

Of Language, Culture and Teaching

Bypassing the eternal and unsolved problems of the definition of culture in superficial technical discussions, this paper deliberates on culture and language with a view to showing that excellent knowledge of 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 century and refers to personal observations and recent teaching practice. In conclusion, it narrows cultural representation down to two persons in verbal contact, their sensitivity to 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: *politeness, insight and instantaneous judgement in context, sensitive points in verbal choices, sociocultural traditions in historical contexts, professional selectivity and focus in teaching.*

Introduction

The integrity of language and culture has rarely been challenged. 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 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 a 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 300 years or at least the last two centuries in view, immense differences will be found to mark culture in Europe in the 19th century and at the beginning of the 21st century. Two hundred years ago, social groups in socially stratified societies kept themselves to themselves and there were 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. **XXX** Literature was part of the concept of cultured life so much that the generation of the 1940s in Lithuania stated reading literature in foreign language studies in the 1960s as a major and legitimate priority at entrance examinations to the EFL programme at the University of Vilnius. Such a priority

¹In the nineteenth century, in the Regency era, 1811-1820, in England society was “awash with literary sex”.

1 had not come from written instructions to prospective students. It was part of
 2 inheritance, upbringing and man's consciousness, but the word 'culture' was not a
 3 routine word in education or daily life. It was rather politeness and etiquette, the
 4 Dos and Don'ts in society that were the words spoken and explained. This
 5 reference is to the time that we actually remember.

6
 7 *Cultural norms and engagements in the 19th century. Travelling and schooling*
 8

9 Apart from upbringing, education and functioning socially, literature and
 10 culture mattered to persons who travelled 300 or so years ago. The concept could
 11 have been broader or narrower, but culture defined peoples otherwise centred in a
 12 locality. Travellers were fewer so many years ago and it was only wealthy persons
 13 of status who had opportunities to learn about people of different countries and
 14 their identity first-hand. Perhaps the best and well-described kind of travelling was
 15 the Grand Tour. It was a traditional trip to Europe, primarily to Italy, practiced in
 16 the 17th-19th centuries and planned for the young of wealthy influential families
 17 when they had come of age, at about twenty-one years. Italy was selected in The
 18 Grand Tour because of its historical and artistic heritage. It was an educational
 19 undertaking: the young travelled under guidance of a tutor or family member who
 20 spoke the language of the country.²

21 It is notable that the young on The Grand Tour were young adults guided by a
 22 speaker of the language of the country of destination. Young persons may have
 23 had some familiarity with the language of the country themselves. Whatever they
 24 had learned of the country themselves had also come from private education.
 25 Language and culture were not named subjects, they were rather integrated
 26 components in private education.

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

39 The words just quoted do not require explicit definitions to indicate that
 40 inherited words which had come from upbringing are more human and imply
 41 relationships on their own, while the words invented in the twentieth century are

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).

1 rationally analytical and record nothing of human relations and attitudes, while
2 culture is essentially a value system of experiences and ideas.

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

6 Books in this sphere were also different. They focused on observations on
7 verbal and cultural customs and psychological nuances. A late publication,
8 *Etiquette of Good Society* by Lady Colin Campbell (1903), overviews social
9 occasions, such as Christening, Visiting, Wedding, Funeral, Invitations and parties,
10 Private theatricals, Sports, Excursions and Picnics, and The Court. The author
11 assumes that “the books already published on the subject of “manners” and
12 “etiquette” are sufficiently numerous”, yet “minutia” are constantly altering.
13 Although the broad principles of manners remain the same”, “modes of speech
14 and action which were considered the height of politeness a few years ago would
15 be pronounced very *old-fashioned* if used and exhibited in the present day” (
16 Campbell, p.iii). This was the reason of publishing the book in question. This may
17 be the reason for the understanding of moderns of what mattered to cultured
18 people one hundred years ago and with what concern and detail it was discussed
19 and attained.

