**Teaching Culture in the EFL Class**

Language and culture are interconnected so that they complement each other. Sun (2013) describes language as a primary vehicle by which a culture emanates its beliefs, values and norms (371). Similarly, language is influenced by culture – “If there is no culture, language will be like water without a source or a tree without roots” (Sun, 2013, P.371). Thus, the connection between language and culture must be considered in foreign language teaching because the main purpose of learning a foreign language is to learn the customs and traditions of the speech community, and to become competent for communication with speakers of the foreign language (Sun , 2013, P. 371).

1. **Culture in the EFL Class**

Successful communication requires proficiency on multiple levels – grammar, phonology, lexis and culture. The latter is a fundamental factor if we communicate on an international level. Culture is a complex term that can be defined from various perspectives as far as teaching EFL is concerned. It can be accessed through five different views – the communicative view, the classical curriculum view, the instrumental or culture-free-language view, the deconstructionist view, and the competence view. In the communicative era, a combination of these five views is frequent. The first three views pay little attention to cultural context concerning its contribution to successful language learning.

The last two views treat language and culture as a unity, with one being essential to the full understanding of the other (Holme 18). In other words, they cling to the idea of language being affected and shaped by culture. *The deconstructionist view* offers a critical view of a language. It attempts to dissociate a language student from implicit meanings in language. Language is a social semiotic and is under the influence of its context. The best example of language analysis is explaining the metaphors and their hidden meaning. It is a fact that certain fixed expressions used in the English language lose their meaning when they are translated into other languages. Likewise, other languages have their distinctive phrases, idioms or expressions that would sound strange if translated into English for an English speaker*. The competence view* “contends that the knowledge of a language’s culture is thought essential for a full understanding of a language’s nuances of meaning” (Holme 20). The last view unifies culture and language as scaffolding for successful communication and that is the notion that should be aspired to in English teaching.

Due to inseparability of culture and language, Cunningsworth adds, a study of language solely as an abstract system would not equip learners to use it in the real world (qtd. in Skopinskaja 39). Therefore, teaching materials (TM) should include elements of culture. Also, teachers need to motivate students and make the learning of a new culture interesting. Culture per se can be described from various points of view. It is a matter of interest in anthropology, psychology, sociology, linguistics, and numerous other sciences. Also, many people equate culture with food, drinks, behaviour, music and art, among others. Culture is an essential part of every person’s identity but language is the most expressive part of that culture. Furthermore, a person’s way of thinking, emotions and communication can be affected by a change from one culture to another (Çakir 155). Tang promotes the view that culture and language are interconnected. She suggests that “to speak a language well, one has to be able to think in that language” and she adds that “language is the soul of the country and people who speak it” (Tang). That clearly suggests that language and culture are inseparably linked and that they have to be paired with one another in the EFL syllabi.

**2. The history of teaching culture**

In the past, language learning has been restricted to teacher-centred teaching; traditional ways of visualization and textbooks were mainly language oriented (Wendt 92). Furthermore, “people learned a second or foreign language in order to read and study its literature” (Lessard-Clouston). Therefore, this was the main source of culture. Students were getting acquainted with the target culture through novels they were reading and at that point there is no synthesis of language and culture. Cultural awareness has its beginnings in the 1960s and 1970s. Brooks emphasized the importance of culture, not in relation to the study of literature, but in the means of language learning. His seminal work Language and Language Learning (1960) offers sixty four topics regarding culture among which are greetings, town and country life, cafes, bars, restaurants, expletives, verbal taboos, patterns of politeness, etc. (Thanasoulas). These topics are nothing less current today and similar topics can be seen in most of the EFL textbooks, as it is also evident in the textbook analysis. Conclusively, Brooks certainly paved the way for modern teaching of culture and the topics covered nowadays. Byram, Morgan et al. state that it is only in the 1980s that scholars begin to study the dynamics of culture and its impact on ‘successful’ language learning. For example, Littlewood advocates the value of culture but he still emphasizes linguistic proficiency as the aim of communicative proficiency. A view that has much more common ground to the view that is fostered today makes its appearance towards the end of the 1980s. Melde mentions ‘critical awareness’ of social life and he sees it as an essential part of foreign language teaching. This can be linked to cultural awareness that is included in modern EFL teaching (Thanasoulas). In the past few decades, globalization has taken hold and the need for communication in foreign languages has increased. However, the connection between language and culture has not always been important as it is today. During the 20th century culture had slowly been displaced from its unity with literature to an equal position in relation to language. In order to achieve complete foreign language acquisition, it is important to deduce which aspects of culture should be taught and in which manner to incorporate a unity of culture into EFL teaching.