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News: 94% primary students in India cannot recognise English

“ Ahmedabad: For 94% of the primary students in India, English is an alien language. And this is official.

A study conducted by the Programme Evaluation Organisation (PEO) of the Planning Commission has revealed that 94 per cent of the students in primary schools across the country cannot recognise the English alphabets. This reality check is major setback for prime minister Dr Manmohan Singh's UPA government that has embarked on a major initiative to universalise primary education, and grant the right to education.

The 'Programme Evaluation Organization' (PEO) headed by deputy chairman Planning Commission, Montek Singh Ahluwalia has come out with this data through an evaluation study of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in order to assess its impact. ”

Read the complete news item at <http://www.eltweekly.com/elt-newsletter/2010/06/61-news-94-primary-students-in-india-cannot-recognise-english/>

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Video: David Treuer – 2007 Heginbotham Lecture Series

Award-winning author David Treuer was the speaker for the 2007 Possibilities Heginbotham Literary Lecture. The lecture hosted by the Department of English and Modern Languages was held in the Buetow Auditorium on Tuesday, Sept. 18.

Treuer's third novel, *The Translation of Dr. Apelles* (2006), was named a Best Book of the Year by *The Washington Post*, *Time Out Chicago*, and *Minneapolis Star Tribune*. He was the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Fulbright Fellowship to Canada, a Pushcart Prize, the 1996 Minnesota Book Award and was a finalist for the Penn West prize in 1999. An Ojibwe Indian, Treuer divides his time between his home on the Leech Lake Reservation in northern Minnesota and Minneapolis.

The son of Robert Treuer, an Austrian Jew and Holocaust survivor, and Margaret Seelye Treuer, a tribal court judge, David grew up on Leech Lake Reservation. After graduating from high school he attended Princeton University where he wrote two senior theses—one in anthropology and one in creative writing—and where he worked with Toni Morrison, Paul Muldoon, and Joanna Scott. Treuer graduated in 1992 and published his first novel, *Little*, in 1995. He received his Ph.D. in anthropology and published his second novel, *The Hiawatha*, in 1999. His novels have been translated into Norwegian, Finnish, French, and Greek.

The Heginbotham Literary Lecture Series is made possible by private donors who established an endowment to honor Dr. Eleanor Heginbotham and her distinguished record of teaching and scholarship at CSP as well as her many contributions to the literary community in the Twin Cities. Heginbotham is a professor emerita of English and Modern Languages, an award-winning Emily Dickinson expert and a Senior Fulbright Scholar who served at Concordia for 10 years until her retirement in 2004.

This video was filmed and produced by Zachary Schuster and CTP Productions at Concordia University-St. Paul. For more info, visit: csp.edu/ctp © September 18, 2007

Watch the video at <http://www.eltweekly.com/elt-newsletter/2010/06/61-video-david-treuer-2007-heginbotham-lecture-series/>

Article: 'The scope of SLA' by Mohammad Hashamdar

(This article is submitted by Mohammad Hashamdar, PhD Student, Islamic Azad University-Science and Research Branch- Tehran- IRAN, E-mail: m_hashamdar@yahoo.com)

Second Language Acquisition has two different senses to be distinguished. Ellis (2005) classified these two senses. He referred to the first one as the learning of another language after the acquisition of one's mother tongue is completed. He labeled it the object of inquiry. The second sense refers to the study of how people learn a second language; that is, it can be labeled as the field of enquiry.

There might be different views in scientific realms of various disciplines. These different views do not always lead to confrontation and debate. They may lead to separate development in that field. That field has to undergo a degree of fragmentation in which different areas of enquiry, while still under the title of the main discipline, can go for their own interest and add new discoveries. One highly dynamic area of enquiry of this kind is the field of Second Language Acquisition.

In 1960s onward, the study of First Language Acquisition was accelerated in the language domain. This acceleration in that field caused the initiation of the study in the SLA in 1970s. Cook (2003) states that SLA research concerned itself with both explaining and describing the process of acquiring a second language. At first, particular areas of interest have included the degree of transfer from the first language to the second language. Later, this transfer from first language to second changed direction and in some topic such as individual differences, the itinerary was from second language to first one.

Gass and Selinker (2008), while recognizing that the field is both an old and a new one, suggest that "as it is now represented" it "only goes back about 40 years". The starting point is generally held to be Corder's (1967) seminal article "The significance of learner errors" together with Selinker's (1969, 1972) work on language transfer and inter-language as a linguistic system in its own right—both of which, in very similar ways, challenged the view prevailing at that time that second language (L2) acquisition was like any other learning, namely, just a matter of habit formation. These early papers provided the impetus for a

series of empirical studies. These consisted of analyses of learner errors, case studies of individual language learners, and studies investigating the order of acquisition of a group of English morphemes by Dulay & Burt in 1973 (cited in Ellis, 2007). The tradition that SLA has followed ever since was a continuum from a theoretical questioning of basic assumptions followed by empirical inquiry to establish whether the new claims have any foundation.

