Part One : Literature Review
Chapter I :Culture and Communication

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the more significant assumptions about the relationship between language, culture and communication. It also provides an overall idea on the major contributions in providing an argument on the need for the integration of language and cultural instruction into foreign language classes.

I.1 . The Concept of Culture

Culture has been defined by different scholars representing various disciplines. Due to its complex nature, the word culture is very difficult to define. One has to agree with Hinkel (1999:1) that *" 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 ,behaviours and activities.".*

In that context, Hall (1981 : cited in Thanasoulas 2001) considers culture as a muddied concept, elusive of any definitive definition. Brian Steed refers to the same idea when he says ," *In fact , there is not much point in trying to say what culture is , what can be done, however, is to say what culture does.*" (quoted in Hall 2002: 19). Culture for him is "*An active process of meaning that contests over definition including its own definition.*" (ibid.) .

In her study of culture and individual, Rosaldo (1984) points out that " *Culture is far more than a mere catalogue of rituals and beliefs* " (quoted in Hinkel 1999) .

I.1.1 Anthropological and Sociological Definitions of Culture

Far from this struggle over a definitive definition of culture and on a general level, anthropologists agree on the definition that culture is the whole way of life of people. The social constructs that evolve within a group, the ways of thinking, feeling, believing and behaving that are imported to members of a group in the socialization process .(Hinkel 1999:3)

In his book *Primitive Cultures* (1871) , the English anthropologist Tylor gave his famous definition : " *Culture ……. Is that complex whole which includes knowledge ,*

beliefs , arts , morals , law , customs , and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society .” (cited in the Encyclopaedia Encarta 2007)

On their perspective sociologists insist on the social aspect of culture. They argue that culture is the framework to the every day way of life of a particular society and that shapes its members' behaviour . Lyons (1990) defines culture as, *“Culture may be described as socially acquired knowledge : i.e. as what someone has by virtue of his being a member of particular society .” P.302*

As Lyons points out, culture cannot be thought separate from its social value. On her view Duranti's definition (1997) highlights the interdependence of language the individual and the culture of its community.

“Culture is something learned , transmitted , passed down from one generation to the next , through human action, often in the form of face to face interaction, and of course, through linguistic communication ”.(quoted in Thanasoulas 2001).

According to Seelye (1997), *“Culture provides the software of the mind without which most behaviour would be random, unpredictable, and meaningless to other people; it tells us how to behave within our in group ”* p.23

Seelye (ibid.) claims that rather than argue pointlessly and futilely about which definition fits reality best. It is more productive for us to ask which definition of culture is more useful to language teaching , he has synthesized many definitions of culture.

He says, *“ Culture is the systemic , rather arbitrar, more or less coherent, group invented , and group shared creed from the past that defines the shape of ' reality’; and assigns the sense and worth of things; it is modified by each generation and in response to adaptive pressure ; it provides the code that tells people how to behave predictably and acceptably , the cipher that allows them to derive meaning from language and other symbols, the map that supplies the behavioural options for satisfying human need ”.p23*

I.1.2 –Definition of Culture in Foreign Language Teaching

In recent years, the development in applied linguistics activity helps us define culture on a more specific level concerning FL education.

According to Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied linguistics (2002) , culture means :

 *"The set of practice, codes and values that mark a particular nation or group: the sum of a nation or group's most highly thought of works of literature, art, music etc. A difference is sometimes made between 'High' culture of literature and the arts, and small ' c' culture of attitudes, values, beliefs, and everyday lifestyles. Culture and language combine to form what is sometimes called 'Discourses' ,i.e. ways of talking, thinking , and behaving that reflect one' s social identity ".*p.138

Adaskou, Britten and Fashi (1990) have outlined four meanings of culture as far as FL education is concerned, these can be summarised in the following:

I.- *The Aesthetic Sense*: Refers to culture with a capital `C´ including cinema, literature , music , and media .

