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ABSTRACT

Culture was not considered significant in foreign language instruction until the direct method was introduced at the end of the nineteenth century. By the 1970s, language teachers came to realize that language was deeply rooted in culture and could not be separated from it. International understanding has been emphasized in foreign language instruction in the United States in this century, as a means of recognizing the universals in human relations and understanding the self and the home culture. Intercultural communication requires handling the target language and having insight into the culture and society of its speakers. Cultural orientation is very important for students preparing to study abroad. The growth of bilingual/bicultural education in the United States has encouraged Americans to understand their own cultural backgrounds as well as others. Professional organizations have supported and encouraged cultural education in foreign language instruction, developing materials and including information about culture in the curriculum from the 1950s on. Beyond the benefits of enhanced international understanding, intercultural communication, and self-knowledge, additional benefits accrue to cultural education. Five pages of references are provided. (MSE)

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Teaching Culture in Foreign Language Instruction in the United States

Kenji Kitao

Introduction

Teaching culture has been considered important in foreign language instruction for almost a century. Jespersen (1904) stated that learning about the culture of another country is the highest purpose of language teaching. However, it was not until more recent years that teaching culture in language courses has been widely emphasized. In the 1970s, teaching culture was one of two important trends that developed in foreign language instruction, the other being individualization of language instruction (Lafayette, 1975a). The theme of the 1975 Central States Conference was "New Challenges, New Opportunities: Foreign Languages in a Multi-Ethnic Society" (Lafayette, 1975b), and teaching culture drew much attention at the 1979 Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) Conference (Kitao, 1979).

In spite of this interest, teaching culture was not developed well enough in English language instruction in the 1970s (Kitao, 1977). In order to learn from the successes and the mistakes of the past, it is useful to consider the teaching of culture in language instruction in the United States. In this paper, I will review the teaching of culture and its related fields through publications until the end of the 1970s.

I will discuss the background of teaching culture, movements of foreign language instruction, and benefits of teaching culture.

Background of Teaching Culture in the United States

The discussion of the background of teaching culture in foreign language instruction in the United States can be divided into two areas: teaching culture as part of foreign language instruction and bilingual/bicultural education. The former includes three areas: 1) understanding the target language, 2) international understanding, that is, understanding the speakers of the target language, their countries, and their cultures, and 3) intercultural communication, that is, communicating with native speakers of that language.

Understanding Target Languages

Culture was not considered significant in foreign language instruction until the direct method was introduced at the end of the nineteenth century (Lafayette, 1975c), but culture did not play an important role even then. Language teachers began emphasizing culture after linguists and cultural anthropologists made the relationships between language and culture clearer with the development of structural linguistics. Sapir (1970) stated that it is not possible to understand even a simple poem without understanding culture — the whole life of the community and its overtones. Based on writings such as these, language teachers came to realize that language was deeply rooted in culture and could not be separated from it. In vocabulary, for example, similar words in different languages have different meanings and nuances. However, language learners tended to just substitute a word in L1 for a similar

word in L2, as if words could be treated like mathematical symbols (Gritner, 1969).

Culture also influences grammar. For example, the task of learning pronouns in Spanish involves "feelings" that are culturally associated with each pronoun (the politeness, groupness, the ego, etc.) (Morain, 1970). Plural and singular forms in English are not only a matter of numbering but also of the world view of English-speaking people, and students of English who do not understand this world view cannot learn them easily. Each pronoun in Japanese is associated with complex vertical human relations, and it is not possible to learn them without understanding Japanese culture. It is useful to present the cultural foundation for grammar simultaneously with structure so that the students get the necessary insight into the ways that the grammatical forms reflect cultural values and world views (Bourgeacq, 1970).

Since the development of the oral method, systematic study of grammar and drills of sentence patterns have assisted learners in learning to use sentence patterns. However, when using drills based only on language that do not take semantic meanings into account, learners do not focus on meaning at all. They may continue to misunderstand vocabulary, grammar and meaning until they learn something of the culture of the target language. Without understanding cultural meanings, it is not possible to understand language as its native speakers do, no matter how well they can manipulate the vocabulary and grammatical forms of the language.

