

THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN TEACHING ENGLISH: SIGNIFICANCE AND APPROACHES

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1. Introduction

Scholars have known for a long time that forms and applications of a language reflect the cultural ideals of the society in which it is spoken. Language has historically served as a means of transmitting culture and cultural links, hence there is a close relationship between language and culture. Different conceptions arise through the use of different languages within a civilization. Thus, when conversing with someone in a foreign language, linguistic proficiency alone is insufficient. This means that learning a language requires not only fluency in the language's vocabulary, syntax, and verb tenses, but also knowledge of the culture to which the language belongs. While language programme graduates may have a high degree of language competence, they are unable to communicate successfully in real-life situations because they lack the necessary cultural knowledge (Liddicoat, 2011). For language learners, Vernier et al. (as stated in Choudhury, 2013) view the teaching of culture as a 'fifth skill' that improves students' overall learning. To Liddicoat (2011), culture and language are considered to influence one another to create meaning. Hence, learning a language is thought to be inextricably linked to knowing about that culture.

1.1. Definition of culture

Culture is described as "the beliefs, customs, arts, etc., of a particular society, group, place, or time;" in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (2022). A broader definition of culture is given below in *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, Micropaedia*:

The integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief and behaviour. Culture ... consists of language, ideas, beliefs, customs, taboos, codes, institutions, tools, techniques, works of art, rituals, ceremonies, and other related components... Every human society has its own particular culture, or sociocultural system.... Variation among sociocultural systems is attributable to physical habitats and resources; to the range of possibilities inherent in various areas of activity such as language, rituals and customs, and the manufacture and use of tools (p. 784).

As mentioned in the definitions above, the hallmarks of culture include, but are not limited to, society, religion, literature, history, science, and education. Language has an impact on institutions and intercommunal ties in addition to creating and maintaining interpersonal relationships. Culture can be defined as a way of life, or the transmission of common attitudes, values, behaviours, norms, languages, and knowledge from one generation to the next. Damen (1987) presented notable characteristics of culture which could be summarised and listed as follows:

- *Culture is learned.*
- *Cultural norms and practises evolve.*
- *Culture is a universal fact of existence for people.*

- *Cultures offer collections of distinctive, interconnected, carefully chosen blueprints for living, as well as values and beliefs that go along with and support these blueprints.*
- *Interaction and close ties exist between language and culture.*
- *Culture serves as a filter between its users and the wide variety of stimuli that the environment offers.*

Although there are several suggestions and attempts, it is not easy to define a term as complex and broad as culture. According to Kramsch (1998), being a part of a discourse group with a same social background, shared history, and shared ideals is belonging to a culture. Liddicoat (2011), on the other hand, explains culture as a complex system of ideas, attitudes, values, beliefs, conventions, behaviours, practices, rituals, and lifestyles of the members of a cultural group as well as the institutions and artefacts they produce (2011). By considering language as a cultural construct, as these definitions and ideas show, it is possible to see how closely linked language and culture are.

1.2. Culture with small ‘c’ and big ‘C’

Culture is defined in two categories by Kramsch (1998). To classify culture, Kramsch makes a distinction between the phrases *culture with a small ‘c’* and *culture with a big ‘C’* (2013). According to Kramsch, in a community, people’s daily routines, such as their eating habits, behaviour, and customary rituals, are what she refers to as ‘culture’ when using a small ‘c’. Contrarily, culture with a big ‘C’ refers to more extensive societal narratives found in things like creative productions, musical subgenres, and literary works. It is also added by Kramsch (2013) that if students need to study culture with the big C, or small c depends on the educational setting like English for scholarly purposes, business, or travel. What is referred to as big ‘C’ culture is a collection of information on the arts, history, geography, business, education, festivals, and customs of a target spoken society. On the other side, the small ‘c’ culture accepts everything as a way of life in its entirety, including the menial aspects of daily life. Each goal will require a different approach to the frame of cultural information to be studied.

1.3. Enculturation and acculturation

The terms ‘enculturation’ and ‘acculturation’ are frequently used when discussing culture and culture learning. As explained by Damen (1987) the acquisition of a second or additional culture is referred to as acculturation, whereas the acquisition of a first culture is referred to as enculturation, and both exhibit distinctive variances. According to Damen (1987), enculturation promotes the growth of a feeling of cultural or social identity, a matrix of values and ideas, stereotyped ways of living, and, most importantly, ethnocentrism, or the conviction in the efficacy and validity of conventional techniques. Contrarily, the procedure of acculturation requires releasing go of ethnocentric preconceptions and removing the original culture's worldview or ethos as well as coming up with fresh solutions to old problems.

