The role of culture in enhancing students' language acquisition: Teacher's strategy

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Abstract

This study discussed the importance of integrating culture into language teaching strategies to enhance students' language acquisition. By fostering an environment that embraces cultural diversity and promotes cultural sensitivity, educators can engage students in a more holistic and immersive language learning experience. Culturally enriched language instruction can contribute significantly to students' language acquisition and promote intercultural competence, thus preparing them for a globalized world. The aim of this research is to understand the role of culture in enhancing students' foreign language acquisition. Therefore, this study wanted to examine whether the Ustadzah at the Darul Ihsan Islamic boarding school in the expanse of silver had implemented it in their classrooms properly. This research used a qualitative descriptive method. The research participants are two English teachers in Islamic boarding schools. The result of this study is that the teacher knows about the importance of understanding cultural literacy in a classroom then if a teacher wants to make students master the language well to speak and interact, a teacher should give an understanding to students about the role of culture in the use of cultural resources, literary culture and authentic ingredients. The researchers concluded that language and culture have a very close relationship.

Keywords: Acquisition; culture; English teacher; foreign; language

1. Introduction

In modern education, the introduction of foreign languages holds a paramount position. Language serves as a conduit not just for communication but also as a reflection of the multifaceted societal dimensions, norms, and cultural values that underpin its native speakers (Poonam, 2023). As we strive to refine language learning strategies, it is crucial to recognize the profound influence of culture in shaping our understanding of foreign languages. This complex interplay between language and culture prompts several significant inquiries. Educators find themselves confronted with questions such as: How can culture be adroitly harnessed to enhance language learning strategies? To what

extent does an awareness of culture infiltrate and influence students' motivation and their capacity to acquire foreign languages (Poonam, 2023)? The role of cultural values, such as collectivism or individualism, in shaping students' preferences for specific language learning methods also becomes a focal point of inquiry. Moreover, the manner in which cultural norms intertwined with education and achievement manifest in students' dedication, participation, and tenacity in language learning tasks (Johnson & Nguyen, 2019) is an area deserving of deeper exploration.

While prior research has provided valuable insights into the relationship between culture and language acquisition, a crucial gap persists. This research lacuna is particularly prominent within the realm of pesantren, religiously-affiliated educational institutions characterized by unique cultural attributes. Understanding the role of culture in enhancing language acquisition strategies within the distinctive context of pesantren is the essence of this study, aiming to illuminate educational dynamics, inform pedagogical practices, and broaden our comprehension of foreign language acquisition within culturally diverse environments.

A series of paramount inquiries surface in this context. How can educators judiciously employ culture as a catalyst to augment language learning strategies? To what extent does an understanding of culture permeate and influence students' motivation and their prowess in acquiring foreign languages (Poonam, 2023)? How do cultural tenets, epitomized by values like collectivism and individualism, mold students' proclivity for specific language learning methodologies? Moreover, how do cultural norms intertwined with education and achievement manifest in students' dedication, participation, and tenacity in language learning endeavors?

While antecedent research has delved into the intricate nexus between culture and language acquisition, an essential chasm remains, necessitating further exploration. This void predominantly exists within the sphere of pesantren, religiously-grounded educational institutions. Recognized for their distinctive cultural attributes, pesantren schools potentially exert a profound influence on the acquisition of language within their unique environments. Hence, a pressing research lacuna emerges—centered on the role of culture in enhancing language acquisition strategies within the distinctive ambience of pesantren (Wang & Wu, 2019).

In-depth exploration of the interplay between culture and language learning within the context of pesantren is anticipated to proffer invaluable insights into the educational dynamics that characterize these unique settings. Furthermore, it promises to furnish a comprehensive understanding of how culture pervades and influences language learning strategies. This research endeavor is poised to yield a substantial contribution towards the refinement of pedagogical methods, particularly in culturally diverse environments, such as pesantren. Furthermore, its implications extend to the broader realm of foreign language acquisition.

