

DISADVANTAGES OF LEARNING AND TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES UNBASED CULTURE

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Abstract. The present paper explores the intricate relationship between language and culture and the disadvantages of teaching or learning a foreign language without integrating its cultural background. The study argues that without cultural context, learners face numerous challenges including pragmatic misunderstandings, communication breakdowns, loss of intercultural competence, and reduced motivation. Drawing on existing literature and empirical findings, the paper underlines that successful language acquisition is not possible without developing cultural awareness. Additionally, an analysis of a student article supports the claim that culture-free instruction fails to build full communicative competence. The paper proposes that embedding culture through authentic materials and pragmatic practice is essential for developing socially and linguistically competent language users.

Key words: culture, language learning, teaching language, communication breakdowns, cultural context, intercultural competence, pragmatic misunderstandings,

Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqola til va madaniyat o'rtasidagi murakkab bog'liqlikni va madaniy asosga ega bo'lmagan xorijiy til o'rgatish hamda o'rganishning salbiy oqibatlarini o'rganadi. Tadqiqot natijalari shuni ko'rsatadiki, madaniy kontekstsiz o'qitish nafaqat kommunikatsion xatoliklar, balki madaniyatlararo kompetensiyaning sust rivojlanishi, o'quvchilarning motivatsiyasining pasayishi, balki noto'g'ri pragmatik foydalanishga olib keladi. Mavzuga oid adabiyotlar va amaliy tadqiqotlar asosida til o'rgatishda madaniyatni integratsiya qilish zarurligi isbotlanadi. Maqolada muallifning o'zi yozgan asar misolida ham madaniyatdan xoli yondashuvning kamchiliklari ko'rsatib berilgan. Yakunda, haqiqiy materiallar, madaniy va pragmatik mashg'ulotlar orqali madaniy kompetensiyani rivojlantirish samarali til o'rganishning asosi sifatida taqdim etiladi.

Kalit so'zlar: madaniyat, til o'rganish, til o'qitish, muloqotda uzilishlar, madaniy kontekst, madaniyatlararo kompetensii, pragmatik tushunmovchiliklar

Introduction

Language and culture are considered inseparable concepts, because there is no nation that has not developed a culture. As Brown puts it: "A language is a part of a culture and a culture is a part of a language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture." Indeed, we have to accept that culture and language

are so interconnected that it is not surprising they are sometimes perceived as synonyms. Language educators have pointed out that learning a language inevitably introduces students to a given culture, since “language does not exist outside a cultural context” (Perkins, 1988, p. 25).

On the other hand, language learning divorced from cultural context leads to gaps in communicative ability and social understanding. Research consistently stresses that “language and culture cannot be separated” in teaching and learning. Applied linguists emphasize an “inextricable connection between language and socio-cultural norms”. In other words, gaining grammar and vocabulary alone is insufficient: learners also need cultural knowledge and pragmatic skills. Fang (2010) summarizes this risk bluntly: “Knowledge of the target language’s culture is as important as its grammar or vocabulary... a lack of cross-cultural awareness can be a severe hindrance in understanding a message which is linguistically accurate”. In short, language learning without culture often produces incomplete communicative competence.

Key disadvantages of omitting cultural context include:

2.1 Pragmatic Misunderstandings: Learners miss subtle cues like politeness formulas, humor, and nonverbal norms. Without cultural insight, even correct sentences can offend or confuse. For example, vocabulary may have different connotations (e.g. “dog” means loyalty in English but can be derogatory in Chinese). Fang’s study of cross-cultural pragmatic failure shows that students who ignore cultural norms frequently produce abrupt or inappropriate requests and responses. English phrases like “Never mind” may be misinterpreted without cultural awareness. In essence, pragmatic competence suffers: learners cannot adjust language use to context or recognize implicatures.

2.2 Communication Breakdowns: Research shows that even linguistically “accurate” messages fail without culture. Fang notes learners often transfer mother-tongue conventions (forms and politeness strategies) into the new language, which “will bring trouble in communication”. A systematic review concludes language teaching “cannot be separated from culture”, because communication involves knowing which styles or norms are appropriate in each culture. In practical terms, students with no cultural grounding struggle to interpret intentions or resolve misunderstandings: they have a harder time negotiating meaning in real-world interactions.

