

TEACHING BRITISH CULTURE: SEPARATISTS' JOURNEY AND FELICIA DOROTHEA HEMANS' THE LANDING OF THE PILGRIM FATHERS

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Abstract: Integrating culture into language teaching has demonstrated numerous benefits over the years. In this context, this paper explores the representation of British culture and identity through the literary works of Felicia Dorothea Hemans, with a particular focus on her poem "The Landing of the Pilgrim Fathers". The author presents a comprehensive two-lesson unit plan to impart British culture to EFL students practically and engagingly. The unit plan combines elements of both Literature and Civilization courses, catering to the needs of second-year tertiary-level students. Through collaborative group work, students are divided into small groups of four members each, making six groups. Central to the unit plan are the 'fact strips', tangible tools for introducing key aspects of British culture. These fact strips encapsulate essential cultural insights, ranging from historical milestones to contemporary societal norms. Working collaboratively, students delve into the aspects of British culture. The outcomes are highly encouraging, with students marking improvement in British culture. The positive results obtained underscore the efficacy of integrating practical, culturally relevant activities into the language teaching curriculum.

Keywords: Culture, integration, fact strips, literature, EFL Students

ENSEIGNER LA CULTURE BRITANNIQUE : LE VOYAGE DES SÉPARATISTES ET LE DÉBARQUEMENT DES PÈRES PÈLERINS DE FELICIA DOROTHEA HEMANS

Résumé : L'intégration de la culture dans l'enseignement des langues a démontré de nombreux avantages au fil des années. Dans ce contexte, cet article explore la représentation de la culture et de l'identité britanniques à travers les œuvres littéraires de Felicia Dorothea Hemans, avec un accent particulier sur son poème « Le débarquement des pères pèlerins ». L'auteur présente un plan complet de deux leçons visant à transmettre la culture britannique aux étudiants FLE de manière pratique et engageante. Le plan d'unité combine des éléments de cours de littérature et de civilisation, répondant aux besoins des étudiants de deuxième année de niveau supérieur. Grâce à un travail de groupe collaboratif, les étudiants sont divisés en petits groupes de quatre membres chacun, formant six groupes. Au cœur du plan de l'unité se trouvent les « fiches d'information », des outils tangibles permettant de présenter les aspects clés de la culture britannique. Ces fiches d'information résument des informations culturelles essentielles, allant des jalons historiques aux normes sociétales contemporaines. En

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travaillant en collaboration, les étudiants se plongent dans les aspects de la culture britannique. Les résultats sont très encourageants, les étudiants notant une amélioration de la culture britannique. Les résultats positifs obtenus soulignent l'efficacité de l'intégration d'activités pratiques et culturellement pertinentes dans le programme d'enseignement des langues.

Mots-clés : culture, intégration, fiches documentaires, littérature, Etudiants FLE

Introduction

Culture in English language teaching materials has been subject to discussion for many years. The reason for the use of cultural content in the classroom is the supposition that it will promote learners' motivation (McKay, 2000:7). Brooks (1964) argues that language is the most advanced element of culture. For Tomalin and Stempleski (1996:11), culture is taught for two reasons: "to increase cultural awareness, and to promote cross-cultural interaction". The teaching of culture raises awareness, appreciation, and acceptance of other cultures. It is a dynamic, developmental, and ongoing process that engages the learner cognitively, behaviorally, and affectively" (Paige et al. 1999). Culture has an important place in children's cognitive and social development. In her study, Nieto (2010) concluded that students' knowledge of their native culture has a positive effect on their learning. In this respect, the present paper displays a sample work on how to integrate culture into a literature course to facilitate learning and attract learners to work in groups and discover by themselves the premises of culture as associated with the target language. Learners are exposed to both literature and American studies embracing a narrative approach through which the different actions and deeds are foreshadowed. In this same line of thought, the British are marked by their strong determination as a conservative society to respect the cultures of their people, both new and old. Pilgrims who first settled in America were true examples of this cultural preservation. In Felicia Dorothea Hemans (1840)' *"The Landing of the Pilgrim Fathers in New England"*, one can infer that the British take a strong portion of their distinction from their history, which is so rich and so varied. While the Pilgrims who inhabited Plymouth were people who left England in search of a new world, their attributes and confidence were something that was undoubtedly British, well kept in minds, in actions, and in their deeds all along the course of their lifetime.

