

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE STUDIES

Author

Mrs. G. ANANDHA LAKSHMI

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH
THE STANDARD FIREWORKS RAJARATNAM COLLEGE FOR WOMEN,
SIVAKASI

anandhalakshmi-eng@sfrcollege.edu.in

9994170531

Abstract

The entire human race elevates itself from other living creatures by well refined language and language in turn pervades in their social life, culture, customs and tradition. Language is a primary means by which we get connected to other people's minds, norms of life and helps to segregate the refined and non-refined races of humanity. This refinement gets its impact on the culture of people and hence language always gets inter-twined with cultural studies of any human race.

Key words: Traditional values, Cultural refinement, believes and group identity.

Introduction

Language is defined by Merriam-Webster Dictionary as a "system of words or signs that people use to express thoughts and feelings to each other" (Merriam-Webster). But language is more than that, language is a vessel that carries culture, spirituality, knowledge and wisdom, it connects humanity to the past, present and future therefore bringing an overall community essence to all those who speak it. Every language is "acquired by man as a member of society," along with society's culture in which people are brought up. Culture of a society and language are mutually indispensable. Cultural Studies is an academic field that deals with the amalgamation of Sociology, Political Economy, Anthropology subjects and the historical events and communications in a certain group of people. It deals with the cultural behavior of any particular society and the class inequality is the main reason for the beginning of cultural studies.

Culture Studies and its Development

Cultural Studies is relatively new interdisciplinary field of study, in the post-war years. Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggard and Stuart Hall are the founding figures of Contemporary Cultural Studies in 1968, at the University of Birmingham. It pioneered the analysis of popular

culture, subculture, race and mass media. Culture is about ideas, beliefs, manners and people's attitudes that are passed from one generation to others. Culture couldn't be understood without having direct access to its language and vice versa. Hence, language teaching always has explicit references to the culture and customs of the people speaking that particular language. The use of words in our speech is related to language while the way we deliver it is related to the culture and the mannerism of our brought-up by our parents.

Analysis of Language and Cultural studies

Any language lives only so long as there are people who speak it and use it as their native tongue, and its greatness is given to it by these people. A language is important because the people who speak it are important – politically, economically, socially and culturally. Literature, which is manifested through language, can only be understood and circumscribed by bringing it into a theoretical relationship with cultural and societal phenomena. It is wrong to insist on the singularity of art and divorce it from its context for it leads to a partial and biased understanding of the processes of literary creation. A work of literature can only be fully grasped by relating it to the total dynamics of social and historical events because the medium of its realization is a part of cultural tradition change. Thus, it goes without saying that there is an intimate relationship between culture and the content of language. Harry Hoijer's (1964) view that language is a cultural complex with a body of customary forms transmitted from generation to generation and from society to society in no different way from other cultural form.

Birmingham Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies (BCCS)

The early version of Cultural Studies was influenced by the British New Left, especially Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams who both had working class background. In 1970s, along with the movements of feminism, gay and others Cultural Studies began to get theorized. Raymond Williams poststructuralism approach developed Cultural Studies and influenced the projects in Birmingham Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies (BCCS). In its early form the texts of Cultural Studies were on identity, nation and bodies that had the image of 'high culture'. Since culture is considered as the source of art and literature, cultural criticism has gained ground, and therefore, Raymond Williams' term "cultural materialism", Stephen Greenblatt's "cultural poetics" and Michael Bakhtin's term "cultural prosaic", have become significant in the field of cultural studies and cultural criticism. The works of Stuart Hall and Richard Hoggart with the Birmingham Centre, later expanded through the writings of David Morley, Tony Bennett and others. Cultural Studies is interested in the process by which power relations organize cultural artefacts like food habits, music, cinema, sport events and clothing. It looks at popular culture and everyday life, which had hitherto been dismissed as "inferior" and unworthy of academic study. Cultural Studies approaches transcend the confines of a particular discipline such as literary

criticism or history and reject the distinction between “high” and “low” art or “elite” and “popular” culture. It analyzes not only the cultural works but also the means of production.

Development of Cultural Studies

Antonio Gramsci was an Italian Marxist intellectual and politician. He modified classical Marxism in seeing culture as a key instrument of political and social control. In his view, capitalists are brutal force to maintain control over the everyday culture of working people. Thus, the key rubric for Gramsci for cultural studies is that of cultural hegemony. It facilitated analysis of the ways in which subaltern groups actively resist and respond to political and economic domination. The approach of Raymond Williams was clearly Marxist and poststructuralist, and he believes that we cannot ‘read’ cultural artefacts only within the aesthetic realm, rather it must be studied with the social and material perspectives also. The novel must be read not only within the generic conventions and history of the novel, but also in terms of the publishing industry and its profit, its reviewers, the politics of awards and the hype of publicity machinery that sells the book

In Cultural Studies, representation is a key concept and the cultural practice of giving dolls to girls indicates that girls are weaker and delicate and need to be given soft things, and boys are to be with machine guns and truck toys. This discourse of femininity and masculinity form the larger context of power relations in culture. Cultural Studies views everyday life as fragmented and multiple, where meanings are hybridized. With the globalization of urban spaces, local cultures are linked to global economies, markets and needs. In India, after economic liberalization, consumption has been seen as a marker of identity. Commodities are signs of identity and lifestyle and consumption begins before the actual act of shopping; it begins with the consumption of the signs of the commodity.

Malls are display of all materials where goods are displayed for maximum visual display in such a fashion that they are attractive enough to instill desire. Spectacle, attention- holding and desire to consume much than necessary are central elements of shopping experience in the mall. Hence mall emerges primarily as a site of gazing and secondarily as a site of shopping. The mall presents a spectacle of a fantasy world created by the presence of models and posters, attractive men and women, comfortable and luxurious families and vibrant youth which altogether attracts people for the possibilities of making a better identity, by consuming global brands and cosmopolitan fashion. The mall invites people for participating in the fantasy of future possibilities and the spectacle turns into a performance that the consumer gets excited for his shopping experience. It is like a theatrical performance that is interesting, in which the spectacle comes alive with the potential consumer. The encircling vistas, long-spread balconies and viewing points at every floor add to the spectacle, by providing a richness and happiness for their actions.

Media studies and its role in the construction of cultural values, circulation of symbolic values, and its production of desire are important to cultural studies today. Cultural Studies of the media begins with the assumption that media culture is ideological, and it reproduces existing social values, oppression and inequalities. Media culture clearly reflects the multiple sides of

contemporary debates and problems. It helps to reinforce the hegemony and power of specific economic, cultural and political groups by suggesting ideologies for the audience, and imbibes their policies and ideologies in their mind. Media culture is also provocative as it sometimes guides people to rethink what they know or believed in. In Cultural Studies, media culture is studied through an analysis of popular media culture like films, TV serials, advertisements for they are the tools of ideological and political power.

Cultural Studies of popular media culture intends to bind a large population with diverse cultures and form a unified cultural identity. Some examples of the pop culture include television programs, clothing advertisements, and slang words with catchy phrases, brand names, and symbols of popular soft drinks. Media culture determine the daily activities of people and their society. Greatly, they affect the listeners lives and the future generations. Several media platforms focus on the socio-economic status of the people and make their relay. Regardless of age, everybody has their preference on the type of media to use. It is a source of entertainment as the video games, movies, Facebook, and music relaxes people especially after a long tiring day's work. Moreover, the media platforms particularly the print and the audio-visual offer an appropriate place of learning, paintings, sports and other educative material. Contemporary Culture Studies of media culture explores 'media ecologies', the environment of human culture created by the intersection of information and communications technologies.

To conclude, Cultural Studies is an ever-changing field and is not confirmed to any particular discipline. Spending time with limited life sources will always make us close-minded in our life. By giving chance to learn about other societies and their behavior, we are more likely to understand their way of living rather than judging it. If more people are to trained in cultural studies, it would lead to better human understanding and global family. Studying about cultures does not necessarily involve book reading. The best way to learn about other cultures is to be right on those places. Travelling help to understand other cultures better and appreciate them. Speaking to a person from a foreign country about their customs and traditions is probably the best way to understand Cultural Studies than to read from books.

Works Cited:

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