1.3.1. Cultural identity and culture shock

Cultural identity, according to Damen (1987), is linked to the relationship between a person and society and is at jeopardy as acculturation takes place since becoming bicultural results in the development of a different cultural personality and identity. The effects of culture shock on someone who is learning another language in a foreign community might range from mild annoyance to extreme psychological anguish and catastrophe. It was brought on, according to Damen (1987), by a dread of losing recognisable signs and symbols. Damen continued by stating that culture shock is a difficult step in the acculturation process that follows an initial period of exhilaration and enthusiasm at the novel and unexpected. Some people may be able to overcome culture shock, but for others it is swiftly followed by a debilitating time of sadness, aversion to new and odd things, illness, discouragement, and despair (Damen, 1987). Thu (2010) pointed out the main stages of culture shock suggested by Brown and Eisterhold (2004), which could be explained as follows:

- *The honeymoon stage* is the period when the distinctions found in the new culture are fascinating and alluring during the honeymoon period.
- *The disintegration stage* is characterised by powerlessness and dissatisfaction. During this time, the new culture seems overpowering, and the newcomer generally responds by withdrawing or going into melancholy.
- *The reintegration stage* is the period when the culture seems to be a difficulty throughout the reintegration period, and the immigrant seems protective rather than responsive.
- *The autonomy stage* is period when the immigrant has insight into the culture, and his or her judgments are fair, impartial, and may even be somewhat optimistic.
- *The interdependence stage* is the stage when some people change their identity to become bicultural or multicultural, at which point they reach the interdependence stage.

2. Language and Culture Relations

Language is a component of culture, and culture is a component of language; the two are closely related, therefore, according to Brown (2007), one cannot separate the two without losing the relevance of either language or culture. They are connected to one another; hence, their relationship is complicated. Language and culture can sometimes signify the same thing. Children simultaneously learn culture and language; therefore, it is the same for them. They are regarded as interdependent because, even when members of one culture migrate, it is easy to recognise them if they speak the local language, and the opposite is also true. Everyone often communicates with others using language to convey ideas and arguments.

Given how intimately people's attitudes are entwined with their languages, it is hard to experience a culture without being familiar with its language. Language and culture are inseparable duo, which makes language teaching and culture inseparable as well. Language

functions as a means of communication as well as a tool for cultural transmission. A certain language reflects a specific society. A language cannot actually be learned unless the student has grasped the cultural circumstances in which the language is used. Culture has always been a part of language education since it is difficult to conceive doing it without making some sort of reference to the target culture (Kovacks, 2017). Students learn about the culture in which a language is rooted by studying that language.

Language and culture have a positive relationship since they both impact and reflect one another. A culture is a component of a language, and the reverse is also true. It is impossible in this situation to separate language from culture since the language acts as a symbol of the country and is strongly tied to the attitudes and behaviours of different groups of language speakers. With the exception of specialised, instrumental acquisition, such as, for example, acquiring reading proficiency in a language for analysing scientific works, learning a second language also entails learning a second culture (Brown, 2007). As a result, when learning a new language, people commonly read authentic literature, go on trips, and interact with locals. They reviewed books on the country's culture, customs, and beliefs. These students typically perform well because they treat culture and language holistically, which always go hand in hand. The significance of either language or culture would be lost if they were separated, according to Brown (2007), who argues that the two are inextricably linked. To put it another way, language is viewed as a means of interaction and communication between individuals, which promotes the emergence of culture.

Language teachers' experience, education, and opinions become crucial when discussing the notion of culture and the possibilities for incorporating cultural knowledge into language learning. They might have different attitudes towards incorporating culture in their classes. These variations may be the consequence of their prior knowledge of the target language, what they have learned throughout their training, and the opportunities they have had to interact directly with the target culture. The degree of cultural divergence between the native and target cultures may also have an impact on the cultural material presented in language training (Kovacs, 2017). Language training primarily focuses on the development of four key skills: speaking, writing, and reading comprehension. However, culture, which is regarded as the 'fifth skill', is the significant component of language that language experts and teachers frequently discuss.

Since it is impossible to separate language and culture from one another, culture and language are acquired together, with each aiding the other's development. Additionally, it is shown by the way language functions as a medium for the social construction of culture, cultural norms in communication, and cultural standards (Kramsch, 1996). According to Liddicoat et al. (2003), no level of language is independent of culture since language and culture interact in a way that connects all levels of language use and structures (Figure 1).

