Strategies to Achieve Socio-linguistic Competence in 2\textsuperscript{nd} Language Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article History</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Received: 09.07.2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revision: 20.07.2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepted: 31.07.2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Published: 10.08.2021</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Abstract:** English is a second language in India. Many different methods and approaches for teaching English as second language have been practised to develop communicative skills in learners, for instance, Grammar and Translation method, Audio Lingual Method, Communicative Approach. However, it does not help to improve process of learning. Because learning second language does not only mean to be conscious of vocabulary, pronunciation and grammatical structures of a target language but along with these efforts, an awareness of cultural elements plays a vital role. Many cultural and social tenets are hidden in language. Language learning assists to gain certain ideas about the thinking, background and cultural aspects of speaking community. To ease our L2 learning, many strategies can be utilized.

**Keywords:** Communicative skills, Socio-cultural roots, Semantic structure, Strategies.

**INTRODUCTION:**

Government of India emphasized teaching and learning of English from 1\textsuperscript{st} Standard. English is a second language in India. Many different methods and approaches for teaching English as second language have been practised to develop communicative skills in learners, for instance, Grammar and Translation method, Audio Lingual Method, Communicative Approach. However, it does not help to improve process of learning. Because learning second language does not only mean to be conscious of vocabulary, pronunciation and grammatical structures of a target language but along with these efforts, an awareness of cultural elements plays a vital role. Now, it is generally accepted that for the effective communication, the teacher and learner of second language should incorporate and understand cultural elements which probe the heart of the meaning and situation as well. As we know culture not only focuses on 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 sent or interpreted.

Second language learning gives an exposure to understanding of culture and society of a target language. But the question is always there that how much of cultural knowledge of L2, the teacher and learner must acquire to be effective in communication. This paper is an attempt to find out the answer in the context of teaching and learning situations. It explores the deep relationship between language and culture keeping in mind that it is advisable to know how much of cultural knowledge of L2 suffices to teach and learn effectively. It also suggests some of the strategies to facilitate teaching and learning second language.

**DISCUSSION:**

In the age of multiculturulism, second language learning plays a crucial role in paying respect towards one another’s culture. English language is important in order to be able to enjoy the English-speaking youth culture, for example music, film and TV-programs and in order to be able to communicate with people from other cultures. Students can use it when travelling, working abroad, studying, etc. which help them to shape the view of the world. It is a medium to form a picture of society. Many cultural and social tenets are hidden in language. Language learning assists to gain certain ideas about the thinking, background and cultural aspects of speaking community. It becomes necessary to study cultural aspects of a target language.
It was Saussure who first proclaimed that language is a social fact. His concept of language is a network of relationships in which the value of each element ultimately depends on the value of the other. For Saussure, language comprises a set of signs: a signifier—speech sound; and signified—of meaning. He says that language is not complete in any speaker, it exists perfectly only with a society. He thought semantics should be regarded as a social fact, not psychological. The anthropologist, Franz Boas felt the need to learn the language, and undertake an intense survey to understand a culture, customs, physical appearance, diet, handicrafts, means of obtaining food, and so on. Sapir, the disciple of Franz Boas following him, studied the ways in which language and culture influence each other, and he was interested in the relationship between linguistic differences, and differences in cultural world views. According to him there is arbitrariness of associations between language, race, and culture. It paves the way to understand that Language and culture are integral parts of each other. In other words, they are inseparably separable disciplines of human world. In this regard, Juri Lotman quotes in McGuire that “No language can exist unless it is steeped in the context of culture; and no culture can exist which does not have at its centre, the structure of natural language”. (Tirumalesh 126) It shows the deep relationship between culture and language and as the second language, teachers teach and learners learn about the culture of the L2 whether or not teachers include it overtly in the curriculum. Here culture can be defined as “the kind of knowledge which we learn from other people, either by direct instruction or by watching their behavior. Since we learn our culture from those around us, we may assume that we share it with them, so this kind of knowledge is likely to play a major role in language pedagogy. Nowadays in language pedagogy, it is accepted that language and culture are intertwined. It is not possible to teach a language without culture and culture is the necessary context for language use. This can be explained by taking into consideration Hudson’s conclusion on language and culture. He says, “Some cultural concepts, including some of our most important abstract concepts, are learned through language, so language is an important instrument of socialisation”. (105) We find values, presuppositions about the nature of life in normal use of language which is aimed to teach and learn L2. Accordingly, as a teacher and learner, we have to understand to what extent cultural background influences language learning and teaching. It leads us to study a language in its socio-cultural context which highlights an awareness of the necessity for interdisciplinary approaches to language, culture and society. It is necessary to understand the functions which cultural elements perform in the language. As we know there is no doubt that the influence of mother tongue is always present in L2 learning. It becomes necessary to investigate the importance of the learner’s native language (L1) which makes impression on a second language (L2). Even, seemingly equivalent language can function quite differently in different culture. In this regard, Cohen points out

“Sorry about that” may serve as an adequate apology in some (cultural) situations. In other it may be perceived as a rude, even arrogant non-apology. In yet other situations, it may not even be intended as an apology in the first place” (Carter, Nunan 104) Hence, it becomes clear that the teaching of second language words and phrases in isolation from their socio-cultural context may lead to the confusion. Accordingly, language learners must go beyond the grammatical competence to be successful users of a language.

