

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND INTERNET RESOURCES IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

Abdiyev Sokhibsher Ashurovich

Master Student of Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages

Annotation

Despite the vast research into motivation in traditional Foreign Language Learning (FLL) environments, there has been little done into retention for. There are many factors that influence retention in FLL, based internet resources, environments and this thesis' original contribution to knowledge was to study the most important aspects for that context. Thus, the objectives of this study are to explore the co-existence and interconnectedness between peers, students' indications of autonomous behavior and the significance of relevance for continuity within an internet resources-based learning environment and how these issues relate to motivation.

Annotatsiya

An'anaviy xorijiy tillarni o'rganish muhitlarida motivatsiya bo'yicha keng ko'lamli tadqiqotlarga qaramay, internet resurslariga asoslangan xorijiy tillarni o'rganish uchun juda kam ish qilingan. Internet-resurslarga asoslangan xorijiy tillarni o'rganish muhitida o'rganilishga ta'sir qiluvchi ko'plab omillar mavjud va bu tezisning amaliyotga qo'shgan asl maqsadi ushbu mavzu doirasida eng muhim jihatlarni o'rganishdir. Shunday qilib, ushbu tadqiqotning maqsadlari tengdoshlar o'rtasidagi birgalikda til o'rganish va o'zaro bog'liqlikni, o'quvchilarning avtonom xatti-harakatlarining ko'rsatkichlarini va Internet resurslariga asoslangan o'quv muhitida uzluksizlikning ahamiyatligini o'rganadi.

Key words: internet resources, intercultural communication, intercultural contexts, communication technologies

Intercultural communication (ICC) aims to understand the impact of culture on communication and to develop the capacity and the ability to perceive and consider alternative viewpoints in intercultural contexts. ICC is the process of communicative interaction between individuals and groups who have cultural differences. These cultural differences are principally differences in perceptions, interpretations, values and behaviors; ICC studies how these variations significantly affect the shape and the outcome of the communicative event. When participants interact in intercultural encounters, they rely on assumptions that have been developed within their own culture; these assumptions and in some cases interpretations, act as perceptual screens or filters for the messages that are being exchanged.

The use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) as well as Internet Resources (IR) in learning language are important and necessary to support modern and current learning and teaching theories. This section explores the evolution of foreign language learning and the development of technological tools to assist this learning. The literature in the field of language learning uses classic concepts that come from the more extended concept for its definition, usually emphasizing organizational or technological structures instead of more educational perspectives or experiences from within the field. Keegan (1990) offers the definition that is most widely cited which outlines the structural characteristics of the more general area of distance learning: a space and temporal distance between teacher and learners with importance given to two-way communication, the use of technology, and the influence of an educational organization that sets it apart from traditional, face-to-face learning. Another more current definition is given by Hipple & Fleming (2002) who focus on the changing evolution of distance learning definitions. They use two features of Keegan's 1990 definition to differentiate more recent language education models: teachers and students and students within the class now communicate using internet-based tools and that communication is two-way. According to him, the underlying



characteristic of the evolution of interaction students have with not only their teachers, but with their peers as well. The amount of research into language learning published seems to show that the concept is more complex than it seems at first sight (Fleming, 2002). The field of technological education has changed dramatically since the appearance of the first courses designed to learn foreign languages from the late nineteenth century (Simonson, 2000) and since the first computer-assisted instruction (CAI) models of the 70s. The methods and means used have changed and been replaced by different tools as they have emerged, such as the telephone, television, the Internet, etc. The first part of this section explores the history of IR in foreign language learning and differs from the above section because, rather than exploring the theoretical aspects of IR in foreign language learning, it focuses on the technological development of each of these stages. The technological tools used in distance and online education radically changed the way IR in foreign language learning was structured. The most emphasized concept of IR in foreign language learning is based on the communication between teacher and student, which was initially very slow and only since the major technological advances of the last century have students and teachers been able to be in contact comfortably (Holmberg, 2005). Although this is now seen as an essential part of IR in foreign language learning, as well as foreign language learning, Holmberg states that the main purpose of this development was so that students can learn through receiving critical and productive feedback (Holmberg, 1995) and Garrison (1989) defends collaboration in foreign language learning between teacher and student based on the communicative approach – free-flowing communication has not always been possible, in addition to the fact that it was not seen as a priority to learning. However, and fortunately for language learners, ever since the appearance of the first distance learning language course in the late nineteenth century, not only have teaching and learning approaches and methodologies changed continuously and radically (see Chapter 2) but so have the means and resources, which have been replaced by different tools as they have emerged, both because of ideological changes in how to teach foreign languages and because of those technological developments (Simonson, 1999)

The importance of ICC in foreign language learning.

