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Importance of Investigating Linguacultural Variability in Learning Foreign Languages

Elnara Putayeva

*PhD,**Azerbaijan University of Languages, Baku, Azerbaijan,**ORCID ID: 0000-0002-1719-1670, putayeva.elnara@adu.edu.az*

Abstract. *The aim of the article is to investigate and prove the importance of linguocultural variability in the study of foreign languages. Results.* In general, the question “Does language determine culture or culture determines language?” is still definitive as a fundamental question of new studies and investigations. Results show that these and other similar questions, as well as forms of interaction of language and culture, have recently become serious in a wider context, and have been a subject of discussion. As we know, language and culture both give distribution to the process of communication, and this interconnection helps foreign language learners to declare pragmatic, semantic and syntactic meanings in order to cooperate. *Scientific novelty.* This article is the author’s contribution to the study of the interaction of language and culture as two interrelated social phenomena that develop under conditions of mutual influence. *Conclusions.* Anyone who prefers to intercommunicate with success through language and culture must be aware of the differences between various cultures. In this example, anyone who evolves such communication should consider sociolinguistic, discourse, grammatical and strategic skills. As a rule, certain concepts may be specific to one culture, and might not be found in other cultures. This case can be considered as one of the crucial reasons of investigating cultural variability of certain language, and this is primary to success in learning foreign languages. While borderlines between languages are very clearly observed and followed, cultural boundaries only originate as a consequence of speakers’ cultural “collision”. Observations give us a chance to make a conclusion that in most countries, multiculturalism exists as a form of equal coexistence of different cultures within the same country. As far as people are related to various cultures, their cultural values are quite different. One can consider that numbers of values exist simply because they “disagree” from each other.

Keywords: variability; language; culture; cultural values; linguacultural

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Introduction

Culture can be characterised as a “social inheritance” transferred from one generation to another with the conglomeration of individual features differentiating people

of one society from another one. Culture is not only a fact, but also a unity of social activities to be followed. It is an exceptional phenomenon of human society with variability and changing diversity. Culture forms minds and opinions, signifies ideas, and spreads knowledge on customs and values. All of these characteristics are communicated through language which is an inseparable part of culture (Ali et al., 2015).

The essence of culture for human society is possible because of the development and use of a common language among the people. It is the effect of culture on human intelligence that both effects human individuality and makes one to act as a member of society. As a consequence, people continue to follow predominating customs, traditions, and values inherited through a social arrangement. Therefore, hardly any human society can exist without developing language and culture. Culture as a social process deals with the use of language and communication experienced by people in given circumstances (Ali et al., 2015). The process of achieving success in communicating in a foreign language both demands an individual to practice various linguistic forms and forces to become familiar with the culture of the intended language in order to interpret intercultural communication. Therefore, in learning foreign languages it is necessary to provide learners' cultural scope and perception so as to develop capability in intercultural communication of target language.

It is undeniable that both language and culture serve communication. Anyone who wants to communicate successfully through language and culture must be aware of the existing differences between cultures. In this case, any person can develop communicative abilities — that is, not only to learn grammatical rules, but also to know where, whom and when to convey these rules in the form of a correct sentence (Chia-lin, 2008).

As a rule, many problems might arise when transferring information from one language to another. The reason for such a language inconsistency is the lack of an exact equivalent in another language for the expression of a particular concept, or even the absence of the concept itself. Given that concepts or objects expressed by a particular word are unique to one culture and do not exist in other cultures, it is acceptable that there are no appropriate words to express them. Description of the world surrounding the language carriers is not only directly reflected in the language, but also determines the characteristics of the language's reflection in speech. That is the reason why knowing the cultural environment surrounding a language is the key to success in learning a foreign language. While boundaries between languages are very clearly traced, cultural boundaries only emerge as a result of the cultural "collision" of native and non-native speakers. There are two levels of influence on the process of language perception under the influence of culture, the first of which can be attributed to the formal features of language, and the second to the levels of reflection in words and sentences of each national and ethnic groups in the process of reflection (Mammadov, 2015).

