

CULTURE AND TEACHING OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE FOR PAKISTANI STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The paper highlights the need to reform and restructure the teaching of English in Pakistan to make it more relevant and meaningful for the Pakistani students. This would involve not only an understanding of the needs of English of the students, but also the place of culture both local and global in their language learning process. The redesigning and restructuring of the English Language and Literature courses would have to take into account the sociolinguistic aspects of English in the Pakistani as well as in the international context.

Introduction: Language and Culture

Culture embraces all that contributes to the survival of man, such as art, craft, drama, dress, education, music, politics, religion and technology. It is absorbed by living in it and changed by contact with outside cultures or inspiration from within. If we examine the concept of Pakistani culture and Pakistani identity we see that though the different regions of Pakistan have their own local culture and regional languages, what unites us is a set of shared beliefs or values regarding standards of behaviour, qualities of character, human relations and life styles that are admired by all Pakistanis whether they are Punjabis, Pathans, Sindhis or Baluchis. Our religious values imbibed through the teachings of Islam affect every aspect of our cultural life. Another important feature of Pakistani culture is a sense of nationhood so that other religious groups whether they are Christians, Parsees or Hindus have this shared feeling of belonging owing to shared sentiments of patriotism and loyalty towards the nation state, Pakistan.

To make the learning of English interesting and useful for the learners, Pakistani English teachers will have to take cognizance of the relationship between language and culture. The current view of the place of culture in language learning is today more sophisticated and deeper and broader in scope involving theories of language acquisition in both affective and cognitive domains. In a sense, education is society's cultural reproductive system influenced by philosophical, political, economic and social forces.

Cultural Needs of Pakistani Learners.

Learning English for Pakistani students is a complex phenomenon. As second language learners, the learning and teaching of English has different implications for native and foreign language learners. English is used widely in Pakistan in official, business and academic circles, not only to meet the needs of Pakistan as a developing country for the purposes of modernisation and technology but also because of linguistic, political and social considerations. Pakistani student needs for learning English are primarily for instrumental reasons like travelling abroad, reading advanced technical literature, coping with university classes, access to international books and journals, getting good jobs, and as the working language of their future careers (Mansoor, 1993). Students also need it for social purposes.

To prepare students to use English, the teaching of English should therefore have the following objectives:

- For academic purposes,
- For inter-active purposes,
- For communication in target areas of work
- For travel and study abroad and meeting native speakers as well as speakers from ESL / EFL countries.

The first three objectives point to the need for students to learn English within their own local contexts and the fourth to learn English for inter-cultural communication. The teaching / learning of English in Pakistan must therefore prepare students to use English both as a second language in Pakistan and as an international language.

The implications in terms of language and culture are manifold. It involves:

- a. an awareness and understanding of the students own ethnicity i.e. his local culture.
- b. an awareness of Pakistani culture, and
- c. an awareness of the target culture (not only British and American culture but sensitisation to global culture).

Incorporating the student's own culture as well as foreign culture would enable Pakistani students, as second language learners of the outer circle, to communicate effectively not only with English speakers of their own country, but also English speakers from other countries whichever circle (inner or expanded) that they may belong to (Kachru 1983) .

The Teaching of English in Pakistan to Incorporate Pakistani Culture

A critical look at the materials available for the teaching of English at both Board and University levels reveal that most of them are imported or books of English writers which are meant to be used for students whose native language is English. The lack of local materials for academic purposes and for the teaching of Functional English has led to the teaching and learning of English being regarded with suspicion. It is felt by some pressure groups that this leads to undue influence of western culture on our students and an alienation of their own culture. As a result, despite highly positive attitudes and high motivational intensity to learn-teach English by learners and teachers (Mansoor, 1993) the position and status of English in our educational set-up remains controversial. Inclusion of local culture in the curriculum, methodology, and teaching materials of TESL would make learning easier and more meaningful for Pakistani students. The most obvious influence of language and culture on thought is that of vocabulary. As Boas points out, words are suited to the environment in which they are used.

