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Intercultural Interaction in English Classrooms: Promoting Cultural Understanding

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Abstract

Knowing one's way around diverse cultures is an increasingly important talent in today's globally interconnected world. This research examines how intercultural interaction in English classes might help students better understand and appreciate one another's cultures. Educators may foster an inclusive and engaging learning environment that promotes cultural appreciation and respect by incorporating varied cultural viewpoints into language learning. Collaborative projects, cultural immersion experiences, and incorporating culturally varied resources into the curriculum are some of the tactics and activities investigated in the study to promote intercultural interchange. Additionally, it discusses the difficulties educators encounter when implementing these methods and provides suggestions on how to overcome them. According to this paper's thorough literature review and case studies, intercultural engagement improves students' social skills, cultural awareness, and language ability. Encouraging intercultural awareness in English classes does more than only improve language acquisition; it also helps students become more compassionate and knowledgeable citizens of the world.

Keywords: Interaction, Cultural, Understanding, intercultural, English Classrooms

1. Introduction

Intercultural interaction is of great importance in any classroom, but especially in English classrooms. English classrooms have the possibility of utilizing cultural understanding to help enhance and enrich the learning experience. When employing content that helps foster an understanding of varied cultural perspectives, students can begin to view themselves and their surroundings more critically. This essay will examine strategies for intercultural interaction in English classrooms and how teaching and assimilation of cultural content can help promote this development. The shared goals of intercultural interaction can promote such things as the exchange

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of ideas and experiences as well as the creation of a supportive learning environment. Once the reasons for employing such techniques are established, the essay will move on to showing that such interaction needs direction.

Conversely, existing only for the sake of movement is a risky or boring way to study. This is why English classes are the perfect environment to facilitate student interaction for a specific purpose while enriching their experience and understanding of their new language and culture. The objectives of this essay are twofold. Firstly, it will explore what intercultural interaction is, and how it might be employed as a tool to aid in language learning, social assimilation, and personal growth in the foreign classroom. Secondly, it will examine several topics that can be useful in the intercultural interactions in the English classroom and show how it can meet the criteria for change indicated above.

1.1. Background and Significance

The field of intercultural communication burgeoned with the growth of traveling and the possibilities for people of varied backgrounds to meet. This work has implications for language learners and teachers. Many English classrooms have students from different cultures; these classes, therefore, are excellent venues for intercultural investigation/query. Our talks, though, often indicate an Anglo frame with occasional, often stereotypical, mentions of other cultures. As early as 1980, Frank Smith raised the issue of ethnocentrism in his book: Language and the Language Policy. ANC did various things to promote interaction between the black and white communities.

The importance of understanding the culture of learners, in particular the relation of culture and language, has recently gained the attention of more than a few teachers and educationists. Its implications are many. Cultural beliefs and structures may come through in the language, creating problems of interpretation. Things and practices that are known and understood in one group may be considered strange and alien in others: often, the behavior of learners appeared to be uncivilized and illogical with a language pattern to match. Poignant them towards understanding may help a teacher to prevent embarrassing situations. Demonstrating one's understanding of the knotty aspects of a foreign language can earn respect and favor with the learner, also, there are some similarities in the cultural behavior of learners that explain their mistakes, inaccuracies, and errors. Repeated patterns are observed in the sections on errors and mistakes. An intercultural perspective in the communicative classroom helps to decode these peculiarities.

2. Theoretical Frameworks

The development of intercultural interaction in English classrooms is theoretically constructed thanks to several schools of reflection that structure their foundations according to the environment. In turn, these give different theoretical and

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categorization approaches, from historical backgrounds dating from the 18th century to the field of sociolinguistics, pragmatics, and contact linguistics. Some authors critically argue that theoretical postures mostly express or modify their concepts according to educational perspectives and practical applicability, away from descriptive or even theoretical categories. This is the starting point for teachers or researchers to analyze whether intercultural and intercultural development truly occurs within English classrooms without conceptual biases.

