

CONSTRUCTIVISM-BASED INSTRUCTIONAL STYLE IN TEACHING AND LEARNING CULTURAL VALUES

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Abstract: Cultural values are important to be integrated in teaching and learning English. Under the paradigm of global literacy, it is important for EFL learners to express their cultural identity as local people by using English as global language. An appropriate instructional style is therefore considered as important factor in teaching and learning cultural values. This essay aims to discuss the importance of cultural values for EFL learners, and to propose a design of instructional style in teaching and learning cultural values based on constructivism theory.

Keywords: *cultural values, instructional style, constructivism, English*

Learning about cultural diversity provides students knowledge and skills for more effective communication in intercultural situations. Being a good intercultural communicator means to know our own culture and to know ourselves – in other words, to reflect thoughtfully on how we perceive things and how we act on those perceptions. The knowledge of cultural differences and self-knowledge of how we respond to those differences can make us aware of hidden prejudices and stereotypes which are barriers to tolerance, understanding, and good communication (Samovar and Porter, 1999). The more we know about the different cultural beliefs, values, and attitudes of others, the better prepared we will be to recognize and to understand the differences in their cultural behaviors. This essay aims to discuss the importance of cultural values in learning English as Foreign Language and to discuss the possibility of designing appropriate instructional style in teaching and learning cultural values in EFL classroom.

Cultural Values in Global Literacy Paradigm

English has achieved a global status as a means of communications among countries nowadays (Crystal, 2003; Nakamura, 2002), as International Language (Phan, 2008), or as Lingua Franca (Dewey and Jenkins, 2010). In response to this global status of English, global literacy is raised as a term for cross-cultural competence or sensitivity along with transcultural and transnational perspectives one may have to get along with the rest of people in the world (Nakamura, 2002). To reach the goal of multiliteracy and multicultural education, global literacy paradigm should become the paradigm of English language teaching in multicultural nation. Based on Smith's prediction (Smith in Nakamura, 2002), we are no longer have to become more Western or to change our moral in order to use English in international situations, but we can use English

as a means of communicating our identity, culture, politics and ways of life. Moreover, learners of English do not need to internalize the cultural norms of local speakers of English language, but they can internalize their own cultural identity and use English to communicate it globally.

To cultivate this paradigm, teachers of English should be aware of at least two cultures: culture of English-speaking country and local culture. Teachers of English should be aware of the historical context of how English has become the lingua franca of the world, aware of the definition of globalization and multicultural in society context, teach students the meaning and understanding of global literacy and demand their students to express it through their attitudes and behaviors. As a result, students will find out that they have 'multicultural citizenship' as the combination of target culture and local culture, to fit themselves in both global and local communities. Ideally speaking, they will be able to express their cultural identity as local people by using English.

The Importance of Teaching Cultural Values to EFL Learners

As EFL (English as Foreign Language) learners, we are norm-dependent to the standard sets of English language norms by native speakers of English. We cannot deny that culture cannot be separated with language, since a language is a part of culture, and culture is also a part of language (Brown, 2007; Byram, 1997; Nieto, 2010). Therefore it is important to teach cultural values of English-speaking countries by considering the paradigm of global literacy as the goal of our language education.

Teaching EFL in multicultural context has raised an important question to consider the inclusion of target culture and local culture, due to the fact that EFL learners have been grown up in their own culture and may have different cultural values with the target culture of English being taught. These differences may affect the

way they think, feel and act and furthermore affect the way they learn English. So both local culture and target culture should be integrated in EFL classroom to bridge the gap between the influence of local cultural values of EFL learners and English culture. This is important for EFL learners to stimulate their curiosity about target culture, also to increase EFL learners' awareness of cultural diversity in multicultural context. By learning both local culture and target culture, EFL learners will be better prepared to recognize and to understand the differences in their cultural behavior also to provide knowledge and skills for more effective communication in intercultural situations.

Significance of Teaching and Learning Cultural Values in EFL Classroom

Cultural values can give benefits to both teachers and learners of EFL. McKay (in Genc and Bada, 2005) stated that cultural values influences language teaching in two ways: linguistic and pedagogical. Linguistically, it affects the semantic, pragmatic, and discourse levels of the language while pedagogically it influences the choice and development of the language materials. Theoretically speaking, teaching and learning cultural values to EFL learners will give contribution to the development of integrating culture and language perspective. Practically speaking, teaching and learning cultural values will provide opportunity to EFL learners to understand the expressions in target language as a genuine example already introduced in textbooks and grammar books, as well as to help learners relate the abstract sounds and forms of a language to real people and places (Chastain in Genc & Bada, 2005). It will also allow learners to use target language either in spoken or written form to discuss, share, and give their opinion related to cultural values presented in learning material. Cultural values as topic discussion in learning material can therefore be treated as linguistic inputs for EFL learners to develop their English speaking and reading skills. EFL learners can be asked to discuss their ideas, opinions, and experiences deal with both local values and target cultural values within the group, present their discussion result orally, and submit the feedback of discussion in written form.