In considering the relationship between second language learning (SLL) and second culture learning, it is very important to consider several types of second language learning contexts as each type involves different degrees of acculturation. SLL in a foreign culture clearly involves the deepest form of acculturation. SLL in the native culture varies in the severity of acculturation experienced by the learner, depending on the country, the socio-political status of the language and the motivation and aspirations of the learners. Kachru (1983) notes that learning English in India does not involve taking on a new culture, since one is acquiring Indian English in school. I think that the same is true of Pakistan where English enjoys a high status and plays a key role in the educational, official and business set-up. It is therefore of vital importance that students be taught Pakistani English that reflects their own culture as well as provides local contexts for using the language.

The Teaching of English as an International Language for Inter-Cultural Communication

Presently the materials used for teaching English pose great difficulty for our learners. They have great difficulty relating to the foreign contexts and no effort is made by the course designers or teachers to make it interesting and non-judgemental. Again, the students are neither sensitised to the foreign culture nor is tact used in introducing certain ethnic groups or their value systems. Research produced in this century has evolved a theory that a native culture is as much interference for SLL learners as for native language learners. Likewise, it has been seen that just as similarities and

differences have been found to be useful in language studies so too cultural similarities, once identified and understood, can be used to advantage. For second language teachers, knowledge of the commonalities between two languages or of the universal features of language appears to be useful for understanding the total language process. We can recognise not only different world-views and different ways of expressing reality but can also recognise through both language and culture some universal qualities that bind us all together in one world.

The theory by Gardner & Lambert (1972) that integrative motivation (the intention of becoming a part of the target culture as well as speaking the target language) leads to more successful language learning than instrumental learning has been modified by Brown (1980) and Mansoor (1993) where it has been seen that instrumental motivation such as learning English for passing an exam or for getting a good job with no or little wish to mix socially with speakers of the language can lead to effective learning.

Requirements: Publish Local Materials

What is required to make ELT useful for Pakistani students is for teachers and materials and syllabus designers to make the cultural component of the course an aid to SLL rather than a hindrance. We need to develop our own materials for the teaching of English. In a study conducted by Khan & Lindley (1993) to assess English language materials published in Pakistan, it was seen that despite being the ninth most populous country in the world, the approximate number of titles published in Pakistan by both private and public sectors was an average of about 3,000 a year. The maximum number of books was in the national language (Urdu) thus reducing the percentage of books published in English. One of the reasons for the low number of books published was identified as shortage of local publishers and the dearth of trained human resources. The study confirms that very few English language publications are being offered to readers through an indigenous process as what is available in English are imported books at exorbitant prices.

Literature: Works / Translations of Pakistani Writers

Professor Farida Javed Malik in the ELT Seminar held in Lahore 1996, suggested that the study of the Literature component for Pakistani students in the curriculum include works of Pakistani English writers especially women poets and English translations of our well known Urdu, Punjabi, Sindhi, Baluchi, Pushto and other local writers to enhance students' understanding of their own cultural identity.

Bapsi Sidhwa (1993) writes

"Although I speak Gujrati at home and am relatively fluent in Urdu and understand Punjabi, English is the language I choose to write in. Fortunately, I

dream and think in all four languages. I feel perhaps in common with most trilingual or bilingual writers, fortunate in having access to these languages. I am free to take what I wish from the riches each offers - the earthy gusto of Punjabi, the poetry and delicacy of Urdu, the comedy and farce of Gujrati, the wealth of choice which makes for exactitude in English, and the body of meaning encapsulated in any of the words of these South Asian languages and juggle them to my advantage."

What is urgently required therefore, is to publish local materials in English. This would involve not only publishing writings and translations of Pakistani writers but encouraging Pakistani authors to create materials for pedagogical purposes.

Language: Activity Books / Audio-Visual / Authentic Materials

For the study of the Language component in our English courses there is an urgent need to develop local materials in English especially:

- Language activity books based on our local contexts which reflect the cultural values of our students and which aim at the teaching of functional English for communicative purposes in our situational contexts.
- Audio-visual materials for teaching spoken English based on our own models of Pakistani English.
- Authentic materials especially newspapers and journals that reflect the everyday use of English.

We need to develop language materials that are easy and assist learners in using English for functional purposes. The language materials must meet both the learning and cultural needs of Pakistani students from the primary to the graduate level. Both applied and sociolinguists must play their due roles in this regard.