SLA is inherently an applied linguistic discipline. That is, it is a problem-oriented field and it is eclectic in the bodies of knowledge it brings to bear in seeking solutions of the problems that it identifies. The early work in SLA was oriented towards solving the problem of “language pedagogy”—namely, identifying a method to teaching L2 which works effectively and that classroom learners were as successful at learning a second/foreign language as they were in their mother tongue or first language. Throughout years, however, SLA has increasingly addressed other problems. The nature of problem changed dramatically from an empirical nature to a more theoretical one. Nevertheless, SLA has never lost its applied orientation totally. Today the scope of SLA has broadened and extended to the programs for linguists and for students studying the cognitive and social sciences.

It is noteworthy to mention that the field of SLA has an interdisciplinary entity (Gass and Selinker, 2008). Scholars approach the field from a wide range of disciplines: sociology, psychology, computer sciences, anthropology, education, and linguistics. Being concerned of different disciplines has both positive and negative effects on the field. The merit is that through the diversity of perspectives and scopes, we can find a richer and more fruitful picture of acquisition. The picture can best represent the issue of SLA from different angles due to the fact that many variables involved in SLA are factors relating to psychology, sociology, education, and linguistics. The demerit is that these multiple involvements from different disciplines in the field provoke complexity. Gass and Selinker (2008) believe that multiple perspectives on what purports to be a single discipline bring confusion, because it frequently occurs that scholars from various disciplines who had worked on SLA cannot understand each other.

Second Language Acquisition has different scope. That is, various disciplines and sciences might have interest or benefits in this realm:

Linguistics

The essence of SLA is language and in order to study and understand its principles one

should be familiar to linguistics. Gass and Selinker (2008) argued that a major goal of the second language acquisition research is the determination of linguistic constraints on the formation of second language grammars.

Sociology

SLA research sometimes deals with social identity and gender as these play important roles in the complex multilingual societies. Socio-cultural theories that address how culture and language are interwoven as learners progress from other- to self-regulation in the L2 has been a continuing interest in individual learner differences in language learning.

Neurolinguistics

The availability of increasingly sophisticated means for examining the functioning of the human brain (e.g. magnetic resonance imaging) has allowed researchers to examine neurolinguistic aspects of L2 use and acquisition. Traditional neurolinguistic, and cognitive approaches to second language acquisition (SLA) operate by observing linguistic behavior in experimental, clinical, or naturalistic settings, and based on patterns in those data, mechanisms are inferred.

Psycholinguistics

The focus of inquiry and research in psycholinguistic SLA has been the acquisition of linguistic competence. The study of learner errors, of orders and sequences of acquisition, of variability in learner language, and even of inter-language pragmatics has been mainly concerned with documenting how learners develop specific L2 linguistic resources. Early SLA research was predominantly psycholinguistic in nature.

Sociolinguistics

Sociolinguists prefer to treat individuals as representative members of the speech communities in which they function. It should be noted, however, that sociolinguistics is a broad field of study, itself encompassing a number of different perspectives. Fasold et al.(2006) defines sociolinguistics as the study of language in its social context. He classified sociolinguistics into two branches: (a) the sociolinguistics of society, and (b) the sociolinguistics of language. The former, according to Fasold, deals with the societal end of the language and society spectrum.

The latter is primarily concerned with language and linguistic theory but sees a need to examine social factors in order to account for these. Later SLA research has increasingly adopted a sociolinguistics of society outlook, often stridently so by insisting on the narrowness and illegitimacy of the input, interaction, and output model.

Mono-lingualism, bilingualism and multilingualism

Many SLA researchers are interested in knowing the nature of learning in monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual cases. When do we label a person as bilingual or multilingual?

De Bot et al. (2005) argued that there were two extreme positions regarding the answer to this question, both of which are now seen as untenable. One is that only people who grow up in two languages are 'real' bilinguals because they have a full command of those languages. The other extreme is that any knowledge of another language will make you a bilingual. So if you can read Hebrew characters, you are a bilingual in Hebrew and your first language. Clearly, the definition should be somewhere between those two extremes.

A form of language acquisition which is relatively recently originated in the education literature is heritage language acquisition. It is a form of SLA and a form of bilingualism.

Heritage language learners have knowledge of two languages (the home language and the language of the environment/school), and they are usually dominant in the second language.

Psycholinguistic or Sociolinguistic SLA?

Tarone and Swain (1995) provide a neat characterization of the differences between a psycholinguistic and a sociolinguistic approach to investigating L2 acquisition.

The controversy over whether SLA should proceed as primarily a psycholinguistic or sociolinguistic field of study came to the fore in a special issue of the *Modern Language Journal*, where Firth and Wagner (1997) presented their prolegomena for a sociolinguistics of society approach to investigating L2 acquisition and a number of psycholinguistic SLA researchers responded (cited in Ellis, 2007).

Ellis (2007) believes that with the partial exception of variability studies, which draws on the sociolinguistics of language tradition, early SLA research was predominantly psycholinguistic in nature.

Diversity in theories of SLA

The multiplicity which exists in SLA caused many theories, models, and hypotheses in the field. Each discipline tried to propose its own theories and models. Few of these theories and models consider the principles of other theories. This is partly because SLA is an interdisciplinary entity and partly due to the lack of attention given to other theories by other theoreticians.

