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Level :First Year

Module :ICC

Course: One / Intercultural Communicative Competence

Introduction

   Students of foreign language worldwide often wish to develop a whole understanding of the people and culture of the language being studied. However, this is not often available as educational curriculum rarely include cultural content that may allow key ideas about how to develop intercultural competence. During the last decades, Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) was reintroduced as a result of its impact on foreign language teaching (Lopez-Rocha & Arevalo-Guerrero,2014). An important question for language tutors is: Do they really prepare their students for this challenge?

   An answer to such question requires many efforts of course designers and linguists to enable students develop the skills they need to communicate more efficiently and understand cultural tendencies. Creating appropriate conditions for language students to face intercultural challenge will be our aim in this course. Practical ideas to promote ICC in an integral way would certainly enhance students' eagerness to develop communicative skills for better functionality and effectiveness in future job careers and social roles.

Why ICC?

 Some researchers claim that culture is the marginalized sister of language (Hernnebry, 2014.135). This same idea is shared by students, who need to be enough aware about the country and people of that other foreign language. It has to be a teacher's concern to foster students' intercultural awareness rather than teach the foreign language simply for communication. A focus has to be done on the contexts in which that communication in going to take place so as to pave the way for meaningful interactions.

   A clear distinction is necessary between Intercultural Competence and Intercultural Communicative Competence. Byram (1997) argues that the first refers to '' individuals' ability to interact in their own language in their language with people from another country and culture,'' while ICC means '' interacting with people from other country and culture using a foreign language''. In fact, speaking in a foreign language open new horisons and facilitates interactions with people of different backgrounds.

 Language Classes and Cultural Incorporation

   Globalization and migration rose a need to integrate interculturality in educational curriculum. The Council of Europe (2001) set a document that highlights the importance of promoting intercultural communication and the understanding of cultural differences through authentic rather than superficial elements. The US Standards for Foreign Language Learning(ACTFL) define language goals in terms of communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities to obtain students with linguistic and intercultural competence.

   Course designers, therefore, should develop curriculums with a process model of Intercultural Competence (Deardorff, 2006)that emphasises in learners self-awareness, openness, and transformation (Furstenberg, 2010), and contributes for various models and approaches to the development of ICC. Besides, instructors have to take Byram's model(1997; 2008) of ICC summerised in five points: knowledge, attitudes, education, skills to understand and learn.

The role of instructors in developing intercultural competence can be not only by exploring ready-made activities, but designing new ones that support the development of ICC skills' objectives. Learner-centered approach encourages interactivity, active participation, and cooperation among peers in classroom context. Byram, Gribkova, and Starkey(2002) argue that foreign language teachers need to promote curiosity and independent exploration and inquiry in students to be active participants in activities which develops intercultural competence.

Intercultural competence cannot be acquired in a short period of time or in one module. It is a lifelong process that develops in learning. Adequate resources or materials are required to create conditions that help students develop critical communicative skills so as to learn about themselves and others. They will need to consider ''other's'' culture, values, and behaviours to first, understand, and then explain, the sources of intercultural conflict that may rise. Finally, these interculturally competent students will know how to effectively deal with any misunderstanding.

Challenges

A set of challenges have to be faced among which the right balance between language and culture, the kind of useful activities, students' own motivation and teachers' preparedness for the promotion of ICC skills. In addition, assessment remains a major challenge as it is not easy to evaluate each student's intercultural competence, because of their different perceptions. Each experience is an ultimate goal for every student. Additionally, some researchers suggest open assessment by using portfolios to record the process(Scarino) which later makes it easier to interpret meaning, critical reflection, self-evaluation, feedback, and awreness of regional differences and cultures.

Conclusion

The need for cultural awareness increases among learners and this must be the role of instructors to promote their intercultural and linguistic competence. Real conditions are to be created for students to promote ICC for easy intercultural interactions in diverse movements. Accurate skills and strategies for skills and strategies incorporation need awareness leading to ICC for global citizenship. Culture teaching approaches should shift from descriptive to interactionists, to enhance interactions and discussion guiding students to self-awareness, openness, and transformation. Developing ICC skills require students to be more aware about challenges of the process. In the end, developing intercultural awareness has to be combined with language learning to encourage students' exploration of their own culture and of the target language.

Outline

   Intercultural communicative competence includes knowledge, skills and attitudes at the interface between several cultural areas including the students' own values and worldviews and those of a target language country. Consequently, the development of intercultural communicative competence involves the students' experiences from their own cultural backgrounds allowing them to reflect on their individual cultural assumptions as an integral part of further development of their skills and knowledge of the world. Linguists and methodologists started to consider it as a major facet of language instruction only recently. Foreign language teaching methods stress on enabling learners to become successful communicators. They are expected to both Master the linguistic code they need and maintain proper relationships with their interlocutors.

   It is a challenge for language teachers and learners alike. The difficulty strongly felt in the countries where the experience of intercultural communication is fairly new. The challenge is to investigate the role of extra-linguistic, mainly culture-specific factors, in the process. The learners' mother culture can either be a facilitator or a barrier having positive or negative function as underlying determinants of the learners' knowledge, skills and attitudes, depends on the degree of similarity between the cultures involved in communication. The closer the relationship is between a mother culture and a target culture, of a speech community whose language is to study, the more successful the foreign language teaching/learning process is.

   Intercultural communicative sensitivity as a component of intercultural communicative competence is a major determinant affecting all the other components as it encourages the understanding of what other people need, and being helpful and kind to them. Its development lies in the learners' experience of a target culture by means of either a formal exposure during language courses when it is taught together with a foreign language, or by means of intercultural communication in courses specifically designed for this purpose. Besides, non-institutionalized means are possible in the course of informal interpersonal contacts with foreigners on various types of occasions.

