Culture in Second Language Teaching and Learning

第二语言教与学的文化因素

Edited by

Eli Hinkel

出 版 前 言

1999 年 5 月至 2000 年 6 月间,上海外语教育出版社先后出版了从牛津大学出版社引进的"牛津应用语言学丛书"19 种、"牛津语言学入门丛书"6 种和"牛津应用语言学丛书续编"10 种,受到了外语界师生的一致好评和欢迎。为了向我国的外语教学与研究人员提供更多的有关专著,帮助读者了解近年来国外应用语言学和外语教学研究的理论,促进我国外语教学研究水平的提高,上海外语教育出版社又精心挑选了剑桥大学出版社的应用语言学丛书 10 种,形成与"牛津应用语言学丛书"相辅相成的"剑桥应用语言学丛书"。相信这套丛书也同样能开阔我国学者的视野,通过借鉴国外研究成果,进一步总结我国自己的外语教学经验,形成具有中国特色的外语教学理论。

《第二语言教与学的文化因素》由西雅图大学语言学教授、文化与语言沟通项目主任伊莱·欣克尔教授(Eli Hinkel)主编,主要探讨外语教学中的目标语社会文化对于外语学习者的影响。本书全面介绍了应用语言学家和外语教师对语言与文化相互作用的调查研究,并指出了文化对外语习得和外语教学的重大作用,对于增强有关人员在外语教与学的环境下的文化意识大有裨益。

全书分为三大部分:第一部分(1、2、3 章)阐述了文化对于第二语言习得的影响——不同文化背景学生的课堂表现和教师期望值的差距、母语和目标语在词汇理解和运用上的差异以及不同文化背景的学习者对会话含义的不同理解;第二部分(4、5、6 章)讨论了文化对第二语言写作,特别是学术写作的影响;第三部分(7、8、9、10、11 章)探讨了外语教材和教学法中的文化含义,并提出了解决因文化差异而引起的教学问题的恰当方法。

本书所选文章以教学实践为基础并借鉴了相关领域的理论,适用于攻读应用语言学和外语教学理论的硕士生和博士生,对于应用语言学研究者和外语教师来说,更是一本不可多得的参考读物。

Contributors

Lawrence R. Bouton, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
Martin Cortazzi, University of Leicester, Leicester
Joan Kelly Hall, University of Georgia, Athens
Linda Harklau, University of Georgia, Athens
Eli Hinkel, Seattle University, Seattle
Lixian Jin, De Montfort University, Leicester
Elliot L. Judd, University of Illinois, Chicago
Yamuna Kachru, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
James B. Lantoff, Cornell University, Ithaca
Ron Scollon, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.
Suzanne Scollon, City University of Hong Kong

Series editors' preface

The relationship between language and culture has been a focus of attention from a variety of disciplinary perspectives for many years. Linguists, anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, and others have sought to understand whether and how cultural factors influence aspects of human behavior such as perception, cognition, language, and communication. Within language teaching, cultural factors have occasionally attracted the interest of both theoreticians and practitioners. Robert Lado was one of the first to suggest that cultural systems in the native culture could be compared with those in the target culture and serve as a source of transfer or interference in much the way other types of contrasting linguistic systems do. Others have examined a range of different aspects of second language use that are subject to culturally based influences, including classroom interaction, roles of teachers and students, and teaching styles. Textbooks in language teaching methodology and classroom texts, however, typically offer a very rudimentary perspective on cultural factors in teaching and learning, if they are dealt with at all, and culture is often identified by an occasional reference to the folklore and customs in the learner's native culture.

This book seeks to reexamine the relationship between culture, language teaching, and learning by showing how cultural factors influence many different aspects of second language learning and use. Among the issues discussed are students' classroom behaviors and teachers' expectations and how they may reflect different norms for culturally appropriate behavior; differences between L1 and L2 modes of conceptual and lexical organization; the interpretation of conversational implicature in conversation by speakers of different cultural groups; the influence of cultural factors on writing and learning to write in a second language; differences between L1 and L2 rhetorical paradigms in written discourse in L1 and L2; and differences in speech act interpretation across cultures. The chapters present original research on these issues and examine implications for teaching and learning.

