

Of Language, Culture and Teaching

By Marija Liudvika Drazdauskiene*

Bypassing the eternal and unsolved problems of the definition of culture in superficial technical discussions, this paper deliberates on culture and language with the view to showing that proficiency in a language and deep understanding of whatever phenomenon can be more helpful in matters of culture and especially in language teaching rather than technical terminology and statistics. It overviews two books on cultural practices from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and refers to personal observations and recent teaching practice. In conclusion, it narrows cultural representation in language down to the condition of two people in verbal contact, their sensitivity to and skill in verbal expression and each other's satisfaction. Concrete illustrations and observations supplement the notion of skill in verbal expression and cultural awareness in personal and group communication.

Keywords: *sociocultural traditions in historical contexts, two persons in communication, verbal choices in context, skill, intellectual discipline and responsibility as culture.*

Introduction

The integrity of language and culture has rarely been questioned. As the dependence of language on a culture can be accepted without further proof, it is relevant to begin with the question of culture. Culture as “the way of life of a people, including their attitudes, values, beliefs, arts, sciences, modes of perception, and habits of thought and activity” (Blackburn, 1996, 90) is one of the most complex phenomena, which is inevitably narrowed down to an individual author's interests. In the present case, this definition should be placed in a system of values for every concrete community. As the question in focus, culture will be limited in scope and time in this conference paper.

As an overinclusive aspect of the life and functioning of human communities, culture is an open-ended phenomenon in time. Taking Europe within three hundred years or at least the last two centuries into view, immense differences will be found to mark culture in Europe in the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Two hundred years ago, social groups in socially stratified societies kept themselves to themselves and there was no news transmitted among the groups, if only by word of mouth. It is possible to assume that stories and intrigue of literary fiction were the main exposure of virtues, vices and vagaries of social life and culture two hundred or so years ago¹. Literature was part of private education and reading was the time nobly spent. Literature was part of the concept of cultured

*Professor, Wszechnica Polska, Academy of Applied Sciences, Poland.

¹In the nineteenth century, in the Regency era, 1811-1820, in England, society was “awash with literary sex” (The Conversation, 25 May 2024).

life so much that it shaped views in education. For instance, the generation of the 1940s in Lithuania stated reading literature in a foreign language in the 1960s as a major and legitimate priority at entrance examinations to the EFL programme at the University of Vilnius. Such a priority had not come from written instructions to prospective students. It was part of inheritance, upbringing and their consciousness, but the word 'culture' was not a routine word in education or daily life. It was rather politeness and etiquette, the Do's and Don'ts in society that were the words spoken and explained. This reference is to the time that we actually remember.

This paper aims at reviewing cultural norms in and prescriptions to language and behaviour that had been inherited from the 19th century and had had the most favourable influence on social contacts but have been ignored and forgotten in social contacts and teaching of late. It refers to two influential books of the 19th and 20th centuries but does not intend to fix concrete ties between language, culture and teaching because that is impossible. Culture is that elevation of a person which influences and shapes his behaviour and language often subconsciously. Even in conscious instantaneous decisions, a cultured person still resorts to his intuition which is always a resource in speech. So, there can be no fixed hard and fast rules which could be given to people in social contacts and teaching. When a teacher is very well familiar with his subject, his individual culture and his cultural background dictates his behaviour and presentation in class, his reactions, care and responses, all of which rub off on his students. I have indicated below directions to style and aspects of culture in language teaching. The taking over of the proposed ideas and their implementation are a matter of methodology and that of an individual teacher's culture.

But a few restored cultural norms can orientate and be helpful in improving social relations in groups and classrooms. Moreover, a cultured teacher must be free in his choices of words and norms of behaviour. Otherwise, rigid prescriptions would distort his verbal choices, reactions and teaching. Too many rigid methodological and even administrative rules have had a considerable negative effect on many a teacher. The purport of this paper is to be a reminder rather than a rule maker to the interested whether in education or in social sciences. Methodologically, it is a historical comparative review.

Cultural Norms and Engagements in the 19th Century. Travelling and Schooling

Apart from upbringing, education and functioning socially, literature and culture mattered to persons who travelled three hundred or so years ago. The concept could have been broader or narrower, but culture defined peoples otherwise centred in a locality. Travellers were fewer so many years ago and it was only wealthy persons of status who had opportunities to learn about people of different countries and their identity first-hand. Perhaps the best and well-described kind of travelling was the Grand Tour. It was a traditional trip to Europe, primarily to Italy, practiced in the 17th-19th centuries and planned for the young of wealthy influential families when they had come of age, at about twenty-one years. Italy was selected in The Grand Tour because of its historical and artistic heritage. It was an educational undertaking:

the young travelled under guidance of a tutor or family member who spoke the language of the country.²

The young may have had some familiarity with the language of the country themselves. Whatever they had learned of the country themselves had also come from private education. Language and culture were not named subjects, they were rather integrated components in private education.

Schools were not as large as they are in the present century, nor did they teach massively. Travelling persons familiarized themselves with the countries of destination in private, and questions of culture, language and teaching did not bother the teachers. Questions of acceptable behaviour informed travelling persons and acceptable behaviour was learned through shared experience or from tutors. Words like 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable', 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate', rather than 'insider', 'outsider', 'high culture', 'low culture', 'group membership', 'saving face', 'losing face' and other technical terms of the twentieth century, orientated the young. There was some emphasis on perception, understanding and intuition while individual persons were encouraged to resort to personal judgment in social contacts. Personal judgment like instinctive politeness had come from good breeding.