International Understanding

International understanding has been emphasized in foreign language

instruction in the United States in this century. The Secondary Education Board, Milton, Massachusetts (1948) emphasized the importance of international understanding in 1933 when they declared that one of the practical values of foreign-language study included was "the breaking down of the barriers of the provincialism and the building up of the spirit of international understanding and friendliness, leading toward world peace" (p.104). In 1956, the Modern Language Association policy pointed out three contributions of foreign language teaching, two of which were experiences with foreign culture and information about foreign culture, both of which contribute to international understanding (M. L. A., 1956). Kirch (1970, p.414) stated "... it (foreign-language study) has the potential to liberate the monocultural individual from his provincialism and to make him tolerant of other viewpoints, beliefs and ways of life."

Beaujour (1969) defines the purpose of foreign language education as true understanding. The purpose of this true understanding is to avoid hating, despising, and misunderstanding.

International understanding was the center of foreign language education in the late 1960s. Two of the three trends Banathy (1974) found in publications in 1968 were international understanding through the study of foreign languages and emphasis on the important role of culture. Also, one of the goals set by a working committee at the Northeast Conference in 1968 was that foreign language learners reach the stage of being able to cope well with foreign culture (Banathy, 1974).

International understanding was emphasized as one of goals of foreign language education for a half century in the field of foreign

language education in the United States. Studying a foreign language in the United States came to include the study of the cultures of the people who speak that language. Edgerton (1971) and Morain (1970) emphasized that foreign language learners should understand themselves and be broad minded toward people from different languages and cultures. The working committees of the Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages 1970 advocated helping foreign language learners recognize universals in human relations (Jursi, 1970). In addition, the students' understanding of self and of the students' own culture came to be emphasized, too.

Intercultural Communication

Understanding language alone is not sufficient for good intercultural communication. Cultural aspects of language and the cultural backgrounds of speakers of that language have to be understood as well. Seelye (1968, p.43) argued that

since the basic aim of a language class is to have the students learn to communicate in the foreign language, it is obvious that if fairly common emotions and thoughts cannot be understood apart from their cultural referents, then these referents must be taught in the language classroom, and that some interesting examples of difficulties in cross-cultural communication that arise from ignorance of the target culture are recounted in several articles.

Nostrand (1967) stated that in addition to native language skills, intercultural communication requires the ability to handle the target language and some insight into the culture and society of speakers of that language.

During World War II, American soldiers were sent overseas and encountered speakers of other languages with different cultural backgrounds, and cultural differences became more important. One purpose of the Army Specialized Training Program was to decrease the cultural gaps between Americans and their enemies (Kelly, 1969).

In order to achieve the goal of increased international understanding, Fries (1945, p. 58) stated:

He (a learner) can, however, set himself the task of attaining as complete a realization as possible of the common situations in which the language operates for the native speaker. To do so... he must be really interested in the details of the whole life-experience of the people.

After World War II, Americans encountered people from different cultures more frequently, and teaching culture was emphasized more. However, many Americans studied abroad without much preparation in the 1960s, and by the end of the 1960s, foreign language teachers recognized lack of orientation programs for study abroad as being a problem. Foreign language teachers in those days did not teach their students how to cope with new situations in foreign countries (Bourque, 1974).

Orientation is very important for students planning to study abroad. Raymond C. Clark, the director of the master's program at the School for International Training, argued for the necessity of orientation programs for study abroad and pointed out that there were not enough orientation programs for study abroad in the United States (Bourque, 1974). Many foreign language teachers came to realize that knowledge

of language and knowledge of culture were both necessary before going abroad (Bourque, 1974). At the fifth seminar at Sandanona, professional people and laypeople concerned with study abroad advocated orientation programs as the key to the success in studying abroad (Windows on the World, 1973). Clark states the importance of orientation programs as follows:

... predeparture orientation/language period is more effective than a sudden and total immersion in a foreign culture, particularly for those students who are undertaking their first foreign experience or who are bound for "different" culture (Bourque, 1974, p. 343).

