

TEACHING CULTURE IN ESP CLASSES

Tohira Islamova

“Foreign languages” department teacher,

Tashkent institute of finance

***Abstract:** While language and culture are generally recognized to be intimately linked, English for Specific Purposes has typically been seen as “a cultural”. This article is about cultural information is a necessary component of any ESP course and that a contrastive-comparative approach can help the learner in appropriating other cultures.*

***Keywords:** contrastive-comparative approach, cultural awareness, English for Specific Purposes, intercultural communication*

Over the past years, many books, articles, journals have been written concerning the role and the importance of teaching culture in ESL classes. It has been said that language implies culture, yet there are many other aspects left out during the English classes due to the need of teachers to focus their attention primary on language, to the detriment of achieving the proper cultural objectives. Therefore, this paper offers some definitions of culture, underlining at the same time its importance in ESP classes.

Culture is a broad, complex notion, to which various definitions have been assigned along the time. Perhaps, the most important one and the most appropriate to the context of my paper is the explanation of culture in point of its relation to the language. It has been said that language is part of culture and, at the same time, culture is part of language so they cannot be separated.¹

Richard Swiderski believes that “Whatever presence culture may have in the language classroom, those who enter the classroom expect culture. They

¹ Ferris, Dana, Hedgcock, John, Teaching ESL Composition: Purpose, Process, and Practice, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1998

have explicit expectations, expressed perhaps as a wish to learn about the ways and lives of the people who speak the language to be learned, or as a need to know how to behave and how not to behave while among these people. Students expect to receive this information, and teachers expect to teach it. This is the outright cultural act of language teaching/learning set within the cultural environment of the classroom.”

1. Claire Kramsch distinguishes two definitions of culture, when talking about the cultural component of language teaching: one coming from the humanities, the other from the social sciences. The first one focuses on “the way a social group represents itself and others through its material productions, be they works of art, literature, social institutions, or artifacts of everyday life, and the mechanisms for their reproduction and preservation through history.” The other refers to “the attitudes and beliefs, ways of thinking, behaving and remembering shared by members of that community.”

2. From the anthropological point of view, culture is in fact the way people live. Thus, the presence of culture in ESL classes is of high importance for students since, gaining insight into their own culture and understanding the culture of the second language implies an awareness of the way they live and think. In 1983, Stern recommended four curricula: linguistic, cultural, communication and general education, highlighting the importance of culture in ESL classes. ²

In ESP classes, culture is a very important aspect intermingling with the specific vocabulary students usually acquire. Teachers should take into consideration the fact that their students have already studied language for several years so they have the necessary linguistic skills to comprehend language. The task of interspersing culture into the English classes becomes easier for the ESP teachers since they can present culture through the specific vocabulary or expressions students need to acquire.

² Grigoriu , Gabriela, An English Language Teaching Reader, vol. I, Reprografia Universitatii din Craiova, 2000

In 1987 Damen believed that the presentation of a critical incident in which some problems occur among people from different cultures is another important approach when teaching culture. Students take into consideration that specific situation and people's reactions and comment on the cultural values represented by the actions of each. "Their objective is to reach a consensus on a course of action that would have been more appropriate in that particular situation".³

Culture is present in all ESP classes no matter the students' specializations: be they students in economics, sociology, theology, geography, so on and so forth, culture being closely linked to language and its use in order to communicate successfully and proficiently. For example, students in economics need to acquire the necessary knowledge concerning the culture of the second language, since, in their future careers, they might encounter different situations when they will have to be aware of the similarities and differences between their culture and the culture of the second language. The teacher may use texts concerning the monetary system of that particular country, its banking system, means of transport, ways of trading, etc. By means of these texts, students not only that they learn the specific vocabulary they are interested in, but, they find out new and interesting things about the country whose language they speak. Debates are also very important since the students have the chance to express their opinion on different subjects, also becoming aware of the main differences between the two countries. By learning expressions related to a telephone conversation, an interview, a negotiation, students become aware of the way they are supposed to act when dealing with foreign business partners. Courtesy phrases and nonverbal communication are of high importance for those students who will meet speakers of the second language in specific social situations that carry important implications not only socially but also psychologically. Thus, teaching communication implies teaching culture. Before studying a language, the

³ Hendor, Donald, Hendon, Rebecca Angeles, Herbig, Paul, Cross-Cultural Business Negotiations, Praeger Publishers, Westport, 1996

student has to get in touch with a set of values and rules pertaining to that language. To the person who grows under such conditions, the above mentioned elements may seem normal but for the one who learns the new language and culture may seem strange. In the case of ESP students, it is important to be familiarized with the British and American culture, not only with the practical use of the language.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

1. Ferris, Dana, Hedgcock, John, Teaching ESL Composition: Purpose, Process, and Practice, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1998
2. Grigoroiu , Gabriela, An English Language Teaching Reader, vol. I, Reprografia Universitatii din Craiova, 2000
3. Hendor, Donald, Hendon, Rebecca Angeles, Herbig, Paul, Cross-Cultural Business Negotiations, Praeger Publishers, Westport, 1996
4. Kress, Gunther, Communication and Culture: An Introduction. Contributors,
5. New South Wales University Press, Kensington, 1988 Pachler, Harbert, Teaching Modern Foreign Languages at Advanced Level , Routledge, 1999
6. Swiderski, Richard, Teaching Language, Learning Culture, Bergin & Garvey, 1993