

## METHODS OF TEACHING LANGUAGE THROUGH CULTURE

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19708903>

### **Anotation**

Language functions not only as a tool for communication but also as a medium through which culture is expressed. In the field of Language Teaching, there are two major opposing perspectives regarding the connection between language and culture. One view argues that language and culture are closely interconnected, while the other suggests that language teaching should be separated from cultural elements. Considering this debate, the present study aims to explore whether language and culture are truly linked. In other words, it examines whether teaching a language necessarily includes teaching its culture. The study begins by defining the concept of culture within the ELT context and then discusses the relationship between language and culture. In the practical section, the paper analyzes empirical studies to investigate this relationship and presents a theoretical framework based on the views of various experts. The study adopts a theoretical approach to discuss arguments both supporting and opposing the integration of culture in language teaching. Finally, the paper concludes with key findings and provides references for further research.

**Keywords:** Culture, English language Teaching, Teaching Language and Culture, Methods for teaching Culture

When teaching an international language like English, educators need to take into account several important factors. These include the nature of the language itself, the role of culture in language teaching, how language reflects cultural expression, and the influence of teaching materials and methods. As McKay (2003) points out, both materials and methods play significant but different roles in the process of language acquisition. According to Cortazzi and Jin (1999), language textbooks generally include three types of cultural content: source culture, target culture, and international culture materials. Source culture materials are based on the learners' own cultural background. For instance, in Japan, this would involve using content related to Japanese society and traditions, which students are already familiar with. Target culture materials, on the other hand, focus on countries where English is spoken as a first language. In this case, learners study aspects of life in places such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, gaining insight into native English-speaking cultures. The third type, international culture materials, incorporates content from a wide range of cultures around the world, both English-speaking and non-English-speaking. For example, Japanese students might learn English through a lesson about environmental issues like rainforest destruction in Brazil.<sup>1</sup>

Many English textbooks mainly rely on source culture materials. However, one of the key objectives of teaching English as an international language is to enable learners to express their own ideas and cultural perspectives in English. Therefore, there are strong arguments in favor of using source culture content, which is also the guiding principle behind material selection in

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Hardy (Keio University) <https://tb.sanseido-publ.co.jp/english/newcrown/pdf/ten006/010.pdf>  
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textbooks such as *New Crown*. In addition to materials, teaching methods are equally important and often reflect cultural perspectives. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is one of the most widely used approaches today. It originally developed in English-speaking countries to help immigrants learn English and adapt to their new environment. As a result, CLT places strong emphasis on speaking skills and group interaction, assuming that learners are surrounded by an English-speaking social context. However, this assumption raises concerns when CLT is applied in other settings. First, many countries do not provide an English-rich environment outside the classroom, as English is treated as a foreign language. Second, the focus on oral communication may not match learners' needs in some contexts. In countries such as Chile, China, and Korea, greater emphasis on reading and writing skills may be more suitable.

Studying culture provides learners with a meaningful reason to learn a target language and makes the process of learning a second language more engaging and purposeful. From the learners' point of view, one major difficulty in language learning is seeing native speakers of the target language as real individuals. Although grammar books often present examples taken from everyday life, without sufficient cultural background, these situations may seem artificial or unrealistic to students. Learning about culture helps bridge this gap by connecting abstract language forms and sounds to real people, places, and contexts. Motivation is widely recognized as a key factor in second language learning. Culture plays an important role in enhancing motivation because learners tend to enjoy culturally related activities such as music, dance, role-playing, and research about different countries and communities. Exposure to culture not only increases learners' curiosity and interest in the target language but also strengthens their overall motivation. For instance, when teachers introduce cultural elements into their lessons, students often become more engaged and show greater preference for these classes compared to more traditional approaches. From the very beginning of the course, teachers should create a cultural environment in the classroom. They can do this by using posters, pictures, maps, signs, and real objects to help students imagine the target culture. Giving students foreign names from the first lesson can also make learning more interesting. Short presentations with pictures or slides on topics students like can further develop this understanding. Teachers should also show students how foreign cultures have influenced their own country. For example, they can introduce borrowed words or place names. This helps students understand that they already know some words from the target language, such as poncho, fiesta, and rodeo. Food is another example, since dishes like taco, burrito, and chili come from other cultures. A useful activity is to ask students to visit supermarkets or stores and find imported products. This helps them see cultural connections in real life.

#### Culture Capsules (Taylor & Sorenson, 1961)

Culture capsules are short presentations prepared by students at home and presented in class in about 5–10 minutes. This idea was introduced by Taylor and Sorenson in 1961. A culture capsule usually explains one small difference between two cultures, for example, between Lebanese and American customs. It includes a short explanation, pictures, and real objects. Later, Miller (1974) developed this idea into more structured classroom activities. Ursula Hendron also recommends using culture capsules in high school classes. This method teaches culture by comparing one important difference between cultures, such as dating habits, food, pets, or sports. Role-playing can be used to make these differences clearer. For example, students can act like young people in Spanish-speaking countries and recreate a

traditional Sunday walk in a town square using posters, music, and props. Brigham Young University has created “Culturgrams” for about 100 countries. These materials include information about family life, attitudes, customs, and history. After studying them, students can compare foreign traditions with their own. There are also “Infograms,” which focus on general topics like travel stress, laws, and family life across cultures.<sup>2</sup>

Culture capsules are one of the most common and effective ways to teach culture, especially in foreign language classes. They provide a short description of one aspect of a culture, such as eating habits or marriage traditions, and compare it with the students’ own culture. Although teachers can explain these differences, it is usually more effective when students identify and discuss them themselves. When teaching a foreign language, educators must consider various elements such as traditions, religion, clothing styles, and celebrations, as all of these are essential components of culture and reflect a way of life. Culture is closely connected to language, as it is expressed through it; therefore, learning a language without understanding its cultural context results in an incomplete learning experience. This point is particularly important because, in many educational settings, teachers tend to overlook students’ social and cultural development, even though it plays a crucial role in foreign language learning. It is essential to consider the learners’ own cultural background, as introducing a new language can influence how they live and perceive the world. For this reason, teaching a language should also be seen as teaching a specific culture and worldview, which can have both positive and negative effects on learners. Furthermore, learning a foreign language is not limited to acquiring grammar, vocabulary, and expressions; it also involves engaging with cultural elements that go beyond the language itself. Therefore, teachers need to be mindful of their students’ cultural backgrounds and origins to ensure that the new language and its associated culture do not conflict with their existing values, but instead contribute to a meaningful and effective learning experience. Language and culture are inextricably linked and cannot be separated in the process of language learning. Language is more than just a system of grammar and vocabulary; it also reflects the culture of its speakers. As a result, teaching a language without considering its cultural context may limit learners’ ability to communicate effectively in real-life situations. Modern language education prioritizes “little-c culture,” which refers to everyday life aspects such as traditions, food, behavior, and daily communication. Teaching language through culture allows students to develop both linguistic competence and intercultural awareness. Language and culture are intimately linked. Language reflects a community’s values, beliefs, and social norms. At the same time, culture shapes how people communicate and interpret meaning. Without understanding the cultural context, learners may misinterpret expressions, gestures, or social rules in the target language. Scholars such as Robert Lado emphasized language structure first, followed by researchers such as George Trager, who emphasized culture in language learning. This demonstrates how language and culture must be integrated into teaching practices. Integrating these elements can result in more effective communication and a deeper understanding of the language being studied. Educators can better prepare students for real-world interactions in diverse environments by

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas Hardy (Keio University) <https://tb.sanseido-publ.co.jp/english/newcrown/pdf/ten006/010.pdf>  
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promoting cultural awareness in addition to language instruction. One of the most effective strategies is to use authentic materials. These include films, songs, newspapers, and television shows that introduce students to real-world language and cultural contexts. These materials help students understand how native speakers use language in everyday situations.<sup>3</sup>

Another effective strategy is to engage in role-playing and simulation activities. These activities allow students to practice real-life scenarios such as ordering food at a restaurant, traveling, and shopping. This method allows students to practice both language and appropriate cultural behavior. To improve cultural-based language instruction, teachers should incorporate cultural content into all lessons rather than teaching it separately. They should also use reliable and current materials on a regular basis. Encouraging student participation through discussions and interactive activities is critical. Teachers must avoid stereotypes while presenting culture in a balanced and respectful manner. Finally, combining language skills with cultural knowledge improves learning effectiveness and realism. Teaching language through culture is an important aspect of modern language education. It assists learners in developing not only linguistic skills but also intercultural competence. Language and culture are inextricably linked, and effective communication requires a thorough understanding of both. As a result, incorporating culture into language teaching methods should be a top priority in all educational institutions.

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