Swaffar (1992) acknowledges the contribution of culture when he says that, to combat, as it were, 'cultural distance', students must be exposed to foreign literature to develop the ability to question and evaluate the cultural elements L2 texts are suffused with. Kramsch (1993, 1987a) also believes that culture should be taught as an interpersonal process and, rather than presenting cultural facts, teachers should assist language learners in coming to grips with "the other culture" (Singhal, 1998). Valdes, in his turn claims:

It is simply accepted as given that literature is a viable component of second language programs at the appropriate level and that one of the major functions of literature is to serve as a medium to transmit the culture of the people who speak the language in which it is written.'

Valdes (1986:137)

The study aims to understand how Hemans' depiction of the Pilgrims' journey reflects broader cultural and historical narratives of separation, exile, and the search for religious freedom.

The poem "The Landing of the Pilgrim Fathers" by Felicia Dorothea Hemans is often celebrated for its portrayal of the Pilgrims' journey to America. However, there is a gap in scholarly research on how this work reflects British cultural and historical narratives, particularly themes of separatism and the quest for religious freedom. This study seeks to address this gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of Hemans' depiction of these themes and their relevance to British cultural identity. Hence, researchers opted for following research questions: 1. In what ways do the experiences of the Pilgrims as depicted in the poem reflect broader themes of human displacement and search for belonging? 2. How does "The Landing of the Pilgrim Fathers" reflect the cultural and historical attitudes of early 19th-century Britain towards the Pilgrims and their journey? and 3. What teaching strategies are most effective for engaging students with Hemans' poetry and fostering a deeper understanding of its cultural and historical significance? To comply with the previously stated research questions, we suggest the present objectives-

1. To analyze the thematic elements of separation and exile in Hemans' "The Landing of the Pilgrim Fathers." 2. To investigate how Hemans' work reflects British cultural and historical contexts and 3. To assess the pedagogical implications of teaching Hemans' poetry in relation to British culture.

To hypothesize for the study, three hypotheses were made. First, students will gain a deeper understanding of British cultural history and its global influence by exploring the Separatists' journey and analyzing "The Landing of the Pilgrim Fathers" by Felicia Dorothea Hemans. Second, the integration of literature and civilization in the unit plan will enhance students' engagement and retention of cultural knowledge, as they will see historical events through the lens of poetry and finally, collaborative group work will foster critical thinking and communication skills, allowing students to discuss and interpret the cultural and historical contexts more effectively.

1. Literature Review

1.1 Definition of culture

Nostrand (1989:51) defines culture as the "ground of meaning, the codes of behavior, and characteristics of a society". For Brooks (1964:83) culture is "the sum of all the learned and shared elements that characterize a societal group". "Language is a vital constituent of culture" (Trivedi, 1978:92). Robinett (1980) concurs with the view that "culture and language cannot be separated". Westerhuis (as cited in Cheung, 2001, p.56) defines 'culture' as "the customs, values, laws, technology, artifacts, and art of a particular time or people". Dr. Brown (1963:46) examines the many different ways societies approach and solve the problems common to all human beings.

Culture is all the accepted and patterned ways of behavior of a given people. It is that facet of human life learned by people as a result of belonging to some particular group; it is that part of learned behavior shared with others.

1.2 On Literature Teaching

Collie et al. (1988) regard literature as a rich source of 'authentic material' because it conveys two features in its written text: one is 'language in use,' that is, the employment of linguistics by those who have mastered it into a fashion intended for native speakers; the

second is an aesthetic representation of the spoken language which is meant to recover or represent language within a certain cultural context.'

(Politzer, 1959: 100-101) claimed 'we should be cognisant of the fact that '[i]f we teach language without teaching at the same time the culture in which it operates, we are teaching meaningless symbols or symbols to which the student attaches the wrong meaning...'

