INFESTATION OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING WITH THE CULTURAL WORM : THE QUEST FOR A BALANCE BETWEEN AN AMBIGUOUS HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND PROFITABLE EPISTEMOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract: This article aimed to reassess the treatment of the cultural component in language learning settings, especially English. It appeared that the generally ambiguous understanding of the history behind the integration of culture in language classrooms has led many practitioners to consider culture as a worm that has infested education with the sole goal of destroying it. Such a point of view is widely reflected in the way culture is considered and poorly treated in most classrooms. However, our discussions have revealed that the cultural component should be recognized, systematized, and valued as an essential way to rethink education. In this regard, three main perspectives offered by culture in language classrooms have been discussed, namely, a response to the tensions of culture shock and globalization through public educational policies, bringing pedagogy and educational content in line with current realities, and creating innovative and motivating language learning opportunities. Such perspectives call for proactive investment in data collection and analysis to strengthen public policies and support actions on the ground.
Keywords: Culture; cultural competence; integration; language learning; cultural perspectives

Résumé : Cet article vise à réévaluer le traitement de la composante culturelle dans les contextes d'apprentissage des langues en général et de l'anglais en particulier. Il en ressort que la compréhension généralement ambiguë de l'histoire de l'intégration de la culture dans les classes de langues a conduit de nombreux praticiens à considérer la culture comme un ver qui a infesté l'éducation dans le seul but de la détruire. Un tel point de vue se reflète largement dans la manière dont la culture est considérée et mal traitée dans la plupart des classes de langue. Cependant, nos discussions ont révélé que la composante culturelle devrait être reconnue, systématisée et valorisée comme un moyen essentiel de repenser l'éducation. À cet égard, trois perspectives principales offertes par la culture dans les classes de langues ont été discutées, à savoir, une réponse aux tensions causées par choc culturel et de la mondialisation par le biais de politiques éducatives optimisées, l'adaptation de la pédagogie et du contenu éducatif aux réalités actuelles, et la création d'opportunités innovantes et motivantes pour l'apprentissage des langues. Ces perspectives appellent à un investissement proactif dans la collecte et l'analyse de données afin de renforcer les politiques publiques et de soutenir les actions sur le terrain.
Mots-clés : Culture ; compétence culturelle ; intégration ; apprentissage des langues ; perspectives culturelles

Introduction

Although the contribution of culture to the education sector worldwide is increasingly recognized, the need to review the link between both fields continues to arise with a view to adapting to the opportunities and challenges of our century. While substantial data is available on the somehow ambiguous history of culture in education, there is still a deficit of research and figures demonstrating the ways in which culture is integrated into the field of education. This situation reflects long-standing public policy priorities that undervalue the contribution of culture to learning processes. A paradigm shift thus appears necessary to allow the emergence of agile, adaptive, and innovative societies. In this sense, UNESCO advocates for an interdisciplinary and intersectoral approach to culture and education in order to strengthen the quality of education and ensure that education systems equip learners with adequate knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and behaviors. Unfortunately, this approach has struggled to take hold due to a general lack of understanding of both the historical context for integrating culture into education and the short-, medium-, and long-term perspectives of culture. This study, therefore, aims to examine the **historical context and the epistemological targets of the integration of culture in language instruction.**

1. Historical context and theoretical considerations

1.1.Historical context of the integration of culture in education

The consideration of culture in foreign language teaching and learning is not recent. Kramsch (2001) states that before World War II, the teaching-learning of a second/foreign language aimed at training learners to be able to read and know great literary works, historical events, or social institutions. Allen (1985: 138), cited in Lessard-Clouston (1997: 133), confirms that "prior to the 1960s, the lines between language and culture were carefully drawn. The primary reason for second language study in the earlier part of this century was access to the great literary masterpieces of civilization."

After World War II, the rise of linguistics and the social sciences, coupled with the demands of the market economy, will trigger strong emphasis on spoken language and intercultural communication in everyday situations (Brooks, 1968; Steel, 1989; and Kramsch, 2001). Beginning in the 1970s with the advent of sociolinguistics (Lessard-Clouston, 1997; Martinez, Miled, & Tirvassen, 2011), an increased focus will be placed on contexts of second/foreign language use, with such contexts incorporating cultural considerations. As Risager, (2007) puts it, language teaching and learning will thus focus on the increasingly accepted relationship between language and culture.