The book serves not only to focus awareness on the role of cultural factors in language learning and teaching but also to develop an appropriate pedagogy to address the kinds of issues identified. This involves

finding ways for the ESL curriculum to engage students and teachers in an exploration of how language and culture interact. Culturally focused consciousness-raising activities in the teaching of writing and speaking are offered as one approach. Teacher educators will find that many of the chapters also invite a reexamination of teacher education curricula to provide teachers with a deeper understanding of some of the culturally based concepts, beliefs, and discourse practice learners bring to the language classroom.

Culture in Second Language Teaching and Learning makes a useful contribution to our understanding of culture within the context of second language learning and clarifies a range of important issues that are often little understood by teachers and teacher educators. The book is therefore a welcome addition to the Cambridge Applied Linguistics Series. It adds a further dimension to our understanding of the nature of communicative competence and shows how functional L2 competence involves recognizing and learning how to use culturally specific norms for written and spoken discourse.

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Michael H. Long
Jack C. Richards

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Acknowledgments

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Introduction

Culture in research and second language pedagogy

Eli Hinkel

Culture and language

It may not be an exaggeration to say that there are nearly as many definitions of culture as there are fields of inquiry into human societies, groups, systems, behaviors, and activities. Over the years, the many explicit and implicit definitions of culture in second language pedagogy have led to what R. Scollon (1995, p. 382) calls "miniaturization of the concept of culture so that researchers study and write about the culture of the school or even the culture of the classroom." Similarly, Flowerdew and Miller (1995) refer to ethnic culture, local culture, academic culture, and disciplinary culture when they discuss the specifics of academic demands on nonnative speakers of English (NNSs) faced with a second language (L2) medium of instruction. In part, the small-scope definitions of culture are a result of teachers' and researchers' increased realization that a detailed analysis of the relationships between various norms of discourse is necessary to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Even within the explorations and the teaching of language, the term *culture* has diverse and disparate definitions that deal with forms of speech acts, rhetorical structure of text, social organizations, and knowledge constructs. Culture is sometimes identified with notions of personal space, appropriate gestures, time, and so forth. Although these concepts are certainly manifestations of cultural norms, the impact of culture as discussed in this volume is both broader and deeper, defining the way a person sees his or her place in a society.

In her study of culture and the individual, Rosaldo (1984) points out that culture is "far more than a mere catalogue of rituals and beliefs." She argues that cultural models derive from the world in which people live and the reality that they construct. She further observes that those who live outside a culture, that is, researchers, ethnographers, and anthropologists, cannot provide its complete interpretation because an individual's sense of self and assumptions about the world and society "ultimately depend upon one's embeddedness within a particular sociocultural milieu" (p. 140). She emphasizes that culture shapes and binds one's social and cognitive concepts, and that these concepts are not likely

to be understood and appreciated by outsiders. In Rosaldo's terms, the cultural world, with its social order and constraints, serves as a background against which a people's subjectivities are formed and expressed.

Applied linguists and language teachers have become increasingly aware that a second or foreign language can rarely be learned or taught without addressing the culture of the community in which it is used. Thomas (1983, 1984) observes that nonnative speakers are often perceived to display inappropriate language behaviors and often are not even aware that they do. She cautions that violations of cultural norms of appropriateness in interactions between native and nonnative speakers often lead to sociopragmatic failure, breakdowns in communication, and the stereotyping of nonnative speakers. Thomas (1983, p. 91) points out that teachers must draw on research to "develop ways of heightening and refining students' metapragmatic awareness, so that they are able to express themselves as they choose."