It has been shown that orientations decrease problems related to study and living in foreign countries. Students in Maryland experienced little culture shock and few intercultural problems as a result of a one-year orientation (Bourque, 1974). Wallach (1973) reported on semester-long programs of culture orientation at the University of Wisconsin at Green Bay that acted as preparation for a trip abroad the following semester. The programs, which covered such countries as Britain, France, Germany, the USSR, and Spanish-speaking South American countries, included preparation for actual cross-cultural experience, examination of stereotypes and prejudices as well as attitudes and other intangibles of culture. In addition, students were encouraged to explore their own interests within the context of the target culture. This arrangement worked very effectively, and students benefited from the program and their experience abroad. They demonstrated a more international outlook with greater understanding of the target culture and they understood themselves better, showed more self-confidence,

and had increased motivation for foreign language study. Language proficiency was improved greatly in a three-week intensive orientation held by the Experiment of International Living and the Peace Corps in 1971 (Bourque, 1974).

By the end of the 1970s, predeparture orientations were believed to be necessary for students going abroad, and most study abroad programs held orientations using professionals. Teaching culture became more common with increase of necessity of intercultural communication.

Bilingual/Bicultural Education

Another important trend in language teaching in the United States in the 1960s was that the teaching of culture was emphasized not only for understanding the target language, international understanding and intercultural communication but also for helping Americans understand each other. This new movement encouraged Americans to understand their own individual backgrounds rather than to just think of themselves as Americans in a "melting pot." This movement was particularly popular in the 1970s. In 1967, the bilingual act was passed and since then bilingual education has been emphasized. The same trend can be seen in TESOL (Kitao, 1974; Hazumi, 1974; Morito, 1975; Otani, 1976; Kitao, 1976).

Trends in Foreign Language Instruction

I will discuss teaching culture in foreign language instruction from the viewpoint of 1) professional organizations of language teaching and activities of professionals in language teaching, 2) foreign language teachers, 3) teaching materials, and 4) foreign language programs.

Professional Organizations of Language Teaching and Activities of Professionals in Language Teaching

Dewey (1897/1968) was already arguing for the importance of the social aspects of language in language instruction as far back as the late 19th century. However, teaching culture was not emphasized in foreign language instruction until after World War II. Some teachers came to realize that they have to teach culture, because without culture, they were just teaching meaningless symbols or symbols to which students attached the wrong meanings (Georgetown University, 1951). In 1953, a new idea of the benefit of teaching culture — that teaching culture contributed to general and liberal education — was introduced by the M. L. A. (Modern Language Association, 1953).

Thus the importance of teaching culture was widely recognized and, in fact, foreign language teachers' major argument related to culture in the 1950s and 1960s was the best definition of culture (Seelye, 1975). Many different definitions were proposed. Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1954) examined 300 definitions of culture.

Teaching culture was emphasized more and more in the 1960s. In 1960, the Northeast Conference of Teaching of Modern Languages invited both linguists and anthropologists, proposed a definition of culture, and clarified the role that it should play in language teaching. Their recommendations caused many language teachers to reappraise what they had been teaching as culture and extend it beyond factual data (Meras, 1964). One of the three objectives of this discipline was "cultural insight and awareness." In a book published in the same period, Rivers (1968) set six classes of objectives in the teaching of foreign language, and she included two concerning culture. Brooks

(1966) depicted the discipline at that time as "a vigorous adolescent who has left home to start out on his own and is seeking a star to hitch his wagon to" (p.71).

For the most part, culture taught as part of language teaching was "Culture with a big C," which includes such areas as art and literature. Brooks (1968) argued for the importance of "culture with a small c," which includes information about everyday life and the emphasis of teaching culture in foreign language instruction was changed from "Culture with a big C" to "culture with a small c" (Lafayette, 1975c). The profession of language education considered the importance of "culture with a small c" in the late 1960s and the early 1970s. Professionals also needed to consider what to teach in the area of culture and how to teach and test it (Morain, 1970). Brooks (1964) listed 64 items of culture that he felt were important to teach. A committee of the Pacific Northwest Conference on Foreign Language Teaching held in 1968 presented cultural items to teach at each level (Nostrand, 1968).