During the 1960s, the teaching-learning of culture began with three major proposals by Lado (1957), Brooks (1960), and Nostrand (1967). Lado's (p. 111) model focused on a presentation of linguistic elements across cultures. This model views culture as "a structured system of patterned behavior." It advocates that teachers involve students in comparing units from two cultures at three levels: form, meaning, and distribution. 'Form' refers to a cultural phenomenon or action, 'meaning' has to do with what the phenomenon means to people in that culture, and 'distribution' focuses on the occasions when the phenomenon occurs.

As for Brooks' approach, it proposes a culture-anthropology oriented towards the selection of specific cultural referents. Such an approach focuses on formal culture represented with small 'c' as opposed to a deep culture, represented with big 'C'. The concept of culture with 'c' refers to manifestations of culture that are associated with the daily life of a given community. It refers to the daily habits and lifestyles that are unique to the members of a given community and are manifested in practical ways through, according to Thanasoulas (2001: 7), "greetings, profanity, personal effects, cosmetics, smoking and tobacco, verbal taboos, cafes, bars, restaurants, contrasts between city and country life, patterns of politeness, keeping one's head cool and warm, medicine, and doctors."

In contrast, culture with Big 'C' refers to art, literature, technology, and philosophy. Brooks suggests that the teaching of languages and cultures should take into account the culture with 'c' because it is already part of people's lives,

while the culture with 'C', which seems to be intended for an elite, refers mainly to a refined way of life, considered civilized.

Nostrand's emergent model provides an inventory to analyze and categorize culture. It puts forward a comprehensive classification of culture to enable cross-cultural communication and understanding. According to Hadley (2001: 350),

> in Nostrand's model, the goals for culture learning go beyond identifying key aspects of culture to include procedural knowledge that would enable students to observe and analyze cultural elements and patterns.

Despite the desire to take culture into account in the various English teaching-learning contexts at that time, the emphasis was mainly on presenting stereotypical aspects of culture embedded in what Brooks refers to as 'C'. The teacher simply offered cultural references from the target language that the learners had to memorize. For Risager, this practice did not allow the learners to develop the necessary skills aimed at cultural education.

A new trend emerged in the 1970s to emphasize the fact that the integration of culture in English teaching-learning is related to two (02) types of societies, namely the source societies and the target societies. From this point, the cultural contents in foreign language teaching will be oriented to learners' source language, in addition to the target language that was already presented. With this trend, the focus will be on introducing cultural topics in the classroom. Language teaching-learning based on the situational context of the culture will be emphasized. However, the proposals of this era still do not take into account the learner's ability to communicate.

In the 1980s, the interest for a more dynamic aspect of culture and its contribution to English language learning (Risager, 2007) stats to emerge. The interrelationship between language and culture is re-examined with an emphasis on the need to integrate language and cultural learning into education (Robinson & Furukawa, 2008; Byram, 1988).

The emergence of the notion of intercultural communicative competence will lead to new practices starting in the 1990s. In the words of Nault (2006: 16), the teaching-learning of English will start to be "confronted with the impact of globalization on the ways of thinking and learning in the language classroom."

This situation will highlight the need for a shift toward a teaching-learning model that transcends national and ethical boundaries to let the classroom reflect the transnational and global context students live in.

From there, the role of English as an international language will impose three changes in the cultural dimension (Wandel, 2002). First, an intercultural approach is proposed in the teaching-learning of English to train learners so that they can become users of English as an international language. This will include training them to develop intercultural sensitivity and awareness.

Second, there will be a need to teach English with the content of the cultures of the major English-speaking countries. The idea will emerge that this teaching must be done in conjunction with other forms and varieties of cultures, especially in non-Western contexts.

Teachers of English will, therefore, be encouraged to rethink the cultural dimension of English language teaching and learning through aspects such as the type of culture that should be included in the EFL/ESL curriculum, the objectives of teaching culture, and how culture-related materials should be designed and selected. Finally, there will be a challenge to the notion of communicative competence through globalization (Alptekin, 2002; Fleer, Hedegaard, & Tudge, 2009). People from different languages and cultures use English to communicate in a variety of contexts, from travel to academic study to conferences. With English used as a lingua franca or transnational language, non-native speakers are engaged in a specific cross-cultural context and need strategies to interpret cultures and languages when communicating (Crozet & Liddicoat, 2000).

Today, with the advent of new technologies, learners and teachers have access to various cultural elements through computers and the Internet. Thus, the role of culture in second/foreign language teaching/learning programs has increased. There is increasing talk of a more natural integration of language and culture through a communicative approach to language teaching/learning (Canale and Swain, 1980). Textbook texts have included chapters on teaching culture.

