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**Teaching And Assessing Intercultural Competence In  
EFL Teaching Context :  
A Model for Algerian EFL classrooms**

Extended essay submitted to the department of English in candidacy for the master's  
degree in Didactics and Assessment in English Language Education.

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## **Abstract**

This extended essay serves to introduce some practical in-class techniques aiming to develop intercultural competence taking into account the Algerian EFL context. The development of intercultural communicative skills, in this regard, intercultural competence, represents the rationale of foreign language pedagogy. Consequently, learning a language is no longer viewed in terms of a continuum whose end-point is the native speaker's use of the language, but rather as the ability to become intercultural speaker, hence, the shift from the native speaker norm to the intercultural speaker model. In this research work, we will see that the intercultural approach to foreign language teaching is, largely explicitly, based on not only the target cultures, but also the mainstream culture, i.e. the learner's home culture. At this level, the process of contact-comparison with otherness is at the very core of this approach, and it is this process which helps learners to establish a relationship between their own and other cultures, and ultimately cope with the differences in develop the sense of tolerance vis-à-vis others' cultural differences. In effect this extended essay strives to suggest a set of techniques that may serve as a conceptual pedagogical framework for the development of intercultural communicative abilities.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all , I am immensely indepted to my my supervisor Prof S. BENMOUSSAT , and to whom i would like to extend my deepest appreciation , pride and my heartfelt thanks as he was my supervisor , teacher , caretaker , guide , source of knowledge and success , during almost my study period at university Prof S. Benmoussat , who accepted to supervise me.

Thank you for your wise peices of advice, constant support , endless patiente and for your open heart and your visible modesty .

My sincere gratitudes also go to all my dearest teacher :

Dr .Semmoud abdellatif for his help , advice and suggestions, and his contribution in the realization of this work and the members of examiners .

A special thanks are also formulated to all my teachers of English.

To all , very warm thanks from the bottom of my heart.

## Dedication

I dedicate my success , and especially this work to my wonderful Mother , to whom am extremely indepted for her sacrifice , financial and moral assistance , aspecially by her precious advice and wide heart . I tell you thank you very much my lovely mother.

I am also indepted to my dear friend Houachine Mohammed for his help , moral support and motivation during all my study period and especially on this work

I would like to dedicate the work to my friends and family at large.

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## **General Introduction**

The rationale of this research work is to enrich our EFL teachers' understanding of the re-considerations involved in the nature of language learning within the increasing process of globalization. The globalization process tends to blur the national boundaries, and the best example is the European Union. In addition to this, the wide use of ICT's has reduced the world into what is called today a village-like planet or global village, and have tremendously affected the field of foreign language pedagogy. All these changes, virtually create a need for greater cross-cultural knowledge. The language learning communicative ends of the 1970s and 1980s have been adapted to give birth to a new concept: inter-cultural competence.

This intercultural paradigm ensures the link between teaching language and learning culture, hence the intercultural language teaching or 'teaching-and-learning language-and-culture' approach (hereafter written TLLC), a term coined by Byram and Morgan (1994). The term intercultural approach, though known to many educationalists such as Rivers, Lado, and Mackey to name just a few, did not become current in books for some little while. The theory was still in the process of being clarified, and the terminology was incomplete. It has been the object of scrutiny in several works written in the 1990s (Byram and Morgan 1994; Byram and Fleming 1998; Kramsch 1998; Risager 1999). However, the work of Buttjes and Byram (1991) has played an important. They view the teaching of language and culture as one entity. Since the mid-1990s TLLC has been the dominant model in teaching foreign languages in many European countries.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Teaching and Learning Language and Culture (TLLC)

#### 1.1. Introduction

Traditional pedagogies have been for many years developed on the development of positive attitudes towards the target culture and its people. So in recent years the notion of empathy has somewhat lost its intrinsic value in the language learning process, and so has acculturation in other respects. It is no more “*desirable for learners to identify with the other nor to deny their own identity and culture*” as stated by (Byram and Fleming 1998:8).

One of the basic principles of the TLLC is the development of intercultural communicative skills. Thus, intercultural competence represents the springboard and rationale of the pedagogy underlying foreign language teaching and learning. Consequently, learning a language is no longer assessed in terms of a continuum whose end-point is the native speaker’s construct, but rather as the ability to become intercultural speaker. Here construct, as one might interpret it, is being used as a broad term to include a set of ideas, beliefs, attitudes, etc. all of which shape one’s behaviour in various conventional ways. Thus, the shift from the native speaker model to the intercultural speaker model has become important.

