Cross-Cultural Awareness and Teaching English as a Second Language in the Context of Globalization

Natia Davitishvili

Gori State Teaching University, Gori, Georgia

The paper focuses on the inseparability of language and culture, highlighting the significant role of cross-cultural awareness and communicative competence in teaching English as a second language (TESL) in the context of increasingly internationalized global world. Cross-cultural awareness has always been important in modern language studies, as preparing students for effective and competent intercultural communication requires not only mere teaching of linguistic skills like phonology, morphology, lexicology, and syntax, but also the vital component of cultural knowledge and awareness. Communication that lacks appropriate cultural content often results in an odd or humorous situation leading to misunderstanding and miscommunication. Therefore, the present paper claims that in TESL it is necessary to incorporate and develop aspects of cross-cultural awareness as a part of the course curriculum to immerse students in effective intercultural communicative competence. It is strongly believed that developing cross-cultural awareness through learning and practicing the patterns of the current lifestyle in the target culture will help the learners overcome both cultural shock and intercultural communicative barriers easier, compare the target culture with their own, and find the similarities and differences between them, thus coping with cross-cultural communication problems successfully. There are many challenges related to teaching English as a lingua franca in a cross-cultural context of globalization—English, not being the native language of the learners, triggers a great number of problems connected with teaching and developing cross-cultural awareness. This paper offers some strategies for coping with them.

Keywords: cross-cultural awareness, cultural values, cultivate intercultural communicative competence, target culture, overcome intercultural communicative barriers

Introduction

The problem of cross-cultural awareness in communication emerges as a result of economic globalization and mass migration of people, as well as a backlash to the crisis of multiculturalism. Cultural critic Edward Hall (1959) termed *intercultural communication* as a new discipline in human sciences which became a part of the Communication Studies in the mid-70s. People need to interact and communicate with the people of different cultures across the borders. In so doing, successful communication largely depends on the cross-cultural awareness and competence. Intercultural Communicative Competence "involves the knowledge, motivation and skills to interact effectively and appropriately with members of different cultures" (Barnett & Lee 2002, p. 208).

Natia Davitishvili, Ph.D., associate professor of English Studies at Gori State Teaching University, Georgia.

In fact, intercultural competence is the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with people of other cultures.

Cultural assimilation and intercultural awareness have been an important hub of modern communicative language studies, reflecting a greater significance of the inseparability of language and culture and the need to prepare students for effective intercultural communication in order to succeed in a global work environment (Kirvalidze, 2017). Under the tutelage of such backdrop, this paper focuses on prioritizing intercultural awareness both in teaching and learning English, linking culture with language in pursuit of excellence in borderless effective communication. The paper shows that in teaching English as a lingua franka, it is necessary to incorporate and develop aspects of cross-cultural awareness as a part of the course curriculum to immerse students in effective intercultural communicative competence, as "simple mastery of the linguistic forms of a language is not enough for learners to be considered competent in the target language" (Krasner, 1999, p. 79).

In many occupational contexts, professionals' poor communication performance resulted in the loss of business which is closely connected to their lack of cross-cultural understanding of the customers' affairs. This challenge emerges because of the gap between the needs of the learning and target situation/workplace. So, in a way or another, to address this existing gap, English language learners need awareness of cultural dimension in language instruction through an intercultural approach because, as Alred and Byram indicated,

> …In any society which expects its education system to prepare people for living in an internationalized culture and globalized economy, and also for the interaction between people of different cultures within and across national boundaries, the process of tertiary socialization and the acquisition of intercultural competence are clearly desirable. (Alred & Byram, 2002, p. 351)

Therefore, linguistic and cultural diversities are significant factors for communication with the people of diverse race, custom, and ethnicity.