In addition to the above, Risager suggests an interesting and more simplified categorization of cultural history that is organized around three main eras. The

first period runs from the mid-1950s to the early 1990s. During this period, the field of foreign language education views culture as a set of facts to be learned about the culture of the target language, which in most cases involved the national or local culture of the learners. The learning of culture was essentially limited to taking into account certain aspects of the learners' culture. Such an approach was primarily aimed at enabling the learner to become familiar with his or her own society and the so-called source culture that supports it. This gave teachers the opportunity to motivate their learners by allowing them to work with texts and images that were essentially related to the source language. However, with the development of Schumann's (1986) acculturation theory, the target culture would eventually become one of the focuses in EFL/ESL. The goal was to maximize the learner's chances of becoming a member of the target language community and acquiring the language more successfully.

The second period, in the 1990s, saw major changes in the way culture was conceptualized. The focus is on appropriate cultural content from the target language. It is marked by a shift from viewing culture as a compact whole to a more categorized approach to culture. With English as a lingua franca, the target culture will now be considered in terms of specific aspects such as values, lifestyles, and certain habits prevalent among people considered native to the English-speaking world. Three main approaches to culture will then emerge from there: intercultural, transcultural, and cross-cultural.

The third and final period focuses on current research trends from the 2000s to date. Risager (2011: 485) posits that this period is characterized by an almost exclusive focus on a "transnational or global/local approach, focusing on cultural complexity and hybridity." The goal is to develop the learner's cultural mindset so that he or she becomes what Guilherme (2002: 50) calls a "critical citizen" with "global cultural awareness." This way of seeing culture goes beyond simply understanding the culture of the target language or integrating cultural content into the language curriculum. It is about promoting the idea that we live in a globalized world where political, social, and economic boundaries are increasingly difficult to define, and that requires language teachers to help their

learners distinguish between culturally relevant aspects and stereotypes that contribute to alienating people through prejudice.

1.2. Evolution of theories and conceptions of culture

Over time, the concept of culture has evolved considerably with the formulation of theories to guide the analysis and description of such a broad concept. The theories developed will strongly influence the definitions given to culture depending on the field to be considered. To date, three main theoretical approaches to understanding culture are advocated: functionalist theory, conflictualist theory, and interactionist theory.

Inspired by Bronislaw Malinowski's (1994) cultural approach, cultural functionalism considers that each fact in the life of an individual or a community has a cultural relevance insofar as it fulfills a practical purpose that gives it a well-defined function. In other words, each element of a community's life has a function and each of these elements responds to a function, "like an organ in a living[1] body." Malinowski considers culture as an integrated whole that intervenes in the life of a community to condition its members and ensure the transmission of acquired models.

The functionalist theory emphasizes the notion of context and describes the interdependence of social facts as an expression of their functional necessity. Emphasis is placed on the notion of utilitarianism and the distinction of basic needs for survival, perpetuation of the race, and functioning of the organism. Malinowski considers these needs as constituting the "animal necessity" of the community, that is, the minimum of cultural practices necessary for its survival. Functionalists view society as a system in which all the parts work together to create society as a whole that needs cultural norms for its functioning.

As regards the conflictualist theory, it views the social structure as inherently unequal, due to power differentials related to issues such as class, gender, race, and age. This theory advocates the view that culture reinforces issues of privilege

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[1] http://malinowsnow4ever.unblog.fr/2015/06/09/concept-5-le-concept-de-culture/

for certain groups. Conflictualists put forward the idea of societies built on conflicting systems that pace life and give meaning to the actions of the members of those societies. This model predicts that women will always struggle for equality in a male-dominated society while the elderly will always struggle to protect their rights, healthcare, and independence from a younger generation of legislators. At the heart of the conflictualist theory is the effect of economic production, materialism, and dependence on technology in rich countries versus the lack of technology and education in poor countries.

The interactionist theory, in turn, focuses on a sociological perspective to analyze the cultural interactions between members of a given society. For advocates of this theory, culture is created and maintained by the way people interact and interpret the actions of others. Interactionism promotes a conceptualization of human interactions as a continuous process of deriving meaning from both objects in the environment and the actions of others. As with the functionalist theory, every object and action has symbolic meaning, and language allows individuals to represent and communicate their interpretations of these meanings to others. Interactionists see culture as highly dynamic in that it depends on how meaning is interpreted and how individuals interact during the transmission of such meanings. As stated by Le Breton (2012), there would be no societies if people do not share their heritage and language, and culture would cease to function if people do not agree on similar values and social control systems.