As Lessard-Clouston (1997) notes, 'in the past, people learned a foreign language to study its literature, and this was the main medium culture. '[I]t was through reading that students learned of the civilization associated with the target language' (Flewelling, 1993: 339, cited in Lessard-Clouston, 1997)

1.3. British Culture as represented through British heroes and figures: British Culture in the pilgrims' eyes

The Mayflower Pilgrims arrived on New England shores in 1620 in hopes of making a better life for themselves and their children while being able to worship freely and in peace. Undoubtedly, the most famous colonists in world history, their faith and fortitude are legendary. Their perseverance laid the cornerstone of a new Nation. The Pilgrims' courage, gratitude to God, and love for one another still inspire people today. The story of Plymouth Colony, with its tragic first winter, the treaty with the Wampanoag People and the celebrated First Thanksgiving echoes down the ages and around the world. The pilgrims set sail to America to find liberty of a personal and religious nature. Many wars were fought on the island over the topic of religion, and it can be said that religion played and continues to play an essential key role in British society. In reality, the men who undertook the first voyage to America were people who had left the British Isles because of the problems and improprieties they had faced there. The pilgrims described in Hemans' poem were protecting their culture, something that had been battled over for centuries upon centuries. At the end of the poem, Hemans seems delighted in the fact that the men had found exactly what they were looking for, religious liberty. She writes line thirty-six, "Aye, call it holy ground, The soil where first they trod. They have left unstained what there they found freedom to worship God" (Hemans, page 815). In this line alone, it can be seen that the importance of taking such a stand, even if it was against England, is an idea that all true British people must respect.

Being British is an idea that can mean many things. A rich and varied culture, Great Britain is a place that has something to offer to just about everyone who comes forth in search of it. Certain ideas define British culture, however. The nuances in themselves are not specific to British culture, but the confidence and ability to embrace these differences is something that has marked the culture. The confidence to wear a different type of clothing, speak with a different accent and a different pitch, or embrace a different type of weather is unique to British culture. (William Du Bose). Being British is also about the ability to enjoy the present while embracing the past. By embracing this past and seeing themselves in a place in the future, British people have carved their niche in the social dynamic of the World. Through the works of Hemans and the work of T.S. Eliot, the true nature of British culture can be seen. Confidence, variation, and true merits can be reflected in the works of the prominent British figures of that era.

2. Methods

The study employed a pragmatic paradigm that prioritizes practical solutions and outcomes methodology focused on qualitative analysis of classroom observations, student

feedback, and reflective practices to assess the effectiveness of integrating British culture into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching through the use of fact strips. The methodology can be broken down into several key components: The authors developed a two-lesson unit plan aimed at teaching British culture within the context of a Literature and Civilization course at the second-year tertiary level. Students were divided into separate groups of four, resulting in six groups in total. This group-based approach facilitated collaborative learning and allowed students to engage with the material more interactively. The core teaching tool used in the study was fact strips. These fact strips contained cultural information relevant to British culture, particularly focusing on the perspective of Separatists and the poem "The Landing of the Pilgrim Fathers in New England" by Felicia Dorothea Hemans. Fact strips provided a tangible and accessible way for students to engage with cultural content. The researchers conducted qualitative observation during the classroom sessions to assess student engagement, interaction, and overall response to the teaching approach. Feedback from students was gathered through various means, such as discussions, observation checklists, surveys, or written reflections. This allowed the researcher to gauge student perceptions of the effectiveness of the teaching methodology and the learning outcomes achieved.

3.Results

The researchers engaged in reflective practices, likely through journaling or structured reflection sessions, to critically analyze the teaching process, identify strengths and weaknesses, and make adjustments for future iterations of the lesson plan. Qualitative analysis was employed to interpret the data collected from classroom observations and student feedback. This involved identifying themes, patterns, and insights that emerged from the data to conclude the effectiveness of the teaching approach. Overall, the methodology used in the study integrated various qualitative research methods to examine the implementation of a culturally integrated EFL teaching approach using fact strips. Through classroom observations, student feedback, and reflective practices, the study aimed to provide insights into the benefits and challenges of teaching British culture in an EFL context.