Three techniques for teaching culture, "culture assimilators" (Piedler, Mitchell & Triandis, 1971), "culture capsules" (Taylor & Sorensen, 1961), and "culture clusters" (Meade & Morain, 1973) were introduced. These, however, were only techniques. They were not integrated programs, and they did not include guidelines about what should be taught, in what order cultural items should be presented, etc.

Upshur (1966), Seelye (1968), Nostrand (1974), and Clark (1972) made proposals about what should be tested in relation to cultural awareness and considered techniques for testing it. However, no standard culture test had been made by the end of the 1970s. Seelye ex-

amined six standard Spanish tests in 1969 and found that most test items were related to "Culture with a big C."

Thus the importance of teaching culture in foreign language instruction was recognized and was one of eight trends of foreign language instruction around 1970. Cultural aspects of foreign languages received more attention (Clark, 1972). The theme of the 1972 Northeast Conference was "culture in language" (Clark, 1972) and the theme of the 1975 Central States Conference was "culture," and it is clear that "culture" was one of two areas which were developed in the first half of the 1970s.

Foreign Language Teachers

The importance of teaching culture in foreign language instruction was discussed by professional people from the 1950s, but many foreign language teachers wondered whether they should teach culture in their foreign language classes (Morain, 1970). Rivers (1968) argued that foreign language teachers were not trained to teach culture. By 1968, foreign language teachers recognized that teaching culture was important in foreign language instruction, but they did not have adequate training to do so (Seelye, 1968). Since teachers did not get enough training in the teaching of culture, the Seattle Symposium, held in 1971, reported to the profession that master's programs should equally include culture, language training, linguistics, and language teaching methodology (Altman, 1971).

Foreign language teachers recognized the necessity of teaching culture by the 1960s. However they were not adequately trained to do so. They argued for better training for teachers.

Teaching Materials

In the 1950s, the importance of teaching culture began to be recognized, and there was a trend to include the teaching of culture in foreign language instruction. The Modern Language Association (1953) advocated teaching materials based on cultural orientation which explained the differences between the target culture and the students' own culture.

As interest in teaching "culture with a small c" increased in the language teaching profession, it became more common in foreign language textbooks (Lafayette, 1975a). Thus new materials for the oral method included much information about everyday life in the target culture (Smith & Leamon, 1969). By the end of the 1970s, teaching materials included information about culture in various ways, based on practical research. The materials tended to include cultures of countries close to the United States and various cultures within the United States (Jenks, 1975; Fryer, 1975). Methods of teaching culture was also studied (Fryer, 1975). By the end of the 1970s, foreign language textbooks which made use of culture in various ways had been produced. However, there was still criticism that not enough cultural information was included in foreign language textbooks (Jenks, 1975).

Foreign Language Programs

Since 1950, the inclusion of information about culture has increased greatly in foreign language instruction. The cultural information that was included was mainly "Culture with a big C," which emphasizes literature, art, etc. Marquardt (1967) and Christian (1967) studied

the teaching of culture using pieces of literature. However, as "culture with a small c" was adopted in foreign language instruction, teaching culture through literature was criticized by Nostrand (1966), Leward (1968) and Inhoof (1968).

Troyanovich (1972) proposed that foreign language curricula should emphasize anthropological culture rather than traditional literature. In addition, Nelson (1972) emphasized the importance of "culture with a small c" and recommended making foreign culture rather than foreign language a required course at the college level.

The teaching of culture was adopted in foreign language instruction in various ways. There were two important trends in foreign language instruction: programs combining foreign language instruction and study abroad, and foreign culture instruction in English in elementary foreign language courses. Hoe & Spack (1975) reported on high school students' short trip to France, and Wallach (1973) reported on the effect of studying abroad after one semester of foreign culture instruction. Students' understanding of the foreign culture deepened, they understood themselves better, and their motivation to study the foreign language increased after participating in these programs. The latter program included lectures explaining various aspects of the target culture, presentations by students on their particular interests in relation to the target culture, and field trips to places related to the target culture. Keller & Ferguson (1976) and Klayman (1976) reported on programs at the college level, and Bourque & Chehy (1976) reported on programs at the high school level. All researchers reported that students liked the inclusion of teaching about the target culture, and as a result of the programs, the number of students who wanted to

study foreign languages increased.

