CULTURE AS A DIDACTIC MODEL IN THE INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COURSE FOR EFL TEACHERS

КУЛЬТУРА ЯК ДИДАКТИЧНА МОДЕЛЬ У КУРСІ «МІЖКУЛЬТУРНА КОМУНІКАЦІЯ ДЛЯ ВЧИТЕЛІВ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ ЯК ІНОЗЕМНОЇ»

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Life in the era of globalization and multiculturalism has defined teaching English-speaking cultures as one of the top priorities for the TEFL curriculum of teacher training institutions [7]. The cultural component has emerged as the "fifth skill" after listening, speaking, reading, and writing, emphasizing an EFL teacher's ability not only to perceive, understand, and accept the cultural relativity of the target language, but also their knowledge and skills of culture didactics [1; 7; 8]. One of the issues in teaching English speaking cultures is the polycentricity of present-day English. Understanding similarities and differences across the target cultures requires knowledge about how cultures differ. EFL teachers need frameworks for comparing cultures.

Given the growing importance of culture didactics in TEFL pedagogy, this study synthesizes a set of cultural components which can be applied by EFL teacher trainers as an interpretative mechanism for profiling cultures by pre-service teachers in a class of Intercultural Communication. The contents development supporting the training-learning process for English speaking cultures is one of the main issues due to the multiplicity of cultural forms and their related didactic typologies.

A survey of cultural models described in research sources [1, p. 226] highlighted the following key characteristics of a national/idioethnic culture: first of all, it is "a complex multi-level construct"; it is something shared between people in the same group or society; it is patterned: <…> "people

have rituals, daily routines, and habitual behaviors" that, finally, shape both the individual's reality and the right things accepted by the society [1, p. 227].

Many sources discuss culture in theoretical terms without providing a concrete framework that future teachers can apply in their classrooms. Barry Tomalin argues that the teaching of culture in ELT should include the following components: (1) cultural knowledge (the knowledge of the culture's institutions, the big C); (2) cultural values (the 'psyche' of the country, what people think is important); (3) cultural behavior (the knowledge of daily routines and behavior, the little c); and (4) cultural skills (the development of intercultural sensitivity and awareness, using the English language as the medium of interaction) [7].

Hector Hammerly distinguishes between: information (or factual) culture, behavioral culture, and achievements (or accomplishment) culture [3]. Informational culture is "the information or facts that the average educated native knows about his society, the geography and history of his country, its heroes and villains, and so on" [op. cit., p. 513]. This aspect of culture is relevant for EFL teachers because it informs students on the background knowledge needed to comprehend language use in various contexts. Behavioral culture refers to "the sum of everyday life" [3, p. 515], i.e. the norms, customs, and habits that guide social interactions. This aspect of culture encourages awareness of cultural differences in communication styles, conversational routines, and politeness strategies. According to Qin [8, p. 76], more than 90% of the misunderstandings in intercultural communication interactions are due to the lack of knowledge of the *little c*, or behavioral culture. And last but not least, achievements culture encompasses "the accomplishments in letters, arts and music", or the *big C* [3, p. 515].

Regarding culture as a multi-layer construct, Hofstede's "Onion" model of culture [4] appears to be comprehensive for EFL teaching practices, encompassing *symbols, heroes*, *rituals, norms* and *rules,* and *values.* Symbols are words, gestures, pictures or objects that carry a particular meaning which is only recognized by those who share the culture, e.g. words in a language, jargon, dress, hairstyles, drinks (Coca-Cola, etc.); *heroes* are persons, alive or dead, real or imaginary, who possess characteristics which are highly prized in a culture, and thus serve as models for behavior, even fantasy or cartoon figures (*George Washington, Abraham Lincoln*, or *Batman, Snoopy*, etc.); *rituals* are collective activities which, within a culture, are considered as socially essential (*customs and traditions*, *social and religious ceremonies, business and political meetings*) [4, p. 8–9]. Symbols, heroes and rituals can be embraced by the term *practices***,** which are visible to an outside observer, but their cultural meaning however is

invisible and is actualized only in the way these practices are interpreted by the insiders.

Cultural *norms* and *rules* mean the proscriptions and prescriptions for acceptable behavior [2, p. 57]. In many research sources, the terms *norms* and *rules* are used interchangeably, but according to Olsen, when the standards of acceptable behavior have moral or ethical connotations, they should be referred to as *norms*; and when there are no moral or ethical connotations in the standards, they should be referred to as *rules* [6]. Rules are developed for expediency, because they allow people to coordinate their activities more easily, e.g. driving rules to keep traffic running smoothly, etc.

The core of culture is formed by *values,* i.e. beliefs as to what is good, best, and right, and their opposites – bad, worst, and wrong [4, p. 9]. The American Heritage Dictionary defines a value as *"a principle, standard, or quality considered worthwhile or desirable.*" Development psychologists believe that by the age of 10, most children have their basic value system developed, and after that age, changes are difficult to make.

The *iceberg* analogy/metaphor of culture representing the degree to which cultural aspects manifest themselves is popular with researchers. Robert Kohls [5] suggests that some cultural aspects are matters of conscious awareness: just as an iceberg has a visible section above the water line, culture has some observable aspects (symbols, heroes, rituals). They can be seen, therefore they are known as *surface culture*. A larger, invisible section of culture is below the water line: these are values, perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs (difficult to see or can't be seen at all). This part is also known as *deep culture.*

In conclusion, one possible approach of formulating a didactic model of culture specifically designed for EFL teacher training could be to adapt existing cultural aspects and models: three key aspects of culture – informational, behavioral and achievements (Hector Hammerly) and layers/ elements of culture – symbols, heroes, rituals, norms, rules, and values (Geert Hostede) arranged according to their visibility. Presumably, this framework provides a clear structure for understanding culture in language teaching, helps pre-service EFL teachers recognize cultural elements in communication, and equips them with tools to integrate culture into their lessons effectively.

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