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## TEACHING CULTURE IN THE FRENCH LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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### Abstract

Teaching culture got to be a necessary part of teaching French as a foreign language because one of the main aims of teaching a French language is intercultural communicative competence. More specifically, some thought will be given to the why and how of teaching culture. It will be demonstrated that teaching a french language is not tantamount to giving a homily on syntactic structures or learning new vocabulary and expressions, but mainly incorporates, or should incorporate, some cultural elements, which are intertwined with language itself. The purpose of this paper is to explore the relationship between language and culture and to determine to what extent culture is incorporated into the Curriculum at the French as a foreign language classroom. What is more, an effort is created to incorporate culture into the classroom by means of considering some techniques and methods currently used. The main premise of the paper is that effective communication is more than a matter of language proficiency and that, apart from enhancing and enriching communicative competence, cultural competence can even cause empathy and respect toward different cultures as well as promote sound judgment and cultural perspicacity.

**Keywords:** culture, intercultural communicative competence, French language curriculum, literature.

### Introduction

French language learning is comprised of many parts together with grammatical ability, communicative ability, language proficiency, as well as a change in attitudes towards one's own or another culture. For scholars and laymen alike, cultural ability, i.e., the knowledge of the conventions, customs, beliefs, and systems of meaning of another country, is indisputably an integral part of French language learning, and many faculties have seen it as their goal to incorporate the teaching of culture into the french language curriculum. To achieve well-

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rounded development and progress in all areas of French language learning, it is necessary to introduce culture as an essential component of French language learning. Moreover, since language and culture are inseparable it is vital to say that the inclusion of culture in French as a foreign language teaching doesn't exclude grammar, vocabulary, spelling, pronunciation and also the four language skills.

Of course, we tend to past an era when first language acquisition and French language learning were forged during a "behaviouristic mould," being the product of imitation and language "drills," and language was thought of as a compendium of rules and strings of words and sentences used to form propositions about a state of affairs. In the last twenty years, there has been a revitalization of interest within the study of language in relation to society, which has led to a shift of focus from behaviourism and positivism to constructivism to critical theory [1]. Yet, there are still some deeply ingrained beliefs as to the nature of language learning and teaching-beliefs that confirm methodology as well as the content of the French language curriculum-which have, gradually and perniciously, contrived to undermine the teaching of culture.

Language and culture are interconnected so that they complement one another. Language is a part of a culture, and culture is a part of the language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture [20]. Sun describes language as a primary vehicle by that a culture emanates its beliefs, values and norms. Similarly, language is influenced by culture – "If there is no culture, language will be like water without a source or a tree without roots" [2]. Thus, the connection between language and culture should be considered in French language pedagogy as a result of the most purpose of learning a French language is to learn the customs and traditions of the speech community, and to become competent for communication with speakers of the French language. Culture could be an advance term that may be outlined from numerous views. It can be accessed through five different views – the communicative view, the classical curriculum view, the instrumental or culture-free-language view, the deconstructionist view, and the competence view. The first three views pay very less attention to cultural context concerning its contribution to successful French language learning. The last two views treat language and culture as a unity, with one being essential to the full understanding of the other [3]. In another word, they take hold the thought of language being affected and formed by culture.

The philosophical view offers a vital view of a language. It tries to dissociate a language student from implicit meanings in language. Language is a social semiotic and is under the influence of its context. The most effective example of language analysis is explaining the metaphors and their hidden meaning. It is a fact that certain fixed expressions used in the French language lose their meaning when they are translated into other languages. Likewise, other languages have their distinctive phrases, idioms or expressions that would sound strange if translated into French for a French speaker. The competence view "contends that the

knowledge of a language's culture is thought essential for a full understanding of a language's nuances of meaning" [3]. The last view unifies culture and language as staging for successful communication and that is the notion that ought to be aspired in French language teaching. From an educational perspective, the attitudes of foreign language learners towards the target culture vary depending on the teaching contexts, motivation, or teachers [4].