2. Methods

This research was conducted at the Darul Ihsan Islamic Boarding School at Hamparan Perak, Deli Serdang. The researchers examined two of the teachers who teach in Darul Ihsan Isamic Boarding School, the initial names are AS and SM. The researchers reason to choose the Darul Ihsan Islamic Boarding School as the research location because at the Darul Ihsan Islamic Boarding School all students were required to use English and Arabic as daily conversations. This research is a design that is systematically arranged as a framework made to find answers to research question (Adawiyah & Daulay, 2022). This research used qualitative descriptive method. In a sense, the qualitative descriptive method is an analytical mechanism that focuses on the purposeful and consistent definition of structured words and sentences, from data collection to research documentation and reporting. The qualitative approach is also descriptive where data is collected in the form of words or photos and not numbers (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

In accordance with the qualitative understanding above, the reason why researchers use qualitative descriptive method, because qualitative research methods are descriptive methods and tend to use analysis, making it easier for researchers to conduct research and find accurate and correct

research results related to the results of researchers' research of the culture role in enhancing student' foreign language acquisition. In qualitative research, researchers also use a theoretical basis that can be used as a guide, so that the focus of research carried out by researchers is in accordance with the facts in the field. The technique of collecting data carried out by researchers is interviews and documentation to obtain accurate and reliable data

3. Results

The results of interviews and observation data were taken from English teachers at the Darul Ihsan Islamic boarding school in Hamparan Perak, Deli Serdang. The researchers interviewed with teachers have revealed that one of the factors boosting students' success in learning languages, particularly English as a foreign language, is culture. When teachers include cultural literacy into the classroom, there are several benefits. Language learners can first become more conscious of the fact that greeting people, showing thanks, asking for something, and agreeing or disagreeing with someone from a different culture are not the same as each other. They are aware that members of the target language community may see proper conduct and intonation patterns in their own language community in a different way. Secondly, if someone develops cultural literacy, it will be simple for them to interact with and correctly comprehend individuals from that culture. Cultural blindness, on the other hand, will undoubtedly prevent someone from understanding the context of a conversation, including jokes, idioms, and name-calling. Thirdly, cultural literacy can spur pupils to learn more while also enabling them to recognize the parallels and discrepancies between distinct cultural groups.

The observations also suggest that teachers are enthusiastic about engaging pupils in the learning of English by incorporating cultural elements into the target language. You can incorporate certain cultural elements by boosting pupils' comprehension, perspective and foster tolerance when observing various civilizations. In this situation, students can get a deeper understanding of their own culture and that of others, as well as discover how cultures can be similar and dissimilar, by gradually developing an internal feeling of cultural equality. According to Frank (2013), raising pupils' cultural understanding can encourage open-mindedness, tolerance, empathy, and cultural sensitivity.

Additionally, the teachers mentioned that by enhancing students' cultural awareness, they can enhance cultural communicative competence in the students, i.e. knowledge, awareness, and understanding of the relationship (similarities and distinct differences) between the place of origin and the place of the target language community. It seems very valuable for the teacher to help pupils extend their personal language experiences from the source culture to the target culture and then to other languages and cultural backgrounds. The instructor also thinks that in order to increase the students' cultural literacy, it is important to examine and critically understand the cultural variety that is taught in the classroom.

In this interview, the teacher wants to be interviewed using Indonesian. Even though the interviewed teachers are English teachers, they are more comfortable using Indonesian as the national language of Indonesian culture. The data received by the researcher from the teacher who has been interviewed is the teacher's response or opinion about the importance of culture in learning English, and will be explained as follows:

1ˢᵗ Data (Teacher A: AS)

> *"In my opinion, there are many ways to introduce literacy culture in English language learning that teachers can use, one of which is the use of authentic materials, authentic materials can use pamphlets, website news broadcasts, magazine photos, newspapers, restaurant menus, travel brochures, and many more. Facilities that can be used in*

cultural learning, for example teachers can provide films that have different cultural content."

Based on the first teacher's explanation above, the teacher explained the importance of introducing culture to children when learning English, and how to introduce culture to children. One of them is to provide films that contain different cultural content. In addition, teachers can also use pamphlets, news, magazine photos, brochures, and newspapers as facilities in learning culture and language in the classroom.