   In fact, English has the status of a modern *lingua franca*, an international means of communication, which has become de-nationalized as each speaker uses it filtered through his/her own cultural experience. So, the ultimate goal in the process of foreign-language learning should be to become an intercultural mediator, a person who has mastered both linguistic competence and intercultural communicative competence and is able to go beyond boundaries thanks to the ability to recognize, negotiate and transfer cultural property and symbolic value.

   One of the reasons why people need to become intercultural communicators is that they experience cultural differences on a daily basis as the proximity is greater between cultures. Globalization as the main factor has made a change between the nations whose languages,

cultures and worldviews have differed significantly make contact now. It has become a basic truth today. The statement that intercultural communication is 'a must' is paramount in a world full of differences. People tend to co-operate with each other and act as partners in various fields although geographically speaking some might remain hundreds of miles away due to political and socio-economic changes. More people cross their own borders and become global students, tourists, employees, etc.

Thus, participants in intercultural encounters are challenged by various opportunities for cultural misunderstanding. This phenomenon is tightly linked to their success or failure in the process of communication. Today more than ever before, the biggest difficulty lies in the manner they deal with the culture-specific differences they face. Very often they do not lack linguistic skills, but still fail to achieve their communication goals. Most communication failures are the result of a low level of intercultural communicative competence or even a lack of it.

In postmodern reality marked with cultural diversity, linguistic competence is no longer a sufficient prerequisite of a communication success since communication has to be understood as more than a mere exchange of information and sending of messages. As noted by Paul Watzlawick, Janet Beavin and Don Jackson (1968) it consists of two mutually complementary levels: a factual one, which is an information exchange and an interpersonal one which serves to create relationships between speakers. Culture differences has an impact on both cases. First, communication success depends upon the receiver's understanding of the speaker's message in another cultural context, then how he tries to interpret it during the decoding phase. Second, it entails culture-specific expectations about the type of interpersonal relations proper to a given communication act.

1. Sensation seeking : Sensation seeking is a personality variable associated with adventure and a thirst for novelty (Everett & Palmgreen, 1995; Zuckerman, 1983, 1994). High sensation seekers enjoy physiologically stimulating experiences and the intense emotions associated with such experiences. Sensation seekers are predisposed to more socially acceptable forms contact with people from other cultures, as revealed in recent research. They look for opportunities to communicate with culturally different other individuals. This may explain why some people are more likely to volunteer at international student services on university campuses or sign up for study abroad programs as compared to others. Yet, it is not clear whether once they find these opportunities they are able to communicate effectively and appropriately.

2. Intercultural communication competence (ICC)
There appears to be consensus among researchers that ICC has to do with effectiveness (ability to accomplish one's goals) and appropriateness (to exhibit expected and accepted behaviour in context) in intercultural situations (Arasaratnam, 2007; Bradford, Allen, & Beisser, 2000; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984). In recent research, Arasaratnam and Doerfel (2005) developed a model of ICC based on the premise that ICC should be studied from the perspective of the "other" (as opposed to self-reported perceptions of one's own ICC), incorporating multiple cultural perspectives. An inductive approach was followed to reach five variables related to ICC, based on the participants' responses. They revealed one of the

few models of ICC which incorporates multiple cultural perspectives (Arasaratnam, 2006). The model identifies experience, listening skills, positive attitudes toward people from other cultures, motivation to interact with people from other cultures, and ability to empathise (engage in cognitive and emotional role-taking behaviour) as variables contributing to ICC.

Empathy not only contributes to positive attitudes toward others, but in turn helps to being perceived as a competent intercultural communicator. In other words, the five variables identified in the model interact to produce a result which is ICC (as perceived by the "other"). Researchers have developed an instrument that translates well into multiple cultural contexts presents unique challenges to the researcher to explore the relationship between ICC and sensation seeking.

3. Sensation seeking and ICC

Arasaratnam's (2006) model of ICC shows a relationship between intercultural experience, motivation to interact with people from other cultures, and positive attitudes toward people from other cultures, all leading to ICC. High sensation seekers are predisposed to attitudes and behaviours that are favourable for intercultural communication. A positive attitude towards people from other cultures is fostered because they represent a form of novelty. High sensation seekers' affinity for new experiences is the driving force behind their motivation to communicate with people from other cultures as well as their favourable attitude toward such people. An experience in intercultural communication leads to positive attitudes toward people of other cultures, which leads to motivation to communicate with people from other cultures, which in turn leads to more experience in ICC.

Based on this, it can be reasoned that more experience in communicating with people from other cultures develops intercultural communicative competence. High sensation seekers are not only predisposed to seeking intercultural contact, but also equipped to exhibit ICC. The relationship between sensation seeking and ICC reveals that sensation seekers achieve better intercultural communication competence.

4. Knowledge of English and ICC

English has inevitably become part of people's lives in many fields today. English teaching and learning is likely to be ineffective in producing perfect language users. For instance, Prapphal's study (2001) reveals that the English ability status of Thai graduates reveals that the English ability status of Thai graduates is ranked eighth among ASEAN member countries, according to the CU-TEP (Chulalongkorn University Test of English Proficiency). Additionally, Wiriyachitra (2002) emphasizes that the lack of effective English skills of Thais communicating in the workplace, particularly in the Thai tourism field, tends to give foreigners a negative attitude towards Thailand.

Thais often lack English language speaking and listening in the classroom. According to Simpson (2011), English teaching in Thailand concentrates on grammar and accuracy and teachers primarily deliver English lessons using the Thai language; therefore, students are not sufficiently exposed to practicing speaking and listening skills. Other factors contributing to unsuccessful English teaching and learning in Thailand is pointed by Mackenzie (2002) who found that being too shy to speak English, being demotivated to communicate in English, worrying too much about accuracy, and relying on rote memorization are characteristics of Thai learners that result in ineffective English language learning.

New English programs with the increased employment of native English teachers applying several teaching approaches such as communicative language teaching (CLT) or student centeredness were adopted to improve Thai English learners. Hence, these were unsuccessful as adopting communicative language teaching (CLT) approach was considered inappropriate attitude in Thai cultures of unquestioning and obeying the senior people (Wangkijichinda, 2011). Student centeredness did not fit their culture since Thai English teachers were often the center of the classroom and acted as knowledge providers for obedient listeners and knowledge receivers. Consequently, English skills development was far of being a priority to promote English communication success in intercultural contexts, other skills and knowledge such as intercultural communicative competence.

Course: **Two/ Intercultural communicative competence: awareness enhanced and foreign language classroom**

Introduction:

   In the American education system, the development of students into global citizens has become essential. In foreign language (FL) education, many organizations and scholars have responded to this need. The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and the Modern Language Association's (MLA) *ad hoc* committee have developed standards and statements that address this aspect of language learning. ACTFL underscores the importance of culture in Standards 2.1 and 2.2, defining culture in the form of products, practices, and perspectives (National Standards, 1999). The MLA *ad hoc* committee emphasizes that FL majors should develop into "educated speakers who have deep trans-lingual and transcultural competence" (p. 3), which "places value on the ability to operate between languages" (pp. 3-4). This competence allows students to interact with speakers from other cultures and "reflect on the world and themselves through the lens of another language and culture" (MLA, 2007, p. 4). In the European context, Byram (1997) advocates for extending the interaction from a simple exchange of information to "understand[ing] and relat[ing] to people from other countries" (p. 5). Many scholars have investigated the move away from communicative language learning to intercultural communicative competence (ICC) or intercultural competence (IC) in FL education (Aguilar, 2007; Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2009; Liddicoat, 2002 among others). Although learners' development of IC have been examined (e.g. Belz, 2002), fewer investigations on teachers' development of IC, their comprehension of it, and their education in teaching IC to their students exist.

Definition of ICC:

   Intercultural communicative competence, or ICC, refers to the ability to understand cultures, including your own, and use this understanding to communicate with people from other cultures successfully.

Example
ICC could include understanding how gestures and the distance between speakers vary from culture to culture.

Communicative Competence and the Native Speaker
   In the 1970s Hymes (1972) introduced the concept of communicative competence to understand first language acquisition, it was necessary to take into account not only how grammatical competence but also the ability to use language appropriately were acquired, thus placing emphasis on sociolinguistic competence among native speakers. This idea was taken up by Canale and Swain (1980) in North America and Van Ek (1986) in Europe, who applied it to foreign language acquisition and turned it into a fundamental concept in the development of communicative language teaching. The aim of communicative methodology was to acquire the necessary skills to communicate in socially and culturally appropriate ways, and, in the learning process, focus was placed on functions, role playing and real situations, among other aspects. Canale and Swain (1980) proposed that communicative competence was minimally composed of grammatical, sociolinguistic and strategic competence (1980: 27–31):
- *Grammatical competence* includes the knowledge of lexical items and rules of morphology, syntax, sentence grammar semantics, and phonology.
- *Sociolinguistic competence* is made up of two different sets of rules: sociocultural and discourse. The former focuses on the extent to which certain propositions and communicative functions are appropriate within a given sociocultural context, and the extent to which appropriate attitude and register or style are conveyed by a

particular grammatical form within a given sociocultural context. Rules of discourse are concerned with cohesion and coherence of groups of utterances.

- Finally, *strategic competence* is made up of verbal and nonverbal communication strategies that the speaker may resort to when breakdowns in communication take place due to performance variables or to insufficient competence. These strategies may relate to grammatical competence (how to paraphrase, how to simplify, etc.) or to sociolinguistic competence (for instance, how to address strangers when unsure of their social status).

At the same time, they insisted on the need to establish communicative interaction with "highly competent speakers" of the language so that learners would be able to respond to genuine communicative needs in realistic second language situations. On the other hand, they also proposed that learners should be taught about the second language culture in order to provide them with the sociocultural knowledge of the second language necessary to infer the social meanings or values of utterances.

A few years later, Van Ek (1986) suggested that foreign language (FL) teaching was not concerned merely with training in communication skills but should also involve the personal and social development of the learner as an individual, and, therefore, he presented a framework for comprehensive FL objectives which included aspects such as social competence, the promotion of autonomy or the development of social responsibility (1986:33–65), quoted by Byram (1997: 9). The model he presented contemplated six dimensions of CC, each of them called competence also. In fact, they are six points of view of a complex phenomenon, which overlap and are mutually dependent:

- *Linguistic competence*: The ability to produce and interpret meaningful utterances which are formed in accordance with the rules of the language concerned and bear their conventional meaning ... that meaning which native speakers would normally attach to an utterance when used in isolation.
- *Sociolinguistic competence*: The awareness of ways in which the choice of language forms ... is determined by such conditions as setting, relationship between communication partners, communicative intention, etc. ... [this] competence covers the relation between linguistic signals and their contextual –or situational– meaning.
- *Discourse competence*: The ability to use appropriate strategies in the construction and interpretation of texts.
- *Strategic competence*: When communication is difficult we have to find ways of 'getting our meaning across' or 'finding out what somebody means'; these are communication strategies, such as rephrasing, asking for clarification.