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

32 This author emphasised the accomplishment of man of good breeding:

33 “Goodness of heart, however boundless; learning, however profound; and
34 accomplishments the most brilliant and varied, are not in themselves sufficient to
35 make pleasant and agreeable members of society – a knowledge and practice of
36 the laws of good-breeding must be added to make a perfect whole” (p, 12). A
37 reference to Lord Chesterfield, who defined politeness as “the art of pleasing”,
38 confirmed the high requirements just enumerated.³

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

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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 reject his manners when they are embarrassing or approximate “gross behaviour”
2 (p. 40).

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

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

19 One of the most significant views in this book is about language. When
20 talking, a gentleman should not use slang in the presence of a lady. There is no
21 warning about expletives or rude language, as this was obviously non-existent. But
22 conversation also had its rules. The tone of good conversation “is flowing and
23 natural; it is neither heavy nor frivolous; it is lively without noise”. Lady Colin had
24 followed Rousseau’s idea in this definition as she esteemed France as “the country
25 of good taste and good breedin”g. She completed this opening by saying that “The
26 art of conversation consists as much in listening politely as in talking agreeably...”
27 (p 45). Whispering, as young people would do in corners, “is a great breach of
28 good manners”, because it is “forgetful or oblivious of the feelings of others” (p.
29 46).

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

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

44 This author has a warning against introducing words and phrases
45 “unconsciously into our conversation which are offensive corruptions of the
46 English tongue” (p. 48). This may mean dropping foreign words unconsciously,

1 which is pretentious and rude if the company is not familiar with the foreign
2 language.

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

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

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

21
22 *Cultural norms and practices in the 20th century in Books: Working Classes*

23
24 A slightly different socio-cultural picture emerges from the book, *The Uses of*
25 *Literacy*, by Richard Hoggart (1957/1981), published as “A Twentieth Century
26 Classic”. This author begins his book focusing squarely on working classes, the
27 active social force in the wars- and technology-ridden century. Although this
28 author takes a very insightful evaluative view, he does not indulge in charades with
29 the word ‘culture’, while he equally avoids “the technical languages of the
30 experts” (Hoggrat, 1951/1981, 10). This author begins with a definition of the
31 working-classes, his central subject, with a description of the social cultural
32 context and continues with an attitudinal outline of the working-classes, the wealth
33 of the century and the trends and vagaries in their cultural life.

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

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

17 Attitudes to history have the same tendency. The history of the working-class
18 movement is often exaggerated because of a replacement of political activities for
19 the working-classes and speaking only of a minority (pp. 15-16). One other reason
20 of such an exaggeration may be no adequate sense of the grassroots of working-
21 class life in authors of this history. Romanticism, pity and admiration of the
22 working-classes are typical traits of a middle-class Marxists’ view, too. These
23 views happen to be accompanied by the idiom and idiomatic language of the
24 uncritical authors affected by imaginative literature and a variety of statistics,
25 which demand to be looked through for these authors’ “felt sense of working-class
26 life” and for the tendency “to make the old much more admirable than the new”
27 (p.17).

28 A rough definition of ‘the working-classes’ begins with their feature to keep
29 together as a group without an implication of “any feeling of inferiority or pride”
30 (p.19). Their noticeable attitudes group them as ‘the common people’ while what
31 makes the description of ‘working-class’ may be attributed to what are often called
32 the ‘lower middle-classes’. The working-class people so described live in
33 identifiable urban districts, and have “their own recognizable styles of housing”
34 (p.19). Most of them culturally belong to lower professional groups, such as:
35 ‘cobbler’, ‘barber’, ‘grocer’, ‘bike-mender’ or ‘cast-off clothing dealer’, work for
36 a wage, not a salary. They are educated at a primary level, equivalent to a
37 secondary modern school, “still popularly known as an ‘elementary’ school” (p.
38 20).

