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Article critique of “Developing real life experience through teaching culture in the EFL class: fostering the learning trough intercultural awareness.

INTRODUCTION

In order to know how university can give learners useful tools to develop the communicative competence into the English class, it is necessary to implement different kind of activities that involve the students in a curriculum of meaningful content.

One of the aspects to take into account is the inclusion of Culture in the learning process in English classes. One of the key components in language is Culture. Culture, however, varies from one country to another and from one community to another within that country. Due to the diversity of cultures, it is important for teachers to know the culture that is going to be taught in the language-learning classroom.

The problem state by the author is that culture is not part of the curriculum in many universities due to the fact that teachers leave behind the role of culture in the EFL because teachers are not culturally aware, the extra time devoted to activities and the limited span of time to complete the syllabi in a semester. Moreover, the author argues that universities neglect to teach culture due to students' negative attitude towards the target culture.

This critique will explore three important dimensions: the impact of the inclusion of culture in EFL, how do teachers understand the concept of culture and analyze the concept of culture materials that teachers use to address cultural issues in English classes.

First of all, the author begins with a brief review of literature that supports the ideas of the importance of culture in EFL.

EFL classrooms are integrated for students who have a monolingual life in their own country and they learn English as a foreign language (Kieger 2005, cited by Chlopek (2008) and they do not have the necessary access to interact with the target culture nor have sufficient spaces to development of cultural competence.

The motivation and participation of students in the learning of the new language could be focused also in the learning of the new culture. The teachers have limited the teaching to the lineal development guided by books, leaving to a second place the motivation; considered one of the most powerful aspects to achieve a near picture between the students and the language, taking into account the immersion into the culture.

The learning of the foreign language is developed in a high level through the cultural characteristic of the language, and according to Tomalin (1993) Cultural awareness is the term, which is used to describe the sensitivity to the cultural impact – induced behavior on language use and communication. However, Manjarres (2006) expresses the view that it is clear that many students of our country could never have the opportunity to be immersed in English or native culture, and so understand the function of the language in its context.

In her work, Saluveer (2004) cites to Fenner (2000) who claims that the aim of foreign language education, is to give learners opportunities to develop cultural knowledge as well as competence and awareness in order that they can build up a better understanding of the foreign culture, likewise solidify their own culture.

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the grammatical structures of the target language and a mastery of its phonology. The learner must also acquire new cultural knowledge and a set of culture-specific constraints on linguistic behavior”.

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Secondly, according to the study of Önalán (2005) for most teachers; culture means: traditions, customs, family and home life, institutions of a community, as well as social relations in it. Likewise they think that culture implies aesthetic aspects like art, music, literature etc. of a community. Teachers perceive “culture” in general, to be composed of sociological facets rather than elements related to language.

Finally, As it is known, English teachers use course books as a resource in their methodology, and this material is based on British and American cultural aspects, giving to the students’ models of ways of living and social interactions. Nevertheless, these aspects are managed in a superficial way. Tutors only teach what the course book shows, without going deeply in explanations about cultural implications of Anglophone countries. As Önalán (2005) says about the implications of culture in teaching, the material must be prepared according to the learners’ particular needs, and also teaching should be more focused on global cultural awareness than in English/American cultural information.

In the teaching–learning interaction, teachers include in the methodology of their classes different resources, tasks or assignments and implement different kind of assessments. But it is important to bear in mind the inclusion of other activities that could foster the interest of the English learning among the students. These activities should be applied within the frame of classroom projects.

Classroom projects are tools that involve the careful orchestration of learning and teaching objectives, selected pedagogies and resources, aligned to particular expected outcomes. This kind of projects are expected to have an impact not only on the students' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behavior, but also as a consequence, on their learning process of English as a foreign language. This learning process not only takes place at an individual level but also collectively and exists new possibilities for understanding the cultural implications in language learning. At the same time, these innovated alternatives bring into the students an interest in the interaction and increase of new expectations about the learning of English in each classroom and its proficient development.

As a conclusion, I strongly agree with the author in the immersion and inclusion of cultural awareness in the curriculum but some points addressed in the article are confusing and they are not clearly state; one instance could be the research design, I believe that the data collection wasn't enough or well explain in detail.

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