Culture awareness

Culture awareness and ICC/IC has become an integral part of the FL classroom. Many scholars and educators remind us, language instructors that language and culture are to be seen as one entity (e.g. Agar, 1994; Kramsch, 2000). Instead of considering language and culture as two separate units, Kramsch (2000) accentuates that culture is "the very core of language teaching" and should aid language proficiency (p. 8). Studies by Chavez (2002, 2005) and Yang (2012), among others, on students' beliefs and perspective of language and culture in the FL classroom illustrate various results. Yang's (2012) study on 35 students found that the learners chose a FL for different reasons. Motivation, textbooks, technology, instruction, and assessment played a role for the students. Students were motivated due to being heritage learners tended to want to learn about the language, but also the culture to be able to carry out traditions.

Culture Defined:

Definition of culture to what might be encountered in a FL class and particular aspects of culture seem to have been labeled for majors of the subject only. In the literature on culture in the FL field, a distinction is commonly made between high culture, also referred to as "C" (capital or big C), which includes architecture, art, history, literature, and music, and "c" (little c) which refers to everyday life, behavior, traditions, and the perspectives of the people in the culture of study. In FL education, "C" seemed to have been traditionally preferred over "c", however, a shift from "C" to "c" has occurred with the influences from fields such as Anthropology and Sociology (Hall, 1990). Byram (1986) calls for the inclusion of all features within culture, including "C" and "c".

These definitions of culture and what culture entails supply the content that can be included in instruction, which tends to be very factual and not necessarily very interpretive, or so they seem too many beginning instructors. The Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21stCentury (National Standards, 1999) discuss culture in terms of products, practices, and perspectives (three P's). Two of these three strands represent facts, however, the third strand (perspectives) allows for interpretive expansion. Going beyond the facts and interpreting cultural interaction is what IC tends to emphasize. Many definitions exist for IC; in Byram's (1997) terms, IC is the willingness to consider and respect other beliefs and behaviors "and to analyse them from the viewpoint of the others with whom one is engaging" (p. 34). Liddicoat et al. (2003) state "Intercultural language learning involves developing with learners and understanding of their own language(s) and culture(s) in relation to an additional language and culture." (p. 46). The authors go further by maintaining, "It [intercultural language learning] is a dialogue that allows for reaching a common ground for negotiation to take place, and where variable points of view are recognised, mediated, and accepted" (p. 46). Learning and teaching FLs automatically include IC, yet how the "learning" and "teaching" of IC occurs and how it is mediated in the FL classroom is a question that requires more attention.

In the classroom
Ways to develop this competence include learners producing a written or online guide to their own country and culture for visitors, reading and discussing guides written by visitors, researching aspects of a target culture in various media including cinema, literature and television, giving presentations on aspects of the target culture, and exploiting the teacher's own expertise of their own culture.

 Below is a focus-group interview dealing with the definition of culture and intercultural learning in a study held for the purpose of what to teach in the classroom. A constant engagement with intercultural and cultural terms and ideas that the participants completed for this study illustrates that teachers need constant and continuous interaction and engagement with pedagogical topics such as culture and intercultural learning. The subjects' uncertainty in defining the term culture and the shift from one concept to another demonstrates the complexity and difficulty of culture. Since the participants struggle with defining the term, it becomes apparent that their understanding of what or how culture *should* be taught might be unclear. To gain a deeper insight on the perception of teaching culture and what it entails in the classroom, the participants discussed various ideas and their understanding in the focus-group interview. An important moment occurred when asking what culture really is:

Justin: I don't necessarily think that the culture would be the only pragmatics position of that, it would be limited to that, but I think **culture is already part of the language** to a certain extent.
[…]
Justin: So, teaching language and culture would also encompass being able to use language to engage within a culture?
Everybody: Right!
[…]
Justin: The transition is from **linguistic fluency** so to speak to a more **cultural fluency**.
Franc: Oh, but they **go hand-in-hand**. I mean you, in order to understand language, you need to understand the culture and you understand the cultures through the language.
[…]
Linda: Doesn't it depend on how you **define culture**? Because it's such a broad topic… (Focus group interview) [emphasis added]

This excerpt underscores the difficulty of defining culture and therefore having to decide what to teach in the classroom. Having the opportunity to discuss this phenomenon with each other, the participants attempt to make sense of the complexity that culture brings to their work .

Course: Three / Teaching Culture in the EFL/ESL classroom

Introduction

The need for mastering a foreign or second language besides one's own seems to grow rapidly these two decades. More people are learning languages for their personal and professional needs. Specifically, cultural aspects of the language being learned must be taught concurrently with the linguistic aspects, which have traditionally been emphasized.

Teaching culture to foreign or second language students may not be a novel topic, as it has repeatedly been discussed by a whole of authors such as Atkinson (1999), Blatchford (1986), Brown (1986), Brown (2007a), Brown and Eisterhold (2004), Brooks (1986), Damen (1987), Morgan and Cain (2000), Tang (1999), Tang (2006), Valdes (1986), to name but a few.

One might wonder what role may culture play in language curriculum and language programs for language teachers. Likewise, it is still unclear for learners of second and foreign language classrooms about effective methods teachers might practice for integrating culture in learning programs. To that end, it is necessary to highlight some terms in relation to this topic like language, culture, enculturation, acculturation, culture awareness, cross-cultural awareness, cultural identity, culture bump, and culture shock. An understanding of these basic terms will enable one to realize the importance of culture in language learning and teaching.