2- *Sociological Sense*: Refers to the organization and nature of family, interpersonal relations, customs, material conditions, ways of thinking and behaving .

3-*The Semantic Sense* : Encompasses the whole conceptualisation system, which conditions our perceptions and thought processes .

4-*The Pragmatic or Sociolinguistic Sense* : Refers to the background knowledge, social and paralinguistic skills and language code which are necessary for successful communication .

These four senses of culture reflect its many dimensions and offer the substance for culture teaching in FL classrooms. (Lessard-Clouston 1997).

Kramsch (1996) identifies two main definitions, the first of which comes from humanities. It focuses on " *The way a social group represents itself and others through its material productions, be they works of art , literature , social institutions , or artefacts of everyday life."* (1996 :2)

The second definition originates from social sciences and sees culture as: " *The attitudes and beliefs ,ways of thinking , behaving and remembering shared by members of that community." (ibid)*

Lazar (2001) summarises the existing definitions of culture concerning FL teaching literature by classifying them into two main streams:

On one hand, culture is referred to as *'formal culture '* (Brooks 1964) , or " *culture with capital C*" (Stern 1992), or " *achievement culture* "
(Stempleski & Tomalin 1993), or " high culture " (Scollen 1995) in the sense of a people's intellectual and artistic achievements as well as their economic, social and political history.

On the other hand, this contrasts with " *deep culture* " (Brook1964) , or
" *culture with small c*" (Stern1992), or " *behaviour culture* " (Stempleski & Tomalin 1993), or "*anthropological culture* " (Scollon 1995) which emphasises the way-of- life aspect of culture .

The different levels and aspects of culture outlined from various perspective here show that our understanding of what culture means in FL education is varied. This provides the possibility for language teachers and learners to stress various dimensions of culture at different levels of language proficiency.

I.2 The Interrelationship Between Language and Culture

As a matter of fact, any community possesses both a culture and a language of its own. The question that rises now is, what is the relationship between them. According to Corder (1993), language mediates between the individual and the culture of its community. Since, it is through the language of the community that the child acquires the attitudes, values, and ways of behaving that we call its culture, which is the process of socialisation.

In this sense, the language of the community reflects the culture and serves the needs of that community

Byram (1998) highlights that, "*Language is not merely a means of reference to what is an objective world , but also carries the shared connotations and associations*

which help to maintain a speaker's sense of belonging to a particular social group "
P.2

In an attempt to clarify the relations between language, the individual and culture, Corder (1993) states that, *"Psychological and sociological approaches to language converge in the sense that the psychologist is concerned with the relations between the formal system of language (the code) and conceptual system (or cognitive structure) of the individual i.e. language as a symbolic system. The sociolinguist, on the other hand, is , concerned with the relation between linguistic code and the culture of the community"* . *P71.*

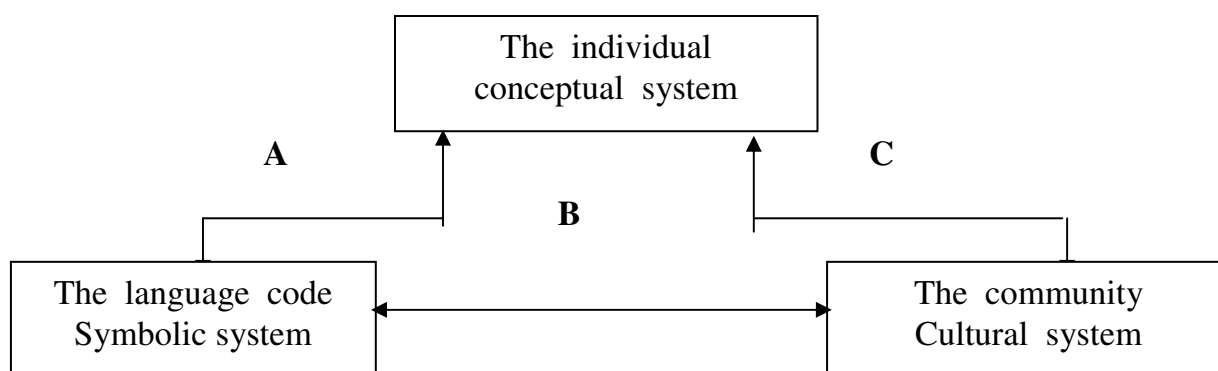Corder provides a diagram in which he illustrates these relationships:

