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CULTURAL ASPECTS OF TEACHING ENGLISH IN THE TRIBAL COLLEGES OF ODISHA

Sudhansu Kumar Dash

Abstract:-Culture is closely related to language. It indicates that in learning a language, learners also need to learn about the culture. English is one of the foreign languages which are taught in schools, from primary up to secondary schools. Moreover, there are also kindergarten and playgroups which provide English as the subject. In this case, English is a language which is very important because it is taught in every level of education. For the English teachers, an appropriate teaching strategy is needed to make the students learn English more easily. One of the additional aspects that occur in learning English is the cultural aspect. In learning a language, the learners should also learn the culture of where the language comes. Language is rooted in culture and culture is reflected and passed on by language from one generation to the next. From this, one can see that learning a new language involves learning a new culture. In English, the learners should also know the western culture to use English in the appropriate way. Culture is a shared background as the result of common language and communication style of a society. Culture is a social practice which produces, circulates and exchanges meanings. In sum, culture is a result of people's thought or imagination so that they make it as belief or customs. Through the belief and customs, human being has the thing called culture. Although culture is broad in meaning and types, people can still study culture through its differences and similarities.

Keywords:Cultural Aspects , Tribal Colleges , foreign languages , communication style .

INTRODUCTION:

There is a term socio cultural competence in the language learning. Socio cultural competence is one of aspects of communicative competence. Cultural factor is one of the components of socio cultural competence. Hence, in order to gain the socio cultural competence, language learners have to learn the culture of the target language. In schools, English teachers can develop their students' socio cultural competence by conveying the cultural aspect during the teaching and learning process. It is a challenge for English teachers to insert the cultural aspects when they teach English in class. As every language will reflect the values, beliefs and assumption of the culture it came from, so learning a language will also involve learning culture the language expresses.

Acquiring knowledge of a target language is often called the fifth skill in language learning. Students differences along with the structural and typological differences of the language is vital. Knowledge of differences helps the students prevent misinterpretation caused by confusing referents, and also avoid associating American concepts with the gestures, objects and grammatical forms of the target language. as the aims of language are to develop both linguistic and competence, which can be called an intercultural communicative competence, just not regarded as the knowledge for an educational objective' in itself that is separate from language. When we regard language as a social practice, culture becomes the core of language and culture awareness must be viewed both as enabling language proficiency and as being the outcome of reflection on language proficiency. A teacher's role is not to impart facts about the target culture, but to help students obtain the skills to understand the facts that they will discover for themselves in studying the target culture. In this way, students will be prepared for various situations they have never previously encountered. Even though language teachers all know the importance of culture, it has been and is still ignored simply because language teachers feel that they do not have enough time to talk about the target culture in regular language classes. This is a common complaint in language, but teachers come to find out that without bringing in the aspect of the language, language itself cannot bring about the intended results, and students do not fully understand the language in context. As a result of this, students do not advance the way the curriculum would indicate they should.

Teachers can solve this problem in part by having heritage students play an active role in class. Most of the heritage students have been to the target country once or twice, and are already familiar with the culture of the target country even if there are differences in terms of the extent of their knowledge. Points of interest might arise from the differences in how each student perceives, relates to and identifies with the target culture, as this varies individually.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