1. Language

Language is a system of verbal and nonverbal signs used to express meanings. Patrikis (1988) simply defined language as signs that convey meanings. Language is also "a system of signs that is seen as having itself a cultural value" (Kramsch, 1998, p. 3). From a linguistic perspective, Sapir (1968), a renowned linguist, see it as an entirely human and non-intrinsic method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols.

2.Culture

Culture is a phenomenon that consists of unwritten rules of social collective programming of the mind, special to the members of one group or category of people from others. Culture is learned or derived from one's social environment, but not innate. Brown (2007) suggested that culture is a set of ideas, customs, skills, arts, and tools that characterize a certain group of people in a given period of time. Though many definitions have tried to define the term culture, there is no single definition that satisfies everyone. However, one of the well-known definitions of culture is Goodenoug's (1957).

…a society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members, and to do so in any role that they accept for any one of themselves (p. 167).

The concept ''*culture*'' should be distinguished from ''human *nature*'' on one side and from an individual's *''personality''* on the other.

Human nature is what all human beings have in common. It represents the inherited part within our genes that determines our physical and basic psychological functioning. The human ability to feel fear, anger, love, joy, sadness, and shame; the need to associate with others and to play and exercise oneself; and the facility to observe the environment and to talk about it. However, what one does with these feelings, how one expresses fear, joy, observations, and so on, is modified by culture.

The *personality* of an individual, on the other hand, is his or her unique personal set of mental programs that need not be shared with any other human being. It is based on traits that are partly inherited within the individual's unique set of genes and partly learned. *Learned* means modified by the influence of collective programming (culture) *as well as* by unique personal experiences. The following figure represents the previous three concepts:

Specific to individual   Inherited and learned

PERSONALITY

Specific to group
or category   CULTURE   Learned

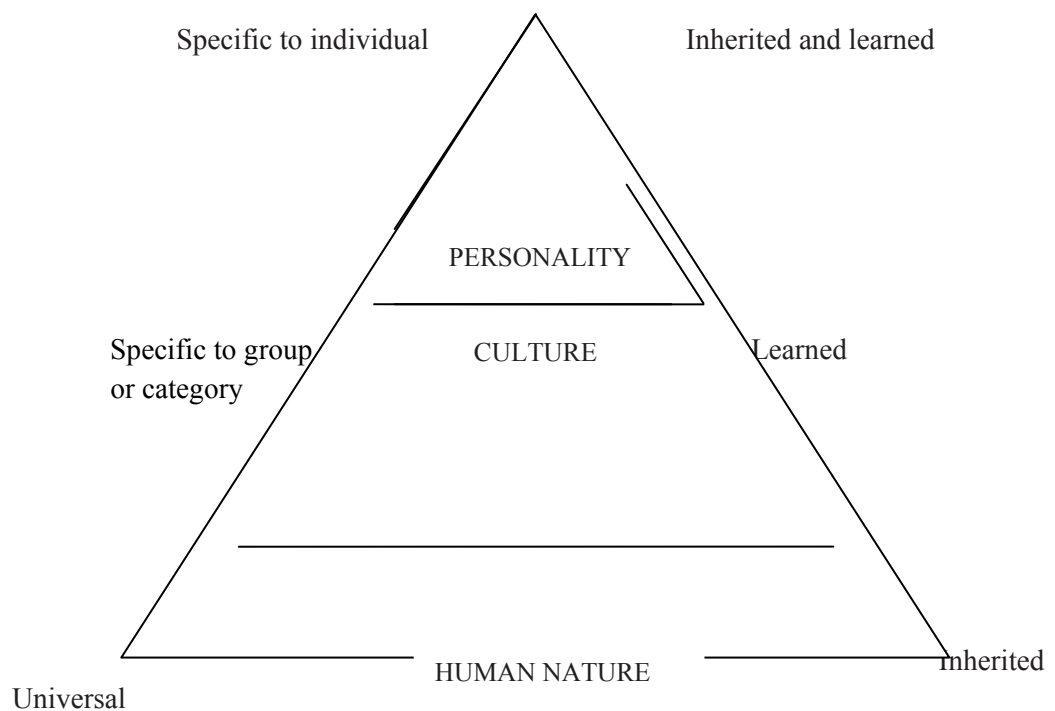HUMAN NATURE   Inherited

Universal

Fig: Three Levels of Uniqueness in Mental Programming

According to the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning (1996), culture is typically understood to include the philosophical perspectives, the behavioral practices, and both tangible and intangible products of a society. The relationship between perspectives, practices, and products within culture is illustrated below.

Figure 1: What constitutes culture? (The National Standards for Foreign Language Learning, 1996, p. 43)
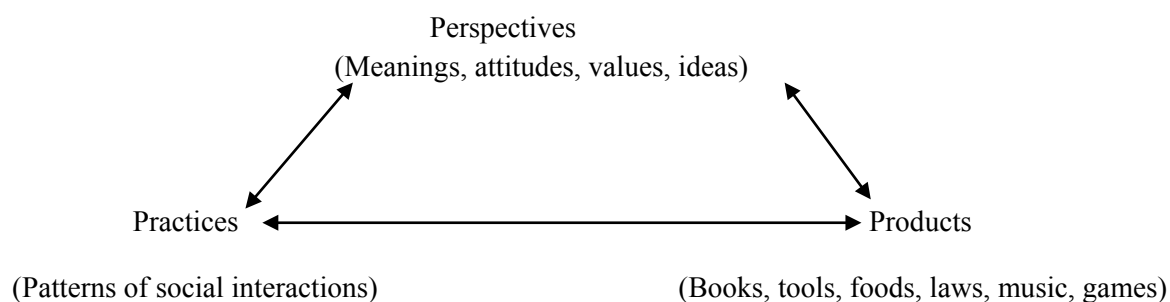
Perspectives
(Meanings, attitudes, values, ideas)

Practices ←—————————————————→ Products

(Patterns of social interactions)   (Books, tools, foods, laws, music, games)

Figure 1: What constitutes culture? (The National Standards for Foreign Language Learning, 1996, p. 43)

Characteristics and components of culture

   Damen (1987) presented six components of culture:

1. Culture is learned.

2. Cultures and cultural patterns change.

3. Culture is a universal fact of human life.

4. Cultures provide sets of unique and interrelated, selected blueprints for living and accompanying sets of values and beliefs to support these blueprints.