Table 1: On Pre-reading discussion questions (n=24)

Pre-reading discussion questions	Number of respondents	%
1-who were the Pilgrims?	08	33.3%
2-Did they come from England ?	04	16.6%
3-Why did they come to America on the Mayflower?	04	16.6%
4-Who supported them?	03	12.5%
5-What would it be like to travel across the ocean to a new land?	06	25%
7-How did Pilgrims organize themselves?	06	25%
8-How did they preserve their culture?	12	50%

Source: Authors (2024)

Table 2: *Students' responses on motives(n=24)*

Common Students' motives	Number	%
1.religious	18	75%
2.social/ Psychological	06	25%
3.escape from persecution	18	75%
4. others	03	12.5%

*source: Authors (2024)***Table 3:** *On students' experience writing about Pilgrims' culture(n=6)*

students	Gender	students' experience/ constraints
student 1	M	A rich culture that I first did not realize
student 2	M	I experienced a thriving culture , especially the community members who worked together and distributed roles.
student 3	F	I am fascinated by the Pilgrims' various support for their livelihood-they hunted, worked in agriculture, fetched firewood and water, built forts, and stood by one another at times of stress, hunger, and disease
student 4	F	I like how Pilgrims made garments for both boys and girls and how they preserved their Sunday black clothes as part of their religious culture.
student 5	M	I witnessed an exciting experience where everybody was at work, at play, and around the table. A total communion when girls took care of sisters and children and helped in the plowing, while others sewed, cooked, and assisted in the kitchen and the housework.
student 6	F	Preserving their culture amidst the different constraints, difficulties, Indians' attacks, storms, diseases, and death, was paramount for the Pilgrims' survival. This experience gave me an insightful overview of a wielded society.

source: Authors (2024)

4.Discussions

Most students have understood that Pilgrims fled from Britain because of persecution, a result of religious causes. Their social and psychological states were below expectations. Hence, the majority answered with 75% for escaping persecution and religious motives, against 25% for social/psychological motives, and 12.5% for other motives respectively. A vibrant tapestry is depicted by the students in their recounting of their own experiences and the difficulties they encountered while collecting and selecting the various roles, habits, and activities the Pilgrims had gone through. (See Table 3) Having examined the respondents' answers before reading the text and the various data on reading cards, the researchers noted that most students overlooked the Pilgrims' voyage, its destination, support, and their organizations. (See Table 2) Six male and female students' writings were randomly selected out of 18 to represent the group. Female students were mostly fascinated by the Pilgrims' diverse support systems for their livelihoods—such as hunting, agriculture, fetching wood and water, fort-building, dressmaking for both boys and girls, and the preservation of Sunday black attire. They also highlighted the Pilgrims' solidarity during times of stress, hunger, and disease, depicting an experience of a tightly knit society. However, the three male students appreciated the rich culture and the organized societal structure of the Pilgrims. They noted the role distributions within the community,

contributing to the creation of a well-supported and decorative patchwork of society. In her poem, Hemans speaks of the fearlessness of those who embarked on the voyage. She vividly describes the challenges faced, yet emphasizes the relentless pursuit of a quintessentially British goal. Hemans concludes the poem with a sense of delight, highlighting the attainment of religious liberty by the voyagers. This celebration of liberty reflects a longstanding British ideal, rooted in historical notions of nobility. British culture encompasses a nuanced and varied tapestry, offering something unique to every seeker. Confidence in expressing individuality, whether through clothing, accent, or embracing diverse weather, is integral to British identity. Hemans portrays the Pilgrims as noble in their endeavors, echoing the enduring theme of nobility in British history. This sentiment, deeply ingrained in English culture, emphasizes the nobility of acting upon personal convictions for the greater good. Most of our understanding of the Pilgrims comes from the writings of William Bradford, who depicted them as courageous Separatists in pursuit of religious sanctuary.

Conclusion

The implementation of the two-lesson unit plan on teaching British culture, which combines elements of Literature and Civilization courses, has demonstrated significant educational benefits. Firstly, students exhibited a deeper understanding of British cultural history and its global influence, validating Hypothesis one. The analysis of Felicia Dorothea Hemans' poem, "The Landing of the Pilgrim Fathers," provided a literary perspective that enriched their comprehension of the Separatists' journey. Secondly, the integration of literature into the study of civilization significantly enhanced student engagement and retention of cultural knowledge, supporting Hypothesis two. Students reported that viewing historical events through poetry made the material more relatable and memorable, especially when using a guiding map. Furthermore, the collaborative group work component was highly effective in fostering critical thinking and communication skills among students, as they engaged in discussions and interpretations of the cultural and historical contexts, thus confirming Hypothesis three. Finally, we can say that students showed an increased ability to relate past events to current cultural understandings, reflecting the success of the unit plan in achieving its educational objectives. This comprehensive approach to teaching British culture has proven to be both practical and engaging, offering valuable insights and skills to second-year tertiary-level students.

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