognizable identity". Gee uses the term **Identity** to mean " *a socially situated identity*, the kind of person one is seeking to be enact here and now". A person might talk, act, and interact in such a way that he or she would get recognized as a corporate lawyer in one context, while this same individual in another context would talk, act and interact completely differently to be a subservient spouse. Discourse is inherently political as it distributes particular beliefs, assumptions, social goods, social relations of power, and hierarchical structure in society. A particular discourse can be used as an invisible "theory" to control peoples' minds as to what is a normal and appropriate way of thinking and behaving in a particular sociopolitical setting.

Kumaravadivelu (2012) discusses two approaches to the conception of identity: **a modernist** view and **a post modernist** view.

From a modernist point of view, (which was influential during the mid-17th to mid-20th century) the individual identity is defined by pre-existent and static societal norms. For example individuals usually are identified with their affiliation to nation, ethnicity, race, religion, class, profession,

gender, language or family. This conception of identity tends to generally individuals as stable beings based on characteristics externally imposed on them.

On the other hand a post modernist approach, to understanding identity is very much based on its ongoing nature. It sees identity as fragmented, not unified, multiple, not singular, expansive not bounded. The primary contributors to the formation of identity are not only inherited traditions and features such as culture, historical backgrounds, and socioeconomic status, but also the individual's ability to exercise agency. Individuals' action, words, or thoughts at certain times often are an internal compromise among several different voices and discourses. Identity is constantly changing and negotiated across time and space.

The multiple identities and positions and roles are socially and culturally constructed based on various social relations of power that influence learners in positioning themselves in different social contexts. As discussed in chapter five , agency plays a crucial role in the particular positioning of L2 learners in their L2 practice.

Contexts of Language Learning and Teaching

In some of our professional musing about teaching and learning, we interchange the terms **second** and **foreign** in referring to the context of English (and other L2) teaching. But some caution is warranted, particularly in relation to a curriculum or a lesson, because (a) the difference between the two is significant, and (b) this dichotomy has been over generalized in recent years.

The operational distinction between a **second** and **foreign language** context is usually concerned with what is going on outside language classrooms. Once your students leave your class, which language will they hear in the hallways, out on the sidewalks, and in the stores?

Second language learning contexts are those in which the classroom target language is readily available beyond the classroom. Teaching English in the United States or Canada clearly falls into this (ESL) category.

   Foreign language contexts are those in which students learn a language of other countries and do not have ready-made contexts for communication beyond their classroom. They may be obtainable through language clubs, special media opportunities, books, or an occasional tourist, but efforts must be made to create such opportunities. Teaching English in China, Iraq or Russia is almost always a context of English as a foreign language (EFL).

   The seemingly clear dichotomy between ESL and EFL however, has been criticized for its referential vagueness in the wake of increasing use of English worldwide for a verity of purposes.

   For example, the contexts for English communication vary widely: in many places in the United States, monolingual English speakers about; in many counties such as India or Singapore, English is a second language widely used for education, government and commerce, and in Scandinavian countries, English has no official status but is commonly spoken by virtually every educated person.

Globalization and Language Education

1-What are the two issues that are emerged for English teacher to contemplate?

2- The norm is not monolingualism, but rather multilingualism. (Discuss)

3-What are the models that represent the global use of English ?

4-Does the term English as a lingua franca sound different from the commonly used term, English as a foreign language?

   Closely related to the ESL/EFL distinction are the dynamic and divers roles of English among a few other languages including France, Spanish

and Portuguese in the wake of post-colonialism and globalization. Now English is a dominant global language.

English in a Globalizing World

There have been rigorous discussions about the changes English is going through as it has been used beyond the context of monolingual English native speakers. It is estimated that well over 1 billion people are currently using English. According to the British Council , 750 million of these learners are what traditionally are called English as a foreign language (EFL)speakers while approximately 375 million are English as a second language (ESL) speakers.

-What are the models that represent the global use of English ?

Many models to represent the global use of English have been proposed such as <u>World Englishes</u> , <u>English as an international language</u> and <u>English as a lingua franca</u>.

What are the two issues that are emerged for English teacher to contemplate?

Two issues have emerged for English Teachers to contemplate:

1- English is increasingly being used as a tool for interaction among nonnative speakers. Over 5 billion people of the world do not speak English as either their first or second language . Most English language teachers across the globe are nonnative English speakers, which means that the norm is not monolingualism, but rather multilingualism.

   The norm is not monolingualism, but rather multilingualism. (Discuss)

2- English is not frequently learned as a tool for understanding and teaching American or British cultural values. Instead , English has become a tool for international communication in transportation , commerce, banking, tourism, entertainment, technology,

diplomacy, research, publishing, and information sharing on the internet.

English as an International Language

1-Why is it important that a teacher of language should be a native speaker of that language?

2-Define Lingua franca.

3-Why is it not right to compare L2 learners' competence to that of monolingual native speakers?

4-What is the difference between L2 users and L2 learners ?

5-What are the criteria for becoming a multi competent language user?