Models such as EFL-TEE, EIL, and ELF, sociocultural approaches, participatory cosmopolitanism, and intertranscultural constructionism are presented in this paper. They are successful in building a framework for the proposal and problematic energy. According to various theories, frameworks are offered according to different conceptions and terminologies that became. This has led to theories directly influenced from a collaborative framework in education, called intercultural communicative competence, or critical perspectives based on ideological and sociolinguistic backgrounds. The implications of the proposed theoretical conceptualizations in the interpersonal and educational environment and the discussion about the polarizations of theories or approaches that are practical applications are proposed. The paper introduces, in the framework of several institutions such as the Open University of Catalonia or UOC, especially in universities, a Master of English studies where other courses mention intercultural interaction in English classrooms.

2.1. Intercultural Communication Theories

2.1.1. Culture and cultural differences are terms widely discussed among scholars. There are a number of theories which give grounds to the concept of culture. As dense as culture is, it seems extremely difficult to completely decode what it is or how it should be studied according to a single element. Thus, the nature of the variables affecting our world, the ever-changing framework of our societies, and the complexity of historical background can explain the existence of a plethora of theories and typologies. It is believed that different factors shape the theoretical background of each of these typologies. In order to satisfy its aims, I also called the in-depth essay, intends to provide an insight into the main theoretical constructs of this field and investigate their adaptability to the investigated context of the English classroom.

2.1.2. The primary aim is to introduce our society to the monochronic and polychronic time as social constructions involving a set of norms, rules of behavior, etiquette, and rituals. Burleson and Samter indicate that western time systems, as deeply rooted in the literature on intercultural communication, are applicable in every type of human communication. In what concerns the teaching and learning of foreign languages in European classrooms, there are a plethora of theoretical concepts and models regarding the teaching of intercultural communicative competence,

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consolidating the students' abilities to understand, do, and grow, formula included by Fantini in practically all definitions related to intercultural communicative competence.

3. Key Concepts in Intercultural Interaction

Even though there might be many definitions to describe the notion of culture, anthropologists and sociologists would agree that culture refers to the ways in which people learn how to perceive, interpret, and react towards the world surrounding them. Intercultural interaction is another important concept. It is a term that is used in conjunction with a multicultural environment. In order to make this clearer, Hofstede (1980, p. 21) stated that "a society is multicultural when it is composed of people from different national cultures. A society is multicultural when people from different national cultures live and work together, and when their different values and attitudes, presumably stemming from their respective national cultures, are expected to affect or influence their work environment, interaction, and relationships.

According to Roberts (2005), there are some important things regarding the concept of intercultural. They are: 1. Both main world languages (English and French) and intercultural communication. 2. French and English have both derived from Latin roots and grown in the Roman Empire. 3. When it comes to English, cultures and civilization were understood differently. 4. Today, English is universally accepted as an international language for the purposes of communication between speakers of many languages (Jose, variety of English, 2008). Notwithstanding, the meaning in the learning areas is still not agreed upon. Intercultural can be identified by its non-monoculture nature. Generally, according to Hofstede's proposition, the variation among cultures itself defines the area of differences within the society. These can be demonstrated in daily life, social life, and also working life. However, differences can also be found towards other nationalities as an international multiple cultural being. Intercultural is therefore defined by various cultural identities with their respective cultural knowledge, ways of thinking, patterns of problem-solving, and making sense of the world around us.

3.1. Cultural Identity

From an intercultural perspective, identity is both individual and social, multifaceted and relational. However, in conflict mediation and intercultural learning, cultural differences have often been targeted. In the mid-1990s and since 9/11, discourses concerning identity, "the self and other" have become unified. This process has overemphasized self/own/national/cultural identity and should be complemented by including "difference." Cultural identity is obviously related to and may take away the unnatural constraints of a collective, ethnic or religious identity.

Cultural identity, consisting of tiers, layers, and dimensions, is shifting and

variable, an outcome of negotiation processes affected by encounters with phenomena, people, events and culture that impact it. By conceptualizing identity at individual, collective, national, or cultural levels, identity is pictured as a delicate matter and not as an unmoving entity. It basically shapes how and why subjects react to or cooperate with an interlocutor in an intercultural exchange or mediation procedure. Particularly in the school sphere, the interdependence of (inter)cultural identity and language learning accomplishes its social and ethical character. As a striking example, Kramsch persuasively illuminated the infusing of changing values in the different goals of the learning of school languages. She argues that English classrooms reflecting diversity and experiencing conflicts also require valuing learning directed towards promoting cultural understanding.