Relevance to Pakistani Learners

The use of local materials will lead to more successful language learning, as they will incorporate the cultural values of our own students. It will make learning a second language more meaningful as there will be better cognitive development and avoidance of cultural alienation for the learners. It will also lead to more positive attitudes and higher motivational intensity to learn English.

A recent study was conducted to look at the usefulness of local materials in comparison to foreign materials in English for intermediate students. Results based on questionnaires, interviews and on the spot observation revealed that a text based on Pakistani culture (*Aik thi Nam* by Shahid Nadeem) to teach language through drama was found to be more interesting and motivating than an English play (*The Dear Departed* by Stanley Houghton). The students' comprehension of the play, especially the plot and characters, was found to be better as it was based on their own

experiences. The use of local culture also proved more effective in improving the oral skills of learners as discussion of issues involved, elicited more speech in the class.

The Pakistani Variety of English

The issue of which variety of English should be used for the teaching of English as a second language assumes importance as the recognition of non-native varieties takes place globally to look into the target needs of the users of the language.

Institutionalised Non-Native Variety

Baumgardner (1993) and Tariq Rahman (1990) have built the foundation of a serious academic analysis and description of Pakistani English as a non-native variety of English and not just a mass of ignorant errors that must not be encouraged. The Pakistani variety of English is a variety of English in its own right and not just a stage on the way to a more native-like English. The pedagogical norm in Pakistan remains British Standard English (BSE) and English Literature is the main focus of English studies in most of the universities. Many writers like Ahmed Ali use BSE and as yet there is little realisation that Pakistani English (PE) is an institutionalised, non-native variety which deserves description and codification.

Dr Rahman's study describes the phonetic, phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical semantic features of PE so as to make a pedagogical model of English which may replace the BSE model. Kachru has emphasised the influence of cultural forces on language. For him 'interference' is merely indicative of linguistic changes in a culturally and linguistically pluralistic language-contact situation.

However, there must be a clear distinction between deviation and mistake. Deviations are rule governed and follow a distinctive pattern whereas mistakes are not. The way in which cultural contexts produce an accent or changes in meaning are phonological, lexical and semantic deviations. According to Kachru, a non-native variety passes through three phases. In the first phase, the very existence of a local variety is not recognised. In the second, it is considered sub-standard and in the third, it is slowly accepted as the norm. According to Rahman (1990), PE is probably entering the second stage. However, thanks to linguists like Kachru PE is passing through the third phase and is recognised as a legitimate variety.

Characteristics of Pakistani English

According to Baumgardner (1993), PE has forged its own linguistic and cultural identity. The identity is most evident in:

- a. Word borrowings: a large number of loan words from Urdu and Regional languages borrowed freely from indigenous domains of food, clothing,

administration, government, politics, art, education, music and most of all registers of religion. Words which enter English have become a part of its grammatical system.

- b. Word-formations: Another area in which PE has forged its own identity is that of word formation, prefixes and suffixes e.g. dc-seat, dc-notify, charge-sheeter and woolies.
- c. Conversion: shift of word for one part of speech to another is another area e.g. air-craft to air-line (noun to verb conversion)
- d. Obsolete vocabulary: use of vocabulary no longer current in BSE e.g. botheration, conveyance, moot etc.

Illustrations of Use of Pakistani English

To see how Pakistani English is used, see

- a. a select glossary of PE (Urdu or loan-translations) Baumgardner (1993)
- b. crime reporting register (Kennedy, 1983)
- c. loan words (Baumgardner, Kennedy, Shamim)
- d. well-reported social events like weddings (bilingual shifts)