Recent Research and Publication Analysis. In our country, the interaction of language and culture, the diversity created by national culture, the factors influencing formation of the cultural environment, and such kind of issues have been the subject of academic research. In the article on the relationship between language and culture, A. Gasimov (2011) noted that it is difficult to determine "*the culture of language or the language of culture*". Thus, in addition to the influence of language on the social and technological development of society, the "products" of culture also expand their influence on language.

According to R. Aslanova (2004), there are areas in the dynamics of culture that undermine previous cultural values and achievements. Attempts to replace the existing culture with a “new culture” in the ongoing processes can promote tendencies that deny cultural heritage. N. Veliyeva (2013) noted in her book “Some Aspects and Peculiarities of Intercultural Communication in the Process of Globalization” that culture and communication are considered inseparable, because culture, in addition to managing communication, has a direct impact on the decoding of meanings expressed during this process and the submission of the situation that determines the process of communication.

Language and culture as two social phenomena are closely related to each other and develop in conditions of mutual influence. This relationship and interaction between language and culture was historically under investigation of many scientists and philosophers. This relationship and influence over the last century lead to the observation of more serious studies and theoretical analyzes on the basis of new researches. It shows how relevant and important the topic is.

Aim of the article

The aim of the article is to investigate and prove the importance of linguocultural variability in the study of foreign languages.

Our *approach* to this problem is that when discussing the importance of the linguocultural environment, it is undeniable to note two essential methods. Firstly, at the linguistic level, culture affects semantic, pragmatic, and discourse levels of any language. Secondly, the detailed examination of language material on cultural foundation is convicted to alter relevantly at all times. Here it is possible to mention some of the teaching devices related to culture since using them teachers can present varieties both on cultural and linguistic levels. Teachers should understand different racial and ethnic groups’ cultural values, traditions, and contributions to society, and incorporate that knowledge into their instruction. Teachers should include multiple perspectives in their instruction and make sure the images displayed in classrooms – such as on bulletin boards – represent a wide range of diversity. Teachers should also contextualize issues within race, class, ethnicity and gender. Teachers should connect students’ prior knowledge and cultural experiences with new knowledge.

Describing and Explaining Culture

One of the mostly-used methods of transferring the cultural information has been by explanation. For this method, teachers could prefer to talk about different subjects, scientific achievements and other small details of a foreign people. Furthermore, this information could be put forward by groups of students or by individual ones. While having a higher competence in foreign language, learners can present them in target language, both in and out-of-class activities. These methods can be accompanied by visual illustration in the form of charts, diagrams, maps, and pictures, with films and slides where it is necessary and available (Qu, 2010).

Experiencing Culture through the Language Use

While using the above-mentioned method, one may collide such a problem: Do not we waste time in our language class for the teaching culture in this way? There is an-

other approach which doesn't take time from the essential work of language learning. It is fully combined with the process of assimilation of vocabulary and syntax. Since language is closely connected with every aspect of culture, this approach is useful, when a teacher is fully informed of cultural differences and his students absorb the meaning in many various ways. This knowledge should be part of each foreign language teaching classroom where the teacher should orient the thinking of the students so that they will feel curious about such linguacultural varieties and begin applying what they have attained in their active oral work.

Main research material

Learners of foreign languages may also use the skills in developing their own abilities. While being encouraged to reckon language learning as role playing, learners are inclined to carry this over into classroom acts with gestures, and reaction to simulate a situation in the second culture. Furthermore, students can invent their own situations based on their understanding of the daily life, or the imitation of a foreign movies, etc. Other Popular Activities Within Culture (songs, dances, etc.).

It is always recommended that a sense of reality should be brought into the classroom while students have the opportunity to enjoy these types of activities native speakers of the language enjoy. Some teachers invite celebrities of national sports, dancers, singers, or other native speakers. From time to time, it is advisable to invite native speakers to the language classroom. Learners can ask them questions interesting for them and thus get a clearer understanding of the cultural background. Regular communication may help to improve the mutual understanding and respect of different cultures which is one of the outmost goals of our language teaching and learning.