Cultural Identities in English Classrooms

In English classrooms, the topic of culture has been largely emphasized and spotlighted. A recent study found that even though more culturally diverse, in terms of ethnic heritage, many host-country language classrooms remain unchanged with the majority of students having the same cultural and linguistic background. This, on the one hand, contradicts the multi-culturally shaped, multicultural, and internationally oriented discourse of schooling in target- and source-language culture, which deal with a goal to have an armistice of peace and consequently a harmonious integration of the heterogeneous "other." On the other hand, these studies tend to state uncritically and normatively that "tolerance, respect and open-mindedness should be encouraged," "differences are allowed," "multicultural schools are essential in creating peaceful communities," and "diversity in English classrooms is a very beautiful richness" to celebrate.

4. Strategies for Promoting Intercultural Understanding

There is increasing agreement that peace education in India can only be promoted by making people more tolerant of diversity. The classroom, as an initial point of learning, can shape attitudes and values that may later inform actions within the broader society. Teachers therefore can assist in the efforts to promote tolerance if they are so inclined. Indeed, some researchers believe that the major argument in favor of promoting intercultural learning within the classroom is that education can be seen as a way of overcoming challenges associated with rapid social change. The English classroom can serve as one place where people of diverse backgrounds can work and learn together. In this environment, however, attention must be devoted to what goes on in terms of intercultural interaction.

Possible Instructional Practices Efforts in the classroom to change negative attitudes toward diversity can be very beneficial not only to society in general, but also to students themselves. Comfort levels can increase between students of different backgrounds if the classroom becomes a site for the construction of a shared environment that is reflective of all in that space. There are a number of pedagogical

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and instructional strategies that can be put into place in order to facilitate the accomplishment of deeper emerging understandings and awarenesses of our own ethnic selves and the selves of our neighbors. First, the embrace of culturally driven literacy approaches—literacy as situated, literacy as defined by a socio-cultural context, literacy as process, or what we know as critical pedagogies can lay foundations for such discussions to arise. Starting with cultural awareness and bringing these awarenesses to the table is a crucial step. Further, teachers can use teaching materials that reflect the cultural heritages and beliefs of all their students.

4.1. Curriculum Integration

We have by now defined intercultural learning as education that seeks to develop in students an open-mindedness that results not only from experience of cultural difference but also from an understanding of the processes of cultural production (stereotyping, representations, cultural reconstruction, change, language use, meaning construction) that field of study is undergoing an important transformation. To date, intercultural education has been strongly linked to so-called cultural studies. Although cultures are seen as dynamic and changeable with distinct traditions, understanding of them has, nonetheless, been embedded in an essentialist approach. Cultures are fundamentally bounded and presented, or analysed, as monolithic wholes. The intercultural, in such a framework, refers mostly to the anthropology of the different and the more exotic. With the realization that few people are not living in increasingly (often violently) mixed, pluri-cultural communities things are changing. We are beginning to see the need to 'interculturalize' many academic fields of inquiry, enabling them to engage seriously with processes of cultural mixing and meaning making. However, collaboration between English Studies and other fields is still at a very exploratory stage.

Here the integrative group took on board the suggestion that English academics could and should be at the forefront of the drive to help make 'intercultural tension less of a problem and more of a resource' in Higher Education. As Jovés says, ETCS and an intercultural approach 'seek to integrate people rather than dividing them, and in human terms this has to be a more desirable option for any civilized society'. This group is concerned with exploring the most effective way of achieving this goal, primarily in language classroom settings where cultural contact has provided the conditions for prejudice, but also within the broader context of the student experience in the intercultural community of Trinity College. The wider aim, relevant to academic fields in general, emphasizes the need for greater collaboration between academics in different intercultural fields in order to promote greater cross-fertilization and theoretical growth in what has been treated very much as a peripheral concern. In professions, particularly those areas covered by the Dublin Institute of Technology, we are seeking to advocate new relevant degree provision. Our approach is to integrate the development of intercultural competence skills within existing

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programmes and not create new diversions or add-ons.