This theoretical pluralism has inevitably given rise to sharp divisions in opinion regarding the relative merits of the different theories. It has also given rise to controversy and debate as to whether such multiplicity should be accepted as inevitable and even desirable in a complex field of inquiry such as SLA or whether there is a need to sift out the weaker theories (Ellis, 2007).

On the one hand, there are the “relativists” who view SLA research as an “art” rather than a “science” and argue that “in art perspectives are neither right or wrong; they are simply more or less appealing to various audiences” (Schumann cited in Ellis, 2007). On the other hand, there are those like Long (1993) and Beretta (1991), who see multiple theories as problematic for SLA research and consider the elimination of some theories in favor of others, a necessary goal if the field is to advance. He argued that where opposition exists, culling needs to take place, pointing out that the history of science shows that successful sciences are those that are guided by a dominant theory (Long cited in Ellis, 2007).

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Research Paper: 'Learning about language learners' learning styles' by David Ockert

You can download a research paper entitled "Learning about language learners' learning styles" by David Ockert by visiting <http://www.elweekly.com/elt-newsletter/2010/06/61-research-paper-learning-about-language-learners%E2%80%99-learning-styles-by-david-ockert/>

Case Study: 'Enhancing Cultural Role in Foreign Language Classroom: a Case Study of Malaysian International High Schools' by Dr. Khairi Al-Zubaidi

(This paper is submitted by Dr. Khairi Obaid Al-Zubaidi, Ass. Prof., Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, (UTM) International Campus, Academy of Languages. khairi_alzubaidi@yahoo.com)

Culture is an inseparable portion of language. Culture is the main source of input to foreign language learning. The culture of English as a foreign language is not well understood in some of our English classrooms, in spite of a lot of attention that has been paid to studying the possibilities of enhancing the culture in learning and teaching of the foreign language programs over the last decades. The researcher in this paper aims to discuss the importance of cultural role of the foreign language and to address cultural awareness, cultural competence, cultural diversity, and the foreign language cultural standards as well as to enhance the language skills and cultural components in the classroom. For the purpose of this study, a questionnaire was developed by the researchers on a number of international high school teachers in Malaysia to support the main aim of this study.

Keywords: Cultural awareness, cultural competence Cultural Standards, English second / foreign language.

Introduction

Cultural studies have received a noticeable attention in the last decades due to the emergence of the English as a global language and the rapid growth in the fields of technology and communication through which our universe has become a global village. The cultural awareness, cultural standards and cultural competence are essential components of foreign language learning and teaching. Language and culture are intertwined, interconnected and inextricable. Language is one of the main components of culture. Language would not be learned well and completely without learners be aware of its culture. In this globalized century education teachers and foreign language teachers in particular should be more aware than ever of the cultural standards to enable him/her to face the new challenges. Mastering English opens one to a whole new world of knowledge previously reached by people from all round the world. A strong command of the foreign language and cultural awareness are essential prerequisites for the foreign language teachers.

English language in Malaysia

Malaysia is a multicultural country. There are fundamental differences among Malaysian people arising from the differences in ethnicity and culture, as well as from family background and individual differences. These differences somehow affect the teachers as well as learner's behaviors and attitudes towards the learning process of foreign language. During the British colonization period beginning from the 18th century, the English language has been used extensively in Malaysia. Nowadays, although the Malay language (Bahasa Melayu) is the national and the official language, English is widely taught in all schools. The argument that using English in the classroom will destroy the rich linguistic and cultural heritage of our country is equally preposterous; most Malaysians do not speak English as a native language. It is ridiculous to think that learning new things in a different language will somehow make us forget our real mother tongues. No, the most important question when it comes to the language debate is which language will help our children learn better.

There are many Malaysians who have been influenced to use English in their daily lives, but the majority speaks poor English. Hassan (2005) believes that, "the former Malaysian educational system (using English, Malay, Mandarin, Tamil, and different syllabuses) had kept people apart, and had to be replaced with one that would bring the various groups together."

The Ministry of Education in the mid-1990s reintroduced English as a medium of instruction to teach mathematics and science in all schools, colleges and universities. This action was opposed by the Malays. Finally, however, in 2003 it was announced that the use of English in teaching mathematics and science would be introduced in the primary schools beginning of the year. The Minister of Education also called for a "quantum leap" to improve English standards and techniques through the "introduction of a tougher English examination" Pillay,(1998). Lilian, k (2008) states that many Malaysian college students are poor in English. Even after learning the language for more than 10 years, they are still not able to speak or write English properly, or to use English functionally. She adds that the standard of English proficiency of Malaysian students has declined. This perceived decline is an issue that has sparked off heated debates among scholars of Malaysian English. Some believe that that teaching of the English language should focus on learners' communicative competence and thus the teaching of grammar can be reduced. There is also a growing concern among Malaysian educationalists about Teachers' proficiency and competency. They are trying to improve English teaching in public schools through training programs for English language teachers and for this purpose the Ministry of Education has established new educational institutions such as English Language Coordinators (E.L.Cs). The main aim of this project is to train teachers to improve their competence and standards in English proficiency.

