ABSTRACT

Traditionally, the application of methods pedagogy has been limited and ineffective in capturing the imagination of today’s students. Students have echoed, especially in a globalized and technologically-driven world that traditional content based on existing curriculum is irrelevant and inapplicable to their lived experiences. As a result, the paradigm shift offered by post-methods pedagogy is one which empowered teacher autonomy and provides a meaningful context in which popular culture represents a bridge rather than a barrier between the student’s world, of which popular culture plays an important part, and the English language classroom. By creating synergies thematically and historically with popular music, film, and social media, a bridge to providing a fresh perspective to traditional content is explored.
INTRODUCTION

The first language landscape has emerged through its many evolutionary phases as a rich expression of cultural diversity. Globally culture and its many forms of manifestation represent the blueprint upon which unique people have framed their identity. It is this historical backdrop that gives credence to the expression of cultural identity as a ‘melting pot’. Students within the primary demographic being discussed of the United States (US) and the Caribbean are both culturally diverse and classrooms have students of various backgrounds. It represents the reformulation of the original imprints of a people seeking individuality and the creation of a unique cultural identity through interaction with everyday life and language. We may view the rise of popular culture within this broad framework.

Traditionally, students within the cultural ‘melting pot’ adopted readily to expressions that represent what is popular as it relates to music, dance, film, language and other cultural forms of expression. Students want to engage with current internet-generated content, modern music and speak the latest ‘slang’ from their environment. As a result, the unique language form of creole created by the people emerged. This is the first language of these students. Gained organically from the home environment, they embraced this indigenous native language as the first communicative language tool. Invariably, it is the native or natural cultural expression that forms a part of the popular cultural movement.

Juxtaposing the traditional with the modern manifestation of the first language context, globalisation and technological advancement has increased the speed and ease of communication which internet technology has facilitated. Therefore, students have become experts of sorts in social media communication, video sharing, instant messaging and other emerging technologies. These innovations facilitate the spread of modern culture and shifts in the language matching the ‘trends’ among teenagers globally. The saturation of these students in this modern culture has caused students to have feelings of alienation from the target English Language or second language acquisition because many students embrace their first language from birth until school attendance. It is expected by school administrators that students must learn the second language and discard the first one. This is very difficult to achieve without more. As a result, teachers have found it difficult to surpass what they deem to be a barrier to second language competencies. It is this traditional perspective that will be challenged to show that the modern or popular culture should not be alienated from the English Language classroom. Conscious efforts must be made towards integration to provide a bridge between students and effective second language acquisition strategies.
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