2ⁿᵈ Data (Teacher B: SM)

"In introducing culture and language in the classroom, I think as English teachers we can use role play, which means how to deal with different people in other cultures. For example, how to talk to others of the same age and older people then students can play a role in situations where inappropriate speech is used in a cultural context. For example, when Arabs want to say "stone" they say "hajar" which means stone in Arabic. However, when we say the same word "hajar" in Indonesian culture, Indonesian people will misunderstand the word, because "hajar" in Indonesian culture means "to hit."

From the second teacher's explanation, introducing culture and language in the classroom are namely by using "role play." The meaning here is how someone talks to other people according to their age, how when we talk to people who are younger, the same age, or older old. Then, in the use of language it must be adjusted to each culture. The example has been explained by the participants above, that when we say "hajar" in Arabic it means "batu". But, when we say the word "hajar" in Indonesian culture it means "memukul". So, we have to adapt the context of the language to the culture of a place.

It is important for us to know the relationship between culture and language. Language is part of culture that cannot be separated according to the opinion of Koentjaraningrat (2005). Language as an element of culture has many very important roles, one of which is in the realm of education. Considering that Indonesia is a rich country on culture and language, Indonesia can be said to be a great country. Indonesia is quite good at putting aside cultural, ethnic, racial, and linguistic differences for the sake of unity. This is inseparable from the role of the realm of education. In Indonesia education that a foreign language such as English is one of the mandatory studies to date. This is an effort to avoid lagging developments in science and technology education. Not only that, not infrequently we also find schools or Islamic boarding schools that use bilingual languages such as Arabic and English, one of which is Darul Ihsan Islamic Boarding School, where this school was chosen to be the research site. The findings are the strategy views of two teachers in the school through interviews.

4. Discussion

4.1. Teachers' Strategy about Culture Role in Foreign Language Acquisition

Teacher A:

In the realm of education, the fusion of culture and language plays a pivotal role. This essay explores Teacher A's pioneering strategies for infusing culture into the learning process. Teacher A champions the use of modern technology and multimedia resources as valuable teaching tools. While Teacher A's primary focus is on effective language learning methods, we aim to explore the broader implications of incorporating multimedia into education. By examining how websites, magazines, and

films can serve as gateways to diverse cultures and languages, we can appreciate the multifaceted advantages of multimedia integration.

Teacher A's commitment to enhancing education through multimedia integration is evident. In today's digital age, the traditional confines of teaching have expanded exponentially. Multimedia resources, such as websites, magazines, and films, now hold an indispensable place in the modern classroom. Teacher A's enthusiasm for employing these tools underscores their potential to transform the learning experience. While Teacher A emphasizes effective language learning, we should delve deeper into how multimedia resources can foster cultural awareness and language proficiency. Websites, for instance, offer a vast repository of information about diverse cultures and languages. By immersing students in these digital environments, they can gain firsthand knowledge of the rich tapestry of our world. Magazines and films, on the other hand, provide immersive cultural experiences, enabling learners to explore linguistic subtleties and cultural intricacies.

The integration of culture and language through multimedia is not just about language proficiency; it is about cultivating cultural understanding. Websites grant students access to a wealth of articles, videos, and interactive content that showcase different facets of global cultures. Magazines offer an in-depth exploration of cultural nuances, while films provide auditory and visual immersion in different linguistic and cultural landscapes. This exposure fosters not only language skills but also empathy, appreciation, and cross-cultural competence. The synergy between multimedia and language learning is undeniable. Authentic materials, such as films and articles, expose students to real-world language usage. These resources sharpen language skills, helping students grasp idiomatic expressions, colloquialisms, and nuanced language use. Furthermore, the engaging nature of multimedia makes learning enjoyable, which in turn bolsters motivation and retention.

It is crucial to recognize that multimedia's advantages extend far beyond language learning. These resources are versatile and can be harnessed across various subjects, enhancing overall educational outcomes. Fields like science, history, geography, and others can benefit from the immersive experiences provided by multimedia. As students engage with diverse content, they develop critical thinking skills, cross-cultural competence, and a global perspective that transcends disciplinary boundaries. Teacher A's advocacy for multimedia integration in education resonates strongly in today's interconnected world. As technology continues to evolve, educators and learners have access to an ever-expanding array of multimedia tools. Embracing these resources is not merely an option; it is a necessity for fostering culturally enriched and effective education. Teacher A's pioneering approach reminds us of the transformative power of multimedia in shaping the future of education.