The words just quoted do not require explicit definitions to indicate that inherited words which had come from upbringing are more human and imply relationships on their own, while the words invented in the twentieth century are rationally analytical and record nothing of human relations and attitudes, while culture is essentially a value system of experiences and ideas.

Cultural Norms and Practices in the 19th Century, in Books: High Society

Books in this sphere were also different. They focused on observations on verbal and cultural customs and psychological nuances. A late publication, *Etiquette of Good Society* by Lady Colin Campbell (1903), overviews social occasions, such as Christening, Visiting, Wedding, Funeral, Invitations and parties, Private theatricals, Sports, Excursions and Picnics, and The Court.

The author assumes that "the books already published on the subject of "manners" and "etiquette" are sufficiently numerous", yet "minutia" are constantly altering. Although the broad principles of manners remain the same", "modes of speech and action which were considered the height of politeness a few years ago would be pronounced very *old-fashioned* if used and exhibited in the present day" (Campbell, p.iii).

This was the reason for publishing the book in question. This may be the reason for the understanding of moderns of what mattered to cultured people one hundred years ago and with what concern and detail it was discussed and attained.

²The Grand Tour flourished from 1660 until the advent of large rail transport in the 1840s and had "a standard itinerary". It was associated with the British nobility but similar trips were made by wealthy young men of Protestant Northern Europe and, later, by some South and North Americans (BBC World Service, 10 June 1984; Trease, 1991; Black, 1990, 2003).

Lady Colin described the events selected, manners and rules of behaviour at them, the language used, dress and traditions associated with the events. It is stated that manners of behaviour had existed since the early times among the Anglo-Saxons and, later, the Normans, but “the modes of showing politeness are continually changing”. Although early customs cautioned against picking one’s teeth with “knife, strawe, nor stick”, or cleaning them on the tablecloth, wiping the mouth on the tablecloth was allowed, “but not the nose or eyes!” (p. 10). Such and similar manners have changed as have the restrictions in use between superiors and equals. The author also mentioned that, even in France, “the home and centre of politeness and good breeding”, “manners were not at one time equally refined” (p.p. 12, 77). Yet, the old maxim “Manners makyth man”, “has the same force as ever” (p. 12).

This author emphasised the accomplishment of man of good breeding:

“Goodness of heart, however boundless; learning, however profound; and accomplishments the most brilliant and varied, are not in themselves sufficient to make pleasant and agreeable members of society – a knowledge and practice of the laws of good-breeding must be added to make a perfect whole” (p. 12).

A reference to Lord Chesterfield, who defined politeness as “the art of pleasing”, confirmed the high requirements just enumerated.³

Lady Colin began her book by describing what good-breeding is: it is “perfect ease of manner and the absence of all *fussiness*” (p. 36). The stiffness of manner or too much familiarity would be the opposite of good breeding. Cf.:

“Perfect politeness requires presence of mind, a quick sense of propriety, and an ability to form an instantaneous judgment of what is fittest to be said and done on every occasion as it offers.” (p. 36).

The concepts of politeness so far introduced imply a well-organised and demanding society who had observed the rules of formal behaviour for centuries. Writing for people of class in a stratified society, Lady Colin defined politeness following the French author Montesquieu in a timeless way:

“I consider the spirit of politeness to be one which will govern our behaviour, so that by our words and actions others may be pleased with us and with themselves.” (p. 36)⁴

Lady Colin further added that, “In our endeavours to be polite, we must be careful not to run into any extremes, but bear in mind that good manners show themselves where to the vulgar eye they are least observable. Extreme ceremony is only the caricature of good-breeding; it produces contempt and embarrassment, not respect and ease.” (p.36)

³The word ‘etiquette’ originated as the ticket tied to bags and bundles to denote their contents to have the bags passed unchallenged. It was only gradually that etiquette had come to mean “the formal rules of correct or polite behaviour in society” (OALD, 528). Assuming that etiquette marks the man, whose behaviour is acceptable, the original meaning of the word ‘ticket’ may seem to have been retained.

⁴“Il me semble que l’esprit de politesse est une certain attention à faire que, par nos paroles et nos manières, les autres soient contents de nous et d’eux-mêmes” (Campbell. 1903, 36).

A specification of how people should be addressed follows these definitions because the form of address not only establishes contact but also introduces the speaker against his own will. The first words uttered are an indication of who is speaking, and the first impression is hard to change. The titles of people of rank should not be used excessively and the name of anyone “with whom we may be talking” should not be constantly repeated. But a name may turn a short response into acceptable and polite while it may be rude without it, as for example: “*So you think so, Lady Penrose?*” “*I believe I am right, Mr Brown*”, as opposed to: “*Do you think so?*” or “*I believe I am right.*” The full forms of the verb in these examples should be noticed too and the tone they added at the turn of the twentieth century. That was the time of complete grammatical forms and turns of phrase making the utterances formal, which has also been pointed out by Lady Colin.