This volume focuses on culture as it applies to language research and the applications of its findings in language pedagogy. In addition, it focuses on second language learning and the ways in which people's worldviews affect their learning, understanding, production, and interaction in a second language and a second culture. The contributors to this collection of articles approach the notion of culture as it applies to social norms, worldviews, beliefs, assumptions, and value systems that affect many, if not all, aspects of second or foreign language use, teaching, and learning. The collection brings together research in anthropology and social cognition, as well as second language learning, acquisition, and teaching. The authors take the position that multidisciplinary studies on culture carried out in various domains of applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, interaction and pragmatics, and rhetoric and writing can inform second and foreign language learning and teaching. Conversely, the environments in which languages are learned and taught often serve as research grounds where the impact of culture can be investigated.

Studies of culture and sociolinguistics

This introduction touches briefly on just a few of the studies that have contributed to an understanding of the relationships between culture and language. The list of references included in the book gives a better idea of the scope of work that has been undertaken in the last few decades.

In the early 1900s, linguists who researched the structure of Amerindian languages (Boas, 1911) noted that relationships among thought, abstract notions, and language as a means of expressing thoughts and notions were complex. Edward Sapir in the 1920s concluded that a language and the culture of its speakers cannot be analyzed in isolation. Lan-

guage can be seen as a way to describe and represent human experience and understanding of the world (Sapir, [1921] 1961), and members of a language community share systems of beliefs and assumptions which underlie their constructions of the world. These constructions, views of objective phenomena, beliefs, and histories are communicated through language, thus establishing a connection between language and the culture of a community. Sapir's explanation extends beyond lexis to language as a referential framework of expression: "in all language behavior there are intertwined, in enormously complex patterns, isolable patterns of two distinct orders. These may be roughly defined as patterns of reference and patterns of expression" (p. 11).

In the tradition of Boasian linguistics, independently of Sapir, Whorf (1956) concluded that language systems, discourse, and lexis reflect ways of looking at the world and its various realities. To Whorf, lexicon reflected the thought processes that separated Amerindian worldviews and beliefs from those of Europeans in terms of their definitions of time, space, and natural phenomena. Although languages often have distinct grammatical features, it may be misleading to define differences among languages solely in terms of lexical descriptions and grammar rules. The Sapir–Whorf hypothesis of linguistic relativity pertains to conceptually abstract notions of lexical and grammatical, as well as referential and expressive, systems.

The study of culture further developed in the rather distinct domains of anthropology and sociolinguistics. In general, anthropologists are concerned with culture as the way of life of a people, the social constructs that evolve within a group, the ways of thinking, feeling, believing, and behaving that are imparted to members of a group in the socialization processes. In his book *The Interpretation of Cultures,* which has since become a classic, Geertz (1973) states that language and its uses within a group are of interest to social anthropologists inasmuch as they are a significant part of human behavior that represents symbolic action in regard to the social structure and interactions within the group. He further notes that behavior articulates culture and determines how language is used to express meaning. In general terms, through the analyses of language uses, anthropologists seek to gain access to cultural frameworks and thus acquire an understanding of the conceptual world within which the members of the group live.

Culture theory, developed on the basis of social anthropology, delves into conceptual properties of culture and cultural meaning systems, as well as symbolic representations of self and manifestations of beliefs and emotions (Shweder, 1984). Because concepts, thoughts, and identities are often expressed through language, culture theory is also concerned with language acquisition and socialization into a group. In light of culture theory, language is often viewed as a complex system that reflects what

meanings are attached to behaviors and how they are expressed (Gardner, 1984). On the other hand, some cultural anthropologists believe that language use may have little to do with the true causes of human behavior and often serves to mask them (Stigler, Shweder, & Herdt, 1990).

In the 1960s and the 1970s, investigations of the connections between language and culture produced such impressive and seminal works as Hymes's (1964) *Language in Culture and Society,* Gumperz (1972) on interactional sociolinguistics, Kaplan (1966) on rhetorical patterns accepted in different cultures and styles of writing, and E. Hall (1976) on behavioral and cognitive constructs. The studies carried out at the time did not, however, always establish the relevance of their conclusions to second or foreign language pedagogy. In part for this reason, many teacher- and student-training methodologies, then and now, have not included findings that deal with the effects of the first culture on second and foreign language learning. In 1981, John Lyons noted that "[t]here are certain aspects of the interdependence of language and culture that are not as widely appreciated as they ought to be" (p. 325).