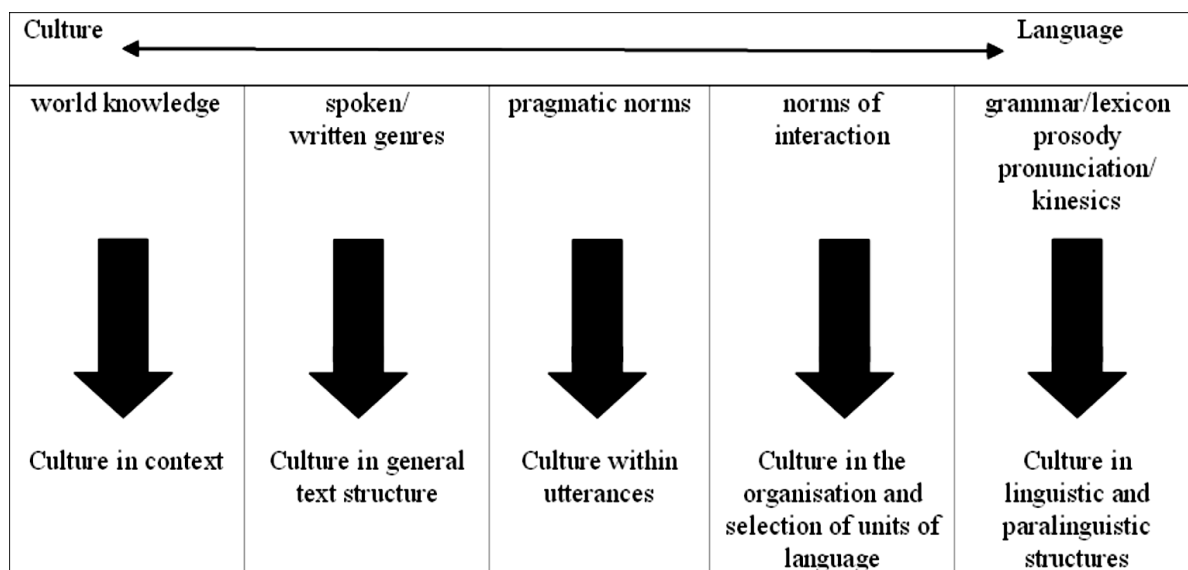


Figure 1. Points of articulation between culture and language (Liddicoat et al., 2003, p. 9)

Furthermore, it reveals the strong connection between language and culture because language communicates, embodies, and represents cultural reality (Kramsch, 1998). The link between language and culture is crucial in language learning because someone who learns a language without understanding culture runs the risk of being a ‘fluent fool’ (Bennett et al., 2003). Thus, when it comes to the teaching and learning environment, the connection between language learning and cultural learning is so clear that it is possible to draw the conclusion that language learning is cultural learning and, as a result, language teaching is cultural teaching. Foreign language instructors should be aware of the value of cultural studies in their classes, and they should work to improve their students' cultural awareness and communication abilities, according to Choudhury (2013). Both teaching other languages and teaching about other cultures are the responsibilities of foreign language instructors.

2.1. Cultural awareness

Being aware of or comprehending people from various cultures, including their behaviour, expectations, opinions, and values, is referred to as cultural awareness. Thu (2010) outlines the Kuang phases of cultural awareness (2007). People are aware of their own tactics at this point and think they are the only ones available. In other words, they disregard the impact of cultural variations. At the second stage, people become aware of alternative methods, yet they continue to believe their approach is the best. At this stage, cultural differences are seen as a source of issues, and as a result, issues are more likely to be disregarded or given less weight. The third stage of cultural awareness, on the other hand, is when a person is aware of both their own way of doing things and other people’s methods of doing things, and they are more likely to choose the optimal approach depending on the circumstance. At the third stage, people start to understand that cultural differences can bring about both benefits and challenges, and they are

eager to use cultural variety to come up with new ideas and alternatives. A culture of shared meanings is finally created at the fourth stage by bringing together individuals from varied cultural origins. At this stage, people converse with others frequently and develop new definitions and rules to fit the demands of a particular circumstance. In essence, it could be concluded that people who go through the four stages of cultural awareness progress from a state of ‘cultural ignorance’ to a state of ‘cultural competence’ (Thu, 2010).

2.2. Cultural competence

Given that culture serves as the basis for communication, language use needs to be connected to culturally appropriate behaviour in order for communication to be successful. As proposed by Samovar et al. (1981), culture affects not only who communicates with whom, what is communicated, and how it is communicated, but it also affects how messages are encoded, what they mean to people, and the circumstances and conditions under which various messages may or may not be sent, noticed, or interpreted, according to Choudhury (2013). It is quite challenging to include culture into the classroom because it is such a large and complex concept (Choudhury, 2013). According to Yıldırım (2012), coursebooks serve as a source of cultural direction for English language teachers, guiding them as they integrate cultural elements into the context of their language instruction.

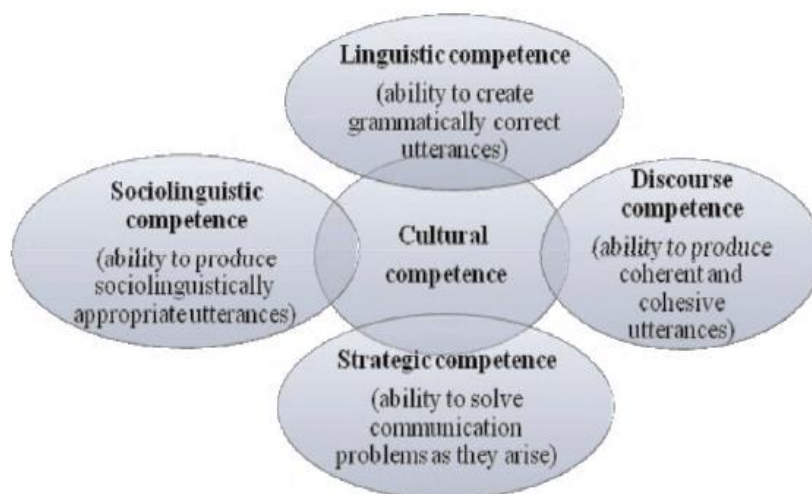


Figure 2. The place of cultural competence in communicative competence (Bárdos, 2004)

