**I An Overview of Culture**

One of the problems at identifying culture is that culture seems to mean different things to different people at different times. Indeed, Monaghan & Just (2000) claim that there are probably as many definitions of culture as there are anthropologists. The pivotal definition of culture is often regarded as coming from British anthropologist Edward Tyler. Prior to Tyler, ideas of culture were largely understood to be the artistic or intellectual products of a people, what is also known as big C culture or upper case culture or a culture rather than just culture. As a word, culture is derived from the Latin cultura meaning ‘cultivation’ and this idea of culture was very much connected to its linguistic roots albeit with society replacing crops.

Tylor’s work, ***Primitive Culture*** (1903) made this purely aesthetic idea of culture obsolete. Although culture is still strongly connected with ideas of civilization, in the opening of his book Tyler gives the following definition of culture :

“Culture or civilization, taken in its broad ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.”

From this definition we can see that Tylor introduces three very important aspects to the notion of culture. Firstly, Tylor sees culture as much more than simply the intellectual and artistic output of a society by adding behaviour and the beliefs and morals that drive them as aspects of culture. Secondly, Tylor suggests that culture is acquired in some way by being a member of a society rather than being something that is manufactured by a specific group people. Thirdly, Tylor seems to predict the years of debate and dissatisfaction with definitions of culture by acknowledging that culture is a “complex whole” which includes a huge array of interacting and overlapping aspects of human existence.

In 1940 Franz Boas rejected the judgements found within the work of Tylor and those before him and their view that cultures can be compared and ranked. Boas saw culture as the peculiar way a group of people think and act rather than being something which evolves from primitive to advanced along a continuum.

Boas was perhaps the first to view culture as something that describes a people rather than evaluates them. Boas saw a society’s culture as being unique and to be taken on its own merits rather than compared to others and judged. Boas’ definition of culture was groundbreaking, not only because it removed the assigning of value to different cultures, but also because it focused predominantly on the idea of culture as something that we wear or carry with us and which shapes our behaviour, ideas and responses. The physical products of culture were given a much less important position.

With the growth of anthropology in the twentieth century there has been no shortage of suggestions, tweaks, additions, and realignments of the definition of culture. In 1952, Kroeber & Kluckhohn conducted a review of hundreds of definitions and statements of culture. From analyzing these concepts of culture they found that the major variability was not as wide as expected but centred on which elements were stressed and how explicitly comprehensive a definition was. Having viewed these definitions, they offered their own:

"Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artefacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, and on the other as conditioning elements of further action."

Although some work such as Kaplan (1966) points to the fact that some applied linguists were already researching the language-culture connection, Kramsch (2011) suggests that research relating to culture as a concept connected to language teaching was taken up in earnest from the 1970s. However, having looked at the early development of the concept of culture and before examining its further development and understanding to those engaged in the fields connected to language teaching, it is worth taking time to identify some commonly accepted aspects of culture beyond those offered by Kroeber & Kluckholn. When considering elements of culture, it is worth bearing in mind that they are not universally agreed upon, but rather constitute popular and enduing notions of culture.

Perhaps the first point that should be made, and one that is often made explicitly in all attempts at definition is that there is no black and white certainty in culture. In our life, we may meet historians and history professors telling us that there is no truth in history, there is only interpretation. Culture would appear to be the same. In its popular form, culture is an interpretation of difference and is, therefore, identified in opposition to something. In this sense, Kuper seems correct to say that culture is “a fiction written by the ethnographer.” Though we may feel culture is real, our understanding of culture- how we divide culture, classify culture or identify culture as a place that can be visited, a phenomenon that can be experienced or a process that can be witnessed – we can never hope to capture the complex reality of culture. As such, most ideas of culture are just that, ideas.

**Culture should be described but not judged**

Cultures may be different, but any assessment of culture should avoid judgements as cultures can only be understood in its own context. However, we need to accept cultural difference and differenciate between cultural difference and judgement.

***Scene 1.*** The narrative opens with a conversation between two of the students about home: Gita and Hande talked about how they missed home. They both agreed that it was hard to find the ingredients they needed to cook the dishes they missed, and that there was just the temptation to rely on fast food and pizzas. They missed their families and the ambiance and the sounds of the streets in the medium-sized towns that they each came from.

***Scene 2.*** Gita and Hande were not happy with western way of life particularly drinking wine or going to pubs in order for them to socialise. They were not happy with open marriages, girlfriend-boyfriend relationship because in their culture only arranged marriage that exist. They said that this contradicts their religion and that putting less dress is impolite and that drinking alcohol is forbidden in Islam.

**Culture changes**

Observation of any culture will show that culture is not static and is subject to change. Cultural change is partly historically bound as new ideas, inventions, practices and priorities arise and these are often influenced by the existing culture, or may be a reaction against it. Cultural change does not have to come from within as the new ideas, practices and inventions may be forced introduced from outside. This point is particularly worth noting given the increasingly global and interconnected world in which we live.

Although culture is always changing, it may be the case that the different elements within a culture do not change at the same speed. The core values of a culture which may or may not exist at an unconscious level, such as respect for elders, are subject to a much slower pace of change than certain surface practices and more visible manifestations of culture such as fashion or etiquette.

Whether it comes from inside or outside, or is quick or slow, change does happen and often produces what could be termed cultural knock-on effects. Changes to values may result in behavioural shifts and changes to practices established upon those values, alternatively, new inventions such as the smartphone may change attitudes to time, availability and information and alter the existing learned behaviour accordingly. Looking at cultural change from this perspective also illustrates the interconnectedness of elements within a culture and between different cultures.

**Big C Culture and small c culture : General and Specific**

For Peterson (2004) the Big “C” and Small “c” Culture are like a top and a bottom of an iceberg. The top is the visible culture, and the bottom is the invisible culture. The Big “C” Culture is a type of culture that refers to a set of facts easily observed and remembered. They are often described as objective or highbrow culture such as history, architecture, and geography. An example of how Big C Culture influences our perception of culture is when we look at the history of America liberating Europe from Nazism and communism, we start believing that America is a superpower and American culture needed to be studied and elevated. However, the Small “c” Culture is considered the subjective culture because it is not easily and immediately observed or understood such as people’s thinking, beliefs and customs.