Figure 01   Relationship between the Individual , the Language and the
Community (Corder1993:71)

As it is shown in **figure 1**, the psychologist is concerned with relation (A) and the sociolinguist with relation (B) . The point of common interest is how the relation between the individual conceptual system and society 's cultural system is developed in relation (C) through the operation of language.

The intrinsic relationship of language and culture is widely recognised both at the semantical and grammatical levels. Savill-Troike (1996) notes, " *The vocabulary of a language provides an interesting reflection of the culture of the people who speak it, since it is a catalogue of things of import to a society, an index*

of the way speakers categorise experience , and often a record of past contacts and cultural borrowings " p.360 .

She illustrates that point when she states that, foreign learners of English may quickly memorise colour terms (blue , yellow , and so on) , but they are unlikely to learn what psycho-aesthetic values English people culture attributes to colours. She further states that the grammar of a language may reveal the way time and space are segmented and organised .

Fantini (1997) refers to this mutual relation by saying," *Language affects and reflects culture just as culture affects and reflects what is encoded in language." P.6*

I.2.1 Linguistic Relativity /Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis

Indeed, the relationship between language and culture, occupied the minds of many anthropological linguists, the most prominent being Boas, Sapir, and Whorf. They have paid special attention to the interrelationship which they see between language and culture .

In the 1920 's Edward Sapir considered that people 's view of the world is effectively determined by their language . His views offered the foundation to the theory of linguistic relativity he states,

" *Human beings do not live in the objective world alone , nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood , but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society . It is quite an illusion to imagine that one adjusts to reality essentially without the use of language and that language is merely an incidental means of solving specific problems of communication or reflection . The fact of the matter is that 'real world '* *is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group "* (Sapir cited in Hall 2002, p20) .

Sapir's student, Whorf offered a wide conception of language in relation to culture, society and the individual.He argued that language organises experience:

"*We cut nature up , organise it into concepts , and ascribe significance as we do , largely because we are parties to an agreement to organise it in this way an*

agreement that holds throughout our speech community and is codified in the patterns of our language. " (Whorf cited ibid.) .

This view expressed by Sapir and Whorf about the relationship between language and culture is known as " *Sapir - Whorf hypothesis* ". It combines two principles:

The first is *" linguistic determinism*" i.e. Language determines the way we think.

The second is known as "*linguistic relativity* ", it states that the distinctions encoded in one language are not found in any other language due to cultural differences

" *We are thus introduced to a new principle of relativity , which holds that all observers are not led by the same physical evidence to the same picture of the universe , unless their linguistic backgrounds are similar , or can in some way be calibrated* " (Whorf cited in Corder 1993 :75).

I.2.2- Linguistic Relativity Criticised

Many linguists and social scientists have debated this hypothesis. Yule (1996) argued that the notion that language determines thought may be partially correct, in some extremely limited way. He further states,

"*The human manipulates the language , not the other way around* " p 198 .

Corder (1993), on his part outlined that, " *If languages reflected differences in kind between cultures, that is , encoded radically different ways of seeing the world, then translation between languages would be impossible."* p.77

And the evidence from language learning experience and from bilinguals proves that .

Nevertheless, a significant contribution of the Sapir – Whorf hypothesis is that it posits an interdependent relationship between language and culture (Lee, 1996). Which current views in foreign language teaching owe a great deal to its proponents.

