

Issues In Teaching English In A Cultural Context

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Abstract

This research paper aims to investigate students' diverse cultural backgrounds that can create communication barriers and issues when teaching English. Language and cultural differences may influence students' comprehension and production of English, affecting their ability to engage in the learning process fully. Teachers should be aware of the many differences and make use of strategies that foster understanding and inclusivity. This research for this paper was conducted in quantitative method research. Teaching English in a cultural context depends on an approach that integrates language learning with a better understanding and appreciation of the cultural aspects which is connected with the English language. This research tries to find out the significance and benefits of teaching English in a cultural context, looking at the impact on language acquisition and intercultural competence. In a few decades, there has been an increasing recognition of the importance of cultural awareness in language education. Language is not only a system of learning something but is also closely interrelated with the beliefs, values, and practices of an individual culture. Teaching English in a cultural context acknowledges this connection that aims to provide learners with a holistic language learning experience.

Keywords *Language acquisition, intercultural competence, cultural awareness, language education, students' comprehension*

1. Introduction

Teaching English in a cultural context means that the approach within language education such as English that interrelated with the cultural aspects and facts of the English language into the teaching and learning process for teachers and learners as well. Teaching English recognizes that language is significantly interrelated with culture, and by understanding and appreciating the cultural context, learners can develop a deeper understanding and proficiency in English. When a teacher teaches English from a cultural perspective, the educator has aim to provide his or her students with not only the linguistic skills but also the cultural efficiency necessary to effectively communicate in English. This approach goes beyond the less memorization of vocabulary and grammar rules. It encourages learners to learn and engage with the cultural

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practices, customs, traditions, and values associated with the English-speaking world. By integrating culture into the English language outlines, English teachers, may help the students to develop a broader perspective and an appreciation for the diversity and richness of English-speaking cultures. This process also includes studying literature, films, music, art, and other forms of cultural expression, as well as discussing societal issues, historical events, and contemporary topics relevant to English-speaking countries.

2. Literature review

Since teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) has become increasingly globalized in recent decades, it has also led to a growing awareness of the importance of cultural factors in the EFL classroom. Culturally responsive teaching is essential for ensuring that all learners have the opportunity to succeed in learning English. Teaching English in a cultural context is a complex and multifaceted endeavor that requires educators to navigate the intricacies of language instruction while considering the cultural factors that influence language learning.

One crucial aspect of teaching English in a cultural context is recognizing and addressing students' cultural identity. Brown (2010) emphasizes the significance of considering cultural backgrounds in language teaching and advocates for a learner-centered approach that respects students' diverse identities. Cultural identity influences language learning motivation, learning styles, and communication patterns (Finkbeiner, 2016). Therefore, teachers must foster a supportive environment that values students' cultural backgrounds and incorporates culturally relevant materials and activities. Teaching English in a cultural context involves navigating cross-cultural communication challenges. Jin and Cortazzi (2018) highlight the importance of developing intercultural communicative competence among English language learners. They argue that teachers should expose students to authentic cultural materials, encourage interactions with native speakers, and promote cultural awareness to facilitate effective cross-cultural communication. Sociocultural factors significantly influence language learning outcomes. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasizes the role of social interaction and cultural tools in language development (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Educators must be aware of the sociocultural contexts in which their students are situated, as these contexts shape students' language proficiency, motivation, and learning strategies. Teaching English in a cultural context necessitates the integration of language and culture. By incorporating cultural content into language instruction, teachers can help students better understand the target language (Byram & Feng, 2004). However, Bland (2018) warns against essentializing cultures and promotes critical cultural awareness, which encourages learners to question cultural stereotypes and biases. Effective teaching in a cultural context requires teachers to possess intercultural competence. Byram (1997) defines intercultural competence as the ability able to interact effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations. Teacher training programs should incorporate intercultural communication skills development to equip educators with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate diverse cultural settings. Assessing language proficiency in a cultural context is a complex task. Language tests often need to capture the cultural nuances of communication (Nakatsukasa, 2016). Therefore, educators should design assessment methods that consider cultural factors and comprehensively evaluate students' language skills within their cultural context. Language policies at the institutional or national level can significantly impact teaching English in a cultural context. Ricento (2013) emphasizes the need for language policies that value diversity and promote linguistic and cultural rights. Inclusive language policies can create an environment that recognizes and supports diverse cultural backgrounds in English language instruction. The use of technology in language instruction can both support and challenge teaching English in a cultural context. Wang and Chen (2017) highlight the potential of technology to enhance cultural learning through multimedia resources, online intercultural exchanges, and virtual communities. However,

