

Integration of Intercultural Competence and Language Skills to EFL Learners in Indian Context

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Abstract:

In recent decades, intercultural communicative competence has received a wide acclamation and many language pedagogy writers and theoreticians have identified and demonstrated the supreme relationship between language and culture. It is an acknowledged fact that language is often a reflection of cultural orientations rather than an artificer. The widespread linguistic imperialism of the English language has influenced the researchers to examine a profitable and more reliable approach to teach the English language to non-native speakers, effectively. This paper analyses the boundless features of the intercultural approach and its pervasive influence in equipping the English language. It also explores the fundamental impact of culture on the target language and endorses cultural tolerance that dwindle hegemonic tendencies of linguistic imperialism.

Keywords: Intercultural Competence, enculturation, discursive practice, language acquisition:

Introduction:

Since the late 1980s, the cultural component of ELT was ignored and many linguists have stripped off the cultural competency from the curriculum and it remained neglected for decades. However, the recent attempt to integrate 'Culture' and 'Language Skills' are emphasised to lay threadbare the paramount significance of ICC in ELT and negotiate the place of social functions in the broad scope of LSRW. Corbett puts it rightly, "A language course concerned with 'culture', then, broadens its scope from a focus on improving the four skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking, in order to help learners, acquire cultural skills, such as strategies for the systematic observation of behavioural patterns." [Corbett **Intercultural Approaches to ELT** pg. 2]

Among the disciplines of psychology, sociology, linguistics and their interplay in influencing the history of English language teaching, the intercultural approach continues to draw its attention in a specific way of creating an awareness of the target language's cultural impingement and its concurrence with language production. In contrast to the traditional grammarian's rule in acquiring a foreign language, the interwoven relationship between language and culture emphasise the learner to cognise the cultural background of the target language to become a successful communicator in situated-cultural contexts. As Alptekin vivifies: "learning a foreign language becomes a kind of enculturation, where one acquires new cultural frames of reference and a new world view, reflecting those of the target language culture and its speakers." (2002, P.58)

Since the English language serves a global communicative purpose, there have been many invective censures pronounced against obligating English competence as linguistic imperialism. But at the other end of economic and educational independent context, the critics rely heavily on the teachers and textbooks of native English-speaking countries to equip the learners with complementing intercultural communication competence. The present paper aims at exploring the effectiveness of ICC in EFL, especially it focuses on Indian origin learners of teaching and non-teaching faculties to analyse the productive achievements in the field of ELT. Over the past few decades, ICC is viewed as a complex portal in sharing knowledge and skills in a multicultural classroom context. As a multicultural celebrant, India respects both home culture and the target culture in a language learning centre, So the learner is often motivated to understand and mediate between the home culture that includes different regional belief, and the culture of the target language. However, the role of culture is prominent in endowing language skills to EFL in promoting and enhancing the intellectual mainstream of ELT: The Research work endeavours to answer the following questions:

1. Does the ICLT model aid in enhancing the English language competence of Indian learners?
2. To what extent the ICLT model ameliorate or educate intercultural speakers to accomplish language learning effectively?

Literature Review

“Culture is in language, and language is loaded with culture” (Agar, 1994, P28).

Agar’s term ‘languaculture’ manifest the relationship between language and culture and their interchangeable influence in language education. In the earlier traditional approach of culture and language teaching, a learner was assumed to be competent enough when he exposed his knowledge on literature which had only emphasised a little alliance with language skills. (Peiser and Jones, 2013). Although a wide range of culture teaching pedagogical approaches were conducted and surveyed to integrate language and culture into language lessons, only potential disharmony and controversial arguments were the results attained. Taking into account the impressions of task-based language teaching, the ICLT approach focused on practising and assessing linguistic skills. Tran, Seepho quotes, “ICC, furthermore, is one of the key competences in the 21st century (Delors, 1996; Sudhoff, 2010; UNESCO, 2006), so it is widely agreed that one of the ultimate goals in language training programs is to educate learners to become intercultural speakers who can deal with linguistic and cultural complexity and take part in multicultural situations (Deardoff, 2009; 3 Jæger, 2001)”. The Current study canvass the learners and teacher’s ability to cognise the effectiveness of intercultural pedagogy in EFL. There was no established study focused on the ICLT model for Indian learners. If at all an experimental task was assessed, there is still a lacuna in evaluating the desirable outcomes. The present study outlines the ways to fill the lacuna in examining the contemporary challenges and affordances in the practice of ICLT. In experimenting with the ICLT model enhancing ELT to EFL, various perspectives and aspects of Byram, 1991; Fantini, 2001; Sinicrope et al, 2007) were successfully integrated

with influencing intercultural competence of language learning to Indian learner. In this paper, ICC can be inferred in the following terminology: "ICC is the ability which enables one to effectively and appropriately interact in a language other than one's native language with others from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. It consists of language competence (linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse competence) and intercultural competence (attitudes, knowledge, skills, and awareness) that help one to be able to successfully integrate in a multicultural society". (Tran, 2015, p. 30)