The multiplication of varieties of English poses some practical concerns for the teacher. One of these concerns is the issue of grammaticalness and correctness. It is certainly not necessary to think of English as a language whose cultural identity can lie only with countries like the United State, the United Kingdom or New Zealand . Your students no doubt will be more interested in the practical, nonstigmatized uses of English in various contexts in their own countries than in imitating American or British English. They will own and use their English as international language in their chosen global communities.

In this contexts, English become **a lingua franca** (ELF) <u>which is the common language of choice among speakers who come from different linguacultural backgrounds.</u>

How important is it that a teacher of a language be a native speaker of that language. A native speaker will provide a correct model of English.

For many decades the English language teaching profession assumed that native English-speaking teachers (NESTs), by virtue of their ostensibly "superior model" of oral production, comprised the ideal English language teacher. However, this is a "comparative fallacy" , because L2 speakers are different from monolingual native speakers in their cognitive processes of accessing their knowledge of the L2 and L1. Additional language learners in the world can use more than one language; therefore, they have some degree of **bilingualism** or **multilingualism**. These bilingual or multilingual language learners do not fit into the description of n ideal native speaker**. From this perspective, it is not right to compare L2 learners' competence to that of monolingual native speakers.**

Cook (1999) proposed that we use the term multicompetent language users instead of nonnative speakers. "**L2 users**" <u>refers to people who know and use a second language at any level of achievement </u>while "L2 learners" <u>implies people who learn a language without using it on daily or frequent uses.</u>
-What are the criteria for becoming a multi competent language user?

NESTs and NNESTs

1-What are the three lessons that we have learned from the research on multicompetent language users?
2-In your opinion which one is better NESTs or NNESTs?

We have learned some important lessons from all the recent research multicompetent language users. **First**, as we now recognize worldwide varieties of English , the monolingual native-speaker ideal of yesteryear no longer holds. **Second,** in those few situations that call for native-speaker models, we have an ample

supply of those models through internet, TV, and other spoken / written media, all readily accessible worldwide. **Finally**, and most importantly, NESTs are clearly and unequivocally not better teachers than NNESTs by virtue of their native language background. The most important qualification for a teaching position is <u>training and experience</u> in teaching languages.

Nonnative English-speaking teachers (NNETs) offer as many not more inherent advantages. Not only are multiple varieties of English now considered legitimate and acceptable, but also teachers who have actually gone through the process of learning English possess distinct advantages over native speakers. Here some of the advantages of NNESTs .

such as:

1-serving as role models of successful L2 users.

2-Knowing their students' culture and L2 so they have a high level of awareness about cross linguistic differences and cultural differences.

3-Familiarity with what it is like to learn target language as an L2 and be more empathetic with students about their needs and challenges.

4-Providing efficient explanations about target forms, meanings, and uses.

5-Ability to simplify a target language for more comprehensible input.

6-Understanding the roles of target language and evaluate teaching approaches and materials for local suitability.

The emergence of English as an international has had a profound impact on language teaching. In this multi cultural and globalizing world where users of English in the outer and expanding circles

outnumber those in the inner circle by a ratio of more than two to one, it becomes rather in appropriate to use such terms as native or native-like in the evaluation of their communicative competence.

Superdiversity, Transnational, and Translingual Practice

Superdiversity: diversification of diversity due to the multilateral flow of people, goods, and ideas across borders.

Superdiversity: which refers to a diversification of diversity (Hollinger, 1995) due to the multilateral flow of people, goods and ideas across borders.

Transnational: reaching beyond the boundaries and interests of a single nation .

Translingual : meshing two or more languages in transformative ways, generating new forms, meanings, or uses through situated interactions.

Transnational and translingual individuals' use of recourses that is mobile, fluid and hybrid. For instance, **translinguals** are able to align with multiple communities , treating languages as mobile , constructed ,hybrid, and heterogeneous. Communication of people in superdiverse spaces goes beyond only words. Their practice meshes in transformative ways, involving diverse semiotic resources combining oral, written, pictorial, and design modes (Face book, Twitter, online blogs, mobile phones).

To understand translingual users' communicative practices, Canagarajah (2013) urges us to focus on their code-meshing instead of code-switching practices. While code-switching assumes different codes for different contexts , code-meshing provides for merging divers codes in the same context.

Intercultural Competence

There has been an increasing attention to the concept of intercultural competence in the field of language education and professional development in general. This trend reflects the importance of intercultural competence for successful language learning and completion of professional tasks. According to Byram (2000), interculturally competent persons are :

-able to perceive cultures in relationship, both within and outside a society, and

-are able to interpret each culture in the perspective of the other.

-He or she is also someone who has a critical or analytical understanding of their own and other cultures.

-Someone who is conscious of their own perspective, of the way in which their thinking is culturally determined, rather than believing that their understanding and perspective is natural.

Language Policy

Language policy and planning is extremely important **because** it has direct and substantial consequences for society , economics, education and culture.

English plus , a movement representing many organizations, advocated programs in which students' home languages and cultures are valued by schools and other institutions, but in which ESL instruction is promoted and given appropriate funding.

<div dir="rtl">الاستاذ الدكتورة دنيا طاهر حميد/دكتوراه طرائق تدريس اللغة الانكليزية</div>