

EMBRACING CULTURAL CLASSES: UNVEILING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CULTURE IN EFL EDUCATION

Raykhona Gulomova

Senior teacher of Uzbekistan state world languages university

r.gulomova@uzswlu.uz

Abstract Language acquisition is a complex process influenced by various factors, including cultural elements. Culture plays a significant role in shaping second language learning experiences and outcomes. This article explores the impact of culture on second language learning from a linguistic perspective. It examines how cultural factors affect language acquisition, including sociolinguistic competence, pragmatics, and intercultural communication. The article also discusses the implications of cultural influences on language pedagogy and provides recommendations for enhancing second language learning in culturally diverse contexts. All the data was collected based on the classes of “Developing cultural competence” at Uzbekistan state world languages university.

Key words: *Intercultural competence, cross-cultural awareness, Culture based classes, sociolinguistic competence.*

Abstrakt Tilni o'zlashtirish murakkab jarayon bo'lib, unga turli omillar, jumladan, madaniy elementlar ham ta'sir qiladi. Madaniyatlararo muloqot tajribasiga ega bo'lish ikkinchi tilni o'rganish va qo'llay olishda muhim rol o'ynaydi. Ushbu maqola madaniyatlararo muloqot kompetensiyasini shakllantirish darslarining ikkinchi tilni o'rganishga ta'sirini tilshunoslik nuqtai nazaridan ko'rib chiqadi. U madaniy omillar tilni o'zlashtirishga qanday ta'sir qilishini, jumladan, sotsiolingvistik kompetentsiya, pragmatika va madaniyatlararo muloqot kompetensiyasining shakllanganligining qanday afzalliklari borligini ko'rib chiqadi. Maqolada madaniy ta'sirlarning til pedagogikasiga ta'siri ham muhokama qilinadi va madaniy jihatdan xilma-xil kontekstlarda ikkinchi tilni o'rganishni yaxshilash bo'yicha tavsiyalar berilgan. Barcha ma'lumotlar O'zbekiston davlat jahon tillari universitetida “Horijiy tillarni o'rganishda madaniyatlararo muloqotni shakllantirish” darslari asosida to'plangan.

Kalit so'zlar: *Madaniyatlararo muloqot kompetensiyasi, sotsiolingvistik kompetensiyasi, madaniyatlararo muloqotni shakllantirishga asoslangan darslar.*

Абстракт Овладение языком — сложный процесс, на который влияют различные факторы, включая культурные элементы. Культура играет важную роль в формировании опыта и результатов изучения второго языка. В этой статье исследуется влияние культуры на изучение второго языка с лингвистической точки зрения. В нем рассматривается, как культурные факторы влияют на овладение языком, включая социолингвистическую компетентность, прагматику и межкультурное общение. В статье также обсуждаются последствия культурных влияний на языковую педагогику и приводятся рекомендации по улучшению изучения второго языка в культурно разнообразных контекстах. Все данные были

собраны на основе занятий «Развитие культурной компетентности» в Узбекском государственном университете мировых языков.

Ключевые слова: *Межкультурная компетентность, межкультурная осведомленность, культурно-ориентированные занятия, социолингвистическая компетентность.*

Introduction In the realm of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, the significance of culture classes has gained increasing recognition. As language learners embark on their journey to master English, they encounter not only linguistic challenges but also cultural intricacies. Culture classes in EFL curricula aim to bridge the gap between language and culture, fostering a deeper understanding of the target language and enabling learners to become more proficient and culturally sensitive communicators.

Our story follows a group of diverse EFL learners enrolled in an immersive language class at world languages university. These learners come from different corners of Uzbekistan each driven by their unique motivations to master the English language. The plot unfolds as they embark on a transformative journey through cultural classes, discovering the profound impact of cultural knowledge on their language learning experience.

Amidst the conventional language classes that focus on grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension, the university introduces a series of culture classes designed to expose learners to the rich tapestry of English-speaking cultures worldwide. These classes delve into various aspects of culture, including traditions, customs, social norms, history, literature, and arts.