It is undeniable that foreign language teachers should be the members of any foreign culture, having the capability to experience and compare both the home and target cultures. And teachers of the culture of a linguistic community need informed insight into the culture to be taught and informed insight into the culture of the language learners (Qu, 2010). If possible, teachers should get into communication with native speakers, discussing all kinds of subjects with them while educating students to cultural interpretation. Finally, the teachers of another culture must encourage sensitivity toward the attitudes of the students toward their own and foreign culture, moving delicately toward attitude change. Above all, native teachers and foreign-language teachers should prevail the temptation to "show off" the superiority of one culture over another.

F. Mamedov (2015) first advised to study the national culture of people in order to study their behavior. By national culture, the author noted that it is determined by ethno-national characteristics. As can be seen from this approach, the formation of culture makes it necessary to realise it in unity with the language system. It is well known that in many multicultural countries there are different ethnic tribes and peoples who share and accept similar cultural values. At the end of the communication of individuals with these characteristics, difficulties can arise from the psychological aspect of cultural diversity. The deeper the gap created by this cultural variability between individuals, the more difficult it will be to organise the realization of mutual communication (Bochner, 2003). M. Y. Gaziyeva, V. E. Agabeyli and S. M. Mehdiyeva (2015) also touched upon the

issue of cultural diversity and explained this process in the following way: “*Existence of minorities is inescapable as diversity is a direct way to differ one from many. Diversity includes many aspects – physical characteristics (race, gender, age, physical abilities, etc.), social status (education, income level, etc.), cultural characteristics (beliefs, values, preferences, etc.) and others*”.

For centuries, many scholars have talked about the interaction of language and culture and have tried to prove that this influence should always be taken into account. Undoubtedly, since language is a social phenomenon, it is supposed to be in direct interaction with its creators and users; at the same time it develops and changes in parallel with the development of society. Language systems that are exposed to different conditions in different contexts differ from each other in their history of development (Abdullayev, 2017).

Everyone knows that culture and communication are inseparable. However, we are confronted with the fact that, like culture, it controls who we talk to and what we talk about, as well as the fact that it regulates the processes of communication. It is under the influence of culture that the process of how people perceive each others behavior takes place. S. K. Mammadova (2001) noted that “at different stages of the historical development of culture, as it is adapted to the needs of human thinking and communication, language develops and enriches adequately”.

Our observations allow us to conclude that both immigrants and local ethnic minorities are currently struggling for greater “recognition”. In many other countries, multiculturalism exists as a form of equal coexistence of different cultures within the same country and obligation to respect for the existence of each national minority.

First Vice-President of Azerbaijan, President of Heydar Aliyev Foundation M. Aliyeva noted in this regard: “People who respect their culture, their history, their traditions, their deeds, should respect different cultures and different histories in the same way” (Abdullayev, 2016, p. 12).

Our approach to this issue is that when talking about the relationship between language and culture, the importance of the linguacultural environment, it is necessary to note two main facts. First, at the linguistic level, culture affects the semantic, pragmatic, and discourse levels of language. Second, the analysis of language material from a cultural aspect or on cultural basis is doomed to change operatively at all times.

Teaching strategies for cultural variability include the comparison method, culture assimilators, drama, newspapers, mass media, observations through movies and other authentic materials, having students visit ethnic restaurants or sections of their hometown, presentations on the customs and traditions of L2 culture, and role-plays in which students demonstrate appropriate cultural behavior in a given situation, opportunities for students to communicate with L2 native speakers and the use of literature (Dema & Moeller, 2012).

Furthermore, a number of methods and approaches to teaching culture can be intensified through the combination of digital media. Foreign language instructors are beginning to integrate more films in the foreign language classroom as an accessible method. Media literacy promotes cross-cultural adequacy and conception focused on meanings rather than on forms.

Recent research in this field suggests, however, that anyone is supposed to be wary of simply assuming cultural universality without evidence. In carried experiments,

a great amount of systematic differences have been determined between East Asians (EAs) and Westerners (Ws) on a number of basic cognitive processes including memory, attention, and perception. These groups also differ in the process they take part while marking out, estimating and motivating events, in the way they systemizing objects and in the way they alter beliefs in the face of new arguments and evidence. This ongoing literature in cultural psychology suggests that culture plays an important and dramatic role in shaping human cognition the world around.