In Malaysia, English language teaching is a huge challenge. Even after learning English from primary school until the secondary school, the students are still quite incapable of acquiring and comprehending the language. The most obvious drawback is in the area of grammar whereby students are having difficulties in grasping the concept of morphology and syntax. Besides the linguistics complications, the social surroundings such as attitudes towards the language and environment that do not encourage them to use the language have worsened the effort of learning the language.

English language teaching starts early in Malaysia, since kindergarten and pre-school but the level of language acquisition is still unsatisfactory. Presently, to make the learning of English more interesting, a literature component is added in the teaching of English. Furthermore, to promote the use of English in a day to day basis, various activities such as debate, drama competition and choral speaking are incorporated. Despite all these measures, the level of English among students especially in the rural areas is still in question. The fact that after 11 years of formal learning, the students are still not quite capable to acquire the language is still the topic of debate among educationalists. The poor English is also perceived as one of the major reasons for a high rate of unemployment among graduates.

History has clearly shown that the two languages, English and Malay are not connected and do not come from the same roots. Therefore, there are many structural differences between the two languages such as in the aspect of morphology and syntax. These differences are big obstacles in hampering the process of language acquisition.

Some scholars believe that the problem is not the medium of instruction. A lot of it lies in the quality of instruction which directly points to the teachers. Get it right at the basic level i.e. train teachers and probably the rest of the problem will be slowly eased away. Our teachers themselves are incompetent in teaching English and it means that for the next few years, we can expect similar bad results from our students until our teachers learn to be proficient enough in the English language. It will not change the fact that the quality of English instruction in our school system is so horrid that even most of our teachers cannot string a proper English sentence together, when the whole reason we teach English is because we want a nation of people who can at least handle the basics of both Malay and English. And it will also not change the fact that even among the Chinese and Indians of this country, there are many other dialects and languages which constitute “mother tongues,” and that for many people, Mandarin and Tamil are as foreign as Swahili or Japanese. Both the present policy and the old policy are not suited to the diversity of our country, because they appear to have been dreamed up by people completely ignorant of how real Malaysians live.

Many attempts have been made, both nationally and individually in the effort to improve the students' ability in improving the command of the language. The failure rate is so high that can no longer be ignored. Analysis in the comparison of the two languages, namely English and Malay could be one of the ways in comprehending the never ending problem of language acquisition throughout the 11 years of formal learning. Moreover, more conducive learning environment should be provided to make the learning process more exciting and fun and ultimately, makes the learning process more meaningful. There should also be a campaign for Malaysians to master the English language, which must involve overcoming the hangover attitude that knowing and speaking the English language is somehow being anti national. Furthermore, the changing of the economic status of Malaysia in the last two decades and rapid development and growth of technology and communication boosted the demand for bilingual teachers. Therefore, teachers see a genuine need to improve their English to cope with these developments and new challenges. Efforts must be made to convey the message effectively to all Malaysians that it is the national interest to enhance the country's international competitiveness in the era of globalization and information and communication technology, by mastering the English language.

Objectives

One of the main objectives of this paper is to investigate the cultural awareness, cultural standards and competence of foreign language teachers in Malaysian international high schools. In addition this paper will explore teacher's differences in cultural background and preparation, attitudes and communication, and perceptions of language learning and teaching. As an English language teaching professionals, our main concern is to help the Malaysian teachers to teach English language more effectively.

Questions of the study

Is the teacher competent to teach foreign language?

What is the role of the teacher in facilitating awareness, navigating differences and harnessing/developing cultural diversity as a resource?

Is the teacher of foreign language aware of the culture of the language he teaches?

How to enhance the language standards of the teachers?

Cultural Awareness

Culture is understood differently with different backgrounds because of different values, beliefs and patterns of behavior. According to Cakir (2006), culture refers to different

things to different people, an understanding of which is likely to help interaction between people from various walks of life. As a result, different people across cultures communicate differently and will be affected as well as respond differently to learning practices and stimuli. Gonzalez (2005), points out that cultural awareness involves a continuous process of developing awareness of one's own and others' cultures in the course of undertaking professional duties. Cultural awareness therefore, suggests an understanding of differences between human communities with regard to, values, beliefs, norms, customs, meanings and ways of life among other things. Such differences are seen in social practices, attitudes and values, family interactions and expectations, values concerning education, business and management behaviors and practices, political practices, and interpersonal relations (Quappe & Cantatore, 2007). Gonzalez (2005) suggests that by increasing cultural awareness, people from different walks of life will develop greater sensitivity to culture, diversity and multicultural societies, and improve their capacity to understand, relate, and interact with a diverse range of people in an ethical, effective, and collaborative way.