Culture in French language learning is not an expendable fifth skill, tacked on, thus to speak, to the teaching of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. It is forever within the background, right from day one, ready to unsettle the good language learners when they expect it least, making evident the limitations of their hard-won communicative competence, challenging their ability to make sense of the world around them. [5]

The teaching of culture isn't corresponding to the transmission of information regarding the people of the target community or country—even though knowledge about (let alone experience of) the “target group” is an important ingredient [6]. It might be nothing short of ludicrous to claim that culture is merely a repository of facts and experiences to which one can have recourse, if need be. Furthermore, what seems to insinuate is that to learn a French language is not merely to learn how to communicate but also to discover how much leeway the target language permit learners to control grammatical forms, sounds, and meanings, and to replicate upon, or maybe flout, socially accepted norms at work both in their own or the target culture.

Culture may be also seen as a context during which we exist and have an effect on each other. It is sort of a blueprint which organizes our lives on both national and family levels. It is incorporated all together spheres of human life and it leaves traces all over. Culture may be summarized within a 3P model – perspectives (what members of a culture assume, feel and value), practices (how members communicate and interact with one another) and products (technology, music, art, food, literature, etc.; the things members of a group create, share, and transmit to the next generation) [7]. Language could be a bond that can bridge every gap but not without cultural awareness.

### **What should be considered while teaching culture during French language class?**

Each topic that is supposed to be covered in the French classroom needs an accurate introduction. Introductory tasks got to raise students' interest and provide them a clue relating the topic. Teachers can introduce students to culture oriented topics by posing several queries such as:

- What behaviours mirror French culture, and how are they learned and shared?
- What necessary factors (social, religious, and economic) influence French culture?
- What are some important traditions that are unique to French country?
- What ideals and values bind French culture together?
- How does culture in French country operates as however for people to live with one another?

- What symbols are prevalent in French culture?

### **Why Culture should teach in French language classroom?**

In this part, we are going to concisely examine the link between language and culture and see why the teaching of culture ought to represent an integral part of the French language curriculum. To start with, language may be a social establishment, both shaping and shaped by society at massive level, or in particular the 'cultural niches' in which it plays an important role. Thus, if our premise is that language is, or should be, understood as cultural practice, then ineluctably we must also grapple with the notion of culture in relation to language. Language is not an 'autonomous construct' [8] but social practice both creating and created by 'the structures and forces of the social institutions within which we live and function'. Certainly, French language cannot exist in a vacuum; one may build so bold as to maintain that there's sort of "transfusion" at work between language and culture.

Culture and communication are indivisible as a result of culture not solely dictates who talks to whom, about what, and how the way communication take, it also helps to determine how people encrypt messages, the meanings they need for messages, and also the conditions and circumstances under which various messages could or might not be sent, noticed, or understood. Culture is the foundation of communication.

At any rate, to speak means to select a particular approach of entering the world and a specific way of sustaining relationships with those we tend to in contact with. It is typically through language uses that way, to a large extent, are members of a community of ideas and practices. Thus, as a complex system of classification of experience and 'an important window on the universe of thoughts' [9] as a link between thought and behaviour; and as 'the archetypal tool for interacting with the world', language is intertwined with culture. In the past, language and culture were lumped along as if they involuntary implied each other.

It may be argued that culture never remains static, however is continually ever changing. In this view, Robinson dismisses behaviorist, functionalist, and cognitive definitions of culture and posits a symbolic one which sees culture as a dynamic 'system of symbols and meanings' whereby 'past experience influences meaning, which in turn affects future experience, which in turn affects subsequent meaning, and so on [10]'. It is this dynamic nature of culture that has been lost sight of an underrated in french language teaching and got to be cast in a new perspective. Learning a french language can be subversive of the assumptions and premises operational within the 'home culture'.

Culture creates and solves problems. If, within a particular culture, cows are looked upon as sacred animals, or breaking a mirror is assumed to bring bad luck, 'threats are posed which don't arise out of the inexorable facts of the external world'. Moreover, such notions as "success," "greed," "decorum," or "promiscuity" will solely be assessed against a culture-specific yardstick, as it were. 'Such worth judgments are acquired in the culture in which the individual has grown up and are accepted unquestioningly by most members of the social

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group' [11] . It goes without saying that the importance of 'any single element in a culture design will be seen only when that element is viewed in the total matrix of its relationship to other elements' [12].