Integration of ICLT models to augment Indian Leaders Competence:

With due respect to complement the cultural and the intellectual competence, a comprehensive framework of Byram's ICC model, Fantini's IC model, Deardoff's pyramid model are integrated to develop and assess Indian Learners ICC in English language class. As Tran and Duong propose that the effective ICC comprise language competence and intellectual competence. "It consists of language competence (linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse competence) and intercultural competence (attitudes, knowledge, skills, and awareness) that help one to be able to successfully integrate in a multicultural society (adapted from Bennett & Bennett, 2004; Byram, 1997; Fantini, 2001; Sinicrope et al., 2007)."

Concerning the proposed study, Byram's (1997) model ICC points out the critical awareness of language competence and intercultural competence as well. Based on this model all the five aforementioned components of interactive language skills can be improved. Further, his specified educational objectives endorse the constructive process of developing and examining the Indian learners' IC in the foreign language class. The process of ICLT is exotically edified with Fantini's (2000) IC model which is likely to imbricate with Byram's (1997) intercultural elements. He emphasises that language education should concentrate more on intercultural aspects of language competence with better participation on a local and global level to empathise with others. A research-based pyramid model of Deardoff (2006) demands internal and external outcomes of attitudes, knowledge and skills of both Byram and Fantini's respective models. Deardoff organizes all the five components in pyramid model displaying the growth of one another in a complex way, Tran and Seepho quotes: "This process model of IC describes the complexity of acquiring IC from "attitudes and/or attitudes and skills/knowledge directly to the external outcome, but the degree of appropriateness and effectiveness of the outcome may not be nearly as high as when the entire cycle is completed and begins again"

Proposed model ICLT:

In response to the requirements of Indian English learners expansion of ICC, a comprehensive and conceptual framework of the process of ICC acquisition was modelled in three significant parts of the on-going process. The first part reflects the intercultural dimension of language teaching that involves the understanding between native culture and the foreign language/target language culture. Brown emphasises that culture has become an integrated pattern of human thoughts and behaviour, "Cultural patterns, customs, and ways of life are expressed in language: culture-specific world views are reflected in language...

[L]anguage and culture interact so that world views among cultures differ, and that language used to express that world may be relative and specific to that view” (Brown 1980, 130 in Coyle, Hood & Marsh 2010, 39). The second objective part aids in providing the learners with a wide resource of cultural and language texts. At this stage, Stephen Krashen's(1985) Comprehensive input hypothesis is organised as a supplementary acquisition drill to motivate and monitor the learners. This objective step is exposed as an embedded process to uncover a range of texts and resource materials to the learners. The thirdstep is named observation where the learners compare and relate the specific values, beliefs, attitudes, behaviour,culture and social conventions with relevance to the linguistic understanding of the intercultural dimension of language teaching. McCarthy and Carter (1994) defines culture from social discourse view and it refers to "Social knowledge and interactive skills which are required in addition to knowledge of the language system. (McCarthy and Carter, 1994, P.151-152). Thus, it is essential to observe the mediation of intercultural reflection in the language classroom. The observation processencloses Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis (Schmidt, 1995, 2001) to unmark the intercultural and language awarenessof the learners. The fourth process allows the learners to involve themselves in task-based language acquisition with the assistance of learning activities. This practical stage motivates the learner to systematically formulate the communication task with the previously gained knowledge of the observation stage and this part is formally called as exercise and itfosters Long’s Interaction Hypothesis (Long 1985, 1996) to enhance the language skills (LSRW) and intercultural context. As Merrill Swain’sComprehensible output (Co) hypothesisuphold the idea of encountering a lacuna of linguistic skills in the second language acquisition,the process stimulates and formulate theICLT model for Indian learner’sas follows: [Table 1]

