Abstract

If culture is an intrinsic part of the FL class, which culture should that be? We shall explore such concepts as the role of the ELT professional in Argentina in light of the status of English as an international language in a globalized world. In approaching the teaching of culture, we shall discuss how we could best determine the contents to teach as well as how to assess the cultural value of authentic material. We shall review the cultural content of popular textbook lessons critically, and share lots of culturally appropriate activities to accompany authentic texts and supplement the imported EFL textbook.

Summary

There is an on-going discussion among ELT professionals as to whether a language could (not) and should (not) be taught devoid of its cultural base. Now if culture is a part of any foreign language class, which one should that be? American? British? South African? Australian? Or a mixture of them all? We need to explore concepts such as English as an international language and the impact its spread is likely to have on us, the ‘developing world’. How are we then to approach the teaching of culture? At the emergence of new trends in ELT, how could we best determine the contents to teach as well as their cultural value? How can we adapt the pre-packaged imported EFL textbooks to make them culturally appropriate? How do we, ELT professionals in Argentina, contribute to educating our students towards becoming critical thinkers and creative individuals that are likely to bring about change in their own reality? We intend to deal with these issues in our 90-minute workshop.
Our presentation will be divided into three major parts: a) theoretical background; b) material developed from our working hypotheses; c) hands-on involvement of participants in brainstorming activities to make textbook lessons and authentic texts (provided by presenters) culturally appropriate.

The presentation of the theoretical background will have two parts. Firstly, we intend to explore the participants’ assumptions and beliefs about certain aspects of our practice as ELT professionals. The purpose of this warm-up activity is to lead them to start reflecting on certain beliefs that consciously or inadvertently on our part have an impact on our practice. Secondly, we shall discuss concepts related to the analysis of the content of our lessons, and how we approach the teaching of culture. As a result we shall propose working hypotheses that will serve as framework to the central part of our workshop: the material we have developed.

The second part which is the bulk of the workshop will be the presentation of material we have developed to support our thesis. Participants will be expected to take an active role as “students” in this part. We intend to share varied activities that have been developed in order to make lessons from imported textbooks more culturally sound. Also, we shall share activities we have devised to accompany authentic texts. The approach focuses on two major aspects: a) giving our students a global perspective; and b) localizing global issues and using their FL also to describe their own culture. The former intends to make students aware that their view of the world is not universally shared, and that other cultures may have widely different views. A global perspective also implies promoting their knowledge of the state of the planet, of the concept of change, and of the choices that are open to human beings as a result of such knowledge. The latter should lead them toward greater awareness of their personal and their community’s perspective of the world; it intends to bring global issues down to our reality, to make a connection
between what happens in the world and in our society. This process should strengthen their sense of identity by making them more aware of the unique characteristics of their own community.

The third part will consist of the participants’ reflection and discussion of the proposed working hypotheses. Finally, they will be provided with popular textbook lessons and authentic texts and will be asked to brainstorm about possible activities to make them culturally appropriate.

Bibliography
Biographical note

Prof. Carlos Lizárraga
EFL teacher. Master of Science in Education (English) State University of New York at New Paltz. Has taught at Millbrook School (New York), State University of New York, I. E. S. San Miguel, and I. E. S. Lola Mora. Currently a faculty member at Universidad Nacional de Tucumán, and Colegio San Patricio, where he heads the intensive English program; visiting instructor of Spanish as a FL every summer since 1999 to the Language Immersion Institute at SUNY, New Paltz, USA. Has conducted workshops in Northwest Argentina, including Catamarca’s 1997 FAAPI, and in the USA about Spanish as a FL. Co-author of the Curriculum Designs for English in E.G.B. 2 and 3 for the province of Tucumán.

Prof. Silvia Granado

Prof. Alina Terán
EFL teacher. Graduated at I.E.S. Lola Mora. Currently teaching at New Way English school and San Patricio High School, preparing students for PET and Trinity College examinations.