

ETIQUETTE BEHAVIOUR IN THE CONTEXT OF LANGUAGE AND CULTURE LEARNING

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The contemporary approach to foreign language teaching in general and to teaching English as a second language in particular is based on the assumption that a language should be taught not only as a means of communication but also as a means of penetration into the culture of the target language community. A foreign language teaching should be combined with teaching the culture of the people who are native speakers of that language, i.e. language bearers because national differences in communication are conditioned not so much linguistically but mostly socially and culturally. In the last few decades we have been witnessing an incredible growth of attention to teaching culture and other issues connected with it, including the socio-cultural influences on communication – all these aspects being manifested both in practical language teaching and in all the research done on above mentioned and other related issues.

The recent growth of interest to cultural studies and teaching culture within the framework of language teaching can be explained by several factors, the main of them being:

- both culture teaching and culture itself are many-sided phenomena. The latter include literature, art, history of the people, the forms of behaviour accepted in a given socio-cultural community, etc. but there are certain essential aspects of culture which have the most direct influence on language communication;
- extensive personal business and cultural contacts between people all over the world;
- language bearers may forgive a foreigner's language errors rather than his / her behavioural ones – both verbal and non-verbal errors may cause strong negative reactions if they break some accepted and highly valued etiquette norms of interpersonal communication;
- culture is a patterned behaviour. Comparing two cultures presupposes comparing two types of patterned behaviour;
- communicative etiquette behaviour penetrates all the areas of human activities and embraces all the typical situations of communication, intercourse, and interaction.

Thus, mastering communicative etiquette in particular and behavioural etiquette in general is no less important than mastering the structure of the language being learnt and taught. Without knowing and acquiring the skills of its application no effective English language teaching / learning as well as speaking good English is possible.

A tight relationship of language and culture is widely recognized, but the ways in which the patterning of communicative behaviour interrelates with that of other cultural

systems are of great interest both to the development of general theories of communication, and to the description and analysis of communication within specific speech communities. The very concept of the evolution of culture is dependent on the capacity of people to use language for organizing social cooperation purposes. There are still questions as to the extent to which language shapes and controls the thinking of its speakers by the perceptual requirements it makes of them, or the extent to which it merely reflects their world view, and whether the relationship is universal or language-specific. There exists a correlation between the form and content of a language on the one hand, and the beliefs, values, and needs present in the culture of its speakers on the other hand. The vocabulary of a language contains a catalogue of things which are important to the society, an index to the way native speakers categorise experience, and often a record of past contacts and cultural borrowings. The grammar in its turn reveals the way time is segmented and organized, the relative power of beings, and especially noticeable social categories in the culture. Mastering the English language should not be separated from mastering the culture of its native speakers. Their combined complex study gives an opportunity of learning how to communicate and behave properly in genuine target socio-cultural environment without experiencing cultural shocks. By culture shock "strong feelings of discomfort, fear, or insecurity which persons may have when they enter another culture" [2, p. 94] are meant. For example, when a person moves to live in a foreign country, he / she may have a period of culture shock until he / she becomes familiar with the new culture. The above mentioned dictionary defines culture as "the total set of beliefs, attitudes, customs, behaviour, social habits. etc. of the members of a particular society" [2, p. 94].

A culture usually manifests itself through the individual acts of behaviour. Each act is unique, and the very same act never occurs again. Having orange juice, coffee, fried eggs, and white toast one morning and grapefruit juice, coffee, scrambled eggs, and wheat toast the next morning can be considered as two occurrences of the same unit of behaviour – eating breakfast. Yet they are different, because the design of having breakfast constitutes a certain pattern of behaviour. Such patterns are made up of substitutive elements, namely: performer, act, objects, setting, time, manner, purpose, etc. These elements though always unique and always different, are identified into "same" and "different" within certain designs which turn out to be also cultural patterns. The same elements have characteristic features in each culture and they are usually of various classes. For example, one such class in different cultures consists of static units: men, women, children, teacher, doctor, animals, family, school, church, tree, building, house, etc. Another class is represented by items indicating process: to study, to live, to think, to sit, to go, to play, etc. Still another contains items denoting qualities: good, bad, slow, hot, cold, cruel, nicely, peacefully, etc. Such units of patterned behaviour have form, meaning, and distribution. Forms, like meanings, are culturally determined. They are also distributed in patterned ways. Forms are relevant when they possess meanings; meanings presuppose forms in order to be of relevance to us, and meaningful forms always occur in patterned distribution. Within a culture one can notice that "when

an individual observes a significant patterned form in a patterned distribution spot, it will have a complex of culturally patterned meanings for him" [3, p. 114].