Quappe and Cantatore (2007) explain that cultural awareness is the foundation of communication that involves being aware of cultural values, beliefs and perceptions. With cultural awareness, people recognize that their actions, attitudes, and learning behavior among other things, are defined by their cultural backgrounds which impact the way interpret the things around them. With this awareness, it is a necessity for teachers to include cultural components in the teaching of the English language to maximize the learning by the students. In a study about the Impact of Online Instruction on EFL Students' Cultural Awareness, Al-Jarf (2007) found that as a result of exposure to a combination of in-class and online instruction involving cultural awareness by the teacher in his teaching, student achievement could improve. There are many implications in teaching as a result of culture. As Gonzalez (2005) indicates, cultural awareness could help organizations to improve understanding and appreciation of intercultural differences. By including cultural aspects in the teaching, it could better help individuals to promote personal growth through learning and understanding, among other things. As such, it becomes imperative to integrate various aspects of culture in teaching to incorporate valuable initiatives as well as activities associated with cultural awareness to minimise, if not eliminate misinterpretations in dealing with others with different cultural backgrounds, and for the betterment of learning at large.

Teaching Standards English and Cultural competency

Change in education requires a vision, a solid foundation, and effective strategies to reach objectives. This is achievable through the implementation of instructional strategies and standards that take into account various issues as well as language that various students bring into classrooms. Standards provide a focus on content – what students actually need to know and be able to do. Standards describe what to teach, not how to teach it. To help

students achieve at high levels, local educators can take these standards and design the specific curricular and instructional strategies that best deliver the content to their students. For instance, in teaching standard English from a cultural perspective, instruction should, among other things, focus on the structure of the language as well as on how to communicate it; maintain an oral basis; and link teaching to clearly defined long term goals.

Standards are a continuing commitment to excellence with their emphasis on what students should be learning. They represent a concerted effort to prepare students with the knowledge and skills to make informed career choices, integrate and apply academic and career concepts, prepare for successful participation in the global society, and seek and love learning as a lifelong endeavor. With standards, students will be able to understand how to create alternative solutions by using critical and creative thinking skills, such as logical reasoning, analytical thinking, and problem-solving techniques. Teachers should therefore integrate and apply knowledge for instruction. They should plan and implement instruction based on knowledge of students, learning theory, subject matter, curricular goals, and community as well as adapt teaching to diverse students.

Teachers should understand how students differ in their development and approaches to learning, and create instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse students. The good approach to implementing standard English includes, but is not limited to, permitting students to demonstrate their listening skills by summarizing, responding, paraphrasing or following directions; allowing varied and frequent opportunities for students to communicate with each other; providing students opportunities to summarize, analyze or evaluate oral or written communication completed by themselves, their peers or the teacher; providing the students opportunities to listen and respond appropriately to the teacher, their classmates or audio visual materials; allowing students to use speech for different purposes in a variety of situations; and teaching students how to evaluate the effectiveness of their own communication.

As a part of teaching students how to read for instance, language instructors should encourage students to understand their individual responses to what they read and sharing those responses. They should help students to think critically about what they read and provide them with many different writing and speaking experiences in order to teach the skills of writing and speaking. It is imperative that language instructors provide students with straightforward assessments of their proficiency in English at every stage of instruction so that students understand what to do to improve. The processes by which students develop proficiency in a second language differ from the experiences of monolingual English speakers. Progress to full competency for English learners depends on the age at which a child begins learning English and the richness of the child's English environment. The

English-language development standards provide teachers with usable information to ensure that English-language development is occurring appropriately for all students.

English learners, regardless of grade level or primary-language literacy level, must receive reading instruction in English. They are to learn to read in English while acquiring oral English fluency. Standards in a foreign language are therefore designed to assist classroom teachers in assessing the progress of English learners toward attaining full fluency in English. The second language standards describe the knowledge, skills and characteristics that new teachers must have to meet expectations for quality instruction. These involve strategies used to help students across cultures attain proficiency in English. In this regard, teachers should be able to understand that one's own cultural orientation affects the perception of another culture, and then avoid creating cultural misperceptions.

The listening and speaking standards for English learners identify a student's competency to understand the English language and to produce the language orally. Students must be prepared to use English effectively in social and academic settings. In "Towards the development of standards in foreign language teacher preparation", Kalebic (2005) discovered that communicative competence was the most important practical competence followed by communication and presentation skills, and then the ability to motivate learners for learning. Listening and speaking skills provide one of the most important building blocks for the foundation of second-language acquisition essential for developing reading and writing skills in English. To develop proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, students must receive instruction in reading and writing while developing fluency in oral English. In addition, students should be given an opportunity to understand cultural and linguistic diversity.

Culture is important from the standpoint that it is easier for students of the same culture to explain things to one another in a way that makes sense to them.

According to King, Sims and Osher (2001), culture suggest "the integrated patterns of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of racial, ethnic, religious, or social groups." King et. al. (2001) considered cultural competence as a developmental process that occurred along a continuum based on the following six possibilities: (1) cultural destructiveness, (2) cultural incapacity, (3) cultural blindness, (4) cultural pre-competence, (5) cultural competence, and (6) cultural proficiency. Talking about cultural competence, Jackson (2006.P) pointed out that "it requires not knowledge of the intersections of race and ethnicity in self, but broader analyses of the vast array of elements that comprise a person." Jackson (2006) advances the theory of self discovery to ensure that future educators are culturally competent as it relates to the important, lifelong process of learning about oneself. (King et. al, 2001), caution that

teacher educators remember that their hopes for educating culturally competent educators on all strands of delivery can only guide their design.