Hymes (1970, 1971, 1972a) and Gumperz and Hymes (1972) held the view that uses of language and its analyses are inseparable from the society, specific sociological situations, the interlocutors' social backgrounds and identities, and social meanings that are "encoded linguistically" (p. 18). Hymes (1972b) notes that in linguistics, a descriptive theory of speech and interaction has to consider the "speech community," to be "all forms of language, including writing. . . ," and "speech events." According to Hymes, speech events are governed by social and linguistic norms for the use of speech, as well as communicative content, form, setting, and goals. He further comments that speech events and acts "are not all universal" and may be contingent on the social structure, values, and the sociocultural order of the community. In his benchmark articles, Hymes (1967, 1972b) first introduced the notion of "communicative competence" that has subsequently had a great deal of influence on second language research and teaching methodologies. He pointed out that communicative competence included both "speaking" and behavioral competence and "interpretation" of speech and behaviors according to the norms of the speech community (Hymes, 1972b, pp. 53 and 64 respectively).

In the 1980s, research into manifestations of culture in second and foreign language teaching and learning focused on the effects of body language, eye contact, and other overt behavioral and communicative paradigms. Comparisons of culturally defined behaviors addressed such general topics as posture, movement and eye contact (Morain, 1986), limitations of lexicon in referring to tangible concepts (e.g., colors and quantities), relationships that do not exist outside Anglo-American societies (e.g., terms of kinship and the structure of the extended family), and punctuality (Condon, 1986).

At the time, many classroom teachers and language teaching methodologists described appropriate techniques for addressing cultural behaviors while teaching second language linguistic skills. Damen's (1987) work approached the influence of culture on interaction and communication, moved beyond overt and recognizable cultural behaviors, and urged classroom teachers to become ethnographers of their students' cultures to provide insights into learner knowledge and expectations. Her view of culture focused predominantly on the anthropological understanding of culture and briefly touched on cultural values, beliefs, and assumptions that invariably find their way into instructional settings. According to Damen's definition, beliefs and values represent distinct paradigms, and she defined beliefs as intellectual acceptance of the "truth or actuality of something" (p. 191), including experiential and religious beliefs among other culturally derived patterns of thinking. She states that values "bring affective force to beliefs" and center on ideas of "good, proper, and positive, or the opposite" (p. 191).

Damen's definition of cultural values and beliefs may seem to imply that teachers and learners are aware of these beliefs and values and can examine them intellectually. However, one of the prominent qualities of cultural values, assumptions, and norms acquired in the socialization process is that they are presupposed and not readily available for intellectual scrutiny. As Stewart (1972, p. 16) explains,

[t]he typical person has a strong sense of what the world is really like, so that it is with surprise that he discovers that 'reality' is built up out of certain assumptions commonly shared among members of the same culture. Cultural assumptions may be defined as abstract, organized, and general concepts which pervade a person's outlook and behavior.

To members of a particular culture, these assumptions appear self-evident and axiomatic. They are not, however, necessarily shared by members of other cultures whose values are also based on unquestioned and unquestionable fundamental notions and constructs. In this sense, conceptualizations of reality and social frameworks in different cultural communities may occasionally be at odds to varying degrees.

Current perspectives

Kramsch (1991) notes that in many language classrooms culture is frequently reduced to "foods, fairs, folklore, and statistical facts" (p. 218). Like Thomas (1983, 1984), Kramsch emphasizes that the impact of culture on language learning and use is far more complex than "the four Fs" (ibid.) and that research and language teaching need to link "the teaching of language to that of culture" (p. 236). It is probably simplistic to imply

that culture can be examined, taught, and learned through exercises for reading newspaper headlines and help-wanted advertisements or that customs, cuisines, and courtesies delineate the extent of the impact of culture on one's linguistic and interactive behaviors, although they can serve as springboards to more in-depth discussions.