5. Assessment in Intercultural Interaction

Assessment in intercultural interaction: The issue of orality in textbooks from the point of view of intercultural competence goes beyond mere basic quantitative description into a deeper understanding related to the assessment of intercultural interaction. From the viewpoint of this paper, the very idea of testing and exams comes from the general convention, which is probably presently systematically mitigated by the term "assessment". In addition, in practical terms, intercultural encounters stand as specific cases of real language use that differ from texts in a foreign language for a passive reader or listener.

When at school, the learner and the learned language already take positions in practical life, and school both changes and is changed by real life. Despite the deficit of space in this article, there are other numerous papers on alternative assessment tools, such as portfolios, self-assessment, and learning diaries, not to mention more formal Certificates of Language Proficiency, which sometimes deal with cross and intercultural communication. While these tools are interesting from a practical PD (professional development) point of view, since they can cater to variable, ever more subtle linguistic skills, in this particular paper, they can help capture variable states of intercultural understanding. Using a longitudinal piece of research informed by complexity and ecological theory, assessment, as evidence of learning, can be considered an artifact for systemic investigation into the speakers' possibly ever-changing multilingual repertoires in the classroom.

5.1. Alternative Assessment Methods

This paper discusses some alternative assessment methods for intercultural communication, specifically ways in which non-traditional assessments of intercultural interaction are designed and conducted. Galletas, a discussion board formed for an Advanced Spanish Grammar and Composition class, and Itsbama, a face-to-face dialoguing exercise for an Automated Oral Proficiency course, are two innovative assessments of cultural understanding. According to annual reports from the Center for the Study of Languages and Cultures, many technological advances have been made to assist intercultural communication and understanding in foreign language classrooms. The use of digital video and computer technologies has enabled the creation of new platforms to assess spoken language performance in intercultural communication activities. These non-traditional assessments help to reveal a deeper and more nuanced understanding of intercultural exchange.

Marta Tecedor Casado, Martha Castillo-Martínez, and Olvido Piqueras-Pies have used the interactions from a virtual discussion to evaluate intercultural competence and revise an official title for a subject in the fifth semester in a Hispanic Studies Degree Program. The interactions in Galletas were also evaluated semantically and syntactically by two independent researchers. Here, our focus is on

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the latter, on the content of the participants' interactions. This co-constructed knowledge, which has been grounded in the classroom's collaborative learning environment, is a valuable learning resource we don't feel that any other assessment would have been able to elicit. The AOP course also seeks to assess both FL communicative ability and effective intercultural understanding through its various assignments and activities.

6. Technology and Intercultural Interaction

In recent years, online communication platforms have been widely used for educational purposes in English language classes in universities. One of the most important concerns discussed in the literature concerning English instruction in universities is intercultural interaction. With the evolution of technologies, these platforms have been employed as appropriate media for establishing intercultural contact. Consequently, in English language instruction at university level, it has been claimed that technology can play a pivotal role in not only enhancing the learning and teaching process but also fostering the process of pursuing cultural proficiency. This section aims to discuss the intersection between technology and intercultural interaction, and the developments that have been made in combination to these constructs in the context of university.

Interacting with individuals from other countries within a language classroom in order to revise and together build knowledge is referred to as intercultural interaction. The processes of "acculturation" and "enculturation" occur when individuals are involved in intercultural interaction and pedagogical interventions. Various means were utilized to develop and promote intercultural understanding in classrooms. Since English is the principal language spoken in the international arena, universities in several non-English speaking countries have sought to improve students' English language competence. Furthermore, technology-mediated class assignments need students to spend the unlimited amount of their personal time to experience digital stories connected to a social matter in an English-speaking society. These platforms help participants to administer English academic courses to improve English skills (in reading and spelling) and their understanding of UPE.