An attempt has been made to review the related studies conducted in the field. The review is not exhaustive. A classroom observation is also done to collect more data. The subjects of this study are teachers who have knowledge on western culture and deliver it to the students during teaching and learning process. Those teachers should have two main criteria. The first criterion is that the English teachers have to know western culture from a real source. The real source is either they once lived in an English-speaking country or they once know native speakers so that they directly get the western culture knowledge from them. The second criterion is the delivery of western culture itself by those teachers during teaching and learning process. In qualitative research, in-depth interview is like a usual conversation between the interviewer and interviewee rather than a formal event such as press conference, yet the responses of the interviewee are previously determined by the interviewer (Marshall and Rossman, 1995:80). In order to facilitate the interview, the researcher made a list of objectives called Interview Guide. The questions chosen were based on the example of basic cultural value in America which involved individual freedom, self reliance, equality and privacy as stated by Grouling (2012). The questions were also related to family since the family life in western culture also needed to be learned. The example of family life which could be asked was the fact that in western culture, children in age above seventeen was considered mature, so that the parents would not interrupt their children's business much. Moreover, parents would suggest their children to solve their problems themselves. Kramsch (1993) introduces several interactive activities in dealing with literary texts at the intermediate level. Conventionally, after reading literary texts, comprehension questions are given to check whether the students fully understood the story. Instead, various activities in the style of communicative teaching can follow after reading literary texts, such as acting out a particular scene or discussing the reading in various configurations such as pairs, small groups or the whole class together. What she argues is that literary texts can be used as a 'springboard' to have students express their ideas and relate reading to their own experience. Heritage students can play a very productive role in interactive activities that are especially designed to improve speaking and listening comprehension skills. The effect of having heritage learners in a classroom along with non-heritage learners is more conspicuous when they are engaged in small group activities. They are often seen leading a group and taking initiatives, enhancing everyone's productivity during various group activities. This may be due to the fact that they feel more comfortable when it comes to oral and aural activities than their non-heritage peers. Cultural 'facts' presented in languages classrooms are often those that a tourist could be expected to know or observe when visiting a country. Hence, the label 'tour guide' is sometimes applied to the culture studies perspective (Galloway cited in Omaggio-Hadley 1993). Such a stance on culture places importance on knowledge about the history, geography and institutions of a nation (Crozet, Liddicoat & Lo Bianco 1999), and often represents the sort of knowledge that residents of the country could be expected to possess. This stance is typified by Hirsch's (1987) work. Hirsch lists the knowledge that culturally literate American citizens could be expected to have and to share. The list includes geographical names, famous people, historical events, patriotic folklore, texts (including speeches, historical declarations, film, television programs and literature), scientific terms, political concepts and so on (Hirsch, 1987).

The culture studies perspective is one still present in classrooms at the beginning of the twenty-first century. In the United States, Begler (1998) comments that in practice, 'despite more than 40 years of culture studies and programs, curriculums [sic] featuring holidays and food festivals... still seem to be the extent of the offerings in many schools' (Collins, Czarra & Smith (1998). Such a conceptual framework is inclusive of the 'Five Fs': food, fashion, festivals, folklore and famous people (Galloway cited in Omaggio-Hadley 1993; Begler 1998), and focuses on facts and ways of life.

Critics of the culture studies perspective note that the view of culture is, again, represented as static and that the information learned dates rapidly. There is little accounting for variation in cultures, and this may establish stereotypes (Omaggio-Hadley 1993). Furthermore, Galloway (cited in Omaggio-Hadley 1993) suggests that the culture studies perspective may result in classroom programs that are disjointed. She labels such programs as the 'Frankenstein' approach, because they consist of bits and pieces of information about a culture sewn together. A 'by-the-way' approach is another method adopted. In these programs, bits of behavior are selected at random in order to emphasize difference (Galloway cited in Omaggio-Hadley 1993). Seelye (1994) is even more scathing of cultural programs based on what he terms 'trivia', likening such teaching and learning to a game of 'Filling Freddie Farkle full of fickle facts'. The culture studies perspective, then, tends 'to view culture as a relatively invariant and static entity made up of accumulated, classifiable, observable, thus eminently teachable and learnable 'facts' Paige . (1999,). The culture studies perspective centers on superficial behaviors, and does not examine underlying values.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. to examine English teachers' understanding of western culture
2. to examine the importance to deliver cultural aspect of a target language when teaching the English language in Odisha .

3. to examine English teachers conveyance of the cultural aspects during English teaching and learning process in Odisha.
4. to examine English teachers conveyance of the cultural aspects to the students during English learning process in Odisha.
5. to examine, the basic cultural value of the western English speaking people.

METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative approach to investigate the delivery of Western culture during the English teaching and learning process by the teachers. Survey research method is followed for conducting the study. Secondary data is collected from the Education department Govt of Odisha concerned district and block offices. Fieldwork is conducted by generating primary data.

a. Universe of the study

For the purpose of the study, colleges of five districts in Odisha state are selected. These are Nuapada, Koraput, Sundargarh, Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj. In each district there are 100 centers and 100 teachers. Twenty five teachers are selected from each district, so the total comes to 125.

b. Tools for collecting data

A questionnaire was prepared. Important items which are relevant to the implementation of the program were included in the questionnaire, educational qualifications of the instructors, educational qualifications of the learners, their training, infra-structure available in the study centre, incentives for instructors and learners, role of local support, supervision and the impact of the program were covered in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was for the students. The number of students was 25 ideally because the researcher took one class from +2 students, as the sample but unfortunately there were three students absent on the day this questionnaire was conducted. The questionnaire consists of thirty questions and there are two types of question, multiple choice and open questions. Those questions were classified into three groups based on the variables; they were (a) the comprehension of western culture and (b) the delivery of western culture in teaching and learning process (c) the influence of western culture towards the students' motivation in learning English.