2.3. Intercultural communicative competence

People from various cultures come into contact with one another due to increased population movement and immigration, which can occasionally result in friction and conflict. There is an alternative approach to teaching culture that does not require rejecting potentially inspiring cultural content. It is inspired by the idea of intercultural competency (Byram, 1997). Developing communicative competence (CC), which is comprised of the four components of

grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies, is interwoven with learning about target cultures. The term ‘intercultural communicative competency’ (ICC) was made popular by Byram in 1997. It is described as social appropriateness and efficacy. In other words, intercultural competence is related to the capacity to interact and communicate effectively with individuals from different cultural backgrounds.

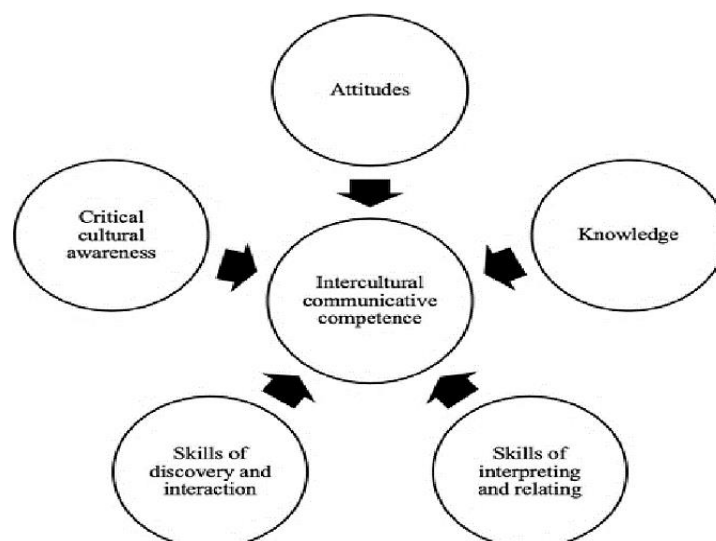


Figure 3. Byram's (1997) framework for intercultural communicative competence

2.4. Cross-cultural and communicative competences

Cross-cultural awareness, according to Damen (1987), comprises being able to recognise and understand both one’s own socially constructed behaviour and cognitive patterns as well as those of other people. It is the force that moves a person learning a new culture along the acculturation continuum from a state of little to no knowledge, or even hostility, to a state of nearly complete understanding, from monoculturalism to multiculturalism. The linguo-cultural orientation of a functionally significant variable of competences is a crucial component of cross-cultural and communicative competences. Cross-cultural and communicative competence is thought to be appropriate to highlight as a distinct competency within the framework of component design cross-cultural and communicative skills and important conceptual principles cognitive-linguo-cultural methodology. There is a variety of cross-cultural interactions today such as Internet, email, social networking websites, chat, and mobile phone technology. Thanks to all of these, interaction has become quicker and wider. The following sub-competencies reflect the training system and make up the framework of cross-cultural and communicative competencies, which is considered to be a level of linguistic proficiency (Figure 4).

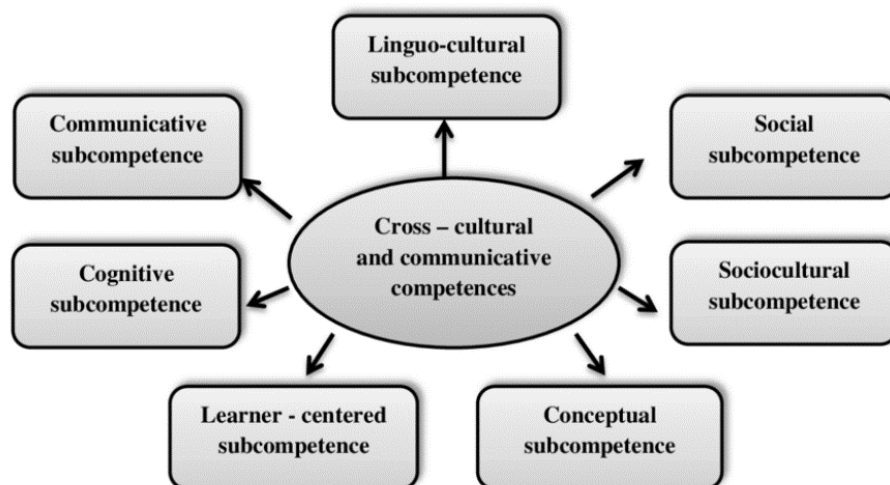


Figure 4. The structure of cross-cultural and communicative competences (Nurmukhanova et al., 2014, 118)