## **1.2. Today's World Order**

This deliberate change is due partly to the new configuration of today's world order – political, economic, financial, educational, linguistic, religious and cultural integration – resulting from large-scale migration, tourism, business and other cross-cultural encounters, namely the emergence of multicultural corporations as a result of changes and globalization, and partly to the linguistic and pragmatic differences among speakers of the same language, which have some effect on the appropriateness of the notion of native speakership (Kramsch 1998:16).

It must be noted that it was not until the mid-1980s that considerable research on inter-cultural communication has started to emerge and to question and examine seriously the notion of the native speaker. In countries like the USA, Britain and France where multiculturalism has become the hallmark of American, British and French schools, time, effort and energy are oriented towards making classroom discourse more explicitly intercultural and various classroom activities are devised in this regard. This new educational pedagogy has a socio-cultural perspective. It aims, through education and school, at developing a form of love, amity and tolerance among the various and different ethnic groups

## **1.3. Intercultural Competence**

To better understand the intimate and close relationship between of language and culture in a world characterized by a relentless global integration at various levels, the time has come for language teachers, second and foreign, not only to focus on the conceptual aspects, but also to investigate the different ways in which intercultural competence can be achieved. It is important, in this respect, to remind that both communicative and cultural competence can be too general terms. Unfortunately, at present they are being strongly called into question in the pedagogical sphere, mainly because they focus on a concept of



society and culture that does not include the context of other cultures. Damen posits that *“The current dedication to the development of communicative competence of language learners mandates the development of intercultural skills and an understanding of the processes of culture learning on the part of the teachers and students alike”* (Damen 1987: xvi). While on the other hand, Cortazzi and Jin (1999) propose an extension and elaboration of Canale and Swain’s list (1980) of competences by adding intercultural competence.

Communicative competence has been developed further by Canale and Swain (1980) in which four sub-components of communicative competence are identified: grammatical competence, i.e. linguistic competence in the Chomskyan sense, sociolinguistic competence, i.e. an understanding of the social context in which communication takes place, discourse competence, i.e. the interpretation of individual message elements in terms of their interconnectedness and how meaning is represented in relationship to the entire discourse or text. and strategic competence, i.e. the knowledge of communicative strategies that the language learners intend to make use of in order to get meaning across to overcome their imperfect command of the language. These strategies involve paraphrasing, avoidance of difficulties, simplifications and so on.

#### **1.4. Origin of the Term Intercultural Competence**

The concept of intercultural competence has been very much used in the discipline of social psychology and in the discipline of studies of communication. In social psychology, it refers to social effectiveness, that is to say, the ability to achieve instrumental and social goals and in studies of communication, it denotes appropriateness, i.e. suitable communication in a given situation in a particular culture. In the context of foreign language learning, however, it has been defined as *“The ability of a person to behave adequately in a flexible manner when confronted with actions, attitudes and*

*expectations of representatives of foreign cultures*”(Meyer 1991:137). Thus, the two main folds of intercultural competence are:

- 1) to gain insights into one’s own culture.
- 2) to find reasons for similarities and differences from within the target cultures.

Therefore, in-depth understanding of otherness implies trying to understand from within.

## **1.5. 5. TLLC: Educational Aims**

The traditional foreign language teaching methodology has specific educational aims, and which are familiar to the language teaching profession. These aims have three dimensions: linguistic, cultural and conceptual:

- ***Linguistic***, that is to say, that dimension which focuses on learning skills and on an understanding and awareness of the target language.
- ***Cultural***, that is to say, that dimension which offers insights into the target culture and focuses on the development of practical communication skills.
- ***Conceptual***, that is to say, that dimension which encourages positive attitudes towards the target culture and its speakers.

Arguably, what is new in the Teaching and Learning of Language and Culture Approach is the importance we give to the comparisons between the learners’ own culture and the target culture, that is to say, *‘inviting learners to develop a reflective attitude to the culture and civilization of their own country’*(Risager 1998:244). This ‘reflective impact’ as Bryam and Fleming 1998 posit refers to the process which turns learners’ attention back onto themselves and their way of life.

