

THE IMPACT OF CULTURAL ELEMENTS ON TEACHING AND LEARNING LANGUAGE FOR NON-ENGLISH MAJORED STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY AT DONG NAI UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

English is utilized in practically every aspect of life these days, making it an official language that is vital to society. Because of this, teaching English should focus on developing effective communication skills, particularly the capacity to interact with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Language knowledge, such as vocabulary, sentence structure, and grammar, as well as listening, speaking, reading, and writing abilities, should all be included. Put another way, it's critical to include English language culture into the teaching and learning process. This paper aims to examine the relationship between language and culture, as well as the impact of cultural factors on first-year non-English major students' English language learning at Dong Nai University (DNU). Based on this analysis, the author will provide comments and recommendations to both English teachers and students for the most effective and high-quality English communication instruction.

Key words: Cultural factors, English teaching, English learning

1. Introduction

There are cultural components in every language, and they frequently differ between nations. Language is frequently used to convey a nation's culture. Language is sometimes easier to understand than culture. A nation's culture exists, of sure, but inside each nation are many variances. Gaining an understanding of the culture that a language originates from is necessary for language learners. Despite the fact that globalization has an impact on practically every part of the world, every nation and area has its own distinct culture. Therefore, any language student may undoubtedly enhance their language skills by learning to be more welcoming and open-minded toward different cultures and individuals. Because the meaning of a word and the substance of discourse in any language can alter depending on its context, communicators, instructors, and learners of foreign languages can all benefit from an understanding of these cultural aspects. Understanding the meaning and substance of words is only one aspect of how language is perceived; understanding the deeper significance of the information contained in those words is even more crucial. No matter how proficient in syntax and lexicon someone is, if they don't comprehend the local way of life, their communication skills will only extend to the point where they can awkwardly convey their ideas in their language and force Vietnamese culture upon those speaking it. Put differently, for those learning a foreign language, linguistic proficiency alone is insufficient.

New students are always taken aback by their entirely unfamiliar living and learning environment when they first arrive at university. There is no exception for Dong Nai University first-year students. During the learning process, they encounter a wide range of obstacles. In actuality, a variety of other factors, including the influence of socio-cultural factors on learners, determine the success of teaching and learning English, in addition to important ones like the curriculum, the credentials and abilities of the teachers, the learning environment, the attitudes and learning motivations of the learners.

2. Content

2.1. The relationship between language and culture

Language is more than just letters and symbols. Writing and meaningful sounds make up language. However, meaning is not a universal and unchangeable concept that exists in a vacuum or in stiff, lifeless dictionaries. A context containing a speaker or writer, one or more listeners or readers, a particular atmosphere, social relationships, feelings, and goals is always linked to meaning. specific conversation. According to Dell Hymes (1972), the key to understanding language in context is to start with context rather than language itself, since meaning is invariably linked to context. Culture is context in that broad sense. All material and spiritual creations made by humans during their formation, existence, and development are collectively referred to as culture. In the study of numerous humanities and social science disciplines, including literature, linguistics, history, philosophy, and so forth, this is also the meaning of the terminology that is employed. But in addition to being expressed internally, this relationship can also be expressed externally through particular material means. One of language's most significant functions—the ability to think—forms the basis of this internal relationship. Man cannot think without language. Put differently, language serves as the foundation for all human thought processes.

2.2. The important role of cultural factors in teaching and learning English

Claire Kramsch (1993) asserts in her book *Context and Culture in Language Education* that any exchange of words with a non-native speaker is a cultural act. For this reason, studying a language is really learning about culture. The symbols we teach pupils will either be meaningless or sufficiently vague for them to get it entirely wrong if we only teach the language and not the culture. Because of this, the term "language teaching" is now frequently used to refer to "intercultural language teaching," where the idea of "communicative competence" is seen through the prism of intercultural or cross-cultural: Communication now involves reaching out to another person rather than just speaking to them. Vietnamese people frequently learn English to a reasonably good level, but they are unable to communicate with native speakers due to one simple issue: when they meet someone, they frequently inquire about their age, occupation, direction of pay, religion, and political affiliation—all of which are taboo subjects in western communication etiquette.

On the other hand, learning Vietnamese is a regular experience for foreigners who are learning a lot of new things. For instance, Vietnamese people rarely welcome, but they frequently inquire about family and age. They claim that they cease once they receive inquiries of this nature. I believe there has been an invasion of my privacy. The idea that Vietnamese people are impolite follows from there. That's why the article was cut off right away.

Both Vietnamese and Westerners lack knowledge of Western culture, hence the issue in both situations is not one of language proficiency but rather one of intercultural communication competency. Vietnamese language learners from the West are unaware of Vietnamese culture.

2.3 Suggestions for incorporating cultural and cross-cultural components into English instruction for non-majoring in English students at Dong Nai University

It might be argued that culture has a significant impact on how foreign languages, including English, are taught. Given the increasing trend toward globalization, foreign language instructors must develop suitable teaching strategies and curriculum that incorporate cultural and cross-cultural elements, since these elements serve to pique students' interest in learning foreign languages. Students get the opportunity to gain an understanding of the cultures of many nations by beginning the process of studying foreign languages.

2.3.1. Understanding the distinctions between the two culture

Through examples or particular communication scenarios, teachers should demonstrate to students the obvious differences between the two cultures of the two languages—Vietnamese and English—from the very first classes of each topic.

2.3.2. Use amusing stories

In order to highlight cultural differences and help students understand the importance of culture in language learning, teachers can incorporate humorous stories from Vietnamese culture at the start or end of their lessons in English. This will engage students and help them understand the differences between the two languages.

2.3.3. Use idioms and proverbs

Teachers can incorporate a few English proverbs and idioms into their lectures at the start or close of the session, encouraging students to respond and speculate on the meaning and usage of the terms. As a result, throughout each session, students may broaden their vocabulary and acquire proverbs that they can use in conversation. Additionally, this helps students comprehend British culture in contrast to Vietnamese society.

2.3.4. Description of the picture

To put it simply, the instructor can display a photo of a British dish, celebration, or outfit during each session, and then assign the students to work together to memorize the description in front of the class. The instructor will then give a clearer explanation. It may be concluded that this is a straightforward, kind, understandable, and appealing cultural approach for pupils.

2.3.5. Create communication situations

Instructors might assign role-playing exercises where students act out scenarios from bars, restaurants, hotels, etc. and take on roles such as Vietnamese and British.

2.3.6. Cross-cultural corner

Students are asked to work in groups to study a cultural feature of a country (first preference is given to nations where English is the national language). Together, learn about a nation, but focus on different aspects for each group, such as cuisine, travel, entertainment, festivals, and customs. Students' interest in studying can be sparked by weekly country studies, which can also cultivate a passion for learning about the cultures of other nations.

3. Conclusion

To put it briefly, populations speaking diverse languages employ a continually evolving form of English. The capacity to communicate empathetically and adaptably, together with a profound awareness of the spirit of openness, will enable DNU instructors and students to grasp this growth trend. Therefore, adjustments are required to provide a catalyst for reconsidering English language instruction, encompassing practice, teaching assessment, and support resources. Thus, integrating linguistics and cultural diversity, raising language learners' knowledge of many cultures, and facilitating cross-cultural communication in English language instruction are critical concerns that require immediate attention. The author's reflections in this essay are limited to the broad link between culture and language, and then to the significance of cultural variables in the teaching and learning of English. Here are some ideas for incorporating cultural features

into English to support students in the most efficient way possible when studying the language's cultural components.

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