6.1. Online Platforms for Intercultural Exchange

In recent years, the internet has made it possible for people from all over the world to connect to others online and to engage in intercultural exchange. Educational contexts, whether they are schools, further or higher education, represent unique environments where speakers of different languages have distinct but common objectives: to teach or learn a language. In particular, classrooms where English is taught to students whose mother tongue is not English can provide good forums for intercultural exchange. There are a variety of new online tools and platforms available for educational contexts that can be used to facilitate intercultural interactions. These

range from simple content sharing sites (blogging, file sharing, video sharing, social networking sites) to platforms that are specifically designed for linguistic or intercultural exchanges (tandem sites or platforms).

Online interaction for intercultural learning has the potential for global reach. The fact that students can come into direct contact, without leaving their classrooms, with people in another part of the world is powerful. Explicit curriculums available through tandem platforms can support English curriculum learning aims and objectives. In addition to academic language learning, interacting with intercultural 'Other' helps promote cultural understanding and communication between cultures, as the goal is to teach each other about each other, themselves, and their country. Students are taught explicit strategies for reflection, comparison, discussion, and interaction. Debates and conversations are negotiated before being written or recorded and integrated into prescribed format journal entries. Forums and 'open' (unprescribed) or free-talks can also take place.

7. Teacher Training and Professional Development

Intercultural communication in the classroom is an emerging area of research in TESOL and English language education, yet very little attention has been given to teacher training in the area. To effectively enrich communication between students from different cultures, enabling them to improve their English speaking and listening abilities, teachers require training to develop the necessary intercultural competence. The investigation into teachers' beliefs and classroom practice presented in this volume shows that, principally, intercultural communication may be developing in a natural way because the teachers are professionals who have been teaching, reflecting on experience, and developing their practice over many years. In addition, the great majority of teachers do have positive attitudes towards fostering intercultural communication in their practice, which follows formal policy documents, the university mission statement, and marks the defining principle of UNESCO.

Intercultural communication should not, therefore, be imposed as an add-on, but should grow out of a concern for thematic integration. Several implications follow from this investigation. One consistent finding is, however, that the development of good teaching is essentially the development of reflective practitioners. Furthermore, this does not happen by exposing teachers merely to the most current theory or just by giving them additional relevant skills, nurturing professional growth by encouraging personal interaction at a practical level and by fostering shared reflection and a sense of community. Consequently, professional development needs to be more personalized in focus and more closely connected to what is going on in situ - in the teachers' classrooms. Research evidence also identifies the following five key components of personalized focus.

7. Training Teachers for Cultural Competence

7.1. Cultural Competence Training

A wide variety of initiatives and programs have been implemented to support educators, a large proportion of which are implemented in schools as in-service programs. While some are more subject-specific, offering content knowledge such as in foreign language instruction or general traineeship and induction, providing theoretical grounding in cultural competence to complement practical skills and knowledge in teaching, a considerable number exist to provide strategies and interventions aimed at equipping teachers with practical knowledge and theory to respond to intercultural interactions in the classroom. They frequently take the form of teacher training programs, workshops, and seminars, specifically aimed at preparing educators for their intercultural encounters and to think and develop policy and practice that is more communicative of a broader understanding of difference.

7.1 Pre-Service Teacher Education

The focus on pre-service teacher education generally means a reduced emphasis on the classroom and, instead, a more in-depth discussion of theoretical frameworks. The more practical courses focus on teaching specific platforms such as foreign languages or English. Even though, due to the nature of the training, teachers are considered as being in a relatively good position to understand linguistic diversity from their time spent training. While a language barrier presents considerable challenges, these have been reported in local news sources when teachers are not equipped to deal with the situation. Language teacher training generally looks to provide pre-service training around how to manage an inclusive classroom, i.e., managing a foreign language, but do not generally encompass a deeper understanding of intercultural competency.

8. Case Studies in Intercultural Interaction

This part presents case studies of intercultural programs in practical settings and within specific cultural environments including Japan, Australia, China, and Peru.

All five case studies present intercultural programs that have been put into practice in English classrooms and have proven to be successful within given cultural contexts. These programs were developed and contributed to the true multicultural development and creativity of classroom participants. Outcomes from these programs were all successful and all of them demonstrate that students' motivation for classwork increases when the focus is placed on intercultural activities instead of traditional grammar pursuits.