39 Their speech identifies by the vocabulary “in common use” and their
40 “manners of speaking, the use of urban dialects, accents and intonations, although
41 indicative socially, had not been analysed by Richard Hoggart. Their ‘common
42 voice’ is husky and is identified “among the more ‘respectable’ working-classes as
43 a ‘common’ voice” (p. 21).

44 Cheap clothing identifies workers as does “paying out money in small
45 instalments” and being “on the ‘panel’ at the local doctor’s” (p. 21). Minor local
46 social differentiations are also known in workers’ residential areas. The author is

1 conscious of such current reference words to them as ‘the vast apathetic mass’,
 2 ‘just plain folk’ and ‘the general run of people’. Yet he neglects “the political, the
 3 pious, and the self-improving minorities in the working-classes” (p.22).

4 ‘Older’ and ‘newer’ attitudes, made for the sake of clarity rather than
 5 chronology, differentiates several working-class generations. The ‘older’ refer to
 6 the generation which grew up in an urban environment “amid many difficulties”
 7 but did not experience... “the assault of mass Press ..., of the wireless and
 8 television, of the ubiquitous cinemas” and other sources of mass culture (p. 23).
 9 ‘Newer’ attitudes refer to numbers of strands of insistent, effective and centralised
 10 forms of professional influences on the people that create new mass culture which
 11 is “in some important ways less healthy than the often crude culture it is replacing”
 12 (p.24). It is suggested that the “crude culture” was manifested by “home-dried
 13 herbs (in) the scullery”, “a pot of goose-grease on the shelf there ... for ‘a bad
 14 chest’, the vitality of man’s spirit, the vigour of the language and peasant humour
 15 and the strength which their children had not and toward which they had at times
 16 something of a sophisticated and urbanized ‘neshness’ (soft squeamishness)” (p.
 17 25).

18 A chronological view of some fifty years shows that “the effect on the
 19 working-classes of the modern ‘mass media of communication’ as widely
 20 described constructs with “the slight effect these things have had upon the
 21 common speech”, while “working people still draw ... on oral and local tradition”
 22 (p. 27). Illustrative examples in Richard Hoggart’s book show which words are
 23 frequent indication of working-classes, what myths and superstitions are current
 24 and enjoyable and which are dying (pp. 28-31). Change is slow in social attitudes,
 25 especially among the people who are restraint by their work and who participate
 26 less in public entertainments.

27 Working class people in Britain acquires more wealth in the twentieth century
 28 but did not live an affluent life; yet “stinginess and tight-fistness” were nor
 29 working lass’s attitudes. The improved life was accompanied by developing mass
 30 culture which descended on working people through films, sound broadcasting
 31 and television, popular fiction, and through railway station book stalls books of
 32 sex and violence. Their critical attitudes to those in power and high places
 33 continued as their had few opportunities to develop some of their inclinations to
 34 elevate their being and intellect (Hoggart, 1951/1981, 169-270).

35 The descriptions just given about the British working-classes identify
 36 curiously with those obvious among upper classes in new democracies in eastern
 37 Europe. This parallel could be drawn for two centuries at least by an intelligent
 38 and informed reader who gleaned them from his reading of a book, *Popular*
 39 *Antiquities of Great Britain*, by Hazlitt (1875). The loom and the technique of
 40 weaving crude cloth were the same both in Britain and Lithuania, for instance, in
 41 the eighteenth century. Then, in the nineteenth century, British production of hand-
 42 woven cloth and articles gradually disappeared giving way to silks, chiffons and
 43 other delicate textiles while analogous production of woven goods continued in
 44 Lithuania to this day. When terms have to be found in English for the archaic ways
 45 of production in this sphere now, they have to be searched in encyclopaediae rather
 46 than in current dictionaries or online, although such rustic production survives

1 only as the art of tourist souvenirs rather than as an industry now even in
2 Lithuania. Very close analogies can be observed in social cultural practices and
3 attitudes in England as expressly described by Richard Hoggart, and Lithuania, but
4 the analogy is closer between the British workers and Lithuanian middle class.