This book also includes a note of how objectionable it is to hear ladies speak of gentlemen by their surnames only, or juveniles address their parents as “Pa” and “Ma”, ... (p.39). Apologising should not be “carried to an ill-bred extreme”. But: “As it is ill-mannered to express too much regret, so it is the essence of rudeness not to make any apology” (p. 39). The formal, “*I beg your pardon*” or “*I am sorry*”, (or “*Please forgive me*”, in the manner of the end of the twentieth century), “should be accompanied by an effort to prove the sincerity of the words ...” (p. 39). Sincerity on both sides may be expressed by an honest glance from the regretting and a smile in the eyes from the recipient, or by some similar expression or gesture. The context also adds to and defines what is appropriate to do.

There is a warning in this book against affectation, which, like patronizing behaviour, is objectionable. Lady Colin defines affectation as “the adoption of peculiarities of speech, action, and demeanour which are not natural”. Following Voltaire, she tends to treat affectation “as a vice”: “Oddities and singularities may attend genius, but when they do so they are misfortunes and its blemishes” (p. 40). It may be right to admire the wisdom of a renowned scholar, but it is as right to reject his manners when they are embarrassing or approximate “gross behaviour” (p. 40).

This book also includes particularities at ladies and gentlemen’ meetings, introductions, the way of following each other, shaking hands and other social contacts. Some of the suggested rules have fallen out of use but they would be very welcome in the brazen twenty-first century, as for instance: a gentleman should not smoke when meeting or even when passing a lady (p. 42); a gentleman must not bow or shake hands with a lady until she has made the first movement; neither must he, under any circumstances, fail to return his courtesies” (p. 41). A gentleman who, on meeting a lady in the street desires to speak to her, should “turn and walk in the direction in which she is going”. It is not “permissible for a lady to stand for any time while talking in the street” (p. 41).

Inside the house, “a woman is allowed much less freedom of posture than a man”. A man can “change his position in an infinity of ways” ... “but a woman must sit still”. “The woman’s posture when seated should also be graceful, which may come from learning to dance”. Her hands should not fidget in any way (p. 45). It has been celebrated in fiction and historical articles how gracefully British ladies sit and keep their head.

One of the most significant views in this book is about language. When talking, a gentleman should not use slang in the presence of a lady. There is no warning about expletives or rude language, as this was obviously non-existent. But conversation had its rules. The tone of good conversation “is flowing and natural; it is neither heavy nor frivolous; it is lively without noise”. Lady Colin had followed Rousseau’s idea in this definition as she esteemed France as “the country of good taste and good breeding”. She completed this opening by saying that “The art of conversation consists as much in listening politely as in talking agreeably...” (p 45). Whispering, as young people would do in corners, “is a great breach of good manners”, because it is “forgetful or oblivious of the feelings of others” (p. 46).

This book includes a very significant remark of the voice of the people in conversation as “a question of culture” (p. 47). It would be good, says the author, that “the speaking voice were as assiduously cultivated as the singing voice” (p. 47). This is confirmed by a quotation from Shakespeare of the voice which “was soft, gentle and ever low – an excellent thing in a woman”. Laughter, too, should desirably be musical, not loud that “bespeaks a vacant mind”.

The language of conversation should match the voice, as the sweet tone of voice requires correct and refined language. There is no requirement to a well-educated gentleman to speak many languages., but it is expected that “whatever he knows, he knows precisely; whatever word he pronounces, he pronounces rightly” and he also knows the origins of words so that he can see the true meaning of the words “*of modern canaille*” (p. 48). This evaluative expression indicates how meaningful language was to the knowledgeable and how it mattered in the nineteenth century.

This author has a warning against introducing words and phrases “unconsciously into our conversation which are offensive corruptions of the English tongue” (p. 48). This may mean dropping foreign words subconsciously, which is pretentious and rude if the company is not familiar with the foreign language.

There is a significant warning against “the fashion of abbreviating words, of making one word out of two and pronouncing the first syllable only, in a word that has many...” (p. 49). Mutilations of words into “phiz” and “coz”, then in vogue, was condemned as were phrases such as “thanks” instead of “thank you” or shortenings of “invite” instead of “invitation”. This author also minded the abuse of the “poor letter H”, which, she wrote, should always be “just in its right and never in its wrong place...” (p. 48). The rules of grammar had to be strictly observed.

These illustrations indicate how much the English language has deteriorated in one hundred years, so that all these uses have become a standard, recognised in research grammars (Carter, McCarthy, 2007) and taught as realistically acceptable in language practice classes. Some of the mentioned corruptions, such as “invite” has been most widely popularized on the internet.

The book by Lady Colin (Campbell, 1903) touches upon the most sensitive and obvious features of the language of and behaviour in high society without declarations of culture or stiff modern terminology. This book expresses expectations of cultured and educated society and reiterates its rules to those who desired to be accepted.

Cultural Norms and Practices in the 20th Century in Books: Working Classes

A slightly different socio-cultural picture emerges from the book, *The Uses of Literacy*, by Richard Hoggart (1957/1981), published as “A Twentieth Century Classic”. This author begins his book while focusing squarely on working classes, the active social force in the war- and technology-ridden century. Although this author takes a very insightful evaluative view, he does not indulge in charades with the word ‘culture’, while he equally avoids “the technical languages of the experts” (Hoggart, 1951/1981, 10). This author begins with a definition of the working-classes, his central subject, with a description of the social cultural context and continues with an attitudinal outline of the working-classes, the wealth of the century and trends and vagaries in their cultural life.