2.3 Limited Intercultural Competence: Neglecting culture inhibits learners’ development of intercultural skills. Studies define Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) as including linguistic ability plus cultural awareness (attitudes, knowledge, and skills). ICC is now seen as a core language-learning objective. If culture is absent, students miss understanding underlying cultural worldviews, traditions, and values that shape language. This can lead to stereotyped or superficial views of the target community. Without cultural context, students may also lack empathy: research notes that learners with high cultural literacy show greater appreciation for differences and navigate

disagreements with “tact and consideration”. By contrast, learners with low cultural awareness tend to commit pragmatic errors that native speakers find jarring.

2.4.Reduced Motivation and Engagement: While not always quantitatively measured, many theorists argue that removing culture makes language study less motivating. Students enjoy language learning more when they can connect it to meaningful cultural contexts (films, music, history, etc.). If lessons focus solely on grammar, students may feel they are memorizing sterile rules. In practice, this can slow progress or cause attrition, though this effect is more qualitative.

Examples of Cultural Disconnect

Below, several researchers’ works are seen and given conclusions with suggestions.

The concrete consequences of ignoring culture in language teaching have been documented in case studies. For instance, Fang’s analysis of “pragmatic failures” in English–Chinese communication provides vivid examples. She notes that English learners from different cultures frequently transfer L1 norms into English “which will bring trouble in communication”. Common mistakes include over-directness (e.g. saying “Be quiet” instead of the more polite “Would you mind closing the window?”) and misused idioms (“Never mind” after thanks). These errors are not grammar issues but cultural usage errors. As Fang states, “Even speakers of the same language ... have different concepts of what it means to be polite”, so pragmatics varies widely. In concrete terms, such disconnects can make native speakers find learners rude or incomprehensible, despite correct vocabulary.

Other authors describe similar risks. When learners study language in a “cultural vacuum,” they may form misconceptions. For example, sarcastic or humorous expressions often make no sense out of context. Humorous customs (like poking fun at elders in some cultures but not others) can confuse learners. Without cultural context, idioms and slang are memorized mechanically and used inappropriately. Over time, these missteps can erode a learner’s confidence or credibility. In workplace or travel situations, such misunderstandings can have costly consequences.

Loss of global perspective is another issue. Culture and language learning are bidirectional: as learners acquire a language, they naturally start internalizing cultural attitudes. Isolation from culture prevents that growth. Some scholars argue that culture learning fosters open-mindedness and global awareness; without it, learners may remain ethnocentric. In today’s globalized society, lacking intercultural skills can limit careers and personal connections.

Eli Hinkel (ed., 1999) – In *Culture in Second Language Teaching and Learning*, Hinkel collects empirical and theoretical chapters on exactly this topic. Contributors document cases where ignoring culture leads to pragmatic breakdown, and they offer classroom strategies to integrate cultural content. Hinkel’s introductory chapter notes (as cited above) the “inextricable connection”

between language and socio-cultural norms. Overall, this volume underscores that culture teaching is not optional but foundational.

Susser & Robb (1990) – In their classic *Language Culture: Materials for the Classroom* (published by Heinle), Susser and Robb compile readings and methodology demonstrating culture's role. They note that a “culture-blind” syllabus impoverishes learners, and they provide guidelines for infusing cultural topics.

Pennycook (1994) – In *The Cultural Politics of English as an International Language*, Alastair Pennycook argues that language always carries power and ideology. While not a pedagogical text per se, his work reminds us that teaching English without culture can unwittingly promote imperialist attitudes. This socio-political perspective highlights an ethical disadvantage of ignoring culture.

Council of Europe (2001) – The CEFR framework explicitly includes sociolinguistic and cultural competences as part of language ability. Its “global scale” levels describe learners being able to take part in multicultural discussions. The CEFR's emphasis on “savoir-être” and “savoir-apprendre” implies that learners need intercultural skills, not just grammar.