As the learners attend their first culture class, they are initially skeptical, wondering how cultural knowledge could possibly enhance their language skills. However, their doubts are soon dispelled as they are introduced to the vibrant tapestry of cultural diversity. The culture classes prove to be a revelation, opening doors to a deeper understanding of the English language and its interconnectedness with culture.

Through engaging discussions, interactive activities, and immersive experiences, the learners explore the cultural nuances embedded within the language. They learn about idiomatic expressions, proverbs, and cultural references that are deeply rooted in the history, traditions, and values of English-speaking societies. With each class, their appreciation for the intricate relationship between language and culture grows, igniting a newfound curiosity to delve deeper.

The culture classes not only broaden the learners' horizons but also challenge their preconceived notions and biases. They confront stereotypes, misconceptions, and cultural biases that they may have unknowingly held. Through introspection and dialogue, the learners develop cultural sensitivity and empathy, recognizing the importance of respecting and embracing cultural differences. (Gulomova, 2020)

As the story progresses, the learners begin to witness the practical benefits of their cultural knowledge in their language proficiency. They find themselves communicating

more effectively, navigating social situations with ease, and deciphering cultural cues embedded in conversations. They become adept at adapting their language use to different cultural contexts, showcasing a level of sociolinguistic competence they had not previously attained.

Furthermore, the learners discover that cultural classes have a profound impact on their personal growth and self-identity. By immersing themselves in the diverse cultures associated with the English language, they develop a sense of belonging to a global community. They realize that language learning transcends linguistic boundaries and becomes a gateway to connect with people from different backgrounds, fostering mutual understanding and collaboration.

By embracing cultural classes, these EFL learners have not only gained language proficiency but also developed intercultural competence, empathy, and a global perspective that will shape their future interactions and endeavors. Their experiences highlight the significance of culture in EFL education and serve as a testament to the transformative power of cultural knowledge in language learning. (Gulomova, 2022)

In the subsequent chapters, we will delve deeper into the individual journeys of these learners, exploring their encounters with diverse cultures and the profound impact it has on their language learning experience. Through their stories, we will unravel the true significance of culture classes in EFL education and the transformative potential it holds for language learners worldwide.

Literature review

The significance of culture-based classes in foreign language learning cannot be overstated. When language education incorporates cultural elements, it not only enhances language proficiency but also contributes to the development of a socio-cultural identity.

In learning a foreign language, understanding cultural nuances is crucial. Culture-based classes help students grasp different perspectives, seeing how language and culture are interconnected, thus enriching the learning experience (Fiorito, 2000). The link between language and culture is profound and complex. Language is not merely a means for communication; it is also a key aspect of cultural identity and expression. Language serves as a vehicle for expressing cultural realities. It encompasses and conveys cultural practices, beliefs, and values. Therefore, the study of a foreign language is inherently tied to the understanding of the corresponding culture, and effective language teaching aims to incorporate cultural elements to enhance the learning experience (Abdollahi-Guilani, 2012).

Researchers posit that learning a foreign language with its cultural context fosters tolerance and a deeper understanding of other cultures, which contributes to forming a socio-cultural identity among learners (Khusainova & Kudryavtseva, 2015). When language learners are exposed to the cultural context of the language they are studying, they are better equipped to communicate effectively and respectfully with native speakers, which builds mutual understanding and tolerance. Language is a reflection of culture. Learning about cultural practices, values, and traditions through language study can

broaden learners' perspectives, making them more open-minded and appreciative of diversity

Incorporating multicultural content in language training prepares students to better reflect on the various societal issues and promotes a global cultural identity (Kartashova & Isaev, 2015). A curriculum that includes multicultural elements can raise students' awareness of global issues such as social justice, equality, environmental concerns, and more. This can stimulate critical thinking about these issues in a global context. Exposure to a variety of cultural perspectives encourages students to analyze and critically evaluate societal issues from multiple viewpoints, which is a crucial skill in today's interconnected world.