I.2.3 Sociolinguistics View

As can be seen, a connection between language and culture was argued by the linguistic anthropologists. This view paved the way for further developments brought by Sociolinguistics. Thus, a similar connection between language and culture can be found in the more recent works of Dell Hymes, who gained prominence in the 1960's and 1970's. Hymes developed a conceptualisation of language as context embedded activity in response to linguist Noam Chomsky 's theory of language (Hall,2000). Hymes regarded Chomsky 's view of language as too restrictive in that it did not account for the social knowledge we rely on to produce and interpret utterances appropriate to the particular context in which they occur.

He noted*, " It is not enough for the child to be able to produce any grammatical utterance . It would have to remain speechless if it could not decide which grammatical utterance here and now , if it could not connect utterances to their contexts of use*." (Hymes cited in Hall 2000 : 21)

Hence, the research focus in Sociolinguistics ranged from the language itself to external variables mainly the social ones. As Labov (1970) has stated, " *every speaker adopts a style of speaking which is appropriate to the particular social c*ontext." (quoted in Dubin and Olshtain, 2000 : 69)

According to Dubin and Olshtain (ibid.), Sociolinguistics views any language as inseparable from its sociocultural context. Hence, a key concept in Sociolinguistics is the focus on the speech community rather than on an individual or idealised speaker.

A point worth noting, is that such a focus provides the ground for the development of an argument for the integration of language and culture in foreign language teaching and learning.

I.3- Culture and Communication

I.3.1- The Importance of Culture In Communication

Language as means of communication makes it possible for individuals to interact with each other in a society. Conversation or communication

between people do not take place in a vacuum, but at a particular time and place. Their behaviour is indicated by that particular situation Corder (1993) states, " *All our behaviour has a conventional element in it because it is learned in society and for that very reason , the form it takes will be specific to the social group in which it is learned "* P.36

This means that communication behaviour is essentially a matter of convention. The thing that makes communication specific to a given culture and what proves effective is one culture may be ineffective in another (De Vito .2006: 40).

Yule (2002) highlights that, *" In many ways , speech is a form of social identity and used ,consciously, to indicate membership of different groups or different speech communities "* p. 190

Hall (2002) expresses a similar view in claiming that language is used to indicate the individual identities, their interpersonal relationship and membership in their social groups and communities. She goes further to argue that people who speak the same language tend to share the same language conventions and any violation of these conventions would result in communication breakdowns .

Seelye (1997) shares both opinions, in fact he says, " *The way people speak indicates their sex , age , social class , and place of residence , and often conveys information concerning their religion, occupation, and interest"* .p 23. In other words, since any linguistic communication occurs in context, it must be appropriate to the context in which it is used.

According to Devito (2006) culture influences communications of all types. It influences what to say and how to talk with friends and family in everyday conversations. And that cultural differences exist across communication from the way of using eye contact to the way to develop or dissolve a relationship.

Consequently, many cultural differences may prevent understanding as well as develop negative opinions between native and non-native speakers .

Bennet (1997) claims, " *To avoid becoming a fluent fool, we need to understand more completely the cultural dimension of language. Language does serve as a tool for communication , but in addition it is a « system of representation » for perception and thinking* " p. 16

For Bennet a fluent fool is someone who speaks a foreign language well but doesn't understand the social and cultural content of that language. According to him such people are likely to get into all sorts of trouble because both they themselves and other one estimate their ability.

Samovar, Porter , & Jain (1981,P.24) statement seems to summarize what has been previously said .They conclude:

" *Culture and communication are inseparable because culture not only dictated who talks to whom , about what , and how the communication proceeds, it also helps to determine how people encode messages , the meanings they have for messages , and the conditions and circumstances under which various messages may or may not be said , noticed or interpreted .....culture ....is the foundation of communication*"
(quoted in M. Clouston, 1997).

In Foreign Language Teaching, these perspectives reflect the growing interest on the importance of culture in all forms of human communication .