educators must be cautious of the digital divide and ensure equitable access to technology for all students. Engaging parents and the broader community is essential when teaching English in a cultural context. Tse (2015) emphasizes the significance of parental involvement in supporting English language learners' education. Collaborative partnerships between teachers, parents, and community members can foster a culturally responsive learning environment.

3. Methodology

This research paper was conducted in quantitative method research. The primary data for this paper was collected by conducting an online-based survey questionnaire through Google form about the topic anonymously among 30 individuals (online and offline). On the other hand, relevant peer-reviewed journal articles were used for secondary data to find relevant information about how technology is playing an integral part in teaching English all around the world. Online sources, articles, and books were also used for relevant research on this topic.

4. Hypothesis

The effectiveness of teaching English in a cultural context is hindered by various issues, including the influence of students' native language and cultural background, the lack of cultural sensitivity in teaching materials, and the limited exposure to authentic cultural experiences in the classroom. Thus, does teaching English in a cultural context significantly impacts language acquisition and learner engagement?

5. Findings

Teaching English in a cultural context is a complex and multifaceted endeavor. The findings outlined below underscore the importance of understanding and addressing cultural factors that influence language learning. By recognizing and adapting to cultural differences, educators can create inclusive and effective teaching environments, fostering language acquisition, cultural understanding, and intercultural competence among learners. Overcoming these challenges requires ongoing professional development, cross-cultural sensitivity, and a commitment to promoting effective language instruction within diverse cultural contexts.

5.1. Finding 1

1. What is the most important factor to consider when teaching English in a cultural context?

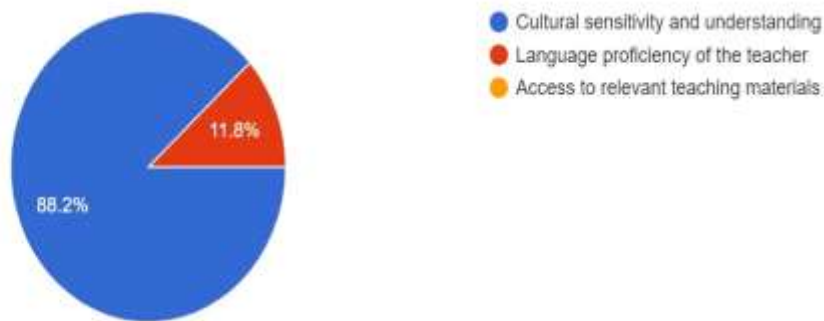


Figure 1. Student survey evaluation

Note: Each section of the pie-chart represents the percentage of the learner's opinion on what is the most important factor they feel is when teaching English in a cultural context.

This was the first question asked of the participants for the survey and as clearly seen from the result, it seems that the majority of the learners, about 88.2% felt cultural sensitivity and understanding are the most important factor to consider when teaching English in a cultural context. The other 11.8% thought language proficiency of the teacher was the most important factor when teaching English in a cultural context. None of them thought access to relevant teaching materials were relevant or an important factor to teaching English in a cultural context. This result falls in line with the fact that the effectiveness of teaching English in a cultural context depends on a deeper understanding of the culture instead of the teaching pedagogy.