Conclusions

In the end, we can conclude that as all the people all over the world belong to various cultures, their cultural costs and values are quite different. But what might happen when people from different cultures encounter? Many values exist simply because they differ from each other. If the values of one group of people confront with the values of another group, then “miscommunication” can emerge. In this case, the value of the group with the largest management power will begin to dominate. Misunderstandings caused by intercultural differences are more acceptable, although, they are more serious than the mistakes made by language in speech.

To raise learners’ interests and motivation in culture learning, material development should be estimated. Though strong opposition from investigators and language educators concerning the supremacy of target cultures and stereotypical submission of different cultures used in many English Language Teaching contexts, many teachers and learners prefer these sources because there are a variety of sociable activities, communicative orientations, and high value of images and illustrations. If linguistic and cultural diversity including local culture is actually added to English Language Teaching materials, it is obligatory to include reflective elements instead of informative and factual presentation. In this way, learners find it easy to study in lessons of culture relevant to real life communication. This is what is requested, namely a deep interaction between researching culture in schools and intercultural communication in real life situations. The effectiveness of culture teaching in English Language Teaching would be empowered considering main native language features. In other words, what students are taught in *Language 1* in subjects such as history, geography, literature and culture will promote or complicate their culture researching in to English as a Foreign Language Teaching classes. However, the English Language Teaching literature provides that attention has been paid to the influence of *Language 1* on the acquisition of *Language 2* skills rather than to culture learning. There is a great number of researches on learners’ preservation of their cultural identity during the foreign language learning process. Whereas, little research has been carried on the positive impact of various linguacultural diversities presented within the community where native speakers are living.

In conclusion, it is suggested that linguacultural variability is created by users and is constantly changing by those very users. Since such cultural systems are not stable, it is obliged to emphasise that each linguacultural environment is formed in response to the existing conditions, and the interaction between different situations in this system is not determinative.

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Conflict of interests

The author declares that have no conflicts of interests.

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Важливість дослідження лінгвокультурної варіативності в процесі вивчення іноземних мов

Ельнара Путаєва

Доктор філософії,

Азербайджанський університет мов, Баку, Азербайджан,

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-1719-1670, putayeva.elnara@adu.edu.az

Анотація. *Мета статті* — дослідити та довести важливість лінгвокультурної варіативності в процесі вивчення іноземних мов. *Результати дослідження.* Загалом питання «Мова визначає культуру чи культура визначає мову?» все ще залишається фундаментальним у нових дослідженнях і наукових розвідках. Результати показують, що останнім часом ці та інші подібні питання, а також форми взаємодії мови та культури набувають вагомого значення та стають предметом дискусій. Як відомо, мова та культура збагачують процеси спілкування, і цей взаємозв'язок допомагає тим, хто вивчає іноземну мову, декларувати прагматичні, семантичні та синтаксичні значення з метою співпраці. *Наукова новизна.* Досліджено взаємодію мови та культури як двох взаємопов'язаних соціальних явищ, що розвиваються в умовах взаємовпливу. *Висновки.* Кожен, хто надає перевагу успішному спілкуванню за допомогою мови та культури, має знати про відмінності між різними культурами. З огляду на зазначене кожен, хто розвиває таке спілкування, має враховувати соціолінгвістичні, дискурсивні, граматичні та стратегічні навички. Зазвичай певні поняття можуть бути специфічними для однієї культури і не траплятися в інших. Цей випадок можна розглядати як одну з вирішальних причин дослідження культурної варіативності певної мови і основу для досягнення успіху в процесі вивчення іноземних мов. Хоча кордони між мовами дуже чітко простежуються і дотримуються, культурні кордони виникають лише внаслідок «зіткнення» носіїв мови. Спостереження дають змогу дійти висновку, що в більшості країн мультикультуралізм існує як форма рівноправного співіснування різних культур у межах однієї країни. Оскільки люди пов'язані з різними культурами, їхні культурні цінності також відрізняються. Можна вважати, що безліч цінностей існує тому, що вони «не узгоджені» між собою.

Ключові слова: варіативність; мова; культура; культурні цінності; лінгвокультурологія