According to Baumgardner (1993), because of the language's new context of use, words from Urdu and indigenous languages of Pakistan which refer to Pakistani culture and society are often used in English where no equivalent or appropriate English word exists. Besides these borrowings, English in Pakistan can also be identified by certain distinctive features of grammar, word-formation and lexical variations which are not errors nor an inferior form of the language as "purists" would suggest. Rather, they are stable features of an institutionalised variety of English. The crucial question is: can Pakistani English of the educated variety assume the status of a national standard? I feel that to some extent it may be possible if we do not diverge too far to remain a part of the international Standard English. Rahman (1990) has categorised PE in further sub-varieties. The choice of Variety B, the acrolect which is the educated variety and differs from BE in all features, but in a way that does not hamper intelligibility seems to be a suitable choice for pedagogical purposes. Variety A, the Anglicised variety only differs in phonological features from BSE and does not represent local or cultural features. Variety C, the mesolect which is the most commonly used, differs radically from all dimensions of BSE and hence unintelligible to foreigners. Pakistani English would incorporate cultural and environmental differences as well as interference from indigenous languages. Apart from pronunciation which is a symbol of cultural identity and least liable to be categorised as standard or non-standard (Rahman, 1990), to remain intelligible internationally, we would have to invest in the teaching of English and establish

language planning agencies to control development of national standards and monitor printed materials.

Teaching of English as an International Language

In order to teach English as an international language it is proposed that global Literature, that is world literatures in English, include not only British and American Literature but also South Asian, African, Mid-Eastern, African, European and Russian writers. The works of these writers that are included should provide the students with a global perspective of cultural interaction. It is important to use materials that pose least difficulty for learners.

The materials should be selected with great care keeping in mind:

- a. The language should be easy to comprehend. The present trend of using writers and poets like Hemingway, Yeats and Auden are least suitable for undergraduate students as they are most demanding and need advanced language skills on the part of the learners.
- b. The materials should be easy to exploit for purposes of language learning. The Literature component should be accompanied by a Language Activity Book to help students in Reading Comprehension and Writing skills.
- c. The materials should provide a mix of simple essays of global writers writing on a variety of subjects such as History, Political Science, Economics and Geography etc. It could include excerpts of national thinkers such as Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Liaquat Ali Khan and Allama Iqbal, as well as global writers like Karl Marx, Margaret Mead and other specialists on diverse issues. The undergraduate students must be prepared for higher studies in different fields using materials most of which are in English.

Teacher's Role and Classroom Applications in Creating Awareness of the Student's Own Culture and Foreign Cultures

As far as the teaching of English as an international language is concerned acculturation is not the goal of our Pakistani students. The second language learner must have knowledge of the target culture to understand behaviour but not necessarily become a part of it.

The teacher would need to determine the following:

- values to be stressed.
- methods and techniques of presentation

- areas requiring tact for certain ethnic groups
- how to make it interesting and non-judgemental

Ethnographic courses are most useful where language students should be encouraged to understand the new culture without embracing it. Teachers will need to develop techniques for teaching cultural awareness and develop research on cultural values of Pakistani and foreign students. Lessons devised to reflect on individual and cultural values are an excellent means for cross-cultural learning. By incorporating foreign texts we can give students experience of the target culture.

Conclusion

Implementation Strategies

In order to incorporate culture in the ELT classroom the following steps are proposed:

- ELT Resource Centres like AKU-CEL, SPELT Karachi, A I.O.U. & UGC Islamabad, CALS Lahore and others pool local materials for English language teachers from primary to graduate levels.
- Text book designers incorporate texts and translations of Pakistani writers and poets which meet international standards.
- English language and literature syllabi at all levels in schools and college include Pakistani, English and global literature.
- Teacher training programmes include the component of culture in their classroom applications.
- Setting up a National Institute for the study of and research on Pakistani English and Pakistani culture and English across cultures. It would be responsible for research programmes, international exchange programmes and graduate teaching programmes. It would also develop and monitor materials for ELT which meet national standards.

Challenges for ELT in Pakistan

As Kachru (1983) points out the inclusion of culture in the learning / teaching of English poses many challenges for education planners, material designers and teachers of English. It emphasizes above all, the responsibility to rethink what English is to be taught and how it is to be taught in their own local (Pakistani) context. There will have to be state-of-the-art research involving empirical and pedagogical studies to provide us with new paradigms and perspectives on the sociolinguistic aspects of English in the international context and in the teaching of English in countries where English is a second or foreign language. If we are to make ELT useful and meaningful for our students, we will need to incorporate these insights so that through English

we can find expression of our own culture and values as well as get to know and understand others.

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