A substantial body of research has emerged that points to a likelihood that many aspects of second and foreign language learning are affected by the interpretive principles and paradigms in learners' natal culture (Moerman, 1988; de Bot, Ginsberg, & Kramsch, 1991); that is, a second language learner's understanding of conceptualizations and constructs in second culture is fundamentally affected by his or her culturally defined worldviews, beliefs, assumptions, and presuppositions.

Culture and language are inseparable and constitute "a single universe or domain of experience" (Kramsch, 1991, p. 217). In her book *Context and Culture in Language Teaching*, Kramsch (1993a) states that cultural awareness and the learning of a second culture can only aid the attaining of second language proficiency. Kramsch indicates that the teaching of culture implicitly or explicitly permeates the teaching of social interaction, and the spoken and the written language. In her view, second and foreign language learners necessarily become learners of the second culture because a language cannot be learned without an understanding of the cultural context in which it is used. She cautions, however, that even the nonnative speakers who have had many years of experience with second culture may have to find their "own place" (p. 257) at the intersection of their natal and target cultures.

In the current understanding of the place of culture in second and foreign language pedagogy and learning, the work of Michael Byram has played a prominent role. In the late 1980s, Byram (1989) observed that culture represents "hidden" (p. 1) curriculum in second and foreign language teaching. He indicates that language teaching can rarely take place without implicitly teaching the culture of its speakers because language invariably refers to their knowledge and perceptions of the world, the concepts of culture, and cultural learning. Byram points out that communicative competence involves "appropriate language use which, in part at least, is culture specific" (Byram, 1989, p. 61).

Buttjes and Byram (1991) approached the teaching of language and culture as integrated and advocated intercultural mediation to serve as a source of "'causal knowledge' about culture" (Buttjes, 1991, p. 9). Byram (1991, p. 22) specified that the analysis of sociological, structural, and cultural aspects of language enhances "the language awareness component" of learning and contributes directly to the learner awareness of language and proficiency as a whole.

As Byram and Morgan (1994) observe, the teaching of culture often represents an aspect of language teaching that is unfamiliar to language

teachers whose professional training largely focuses on structural facets of language. Although applied linguists and practitioners may have become aware that cultural variation is closely tied to language use, training in pedagogy rarely addresses the many influences of culture on language learning and teaching. Advanced language proficiency and linguistic skills do not necessarily point to a developed cultural proficiency (Barro et al., 1993). The conceptualization of culture as inextricable from ethnolinguistic identity (Gudykunst, 1989) and "notions of personhood" (Collier & Thomas, 1988, p. 104), however, leaves open the question of whether adult learners can be fully socialized in a second culture.

Explicit instruction of adults and attempts to speak "like a native" (Saville-Troike, 1989, p. 26) cannot take the place of the socialization process (Scollon & Scollon, 1995). The conceptualization of sociocultural frameworks and the structure of L1 beliefs, knowledge, presuppositions, and behaviors remain predominantly first culture-bound even for advanced and proficient nonnative speakers (Barro et al., 1993; Byram, 1989; Kramsch, 1993a). Byram and Morgan (1994, p. 43) state that "[l]earners cannot simply shake off their own culture and step into another . . . their culture is a part of themselves and created them as social beings. . . . Learners are 'committed' to their culture and to deny any part of it is to deny something within their own being."

Byram and Morgan (1994) state that "[i]t is axiomatic in our view that cultural learning has to take place as an integral part of language learning, and vice versa" (p. 5). They further call for the development of a theory that necessarily brings the learning of culture into the research that deals with second and foreign language teaching and learning. Byram and Morgan conclude that "the mere acquisition of linguistic competence is insufficient" and that teachers need to integrate current research findings into their transmission of knowledge to learners. Hymes (1996) similarly calls for introducing ethnography and research on influences of culture on language into education and states that both disciplines can draw on and change one another. He notes that although "schools have long been aware of cultural differences," culture has often been considered "invisible" (p. 75) in everyday interaction, as have the norms of speaking, the community values, and the sociocultural expectations of an individual's roles. According to Hymes, language plays a crucial role in the social life of the community, and a lack of cultural understanding among members of several communities often leads to social inequality that has yet to be recognized.