Essential elements for cultural competence include (1) value diversity, (2) capacity for cultural self-assessment, (3) consciousness of the dynamics when cultures interact, (4) institutionalization of cultural knowledge, and (5) adaptation to service delivery reflecting an understanding of diversity between and within cultures

In recent times, the language teaching profession has given increasing attention to the role of learners in the language teaching process and the emphasis on the idea that teachers can enhance students' chances of success in language learning by teaching students how to learn languages (Oxford, 1996). One advantage of teaching language learning strategies is that it increases chances of success in mastery of English. Teaching language learning skills and strategies also enhance students' chances of success in the learning of other languages beyond English. The reason for studying English is not simply to master a particular language, or even a communication tool for use in communicating with people of one particular nation. English should serve as a vehicle which allows students to interact with people of many different nations and cultures, and one of the best ways to emphasize this fact to students is by incorporating instruction in intercultural communication skills as part of their English language learning (Lustig & Koester, 1999).

Teaching English should serve as a training ground as well as an invitation to the study of other languages and cultures it awakens students' desire to learn other languages (Richie, 1988). Such approach to the teaching of English sends a clear message to students concerning the value and importance attached to the teaching and learning of all languages and cultures. As Oxford (1996) indicates, it is imperative that teachers understand which students in class show signs of field dependency and address those issues through pairing, group work, and infusion of multiple intelligences in the classroom. Cultural competence should therefore be integrated in classroom as it is capable of bridging across differences, and improving the social, health and educational outcomes (Olsen, Bhattacharya & Scharf, 2006). According to Jackson (2006), to serve the ever-changing multicultural mix in the best possible way, teachers should be well-prepared to address the needs of all students. Jackson suggests that teachers should develop sensitivity to classroom, societal, and global diversity through a process that involves (1) discussion, (2) admission, (3) accommodation, and (4) proration. With a process of self discovery, future teachers would be able to achieve cultural competence and prepare new teachers for a diverse and changing society.

Technology and Teaching Culture

The advent of the information technology is shaping the way people gather and disseminate information. The teaching profession is not an exception to the rule. As Moore, Morales and

Carel (1998) pointed out, “one of the alluring aspects of technological resources is the ease with which recent and relevant information can be brought to students.” With a sample of 100 school districts, Moore et al (1998) carried out a survey on technology and teaching culture, paying attention to foreign language teachers in the State of Texas. The researchers sought to find out whether foreign language teachers made use of the available technological facilities for teaching culture; how they used resources like videodiscs, interactive video, CD-ROMs, and computer networks for teaching culture, and how they incorporated the use of these resources into classroom activities. To analyze the quantitative data, the researchers used the following variables: level of teacher education, years of teaching experience, languages taught, and school setting (urban vs. suburban; urban vs. rural) and level of school (elementary, middle, and high). The study reveals that the level of education tended to influence the frequency with which teachers used technological facilities for teaching where teachers with doctorate degrees had higher scores. With reference to years of experience, the study revealed that this was a factor that determined how frequently teachers incorporated technology in their teaching where the least experienced teachers tended to have the lowest scores in almost all areas, except in the use of CD-ROMs. In the case of languages taught, the study revealed that Japanese teachers made a more frequent use of technology facilities in classrooms particularly in the use of the World Wide Web (WWW) than most teachers. The study discovered that rural teachers made very little use of interactive media learning materials than teachers in urban and suburban settings and that elementary school teachers scored lower in most categories than teachers at the middle or high school level although the differences were not statically significant. The researchers recommended teacher development programs so as to enhance teacher’s technical knowledge as well as ways to use the capabilities of the technology; the inclusion of multiple user domains such as chat rooms into courses to take advantage of the benefits of networking and real time communication for enhancing cultural understanding and behavior; continued collaboration between teachers of foreign language pedagogy and teachers of language courses to create greater curricular articulation; and the encouragement of research on other ways of learning (such as Vygotskian social-constructivist principles) in which students learn not only about cultural products and practices but also about cultural perspectives of the native speakers.

In studying technology and second language learning, Yong Zhao (2005) sought to provide an overview of the capacities of a broad-range of technologies for second language learning and discuss how technology could be designed for the betterment of second language learning. The author discusses technologies in terms of their functions for creating an optimal language environment. The discussion was based on the following functional dimensions of technologies: enhancement of language input/exposure, improvement of exercises and feedback, facilitation of authentic communication, and sustention of motivation. Although technology could potentially improve second language learning, it

does not necessarily lead to learning gains because the use of technology is not straightforward and there is no compelling logic link between technology and second language learning (Zhao, 2005).