This shift in pedagogy is the result of the ‘Assumption-and-Values’ Approach advocated by the Scandinavian educational aims of modern foreign language teaching, mainly the Swedish School, and which views the conceptual dimension, as a the most important way to raise knowledge above the accumulation of mere facts, and therefore to enhance *‘pupils’ international understanding and understanding of their own culture’*(Risager 1998: 245), in other words, an understanding of oneself and the world around us, as well as the way they interrelate. Admittedly, a better understanding of the other culture or cultures requires comparing and contrasting that or those cultures with the learner’s own culture. Ladson-Billings (1992) makes a similar proposal when she puts forward a culturally relevant pedagogy or what she thinks is *“That kind of teaching that is designed not only to fit the school culture to the students’ culture but also to use student culture as the basis for helping students understand themselves and others, structure social interactions, and conceptualize knowledge”* (Ladson-Billings 1992:314). Therefore, the reflective impact goes through process which consists of four steps:

**Step One:** Contact with otherness.

**Step Two:** Comparison of similarities and differences.

**Step Three:** Interpretation of similarities and differences.

**Step Four:** Understanding of the taken-for-granted nature of the target culture.

In addition to this, what is really very interesting in this approach is the use of knowledge from educational psychology to better understand the nature of the learning process. It starts from the fact that foreign language learning usually takes place just half-way between the primary and secondary process of socialization, and the discovery of new sets of practices, beliefs and values – otherness – leads to reflection on and questioning of the learners’ native way of life. Thus, the fact of contacting and comparing with ‘otherness’ provides

answers and explanations to many aspects of the native culture, and the relationship between the different processes contributes to the development of the concept of intercultural competence.

Arguably, the notion of reflective impact suggests the application of ethnographic research methods and practices for developing cultural awareness and intercultural understanding in the context of foreign language learners. This new educational dimension serves a three-fold purpose: One, it aims at modifying negative perceptions and stereotyping; two, it aims to facilitate positive impressions and attitudes, and three, it aims at establishing a sphere of interculturality which helps learners perceive the similarities and cope with the differences.

It should be noted that the TLLC approach calls into question the concept of culture. Thus, it is that Moerman's definition seems to go along with the TLLC schemes. '*Culture is a set – perhaps a system of principles of interpretations, together with the products of that system*' (Moerman, cited in Cortazzi and Jin, 1999:197). In this respect, culture can be seen as the assemble of assumptions, ideas and beliefs that are used to interpret other people's actions, words and patterns of thinking, and ways of living.

As far as the Algerian educational context is concerned, we must say that there is a genuine need for a thorough change; Aspects closely relating to language mastery is still the most important issue, the cultural aspects are often never dealt with. Culture is superficially mentioned in the Official Ministry Guidelines

***According to the Ministry of Education, the general aim of the English syllabi is to provide the learner with the language necessary to communicate efficiently in a normal social situation both orally and in writing. At the same time, it aims at enabling those who go on further studies to use English as a tool or as a means to acquire extra information about their field of study and those who join the job market to exploit by themselves documents, leaflets, notices related to their jobs. The ultimate aim is thus to make them self-sufficient in exploring and exploiting materials that are linked to their fields***

*of study by providing them the basic linguistic tool (Syllabuses for English, 2005).*

This is another way of stating that the teaching of culture often represents an aspect of language teaching that is unfamiliar to most Algerian English language teachers whose prefer to give much emphasis and focus on linguistic aspects. We end up by saying that in the light of the radical transformations which have taken place in the world, we confront a design change in the Algerian educational context.

Subsequently, we make a proposal of a model for curriculum development projects through which we may to focus on the different ways to fit the cultural component the English Language Teaching context in order to enhance cross-cultural competence on a principled TLLC basis. We suggest taking as a point of departure the teaching materials because they capture much of the paradox of teaching English in Algeria. Secondly, we will have a new look at the language teaching profession and finally, come up with a set of techniques which have been advocated with respect to the intercultural approach.