Integrating both the target language's culture and the learner's own culture can improve language skills by providing a deeper understanding of the history, art, and geography associated with each culture. It also reinforces the student's personal and cultural identity (Yang & Zhenhua, 2020).

Discussion

Culture classes play a significant role in the education of students at Uzbekistan State World Languages University (UzSWLU). As a university dedicated to foreign language education, UzSWLU recognizes the importance of integrating culture into language instruction to develop well-rounded and culturally competent graduates. Here, we will discuss the importance of culture classes for students at UzSWLU in Uzbekistan.

Culture classes provide students at UzSWLU with a comprehensive understanding of the target language's associated cultures. Uzbekistan is a diverse country with multiple ethnic groups and a rich historical heritage. By studying the cultures of the languages they are learning, students gain insights into the traditions, customs, values, and social norms of the respective language communities. This knowledge allows them to navigate intercultural interactions more effectively and fosters a greater appreciation for cultural diversity.

Culture classes are instrumental in enhancing students' language proficiency. By immersing themselves in the cultural contexts of the target language, students gain exposure to authentic materials, such as literature, films, music, and art, which provide valuable linguistic input. They learn idiomatic expressions, cultural references, and context-specific vocabulary that significantly enriches their language skills. Cultural understanding enables students to communicate more effectively and appropriately in real-life situations, contributing to their overall language proficiency.

UzSWLU emphasizes the development of intercultural competence among its students, and culture classes play a pivotal role in achieving this goal. Through cultural studies, students learn to appreciate and respect diverse perspectives, values, and beliefs. They develop the ability to navigate cultural differences, communicate across cultural boundaries, and adapt their language use and behavior in different contexts. Intercultural competence is crucial for successful international communication, diplomacy, and fostering mutual understanding.

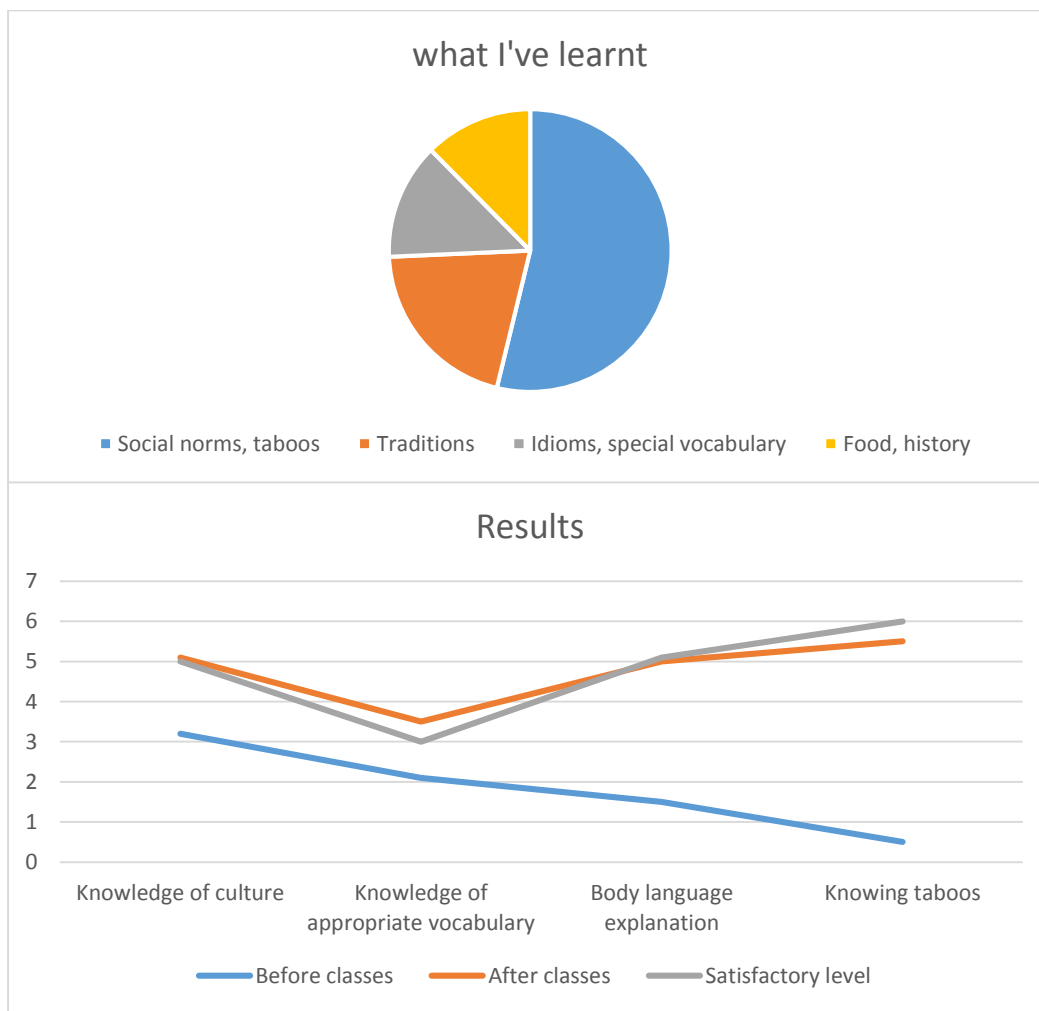
Culture classes at UzSWLU contribute to shaping students into global citizens. By studying different cultures, students expand their worldview and develop a global perspective. They gain knowledge about global issues, cross-cultural communication, and the interconnectedness of societies. This broadens their horizons and prepares them to be active participants in an increasingly interconnected and multicultural world.