The questionnaire prepared with the inclusion of the above mentioned items was pre-tested among 125 +2 students in a nearby institution. After pre-testing, it was administered among 125 instructors. 75 percent responded to the questionnaire.

FINDINGS

The description of the findings was divided into three sub-points based on the instruments that the researcher used in the data collection. They were interview guide, questionnaire and classroom observation.

The first result was from the in-depth interview. There are four interviewees who are also the English teachers of the school. They teach the +2 students. The interview was done face to face. The first question asked to the interviewee was about their style of English. The objective of this question is to investigate the understanding of the differences among the three English styles. Teacher 1 said that she uses the one which is more suitable to their need in teaching English at the college, so she does not use one particular style, yet she knows about the three English styles. Then, teacher 2 also stated that he does not use one particular style in his English. Teachers 3 and 4 do not use one particular style of English. The second question was about how the teachers view culture in relation to language. It aims to know if they are aware of the need in learning culture when people learn a foreign language. The four teachers stated that culture is closely related to language. The third question of this interview was about the teachers' experience in working together with native speakers. It is intended to investigate the source of the knowledge about culture they have. This is important since the validity of the information is being measured. The four teachers stated that they have worked with native speakers in the different colleges in attending different seminars in the past and more than once. They said that there used to be native speakers who became the guest teachers in the colleges. The fourth question was about how westerners or natives introduce themselves and what gesture they make. The four interviewees answer the same that if westerners want to introduce themselves, they will just simply say their names while shaking hands. This can be inferred that it is no doubt that all interviewees know the most basic activity westerners have which also represent their culture. The fifth question was about the topics that most westerners have to open a conversation. There are several answers to this question. The interviewees that westerners commonly talk about weather, the recent issue which happened in the country, weekend activities, and favorite things about the country or place they are in at that time, and events which occur in those places. The sixth question was about western family. The interviewees were asked if they find something special or unusual in western family. Teacher 1 said that western family uses to be flexible. Teacher 2 stated that they tend to be fair in task division. Teacher 3 said that it was rare to find only mothers who take care of the children or doing household activities. Fathers and mothers usually work together. While, teacher 4 noted that the family member value privacy very much even if it is their children's. The seventh question was about the way parents treat their children. Both teacher 1 and 3 said that western parents never forbid their children to fulfill their curiosity. Teacher 2 also said that parents will support their children in doing their favorite activities. Besides, teacher 4 stated that western parents are very discipline. The eighth question was the continuation

question of the seventh question. They were asked if western parents are included in very discipline parents. All of them said yes for this question. The ninth question was about the fact that those teachers convey these values to their students in the teaching and learning process. All of them answered that they conveyed the cultural values when it was suitable for the topic they were discussing. The tenth question was asking about the strategy they used to deliver the cultural aspects in class. Three teachers said that they had a strategy to convey the cultural aspect. They make agreement with the students in order to make the students accustomed to the western culture.

The Result of Questionnaire

The questionnaire was for the students. The questionnaire consists of ten questions and there are two types of question, multiple choice and open questions. Those questions were classified into three groups based on the variables; they were :

- (a) the comprehension of western culture and (b) the delivery of western culture in teaching and learning process
- (c) the influence of western culture towards the students' motivation in learning English.

(a) The comprehension of western culture. There were 72% of the participants who choose shaking hands for question about the gesture westerners have when introducing themselves. Then, 69% of them choose the current weather which is the correct answer for question about the topic westerners have when they talk to a stranger. For question about the proper form of addressing, 53% of the participants choose Mr. Grisham. There are also 61% of the participants who choose mothers and fathers do household activities in turn for question about the role division in western family. In short, it is proven that mostly the students have understood about the western culture and it can be inferred that they have been familiar with those culture.

(b) The delivery of western culture in teaching and learning process .There were 84% of the participants admitted that the English teachers convey the cultural aspect. Most participants or 71% of them stated that their teachers conveyed western culture not more than three times a month. While, there were several examples of the cultural activities that the teachers have taught them. The question about the way teachers conveyed the cultural aspect in teaching and learning process lead 79% of the participants answered that the delivery of western culture was done based on the topics they discussed.