Developing sensitivity to cultural differences is essential for communication as they are deeply ingrained in people's behaviour and thinking and difficult to see directly. To Qin (2012), sensitivity to cultural differences refers to the ability of participants in verbal communication to not only understand the superficial cultural distinctions of the target language country but also to quickly recognise the underlying differences between opposing viewpoints. However, because the deep structure of a culture is much more abstract and is thought to exist in the speaker, writer, listener, or reader's mind, the deep-seated cultural differences are not as simple to recognise. The term 'tolerance' for cultural diversity, on the other hand, relates to the degree to which cultural differences are viewed as either understandable, respectable, or unpleasant and despised. Some people believe that their culture is superior to others' cultures, which they perceive as being more developed. The simple explanation for this is that people are born to benefit from their local culture, so the beliefs and moral standards blend into their blood and function as an essential component of the entire body. When confronted with a different culture, it will automatically react with feelings of misunderstanding, distaste, or, more gravely, revulsion attitude (Qin, 2012). According to Qin (2012), flexibility may be defined as the participant's capacity to adapt her/his communication behaviour in a flexible way to the shared cultural background. This competency in two domains is required to handle challenges linked to cultural differences. Additionally, it is the capacity to settle the communication conflict caused by cultural differences in order to achieve the desired outcome differences.

3. Culture and Teaching English

The value of culture as it relates to the teaching of English becomes a more subtle subject. Language teachers are referred to by Byram (1099) as professional mediators between foreign

languages and culture, and, as it has been underlined above, it is not possible to teach a language without also teaching a culture. However, Murray (2010) believes that in many situations of teacher education programmes around the world, the cultural component is still ignored. As a result, as explained by Gonen and Saglam (2012), some teachers might lack the skills and knowledge necessary to integrate culture into their lessons. A number of EFL teachers might not have complete awareness of the value of cultural orientation in more traditional nations. Some of these teachers tend to view verbal and written communication as simply the application of grammatical rules. Furthermore, sometimes gaining information about or becoming familiar with the culture of the target language is considered as threat to the own culture; thus, the importance of linguistically useful information is ignored in such a mindset.

Nevertheless, recognizing and appreciating the significance of culture as an inseparable component of language teaching is important for language teachers and teacher candidates. Thus, theoretical and practical understanding of what culture is and how it could be present and presented in a language classroom is essential for teacher candidates. Culture is considered as being more difficult to define than grammar or vocabulary; hence, it is not so easy to decide what should be taught and how it should be done. For this reason, a roadmap is needed. As a solution, guidelines and suggestions for the incorporation of cultural content could be included in the course material for language teaching methods. The importance of including culture instruction in the curricula and syllabi of English language teacher preparation programmes is highlighted by Murray (2010), who also notes that the culture component in language education needs more attention.

Furthermore, Byram (1989) emphasises the link between language and culture by asserting that as students learn languages, they also learn cultures, and that as they practise their language abilities, they develop the ability to communicate with people from other cultural backgrounds. They must be aware of, for instance, the proper methods to address somebody, express thanks, make requests, or disagree with someone. They should be aware that members of the target language speech community may not view certain actions and intonation patterns as appropriate in their own speech community. They need to understand that language use must be consistent with socially and culturally accepted behaviour for communication to be productive. Therefore, EFL teachers should not consider to disregard the significance of teaching culture in the development of what Byram (1997) refers to as ‘intercultural communicative competence’ in today’s more globalised and multicultural society.

It is crucial for students to comprehend the cultural components of communication before they travel abroad and run into issues because having direct contact with the target culture and its speakers is a rare opportunity for all language learners in countries from outside and increasing circles (Kachru, 1992). Occasionally, nonverbal characteristics of a target culture are picked up from films and TV shows, which are seldom ever beneficial for communication and occasionally lead to mistakes or prejudices.

Choudhury (2013) asserts that culture has a significant effect on language learning from a pedagogical and linguistic standpoint. From a linguistic perspective, language is important because it influences the lexical, operational, and discourse levels of the language. It affects the selection of language resources from a pedagogical perspective because it's critical to take into account both the cultural context of the teaching strategies and the cultural content of the materials. Students should therefore study both the language's linguistic and cultural norms in order to acquire a language properly.

In order to advance intercultural understanding and world peace, the Council of Europe (2001) emphasizes that it includes cultural awareness and intercultural learning among its policies. In addition to citing other benefits of learning about cultures, as mentioned by Choudhury (2013), learning about culture can help students better understand their own culture. The ideals of the student's own culture shape their worldview. When they encounter people from other cultures, this could cause issues. Choudhury (2013) also discusses that knowing about different cultures fosters students' empathy and prevents misconceptions, which is an essential part of general education. According to Kovács (2017), future language teachers are not required to be experts in the field of culture, but they need to understand what this phrase implies in general and, in particular, how it relates to learning a foreign language. They should be aware that culture cannot be taught simply through a few lectures on a few particular holidays, songs, or literary works. There is much more to it than that, and it is implied in the proper application of other linguistic forms as well. Kramersch (2013) explains that language is not a collection of random verbal constructions used to describe a cultural reality that exists outside of language, in the real world, in the pair 'language and culture'. The customs, values, institutions, and structures we refer to as cultural phenomena would not exist without language and other symbolic systems. They need to have a purpose in order to become culture. Culture is the meaning we assign to things like cuisines, gardens, and lifestyles. As further explained by Kramersch (2013), language and culture cannot be separated from one another.