Moreover, “Developing intercultural competence” lessons challenge stereotypes and biases that students may hold about other cultures. By studying diverse cultures, students gain a more nuanced understanding, dispelling misconceptions and fostering cultural sensitivity. This exposure helps students recognize the commonalities among cultures and appreciate the unique aspects of each culture. It promotes openness, empathy, and respect, breaking down barriers and fostering inclusive attitudes.

It also opens doors to academic and professional opportunities for students at UzSWLU. A deep understanding of the target language's culture enhances their competitiveness in various fields, such as translation, interpretation, international business, tourism, and diplomacy. Employers increasingly value cultural competence, and students equipped with a strong foundation in culture are better positioned to excel in diverse professional environments.

Results

Conducting a survey to evaluate the effectiveness of culture classes among 3rd-year students of Uzbekistan state world languages university involved several careful steps. Initially, one survey designed with both closed-ended and open-ended questions to gather quantitative data on student satisfaction, perceived language improvement, and cultural understanding, as well as qualitative feedback on individual experiences. The questionnaire distributed to a representative sample of 3rd-year students, ensuring that responses reflect the diversity of the student body. Upon collecting the responses, the data analyzed to identify patterns, correlations, and significant feedback. Statistical methods applied to the quantitative data to determine the overall effectiveness, while thematic analysis were useful for interpreting open-ended responses. Finally, the results compiled into a comprehensive report, highlighting how culture classes impact language learning and intercultural competence, with recommendations for future improvements to the curriculum. (Survey participants: 2001-2006, 2104,2106, 2113, 2117, 2146 group students)



Conclusion

Culture classes hold immense importance for students at UzSWLU in Uzbekistan. By integrating culture into language instruction, UzSWLU equips its students with the necessary linguistic and cultural skills to thrive as competent language professionals and global citizens. The emphasis on culture fosters a deeper understanding of the languages they study and enriches their educational experience, preparing them for success in a multicultural world. They do not merely improve linguistic skills but also enhance students' understanding of the cultural nuances and societal norms associated with the language. Such classes often lead to increased cultural awareness, intercultural competence, and a broader global perspective among students. When evaluating the effectiveness of culture classes, research shows that students generally report a deeper engagement with the language and a greater appreciation for the diversity of the target culture. Moreover, these classes prepare students to communicate more effectively in a multicultural world and foster attributes such as empathy, tolerance, and critical thinking. The positive reception of culture classes suggests that they are a valuable component of a comprehensive education in foreign language learning and should be an integral part of the curriculum to ensure a holistic learning experience.

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