



THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE IN TEACHING ENGLISH

Yusupov Holmirza
Andijan State University
Daho84@mail.ru

Abstract. The concrete structure of the teaching of intercultural communication in teaching of foreign languages is considered in the article. Given structured and functional problems of the productive teaching of foreign language.

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In the few decades, the field of English Language Teaching began to address linguistic and cultural diversity; rather than focusing on teaching aspects related to the English language, ELT includes sociocultural factors acknowledging how language and culture are related to one's identity. Without a doubt, English is the most popular foreign language many Uzbek people wish to learn for educational, economic and social reasons, a reality that applies to many other non-English speaking countries as well.

In this article, I will first introduce the role of culture in communicative competence, which is caused by the different intercultural outlook of language learners.

Then, I will present some models of intercultural competence that can be used in language learning. Finally, I will discuss identity as an integral dimension in ELT that cannot be ignored, and suggest three educational projects that can be applied in the English classroom.

Any discussion of communicative competence in the recent years recognizes the importance of the use of the language in social context, also referred to as pragmatics. Bachman (1990) uses pragmatics as an overarching term that includes sociolinguistic competence and its related elements: sensitivity to differences in

dialect or variety, in register, naturalness, cultural references, and figurative language. For example, a competent speaker is one who has awareness that a language can be used distinctively in certain geographical location and within different social groups, and that certain linguistic features carry cultural meaning. Although Bachman's model rightly acknowledges the sociocultural dimension, it is limited to the appropriate use of the language itself. Celce-Murcia and Olshtain(2000) go beyond linguistic references and point out that pragmatics also includes "people's intentions, assumption, belief, goals" that are socioculturally appropriate.(p019) More recently Celce-Murcia(2007) has warned ELT practitioners that "... if the goal of language instruction is communicative competence, language instruction must be integrated with cultural and cross-cultural instruction"(p-51) Thus, besides knowledge of linguistic cultural appropriateness, being sensitive to people's underlying cultural beliefs when language is crucial for effective communication.

Everyone knows people from different cultures have their own cultural perceptions, beliefs, values and social customs which greatly determines their communication ways, it is not surprising to find that people have many difficulties and obstacles in understanding one another and communicating with one another. In daily intercultural communications, it is necessary to pay attention to the code that governs the expectations of social behavior, or the conventional norm. These codes required by good breeding and expected to be obeyed are called etiquette or social norms of communication This item is equivalent to protocol, decorum, courtesy, etc. Etiquette today is based on treating everyone with the same degree of kindness and consideration, and it consists mostly of common sense. It is helpful to know some rules about how to behave in certain situations – if only because this makes life more comfortable for you and makes you more self - confidence in social situation.

That's why it is important to introduce the social norms and styles of making discourse in target language in teaching foreign language. It mainly serves not only to make cultural identity of discourse, but also helps to build valuable communication with native speakers or communicators. Here main attention should be paid to style of forming speech, in which observed objective or subjective approach to the utterance. This phenomenon mainly occurs in addressing to someone with a request.

ESP (English for Specific Purposes) and BE (Business English) students should know that utterances like "*Go and bring some Xerox paper, please*" or "*Please, give me a copy of your report*" sound like orders rather than requests and cannot be recommended for use in professional or business environment, even if one addresses a secretary or an assistant. In addition to formal and semiformal circumstances, examples can be given to students in the form of short stories, when the misuse of the Imperative in requests sounded offensive and caused problems even in informal situations.

The habit of expressing requests in the form of questions “*Can you....?*” “*Could you...?*” “*Will you...?*” “*Would you...?*” can only be built up if Uzbek students whose native language is Uzbek or Russian are constantly exposed to polite requests by the teacher who refrains from abrupt commands still typical in our classrooms: “*Open the books, please*”, “*Read the text out loud*”, “*Translate the next sentence*”.

An effective exercise that can be recommended is discussing multiple choice dialogues, when students have read them and chosen the option that seems most appropriate. Polite and impolite dialogue options can be written by the teacher on the basis of those found in various course books. While comparing such options, students will learn to distinguish between the more polite Subjunctive forms *could/would* and the more casual *can/will*. They will also learn that place, though desirable in all the request formulas, cannot make the Imperative sound acceptable in business conversations in English.

Special care is needed in studying requests containing mind: “*Do you mind opening the window, please?*” or “*Would you mind coming closer?*” There are two typical mistakes made by both Uzbek and Russian native speakers in the use of mind: first, they tend to confuse requests with asking for permission (“*Do you mind if I use your telephone?*”) and secondly, answers expressing readiness to help tend to be “*Yes, of course*” (which means “*I mind your opening the window, you shouldn't open it*”) instead of “*No*”, “*Not at all*”, “*I don't mind*”, which is misleading. Uzbek students basing on features of native language, in which they make question in negative form conventionally don't differ “*Yes or No*” in answer. They transfer the same outlook when they speak in English. Students should also be told that if one is asking for something less obvious the English request formulas become more tentative: “*Do you think you could ...?*”, “*I don't think/suppose you could ..., could you?*”. The roles of both interlocutors in such dialogues can be practiced in a role play.

Request formulas cannot be confined to oral communication. The traditional patterns used in formal letters “*We would appreciate it if...*”, “*I would be most grateful if...*” are worth practising in students' writing (Jordan, 1999).

