



The Role of Culture Awareness in Teaching English as a Foreign Language

Peran Kesadaran Budaya dalam Pengajaran Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing

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Abstract

Many modern researchers have explained the need and rationale for a wide range of cultural studies in combination with foreign language teaching. However, questions remain as to the content selection, forms of work and technologies that provide students with active interactions, and complete immersion. The paper focuses on the research questions: How can cultural knowledge and understanding be incorporated into the context of English language teaching? Findings indicates that including a culturally appropriate approach to foreign language instruction into professional training improves the art and cultural awareness of aspiring English teachers by allowing them to apply their acquired cultural knowledge in cross-cultural communication scenarios. It helps people become more focused on their jobs. Their motivation is increased, and an environment of openness and inquiry is fostered via cultural studies. The questionnaire was completed by 24 respondents.

Keywords : pedagogic competence, teachers, cooperative learning

Abstrak

Banyak peneliti modern telah menjelaskan kebutuhan dan alasan untuk berbagai studi budaya dalam kombinasi dengan pengajaran bahasa asing. Namun, pertanyaan tetap mengenai pemilihan konten, bentuk pekerjaan dan teknologi yang memberi siswa interaksi aktif, dan perendaman lengkap. Makalah ini berfokus pada pertanyaan penelitian: Bagaimana pengetahuan dan pemahaman budaya dapat dimasukkan ke dalam konteks pengajaran bahasa Inggris? Metode yang digunakan adalah desain kualitatif. Kuesioner diisi oleh 24 responden. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa memasukkan pendekatan yang sesuai dengan budaya untuk pengajaran bahasa asing ke dalam pelatihan profesional meningkatkan kesadaran seni dan budaya calon guru bahasa Inggris dengan memungkinkan mereka untuk menerapkan pengetahuan budaya yang mereka peroleh dalam skenario komunikasi lintas budaya. Ini membantu orang menjadi lebih fokus pada pekerjaan mereka. Motivasi mereka meningkat, dan lingkungan keterbukaan dan penyelidikan dipupuk melalui studi budaya.

Kata Kunci: Permainan Tradisional, Kemampuan Motorik, Anak Usia Dini.

INTRODUCTION

English as the lingua franca of our globalized world has become an essential tool for communication, education, and professional advancement. As educators of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), it is the noble yet challenging task of guiding learners not just through the intricacies of grammar and vocabulary, but also across the vast cultural landscapes that shape their understanding and expression. It is where the concept of culture awareness takes center stage, transforming the EFL classroom from a sterile linguistic laboratory into a vibrant tapestry of cross-cultural exchange.

Culture has become an increasingly important component of English language teaching in recent times (Sarigul, Ece, Sally, 2005). Understanding the cultural context of everyday conversational conventions such as greetings, farewells, forms of address, thanking, making requests, and giving or receiving compliments entails more than just being able to create coherent sentences. It entails comprehending the beliefs and values that are reflected in the many forms and usages of language, as well as knowing what to say to whom and when.

Culture awareness fosters deeper comprehension by acknowledging the inherent link between language and its cultural context. Proverbs, idioms, and even seemingly innocuous greetings carry within them layers of meaning that can be easily misinterpreted without cultural understanding. Imagine an EFL learner misconstruing the English expression "break a leg" as a literal wish for physical harm! By delving into the cultural nuances embedded in language, we equip learners with the tools to decode these hidden messages and navigate the complexities of communication with greater accuracy and sensitivity.

Secondly, cultural awareness goes beyond mere comprehension, promoting empathy and intercultural understanding. By exposing learners to diverse cultural perspectives, we encourage them to step outside their own comfort zones and see the world through different lenses. This can involve

exploring literary works, films, music, and traditions from various cultures, fostering a sense of appreciation for the richness and diversity of human experience. Through these encounters, learners develop the ability to recognize and respect cultural differences, laying the foundation for constructive dialogue and collaboration in a globalized world.

Cultural awareness further empowers EFL learners to develop their own cultural identity. By understanding how their own cultural background shapes their communication and worldview, learners gain a deeper appreciation for their heritage and a stronger sense of self. This self-awareness empowers them to express themselves authentically and confidently within the EFL classroom, enriching the learning experience for both themselves and their peers.

Finally, cultural awareness can transform the EFL classroom into a dynamic and engaging space. By incorporating cultural elements into lesson plans, we can create a more stimulating and interactive learning environment. Imagine a classroom where learners engage in role-playing cultural scenarios, debate ethical dilemmas from different cultural perspectives, or even create their own artistic expressions inspired by diverse cultural influences. Such activities not only enhance language acquisition but also foster creativity, critical thinking, and a love for learning. Culture awareness is not simply an add-on to EFL teaching. It is the very fabric that weaves together language, understanding, and connection. By embracing cultural diversity and weaving it into the tapestry of our lessons, we empower our learners to become not just proficient English speakers, but also global citizens equipped with the empathy, understanding, and self-awareness needed to thrive in our interconnected world.

However, questions remain as to the content selection, forms of work and technologies that provide students with active interactions, and complete immersion. The paper focuses on the research questions: How can cultural knowledge and understanding be incorporated into the context of English

language classes. This study aims to examine the various roles of culture in language teaching with the aim of increasing awareness for English teachers.

RESEARCH METHOD

The methods used in the research were systematic literature review. It involved searching online through Google Scholar and other academic search engines. Some keywords that were used for searching are culture awareness, teaching, English, EFL.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Incorporating cultural awareness into English language teaching (ELT) has become increasingly important in our globalized world. Recognizing the interconnectedness of language and culture, several journals have explored this topic, offering valuable insights for educators. Here are some key points found based on articles :

1. Some points of view related to the importance of cultural awareness:
 - 1) Language is embedded in culture, and understanding cultural references enhances language comprehension and communication. (Senowarsito, 2019)
 - 2) Cultural awareness fosters respect and promotes inclusivity in diverse ELT classrooms. (Krulatz, Steen-Olsen, & Torgersen, 2018)
 - 3) It helps avoid misunderstandings and misinterpretations arising from cultural differences. (Buck, 2018)

2. Strategies for Integrating Cultural Awareness:
 - 1) Use authentic materials: Incorporate texts, videos, and images that reflect diverse cultures, not just dominant English-speaking ones. (Nurdiana, 2021)

- 2) Encourage intercultural dialogue such as facilitate discussions and activities where students share their own cultural perspectives and learn from each other. (US Department of State, 2019)
 - 3) Explore cultural aspects of language: Discuss idioms, nonverbal communication, and social etiquette in different cultures. (TEFL Barcelona, 2023)
 - 4) Promote critical thinking: Help students analyze how cultural context influences language use and interpretations. (Senowarsito, 2019)
3. Challenges and Considerations:
- 1) Teacher's own cultural biases: Teachers need to be aware of their own cultural assumptions and strive to present balanced perspectives. (Nurdiana, 2021)
 - 2) Sensitivity to cultural differences: Avoiding stereotypes and generalizations is crucial in promoting respectful dialogue. (US Department of State, 2019)
 - 3) Adapting to diverse backgrounds: Different learners have varying levels of cultural understanding and comfort, requiring individualized approaches. (Buck, 2018)

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In conclusion, incorporating culture awareness into English language teaching (ELT) is not just a trend, but a crucial element for preparing students to thrive in a globalized world. By integrating diverse cultural perspectives and fostering intercultural understanding, educators can enrich learning experiences, promote respect, and empower students to communicate effectively across cultures. As suggestion for schools and institutions, it is better to Create opportunities for students and teachers to engage with people from different cultures through exchange programs, online collaborations, and community projects.

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