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

15 Yet even British working classes are revealed by Richard Hoggart (1957/1981,
16 72-101) as expressing attitudinal bias against the higher classes. It is the concepts
17 THEM and US that has been born from this bias and has been routinely applied
18 with reference to people in local administration, other elected representatives and
19 people in power. These concepts may be still gentler employed in Britain but they
20 have produced extremely marked disrespect to politicians and the ruling
21 representatives in Eastern Europe. A mere study of the use of idioms in the British
22 current press has shown that idioms distinctly imply disrespect to politicians and it
23 is only British authors who can permit themselves such a liberty. If foreign
24 journalists permitted themselves such and similar uses, they would be insulting to
25 the British reading public (Drazdauskiene, 2019). This observation has been
26 echoed, in a way, by a British author (Toynbee, 2021) in *The Guardian*.

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

34 When we turn to Eastern Europe from Richard Hoggart’s analytical
35 descriptions, the picture becomes darker. Working-classes in this part of Europe
36 had come from a politically tyrannical past in the consciousness of some people
37 and their attitudes and practices had been marked by cruder ways and coarser
38 attitudes. Political disagreements have for years been kept alive with much
39 bitterness and unforgivable senses. Much of this had been covered by
40 governmental policies in Soviet years but it flared out after the restoration of
41 democracy in the 1990s. When western journalists speculate about social and
42 political culture and attitudes in Eastern Europe at present, they often ignore or are
43 ignorant of how deeply social-political injustices run in the people in minor
44 countries in Eastern Europe and what forms of behaviour they may produce daily
45 in routine contexts. What is meant here is camouflaged sneer and insults, ‘setting
46 accounts’ from round the corner, by ripping off extra pay, stealing stealthily and

1 openly or by breaking into apartments and otherwise violating private lives of
2 people who had bypassed revolutionary, post-revolutionary, war and post-war
3 injustices while living a somewhat isolated or protected life as artists, scholars,
4 sportsmen and other professionals. Like the British working people, who had been
5 known for their exceptional qualities rather than for typical features of the class,
6 the protected East Europeans may also had been talented individuals, artists and
7 authors, who do not represent any class significantly. But they find faults with the
8 present-day injustices dealt with from round the corner in the neglect of the core
9 laws of a country or principles of honest and moral people. Democratic liberties in
10 new democracies have turned many a law and principle upside down and there is
11 no institute or body to remedy the practices.

12
13
14

Discussion of changes in cultural norms and practices and terminology

15 Culture in its opening definition here above has deteriorated in the present
16 century even if we only compare what Lady Colin and Richard Hoggart highlight
17 in their books about politeness and expected behaviour of good society and about
18 speech, attitudes and biases among the working-class and middle-class people in
19 England and continental Europe. It should be noted that no rigid terminology of
20 culture of the twentieth century has been used in the present paper, as it was not in
21 the books (Campbell. 1903; Hoggart, 1957/1981) reviewed here. This terminological
22 neglect permits the focus on delicate details and nuances of meaning in a humanly
23 obvious way when describing cultural practices. The focus on politeness,
24 psychological reactions and detail can also be closer to the facts. Some practicing
25 teachers (Subhan, 2024) reveal the embarrassing treatment of a person in
26 sociocultural contexts when speakers of multiple languages question a British
27 speaking person from an Indian family whether she really is British. Ms Subhan
28 used no special terminology when she spoke of pain and embarrassment in
29 encounters with outsiders who were reluctant to acknowledge her British cultural
30 background when perceiving her Indian ethnicity. She gave examples with added
31 emotional accents, at the 57th IATEFL Annual International Conference in
32 Brighton in 2024. There may be a point in avoiding the supposedly learned
33 categorisation of culture. It becomes more precise and of human concern rather
34 than abstracted and incomprehensible. This can be also useful in teaching.