In addition, Kovacs (2017) points out that so as to attract more international students, which would bring in more revenue, and to encourage their researchers and prospective graduates to publish in English, many institutions throughout the world offer their courses and programmes in English. This shows that rather than using English as a means to an end, academics utilise it to facilitate the sharing of knowledge.

Students who are learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) are those who study the language to communicate in settings where there are frequently no native English speakers present. This approach is distinct from those employed in settings where English is being learnt as a second language (ESL). Kovacs (2017) explains what Galloway and Rose (2015) offer as a more comprehensive viewpoint contending that even when native speakers of English communicate with non-native speakers of English, they alter the language they use to a sort of EFL, making it more understandable. This understanding decentralises and isolates English from any specific community. As a result, including culture in the ELF classroom, as suggested

by Coskun (2010), is more about intercultural communication and the ability of the interlocutors to comprehend and appreciate one another's culture rather than it is about the culture(s) of English-speaking countries. This means that language is related to the culture(s) of its users, whether they are native or non-native English speakers; therefore, no culture would be marginalised or subordinated as suggested by Dogancy-Aktuna & Hardman (2018). All interconnected cultures would be respected and given equal value instead. Students of English need to understand in the EFL classes that a culture's dynamic nature is what permits negotiation as emphasised by Mahboob (2018).

Since communicative theories were originally created in the context of English Language Teaching (ELT), the integration of culture has started to assume an even greater significance. Communication skills are the capacity to relativize one's own cultural beliefs, attitudes, and practises, to comprehend those of others, to create a bridge between people, and to accept diversity rather than calling for a certain level of concord between cultures as explained by Kovacs (2017). Interaction with a different culture in this situation enables language learners to relativize their own culture. According to Tomalin (2008), teaching culture as a fifth language skill - in addition to listening, speaking, reading, and writing- is important because of the international role of the English language and globalisation. The fifth language skill shows people how to change the way they use English so that they may discover, comprehend, and respect the values, customs, and distinctive traits of various cultures. It requires language proficiency in order to be tolerant of diversity, adaptive, and accepting of ways of doing things that may be different from your own. It is an attitude change that is expressed through words.

3.1. Cultural contexts in ELF

It would appear that studying a linguistic system is only a small part of what English education entails. In an attempt to clarify the role of culture in the context of so many different varieties of English, Cates (2004) contends that it can also be viewed as an international language for communication with people from all over the world and a subject for learning about the world's peoples, countries, and problems. Choudhury (2013) argues that despite the fact that two non-native English speakers are conversing in English, cultural familiarity on the parts of each interlocutor is still of the utmost importance.

The success or failure of teaching culture in language schools, according to Thu (2010), may depend on a variety of factors. The most crucial elements to examine include teachers, courses, and texts. As pointed out by Damen (1987), there are causes for the teachers' ineffectiveness as cultural ambassadors. One reason as suggested by him is that teachers are unsure about which 'culture' to instruct. Another reason is given as that, until recently, there were just a few texts and approaches accessible to help teachers guide students toward a greater understanding of culture.

3.2. The teacher's role in integration of culture

English language teachers need to receive the training necessary to support the integration of culture into language instruction by understanding the cultural needs of their students (Coskun, 2010), fostering intercultural awareness and using the ‘cultura franca’ as a foundation for global communication (Byrd et al., 2011). As they need to teach it, language teachers should be interested in the study of culture. No ethical educator would intentionally undermine learners’ capacity for successful linguistic and cultural communication in the future by refusing to address cultural issues explicitly and overtly. In addition, teachers need to recognize the sociocultural background and context of the target community. They also need to understand the drawbacks of the target culture and how miscommunication can be avoided. However, incorporating culture into ELF discourse is difficult and problematic since it depends on where, when, and how English language learners will use the language in their daily lives. Thus, as Al Hariri (2022) suggests, determining students’ needs as the first step toward the proper blending of cultures is vital. In that way, teachers can choose which components are to be included to help their students perform well. Culturally aware teachers value the essential approaches that should be applied during language teaching, some of which could be listed as follows:

- fostering multicultural sensitivity in ELF classes
- embracing intercultural sensitivity,
- recognising the first culture’s interference,
- encouraging the use of stereotype-critical thinking

Thu (2010) focuses on the necessity of teachers who adhere to the communicative approach to second language learning and instruction being aware of some concealed assumptions (see Table 1). He notes that in order to give learners opportunities for meaningful communicative contact and to prioritise the needs of learners, as proposed by Damen, educators should review their own adherence to the underlying assumptions before, after, and during training sessions (1987).

Table 1. Using the communicative competence train of thought (Adapted by Damen, 1987)

It is assumed...	It means that...
1. Nothing about a human being is off limits or to be ignored at will.	1. The cornerstone of cross-cultural communication is cultural relativism.
2. Cultural practices or norms are taught or learnt. Such education is not substitutive; rather, it is additive.	2. While learning a new language and a new culture go hand in hand, they do not include the same steps.