Teacher B:

Teacher B's approach to incorporating culture and language is founded on the belief that educators should provide real examples that illustrate the interplay between language and culture. Teacher B employs a method known as "Role Play" to achieve this objective. Role Play is a form of stimulation commonly used in social education and human relations, as noted (Daulay, 2011) who defines it as a method for students to master subject matter through the development of imagination and empathy. In addition to the Role Play method, Teacher B emphasizes the importance of teaching ethics, which is an integral component of culture, often referred to as ethical language. Teacher B asserts that teachers must instill in students an appreciation for cultural and linguistic diversity. Students should learn how to pragmatically apply language in interactions with individuals of varying ages and cultural backgrounds. Based on these insights, it is evident that Teacher B incorporates the Role Play method into language learning in the classroom to stimulate students' imagination and facilitate a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

The respondents share a perspective on the concept of culture in language that revolves around fostering good behavior through the use of English. While culture is a multifaceted concept, it consistently aligns with positive and ethical principles. Culture is rooted in knowledge and human

civilization, representing the collective wisdom of particular human groups passed down through generations. In the context discussed here, cultivating good ethical practices in language usage involves understanding interlocutors based on factors such as age, language type, dialect, and situational context, all of which must be mastered pragmatically. The respondents' perspectives highlight their awareness of the significance of culture in the educational process, not solely within the realm of language but across all academic disciplines. The cultural aspect holds paramount importance because it encompasses patterns of behavior and values that are deemed virtuous and are, therefore, preserved over time. Culture constitutes an inseparable component of the foundational principles of human existence, encompassing language, dialects, and societal norms.

Teacher B's strategies for integrating culture and language in education center around the use of the Role Play method to provide real-life examples and promote students' understanding of the intricate relationship between language and culture. Additionally, Teacher B emphasizes the teaching of ethics as an integral aspect of culture, aiming to foster good behavior and ethical language usage among students. The respondents' perspectives underscore the importance of preserving cultural values in the educational process, as culture serves as the bedrock of human society, influencing language, dialects, and ethical norms across various domains of knowledge.

Cultural Literacy in Language Learning

The integration of cultural literacy into language education is a fundamental and enriching component, offering a multitude of advantages to students as they embark on their language learning journey. Beyond the mere acquisition of language structures and vocabulary, cultural literacy delves into the intricate intricacies of communication within diverse cultural contexts. It encompasses the subtle nuances in greetings, expressions of gratitude, requests, and the art of agreeing or disagreeing. This profound understanding empowers language learners to not only navigate but excel in intercultural communication (Daulay, 2019). Cultural literacy, in essence, equips learners with the tools to interpret and appropriately respond to the unspoken rules and cues that vary across cultures. It goes beyond grammar textbooks and language lessons, immersing students in the rich tapestry of human interaction. When language learners delve into these cultural subtleties, they cultivate an acute awareness that members of the target language community may perceive proper conduct and intonation patterns differently from their own cultural norms.

Imagine a scenario where a student encounters a native speaker from a different cultural background. Without cultural literacy, they might struggle to understand why their attempts at politeness are perceived as overly formal or why their expressions of gratitude fall flat. However, armed with cultural literacy, they recognize the divergence in cultural norms and can adjust their communication style accordingly. Furthermore, cultural literacy cultivates a profound sense of empathy and respect for diverse cultural practices and language variations. It goes beyond the realm of language; it is a gateway to understanding the deeper layers of a culture's history, values, traditions, and customs. This understanding extends far beyond the linguistic aspect, fostering an appreciation for the rich tapestry of human diversity.

In the globalized world we live in today, the ability to effectively engage in cross-cultural communication is more valuable than ever. Cultural literacy is the bridge that allows individuals to traverse the cultural divide with grace and sensitivity. It promotes effective cross-cultural communication by equipping language learners with the knowledge and understanding necessary to navigate the complexities of multicultural interactions (Faradilla & Daulay, 2023). Moreover, cultural literacy serves as a catalyst for breaking down stereotypes and dispelling biases. It challenges preconceived notions and fosters a genuine curiosity to learn about other cultures. When language learners gain insights into the different ways people express themselves, they are less likely to resort to stereotypes or misconceptions. The incorporation of cultural literacy into language education is a

transformative journey that enhances students' linguistic abilities and equips them with invaluable skills for intercultural communication. It empowers learners to navigate the intricate web of cultural nuances, fostering empathy, respect, and an appreciation for the rich diversity of human cultures. In our interconnected world, cultural literacy is not just an educational asset; it is a key to unlocking meaningful cross-cultural connections and bridging divides. It is a lifelong skill that enriches not only language but also the human experience itself.