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

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

42
43

1 *The Integrity of Language and Culture*
2

3 This is to say that culture, language and speech work in continuous
4 integration. In several of his books, Michael Halliday emphasised the role of
5 situation or context in understanding and in choosing the words in more or less
6 formal way. He stated that “It is impossible to draw a line between ‘what he said’
7 and ‘how he said it’, since this is based on a conception of language in isolation
8 from any context” (Halliday, 1978,34). The distinction between registers is “a
9 distinction of *what* is said as much as of *how* it is said, without any enforced
10 separation between the two” (Ibidem).

11 The concept of language as a meaning potential (Halliday, 1973, 1976, 1978)
12 opens all the resources of a language to its speaker who can exploit those resources
13 consciously and instinctively and sound more or less cultured. Instinctive choices
14 would come from breeding or upbringing while conscious choices from education.
15 If both ways are available to a speaker, he can be a connoisseur in his use of the
16 language. Other people learn from such a speaker by picking his concrete
17 expressions, turns of thought and idiom. The ultimate result is a cultural identity of
18 the speaker which may mean refinement or taste in verbal expression. It is notable
19 how a concrete speaker matters in the taking over of verbal manners and how
20 sensitive the speaker should be. Awareness of the listener or the audience present,
21 mobilises and informs the speaker in his verbal choices. The ultimate notion of
22 culture depends on such relatedness and choices. Rules of politeness, when they
23 existed, orientated the speaker.

24 Concepts of politeness, rules in language and behaviour, and self-restraint
25 have been dashed among the moderns. One of the reasons of this deterioration
26 from politeness to rudeness may be current practices in teaching.

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

39 It has been known that language was the primary and identifiable feature of
40 class in Britain at the turn of the twenty-first century. The popularized images of
41 and comments about high classes do not really reflect their true life as they had
42 lived and remained living closed lives. What the public is familiar with is televised
43 reports, shows, festivals and details of private lives of individuals, which are
44 multiplied by social media sites with crude comments and irreverent exposure.
45 One can only think of what Her Majesty the late Queen Elixabeth II was made to
46 endure in publicity so brazen and insistent, and nobody has asked a question what

1 has been gained, who has been improved or honoured. Modern publicity and
 2 public life are cruel and brazen and nobody sets the account of it. Most of it is
 3 maintained by journalists but working-class attitudes also reflect it and influence it
 4 by their unbalanced comments, interferences, demands and other actions. There is
 5 little praiseworthy that can be said about social cultural life of the public at large
 6 and working-classes in particular, and certainly nothing to compare with the image
 7 of society revealed by Lady Colin (Campbell, 1903).

8
 9 *Language and culture in teaching*

10
 11 Much of the elevation and refinement of former classes have been lost or
 12 covert with the loss of contexts for polished language. This is one of the main
 13 points of argument in the present paper. The primary reason of the rudeness of the
 14 young today may be the democratic liberties wrongly applied. What is meant here
 15 is the relaxed or deleted rules in the teaching of language itself, whether native or
 16 foreign. As has been mentioned above, corruptions in speech such as
 17 abbreviations, shortened words, informal words and slang, the neglect of titles,
 18 although this belongs to a general tendency in British English under the influence
 19 of the internet, (Five ways the internet as changed British English..., 2021), and
 20 otherwise careless speech that was rejected by Lady Colin has been accepted in the
 21 classroom today (cf.: Gore, 2023). The focus on intelligibility neglects distinctive
 22 features of Received Pronunciation and forwards individual accents rather than a
 23 standard accent, so perfection of speech has become undesirable, contracted forms
 24 *I'll, I'd, she's* generally accepted to the degree that students do not know that *I'll =*
 25 *I will* rather than *I shall*, *I'd = I should* and *I would*, and with it, have lost the
 26 sense of the difference between the two modal forms while it may be significant in
 27 formal speech and writing. In general, formal speech is largely overlooked in
 28 teaching, and formal vocabulary is “Greek” to modern students.