The above discussion demonstrates that a wide range of approaches on the history of the integration of culture in education exist without any clear understanding of how and when the link between both fields interconnect. Such failure to clarify this link has led to a more or less ambiguous understanding of culture in the field of education, leading many scholars to consider the latter as a worm or predator attempting to infest or destroy the former. Of course, this misunderstanding will cause various problems in the practical teaching of languages from a cultural perspective as we discuss next.

2. The practice of culture teaching-learning in language classrooms

Omaggio (1993: 357), cited in Cullen and Sato (2000: 1), posits that "teaching culture…has remained 'insubstantial and sporadic in most language classrooms" as a consequence of misunderstanding around the place that culture can eventually hold in the language classroom. To this, she adds, among other things, the lack of time and the uncertainty surrounding the aspects of the culture to be taught. Oxford (1994), cited in Cullen and Sato (2000: 2), uses the term 'cultural texture' to describe the different aspects of culture that can be taught. Two (02) parameters are considered to obtain this 'texture': information sources and activities.

2.1. Information sources

According to Cullen and Sato (*Op.cit.:* 4), different types of information about the target culture are needed if one is to get a comprehensive view of that culture. They suggest nineteen visual, audio, and tactile sources for use in the classroom. These are "video, CDs, television, reading passages, internet, stories, information from learners themselves, songs, newspapers, realia, fieldwork, interviews, invitations from others, anecdotes, memories, photographs, surveys, illustrations, and literature."

The belief underlying such an approach is that when such sources of information are exploited correctly, learners will be likely to approach culture from the appropriate side, hence avoiding misunderstandings and conflictual considerations regarding the meanings attributed to the cultural elements presented.

2.2. Types of activities

Cullen and Sato suggest six types of activities such as "quizzing, action logs or journals, rephrasing, observing, and predicting and researching." The quiz, as a hands-on cultural learning activity, is easily applicable in the classroom at all levels. Indeed, as Peace Corps (1999: 7) explains, the quiz represents a "brief activity [....] representing a way for trainers to formally introduce culture matters

to trainees. Here, the quiz becomes a useful way to present new information about culture in a way that makes it easier for learners to discover and learn what may be considered as appropriate cultural elements to avoid cultural shocks. They recommend that teachers use this technique to introduce information about the differences and similarities between cultures.

Logbooks refer to notebooks or notepads used by students to record classroom activities. According to Bolin (1988) cited in De Cock (2020: 23), journal writing helps the learner "become more independent and aware of his or her teaching." Through this type of activity, students express their interest in the target and source cultures by writing numerous pages relating to referents from both cultures. The logbook allows for an eventual comparison of cultural referents in order to assimilate the similarities and differences between two cultures.

Observation involves having learners pay attention to points made in class so that they notice cultural differences between the English-speaking world and their daily lives. This technique can help students focus their attention on important elements of the lesson. For example, while watching a video about the target culture, students note any differences between the habits and other recurring practices of that culture and their own culture.

Prediction involves students being more active in predicting what will happen in a given story or video. They draw on their own experiences in the source culture to predict situations presented to them in the target culture. This allows them to see what they have learned or made mistakes that are reflected in the quality of the predictions made. This practice leads the learner to discover for himself the link between the two cultures. Clearly, when they make good predictions, their knowledge of the link between their own culture and the culture they are discovering is reinforced. If they are not, they also learn from their mistakes.

The last type of activity is research. According to Cullen and Sato (Op.cit.), this activity leads the learner to be curious; this motivates him to do research. Being at the center of the process of researching cultural themes and referents gives the learner the opportunity to discover a variety of information that will be useful in interpreting the meaning of sentences and words produced by native

speakers. Research in this context can be done online, in libraries, or through meetings with native speakers.

3. Discussions around the perspectives offered by the teaching of culture

3.1. A response to the tensions of culture shock and globalization through public educational policies

Nowadays, our societies are increasingly interconnected and interdependent. Through globalization, urbanization, and migration, cultural diversity has become an indispensable component that generates vast opportunities for creativity and innovation through interactions between cultures. In this sense, the new global landscape we live in, which is increasingly complex, uncertain, and precarious, is likely to exacerbate divisions and tensions due to the socioeconomic disparities it sets room for. Furthermore, digital transformation expands opportunities for employment, learning, dialogue, and creative expression, but does not benefit everyone equally.