Teaching Methods for Cultural Integration

The effectiveness of teaching methods plays a pivotal role in the seamless integration of culture into language education. Teacher B's utilization of role play is a prime example of a method that immerses students in diverse cultural scenarios, encouraging them to adapt their language usage to factors such as age, cultural background, and context. This active participation in cultural scenarios not only enhances language proficiency but also cultivates cultural sensitivity, a critical skill in today's globalized world (Frank, 2013). In addition, Teacher A's emphasis on authentic materials, such as films, brochures, news articles, and restaurant menus, is invaluable. These materials provide students with real-world exposure to various cultures, offering insights into daily practices and customs. Such experiential learning is known to enhance language acquisition by making it engaging and relevant (Harahap, 2020). It's worth noting that the incorporation of culture into language education requires careful consideration to strike the right balance. Educators must ensure that cultural elements are presented in a manner that fosters understanding and respect, avoiding stereotypes or biases. This calls for meticulous selection and adaptation of cultural materials to suit the educational context (Nabila & Daulay, 2023).

Challenges in Language and Culture Integration

While the integration of culture into language learning offers a plethora of benefits, educators must grapple with certain challenges that can arise in this endeavor. These challenges are significant and demand thoughtful consideration. One prominent challenge faced by educators is the potential for the misinterpretation of cultural context, which can result in misunderstandings or misapplications of language. Language learners may struggle to grasp the subtleties of cultural practices, leading to inadvertent missteps in communication. In such instances, educators play a pivotal role in providing guidance and explanations to help students navigate these cultural differences effectively (Niswa & Daulay, 2022). Their expertise and insights are essential in aiding students to comprehend the intricacies of cultural context.

Cultural sensitivity represents another challenge in the integration of culture into language education. Educators must create an inclusive classroom environment where students feel not only safe but also encouraged to engage in discussions on cultural topics. Students should be able to pose questions without fearing judgment, and an atmosphere of mutual respect should prevail. Fostering open dialogue is paramount in addressing this challenge (Saddhono, 2014). When students feel valued and heard, they are more likely to actively participate in cross-cultural conversations and enrich their understanding. Additionally, educators must remain vigilant about preventing cultural blindness, a scenario where students remain oblivious to or dismissive of cultural differences. To counteract this phenomenon, educators should actively encourage critical thinking and reflection on cultural topics. Empowering students to analyze and interpret cultural diversity is essential for developing a nuanced understanding of different cultures and their practices (Sanjaya, 2014).

In conclusion, the integration of culture into language learning significantly enhances students' cultural literacy, deepening their understanding of language and cultural nuances. Effective teaching methods, such as role play and the use of authentic materials, are instrumental in promoting this integration. Nevertheless, educators face challenges related to cultural context, sensitivity, and

awareness that require proactive measures. By addressing these challenges head-on, educators can ensure that cultural integration remains a valuable and enriching aspect of language education, fostering well-rounded, culturally aware individuals (Ningsih & Daulay, 2023).

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings in this paper, the writer concludes that there are two different respondent's answers to apply a cultural aspect in language or language lessons. The first way is to use the media in the teaching and learning process, learning media is very important to provide in language learning. This is due to the limited knowledge of humans to know what languages exist in this world. In this era we can find out about anything in this world with the the internet network aid which contains various sources of knowledge such as articles, books, videos, pictures etc. The use of the role play method is very popular in today's era. This method approach relies on the imagination of students to act according to the requested role. This way will stimulate the actions that should be done if we get the requested role. For example, if we act as a teacher, how do we act to perform the role of a teacher. This method will help students learn in a fun way. Finally there are many methods in introducing the culture role in enhancing a language.

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