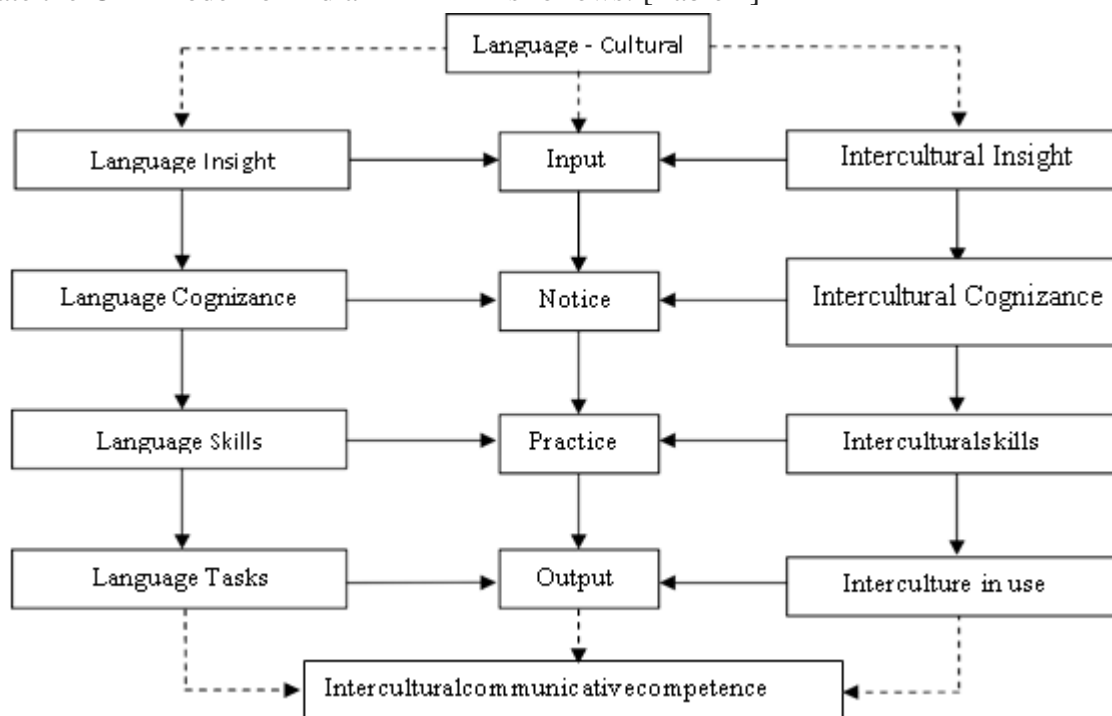


Figure 1: ICLT Model based on Tran, 2016.pp(24)

Details	Teacher 1 (Indian)		Teacher 2	Internal and External Teachers (Both)
	Regular lessons	ICC lessons	(Foreigner)	
Teaching hours	25	25	25	5
Teaching components	Student book Technical Communication (Part 1,3&4)	Student book Technical Communication Additional intercultural material (Part 2&4)	Language, quizzes, IC quizzes, Extra activities	Assessment LC tests & IC tests

Table.1: Distribution of Teaching Hours**Research Location:**

This project was accomplished at the Language Training Centre at Sona College of Arts and Science, Salem, Tamil Nadu which carried out a wide range of language training programmes. This is a multicultural English language training centre that comprises different regional learners with different cultural practice. This language training centre had implemented both online and offline training programmes with systematic course design. The current project was materialised through an online platform with the assistance of Indian teachers and foreign language trainers. The following table vivifies the categorization:

Table.2: Research Participants General Information

N=66			
		F	%
Gender	Male	21	32
	Female	45	68
Age	Under 20	6	9
	21–30	14	21
	31–40	27	41
	Over 40	19	29
Job	Office worker	7	11
	University Student	26	39
	School student	16	24
	Other	17	26
Higher degrees	Bachelor's	5	8
	Master's	28	42
	Doctorate	19	29
	Others	14	21

Number of years' learning English	Under 1	9	14
	1 - under 3	18	27
	3-5	24	36
	Over 5	15	23
Have been abroad	Yes	23	35
	No	43	65
Have taken an intercultural course	Yes	6	9
	No	60	91

Conclusion:

The ICLT model for Indian learners is task-based and evidence-based which was implemented in the real-life context and spawned constructive results. However the varying degrees of importance and the strategies and techniques adopted by various practitioners and the perceptive aptitude of the learners provided a great number of variables in the process of gaining optimum proficiency of language. Besides the chosen resource, the learners were motivated to read culture embedded English textbooks to reinforce socio-cultural language learning context. Thus the empirical Task-Based method attempts to transmit and acquire the specific aptitude relevant to the learner's need in language acquisition. The study proved that the ICLT model was effective in enhancing EFL learners in the global context. Furthermore, this ICLT model can be experimented at various educational institutions to scrutinize the effectiveness of the approach and facilitate the learners with optimum language proficiency and improve their intercultural communicative competence.

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