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| 3. Because culture and language development are intertwined, the issue is not whether to teach culture, but rather which culture should be taught. | 3. There are various approaches to cultural education and instruction. No strategy will work for all educators and students in all situations. One must make decisions. |
| 4. Cultural patterns within a specific culture function as components of the whole and display cultural rationalism within that setting. | 4. Despite individual manifestations' differences, cultural patterns at any given moment exhibit a basic constancy. |
| 5. The term 'ethnocentrism' is not always negative. | 5. Humans are culturally capable creatures. Cultural education should not aim to make students lose their sense of culture. |
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Being aware of these hidden assumptions might be very helpful for teachers of English when designing their classes. For instance, the first one suggests that the concepts of cultural relativism must be accepted and used in language instruction. In addition, according to the second assumption, it is important to carefully select and tailor the goals and objectives of cultural learning in the classroom to the requirements and preferences of the learners. The third premise makes it very evident that the question of whether or not culture should be taught is irrelevant because language acquisition and cultural learning go hand in hand. The choice of subject matter and instructional strategy is the central issue in cultural instruction. The fourth premise holds that to accept the idea of cultural relativity is to acknowledge that the cultural traits that make up a particular culture serve as components of the whole and display a general consistency at a certain moment. Damen concludes by saying that the premise supports the necessity to preserve people's psychocultural identities. Ethnocentrism is a normal and necessary human attitude that, as Damen believes, is equivalent with adhering to a particular set of cultural possibilities deemed to be correct (Damen,1987).

3.3. Cultural target group

When it comes to teaching English in connection to culture, which type of culture is to be learned is the pressing decision faced with by any teachers and students. The most popular choice was British or American culture with a mix of small 'c' and big 'C' cultures for historical and economic reasons. Additionally, there is a clear bias toward British or American culture in the majority of worldwide English language teaching materials. Both the teachers and the students appear to have a simple decision to choose. It gets harder the more you explore the idea of culture in education. One issue is that there is not a single, homogeneous national culture. People can be categorised into any variety of cultural groups, including those based on their age, gender, regional origin, occupation, social status, religion, and ethnicity. Lack of awareness of this results in stereotypes being reinforced.

The issue of whose culture(s) should be included in English language training arises as a result of the fact that non-native speakers of English outweigh native speakers worldwide. The fluid

nature of international business communication in English and its hallmark of shared interests suggest that power is dynamic and reciprocally dispersed (Coskun, 2010). As a result, neither the laws of the British nor the American civilizations must be followed.

Therefore, the question of whether British or American culture is the target culture in the EFL environment arises. English has overtaken other languages as the most frequently spoken one, thanks to British colonialism before the middle of the twentieth century and the subsequent rise of the USA as a political, military, and economic superpower.

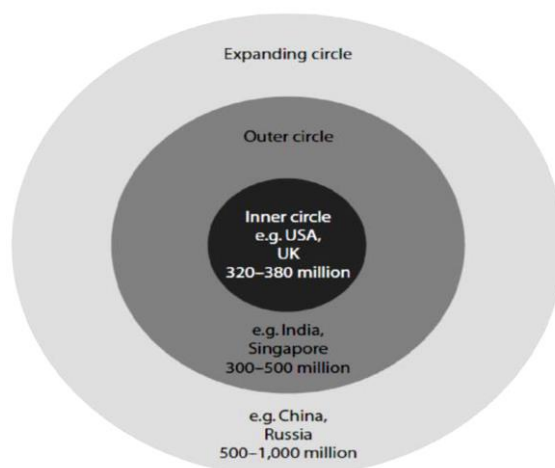


Figure 5. Kachru’s (1985) ‘Three Circles’ model of English

The concept of World Englishes (Kachru, 1992), which consists of several variations of English used in various sociolinguistic situations, evolved as a result of the growth of English over the past century; it is not any longer a single, universal language. The first type of English is the English that is spoken in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. According to Kachru (1992), this English is considered to be a part of the ‘inner circle’ and represents the historical and sociolinguistic roots of English in the nations where it is currently the dominant language. Then, in the ‘outer circle’, there are newly formed regional or indigenous types created in formerly British colonies like India, Nigeria, Caribbean Island nations, etc. China, Russia, and Brazil are included in the ‘expanding circle’, which is the last group (Kachru, 1992).

Table 2. Englishes of the three circles model

Inner Circle	English as Native Language (ENL)
Outer Circle	English as Second Language (ESL)
Expanding Circle	English as Foreign Language (EFL)

The nations where English is the mother tongue and the major language are included in Kachru's inner circle. The USA, UK, Ireland, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand are included in this circle. The post-colonial nations in the outer circle are those where English is widely used in government, education, and popular culture despite not being the native tongue. India, Pakistan, the Philippines, Singapore, Nigeria, and more than 50 more countries and territories are included in this broad group of countries. The expanding circle of nations recognises the importance of English as a language of international communication. English is frequently taught in these nations as a 'foreign' language with a focus on communication in international commerce. Russia, China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Indonesia, Iran, and many other nations are included in the growing circle (Kachru, 1992).