Richard Hoggart’s idea of working-class people is derived from ‘older’ present which has brought about the concept that working class people almost identify with the lower middle – to middle classes (Hoggart, 1957/1981, 13). As “a ‘bloodless revolution’ has taken place”, “there are no working-class in England now”. Surveys of the turn of the twentieth century and some novels of the same period may give the impression that “working-class people have improved their lot, acquired more power and possessions” and do not “feel themselves members of ‘the lower orders’” (p. 13). Whatever class difference has remained, “it has been greatly reduced”. The expected definition of working classes is not so difficult to give to the author, but it may be more difficult to avoid “the romanticisms which tempt anyone who discusses ‘the workers’ or ‘the common people’” (p. 13). It may be easy to over-stress “the admirable qualities of the earlier working-class culture and its debased condition today” (pp. 13-14).

The author assumes that working-classes still have “some admirable older and inner resistances”, but the authors, who may appeal to “established attitudes, which (are) not wholly admirable”, tend to mention “contemporary ills”, which “are not always considerable as a diagnosis from outside would suggest” (p. 14). This view would be supported by the attitude of middle-class intellectuals who tend “to see every second working-class man as Felix Holt or a Jude the Obscure”. This attitude may have derived from their acquaintances “of an unusual or self-selected kind” and may identify with other such individuals who come from Summer Schools, meetings of learned societies and courses of lectures. These may really be “exceptional individuals whom chance of birth has deprived of their proper intellectual inheritance” (p. 14). The idea that “they would be exceptional people in any class, as they reveal less about their class than about themselves” (p14), attaches itself to what Mr Hoggart calls “pastoral myths”, which draw on some of the literature of the fourteenth, nineteenth and even twentieth century (p.15). Romantic ideas about the working-class are the first thing that Richard Hoggarth notices in his delicate approach to a sensitive subject.

Attitudes to history have the same tendency. The history of the working-class movement is often exaggerated because of a replacement of political activities for the working-classes and speaking only of a minority (pp. 15-16). One other reason for such inaccuracies may be no adequate sense of the grassroots of working-class life in authors of this history. Romanticism, pity and admiration of the working-

classes are typical traits of a middle-class Marxists' view, too. These views happen to be accompanied by the idioms and idiomatic language of the uncritical authors affected by imaginative literature and a variety of statistics. Such sources demand looking through as these authors' "felt sense of working-class life" and their tendency "to make the old much more admirable than the new" (p.17) are obvious and known digressions.

A rough definition of 'the working-classes' begins with their feature to keep together as a group without an implication of "any feeling of inferiority or pride" (p.19). Their noticeable attitudes group them as 'the common people' while what makes the description of 'working-class' may be attributed to what are often called the 'lower middle-classes'. The working-class people so described live in identifiable urban districts and have "their own recognizable styles of housing" (p.19). Most of them culturally belong to lower professional groups, such as: 'cobbler', 'barber', 'grocer', 'bike-mender' or 'cast-off clothing dealer', work for a wage, not a salary. They are educated at a primary level, equivalent to a secondary modern school, "still popularly known as an 'elementary' school" (p. 20).

Their speech identified by the vocabulary "in common use" and their "manners of speaking, the use of urban dialects, accents and intonations, indicative socially, has not been analysed by Richard Hoggart. Their 'common voice' is husky and is identified "among the more 'respectable' working classes as a 'common' voice" (p. 21).

Cheap clothing identifies workers as does "paying out money in small instalments" and being "on the 'panel' at the local doctor's" (p. 21). Minor local social differentiations are also known in workers' residential areas. The author is conscious of such current reference words to them as 'the vast apathetic mass', 'just plain folk' and 'the general run of people'. Yet he neglects "the political, the pious, and the self-improving minorities in the working-classes" (p.22).

'Older' and 'newer' attitudes, made for the sake of clarity rather than chronology, differentiate several working-class generations. The 'older' refer to the generation which grew up in an urban environment "amid many difficulties" but did not experience... "the assault of mass Press ... of the wireless and television, of the ubiquitous cinemas" and other sources of mass culture (p. 23). 'Newer' attitudes refer to numbers of strands of insistent, effective and centralised forms of professional influences on the people that create new mass culture which is "in some important ways less healthy than the often-crude culture it is replacing" (p.24). It is suggested that the "crude culture" was manifested by "home-dried herbs (in) the scullery", "a pot of goose-grease on the shelf there ... for 'a bad chest', the vitality of man's spirit, the vigour of the language and peasant humour and the strength which their children had not and toward which they had at times something of a sophisticated and urbanized 'neshness'" (soft squeamishness) (p. 25).

A chronological view of some fifty years shows that "the effect on the working-classes of the modern 'mass media of communication' as widely described constructs have had "the slight effect ... upon the common speech", because "working people still draw ... on oral and local tradition" (p. 27). Illustrative examples in Richard Hoggart's book show which words are a frequent indication of working-classes, what myths and superstitions are current and enjoyable and which are dying out (pp.

28-31). Change is slow in social attitudes, especially among the people who are restrained by their work and who participate less in public entertainments.

Working class people in Britain acquired more wealth in the twentieth century but did not live an affluent life; yet “stinginess and tight-fistness” were not working class’s attitudes. The improved life was accompanied by developing mass culture which descended on working people through films, sound broadcasting and television, popular fiction, and through railway station book stalls books of sex and violence. Their critical attitudes to those in power and high places continued as they had few opportunities to develop some of their inclinations and to elevate their being and intellect (Hoggart, 1951/1981, 169-270).