Roses signify passion or love. If we tend to analyse their "meaning," we have got three elements: the signifier-the roses; the signified-passion or love; and the sign-the "personified roses" as a whole. Obviously, there's nothing inherently "passionate" or "amorous" concerning about roses; they are viewed as such within the context of western culture. In another culture, roses could signify something different, even the opposite of passion or love. Of course, if we asked an Indian why she worships cows or a Frenchman why he says un pied de laitue (literally "a foot of lettuce) whereas French speakers say "a head of lettuce" and Greek speakers (literally "a heart of lettuce"), chances are that we would get no more satisfactory an answer than we ourselves would be ready to give regarding our own language or culture [13]. Apparently, culture includes various elementary meaning units, such as the ones touched upon above, which may be at variance with different elementary meaning unit at work in another culture. For him, returning to grips with these Elementary meaning units is 'necessary for full communication with natives, to know their reports on huge achievements, and to read their classics'.

The question arises, however, that if French language and culture are so intricately intertwined, why should we overtly concentrate on culture once there are alternative aspects of the curriculum that need lot of attention? To start with, we must always concern ourselves with culture because, despite the fact that it is inherent in what we tend to teach, to believe that whoever is learning the French language is also learning the cultural knowledge and skills required to be a competent foreign language speaker 'denies the complexity of culture, language learning, and communication' [14] Second, it is deemed vital to incorporate culture in the foreign language curriculum because it helps avoid the stereotypes that Nemni has mentioned and the recent study has intimated[15]. The third reason for expressly teaching culture in the French language classroom is to enable students to take control of their own learning as well as to achieve autonomy by evaluating and questioning the broader context within which the learning of the target language is embedded [16], modifying Seelye's 'seven goals of cultural instruction', might give an answer pertinent to the question posed [17]. According to them, the teaching of culture has the following goals and is of and in itself a method of accomplishing them.

To facilitate students to develop an understanding of the fact that every individuals exhibit culturally-conditioned behaviours.

- To facilitate students to become more awake of typical behaviour in common things within the target culture (French culture).

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- To facilitate students to extend their awareness of the cultural connotations of words and phrases within the French language.
  - To facilitate students to develop the ability to assess and refine generalizations regarding the target culture, in terms of supporting evidence.
  - To facilitate students to develop the required skills to identify and organize information about the French culture.
  - To facilitate students to develop an understanding that social variables like age, sex, socio economic class, and place of residence influence the ways that within which individuals speak and behave.

Faculties have to compel to prepare their students for such things just in case they plan to travel abroad or move to associate French-speaking country. The process of adjusting to a brand new culture is termed acculturation and it consists of four stages - excitement (about being in an exceedingly new country), culture shock (feelings of frustration and hostility), recovery (adjustment and a born comfort within the new culture), and adaption (bridging cultural barriers and accepting the new culture). Faculties have to compel students regarding every section and emphasize that those phases are real and largely inescapable. Excitement may be a usual development that happens which occurs during travelling [19]. Individuals are desperate to find out everything about the new culture, visit places of importance and hope to meet new people. After they are drawn into the new culture, they start to notice things they do not like or things they notice strange or uncommon. Therefore, the second stage may influence be the foremost sophisticated. Individuals might feel nervous or even scared. Afterwards, they typically get used to differences in this new culture and start seeing it as diverse instead of hostile. They also make friends and use the French language without restraint. Finally, they accept the new culture and assimilate successfully.

## Conclusion

Teaching of culture should become an integral part of French language curriculum. On a sensible note, culture teaching should enable students to extend their knowledge of the French culture in terms of people's way of life, values, attitudes, and beliefs, and the way these manifest themselves or are couched in linguistic categories and forms. More specifically, the teaching of culture ought to create students conscious of speech acts, connotations, etiquette, that is, applicable or inappropriate behaviour, additionally as offer them with the opportunity to act out being a member of the French culture. Equipped with the knowledge that such notions as "inferior" or "superior" cultures are nothing but sweeping generalizations proceed from lack of knowledge and disrespect to different human beings with different worldviews, students can

delve into the French language and use it as a tool not solely to communicate in the country where it is spoken but also to give a second (or third) voice to their thoughts, therefore flying within the face of cultural conventions and stereotypes. It is hoped that the present paper has helped contribute to an improved understanding of culture and its importance in the French language classroom.

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