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Culture Bound (1995). Edited by Joyce Merrill Valdes. New York: Cambridge University Press. 222 pp. ISBN 0-521-31045-8 \$28.00

Culture has always been recognized as an important area in language learning and teaching. However, the inclusion of cultural components have been neglected in many language classrooms and only occasionally integrated through seasonal activities on food, showing of films, and learners' participation in community cultural events. If culture, as Brown (1980) puts it, is a "deeply ingrained part of our being and language is the most visible and available feature of culture," then language teachers and scholars alike should include every aspect of culture in language teaching and in the study of language.

Culture Bound, a reference book written by scholars and teachers and edited by Joyce Merrill Valdes, presents language teachers with theoretical and practical resources for including cultural components in their teaching. This compilation has transformed my personal views on what fundamental components should be included in foreign language teaching beyond the rules of grammar. The book as a whole resonates with the notion that

language is not only part of how we define culture, it also reflects culture. The culture associated with a language cannot be learned or acquired in a few lessons about celebrations, folk songs, or costumes of the country where the language is spoken. Culture is a much broader concept that is inherently tied to many of the linguistic concepts taught in second language classes. (Peterson, Coltrane, 2003)

The different articles in *Culture Bound* give a wide perspective on how language and culture relate and how understanding culture aids in successful and enriching language learning. The book is organized into three different sections, namely: Part One – Language, Thought and Culture, Part Two – Cultural Differences and Similarities, and Part Three – Classroom Applications. At the end of every article is a list of questions for further reflection, discussion and consideration as a tool to encourage teachers to reflect on a given area of language learning and teaching. The final pages of the book are

bibliographic information of all the references used in all the articles including an index of important topics/words in the whole book.

Part One serves as the foundation for the succeeding sections. The essays in this section comprise topics such as: Language and Thought, Culture and the Written Language, Acculturation and Mind, and Learning a Second Culture. These topics discuss thoroughly the relationship between language and mind as it is essential to an understanding of culture reflected in language learning. The essays also reiterate the importance of learners' own culture and how it may aid in the learning of the second culture. Brown (1980) states clearly this view that in every other human learning, "the second language learner can make positive use of prior experiences to make possible the process of learning by retaining that which is suitable and beneficial for second culture learning and second language learning." Language teaching and learning has typically focused on the development of specific language skills such listening, writing, reading, speaking and grammar acquisition so that cultural inclusions have been overshadowed. The process of cultural connections and relationships makes language learning, especially in a foreign language setting, take a new direction beyond the emphasis on language specific skills.

Part Two presents the acculturation stage of particular groups of learners as it relates to language learning and essays on different cross and inter-cultural perspectives. Topics included under this section are: How to Compare Two Cultures, Kinesics and Cross-Cultural Understanding, Intercultural Differences and Communicative Approaches to Foreign Language Teaching in the Third World, Cultural Clues to the Middle Eastern Student, and Cultural Perspectives. Although the essays derived from experiences in specific pedagogical settings, discussions on different semantic and sociolinguistic issues such as proxemics, compliments, time, non-verbal cues, familial patterns, independence and interdependence, direct and indirect communication, are all universal and may be applied to any number of settings, e.g. teaching Southeast Asian Languages in the U. S. Perspectives and classroom implications presented in this section encourage practitioners to create a classroom environment where students demonstrate appreciation of the role of culture in language learning through comparisons of the target culture and their own culture. The articles also encourage practitioners to allow demonstration of viewpoints that are only available through language learning and cultural understanding.

Part Three focuses on approaches and methodologies in integrating culture in language teaching. Essays in this section present practical suggestions, useful instructional materials, and guidelines for further classroom application. Topics include the following: Culture in the Classroom, Newspapers: Vehicles for teaching with a cultural focus, Culture in Literature, An Argument for Culture Analysis in the Second Language Classroom, and Culture Bump and Beyond. The highlight of this section is an exhaustive list of practical instructional topics for classroom use. In the essay "Culture in the Classroom", the author lists an "hors d'oeuvres" of over 60 sociolinguistic and linguistic items for language classrooms. The list includes contraction and omissions, verbal taboos, patterns of politeness, levels of speech (formal and non-formal), written and spoken language, folklore, discipline, games, personal possessions, cleanliness, keeping

warm and cool, family meals, contrasts in town and country life, and meals away from home. The focal points of all the essays in this section are the development of connections and relationships between practices and perspectives of the target culture and language; and the establishment of the classroom (especially in the foreign language setting) as a cultural island made up of material and non-materials elements. The authors encourage practitioners to look into items of language and culture learning that are significant in building awareness and understanding of the differences and similarities of the learners' culture and the target culture and how to effectively develop and implement instructional activities that will promote this purpose.

The variety of essays under each section as stated in the book's preface, "brings together a collection of representative and theoretical and practical materials by different scholars and teachers in the field to serve as a guide to the teaching of culture in the foreign and second language classroom." (p ix). Although it does not claim to provide a curriculum for the language teacher, the theoretical frameworks presented and the instructional activities suggested are universal and can be used both in a second language learning setting and in a foreign language-learning classroom. *Culture Bound* offers a great contribution for the inclusion of culture in language teaching at any level. Every language teacher can benefit from this collection and find confirmation of the importance of culture in language teaching and learning.

References:

Brown, H.D. (1980). *Principles of Language, Learning and Teaching*, pp.129-144. Prentice Hall, Inc. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey.

Peterson E. & Coltrane, B. (2003). *Culture in Second Language Teaching*. Eric Digest EDO-FL-03-09. Center for Applied Linguistics.

Reviewer:

Rhodalyne Gallo-Crail
Northern Illinois University