5. Language and culture are closely related and interactive.

6. Culture functions as a filtering device between its bearers and the great range of stimuli presented by the environment.

   One culture can be distinguished from another thanks to its individual components (such as dress, systems of rewards and punishments, uses of time and space, fashions of eating, means of communication, family relationships, beliefs and values), or from the more social point of view of its systems (such as kinship, education, economy, government association, and health). However, Nieto (2002, p. 10) postulated that "culture is complex and intricate; it cannot be reduced to holidays, foods, or dances, although these are of course elements of cultures."

The importance of English
   English as the foremost medium of international communication, is called upon to mediate a whole range of cultural and cross-cultural concepts between people to a greater degree than in the past. The burgeoning bibliography on cross-cultural matters in language teaching is a symptom of wider social, political, and technological developments and in particular the increased mobility of people brought about by modern communications, electronic media, and international organizations. The international dimension of English language teaching offers ELT a potentially more significant role than traditional ethnocentric views of the language as a peculiarly Anglo-Saxon entity would have allowed.
   What should language teaching be about?
   It is obvious that not all lessons about 'the English language' have, in a way, to be 'about' English. Apart from language itself, facts about *science and society may be* the most popular source of content, and the least popular 'American life and institutions'. This is an interesting contrast, in that 'science and society' are the

most neutral/universal cultural areas in the list, while American culture is the most 'marked' as the majority of advanced level learners are generally university students with a healthy interest in the world around them, and a less healthy obsession with passing their exams at all costs. A significantly lower level of all students may have quite strong interest in British life and institutions. They are very interested in British culture. These link between learning a language and learning about the people who speak that language.

Ways forward the cultural background

Knowledge of the target culture remains an important part of language learning, especially at higher levels. This may be due to both subjective and objective factors: on the one hand, the sheer, intrinsic delight in discovering more about a culture so different from the students' own—this includes the escapist factor. On the other hand, there is what Gillian Brown has discussed as the 'interpretation of discourse': an intuitive competence, drawing on cultural knowledge, which native-speakers possess, but which learners have to be trained in (Brown, 1990). Training students to infer culturally-determined meanings from clues in a text is a particularly valuable approach with advanced students who have to deal with authentic texts. It is an approach to the 'cultural background' very different from the traditional teaching of facts about 'British life and institutions'.

In fact, there is still a place for this kind of 'learning about' the target culture, but that wherever possible such 'fact-based' sessions should be integrated with the other work done by the class and should be consistent with a learner-centered methodology, if that is the option adopted by the teacher. Activities in class may take the form of games, questionnaires, quizzes, and project work.

For example, at elementary level, a true-false exercise about Britain or the USA may be conducted as a quiz game or as part of project work. Not only are such activities potentially enjoyable in themselves but may also be of practical value to any students planning to travel abroad:

True or False?
—People drive on the left in the UK.
—If you go to Oxford you will see Buckingham Palace.
—You cannot use English pounds in Scotland.
—The head of the government in Britain is the President.
—There are 20 pence in a pound, etc.

The Cultural Foreground

In fact, there is a place for materials based on local culture in the EFL classroom but that, in this context at least, it might not be as predominant as that suggested by Alptekin (1984). Nevertheless, the direction taken by Adaskou *et al.,* (1990) in devising materials for Morocco following an assessment of teachers' attitudes to the cultural content of textbooks is consistent with the approach taken here in that they avoided a top-down strategy in arriving at their decisions. Although most of the texts chosen by the Morocco team involve local uses of English, they also include texts of general interest corresponding to the topics in my 'English as education' category (technology, unemployment, history, science, etc. (Adaskou *et al.,* 1990: 9). A technique I have found useful for drawing

A useful technique for drawing on local culture in a natural 'communicative' way, is a team game which reverses the usual roles of teacher and learners. The students, in teams, prepare questions about local culture for the native-speaker teacher to answer. The group which asks most questions to which the teacher does not know the answer, wins. (If the 'innocent' teacher is new to the country, he or she may be allowed to select a student as informant/advisor.)

This kind of activity makes for a more reciprocal relationship between the culture of the teacher and that of the students. It involves a built-in recognition of the value of the learners' culture and the value of their contribution to the learning process: As Freire puts it: 'the literacy process, as cultural action for freedom, is

an act of knowing in which the learner assumes the role of knowing subject, in dialogue with the educator' (1970: 29). This use of learner input, incidentally, helps the guest teacher develop greater awareness of local historical events and attitudes towards them, thus avoiding certain *cultural faux pas,* which the Alptekins and Adaskou *et al.* warn against.

Placing or displacing the native speaker?

Rampton's (1990) assertion that linguistic 'expertise' is more important than notions of who is and who is not a 'native speaker' gains implicit support from the way students responded to question 4 of my survey. In the long run, what seems to matter most to students is the teacher's ability to do the job; it is not 'who you are, but what you know' (Rampton, 1990:99) that students will pay for. Non-native-speaker teachers of English are not necessarily worse off than their native-speaker colleagues: they can be, and often are, as 'expert' in English and ELT methodology as native speakers, and have the added advantage of being able to draw *research?* Value of the content. One looks forward to more examination material which successfully balances exam preparation with preparation for living in the real world, multiple choice with personal choice.

