Intercultural Understanding in Language Teaching and Learning

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To start with...

• According to Kramsch (1998), language is related to culture in the following ways:
  – Language **expresses** cultural reality
  – Language **embodies** cultural reality
  – Language **symbolizes** cultural reality

• As suggested by Liddicoat, Papademetre, Scarino, & Kohler (2003, p.44), language is “**not simply structural, but social and communicative.**” Learning a new language, therefore, becomes more complicated due to the complexity of the linguistic forms that get tangled with the socio-cultural aspects.
What is culture?

Moran (2001) formulated 5 dimensions of culture:
• Culture is defined by Moran (2001) as:

the evolving way of life of a GROUP of PERSONS, consisting of a shared set of PRACTICES associated with a shared set of PRODUCTS, based upon a shared set of PERSPECTIVES of the world, and set within specific social contexts
So, what does it have to do with language?

• Since language use is a form of cultural PRACTICES, by PERSONS in COMMUNITIES, understanding the cultural PERSPECTIVES underlying the practices becomes very crucial.

• Here, cultural understanding (and also awareness) should become an inseparable part in language teaching and learning.

• Intercultural understanding will help language learners decide whether the language features or expressions they use are culturally appropriate, polite, and acceptable.

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Intercultural Understanding

Etic Perspective

First Language Culture

Emic Perspective

Target Culture

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Which Cultures to understand?

- Does English culture exist?
- Which country should become our reference?
- Three most possible references:
  - U.S. American
  - British
  - Australian
American Cultural Values (Levine & Adelman, 1993)

1. Personal control over environment
2. Change
3. Control over time
4. Equality and egalitarianism
5. Individualism and privacy
6. Self-help
7. Future orientation
8. Action and work orientation
9. Informality
10. Directness, openness, and honesty
11. Materialism
So, what next? What cultural forms do we need to teach?

• There are some possible materials to utilize:
  – **(Authentic) Texts, both written and spoken**: articles, song lyrics, literary works, letters, greeting cards, announcements, legal documents, news reports, speeches, dialogues, etc.
  – **Audio (and or) visuals**: talk shows, debate, pictures, photographs, movies, plays, etc.
  – **Cultural products**: bus tickets, clothes, kitchen utensils, etc.
Some important issues

• Teaching culture **EXPLICITLY** or **IMPLICITLY**
• The **authenticity** of the materials
• Teachers’ **cultural knowledge**
• Cultural conflict
• Understanding culture is not about **RIGHT vs. WRONG**
Questions, please..