The descriptions just given about the British working-classes identify curiously with those obvious among middle classes in new democracies in Eastern Europe. This parallel could be drawn for two centuries at least by an intelligent and informed reader who gleaned them from his reading of a book, *Popular Antiquities of Great Britain*, by William Hazlitt (1875). The loom and the technique of weaving crude cloth were the same both in Britain and Lithuania, for instance, in the eighteenth century. Then, in the nineteenth century, British production of hand-woven cloth and articles gradually disappeared giving way to silks, chiffons and other delicate textiles while the earlier production of crude woven goods continued in Lithuania to this day. When terms have to be found in English for the archaic ways of production in this sphere now, they have to be searched in encyclopaediae rather than in current dictionaries or online, although such rustic production survives only as the art of tourist souvenirs rather than as an industry now even in Lithuania. Very close analogies can be observed in social cultural practices and attitudes in England as expressly described by Richard Hoggart, and Lithuania, but the analogy is closer between the British workers and Lithuanian middle class. Incidentally, such an analogy is also implied by the data of the Great British Class Survey (The Great British Class Calculator..., 2024), which measures class differences mainly by income. Such a measurement identifies Lithuanian middle class, or intelligentsia, with the British working class, among the newly found seven social classes in Britain.

The parallels between social cultural life and practices in Britain and Lithuania identify up to a point. “A bloodless revolution”, which marks a boundary for the formation of the British working-classes, was a ‘blood-marked revolution’ in some parts of Eastern Europe and it effectuated the evolution of different working-classes there. It is true, the generation of the 1940s, who had not lived through this revolution, tended to ignore the massacres and political persecutions as bypassing their “felt-sense” of cruel politically committed groups. This generation is the last now that remembers the peaceful although “bitter” 1960s and 1980s and can confirm actual parallels between the truth about the British and East European working- and middle-classes.

Yet even British working classes are revealed by Richard Hoggart (1957/1981, 72-101) as expressing attitudinal bias against the higher classes. It is the concepts THEM and US that have been born from this bias and have been routinely applied with reference to people in local administration, other elected representatives and people in power. These concepts may still have gentler meaning in Britain, but they have produced extremely marked disrespect to politicians and the ruling representatives

in Eastern Europe. A mere study of the use of idioms in the British current press has shown that idioms distinctly imply disrespect to politicians, and it is only British authors who can permit themselves such a liberty in their use. If foreign journalists permitted themselves such and similar uses, they would be insulting to the British reading public (Drazdauskiene, 2019). This observation has been echoed, in a way, by a British author (Toynbee, 2021) in *The Guardian*.

Richard Hoggart analysed in detail rather than statistically the activities of the working-classes to show how they shaped social cultural life in Britain during and after the affluent twentieth century. It has been known from individual exchanges and reading that British working people are “gentle”, “gentler than the same groups of people in other countries”. It has also been known that the British have an innate respect for hierarchy, which is missing elsewhere (David McDowall, 1999/2003, 38-39).

When we turn to Eastern Europe from Richard Hoggart’s analytical descriptions, the picture becomes darker. Working classes in this part of Europe had come from a politically tyrannical past retained in the consciousness of older people, and their attitudes and practices have shown in cruder ways and coarser attitudes. Political disagreements have for years been kept alive with much bitterness and unforgivable senses. Much of this had been covered by governmental policies in Soviet years but it flared out after the restoration of democracy in the 1990s. When western journalists speculate about social and political culture and attitudes in Eastern Europe at present, they often ignore or are ignorant of how deeply social-political injustices run in the people in minor countries in Eastern Europe and what forms of behaviour they may produce daily in routine contexts. What is meant here is camouflaged sneer and insults, ‘setting accounts’ from round the corner even with those who are too young to have had any ‘accounts’, by ripping off an extra pay, stealing stealthily and openly or by breaking into apartments to compel independent persons to humiliating contacts and otherwise violating private lives of people who had bypassed revolutionary, post-revolutionary, war and post-war cruelty. They lived a somewhat isolated or protected life as artists, scholars, sportsmen and other professionals. Like the British working people, who had been known for their exceptional qualities rather than for typical features of the class, the protected East Europeans may also had been talented individuals, artists and authors, who did not represent any class significantly. But they find fault with the present-day injustices dealt with from round the corner, with the neglect of the core laws of the country or principles of honest and moral life. Democratic liberties in new democracies have enabled the scornful elders to turn many a law and principle upside down and there is no institute or body to remedy the practices.

Discussion of Changes in Cultural Norms and Practices, and Terminology

Culture in its opening definition here above has deteriorated in the present century even if we only compare what Lady Colin and Mr Hoggart highlight in their books about politeness and expected behaviour of good society and about speech, attitudes and biases among the working-class and middle-class people in England

and continental Europe. It should be noted that no rigid terminology of culture of the twentieth century has been used in the present paper, as it was not in the books (Campbell, 1903; Hoggart, 1957/1981) reviewed here. This terminological neglect permits the focus on delicate details and nuances of meaning in a humanly sensitive way when describing cultural practices. The focus on politeness, psychological reactions and detail can also be closer to the facts. Some practicing teachers (Subhan, 2024) reveal the embarrassing treatment of a person in sociocultural contexts when speakers of multiple languages question a British speaking person from an Indian family whether she really is British. Ms. Subhan used no special terminology when she spoke of pain and embarrassment in encounters with outsiders who were reluctant to acknowledge her British cultural background when perceiving her Indian ethnicity. She gave examples with added emotional accents, at the 57th IATEFL Annual International Conference in Brighton in 2024. There may be a point in avoiding the supposedly learned categorisation of culture. Thus, it becomes more precise and of human concern rather than abstracted and incomprehensible. This can be also useful in teaching.