Cultural awareness and cross-cultural awareness

Cortazzi and Jin (1999) pointed out that cultural awareness means to become aware of members of another cultural group including their behavior, their expectations, their perspectives and values. Kuang (2007) delineated four levels of cultural awareness. At the first level, people are aware of their ways of doing things, and their way is the only way. They ignore the influence of cultural differences. People become aware of other ways of doing things at the second level, but they still see their way as the best. Cultural differences at this level are deemed as a source of problems, and people are likely to ignore

the problems or reduce their importance. People at the third level of cultural awareness are aware of both their way of doing things and others" ways of doing things, and they tend to choose the best way according to the situation. At the third level, people come to realize that cultural differences can lead to problems as well as benefits, and are willing to use cultural diversity to generate new solutions and alternatives. Finally, at the fourth level, people from various cultural backgrounds are brought together to create a culture of shared meanings. People at this level repeatedly dialogue with others, and create new meanings and rules to meet the needs of a specific situation. In essence, it can be said that individuals who experience the four levels of cultural awareness proposed by Kuang (2007) move from a stage of "cultural ignorance" to a stage of "cultural competence."

Krasner (1999) mentioned a three-step process of internalizing culture that was proposed by Agar (1994): mistake, awareness, and repair. Generally, step one, mistake, is when something goes wrong; step two, awareness, is when the learners know the frame of the new culture and possible alternatives; step three, repair, is when learners try to adjust to the new culture. A critical goal of culture teaching in foreign language teaching, as Krasner postulated, is raising students" awareness about the target culture.

Like cultural awareness, cross-cultural awareness, as Damen (1987) indicated, involves discovering and understanding one's own culturally conditioned behavior and thinking, as well as the patterns of others. It is also "the force that moves a culture learner across the acculturation continuum from a state of no understanding of, or even hostility to, a new culture to near total understanding, from monoculturalism, to bi- or multi-culturalism" (Damen, 1987, p. 141). In a similar vein, intercultural communication is defined as acts of communication undertaken by individuals identified with groups exhibiting intergroup variation in shared social and cultural patterns (Damen, 1987). Citing from Rich and Ogawa (1982), Damen remarked that the term **intercultural communication** has had different names such as ***cross-cultural communication***, ***transcultural communication***, ***interracial communication***, ***international communication***, and ***contracultural communication***. Zhang (2007) argued that having the proper awareness of cross-cultural communication is the first step to achieve harmony and success of intercultural communication.

Cultural identity, culture shock, and culture bump

   Block (2007:12) states that individuals are defined by categories based on social class, religion, education, peer groups, but most of all, they are shaped and formed by their ''culture''. According to Norton (2006 :3) ''identity is constructed and constructs by language''. An enriched cultural identity is to be developed with the aim of culture-related competences. In fact, there is a focus on the cultural component for language teachers to prepare learners who can actively function in a cross-cultural environment or in another culture (Byram, Feng 2004: 149). There has always been a significant impact when one experiences what it is like to be an English learner in another environment with a different culture.

   Culture shock which is a common experience for a person learning a second language in a second culture refers to the phenomena ranging from mild irritating to deep psychological panic and crisis (Brown, 1986, 2007). In terms of the origin of the term, Damen (1987) pointed out that it was coined in 1958 by Oberg who suggested that it resulted from anxiety over losing familiar signs and symbols. Damen further indicated that culture shock is an intermediate stage in the acculturative process, and is particularly painful as it follows an initial period of euphoria and joy at the new and strange. Culture shock may endure for some, whereas for others it is quickly followed by a devastating period of depression, dislike of the new and strange, illness, discouragement, and despair (Damen, 1987).

Using Pederson (1995) as a guide, Brown and Eisterhold (2004) described the classic model of culture shock as a U-shape curve of five stages.

1. The honeymoon stage: The observed differences of the new culture look attractive and exciting.

2. The disintegration stage: The newcomer is frustrated and depressed. He tends to withdraw in response to the new culture and is in a des-integration stage

3. The reintegration stage: In this stage, culture appears to be a problem, and the newcomer is defensive, not responsive.

4. The autonomy stage: The newcomer in the autonomy stage has perspective on the culture, and his or her opinions are balanced, objective, and may indeed be relatively positive.

5. The interdependence stage: Some people attain the interdependence stage when they adopt a new identity as a bicultural or multicultural person.

Archer (1986) declares that culture bump occurs when a person from one culture finds himself or herself in a different, strange, or uncomfortable situation when interacting with people of a different culture. This similar phenomenon may result from a difference in the way people from one culture behave in a certain situation from those in another culture. Archer indicates that culture bumps happen when a person has expectations of one behavior and gets something completely different; and an individual does not have to leave one's own culture in order to experience a culture bump.
  Usually, a culture bump is instantaneous and lasts for minutes or seconds, but can have long-lasting effects. It can occur any time an individual is in contact with members of another culture (Archer, 1986). In contrast, culture shock lasts over an extended period of time. Culture bumps are beneficial both for teachers and students as they lead to an awareness of self by providing skill development in extrapolating one cultural influence on everyday life, expressing feelings successfully in a cross-cultural situation, and observing behavior. Archer say that though culture bumps can be negative, neutral, and positive, negative culture bumps should ideally be eliminated.