Cross-cultural awareness implies preparing students for effective and competent intercultural communication which requires not only mere teaching of linguistic skills like phonology, morphology, lexicology, and syntax, but also the vital component of cultural knowledge and awareness. Communication that lacks appropriate cultural content often results in an odd or humorous situation leading to misunderstanding and miscommunication (Kirvalidze, 2008, p. 85). In other words, learning a language effectively requires knowing something about the cultural aspects of that language. Consequently, the intercultural awareness to language teaching and learning is believed to be one of the many paradigms in this complex global perspective. No-one involved in teaching English is likely to argue for cross-cultural misunderstanding. Nevertheless, there are many challenges related to teaching English in a cross-cultural context and the issue of exploring the challenges and the way to come out of the deficiency of the learners has been a matter of immense concern since long. What is widely accepted in this regard is that English, not being the native language of the learners, triggers a great number of problems. Therefore, this paper focuses on some of them.

Cross-Cultural Awareness and Communicative Competence in the Context of Globalization

Intercultural communication takes place in an enormous variety of contexts, such as psychological, educational, social, or political contexts. It can be physical context as well, like the room in which we talk or an auditorium for a public lecture. Therefore, adaptation with a new context or situation has become a significant

aspect of intercultural communication. A human being has an innate capacity to adapt to environmental challenges through communication. According to Kim, "adaptation is a complex and dynamic process that brings about a qualitative transformation of the individual" (Kim, 2001, p. 37). In the emerging "global village", all parties must adapt and move towards a greater awareness of intercultural issues. So, adaptability is undeniably a certain focal point in intercultural communication as well as in cultural anthropology and communication studies.

The goal of intercultural language teaching under the umbrella concept of *Intercultural Communicative Competence* is to embrace linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse competence, as well as intercultural knowledge, skills, attitudes, and critical cultural awareness. It is intended to help the learners avoid communication breakdown in their learning and workplace settings. The importance of developing intercultural communicative competence alongside linguistic competence has resulted from learners' needs to acquire intercultural competence for cross-cultural communication in which they may encounter linguistic and cultural barriers. Actually, intercultural competence is the ability to communicate effectively in cross-cultural situations and to relate appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts. Therefore, intercultural competence must be seen as a generic competence. So, the reason behind the teaching of culture is "to help the second language learners develop the ability to use the target language in culturally appropriate ways for the specific purpose of empathizing and interacting with speakers of the target language" (Barnett & Lee, 2002, p. 204).

Today, in the era of globalization, professionals, learners, and others are involved in meaningful interactions and negotiations with people of the same or other discourse community. Negotiation is considered as a powerful device enabling speakers to engage in cross-cultural communication. In this respect, adapting an intercultural approach to TESL might be of great value if the teacher is able to match the learners' needs and requirements with the needed linguistic knowledge, enhancing their intercultural competence through analyzing texts and comparing them to their own culture. Both linguistic accuracy and sociolinguistic appropriacy are crucial for effective communication, indeed. Inappropriate performance, even if it is perfectly accurate linguistically, can never be really effective as communication, not only because it does not produce the desired effect, but also because it sometimes produces the opposite effect. In global standpoint, the cultural and linguistic diversities are the specificities in language teaching. Students' intercultural awareness can lead to success in communication process in their real life situation. In cross-cultural encounters, learners' linguistic competence along with the knowledge of the culture of a given community is of great importance for successful cross-cultural communication. So, in addition to grammatical competence, a culturally competent learner must possess sociolinguistic competence, pragmatic competence, socio-cultural knowledge, and intercultural awareness. In this connection, Rod Ellis (1997) claimed that "individuals who are motivated to integrate both linguistic and nonlinguistic outcomes of the learning experience will attain a higher degree of L2 proficiency and more desirable attitudes" (p. 89).

Theoretical Framework: The Concept of Culture and Challenges of Multicultural Education

To define the notion of culture and its relation to language, we refer to Hall (1959), who claimed that culture is something that we do, something that coheres us as a society, whereas language is a way in which we practice culture. But culture itself is never frozen—we consume culture as we produce it and it is defined in terms of our use of nature. Pedagogy, likewise, is embedded in and shaped by culture. It is hence important for teachers to be

aware of this in their pedagogical practices. Culture involves well-established cognitive networks that frame and guide our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors without us much noticing the process very much. Culture is also dynamic, with some parts changing and other parts remaining the same depending on a host of variables. As Griffith, HU, and Ryans indicated,

> Cultures are not written into codes, but culturally prescribed values and norms are embedded in our social institutions and unwritten rules of discourse and interaction that we learn through the socialization and internalization processes. Furthermore, it has also been suggested that culture exists on a multitude of levels and dimensions in which nationality is the one. (Griffith, HU, & Ryans, 2000, p. 303)

Furthermore, people are affected by regional, organizational, family, and work group cultures in addition to national culture, and there are not always clear boundaries where the influence of one culture ends and another begins.