Additionally, it is true that English today holds a special place in the world as a language. The notion that English is exclusive to the nations that Kachru (1992) refers to as the 'Inner Circle' - Britain, the USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand - has been disproved. This has prompted some to demand that English be taught as an international language in a neutral or supranational variation that is completely free of cultural character.

Others, however, contend that even the newly developed form of English used internationally is a North American sub-genre that imperils other languages and homogenises culture. However, given that culture is a key component of the core English curriculum in most schools, it can hardly be disregarded.

3.4. Integration of culture in language classroom

To increase intercultural competence, one should be able to do the following: negotiate and find common ground; avoid making assumptions or stereotypes; teach culture through language skills training; read literary works; enjoy music and movies; browse the internet and read web pages about learning English culture; engage in task-based activities like roleplay and drama; and use a variety of tools for teaching and learning culture. The core competency of intercultural communicative competence is the result of the three interrelated learning outcomes of cultural awareness, language awareness, and language skills, as represented in the diagram below (Figure 6).

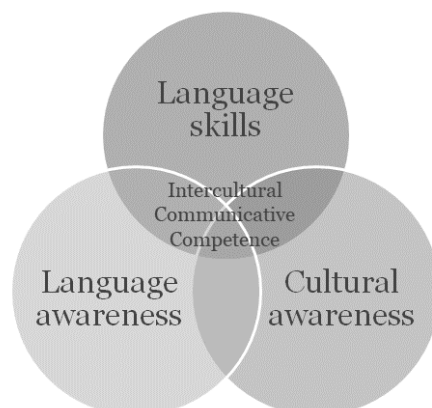


Figure 6. Learning outcomes for a content-rich Modern Languages curriculum (adapted from Meesterschapsteam MVT’s vision on the future of Modern Languages education by de Jong)

Being the most extensively spoken language, English is used more frequently in the interactions indicated above, making the cultivation of intercultural competence necessary. To become interculturally competent, one must first be able to identify distinctions and variations both within one’s own culture and in other cultures. It is about taking up what is referred to as a third position, an objective viewpoint that cuts over cultural boundaries. It entails letting go of the notion that everyone has a similar perspective on the world. In order to encourage students to think about their own cultures and foster an environment of ‘inter-culturality’, McKay (2002) contends that cultural artefacts should be used in the classroom (Kramersch 1993). In this way, intercultural competence becomes more about abilities than it is about knowledge. The concern that students would be influenced by the target culture and lose their own identity since this may be viewed as linguistic imperialism is one of the issues brought on by the usage of the target culture in ELT. To overcome the drawbacks of employing only one of the cultures, some authors have proposed combining the cultures of the home language and the target language. According to Ariffin (2009), this concept is great because it encourages students to find connections between their culture and the culture of the target language.

4. Conclusion and Implications

There are other aspects of teaching English besides only grammar and vocabulary; it also involves helping students become aware of their own cultures and how to navigate them in cross-cultural situations. It is a pitiful reason to not teach culture or not be aware of culture in language classes on the grounds that language learning is culture learning; culture can easily be forgotten, disregarded, or given temporary attention in the classroom when teachers are not completely aware that cultural learning can considerably help their students in second language learning. One of the crucial objectives is to find areas of agreement amongst language users from various cultural backgrounds so that they can interact across cultures. In this way, the participants of communication can approach the conversation from two different angles by

recognising differences through intercultural awareness, and by comprehending culturally shared values.

Another significant point that needs to be highlighted is related to teacher training. That is, cultural preparation in teacher education programmes has to be prioritised more to enable teachers to provide students with the necessary skills to function outside of the classroom and become global citizens. Teachers should also encourage their students to avoid generalising about other cultures. Instead, teachers ought to assist their students understand a common culture so that they can utilise English in a variety of multicultural settings. This can be accomplished by embracing the notion that no culture is better to another and highlighting the fact that many of the values shared by most cultures have overlapping ancestral origins. Consequently, a key component of teaching English as a foreign language is cultural awareness.

Instead of spreading or demonstrating how the target culture is superior to the learner's own culture, the objective of culture training in EFL should be to strengthen students' intercultural communication skills. The student should be able to recognise elements of his own culture in the culture of the host nation. The student should be able to see her/his own culture reflected in the culture of the other country. An important step in appreciating otherness is for learners to comprehend what culture is and how it changes throughout the world. Learners must be open to learning about the mechanisms of culture if they are to comprehend why people from various cultures behave or react in different ways. This reduces assumptions and cultural gaps.

It is also crucial for native English speakers who teach English to be sensitive to the cultural norms of their students as part of the intercultural awareness process, for they need to be able to adapt to the cultural backgrounds of their students. They also need to learn about other cultures in addition to their own in order to be able to do this.

To conclude, understanding a culture should be an intentional, deliberate process in which the implicit is made explicit. Teaching culture is now considered to be a part of values education. Fostering critical thinking and tolerance for difference is emphasised. Culture learning is viewed as a comparative process in which students are encouraged to become aware of their own cultures and compare them to the target cultures.

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