## **1.6. Teaching Materials**

The immensity and complexity of the concept of culture would lead us to follow the principles underlying the ‘selective–focusing’ approach. This approach consists in setting apart the areas of culture teaching on the basis of humanistic and anthropological perspectives. In this respect, three broad topic areas will be make up the subsequent sections. It is important to note that the proposed topics are by no means exhaustive, and can be extended to cover other related aspects:

1. People and Places.
2. History and institutions.
3. Arts and other major events.

### **1.6.1. Places and People**

The EFL student should be aware of the most common geographical expressions used and how they are perceived by the native speakers. For example, Britons tend to think of their country as an island nation, separate from the rest of Europe and consequently, people in Britain often talk about “travelling to Europe” or “taking a holiday in Europe”, or simply “going on the continent”. More surprisingly in Cornwall, in the south-east corner of England, some Cornish people still talk about “going to England” when they cross the county border. Besides the geographical division of England into areas such the Midlands, the Downs, Yorkshire etc. and Scotland into mainly the Highlands in the north and the Lowlands in the South, there are nicknames used to refer to specific areas, cities or towns. For example, the south-eastern area surrounding London is often called the “Home Counties”. The word “Home” in this context highlights the importance attached to London and its domination of public and political life in the United Kingdom at large.

Additionally, the language learner should be taught how to identify members of the target community making use of social and regional differences, and adjust his/her linguistic and cultural behaviour according to those differences. However, the distinction between the different social classes in Britain, is difficult to establish. Social classes are less marked today than they used to be. The student should be aware that the tendency of the upper and working classes to merge into the middle class has been accelerated since the triumph of the Labour Party over the Conservatives.

The old pattern of old Britain is breaking up. However, regionally it is generally recognized that the people of northern England are thought to be less refined than their southern neighbours, but more energetic. The people of the south are kind and courteous. On the other hand, “Dai” or “Taffy” the typical Welshman, is renowned for his singing ability. Whereas, “Jock” the Scotsman is

supposed to have red hair and freckles on the face, and to be addicted to golf, whisky and endless argumentation. When he does not go to the church gloomily dressed in black, he wears the kilt and plays the bagpipe. “Jock” also has the reputation of being very careful with money. To the average Englishman “Paddy” or “Mick” is supposed to be a great talker, a fellow full of unexpectedness proud of his Irish culture and Celtic origin, friendly but bloodthirsty. These are some stereotypes which are commonplace in Britain and which form the seeds of anecdotal jokes in Britain.

(Adapted from *L’Anglais par la Littérature*, p. 104)

Let’s have a look at the following text:

### ***National Stereotype***

*You will meet an Irishman in two kinds of English jokes. The first kind always begins: There was an Englishman, an Irishman and a Scotsman... These jokes are about national stereotypes. The Englishman is usually cold and formal; the Scotsman is frugal not to say mean; the Irishman is warm-hearted and funny.*

*Of course, it depends who is telling the joke. From the Scottish perspective, the Scotsman is shrewd and sensible, while the Englishman’s Englishman is ironic and witty. The Irishman is all of these: shrewd, sensible, ironic and of course, warm-hearted and funny.*

*The second kind of joke, however, is not flattening to the Irish. ‘Irish jokes’ as they are called, have their equivalent in other countries of the world. In France, they are about the Belgians. For some reason, there are few jokes told about the people of Wales, the fourth country in the British Isles. The national stereotype of a Welshman is ... well, this rare joke gives an idea of it:*

*A sea captain saw smoke coming from a desert island. He gave the order for a small boat to be launched and then made his way, with a couple of sailors, to investigate. As they approach the shore, they heard a fine tenor voice singing ‘Land of my fathers’. There was a man on the beach practicing drop-kicks in front of some improvised rugby goalposts. Obviously a Welshman.*

*“How long have you been here?” the captain asked.*

*“Longer than I can remember”, replied the castaway.*

*He was pleased to see his rescuers, but before he would let them take him back to civilisation, the Welshman was keen to show the captain round the island.*

*“This is my house here; do you see? And look, I’ve got a few sheep on the hillside too.”*

*The captain raised his eyes to the hills.*

*“And what are those two study buildings over there? Are they barns to the sheep?”*

*“Oh, no. They’re chapels,”*

*“Chapels? What, both of them, why two?”*

*Ah well, you see, the one on the left is the chapel I go to, and the one on the right is the chapel I don’t go.”*

*(George Mikes How to be a Brit)*

### **1.6.2. History and Institutions**

The EFL student should be taught about the main historical events of the country, including the historically significant symbols, dates and the main historical personalities. For example, the Union Jack, the national flag of the UK, provides a wonderful illustration of the identifying symbols of the British nations represented through the cross of St George (England), the cross of St Andrews (Scotland), and the cross of St Patrick (Ireland).

On the other hand, the Norman Conquest (1066) is an illustrative pedagogical example to explain how many borrowed French words and expressions have been adopted by the English language *The linguistic influence of the Norman Conquest of England in 1066 was the influx to English of a considerable number of French words and expressions* (see Crystal 1990: 175-77).

Another evidence of such an influence is the Royal Arms of England on which the motto “Dieu et mon Droit” is written in French. This illustrates the impact of French culture on English political institutions after the Norman Conquest and which lasted almost to Henry VIII’s reign when the British monarch saddled all responsibilities and powers: religious as well as political.

The historical personality, who swept away the power of the Roman Catholic Church in England, is Henry VIII. All these historical events, or hard-and-fast facts, can be studied in a scholarly fashion, i.e. the way books of history present them. However, some of the most important aspects of British life cannot be



described in terms of hard-and-fast facts, they can easily be incorporated in some teaching materials (Benmoussat, 2003) Let's have a look at the following sentences which covertly convey cultural information:

- *10 Downing Street*, i.e. the British Prime Minister
- *Buckingham*, i.e. the royal family
- *St Paul's Cathedral*, the religious centre of London

### **1.6.3. Arts and Achievements**

These aspects of culture denote a legacy of common literacy, thereby making up the common knowledge in a speech community. In the context of culture teaching, Arts and Achievements provide another way or other ways to raise cultural awareness. *'The learner should be able to acquire knowledge about and an appreciation of artists, musicians, and writers and their works'* (Stern 1992:221). Allen and Valette (1977:336-8) categorize under the rubric of Arts: music, painting, sculpture and dance. They recommend that folksongs and folkdances to be dealt with separately. It is particularly noteworthy that in Algeria the choice to study English as a foreign language in Middle Schools is mainly motivated by the popularity of the language created through pop-music.

What is more, knowledge of the major discoveries made by British scientists in the field of science and technology, for example Newton's law of gravitation, Watt's revolutionary invention of the steam-engine, Jenner's discovery of the vaccination process and the many other famous achievements constitutes imperatively, among others, the basics of the student's general cultural repertoire (Benmoussat, 2003). However, an exhaustive listing of all the cultural features would be impossible; learning to know a culture requires time and interest, in other words it is a life-time process. Many natives come across some aspects of their own culture which they have never heard before.

## 1.7. Selection Criteria

The following checklist is proposed to serve as a springboard for the section of cultural topics. It consists of sound criteria to help teachers decide on the adequacy of the teaching materials for developing intercultural competence. The checklist is an adaptation of adapted of Sercu's (1998) original list.

- What image is presented in the teaching material: realistic and representative? Or a distorted picture based on stereotypes, simplistic and biased and prejudiced information?
- Is the content outdated and therefore fails to present a coherent picture of the target culture?
- Does the content present generalizing statements about the target culture?
- Are negative and problematic aspects of the target culture touched upon?
- Does the teaching material offer an authentic reflection of the multicultural character of the target culture?
- Is a historical perspective presented and used to explain certain present-day features of mentality and national character?
- Are the cultural elements presented in the teaching material used to develop specific language skills?
- Do photographs provide realistic and representative pictures of the target culture?
- Do learners get the chance to reflect on their own culture and lead to draw comparisons between the their own and target culture?
- Are insights that have been gained previously re-used in the teaching material?

(Sercu1998:271-63).

It should be noted that the checklist can be extended by adding a criterion which is rather specific to the Algerian context: does the teaching material deal with unfamiliar or taboo topics that make both teacher and learners feel uncomfortable, and are therefore inappropriate for use in the classroom? To give illustrative examples of the practical applications of our checklist, we found it useful to take a look at some examples and consider the potential for language teaching and culture learning.

Let's have a look at the following example from the British Newspaper the Sun's rubric *Dear Deidre*

#### **He Believes I'm a Cheat**

My boyfriend dumped me because four people lied and said I had slept with another man. I am 19 and he is 21. We were together for three years and have a two-year-old son. I love him very much but he doesn't love because he believes I have cheated on him; I'm gutted. He's not being unkind to me – in fact he is being very nice. I have no idea why these so-called friends are lying but it hurts that he believes them. If someone told me he'd been unfaithful, I would have gone mad. But at least I would have given him a chance to explain. I did sleep with someone else when we split up once before I confessed. I think that is why he isn't willing to give me a second chance. I want him back but I think I've blown it.

(The Sun 15 March 2018)

This article taken from *The Sun*, the most popular newspaper or tabloid in Britain, provides a concrete example of the culture-specific criterion. Admittedly, virtually all our teachers and learners will feel uneasy having to deal with such a topic. Yet, newspaper articles represent a rich source of authentic texts which are ideal study materials for higher-level learners; the language is authentic, the material is topical and they provide both language practice and insights into English-speaking cultures, in sum, there is always something to interest every student (Benmoussat, 3003).

## **1.8. Conclusion**

It should be noted that the acquisition of intercultural competence is not an easy task. It is effort and time demanding. It also requires contact with members of the target language in an active and direct way, i.e. cultural immersion. In this chapter, we have dealt with the importance of culture in an EFL setting. We have also provided some illustrations of the most important criteria that ought to be taken into account in the selection of culture-loaded material. Yet, teachers, one can say, are in a better position to decide what is culturally relevant to their students in terms of needs, interests and levels.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

# **In-Class Techniques for the Development of Intercultural Competence**

### **2.1. Introduction**

Needless to recall, the acquisition of intercultural competence is regarded as an important asset in today's globalized world. This process requires contact with members of the target language in live and direct way as possible. In this chapter, a set of in-class techniques will be proposed for teachers to enhance culture teaching on a cross-cultural basis. These pedagogical eclectic techniques such as cultural asides, culture capsules, culture assimilators, role playing and classroom decoration have been advocated by language educators to develop inter-cultural competence while teaching language skills, that is, to link 'the teaching of language to that of culture' (Kramsch 1991). The proposed techniques make use of very practical ideas intended to develop cultural awareness as well as cross-cultural understanding.

## **2.2. Cultural Asides (Magazine Pictures)**

From a pedagogical point of view, cultural asides, as a set of techniques, refers to a set of *'items of cultural information offered by the teacher as they present themselves in the course of language work'* (Stern 1992:224). Language teachers and educators on culture teaching strongly recommend the use of cultural asides. Wilga Rivers describes them in terms of *'experiencing the culture through language use'* (Rivers 1981:326). What is more, it is also highly recommended to use the same cultural material several times throughout the course (Benmoussat, 2003). Using the same cultural asides over and over again increases the students' familiarity with items closely relating to the target culture. Let's have a look at the following cultural asides:

Of the many cultural asides are magazine pictures. They are supposed to increase effectively the learning process by helping the students better understand the cultural dimension underlying the aside in a more meaningful and interesting way. For example, to have an idea about what is breakfast like in Britain, the teacher can download pictures the net or cuts them from magazines. Typically, a British breakfast consists of orange juice, fried eggs, bacon, toast, corn-flakes and coffee. These may be contrasted with pictures representing Algerian breakfast.

## **2.3. Culture Capsule**

The technique of the culture capsule is viewed as one of the most important devices aiming to develop cultural awareness as well as cross-cultural understanding. Culture capsule was put forward by Taylor and Sorenson (1991). It is a short oral presentation depicting characteristic differences between the target culture and learner's home culture. The following topic is a culture capsule in the true sense of the word:

### **Superstitious Beliefs in Britain**

**In Britain, certain objects are believed to bring good or bad luck. For example, seeing a white horse, a four-leafed clover, two magpies together, a ladybird or a horseshoe is supposed to bring good luck, whereas it is regarded as bad luck to look at the new moon through glass or see a single magpie. When a black cat crosses one's path, it can mean either good or bad luck. A horseshoe upside down is unlucky, because its luck is 'running out'.**

**Certain actions are also believed to bring bad luck. These include walking under a ladder, breaking a mirror, and killing a spider. If someone spills salt, he should immediately throw a pinch of it over his left shoulder. On the other hand, picking up a pin from the ground brings good luck. Relics of superstitious actions like these have been preserved in phrases like 'touch wood', for avoiding bad luck, or 'keep your fingers crossed'. Some people accompany such sayings with actions, for example by touching wood when saying 'touch wood'.**