The purpose of multicultural education is not only to teach learners about other ethno-cultural groups or countries. It is also to help them become accustomed to the idea that there are many lifestyles, languages, cultures, and points of view. Besides, it has to attach positive feelings to multicultural experiences so that each learner will feel included and valued and will feel friendly and respectful toward people from other ethnic and cultural groups. In TESL classroom, students are learning English which differs from their own culture. In other words, they are having multicultural education. The global status of English language as a lingua franca and the cultural and linguistic qualities of English literature are accepted, appreciated, and admired worldwide. Through multicultural literature, learners discover that all cultural groups have made different contributions to civilization. A well-balanced English course includes literature that depicts people with a variety of aspirations, from different sociometric levels, with different occupations and with a range of human characteristics (Norton, 1985). Kienle and Loyd (2005, p. 580) claimed that globalization is becoming more prominent in all aspects of civilization. In the current millennium, multicultural and multinational barriers have crumbled down and bridges of communication have gone across lands and seas and the English language is the primary medium of communication for world citizens.

In the present context of globalization, the English language classroom can provide the right platform for skills development and learning opportunities for understanding, empathizing, and evaluating the world around. Language teaching is not related to imparting knowledge but is an art as well as a science of developing the skills. According to Wilga M. Rivers (1983), foreign language teaching, unlike teaching geography or history, is not only sharing of knowledge but also a development of the four basic skills of language—i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It is an appreciation of foreign people; it is a readjustment of one's attitude towards the world and towards oneself. In fact, in the path of achieving these four skills, a learner has to be exposed to multicultural content so extensively that he/she attains better understanding; consequently, better attitude towards world around.

Teaching English as a Second Language at higher schools plays an especially important role in moulding global learners. We need people who possess the knowledge, skills, and attitude to critically evaluate and understand the world around them. They need to appreciate cultural differences and rely on this knowledge in order to succeed in the present multicultural global work environment. Strong support comes from a survey by Timmis, in which the majority of the learners and the teachers of English from a large range of countries expressed a desire to speak English according to the native speaker norms, however, the survey also

demonstrated a wish to retain the aspects of their own culture (Timmis, 2002, p. 242).

Thus, multicultural education encourages appreciation and understanding of other cultures as well as one's own. Teaching with this perspective promotes the learner's sense of the uniqueness of their own culture as a positive characteristic and enables them to accept the uniqueness of the cultures of others.

Teaching English in a cross-cultural context raises a number of challenges. Though we can successfully generalize and predict certain students' thought, emotion, and behaviour patterns, there will always be exceptions to any rules we might formulate. The first and foremost problem faced in teaching English in a cross-cultural context is the "Language" itself. Both teachers and learners face some limitations in different ways, dealing with language.

Native speaker teachers' speed, accent, tone, pronunciation, and pitch can be sometimes a challenge for learners. They cannot follow the instructor sometimes or even they do not understand anything. Some of the native English speaking teachers' expectations of students is culturally based and stereotyped. Some Western teachers may get frustrated over the perceived lack of imagination and creativity of their students without realizing that this might be caused by the peculiarities of their culture. On the other hand, it is also found that students have stereotype feeling for the instructor. In his study of the problem, Luke Prodromou (1992) discovered that just over half of the students thought the native English speaking teacher should know the learners' mother tongue and know about local culture.