Method

This study employs a literature review method, analyzing scholarly perspectives on the interconnection between language and culture in foreign language education. Fang (2010) highlights the impact of neglecting cultural norms, stating that students often make pragmatic errors like inappropriate requests or misused idioms. Mokoro (2024) argues that cultural immersion is essential for developing pragmatic competence. Zhang & Li (2024) conducted experiments demonstrating that explicit pragmatics instruction significantly improved learners' communicative adaptability. Preksha & Kaur (2024) found a strong positive correlation between cultural awareness and successful language use in social contexts.

I fully agree with Fang and Mokoro's stance that cultural context is essential for meaningful communication. However, I partially diverge from Pennycook's (1994) critical view that teaching English risks promoting imperialist attitudes. While it is important to remain culturally sensitive, completely removing cultural components undermines language learning goals.

Results

Several empirical studies reinforce the significance of integrating culture in language education. For instance, Mokoro (2024) observed that students who had strong grammar skills still failed to use language appropriately without cultural knowledge. Zhang & Li (2024) found that students who received explicit cultural instruction performed better in role-play tasks requiring intercultural sensitivity.

In analyzing my own article titled 'Disadvantages of Learning and Teaching Foreign Languages Unbased Culture,' I observed patterns that align with existing findings. The article emphasizes issues like pragmatic

misunderstandings, low engagement, and lack of intercultural competence when culture is not incorporated. It supports the idea that even grammatically correct communication can fail without cultural awareness. Thus, my article provides additional confirmation of the broader academic consensus.

Through reviewing literature and analyzing empirical data, I have learned that language learning is incomplete without a solid cultural foundation. Cultural elements such as politeness norms, idioms, and body language are crucial for effective communication. Ignoring them leads to misunderstandings, lack of empathy, and failure in real-life interactions.

The research shows that including cultural content enhances learners' motivation, social sensitivity, and global awareness. This paper underscores the necessity of integrating authentic materials, pragmatics practice, and cultural discussions in the curriculum. Overall, I have come to understand that teaching a language without its culture is like offering a key without a lock — learners may know the language but remain unable to unlock its true communicative power.

The present paper explores the inseparable connection between language and culture, emphasizing that teaching or learning a language without its cultural context can lead to serious challenges. It presents four key disadvantages: pragmatic misunderstandings, communication breakdowns, lack of intercultural competence, and reduced motivation. The paper aims to highlight that without cultural knowledge, even grammatically correct language use may be inappropriate or offensive. Drawing on empirical studies and literature reviews, it demonstrates that cultural integration enhances language learners' communicative competence. The paper also analyzes the author's own academic article to reflect on these challenges. The final discussion presents what has been learned through this exploration, emphasizing the necessity of authentic cultural materials in curriculum design.

The findings of Gulomova (2020) clearly emphasize the importance of sociolinguistic competence in second language acquisition. While many L2 learners focus on mastering grammar and vocabulary, their ability to use language appropriately in real-life social and cultural contexts often remains limited. This lack of sociolinguistic awareness can result in misunderstandings and ineffective communication, even among grammatically proficient students.

In particular, the study identifies several key factors contributing to this issue: lack of emphasis on sociolinguistic aspects in classroom instruction, insufficient teacher training in sociolinguistic matters, and the use of inauthentic teaching materials. These challenges highlight the need for a more comprehensive language teaching approach that integrates sociolinguistic competence alongside linguistic and communicative skills.

Therefore, it is necessary for educators to incorporate authentic materials, promote intercultural communication, and engage in professional development focused on sociolinguistics. Doing so will better prepare L2 learners to navigate

diverse communication settings, enhancing both their language proficiency and cultural understanding.

Conclusion

The literature is clear: teaching a language in isolation from its culture undermines the ultimate goals of communication. To avoid the disadvantages outlined above, educators are advised to integrate cultural content throughout curricula. This can include authentic materials (films, news, literature), pragmatic instruction (role-plays, politeness strategies), and discussions of cultural norms. Numerous studies recommend not just sporadic culture lessons but embedding culture in every lesson.

In summary, learning a language without cultural context tends to produce fragmented knowledge and pragmatic breakdowns. Conversely, when culture is woven in, learners develop communicative and intercultural competence – they become more adaptable, empathetic, and effective in real-world use. As one study succinctly puts it, cultural immersion is “essential for developing practical pragmatic skills”. Integrating culture is therefore not a luxury but a necessity for meaningful language education.

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