Even a scholarly concept of language and culture of the twentieth century (Halliday, 1975, 1978) based on the analytical study of a child's development of language avoids unnecessary terminological complications:

The functional “picture of the adult linguistic system is of a culturally specific and situationally sensitive range of meaning potential. Language is the ability to ‘mean’ in the situation types, or social contexts, that are generated by the culture” (Halliday, 1978, 34).

The Integrity of Language and Culture

This is to say that culture, language and speech work in continuous integration. In several of his books, Michael Halliday emphasised the role of situation or context in understanding and in choosing the words in more or less formal way. He stated that “It is impossible to draw a line between ‘what he said’ and ‘how he said it’, since this is based on a conception of language in isolation from any context” (Halliday, 1978,34). The distinction between registers is “a distinction of *what* is said as much as of *how* it is said, without any enforced separation between the two” (Ibidem). This also means that sociocultural aspects of meaning or culture in general are embedded in language while speakers demonstrate it by their sensitivity to meaning, care in the selection of words, intellectual discipline and responsibility. That is why it is impossible to give concrete rules about language and culture in teaching; a teacher must be guided by his individual culture, his sensitivity to meaning and detail, and general methodology.

The concept of language as a meaning potential (Halliday, 1973, 1976, 1978) opens all the resources of a language to its speaker who can exploit those resources consciously and instinctively and sound more or less cultured. Instinctive choices would come from breeding or upbringing while conscious choices from education. If both ways are available to a speaker, he can be a connoisseur in his use of the language. Other people learn from such a speaker by picking his concrete expressions, turns of thought and idiom. The ultimate result is the cultural identity of the speaker,

which may mean refinement and taste in verbal expression. It is notable how a concrete speaker matters in the taking over of verbal manners and how sensitive the speaker should be. A teacher is the model to his audience, and his responsibility matters. Awareness of the listener or the audience present, mobilises and informs the speaker in his verbal choices. The ultimate notion of culture depends on such relatedness and choices. Rules of politeness, when they existed, also orientated the speaker.

Conscious awareness of the listener always mobilises the speaker. A sensitive speaker selects his words with care, in which his upbringing/breeding and educations show. In their wholeness, verbal features form the image of the culture of the speaker, in which the person's sensitivity, taste, knowledge and skill matter. Little has ever been said of how sensitivity, delicacy and taste of the person decide his verbal reactions. But it has been known from British literary studies that a sensitive and well brought-up person understands and reacts deeper to literature and senses in it than his unpolished contemporary. An analogy with a person's verbal expression is not far to seek. Like mannerisms noted by Lady Colin, the refinement of a cultured person shows not only in his choice of words but also in his restraint and disciplined thinking. The choice of words and obvious intellectual composure extend over to the listener, honour him and lift up his esteem. The speaker's general culture shows in his language and attitude and cannot be analytically detailed if only to diminish the honour and dignity it creates.

Concepts of politeness, rules in language and behaviour, and self-restraint have been dashed among the moderns. One of the reasons for this deterioration from politeness to rudeness may be current practices in teaching. This is detailed in the following section.

It is notable that language has come up as a significant feature of the life and culture of any class or community. It was highlighted by Lady Colin, by Mr Hoggart and other authors. If the concept of language, through the acquisition of which a young child internalizes and acquires a sense of his native culture (Halliday, 1975) were minded, no other introduction would be required to turn to language in the present context. Recent publications massively focus on entertainment when they discuss culture, everywhere, and culture is further narrowed down to political culture in Eastern Europe and elsewhere. But language exists and functions in context which is the primary and basic condition that ensures understanding (Halliday, Hassan, 1990), and determines the speaker's culture. Context has been the pivotal concept in studies of language and culture by some authors (Kramsch, 1993/2010).

It has been known that language was the primary and identifiable feature of class in Britain at the turn of the twenty-first century. The popularized images of and comments about upper classes do not really reflect their true life as they had lived and remained living closed lives. What the public is familiar with is televised reports, shows, festivals and details of private lives of individuals, which are multiplied by social media sites with crude comments and irreverent exposure. One can only think of what Her Majesty the late Queen Elixabeth II was made to endure in publicity so brazen and insistent, and nobody has asked a question what has been gained, who has improved or been honoured. Modern publicity and public life are cruel and brazen, and nobody takes account of it. Most of it is maintained by journalists but

working-class attitudes also reflect it and expose it by unbalanced comments, interferences, demands and other actions. There is little praiseworthy that can be said about the social cultural life of the public at large and working classes in particular, and certainly nothing to compare with the image of society revealed by Lady Colin (Campbell, 1903).