Sometimes students think that non-native English speaking teachers do not know much, therefore the learners have little confidence in them. On the other hand, Rampton asserted that linguistic "expertise" is more important than notions of who is and who is not a "native speaker". 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, p. 99) the students will pay for. Non-native speaker teachers of English are not necessarily worse off than their native speaker colleagues: They can be as "expert" in English and ELT methodology as native speakers and have the added advantage of being able to draw on the vast reservoir of the students' first language and culture (Atkinson, 1987).

Students sometimes face language shock, that is, they experience doubt and possible confusion when using a foreign language. English not being their mother tongue, they remain under pressure of accuracy, appropriacy, and fluency. They are often found to apologize for not being able to express themselves in English appropriately because they cannot find the necessary word. Moreover, sometimes the structures are wrong and there are too many pauses.

The content of the language class can also be the issue of challenge. Sometimes the content can be a problem for the learners. As they are being taught a different language, most often different countries also come into play simultaneously. This may lead to various types of confusion. For instance, Guest (2002) has argued that attempts to identify national characteristics for the purpose of comparing and contrasting cultures leads to oversimplification and stereotypes of cultural characteristics. This may lead to contradictions among the learners sometimes. Frustration, anxiety, and stress may also occur whenever people cannot find all the things they are accustomed to doing in their everyday lives. For example, sometimes because of differences in activities, norms, rituals, traditions, etc., that are found in the content of the lessons taught in the English classroom, students from different cultural background cannot cope with that successfully—ultimately, frustration, anxiety, and stress

arise.

Last, but not the least, students often face culture shock that is a severe obstacle in gaining a desired goal. "Culture shock" is the term used to denote the anxiety and stress reactions that some people experience when they live in a cultural and linguistic environment that is significantly different from their own (Schumann, 1978). The anxiety, stress, and resulting thoughts, emotions, and behaviours are caused by cognitive dissonance and uncertainty due to disconfirmed expectancies and ego-identity diminishment. Our identities are rooted in our home culture and its particular physical and socio-cultural environment. When we leave that particular complex of socio-cultural and physical environmental factors, we also leave the roots that support and nourish our personalities. Cognitive dissonance occurs when people's cognitions about themselves and the world around them are inconsistent with one another. The disconfirmed expectancies that we experience when living in a different culture contribute to this cognitive dissonance and to uncertainty, insecurity, anxiety, and stress.

Some Recommendations for Developing Students' Cross-Cultural Awareness

Peterson and Coltrane emphasized that language learners need to know what is appropriate to say to whom, and in what situations. Hence, the teaching of English as a second or foreign language should go beyond teaching the language as a linguistic skill to teaching the language in a way that incorporates intercultural awareness and understanding as well (Peterson & Coltrane, 2003, p. 12).

Teaching culture thus becomes a vital part of ELT (English Language Teaching) as language is bound up with culture in multiple and complex ways. So, to construct a meaningful communication, cultural awareness must be viewed as enabling language proficiency, for language and culture are interwoven to such degree that "one cannot separate them without losing the significance of either language or culture" (JIANG, 1994, p. 138). Moreover, as Claire Kramsch claimed, "culture in language teaching is an expendable fifth skill, so to speak, to the teaching of speaking, listening, reading and writing" (Kramsch, 1993, p. 26).

Though every teacher has his/her own style of teaching, there are different national and cultural academic traditions as well as cultural differences in pedagogy. But regardless of style, traditions, and cultures, good teaching anywhere in the world implies one thing—"making connections". It is important to bring about knowledge and develop students' skills by making connections between the new things that we are trying to teach them and their background information and repertoire of skills. The major areas of challenges having been identified, we will try to offer some recommendations that will facilitate both teaching and learning English in a cross-cultural context.

Promoting Motivation and Cross-Cultural Consciousness

Linguists and anthropologists have long recognized that the forms and uses of a given language reflect the cultural values of the society in which the language is spoken. Linguistic competence alone is not enough for learners of a language to be competent in that language (Krasner, 1999).