  Culture bumps can happen to anyone who is not familiar with a new culture, especially with native English speaking teachers working in English as a foreign language context. It is inevitable for them to use the incident to teach their own culture as knowledge in authentic situation is more instructing than obtained from any books. According to Jiang (2001) culture bumps can happen to anyone who is not familiar with a new culture. Therefore, not only language students but language teachers may also encounter such experiences which can turn out to be very instructive for teachers and students to discuss in the class.

  More students are doing part of their studies not only in neighboring countries, but also at universities in other continents. Studying there may be enriching in many respects, but adaptation to a new study environment is not always easy. Higher students have a long history of schooling with patterns of learning and study habits which have been formed in interaction with their cultural and educational environments. These patterns of learning, including approaches to learning, regulation strategies, conceptions of learning, and learning orientations, may coincide or conflict with the way of learning in universities abroad. Wierstra et al. (2003), for example, found marked differences in educational cultures between Northern and Southern

Europe as perceived by international exchange students, and associated differences in students" learning patterns. Bieman and Van Mil (2008) studied Dutch and Chinese first year students "learning patterns at a Dutch agricultural university.

The Chinese students indicated to use more reproductive, stepwise, sequential, detailed and analytic study strategies, while their Dutch colleagues reported to use more deep, structuring, and relating strategies aimed at identifying main points and constructing an overall, coherent picture of the study materials. The authors concluded that the way the Chinese Students were used to learn in China, did not fit the demands of the educational system at this Dutch university, and that a lot of Chinese Students experienced problems to adapt their way of learning to the Dutch educational system. Studies such as these underline the importance of knowing more about the views, motives, study habits and cultural norms students bring with them when they go abroad for their studies. Knowing more about these differences can be highly informative about how we might support students with their adaptation to new learning environments.

Language-culture relationship

Shaul and Furbee (1998) stated that languages and cultures are two concepts that are systematic to a large degree, and are thus observable and describable. These authors added that whereas the systematic description of language is called linguistics, the description of cultures is called ethnography. In addition, a lot of authors have declared that language and culture are closely related (Ardila-Rey, 2008; Brown, 2007; Damen, 1987; Kuang, 2007; Kramsch, 1998; Tang, 1999). For example, Ardila-Rey (2008) maintained that: "Language and culture are inextricably linked with each other" (p. 335). Likewise, Brown (2007) pointed out the interrelatedness of language and culture.

Language is part of culture, and culture is part of language. The acquisition of a second language, except for specialized, instrumental acquisition (as may be the case, say, in acquisition of reading knowledge of a language for examining scientific texts), is also the acquisition of a second culture" (pp. 189-190). In the same vein, Kramsch (1998) held that language is the main means whereby people conduct their social lives and when it is used in context of communication, it is bound up with culture in various and complex ways. Tang (1999) went even further by equating the concept of language with that of culture. In other words, this author claimed that language is synonymous with culture. Another author, however, considers one as the container of the other. Kuang (2007, p. 75) wrote: "Language is the carrier of culture and culture is the content of language."

Language is for some regarded as the product of culture, as Muir (2007) asserted that language is just one of the various cultural products. Wardhaugh (2010) pinpointed that relationship in three constituents between. First, the structure of a language determines the way in which speakers of that language view the world. Second, a relatively weaker version is that the structure of a language does not determine the world-view, but it is still greatly influential in predisposing speakers of a language toward adopting a particular world-view. Third, it is also claimed that there is little or no relationship between language and culture.

The issue of the relationship between language and culture has also been mentioned in a much discussed hypothesis proposed by Sapir and Whorf. The former was a linguist, and the latter was Sapir's student who was a chemical engineer by training, a fire prevention engineer by vocation and a linguist by avocation, as Wardhaugh (2010) mentioned. The hypothesis has been given several different names: the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, the Whorfian hypothesis, Linguistic Relativity, or Linguistic Determinism (Brown, 2007).

When addressing the question of the extent and the way language is related to the world-view of the people who speak it, Eastman (1980, p. 75) summarized the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis as follows: "A person's language determines how that person segments his world." The hypothesis Sapir and Whorf proposed has become two different versions: a strong one and a weaker one. Whereas the strong version may not have received very much approval, the weak one is likely to be easily "received." Commenting on the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, Kramsch (1998, p.13) wrote: The strong version of Whorf's hypothesis, therefore, that posits that language determines the way we think, cannot be taken seriously, but a weak version, supported by the findings that there are cultural differences in the semantic associations evoked by seemingly common concepts, is generally accepted nowadays p.13) wrote:

The strong version of Whorf's hypothesis, therefore, posits that language determines the way we think, cannot be taken seriously, but a weak version, supported by the findings that there are cultural differences in the semantic associations evoked by seemingly common concepts, is generally accepted nowadays.

Like Kramsch, Bonvillain (2000) succinctly summarized the two versions of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis:

The opinions of Sapir and Whorf on relationships among language, thought, and behavior have come to be known as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. One summation of this theory, sometimes referred to as the "weak version," is that some elements of language, for example, in vocabulary or grammatical systems, influence speakers" perceptions and can affect their attitudes and behavior. The "strong version" suggests that language is ultimately directive in this process. The difference between the two versions seems to be the degree of control that language exerts. The "strong" position is clearly unprovable" (pp. 51-52).

In short, examining the evidence to support or disprove the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, Wardhaugh (2010) emphasized that the most valid conclusion concerning the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is that it is still unproved. Total acceptance as well as outright rejection of the hypothesis may not appear logical. Therefore, most researchers seem to admit that there is a relationship between language and culture, but the exact influence of one on the other can still be a contentious issue that is not easily proved or disproved.