Language and Culture in Teaching

Much of the elevation and refinement of former classes have been lost or covert with the loss of contexts for polished language. This is one of the main points of argument in the present paper. The primary reason of the rudeness of the young today may be democratic liberties wrongly applied. What is meant here is the relaxed or deleted rules in the teaching of language itself, whether native or foreign. As has been mentioned above, corruptions in speech such as abbreviations, shortened words, informal words and slang, the neglect of titles, although this belongs to a general tendency in British English under the influence of the internet, (Five ways the internet as changed British English..., 2021), and otherwise careless speech that was rejected by Lady Colin, has been accepted in the classroom today (cf.: Gore, 2023). The focus on intelligibility neglects distinctive features of Received Pronunciation and forwards individual accents rather than a standard accent, so perfection of speech has become undesirable, contracted forms *I'll*, *I'd*, *she's* generally accepted to the degree that students do not know that *I'll* = *I will* rather than *I shall*, *I'd* = *I should* and *I would*, and with it, have lost the sense of the difference between the two modal forms while they may be significant in formal speech and writing. In general, formal speech is largely overlooked in teaching, and formal vocabulary is Greek to modern students.

If students were obliged to learn a language following clear and strict rules, their behaviour would polish with it. Nuances of meaning and the delicacy of forms are minor details, but they affect man's consciousness and understanding if systemically followed. Such tiny details are part of learning and practicing in the arts. It is not for nothing that learning a language, at a high level, has been compared with learning to play a musical instrument. Language is not a tyrant. Language may be a quiet obligation to the learner. Learners would definitely become gentler, if not polished, if they were learning languages with strict rules applied. When rules do not matter and learners are free to neglect all the rules, they become impatient with any remark or correction, and rude. This transforms into rude behaviour generally and even into physical conflicts in schools, families and outside (Drazdauskiene, 2019; cf.: Tisdall, 2024).

This idea would apply in actual teaching without any declaration of culture or compartmentalization of vocabulary and prescriptions. No theories and declarations are required. If pupils, who had not the privilege of one-hundred-year-old private education, learned that some of the words they use (*scum*, *it sucks*, *to dis*, *I'd the rap for Sim today*, etc.) may make their friends laugh and parents with teachers frown, they would be learning of culture. If students learned that some words are formal (*renounce*, *depraved*, *preposterous*, etc.) and some are too big (*provide*, *crucial*, etc.)

in their meagre compositions, they would be learning of culture. The focus on meaning and sense would have to save both teachers and learners. Learners in secondary schools may aim at learning to differentiate informal and formal speech. This would mean the difference between full and contracted forms, complete and incomplete sentences, the difference between an utterance and a sentence and the respective choice of words and structures, while introducing these differences with reference to their acceptance by parents, teachers and strangers. It is true, the difference in formality could not be taught only on the basis of a foreign language. It is beyond learners to understand this difference in their vaguely familiar foreign language. But a joke in the learners' native language which exposes exactly formal and informal remarks, would make them laugh at once and give an idea of what formality in language is. Exercises worked out accordingly would train their understanding and enrich their language to help them use a foreign language appropriately.

If pupils finished secondary school with the knowledge that a speaker should be as formal as the situation requires and as informal as the situation permits, they would be informed cultured speakers/writers. This is not much of intellectual sophistication to understand. There are authors who have written of language and culture without a play on these words or declarations (Widdowson, 1992; Carter, 2023; McCarthy, 2023; Thornbury, 2017) and whose works may be exploited to produce sensible exercises in the classroom. No theory is required in this approach. The simple idea of the presence of a speaker and listener in every speech act and their satisfaction would be sufficient. Theories would be better reserved to theorists rather than school, while references to two persons in verbal contact have come from notable authors (Aristotle, Bühler, 1934; Jakobson, 1965; Halliday, 1973, 1978; Widdowson, 1992; Leech, Svartvik, 1983; Crystal, 1988/2002) and can be learned by anyone interested. A mobilising remark about the sensitivity of the speaker in how his speech exposes his identity, his knowledge of the language, his politeness and attention against his will may be quite helpful. If university students had learned that language has the power in itself to expose the speaker's attitude and politeness, perfections and fallacies/errors, they would have mastered a philosophical truth of language's semantic potential and learned of language and culture for life. Literature featured significantly in private education, it had a function in modern education and has been losing it by now. Yet, as an infinite resource, literature can accomplish the student's familiarity with culture because its study refines understanding and expression, develops senses, emotions and intellect.

Conclusions

Culture as a complex social phenomenon means experiences, practices and attitudes in identifiable communities. Its exhaustive definition exceeds a minor conference paper. What has been observed with references implies that no sudden or declarative prescriptions can change the culture of a group or community. But cultural norms and practices can be gainfully transposed in teaching where they can breed not only educate the young. A teacher would achieve less in passing on and instilling culture if he departmentalized words rather than if he showed by example and put accents on the significant, in a word, a comment, an utterance, a sentence.

But the teacher may gain from the known (Kramersch, 1993; Thornbury, 2017; Widdowson, 1990; Halliday, 1973; Carter, McCarthy, 2007 and others), especially about formality and overtones of meaning in forms of address, idioms, stereotypes, response utterances, clichés, etc. (Drazdauskiene, 2016). The concept of language as “a meaning potential” (Halliday, 1976, 1978) and its potentialities would include all questions of language and culture. Wide reading means professional achievement but, in teaching, deep understanding of the tested in theory and literature, and proficiency in the language taught cannot be replaced by any particularization of such general concepts as language and culture.