The second aspect included in the study of English politeness strategies is what is called tentative discourse. It reflects an observation that compared to the Uzbek or Russian languages, English is characterised by a greater dislike of too explicit and straightforward statements (e.g., not just “*I cannot come to the conference*”, but “*The conference is really interesting, but, unfortunately my earlier plans make it impossible for me to attend it*”).

Non-native speakers of English need to be more careful about any claims they make. However, this peculiarity of English is underestimated by both course book writers and EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers.

To enable Uzbek students to master the strategy of tentative discourse we selected a list of the most typical English discourse patterns based on Jordan's (Jordan, 1999) recommendations.

These patterns differ from their Uzbek and Russian equivalents by showing a greater degree of tentativeness and thus deserve special practice in the ESP or BE classroom. They are:

1. Answering general questions by saying “*I think so*”, “*I don't think so*”, “*I suppose so*”, “*I don't expect so*”, “*I hope so*”, “*I am afraid so*” instead of plain “*Yes*” or “*No*”.

2. Using tag questions instead of general questions to avoid sounding too inquisitive; using tags instead of affirmative sentences to keep discussions going and to facilitate an exchange of opinions: “*Your idea deals with methods of payment, doesn't it?*”

3. Using negative tag questions while asking for information or making an implicit request: “*Jack, you haven't seen Alice, have you?*”, “*Tom, you haven't got a cigarette, have you?*”

4. Using implicit negations expressed by the words *hardly*, *barely*, *scarcely*, *fails to*, *lacks*, *little*: “*There was hardly anywhere to sit down*”, “*She scarcely remembers her mother*”, “*Physiologists had little idea how that occurred*”, “*She failed to lose weight*”, instead of explicit ones.

5. Using the verbs – *appears (to)*, *seems (to)*, *tends (to)*, *may*, *might*; adjectives – *likely (to)*, *unlikely (to)*; adverbs – *perhaps*, *possibly*, *probably*, *apparently* – more frequently than their equivalents are used in Russian.

6. Using words *rather*, *quite*, *fairly*, *a little*, *a bit* before Adjectives and Adverbs, especially when expressing an opinion: “*The service in the hotel was rather slow*”, “*The excursion was a bit tiring*”.

7. Using impersonal verb phrases that imply rather than directly express the speaker's own attitude: “*It is widely accepted that...*”, “*It is very doubtful that...*”.

8. The reluctance to use modal verbs *must*, *should*, *ought to* in the second person, using milder formulas for expressing recommendation or advice: “*Why don't you...?*”, “*You'd better...*”, “*If I were you, I'd...*”.

9. Using the subjunctive for refusing permission: “*I'd rather you didn't*”, expressing desire: “*I'd like to...*” (instead of “*I want...*”) and accusation: “*I wish you wouldn't...*”.

10. Using mild and tactful formulas for expressing dislike: “*I'm not very (too, particularly) keen on...*”.

11. The tendency to avoid sounding dogmatic by beginning sentences with “*As far as I know...*”, “*As for me...*”, “*As far as I am concerned...*”, “*If I'm not mistaken...*”.

12. Using double negation (one explicit and one implicit), instead of an affirmative sentence: “*She didn't look indifferent*”, “*It isn't uneasy*”, “*It's not beyond any doubt*”.

An essential feature of the English politeness strategies is the so-called understatement, or saying less than is implied. It also leads to playing down the seriousness of misfortunes and failures: “*I'm not too well at the moment*” (instead of “*I'm very ill*”); “*It's not good enough*” (instead of “*It's very bad*”); “*Well, naturally, I'm a bit disappointed*” (instead of “*I am desperate*”).

Understatement should also be specially practiced with advanced students because in Uzbek as well as in Russian it is opposed by the tendency to exaggerate the seriousness of events.

The following typical features of the English politeness strategies are worth discussing with the students:

- 1) As with all cultural stereotypes they function subconsciously;
- 2) Native speakers' tolerance to their misuse is unpredictable and does not always depend on releasing the causes of the misuse;
- 3) The closeness of the relationship does not presuppose neglecting politeness;
- 4) Uzbek speakers need to be particularly careful when making requests and strong claims;
- 5) The opposite case of misuse, when excessive politeness are transferred from English into Uzbek is less dangerous; it may sound amusing, but it cannot be taken for rudeness.

In conclusion, the idea of developing students' intercultural communication competence in the western etiquette teaching is a constructive proposal for how to teach culture in foreign language education in the Republic of Uzbekistan. To put this idea into practice, the existing curriculums of foreign language teaching must change. Of course, to make change is an arduous task. In this sense, the proposal of intercultural communication competence is just a small contribution we have made in order to bring changes to foreign language education in Uzbekistan. So, the teaching of western etiquette in foreign language education is important to learn and use a foreign language to communicate. It certainly helps us to find some keys to overcome the existing barriers. And it is vital for students to remember that communication is not conducted in an etiquette, cultural void, rather it involves too many etiquette differences that may lead to misunderstandings. Therefore, we should be aware of the etiquette differences, show understanding and respect to different etiquettes and most

importantly, build bridges across misunderstanding among different etiquette cultures.

Overall, the teaching of western etiquettes makes, such an important impact on the students that they carry those knowledge and skills with them into the intercultural communication.

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