The case studies provide a range of cultures, from Japanese high school students to Australian secondary school students, higher education students in China, and pre-service teachers from universities in Peru and Australia developing their intercultural communicative competence. Implications for developing further intercultural programs include adaptations and strategies for unique cultural and

linguistic groups and some recommendations to enhance intercultural learning in such contexts.

8.1. Impact of Intercultural Programs in Schools

The survey analyzes the impact of intercultural programs or projects in schools, focusing on their expected outcomes and contributions. It has proved beyond doubt that intercultural programs in schools and colleges are beneficial in many ways. Given this, what kind of effect can we expect from running an intercultural program or project? This is indicated in the outcomes of the intercultural learning content analysis of 98 documents, based on the evaluation of 92 evaluation reports and other documents, which revealed 12 immediate outcomes of intercultural learning and 18 longer-term effects of intercultural programs. The twelve immediate outcomes refer to learning in three areas – knowledge, affective, and skills; characterized in six dimensions of on-the-bus tolerance; knowledge of one's self and others; we-the-people; mental and emotional health; social morality, and international relations. Intercultural programs lead to increased knowledge and understanding of human behavior, usually on the cultural and value level, shared and stable human need, and intercultural principle as well as a more in-depth appreciation of cultural similarities and uniqueness. The program can also change a person's feelings and attitudes, inner adjustments of attitudes and values resulting in improved self-concept, social acceptance of oneself, rejection of prejudice and ethnocentrism, coin of human interest, a sharing of and caring for consociates' and 'foreign others' sorrows and joys.

Some concrete and direct intercultural competencies and skills the individual acquires from participating in intercultural learning activities are knowledge of the human and cultural variations in communication, a commitment to care and ally, a means of supporting as equivalents, a code of behavior manifest in the intercultural value-judgments in action, organizational skills including interpersonal management, leadership abilities on minimum as facilitators and regulators, rather than organizers and managers at the highest level despite the several claims on transformational leadership dimensions, group processes and dynamics where inclusiveness and consensus forms the norm of intercultural group behavior, and intercultural sensitivity and empathy, or the feel for the common person in diverse cultural settings. The basic impact of intercultural programs is then indeed on attitudes, behavior, understanding, and feelings, both at the personal and socio-cultural level; in concordance with the 'four areas' of attitude change: cognitive (knowledge), affective (feelings and attitudes), behavioral (actions), and attitudinal. In other words, intercultural programs seek, inter alia, to produce one's character, belief, and feelings about social reality, i.e. personal epistemology. It is particularly informative to note that intercultural education in classrooms does intrinsically promote the legitimate cultural learning that is uniquely intercultural.

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9. Challenges and Solutions

Cultural understanding is important, meaning it is our responsibility to make every effort to educate and enhance it. Although international students' intercultural experiences can enhance their creativity, imagination, problem-solving, and cognitive skills, learning how to work interculturally can be difficult. In intercultural education, intercultural interaction is vital for developing intercultural sensitivity, as Bodur (2014) clearly argues. However, the fact that merely having the same native language, let alone intercultural interaction, facilitates learning appears to be an oversimplification. This opportunity to improve communication links has, however, brought many time-consuming difficulties to the area of intercultural education in the global realm.

Many of these challenges were primarily concerned with creating inclusive cultural diversity on the college campus (Hirose, 2007) and the Widening Participation idea made it difficult to manage an ethnically diverse classroom. Japanese EFL learners are often opposed to interaction with their classmates for a variety of reasons, such as the possibility of being misunderstood or being unable to understand a foreign accent (Attridge et al., 1990). They may also consider their lack of interaction with native speakers to be a sign of inadequacy and instead prefer to speak English with other Japanese students (McDonough and Jackson, 2006). Although blended interaction between students has been reported, conflicting results have also indicated that cultural orientation is a barrier to the effectiveness of intercultural education (Akenson, 1985). Overall, it is essential to maximize language learning and diminish cultural misconceptions and unfounded stereotypes through intercultural interaction so as to foster a legitimate intercultural learning environment. Students may have false beliefs about various nationalities because they lack experience.

9.1. Addressing Stereotypes and Bias

• Every culture abounds with generalizations, both positive and negative, and making use of these simplifications provides a starting point for an exploration of cultural phenomena. However, our students must come to realize that it is one thing to note patterns and another to ascribe these generalizations to every individual within a culture. It is not effective to tell our students to stop making generalizations. Generalizations are too ingrained and, in fact, serve vital purposes in developing knowledge and understanding. Our task, therefore, is to redirect negative generalizations using interventions from intercultural communication research that challenge and correct stereotypes.

• Why are generalizations about cultures so hard to shake? One reason is that generalizations served an important adaptive function as our ancestors moved about the world. In unknown situations, reliance on existing mental schemata is an efficient way to make sense of the surroundings. Even if stereotypes are incorrect, they

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facilitate communication by enabling quick inferences about others' social identity, meaning groups to which they belong.

• In fact, some social psychologists claim that we need stereotypes to navigate a world teeming with overloading amounts of information. This is especially true in international travel, where one must "read" individuals and groups in the local context, while also communicating to others where one belongs.

• Thus, cultural and national identity stereotypes are a deep aspect of our social cognition. They can change or be challenged if one has an education in intercultural communication and/or experience in another culture. Ethnographic description through a variety of reading materials is one way to achieve this goal. Subsequently, a brief lecture or personal narrative based on the authors' intercultural experience in their travels is provided, so as to challenge the students' portrait of Latin American culture.

10. Conclusion

In this essay, we argued that culture is an important dimension in learning a second or foreign language and that intercultural interaction in English Language Teaching (ELT) classroom promotes the development of learners' intercultural communicative competence. We first examined the importance of intercultural communication skills in English as a lingua franca and then explored the current language policy of The People's Republic of China with a focus on intercultural communication and the 'non-native English speaking teacher'.

After investigating whether or not we are capable of teaching a 'foreign' culture, we conducted a small-scale qualitative study based on teachers' views and experiences in South China. We found that teachers perceive an important role for intercultural interaction in the teaching and learning of English language and culture. Teachers and learners in our study believe that interpersonal relations between people of different nationalities would be influenced by the relationship between nations and their social and cultural differences. Although our study was limited to teaching English in China, we believe that the key findings can be meaningfully carried over into a wider international context. The contribution is twofold: we argue that intercultural interaction is an important tool through which to encourage the understanding of different cultures and develop learner communication skills in an international setting. We assert that a clear definition of intercultural interaction can be used to create a foundation upon which researchers can then work to develop learning materials or tasks specifically designed to improve learners' understanding of other cultures.

10.1. Summary of Key Findings

This chapter aimed to understand the realities of intercultural interaction which language learners are engaged in, in East and Southeast Asian secondary schools and to consider the impact of these realities on learners. This involved

examining the relationships between oral proficiency, identity, and culture, focusing on the lived realities of learners in local private and premium secondary schools in Singapore, a location that has been the subject of a large body of research on second language learning and teaching.

339 students studying English at eight schools largely comparable on demographic characteristics from six different international cultures of learning formed two cohorts (economically disadvantaged, ED, and less economically disadvantaged, LED) in a research project. Based on longitudinal mixed-methods data collection and analysis of surveys, written narratives, analyses of national and international assessment tests, and individual interviews, research findings explore ways in which students who identify with Chinese and Indian sub-cultures at school manage their identities in interactions across national, international, and inter-cultural communities. In particular, they show how limited communicative English proficiency affects students' identities and their desire to engage in intercultural communities of practice, and how conscious the research participants are of the role that international tests play in identifying them as English language learners.

Research outcomes indicate the critical need for schools to address language learners' development of self-identity through a transnational lens in order to promote interculturality in East and South East Asian locations more broadly; the specific outcomes of this study can potentially be used in the further professional development of teachers of English everywhere, particularly those in Asia. In this final section, we summarize the outcomes of the research for practice and critically consider the push and pull factors influencing the development of the learners' identities in the international community of practice of learning additional languages for which English serves as a global lingua franca.

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