In other words, it becomes clear that teaching and learning second language without its socio-cultural roots may mislead the communication. If the teacher and learner have to study some well-known statements such as “The proper study of mankind is Man” (Pope), “The child is the father of the Man” (Wordsworth), “Man is the measure of all things” (Pythagoras) etc. They should be able to recognize the patriarchal culture of the society in which the word ‘man’ stands for all human being. Here we have to understand that the meanings of an utterance do not depend entirely on its grammatical forms but in addition to that, certain socio-cultural elements such as the attitudes, values, conventions and prejudices should be known. Thus, the cultural knowledge of L2 deepens and enlightens the understanding of learner and teacher as well.

In the same way, we may face many problems which crop up while using grammar-translation method of second language teaching if we are not familiar with culture of the target language. Here Vocabulary in the target language is learned through direct translation from the native language and readings in the target language are translated directly and then discussed in the native language, for instance, the house= ‘ghar’. But sometimes we find difficulties while translating customs, objects and culture-specific concepts which are associated with different cultures, for instance, the English words brown, monkey, carpet are untranslatable into French. Similarly, the teacher or learner may find difficulty in translation if he is unknown to some gender differences in English and Telugu. “As the word ‘moon’ is masculine in English and feminine in Telugu. Similarly, ‘ship’ is feminine in English and neuter in Telugu”. (H. Lakshmi quoted in K.V. Tirumalesh 128) This shows that in different languages the same ideas can be expressed in different ways. Moreover, the senses that ideas can be expressed differ from language to language.

We can also take an example of Cora spoken in Mexico (Uto-Aztecan) to find out deep cultural explanations for the language’s semantic structure. This
language is having affixes u- and a-. They can be translated as ‘inside’ and ‘outside’. This translation seems useless in the following one-word sentences which describe a dog.
1) U-h-ki-tya-pu’u.
2) A-h-ki-tya-pu’u.

The meaning these sentences try to convey is that ‘Dog’s tail is chopped short’. Here the speaker’s position is different in these sentences. In the first sentence the speaker is standing behind the dog and in second he is standing to one side of the dog. This shows that the meaning expressed by the prefixes in one language (Com) cannot be expressed by prefixes in another language. Such language’s semantic structures help to understand that the study of cultural aspect of the target language is beneficial for the students and teachers to be effective in language learning process. But sometimes a question may occur in mind that is it necessary to adopt the whole culture of a second language. In this context, attention can be paid to the issue of the separateness of the language’s semantic system from the rest of the culture. There are many languages’ semantic structures which have nothing to do with anything else in the culture. It can be explored by an example of German Verbs ‘essen’ (human) and ‘fressen’ (animal) for ‘eat’ in English. (Hudson 90).
Both of these German verbs have a more specific meaning than ‘eat’. Here, German forces a speaker to pay attention to whether the eater is a person or an animal whereas English doesn’t; but there seems to be nothing else in the two cultures which reflect this difference. The verb ‘eat’ has to be translated by a range of different German verbs with more specific meaning. This example denotes that the semantic system of a language is linked to the culture of its speaker but only loosely.

That’s why, it is always advisable to know how much of cultural knowledge suffices to teach and learn L2 effectively.

**Strategies to facilitate teaching and learning L2:**

The learning of second language involves efforts to acquire syntactic, semantic, and sociolinguistics competence. Sociolinguistics competence enriches the appropriate language use based on the knowledge of socio-cultural conventions and social context. To ease our L2 learning, many strategies can be utilized. According to John Schumann (1978), “the most important influence on L2 learning is the relationship between the social group of the L2 learners and the social group of the speakers of the target language. Successful learning means ‘acculturation’ becoming part of the target culture”. (Vivian 169) By acculturation he means ‘the social and psychological integration of the learner with the target learner group. Here in social factors the focus is mainly on how the learner group relates to the target language group and among psychological factors the emphasis is on the affective reaction of the learner to the language and culture of the target language group. If the group of L2 learners thinks of itself as superior or inferior to the target language speakers, they will not learn the language very well. But the international use of language as English is often detached from the English-speaking people. To this, Schumann uses a term ‘enculturation’ in which it is desirable to speak a second language within one’s own culture.

It is always fruitful to learn about cultural norms and values by asking questions for clarification in class or outside of class. There are five steps recommended by Cohen to obtain native like sociolinguistic competence. They are as follows,

1) Assessment of students’ sociolinguistic awareness - In this step the teachers determine the learners’ level of awareness of the speech act to be taught. The aim of this step is to develop awareness of the diversity of language in the many situations encountered in everyday life and in familiar contexts. Students will be expected to reflect on their sense of cultural identity.

2) Presentation and discussion of dialogues focusing on socio-cultural factors affecting speech acts - Here the teacher presents learners with examples of the speech act in use (i.e., model dialogues) and learners are to guess details with regard to participants, such as their social status or role-relationship, as well as to the particular speech act, for instance, whether an apology could be considered an offense or not.

3) Evaluation of situations that might require apologies or complaints - In this step, learners are given a variety of typical situations in the target culture and they have to evaluate how contextual variables affect the choice of the linguistic form of the speech act.

4) Role-playing - In this step, learners perform a role-play as a final practice. Here, as highlighted by the authors, the important thing is to supply learners with a lot of details about the role-relationship between the interlocutors as well as about the situation.

5) Feedback and discussion - The final step of the approach help learners to be aware of similarities and differences between speech act behavior in their own culture and in the target culture.

These steps will assist the teacher and learner to achieve mastery in a target language.

**Conclusion:**

Thus, from the above, it becomes clear that to teach and learn second language does not only need grammatical and semantic knowledge of L2 but also attention on cultural aspects of language use is essential. So, language teacher and learner should go beyond syntactic, semantic knowledge to achieve sociolinguistics competence of a target language to be
effective. This can be done with the use of certain strategies to facilitate and understand how much of cultural knowledge suffices in language use.

REFERENCES: