

**Reading Culture in Dialects.
An Attempt Towards Transmitting Culture
to Children at Middle Childhood Stage**

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Abstract:

The present paper will work on childhood period of time within an approach of joining mental and psychological abilities of the child in understanding culture. A relationship that will certainly examine the role of language in learning culture and absorbing educative notions that typically fit the local environment and the society in general.

Key words: Reading; Culture; Dialects; Children; Childhood; translation; Arab World.

According to some psychologists and biologists, childhood is a period of time that implies a varying range of years in human development where the age of children ranges from birth to the age of puberty which refers to the beginning of the age of adolescence.

Along this period of life, it is still possible to distinguish two stages; early childhood and middle childhood. In the first, we speak about toddlers who are young children still learning to walk. The second represents the group of children whose age varies from seven or eight to end at adolescence, it is then the period of time where children are going to school and are able to learn and acquire a more developed knowledge from the

environment than at any age before. For a more precise terminology, let us consider the middle childhood as an early academic age where children start to become less dependent, slowly productive, and comprehensive, as they begin to find a logical relationship between the environment and their being as members of the community and the reality defining their membership in this environment when being involved with persons outside their families.

Accordingly, the present paper will work on this important period of time within an approach of joining mental and psychological abilities of the child in understanding culture. A relationship that will certainly examine the role of language in learning culture and absorbing educative notions that typically fit the local environment and the society in general.

Culture plays an essential role in how children make sense of the world; however, children do not consciously follow a mentally programmed process for understanding cultural measures that represent their society. They generally acquire habits and behaviours from their environment and understand even unconsciously the nature of relationships between individuals and the importance of the abstract presence of divine concepts in the life of humanity. They generally shape their understanding via recurrent behaviours and daily communication with their relatives, and they can beside develop their knowledge about cultural traits characterizing their society with instructive books by reading images and texts or by providing them with tangible examples drawn from social contexts.

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However, as the aim of the present paper is to approach the role of language in transmitting culture for middle childhood infants, it is of major importance to refer to the language or form of language that can influence the children's understandings of culture. In the Algerian society, Standard Arabic is the official academic language reserved for education at schools and administration; almost all academic books in the primary stage are written in this language and pupils are obliged to learn it and understand cultural concepts in this same language.

The present paper finds the idea of teaching culture to children in a language that largely differs from the mother tongue language acquired by children at home as a problematic in the sense where the distinction between learning a language and learning about his culture is a distinction that should be considerably taken into account at schools.

Though, to know about his culture in a Standard language has an elevated rate of importance, but what if the language is here but not culture. Then, it will become more logical and more persuasive to teach children culture by books that they have to read in the mother tongue, or what should be called a form of "dialectal Arabic". In this respect, (*Kuhl PK. A new view of language acquisition. In: Luria H, Seymour DM, Smoke T, eds*) say that:

"Children are born already knowing the characteristic "tune" of their native language, learning that is displayed when different attention is given to vocalizations in that language".

This statement remarkably sustains the importance of the mother tongue in discovering future realities about the world and maintaining social and cultural belongings; children in this respect will successfully develop a kind of academic knowledge at schools if to keep transmitting educative and instructive messages in the language used at home.

Obviously, the same institutional strategy of learning and of planning books can be respected for the edition of culturally- oriented books, and here a translation from existing productions in Standard Arabic to the dialect remains a possible realization. The most valuable and available books or short stories in this respect have a religious status; they aim at narrating the lives of the prophet and messengers with regard to their highly estimated relationships with people and the way they were models in driving social problems and maintaining solidarity between the members of communities , tribes and groups of people.

The translation of these books then is an important step where the most important thing remains to talk about the Prophet Mohammed (Peace be upon him) for instance in a usual language as the one the child feels relaxed with when communicating with his mother or father to ask for food, to tell jokes, to express his feelings, to follow home instructions, etc.

This environment helps the child preserving a mental ability in understanding new concepts and knowledge with an instructive nature to reach a high rank of competence in not only relying on present and real facts but also referring to past abstract facts where no

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body of his relatives nor he were present. By this way, the translation of these books will also bring the child from the world of concreteness to the abstract world in which it will be necessary to develop imagination and the shaping of important personalities that existed before.

Evidently, the same aim can be reached by the present books drafted in Standard Arabic, but the difference is that the focus is largely and typically oriented towards the content rather than the language itself. by reading in his dialect, the child is not going to pay attention to the grammar of this language, he is not going to slow down his reading just because he has to respect the “complicated” distribution of vowels in Standard Arabic(to mean movements) with reference to the grammar again. Further, it is sometimes difficult for the child to recognize the doer of actions from the one the action falls upon especially in long sentences, in addition to the frequent presence of new words he has never heard before. By all these obstacles the child will develop a reluctant behaviour towards reading; he will find it boring to check words in the dictionary, to be submitted to the grammar of the language, and to disturb his understanding by recurrent referential interruptions.

The kind of translation that is examined in the present paper does not aim at distributing the role of languages or varieties of language in a scale of value, rather it aims at localizing the function of each in a given context and situation. Culture touches a wide range of basic elements for the guidance of life; and this core idea is typically the reason for which the teaching of culture should not be interrupted by the teaching of language.

There have been many attempts towards the institutionalization of dialects for the aim of solidarity and identity, and here another aim is to maintain cultural dimensions in the education of children.

The translation of religious books is not the only attempt behind this proposal, there are other productions that shape the different cultures of the world via games books, articles, practice books, dictionaries, etc. here again, translation is also a very intelligent step when to educate our children with new ways of behaving that perhaps are apparent in the others' cultures while not clear in his. Further, it is evident that the translation of foreign cultures in dialects will help the child at an early stage recognize the existence of persons in the world who share with him the same biology and composition but differs from him in beliefs and ways of thinking; he will ultimately start to implicate the history of men in understanding the difference between communities and societies. An approach toward writing in dialect was made via a new program called Dialect readers, and linguists such as William Labov and Geneva Smitherman supported it since they are reading materials written in African American English (AAE) and their aim is to teach students who speak AAE to read in their own dialect, and then transfer that ability to reading Standard American English (SAE) believing that it was a good tool for improving the reading skills of AAE-speaking students. The idea of improving the reading skills via dialects raises another important point, the one that incites children to reading even later in another language or in Standard languages. The future of readership will then depend on the quantity of readings practiced in early

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childhood; the result will bring the attempt towards understanding and developing knowledge to read in any language that supplies the reader with more knowledge.

Translation is then considered as one of the possible realizations that will absorb children attempts to reading all possible books that perhaps they have not read or they do not want to read; hence these writings should be explored since they are of a great value in as far as cultural lines and guidance are concerned.

Further, and in another investigation of exploring language for cultural purposes, the kind of culture tackled in most of the lines before refers to the one that concerns all individuals in the same community, and the way it should be transmitted to early aged children. However, there is another kind of culture that is typically reserved for children; the one that makes him different from adults and keeps him preserved from their culture; this one brings all the children of the world as constituting one body with the same biology and the same mental development (regardless to some mental abnormalities). Accordingly, if the core element involved in the treatment of culture as a phenomenon that characterizes childhood is age, then children of the world should be provided with the same cultural notions; these involve mainly entertainment and education...However, children receive their cultures at home or at schools, and they are very often subjected to learn foreign cultures in their language ; in case of Algerians, Standard Arabic.

In the light of cultural exchanges, education remains one of the most reliable mediums for interpreting cultural traits and preserving relations between

communities. It sets out from early stages of teaching and evolves in respect to different criteria in the educational institutions, these like, age, mental abilities, social status, globalization, modernization, etc. Children in the primary school are very often subjected to examples, lessons, and ways of Teaching drawn from foreign contexts and translated throughout their official language in which they receive their basic and primary education, this translation aims at achieving two main purposes; information and awareness.

The issue in translating source cultures to target ones for children in the Arabo-Islamic world brings different attitudes and approaches to discuss the notion of transmitting foreign messages for culturally different targets with careful maintaining of social and cultural values. The idea should consider the delicate aspect of the task of translating for the most sensitive age groups of children between six and thirteen years old.

From a sociolinguistic point of view, some pragmatic parameters are to be accounted for in teaching children especially when lessons are intensified by examples drawn from the others' cultures, the paper proposes coherence between language, culture and teaching materials; that is the content of the teaching materials like lessons, examples, texts, etc should fit the cultural context of the target reader.

Translated texts are very interesting as they may bring instructive information to the target reader in Algeria, and to adjust both cultures, the instructor should select from translated texts what seems "logical" in the reality of the Algerian. The term logical here will then

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serve all surrounding realities that a child can see and can understand even if sometimes they do not necessarily exist in his proper environment which is home.

In the pragmatics of this approach, dialects remain an easy instrument in explaining what is local culture and what is foreign culture and what to take from the foreign culture and what to respect and just consider as culturally, socially, and linguistically different. The child will by the end understand that the variety of cultures that exist in the world makes up the world itself.

To conclude, when to talk about culture, the main thing that may come to mind is society, religion, education, habits, traditions, etc. They are all things that are taught to any member of the community at an early age, first by acquisition, then later by learning. The most important thing in this is not culture itself but the period of time where it is made known to the child; early and middle childhood go simultaneously with the phenomenon of speaking and expressing oneself and more importantly understanding; and the means of communication that serves these actions is the mother tongue. Then the institutions of knowledge in the child's mind depend on the language he speaks earlier. However, at schools, he will have to acquire knowledge in another language, and this may bring some results in building his culture but only if he is good at this new language in terms of wide grammar, vocabulary, syntax and lexis at the age of seven to 9.

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