According to Zhao (2005), the impact of technology on the acquisition of a second language is limited by the fact that the traditional conceptualization of the uses of technology focuses on the potential uses of individual technologies rather than on the combined potential of all technologies; on individual language learning issues instead of the learning processes; on newer technologies but it ignores older technologies (for instance, the replacement of traditional audiovisual language labs with newer computer-based networked language learning centers), and that the existing research on technology for language learning tends to focus on adult language learners. For the successful language learning, Zhao (2005) suggests high quality input ample opportunities for practice, high quality feedback, and individualized content.

To achieve these conditions, it is important that an ideal teacher or teaching system helps learners develop and elaborate their increasingly specified cognitive representation for the second language; allow learners to experiment and take risks in a psychologically favorable and motivating environment; puts learners in touch with others; promotes cultural and social learning; and promotes interactivity in learning and communication, among other things (Zhao, 2005). In conclusion, an effective learning environment should consider a variety of technologies (such as the Leap Pads that enable the users to retrieve sound files by touching an area of the book placed on a platform and Alpha Smart as a low-cost, portable language learning device for teaching writing) designed to create opportunities for communication and practice. It is also imperative that language learning should not only be confined to classroom boundaries. As such, effective language learning should encompass tools for instructional and learning activities in and outside the classroom, among other things.

Cultural Standards

In 1996, The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) published the standards for foreign language learning: Preparing for the 21st Century. These standards are based on five goals: communication, cultures, connections, comparison and communities.

The new Standards (ACTFL p.43) suggest, however, that language educators consider culture as “the philosophical perspectives, behavioral practices and products – both tangible and intangible – of a society”, and in the statement of the philosophy of the publication: “The United States must educate students who are linguistically and culturally equipped to communicate successfully in a pluralistic American society and abroad “. These standards

were updated and widely supported in national reform efforts. The researchers will focus only on the cultural standards of ACTEL where there are several Departments of Education in the United States such as, California, Utah, Mississippi and others have published suggestions, guidelines and applications regarding these standards. These standards have two cultural goals:

1. To gain knowledge and understanding of other culture. The standards under this goal make reference to three cultural components: perspectives (cultural values and attitudes), practices (patterns of social interactions), and the products (language plus all the tangible and intangible creations of that culture: housing, food, social structures, inventions, work of arts, etc.) In their activities, students will not just learn the language, but they will discover the nature of a new culture. Therefore in this goal, there are two main standards:

Standard 1: Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied. Standard 2: students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied.

2. Comparisons: develop insight into the nature of language and culture. In this goal, there are also two main standards: Standard 1: Students demonstrate understanding of the nature of language through comparisons of the language studied and their own.

Standard 2 Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the culture studied and their own.

Methodology

The instruments used to collect data were questionnaire designed by the researchers. A set of questionnaire which contained twenty questions are divided into four groups. Different questions types, such as scale, yes, no; open-ended, listing and category were used in the questionnaire. The questions were designed to cover the cultural awareness, cultural standards, cultural competence and the use of technology to enhance cultural components. The questionnaires were distributed among English teachers in international high schools in Kuala Lumpur and we received fifty respondents.

Data Analysis

The data shows that the respondents belonging to different ethnic, lingual and racial backgrounds (38 Malays, 8 Chinese and 4 Indians) and it seems that a reflection of the Malaysian society, and also shows that 35 of them (70%) have lived in English speaking country, and it is also is normal because international schools in its recruitments select teachers who lived or trained in English speaking country.

Speaking English is not only about using proper grammar. To use English effectively, you need to understand the culture in which it is spoken. Regardless of different points of view, culture has taken an important place in foreign language learning and teaching. We all know that understanding of language involves not only the knowledge of grammar, but also certain features and characteristics of the culture. To communicate internationally involves communicating inter-culturally as well, which probably leads us to encounter factors of cultural differences. Based on the survey that has been conducted, it is found that 49(98%) respondents are personally aware of the English culture. 15(30%) respondents are aware of 75% of the English culture, 24(48%) are only aware of 50% of the English culture and the least 11(22%) are only aware of 11% of the English culture. This is accounted by the fact that 35(70%) respondents have lived in an English speaking countries before. Slightly more than half of the respondents (27), 54% demonstrated the insight into how target language and culture compare to the students' language and culture. Only 28% (14) of the respondents however, provide examples of mutual influences across language and culture in the classroom. Finally, also a rather small number of respondents (19, 38%) identify distinctive aspects of the target culture presented in print literature. Visual arts, film and videos and relate these to the cultural perspectives of English culture. It can be concluded therefore, that even though majority of the language teachers are personally aware of the English culture, they do not employ this knowledge in relating the teaching components to the cultural perspectives of the English culture.

As the global development of science and technology and economy, cross-cultural communication is no longer a new phenomenon. It has already become an important part in life for people to communicate with others from different nations, regions and with different cultural background. Therefore, language teaching is faced with new challenges. Language is the soul of the country and people who speak it. If language is taught only as a tool, very little culture will be taught along with the language. The more one knows about the language, the more eager he will be to know about the culture, history and people of the country. Vice versa, one can learn the language better when one knows more about the culture. His cross-cultural communicative competence will therefore be improved. The data shows that a vast majority of the respondents believe in cultural competence among teachers of foreign languages. A whopping 47(94%) respondents think that cultural competence is an important aspect that should be inherent in a foreign language teacher. It is believed that it is high time that language teachers thought about how to cultivate students' cross-cultural communicative competence.