5.2. Finding 2

4. What is the ideal approach for integrating local culture into English language lessons?

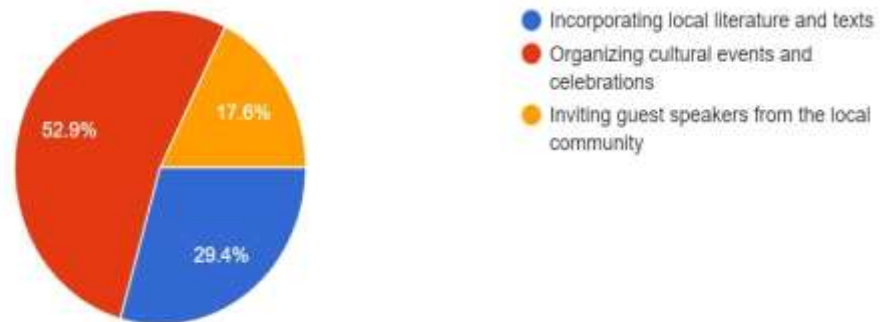


Figure 2. Student survey evaluation

Note: Each section of the pie-chart represents the percentage of the learner's opinion on what is the most important factor they feel is when teaching English in a cultural context.

For the next question, the participants for the survey were asked about what is the ideal approach for integrating local culture into English language lessons. It seems that the majority of the learners, about 52.9% felt it is organizing cultural events and celebrations. The other 29.4% thought it is incorporating local literature and texts and only 17.6% thought the ideal approach would be inviting guest speakers from the local community.

5.3. Finding 3

9. How can teachers address potential bias or stereotypes in English language materials in a multicultural context?

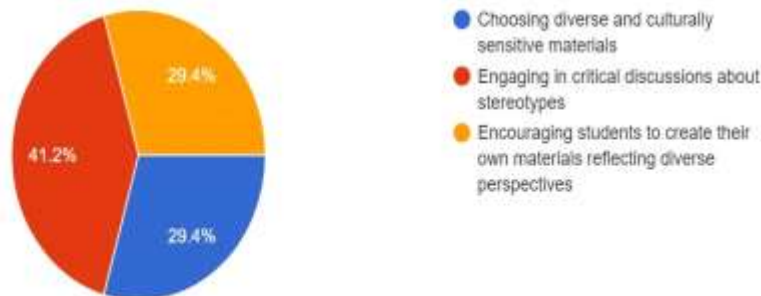


Figure 3. Student survey evaluation

Note: Each section of the pie-chart represents the percentage of the learner's opinion on what is the most important factor they feel is when teaching English in a cultural context.

In the third question, the participants of the survey were asked about how the teachers can address the potential bias in English language materials in a multicultural context. The majority of the participants, about 41.2% felt it can be addressed by engaging in critical discussion about stereotypes. The other 29.4% felt it could be ironed out by encouraging students to create their own materials reflecting diverse perspectives and 29.4% felt it can be addressed by choosing diverse and culturally sensitive materials.

6. Discussion

English is the most widely spoken language in the world, and its importance in the global economy and culture is only growing. As a result, there is a growing demand for English language education around the world. However, teaching English in a cultural context can present some unique challenges. One challenge is that different cultures have different values and beliefs, which can sometimes clash with the values and beliefs embedded in English. For example, in some cultures, making direct eye contact is considered rude, while in other cultures, it is considered a sign of respect. If teachers are unaware of these cultural differences, they can inadvertently offend their students. Another challenge is that different cultures have different ways of communicating. For example, in some cultures, it is more common to use indirect communication, while in other cultures, it is more common to use direct communication. If a teacher is aware of these cultural differences, they can understand their students and make it easier for them to understand them. Despite these challenges, there are many benefits to teaching English in a cultural context. First, it can help students to develop a deeper understanding of the English language and its culture. Second, it can help students to develop a more global perspective. Third, it can help students to become more tolerant and understanding of other cultures.

A growing body of research suggests that teaching English in a cultural context can significantly impact language acquisition and learner engagement. For example, one study found that students who were taught English in a cultural context were more likely to retain the language after they finished their studies. Another study found that students who were taught English in a cultural context were more likely to be engaged in their learning. There are a number of reasons why teaching English in a cultural context can be so beneficial. First, it can