In the face of such inequalities, countries are struggling to adapt their training and professional sectors to the new globalized world. These challenges have revealed gaps in education systems and skills that are insufficiently adapted to societal challenges. An observation that continues to rise is that education systems must develop the capacities and competencies necessary for adaptability, agility, inclusion, social responsibility, and global citizenship.

Therefore, the adaptation of public policies is needed to favor holistic education systems that address learning content and outcomes, pedagogy, and learning environment in formal, non-formal, and informal settings. Moreover, educational policies in Côte d'Ivoire should enable learners to transform themselves and society. To do so, there is a need to expose them to knowledge from the world and to contextualize learning by adapting it to local needs and cultural realities. Once such steps are taken, the integration of culture will make it easier to incorporate value-based pedagogies that promote universally shared values such as non-discrimination, equality, respect, and dialogue, which will be essential for every single learner who commits to learning in a system that

promotes inclusive education. This perspective is a prerequisite for learners who are called upon to become citizens of the world after leaving the classroom setting.

3.2. Bringing pedagogy and educational content in line with current realities

With the changes experienced around us, new capacities and skills are needed to cope with these changes and build inclusive, peaceful, and sustainable societies. Strengthening the synergies between culture and education can better prepare societies through formal and informal education, including technical and vocational training, as well as lifelong learning in such a way that learners become more agile and resilient in a rapidly changing context.

The appropriate integration of culture and notions of cultural diversity is a strong contribution to developing creative skills in the linguistic field as it opens up opportunities for new types of learners who are sensitive to what occurs in a broader context and forge their skills of adaptation and innovation, which have become indispensable in the new culture-led world. In other words, culture enriches the educational system by allowing it to reinforce the relevance of its contents and to better adapt to such a quickly changing context.

Culture should, therefore, be seen as a resource to enrich pedagogy, educational content, and learning contexts. As UNESCO[2] posits, it "connects people to their history and heritage, allows them to make sense of things, stimulate self-confidence and develop qualities of empathy and critical thinking." Going further, we can highlight the fact that culture supports education through culture-related activities, jobs, and institutions.

This dependence of education on culture proves that it is essential for human development and advances several areas of development in a cross-cultural context. Culture thus contributes to overcoming obstacles in the implementation

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[2] https://fr.unesco.org/news/lhorizon-culture-education-investissement-strategique-developpement-durable-inclusif-durable

of language teaching while strengthening learners' sense of global knowledge that they need to acquire to better function in local contexts.

3.3. Creating innovative and motivating language learning opportunities

Creating appropriate conditions for the integration of culture in language classrooms allows for a re-evaluation of traditional pedagogical frameworks and opens up new perspectives for learning. If we agree with UNESCO's idea that "education is inherently cultural, being influenced by environment, history, identity, and culture," we must admit that culture reinforces, on the one hand, the plurality and richness of learning processes, spaces, and pedagogical approaches, and on the other hand, ensures a comprehensive and contextually relevant education.

By doing so, culture poses itself as a powerful engine for enhancing education, promoting educational systems, and motivating learners to involve if they wish to develop their critical thinking and be able to take up all the new challenges of the new world we are living in. Strengthening the mutual benefits of culture and education advances individual and collective development goals, which stands as a great source of motivation for learners to continue their dedication to learning.

In addition, the impact of culture on education has been widely demonstrated and it is now clear that culture improves the quality of education and enhances learning outcomes, thereby addressing diverse learning needs and approaches. Indeed, Culture contextualizes education, makes it more relevant, and improves educational outcomes and critical thinking skills, which favors motivation for learning. The integration of cultural diversity into curricula, therefore, brings learning benefits.

Conclusion

This article aimed to examine the historical context and the epistemological targets of the integration of culture in language instruction. It also allowed reassessing the treatment of the cultural component in language

learning settings, especially English. It appeared that the generally ambiguous understanding of the history behind the integration of culture in language classrooms has led many practitioners to consider culture as a worm that has infested education with the sole goal of destroying it. Such a point of view is widely reflected in the way culture is considered and poorly treated in most classrooms. However, our discussions have revealed that the cultural component should be recognized, systematized, and valued as an essential way to rethink education. In this regard, three main perspectives offered by culture in language classrooms have been discussed, namely, a response to the tensions of culture shock and globalization through public educational policies, bringing pedagogy and educational content in line with current realities, and creating innovative and motivating language learning opportunities. Such perspectives call for proactive investment in data collection and analysis to strengthen public policies and support actions on the ground.

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