

CULTURAL IDENTITY FILTERS IN THE EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

Iván Illesfalvi

ELTE University, Hungary

Abstract

Multilingual communities represent melting pots of cultures, a framework within which linguistic, social, political, economic differences are enhanced due to the permanent pressure of co-existence. The ex-British colonies are typical examples of this kind of situation. The English language, one of the most important media of international communication, therefore must be viewed as a vehicle that is carrying multicultural load; consequently, functional language teaching must focus on the cultural complexities hidden behind vocabulary and grammar. The general expectation of language examinations definitely provides evidence at this point, but the question inevitably appears: what kind of information should be considered essential?

The theory of cultural identity-filters argues that pieces of art filter out an amount of, both personal and community, experience of culture. In this sense, literary works are definitely cultural identity-filters that tell us about almost every segment of life. The use of well-chosen pieces of literature in English in course books and in the classroom may greatly contribute to the development of cultural (self-)awareness of language learners by providing them with examples of various cultural scripts, behavioural patterns from different Anglophone cultures. The present paper aims to sketch the layout of a classroom project using poetry to introduce cultural identity.

Key words: Cultural identity filters; Education; Literature.

References

- Cunningham, D.J. (1987). *Semiotics and education: Strands in the Web*. In T.A. Sebeok, & J. Umiker-Sebeok (Eds.) *The semiotic web, 1986* (pp. 367-378). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Danesi, M. (2000). *Semiotics in language education*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Danesi, M. (2004). *Messages, signs, and meanings: A basic textbook in semiotics and communication theory*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc.
- Danesi, M. (2007). *The quest for meaning: A guide to semiotic theory and practice*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Illésfalvi, I. (2004). *Like feeble bough of the trunk of a tree*. Master's Thesis, University of

Veszprém.

Illésfalvi, I. (2008). Kik vagyunk a tengerben? A kulturális önmeghatározás technikája. (Who are we in the crowd? A technique of cultural self-identification) In L. Haraszti (Ed.) *Egy csepp tudomány*. Veszprém: Pannon Egyetemi Kiadó.

Kramsch, C. (1993). *Context and culture in language teaching*. Hong Kong: Oxford University Press.

Lado, R. (1993). *How to compare two cultures*. In J.M. Valdes (Ed.) *Culture bound: Bridging the cultural gap in language teaching*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Martinkó, A. (2001). *A szó jelentése*. Szeged: Lazi Könyvkiadó.

Rudnick, L.P. & Smith, J.E. & Rubin, R. (Eds.). (2005). *American identities: An introductory textbook*. Boston: Blackwell Publishing.

Thompson, J. (1990). *Ideology and modern culture*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Valdes, J.M. (Ed.) (1986). *Culture bound: Bridging the cultural gap in language teaching*. New York: Cambridge University Press.