**Among the strongest superstitious beliefs are those concerning lucky and unlucky numbers. The number 13 is generally regarded as unlucky. Some hotels even have no room of this number, some buildings have no 13th floor, and airplanes often have no 13th row of seats. When the 13th of any month is a Friday it is regarded as particularly unlucky.**

**Fortune-telling or prophesying the future can range from seeing in tea-leaves or in the flames of a fire, or in a crystal ball to having one's palm read by a palmist or one's fortune told by a fortune-teller. Almost all the popular newspapers and magazines print horoscopes, which foretell the future according to person's 'stars', the sign of the zodiac under which he was born.**

**Schoolchildren and students sometimes take a 'mascot' or lucky charm into an examination room with them. It may be a pet toy, the figure of an animal, or any small object that they feel brings them luck. In Britain old houses and castles are sometimes said to be haunted by the ghost of someone who died violently or mysteriously in the house.**

(Adapted from the Oxford Advanced Learners' English Dictionary)

This culture capsule reflects the characteristic differences between the British culture and Algerian culture. In practice, following the presentation, the teacher opens a discussion on differences and similarities between the superstitious beliefs in the British and Algerian societies. This activity motivates students to investigate not only some aspects of the target culture, but also aspects of their own culture. One should note that the most important aspect underlying the technique of culture capsules is to increase cross-cultural awareness, and ultimately to develop tolerance for cultural differences (Benmoussat, 2003).

## **2.4. Culture Cluster**

In 1973 Meade and Morain proposed the technique of culture clusters. By definition, a culture cluster is a short unit which consists of three or four conceptually related culture capsules. According to Mead and Morain, the culture cluster should be followed by some related activities, for example, questions and answers to engage into a cultural debate. Let's have a look at the following example:

Kamila is an Algerian student studying in England. She has been placed in an English family. She has been served an English breakfast for the first time.

### Scene One

Landlady: What's the matter Kam? You are pretty well, I guess.

Kamila: No, it's Ok Mary.

Mary: But why aren't eating your breakfast. Didn't you like it?

### Mid-discussion

The language learners try to guess the source of the problem and propose explanations making use of the following questions:

- *What's wrong with Kami?*
- *Why didn't want to have breakfast?*



## Scene Two

Kam: Well, actually I'm not used to eating so much in the morning.

Mary: But, Kam, in Britain breakfast is a very important meal of the day. You must know that from now on.

Kam: Yes, I try to know more about British ways of life.

## Mid-discussion

- *Is she accustomed to eating so much in the morning?*

- *What is the difference between an English and Algerian breakfast?*

## Last Scene

Mary: Well, because at midday break, you'll have a sandwich for lunch

Kam: Yes, now I understand better.

## **2.5. Culture Assimilator**

Culture assimilator, as an in-class technique, has been elaborated by Fielder *et al.*(1971). In essence, it is a situation involving a cultural problem-solving activity in which the learner is faced with a situation that "contrasts with his own culture". For

For example, a situation in which one of our students interacts with an Englishman. During the course of this interaction, a cultural misunderstanding occurs due to a lack of knowledge about the target culture. Here are some examples:

- Getting closer to the person
- Touching a part of the person's body
- Breaking the ice at first meeting
- Use of intimate and informal style

## **2.6. Role Playing**

The role play technique is a very important device to increase and develop cross-cultural understanding. The technique has to do with culturally appropriate or inappropriate language behaviour.

From a pedagogical point of view, this technique refers to activities which are performed in the form of a drama activity. Let's have a look at the following example:

### **Informal Greetings**

**Liza:** Hello, Sue.

**Sue:** Hi, Liza, how are you?

**Liza:** Fine thanks. And you?

**Sue:** Not bad. It's good to see the sun again.

**Liza:** It makes a change, doesn't it?

**Sue:** Let's hope it keeps fine for the week-end.

**Liza:** Well, here's my bus. Bye, Sue.

**Sue:** Bye, Liza. See you.

### **Formal Greetings**

**Mr. Butler:** Good morning Dr. Hans. How are you?

**Dr. Hans:** Oh, good morning Mr. Butler. I'm very well, thank you. And you?

**Mr. Butler:** I'm fine, thank you. Nice and bright this morning. Isn't it?

**Dr. Hans:** Yes, much better than what we've been having.

**Mr. Butler:** Good-bye Dr. Hans, and have a nice day.

**Dr. Hans:** Good-bye Mr. Butler.

The two dialogues reflect the way language is used in formal and informal situations in greetings taking into account the participants in the speech event. Sociolinguistically speaking, social events are conditioned by the use of fixed phrases obeying the rules of speaking as advocated by Hymes (1972).