help students to make connections between the English language and their own culture. This can make the language more meaningful to them and make it easier for them to learn. Second, it can help students better understand the cultural context in which English is used. This can help them understand the language's nuances and use it more effectively. Third, it can help students to develop a more positive attitude toward the English language and its culture. This can motivate them to learn the language and use it in their everyday lives. When English language learners are exposed to a cultural context that reflects real-life situations, their language acquisition becomes more authentic and meaningful. Integrating cultural elements, such as customs, traditions, and social norms, into language lessons makes students more willing to take part in the language learning process. This approach helps learners connect with the language at a deeper level, enhancing their comprehension, fluency, and overall language proficiency. Language learning is not solely about grammar and vocabulary; it also involves understanding the cultural nuances that shape communication. Teaching English in a cultural context enables students to develop cultural sensitivity and adaptability, which are crucial for effective communication. By exposing learners to authentic materials, such as literature, films, or conversations rooted in the cultural context, they gain insights into cultural references, idiomatic expressions, and appropriate language use. This enhances their communicative competence and allows for more meaningful interactions with native speakers. In our interconnected world, intercultural competence is becoming increasingly important. By teaching English in a cultural context, educators can foster the development of intercultural competence among learners. This involves understanding other cultures, appreciating diversity, developing empathy, and effectively navigating cross-cultural communication. English language learners exposed to diverse cultural contexts become more open-minded and tolerant, enabling them to interact and collaborate successfully with individuals from various backgrounds. While teaching English in a cultural context offers numerous advantages, it is not without challenges. Educators must strike a balance between language acquisition and cultural content, ensuring that language learning objectives are not compromised. Additionally, cultural sensitivity and accuracy are vital, as misrepresentations or stereotypes can hinder learning and perpetuate cultural misunderstandings.

Integrating cultural contexts in English language instruction provides learners with meaningful and authentic language experiences. When students are exposed to the cultural nuances, traditions, customs, and values associated with the English language, they gain a deeper understanding of its practical use. This deeper understanding leads to improved language acquisition, as learners are motivated to communicate effectively in real-life situations. Cultural contexts provide the necessary context for vocabulary, grammar, idiomatic expressions, and pragmatics, allowing learners to grasp the language more naturally. Teaching English in a cultural context cultivates cultural sensitivity and intercultural competence among learners. Learners develop empathy, understanding, and respect for diverse communities by exploring different cultural perspectives. Language learning becomes a gateway to appreciating cultural diversity, breaking down stereotypes, and promoting global citizenship. Students equipped with intercultural competence are better prepared to communicate and collaborate in multicultural settings, both within and outside the language classroom. Teaching English in a cultural context significantly impacts language acquisition and learner engagement. This approach facilitates language learning and empowers learners to embrace cultural diversity, fostering global understanding and cooperation. Educators should continue to recognize the importance of cultural contexts in English language instruction to create enriching and inclusive learning environments.

7. Conclusion

Teaching English in a cultural context poses several vital issues that require further research and thoughtful implementation strategies. The complex interplay between language and culture necessitates a nuanced approach to language instruction, considering learners' cultural backgrounds, beliefs, and values. While this approach has the potential to enhance language learning and cultural understanding, it also presents challenges that must be addressed. Firstly, selecting and adapting appropriate instructional materials is a big issue. Future research should focus on developing culturally sensitive and inclusive resources that reflect English language learners' diverse perspectives and experiences. These materials foster language acquisition and promote intercultural competence, allowing learners to navigate cross-cultural communication effectively. Another area for research is the role of the teacher in navigating cultural contexts. Teachers need to be equipped with the proper skills and knowledge to recognize and address cultural differences in the classroom. Professional development programs and training initiatives should emphasize intercultural awareness and competence, enabling teachers to facilitate meaningful and respectful intercultural interactions. Furthermore, the assessment of English language proficiency in a cultural context requires careful consideration.

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Appendix A

Survey questionnaire questions

1. What is the most important factor to consider when teaching English in a cultural context?
2. Which aspect of culture should be emphasized in English language instruction?
3. How should teachers address potential cultural barriers in language learning?
4. What is the ideal approach for integrating local culture into English language lessons?
5. Which teaching method is most effective for enhancing cross-cultural understanding in English language classrooms?
6. How can teachers encourage students to value and respect different cultural perspectives in language learning?
7. Which factors may pose challenges when teaching English in a multicultural classroom?

8. Which strategies can teachers employ to create an inclusive environment in a culturally diverse English language classroom?
9. How can teachers address potential bias or stereotypes in English language materials in a multicultural context?
10. What resources or professional development opportunities are needed for teachers to effectively teach English in a multicultural context?