Pointing towards close relationships between language and culture, Edward Sapir wrote: "Language is becoming increasingly valuable as a guide to the scientific study of a given culture. In a sense, the network of cultural patterns of a civilization is indexed in the language which expresses that civilization. It is an illusion to think that we can understand the significant outlines of a culture through sheer observation and without the guide of the linguistic symbolism which makes outlines significant and intelligible to society..." [7, p. 161].

Thus, teaching culture should be performed in full accordance with language teaching. The same concerns both language and culture learning. Their complex study means at the same time gaining command of normative patterned behaviour characteristic of native speakers of the target language in different communicative situations.

Effective language and culture learning / teaching cannot be successful without gaining knowledge about etiquette which characterizes all the spheres of human activities and can be found in all typical situations of communication, intercourse and interaction. Etiquette is defined by Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture as "the formal rules of proper (social) behaviour: *medical / professional etiquette*. ► Cultural Note. In Britain, the rules of social behaviour are not as severe as they were in the past, but there are still many rules about formal behaviour in upper-class society. People who move up in society sometimes look at etiquette books to learn how they are expected to behave" [4, p. 436]. Macmillan English Dictionary gives the following definition of etiquette: "a set of rules for behaving correctly in social situations, rules about behaviour for people in a particular profession: *professional / business / diplomatic etiquette*" [5, p. 470]. Etiquette is described in Cambridge International Dictionary of English as "the set of rules or customs which control accepted behaviour in particular social groups or social situations" [1, p. 470]. Webster's New Encyclopedic Dictionary explains the meaning and origin of the word "etiquette" in the following way: "the body of rules governing the way in which people behave socially, ceremonially, or in public life [French *étiquette*, literally, "ticket". The primary meaning of French *étiquette* is "ticket, label attached to something for description or identification"]. It was once the practice in royal palaces of France to post notices that set down the proper forms to be observed at court. Such notices were called etiquettes. The word came to be used for the court ceremonial itself as well as the document that described it. It was this sense of French *étiquette* that English borrowed" [8, p. 344].

Using language appropriately involves knowing the social rules for speaking in a community. It means understanding the influence of social factors on speech behaviour. From the point of view of language learning / teaching and intercultural communication one should recognize that the person who wants to be good at English must, in addition to acquiring its vocabulary and syntactic rules, study the rules of speaking, i.e. the patterns of sociolinguistic behaviour of the target language. These rules of speaking

necessarily contain etiquette, and a correct / incorrect use of them tells much about the person speaking the language. Knowing of such rules leads to acquiring communicative etiquette behaviour which "follows socially, culturally, historically, and traditionally established communicative patterns of behaviour in standard situations of human communication and interaction" [6, p. 15]. Every pattern can include certain components – verbal, non-verbal or both. Any socially and culturally conditioned communicative behavioural pattern gets some individual colouring when being used by an individual with his / her emotions, habits, life experience, attitudes, feelings, etc. We agree with Tarnopolsky O. and Sklyarenko N. in distinguishing four basic and most general factors determining communicative behavioural patterns which are positioned along the scale from purely social factors (historical, traditional, cultural) to the ones of individual character. These four factors are as follows:

- cultural-historical-traditional called the norm-setting one (strictly social factor) which determines the characteristics of any communicative behavioural pattern conditioned by the history, culture, traditions of the community;
- situation-relationship factor called the attitude-setting which is influenced by definite situations of communication and existing relationships between communication participants;
- purpose-setting factor which modifies communicative behavioural patterns and communicative behaviour in general according to the personal motives of communication participants and the goals they pursue in communication;
- individual distinctions factor called an individual distinctions-setting which determines all personalised characteristics of communication participants.

The interaction of the above mentioned four factors makes communicative etiquette behaviour be differently used by different people within one and the same language community.

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