I.3.2- Culture and Non -verbal Communication

Non-verbal communication is communication without words. It is present in everyday conversations, but it is something that is not thought about by

most people. There are many forms of non-verbal communication including hand gestures, smile or frown, eye contact, use of space, wearing jewellery, touching someone, raising the vocal volume, or even saying nothing. (Devito 2006)

In fact, some researchers argue that we actually communicate more information non verbally than we do with words.

According to Brown (1987 : 209 cited in Lazar 2003) non-verbal communication refers to the following areas :

Proximics; i.e. . space and distance between people and Kinesics, i.e. facial expression, posture gestures; and paralanguage.

The way these forms of non-verbal communication are interpreted varies across cultures. For example, in the US, to say ' hello' people wave with their whole hands moving from side to side, but in a large part of Europe that same single means 'no'. In Greece, such a gesture would be considered insulting. (Devito 2006)

The eye contact also communicates, for instance, it is usual for two people in the US who are having a conversation to maintain eye contact during a conversation, people who are unable to maintain eye contact are often looked upon as untrustworthy or rude .Whereas, in many Asian and African cultures, eye contact is viewed in a different way . In those culture, it is considered disrespectful to look an older or authority person in the eyes during a conversation (ibid)

Another important form of non- verbal behaviour is personal space, Americans maintain some distance between themselves and the people with whom they are speaking. Standing too close may give the impression of forced intimacy or an attempt to dominate. (Tiersky and Tiersky 2001)

However, personal space in the Middle East countries is not important, people tend to sit closer to each other while talking. (ibid.)

Despite the importance of these forms of communication within culture, they are often neglected. Hence, foreign language learners who attempt to

interact in a new culture often try to use the same non-verbal communication that is common to their own culture. (Martin and Cortazzi 1999)

Consequently, Foreign Language Teachers need to at least explain to their students these differences so that their students will be aware that body language and politeness conventions are not the same all over the world and that they will need to use this awareness in situations of intercultural contact .

I .4- Applications for Language Teaching and Learning

It is quite true that for anyone to participate in the social life of the community, he has to be able to communicate and be communicated to. (Corder 1993)

In language teaching as well, the leaner is prepared to participate in another social group and other social community. Thus, inappropriate language prevents him interacting or communicating; he may fail to achieve his ends, he may give offence or make himself ridiculous. (ibid.)

Of consequence to language teaching and learning, advances in the field of Sociolinguistics and intercultural studies are to provide a general application in defining the goals of language teaching. (Dubin & Olshtain, 2000)

According to Schiffrin (1996) learning a language in a way that enables one to use it in a range of social and expressive purposes requires more than learning lists of vocabulary items, syntactic paradigms, and native like pronunciation. Since, sociolinguistics sees language as a system of use whose rules and norms are an integral part of culture (Saville – Troike, 1996). This means that learning a language requires knowledge of the rules that govern its appropriate use in concrete situations of every day life. Therefore, learners should know how to engage in conversations such as shop in a store, be interviewed for a job, pray, joke, argue, warn, and even when to be silent

(Schiffrin, 1996). These major innovations are of a great help in as far as foreign language teaching is concerned. This was resulted in the introduction of the term

"communicative competence " in the early 1970's, which is the central theoretical concept in communicative language teaching.

Conclusion

The attempt in this chapter was to investigate   that mutual relationship between language and culture which has   been a settled issue thanks to the writings of prominent linguist anthropologists Edward   Sapir and Benjamen Whorf. These are the names first to come in minds when the issue is the relation between language and culture. They are the scholar whose names are often used synonymously with the term " Linguistic Relativity " .

However, it is not until the 1970's that the need of teaching culture in language classes is indicated thanks to the development in the field of sociolinguistics whose   major   innovation is   the   introduction   of   the   term   "communicative competence ". Brought by the efforts of the American sociolinguist "Dell Hymes" along   with   others   who   advocate   that   learners   should   have   more   than   a command   in   grammar   and   vocabulary   to   communicate   effectively   and appropriately in   the target language. This will be clarified in the next chapter.