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

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

1 words are formal (*renounce, depraved, preposterous*, etc) and some are too big
 2 (*provide, crucial*, etc) in their meagre compositions, they would be learning of
 3 culture. The focus on meaning and sense would have to save both teachers and
 4 learners. Learners in secondary schools may aim at learning to differentiate
 5 informal and formal speech. This would mean the difference between full and
 6 contracted forms, complete and incomplete sentences, the difference between an
 7 utterance and a sentence and the respective choice of words and structures, while
 8 introducing these differences with reference to their acceptance by parents,
 9 teachers and strangers. It is true, the difference in formality could not be taught
 10 only on the basis of a foreign language. It is beyond learners to understand this
 11 difference in their vaguely familiar foreign language. But a joke in the learners'
 12 native language which exposes exactly formal and informal remarks, would make
 13 them laugh at once and give an idea of what formality in language is. Exercises
 14 worked out accordingly would train their understanding and enrich their language
 15 to help them use it appropriately.

16 If pupils finished secondary school with the knowledge that a speaker should
 17 be as formal as the situation requires and as informal as the situation permits, they
 18 would be informed cultured speakers/writers. This is not much of intellectual
 19 sophistication to understand. There are authors who have written of language and
 20 culture without a play on these words or declarations (Widdowson, 1992; Carter,
 21 2023; McCarthy, 2023; Thornbury, 2017) and whose works may be exploited to
 22 produce sensible exercises in the classroom. No theory is required in this
 23 approach. The simple idea of the presence of a speaker and a listener in every
 24 speech act and their satisfaction would be sufficient. Theories would be better left
 25 to theorists rather than school, while references for the two persons in verbal
 26 contact have come from notable authors (Aristotle, Bühler, 1934; Jakobson, 1965;
 27 Halliday, 1973, 1978; Widdowson, 1992; Leech, Svartvik, 1983; Crystal,
 28 1988/2002) and can be learned by anyone interested. A mobilizing remark about
 29 the sensitivity of the speaker in how his speech exposes his identity, his knowledge
 30 of the language, his politeness and attention against his will may be quite helpful.
 31 If university students had learned that language has the power in itself to expose
 32 the speaker's attitude and politeness, perfections and fallacies/errors, they would
 33 have mastered a philosophical truth of language's semantic potential and learned
 34 of language and culture for life. Literature featured significantly in private
 35 education, it had a function in modern education and has been losing it by now.
 36 Yet, as an infinite resource, literature can accomplish the student's familiarity with
 37 culture because its study refines understanding and expression, develops senses,
 38 emotions and intellect.

39
 40

41 **Conclusions**

42

43 Culture as a complex social phenomenon means experiences, practices and
 44 attitudes in identifiable communities. Its exhaustive definition exceeds a minor
 45 conference paper. What has been observed with references implies that no sudden
 46 or declarative prescriptions can change the culture of a group or community. But

1 cultural norms and practices can be profitably transposed in teaching where they
 2 can breed not only educate the young. A teacher would achieve less in passing on
 3 and instilling culture if he departmentalized words rather than if he showed by
 4 example and put accents on the significant, in a word, a comment, an utterance, a
 5 sentence. But the teacher may gain from the known (Kramersch, 1993; Thornbury,
 6 2017; Widdowson, 1990; Halliday, 1973; Carter, McCarthy, 2007 and others),
 7 especially about formality and overtones of meaning in forms of address, idioms,
 8 stereotypes, response utterances, clichés, etc (Drazdauskiene, 2016). The concept
 9 of language as “a meaning potential” (Halliday, 1976, 1978) and its potentialities
 10 would include all questions of language and culture. Wide reading means
 11 professional achievement but, in teaching, deep understanding of the tested in
 12 theory and literature, and excellent knowledge of the language cannot be replaced
 13 by any particularization of such general concepts as language and culture.

14

15

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