INSTRUCTIONAL VARIABLE IN EFL

Mackey's interactional model figures out important variables including the position of society and its cultural values in language teaching and learning. (Stern, 1983:39).

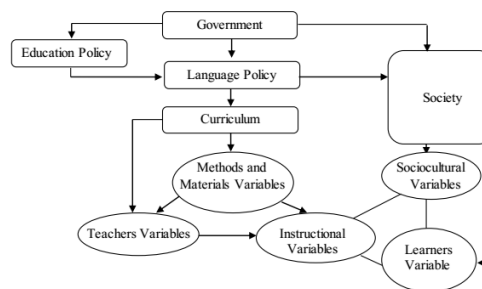


Figure 1: Mackey's interactional model of language learning, teaching, and policy (taken from Stern, 1983:40)

In this interactional model displayed in figure 1, there are five major variables that should be consider in language teaching and learning process which are methods and materials variables, teacher variables, instructional variables, sociocultural variables, and learners variable. From the arrows, we can see that the meeting point of language policy factor and society factor here is instructional variables. Instructional variables then become important in teaching cultural values for EFL learners because it is directly related to what EFL learners get in learning process.

Constructivism-Based Instructional Style in Teaching and Learning Cultural Values in EFL

Constructivism is a theory of learning which is emphasizing on the active construction of knowledge (Woolfolk in Tracey and Morrow, 2006:47). We can focus on both the importance of the mind and the importance of environment role and interaction between learners in learning process. Relating to the importance of instructional variables in Mackey's interactional model, constructivism theory is considered as a basis of designing an instructional style to meet EFL learners' need of learning cultural values of both target culture and local values. Figure 2 displays the design of constructivism-based instructional style in teaching and learning cultural values.

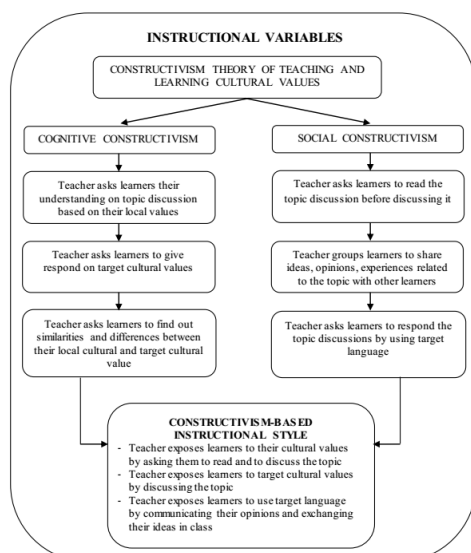


Figure 2. Design of Constructivism-Based Instructional Style

The design proposed in Figure 2 is included in instructional variables already displayed in figure 1 of Mackey's interactional model. Based on constructivism theory, this instructional variable will meet both the needs of EFL learners to learn the cultural values of target language and to explore their own local values. There are three central activities proposed in this design: (1) exposing learners to their own cultural values by asking them to write down their opinion, ideas or knowledge related to the keys of cultural values as presented in topic material, (2) exposing learners to the target culture by discussing the keys of cultural values within group, and (3) exposing learners to the use of target language by presenting the discussion result in the classroom.

Key Cultural Values as Topic Discussion in EFL Classroom

Basic keys of cultural values are the important elements to teach to EFL learners. There are at least 10 basic keys of cultural values which are closely interrelated to each other (Moran, Harris and Moran: 2007). The keys or topic discussions are: sense of self and space; communication and language; dress and appearance; food and feeding habits; time and time consciousness; relationships; values and norms; beliefs and attitudes; mental process and learning, and; work habits and practices. As teachers of English, we should be aware of the cultural elements that may be too sensitive to be discussed in class, since topics that we often discuss may create major problems when raised beyond our own society (classroom as a society context). Therefore, it is important for teachers

to consider discussing such delicate matters as male-female relationship, sexual orientation, alcohol and drugs, and sexual orientation. The discussion of cultural elements in classroom should be useful for learners, in term of building their character and positive attitude toward the learning process itself and toward others. To my concern, it is important to explore the local culture before comparing and contrasting it with the target culture. When EFL learners understand and know how to talk about their own cultural values, they will be ready to discuss values, expectations, behaviors, and traditions of target culture objectively (Straub, 1999).

CONCLUSION

Learning both cultural values of target language and local values will allow EFL learners to raise their multicultural awareness under the paradigm of global literacy. By exploring learners' local values first, learners will be ready to explore and therefore to understand the values, expectations, behaviors, and traditions of target culture objectively. Moreover, an appropriate instructional style will enable both teachers and learners to gain benefits linguistically and pedagogically in teaching and learning cultural values in EFL classroom, also to raise learners' positive attitude toward the learning process, toward the learning material, and toward other learners.

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