As I have discussed, teaching culture in foreign language instruction in the United States was increased as intercultural communication increased in the 1950s. The change from emphasis on "Culture with a big C" to "culture with a small c" has taken place since 1968, and teaching about daily life in the target culture was widely adopted. Many study abroad programs were started. Cultural instruction continued to be improved through the end of the 1970s.

Benefits of Culture Instruction

As I have already discussed, we can understand the target language better, enhance international understanding, communicate better with people of different cultures, and understand our own culture better by studying other cultures. In addition, there are other benefits of studying culture.

First, studying culture gives students a reason to study the target language (Stainer, 1971). Wallach (1973) found that teachers of foreign languages and foreign literature knew that understanding cultures made studying foreign languages and literature more meaningful.

Bals (1971) reported on a study that compared American students who studied cultural patterns of German teenagers in German for ten minutes every day for ten weeks with students who studied German only from a textbook. In the group that had additional cultural instruction, none of the students dropped the course (compared to three in the other group) and the grades of the students who received cultural instruction were better. Many students studied foreign languages just because they were required. In this case, studying culture

gave students a reason for studying foreign languages.

Second, studying culture makes studying foreign languages real. Students have difficulty relating to the people of another culture without knowing anything about them. Chastain (1971) argued that explaining cultural aspects of language would help students relate the abstract sounds and forms of a language to real people and places.

Third, studying culture increases students' interest. Students like activities based on culture, including singing, dancing, role playing, skits, doing research on countries and people, etc. Wallach (1973) reported that there was a high correlation between the foreign language which students were studying and their choice of foreign countries to visit or live in. The study of culture increases students' curiosity about and interest in the target countries, their people, and their culture.

Fourth, studying cultures motivates students to study foreign languages. Brooks (1968) argued that this type of motivation is very strong. Keller & Ferguson (1976) reported that Murray State University offered a course entitled "A Cultural Introduction to Foreign Language Study" during both terms of the academic year 1974-1975. Several professors introduced the cultures of the foreign languages they taught. As the result of this course, students showed an increased interest in studying foreign languages and foreign cultures. Klayman (1976) reported the results of offering a course entitled "Contemporary France: Its Heritage and Influence," which was established in order to reverse the decline in enrollment in French in a four-year college. This lecture course taught in English was very popular, and Klayman strongly suggested that other foreign language departments offer similar courses.

Leward (1974) reported on the results of classes based on culture in sophomore French and Spanish classes which was offered for two years. Students evaluated the classes based on culture more highly than traditional classes.

In addition to such long-term motivation, teaching culture is effective for short-term motivation. Steiner (1971) argued that introduction of culture is very useful for instant motivation. He emphasized by saying "When pace lags, when the eyes drop, when the heat comes, the smart teacher will have the cultural unit" (Steiner, 1971, p. 63).

Fifth, studying culture is useful not only for understanding people of other cultures but to help students understand themselves and their own culture. Rivers (1968) argued that most students were culture bound, that is, their entire view of the world was determined by the values of their own culture and they had difficulty understanding or accepting people with points of view based on other views of the world. This aspect of teaching culture was emphasized in the United States in the 1970s.

Sixth, studying culture gives students a liking for the people of that culture (Cooke, 1970).

Seventh, studying culture is a useful part of general education. The Modern Language Association has held this position from its early days (M. L. A., 1953).

Conclusion

As I have discussed, studying culture is useful as part of foreign language instruction because of its influence on language and communication. It has additional benefits as well, including increased

interest and motivation for language study, improved understanding of one's own culture, and increased understanding of and liking for people of the target culture. I have not found any writers who listed disadvantages of studying cultures in foreign language classes.

By the end of the 1970s, the advantages of teaching culture in foreign language classes were virtually universally accepted, and culture was widely taught in language classes. However, questions remained about what should be taught and how it could be most beneficially taught. These questions were faced more and more in the 1980s, and in a future paper, I will discuss the teaching of culture in the 1980s and how these questions have been dealt with.

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