(c) The influence of western culture towards students' motivation in learning English There were 96% of the participants who feel that the understanding of western culture help them in learning English and that understanding the western culture influences the students' motivation in learning English in several aspects.

The Result of Classroom Observations

The classroom observations were conducted four times. It was known that the class was opened by a performance of a student who spoke out wise words. This activity is intended to motivate the students and it also can improve their confidence in speaking English. There were also students' performances on the next classroom observation. This time, the student in charge had to retell the book she had read. This activity is aimed to train the students to be more confident when they have to speak in front of the audiences. In the third classroom observation, the students were asked to retell the story from a movie they had watched. Besides retelling the story, this student had to find the moral values of the story. The last classroom observation was begun the class with agreement dealing with politeness. The teacher taught the students how to be polite when they wanted to interrupt or ask questions to the teacher.

SUGGESTIONS

No two students will have the same experience or understanding of any given culture. People and families celebrate holidays differently, use language differently and eat different foods, despite an overall assumption that everyone is "similar" within a culture or country.

In this respect, heritage students who have various experiences can be used as facilitators (if they are willing) in introducing, discussing and explaining certain of the target language, thereby promoting peer learning. Of course, an instructor cannot fully plan for or count on students' input for any given class, but can only be aware when a "teachable moment" occurs and try to take full advantage of it. Otherwise, the instructor can speak to heritage students individually or as a group to see where they might be comfortable sharing with the class. The instructor should always remember to remind the class as a whole that what they are hearing is one person's point of view or experience and others from the same culture might not see it the same way. Right from the early stages of instruction, students should be exposed to various of the target culture. For the the Indian Universities several different of the target culture are selected, and the introduction of these is evenly spread out throughout the two years of language instruction. They are introduced depending on the students' overall linguistic ability and their knowledge. So, it is important how you design and organize the syllabus, considering various points and the time frame of the class, i.e., how many years of language instruction are offered, and what can fit into a year-long or semester-based plan.

DISCUSSION

This research was intended to investigate the delivery of western culture during English teaching and learning process by English teachers in the Tribal colleges of Odisha. The possibility of meeting native speakers should trigger English teachers to convey cultural aspect when they were teaching. Thus, cultural competence may become the requirement to interact with native speakers since it helps them in using English properly. The indicator of cultural competence mastery can be known when the language learners use the proper words and gestures when they communicate with native speakers. This research presented two research questions to be answered. They were: how well do the English teachers understand about western culture and whether those teachers deliver the western culture during teaching and learning process. The result of in-depth interview which engaged four English teachers showed that the teachers understand well about the western culture, especially the most basic ones such as in introduction, politeness and family life. They also stated that they delivered the western culture during teaching and learning process. Basically, all of them convey the cultural aspect based on the topics they were discussing. They would add the cultural aspect when it was necessary. In addition, the three of them also made a strategy in training the students to be accustomed to western culture. They always have a performance as the opening of the class. Some of them called it a moment of silence session. In the questionnaire which was given to twenty two students of +2 students the mastery of English usage could be seen. For instance, the question about the topic westerners have when interact with others for the first time might lead the students to choose the improper answers such as marital status or age. The possibility that students would choose marital status or age was triggered by the fact that those students imitated what their parents usually did. However, it was also possible that the students do not like it since they had been thought by their English teachers that marital status and age were sensitive topics to be asked. But, they still asked that because their parents also did it, so they thought that asking about marital status or age was good and polite.

CONCLUSION

These conclusions are based on the data analysis which has been done. Firstly, the English teachers of urban Odisha understand well about the western culture. Secondly, the delivery of cultural aspect is also done by the English teachers during teaching and learning process. Thirdly, based on the questionnaire which was distributed to the students, it is known that through learning culture, they can expand their comprehension of English. Since learning culture is important in improving students' communicative competence, it is suggested that the delivery of western culture in English teaching and learning process should be done. The strategies in delivering the cultural aspect should be thought carefully in order to make students more interested in learning it and do not feel forced. It is also suggested for further researchers to conduct another research dealing with the delivery of western cultures in English teaching and learning process, especially the most suitable teaching strategy that can be used to deliver the cultural aspect of English.

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