In 1996, The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTEL) published the standards for foreign language learning: Preparing for the 21st Century. These standards are based on five goals: communication, cultures, connections, comparison and communities. These standards have two cultural goals:

1. To gain knowledge and understanding of other culture. 2. Comparisons: develop insight into the nature of language and culture. Regarding the cultural standards requirement of foreign language teachers, apparently the analysis shows that a very marginal number of the respondents are aware of the concept. Only a mere 16(32%) respondents understand the notion of the cultural standards requirement. Only a small majority of 19 respondents (38%) portray the English culture in their behavior such as using gestures, signs or body movements, in the classroom. It can be perceived that largely, the respondents are not very clear on the premise of the cultural standards perception.

Technology is an ever-increasing part of the English language arts classroom. Today's teachers are developing new and exciting means of integrating language, writing, and literature with innovative technologies. There are some theories which might help teachers implement technology. The first is to separate the role of the teacher

It is important to understand the respective roles played by the teacher and the technology in the learning process. It is also important for the teacher to teach in a principled way

Whenever a new technology emerges (such as, say, podcasting), it is important to go beyond the 'wow' factor and think about the pedagogical reasons for using it. It is also possible to use the technology to complement and enhance what the teacher does. Finally, 'It's not what it is, it's what you do with it.' (Jones 1986.) So it is not the interactive whiteboard per se which could improve the learning experience, but how it is used. From the analysis of the data, 37 respondents(74%) employs the use of technology in the teaching of English in the classroom, in which 15 respondents are utilizing the internet, 38 respondents make use of the LCDs during presentation and 8 of them are using other modes of technological devices. Many of the respondents (36, 72%) do not have appropriate resources to teach English culture. Therefore, there arises the difficulty for the teachers to incorporate the English culture components in their teaching to maximize the learning process of the students.

Conclusion:

Culture components are an important integration for the teaching of English as a foreign language. Cultural awareness helps foreign language teachers compare the first and second language cultures and apply communication skills in their activities in the classroom. Cultural competence is one of the main tools to encourage the teachers of foreign language to be successful in their career. On the other hand, we simply cannot ignore the role of cultural standards and the use of modern technology to enhance the skills of teachers of foreign language.

To sum up, culture is an integration of different patterns of human behavior that include language, beliefs, religions values, communications and thoughts which encompasses the philosophical perspectives, behavioral practices, and tangible and intangible products of a society. Language and culture is inseparable and language is one of the main components of culture. Cultural awareness helps the foreign language teachers compare the first and second language culture and apply communications skills in their activities in classroom. These activities will help students to interact with other culture. Cultural and linguistic competence is a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes that enables teacher of foreign language to work effectively in cross-cultural situations.

Cultural competence is the process by which individuals and systems respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, languages, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, religions, and other diversity factors in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families, and communities and protects and preserves the dignity of each. Particularly cultural competence is the integration and transformation of foreign language knowledge and patterns of behavior of its people into specific practices, and attitudes in appropriate cultural settings to increase the understanding of a new language. From our experience, students who are studying foreign languages are excited and interested to know some details about foreign culture and are open to share, discuss and compare the foreign culture with their own. The diversity of cultural values enriches the discussions and help in preventing of misjudging the other culture.

This study showed there is a need for more training toward cultural proficiency in foreign language teacher programs to improve the quality of their communication skills and performance as well as there is a need for using self-assessment for continuous improvement in culturally responsive interactions.

The results of the study also show that teachers believe that there is a high need for cultural competence in English language teaching. Most of the teachers confirmed the importance of cultural awareness in teaching English as a foreign language. A high percentage of teachers showed a kind of confusion regarding cultural standards, because the training programs preparation for teacher education certificate does not include the syllabus concerning cultural standards. A high percentage of teachers employ the use of technology in teaching English in the classroom.

As a conclusion, nowadays culture is more important than ever in the language teaching due to the huge interactions among the nations because there is no existence of the cultural boundaries anymore in this globalize world we live in.

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Article: Using web resources to create tasks with real outcomes

“I consider the greatest problem facing me as a language teacher is knowing how to motivate my students: how to get them past the hurdle of seeing learning English as just another academic subject, to regarding it as developing a communication tool that will be useful for them throughout their lives.

Over the last years I've gradually developed a working method that seems, at least, to tackle the problem. It's based on using web publishing resources for creating tasks which are relevant to students and that produce tangible results.

Case study

The broader context – task-based learning and developing PLEs

Drawing out the implications

Case study: presenting a recipe task

In my first session with a group of adult students (Basque School teachers) we set up a class blog and, soon after, identified that pronunciation was an area they wanted to focus on. Accordingly, I formulated a task for presenting a recipe in a post on their blog.”

Read the remaining article at <http://www.eltweekly.com/elt-newsletter/2010/06/61-article-using-web-resources-to-create-tasks-with-real-outcomes/>

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