Promoting cultural awareness among learners of any foreign language is essential, so far as the cross-cultural factors are concerned. Cultural compatibility and adaptation to cross-cultural issues are motivating factors in the acquisition of L2. Language learners need to be aware, for example, of the culturally appropriate ways to address people, express gratitude, make requests, and agree or disagree with someone. They should know that behaviors and intonation patterns that are appropriate in their own speech community may be

perceived differently by members of the target language speech community. They have to understand that, in order for communication to be successful, language use must be associated with other culturally appropriate behavior.

In today's world of globalization, learning the culture of the target language is a step ahead of effective intercultural communication. It is unanimously acknowledged that developing critical cultural consciousness enables one to learn and grow, to change and evolve, so as to meet the challenges of today's emerging global reality. Such a cultural consciousness is often referred to as intercultural or cross-cultural awareness. The lack of cross-cultural awareness may cause misunderstanding, and even communicative failure. An instance of such misunderstanding in a discourse between a Chinese girl and her American boyfriend has been borrowed from Liton and Qaid (2016, p. 42):

Hey, Puppy, you look lovely today!

What? Am I your pet dog?

Oh, I mean baby, please.

Here, the lack of knowledge about "Puppy" as a pet name in American culture obviously offends the girl, whose culture has attributed unfavorable meanings to dogs. An English as a second language teacher could help students understand socially appropriate communication, such as making requests that show respect; for example, "Hey you, come here" may be a linguistically correct request, but it is not a culturally appropriate way for a student to address a teacher. Students will master a language only when they learn both its linguistic and cultural norms. Behind such a perspective, it is essential to address culture and cultural differences in between the cultures of the target language and that of the learners.

In intercultural communication, incorporation of culture of the target language in TESL is highly suggestive because students' comprehension is frequently impeded not by linguistic features, but by cultural one. So, it is suggested that in teaching English, the course should cover and address the intercultural issue to develop both the learners' linguistic and intercultural competences in a complex network of interactions between people of different cultural perspectives, beliefs, values, and practices. In the textbook, the learners should be exposed to a variety of cultural contents from home and abroad and video-led intercultural conversations to develop intercultural awareness and effective communication.

Linguistic Support. Multicultural Approach to Content

Good teaching requires considerable linguistic support. Teachers must utilize and build these supports into their courses, methods of classroom instruction, and overall interaction with students whether they are native or non-native English speaking teachers.

Students find some difficulties in keeping with native speaking teachers. Therefore, linguistic supports should include an adjustment of the teacher's language which implies slowing down the pace at which the teacher explains material, simplifying his/her English a little and avoiding using slang, jargon, and idiomatic expressions, and in general controlling vocabulary and keeping to familiar words. In addition, for both native and non-native teachers, it is also helpful to either preview key vocabulary before a lecture or unit or else to stop and define words as one goes along. When a teacher is delivering a lecture, it is a good practice to constantly repeat, to sum up the things, and then to repeat them again. And lastly, it is important to ensure that the volume of the teacher's

voice is loud enough for students to hear.

It is of great importance to adopt multi-cultural approach to content selection of the English course. A multi-cultural approach, particularly the one which involves comparisons between students' culture and other cultures, is an important area to be developed. An English text by a writer with a similar cultural background to that of the group of students studying the text may be more culturally accessible than a text written by an author from a culture far removed from the students' own. On the other hand, a text from another culture which deals with themes relevant to the students' own society may prove to be both accessible and absorbing. Through multicultural education, learners discover that all cultural groups have made significant contributions to civilization. A well balanced English course should include the literature that depicts people with a variety of aspirations and different occupations, from different sociometric levels, and with a range of human characteristics (Norton, 1985). Gillian Lazar offered some teaching strategies for overcoming cultural problems in the content of the text (Lazar, 1993):

(1) Personalising, which implies cueing students in the theme or topic of the text by making it relevant to their own experience;

(2) Proving Explanations/Glosses, which implies both providing students with a brief cultural information in a note or gloss and asking them to infer the cultural information contained in the text by making it explicit;

(3) Making Cultural Comparisons, which implies encouraging the students to brainstorm ideas about their own society and then compare them with those contained in the text;

(4) Making Associations, which implies facilitating students' free associations around a word or phrase that might have particular connotations or even figurative meanings for a native speaker of the language.