Overviewing the ideas put forward in this paper, the following points merit attention in conclusion:

1. **Culture** as an inclusive phenomenon means practices, experiences, attitudes and possessions of an identifiable community in a system of values.
2. **No sudden or declarative prescriptions can change the culture of a community.** When they happen, cultural changes are slow. “Man cannot be made moral by an act of parliament” (Alistair Cooke, 1976).
3. **In the 19th century, societies were organized on the principles** of honesty and correctness, had obligatory rules of speech and behaviour and were orientated to make those in verbal contact “pleased with others and with themselves”.
4. **Language featured as an obvious and indicative expression of man** in cultured communities.
5. **The 20th century replaced cultural refinement in word and action** of cultured communities by working class attitudes, abundance of popular culture in its aural, oral, visual and printed forms. Speech and behaviour have altered in its wake. Criticism of the superior has become ample and aggressive.
6. **What was rejected in cultured speech in the 19th century has been accepted in use** and in language teaching in the 21st century.
7. **Influential social attitudes of working classes have altered themselves** to make people biased and critical of those assumed to be the elite and those in government.
8. Cultural practices, engagements, tastes and preferences have turned vulgar and abundant.
9. **Context** as the basic condition in understanding is also a decisive circumstance in the manifestation of culture in language, which features in sociocultural aspects of meaning. What is said and how it is said are two sides of every utterance and speech act, which testify to the culture of the speaker and the speech community and rise from the expository power of the language. Every speaker is at the mercy of this power of language. It exposes culture together with the literal meaning of the words in every utterance even when the speaker is not aware of it.
10. Like society, **language teaching has foregone rules with a predictable issue in disobedience and violence.** Another source of violence like that against politicians (Tisdall, 2024) may be an issue of mass literacy, affluence

and abused democratic liberties. Social aspirations in the 19th century were to be correct, to observe the rules and to please the person(s) in verbal contact. Aspirations lost, literate society of the 21st century has become vulgar and rude, worshipping sex, violence and money in literature, shows and practices while its aspiration has become massive entertainment.

11. **Culture in language teaching can never be removed but** can be neglected or approached **through the lens of compartmentalization** which formally distort culture. Depending on their age and awareness of a second person/ audience in communication, learners can master formality in language with all the nuances of meaning and internalise the idea of the expository power of language in production and perception, which would encompass and breed culture and learning for life.

References

- Aristotle (1954). *Rhetoric. Poetics*. New York: The Modern Library.
- BBC World Service (1984). The Grand Tour.
- Black J (1990). Fragments from the Grand Tour. *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 53.4, 337-341.
- Black J (2003) *Italy and the Grand Tour*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Bühler K (1934) *Sprachtheorie*. Jena: Fischer.
- Campbell Lady Collin (1903) *Etiquette of Good Society*. London: Cassell.
- Carter R, McCarthy M (2007) *The Cambridge Grammar of English*. Cambridge University Press.
- Crystal D (1988/2002) *The English Language. A guided tour of the language*. London: Penguin Books.
- Drazdauskiene ML (2016) *Language and Usage: Potentialities and Problems*. Warszawa: Wsztechnica Polska.
- Drazdauskiene ML (2019) *Teaching language for the attainment of culture*. Report at the 52nd IATEFL Annual International Conference, PCE, Liverpool.
- Five ways the internet era has changed British English – new research. DOI: <https://theconversation.com/five-ways-the-internet-era-has-changed-british-english-new-research-172432>
- Gore J (2023) Six tips for speaking English internationally. DOI: <https://learnenglish.Britishcouncil.org/english-levels/improve-your-english-level/six-tips-speaking-english-internationally>
- Halliday MA (1973) *Explorations in the Functions of Language*. London: Arnold.
- Halliday MA (1975) *Learning How to Mean*. London: Arnold.
- Halliday MA (1976) *System and Function in Language* Edited by Gunther Kress. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Halliday MA (1978) *Language as Social Semiotic*. London: Arnold.
- Halliday MA, Hasan R (1990) *Language, Context and Text*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hazlitt W (1870) *Popular Antiquities of Great Britain*. Vols. 1-3. London: John Russel Smith.
- Hoggart R (1957/1981) *The Uses of Literacy*. Penguin Books, Great Britain.
- Jakobson R (1960) *Linguistics and Poetics*. In: *Style in language*/Ed. By Thomas Sebeok. Cambridge (Mass.): The M.I.T. Press, 350-377.
- Kramsch C (1993) *Context and Culture in Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Leech G, Svartvik J (2003) *A Communicative Grammar of English*. London and New York: Routledge.
- McDowall D (1999/2003) *Britain in Close-Up. An In-Depth Study of Contemporary Britain*. London: Longman: Pearson Education Limited.
- Subhan Z (2024) Because you're all worth it. Report at the 57th IATEFL Annual International Conference, Brighton, UK, 17 April 2024.
- The Great British Class Survey. DOI: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/special/2013/newsspec_5093/index.stm
- Thornbury S (2017) *30 Language Teaching Methods*. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Tisdall S (2024) *Rising violence against politicians is an attack on democracy itself*. DOI: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/article/2024/jun15/rising-violence-against-politicians-is-attack-on-democracy-itself?utm_term=666ec5b799709cad87693c4e6b267c2a&utm_campaign=GuardianTodayUS&utm_source=esp&utm_medium. 16 June 2024
- Toynbee P (2021) *When we lose respect for our politicians, democracy itself is taking a hit*. DOI: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/jan/29/politicians-democracy-matt-hancock-byelection-batley-and-spen?utm_term=767c0e019.
- Trease G (1991) *The Grand Tour*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Widdowson HG (1990) *Aspects of Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