In addition to the use of appropriate phrases illustrated through the use of formal vs. informal style and pet names (Sue for Suzan and Liza for Elizabeth), the dialogues also include an important element: weather information. This purposeful use of such cultural aspect shows that the British people are constantly talking about the weather.

## **2.7. Classroom Decoration (Proverbs)**

The use of proverbs as a pedagogical device dates back to the very past years of education. Ridout and Witting (1977) note that as early as the tenth century proverbs were used in England for the teaching of Latin. Posters can then be made of proverbs and hung on the classroom walls. Allan and Valette (1977) advocate five pedagogical ways to be used according to the main theme. Here are some examples:

### **2.7.1. First Pedagogical Way**

#### **Thematic Grouping**

##### **Sense of privacy in British Life**

There is no place like home.

East or west home is best.

An Englishman's home is his castle.

Home sweet home.

A hedge between keeps friendship green.

##### **Sense of perseverance, patience and determination in British Life**

Constant dripping wears away the stone.

If at first you don't succeed, try, try, try again.

Where there is a will there is a way.

Little by little and bit by bit.

Rome was not built in a day.

##### **Sense of prudence in British Life**

Catch your bear before you sell it.

Don't count your chickens before they are hatched.

Don't halloo till you are out of the wood.

Never spend your money before you have it.

### 2.7.2. Second Pedagogical Way

#### Writing the proverbs in the right order

glitters not that gold all is  
the child burnt fire dreads  
policy honesty the is best  
means the justifies end the  
wisdom mother experience the is of

### 2.7.3. Third Pedagogical Way

#### Matching the two parts of the proverb

1. A bird in hand      a. flock together.
2. Don't cross the bridge      b. is his castle.
3. Every cloud has      c. till you come to it.
4. Birds of a feather      d. is worth two in the bush.
5. An Englishman's home      e. a silver lining.

### 2.7.4. Fourth Pedagogical Way

#### Supplying the missing word in the proverb

1. Where there's a ..... there's a way.
2. East ..... home is best.
3. There is no ..... like home.
4. .... speak louder than words.
5. While there's ..... there's hope.

### **2.7.5. Fifth Pedagogical Way**

#### **Providing the final part of the proverb**

1. All roads lead .....
2. Charity begins .....
3. Better late .....
4. All's well that.....
5. The eye is bigger than.....

### **2.8. Conclusion**

We have seen that the intercultural approach to foreign language teaching is in general, and English in particular takes into account the target cultures, but also the learner's culture. Arguably, the contact - comparison process with otherness represents the very heart of this approach. This process overtly or covertly helps learners to bridge a gap between their own and other cultures, and ultimately cope with the differences. This approach is very interesting in the sense that it aims to develop a sense of tolerance in the language learner and enhances cultural self-awareness. Thus, language teachers and textbook writers will find it a necessary aid to make the most of the techniques mentioned in the chapter.

We should say that experts in intercultural teaching have emphasized some variables that may affect culture teaching. These factors include the age of the learners, the level of maturity, the language learning experience. However, the teacher, is in a better position than anyone else to know when and how to introduce the cultural component in language learning.

## **General Conclusion**

One might argue that the intercultural approach makes use of teaching material and in-class techniques that are likely to bridge the gap of communication between the target culture and the mainstream culture. From a pedagogical point of view, these teaching materials and techniques give teachers guidance in key aspects of the process intercultural language teaching. This is why the teacher and ELT textbook may be a powerful force in representing a frame of reference for developing tolerance to cultural differences and motivate their learners to acquire the needed skills to discover and interpret other cultures in an enjoyable way.

Therefore, language learners are called upon to initiate themselves in the field of ethnography. What makes intercultural language learning especially valuable is that from the potentially “unwanted side effects” of language learning several benefits may accrue, not least the mechanisms underlying many aspects of the native culture (Benmoussat, 2003). The contact – comparison process leading to the identification of the intercultural differences will allow the learners to develop their own identity on the basis of cross-cultural understanding.

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