In addition to the above-mentioned strategies, we consider that teachers have to ensure the following for students in order to develop more effectively their cross-cultural awareness:

(1) Maximum exposure of the English Language. Accordingly, the medium of instruction will be English only. Using mother tongue will not be encouraged;

(2) The variety of equipments used in the classroom. Learning is greatly facilitated by using more audio-visual elements of teaching. Films, multimedia slides, and photos are very effective as they facilitate students' cognitive activities;

(3) Focus on the skills. All the four skills along with grammar and vocabulary should be emphasized and evaluated. Then, students will perceive their importance;

(4) Ensuring more and more practice. Different activities should be used to initiate more and more practice of English not only in class, but outside the classroom as well.

Finally, literary texts are often replete with cultural information and evoke memorable reactions for readers. Some stories are universal by the human values contained in them, therefore they can be easily understood by students worldwide, no matter what culture they are from, while the comprehension of other stories may require students' specific cultural background. Texts that are carefully selected for a given group of students and with specific goals in mind can be very helpful in allowing students to acquire insight into a target culture;

(5) Eliminating Culture Shock. In many regards, culture is taught implicitly embedded in the linguistic forms that students are learning. To make students aware of the cultural features reflected in the language, teachers can make those cultural features an explicit topic of discussion in relation to the linguistic forms being

studied. Cultural activities and objectives should be carefully organized and incorporated into lesson plans to enrich and inform the teaching content.

Using authentic sources from the target language helps to engage students in authentic cultural experiences. These sources can include films, news broadcasts and television shows, Web sites, photographs, magazines, newspapers, and other printed materials. Teachers can adapt their use of authentic materials to suit the age and language proficiency level of the students.

Film and television segments offer students an opportunity to witness behaviors that are not obvious in texts. Film is often one of the more current and comprehensive ways to encapsulate the look, feel, and rhythm of a culture. It also connects students with language and cultural issues simultaneously, such as depicting conversational timing or turn-taking in discourse. After the class has viewed the relevant segments, the teacher can engage the students in the discussion of the cultural norms represented in the segments and what these norms might say about the values of the culture. Students might describe the behaviors they observed and discuss which of them are similar to their native culture and which are not, and determine strategies for effective communication in the target language.

Using so-called "Culture Capsules" is also very important. Students can be presented with objects or images that originate from the target culture. The students are then responsible for finding information about the item in question, either by conducting research or by being given clues to investigate. They can either write a brief summary or make an oral presentation to the class about the cultural relevance of the item. Such activities can also serve as a foundation from which teachers can go on to discuss larger cultural, historical, and linguistic factors that tie in with the objects. Such contextualization is, in fact, important to the success of using culture capsules. It is useful for teachers to brainstorm with one another on the ways how to remove communication barriers. In this respect, it is recommended to identify sources of miscommunication and socially offensive behavior or language that can be shocking for students. Individuals are often keenly aware of how culture affects the behavior of those of another culture while they do not perceive how their own behavior is also culturally oriented (Javidan & House, 2001).

And last but not least, to prevent culture shock, teachers are advised to avoid using certain expressions that would evoke students' national feelings.

Conclusion

Thus, we have discussed the inseparability of language and culture making some suggestions that emerge from the results of the research and that would probably facilitate developing cross-cultural awareness and communicative competence of the learners. First, English as a Second Language course contents should cover linguistic and cross-cultural components to create intercultural situation in classrooms and to tackle the challenges students may face. Second, cross-cultural contents, relevant to the learners' own values and cultural background, need to be imported in existing course curricula for students' awareness of cultural differences in multicultural situations to prevent cultural conflicts that may arise as a result of misinterpretations, ethnocentrism, and stereotypes. Third, teachers of ESL (English as a Second Language) need to shift from a traditional teaching practice to an intercultural one. Finally, English as a second language textbooks should be supplemented with additional material that would facilitate developing the learners' cross-cultural awareness and communicative

competence. We hope that the issues discussed in the paper as well as the suggested recommendations will be helpful both for teachers and learners of the English language.

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