The definition of intercultural competence in a language given by Hains, Lynch, and Winton (2000) emphasizes the ability of individuals to relate and communicate effectively with other people who do not share the same culture, ethnicity, language or other important variables. According to Meyer intercultural competence - as part of the foreign language learner's broad competence of speaking another language - identifies the ability of a person to act appropriately and flexibly when confronted with actions, attitudes and expectations of people from other cultures (Meyer, 1991). Oliveras' definition is also worth noting, "[...] the ability for language learners to stabilize their own identity in the process of mediation between cultures and help others to stabilize theirs." (Oliveras, 2000:38). One of the reasons why intercultural competence is so important to language learners is because much of people's culturally motivated behavior occurs at a subconscious level; learners need to be aware of this is because it will help them better understand the messages members of those cultures are sending which are not verbalized or obvious and the many meanings that may be hidden from them. Recent studies that have researched reasons why learning about culture is thought to be an important part of the foreign language learning experience have proved that it is a relevant issue in the applied linguistics field and consequently that the two should be taught simultaneously. These studies have also highlighted the importance of the sociocultural context when learning a foreign language, and consequently the social interactions needed to develop intercultural communicative competence in foreign language learners. Theoretical research into foreign language learning often uses terms such as 'cultural competence', 'the intercultural dimension', 'intercultural communicative competence' and there are continuous references to the significance of understanding cultures and learning about cultural communication during the foreign language learning process. Byram (1997), Buttjes (1991), Kramersch (1998), Morgan (1994) and Sercu (2004, 2005) stand out as relevant figures in this field. They have all served as a reference for the document 'The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment' developed by the Council of Europe on language learning and the importance of ICC during this process. This publication states that: "Knowledge of the shared values and beliefs held by social groups in other countries and regions, such as

religious beliefs, taboos, assumed common history, etc., are essential to ICC." (European Council, 2002:11) and that "The linguistic and cultural competences in respect of each language are modified by knowledge of the other and contribute to intercultural awareness, skills and know-how. They enable the individual to develop an enriched, more complex personality and an enhanced capacity for further language learning and greater openness to new cultural experiences." (European Council, 2002:43). This framework was developed by exploring the relationship between language and culture and using the resulting conclusions to guide research into the significance of addressing ICC in foreign language education. Sercu (2005) states that incorporating intercultural objectives into a foreign language curriculum should not be unique to language teaching as it affects a wide variety of issues. She also believes that foreign language learning is, by definition, intercultural as two cultures are meeting during the learning process and needs to be negotiated, a foreign language in the classroom puts learners into contact with a world that is culturally different from their own. As Nichols and Stevens (2001) point out, teachers of languages often agree that target languages should be taught alongside their cultures. If the foreigner would like to become familiar with a new culture, often the culture of the foreign language they are studying, they must go through a learning process, which is usually long and arduous, as, although exactly the same categories exist in their culture, the content and interpretation of these categories (and thus reactions and behaviours towards them) is completely different; for a member of another group to understand the same concept in a different way or to view them from a different perspective is not easy, which is why the learner should be taught the different possible ways of interpreting them or at least be made aware of them and that there are many ways of reacting to them, that they exist on a continuum with two extreme points. Culture used to be taught in language learning class as the literature, facts and geography of the target language, this was a simplification of culture, what Kramsch (1993) calls the four Fs; food, fairs, folklore and statistical facts. When anthropology began to study culture in the 1960s the idea that culture did not only exist as facts and information began to take root and began to be seen as something that is shared between members of a group and as more deep rooted. Brooks (1960) wrote about 'Culture with a capital C' and 'culture with a small

c' in language learning. The former refers to those traditional ideas of culture (the four Fs), and the latter to the behavioural patterns and lifestyles of everyday people and he stressed that although this culture was less visible he thought that it was either equally or more significant. Kramsch (2003) believes that foreign language education should include teaching about how to understand differences between cultures through teaching culture with a small c. Also according to Brooks, it is not possible to teach learners how to internalise the culture of the language they are learning but they can understand the differences between cultures, by learning about the different cultural dimensions, which can eventually result in a deeper understanding of that culture when those learners then go on to experience and live in or interact with that culture. Hofstede and Pedersen (2002) noted that intercultural misunderstandings are underestimated problems. They believe an awareness of cultural differences and knowledge of basic and general cultural variables would facilitate the art of communicating effectively across boundaries.

Categorizing Cultures for ICC

Learning a foreign language necessarily includes learning about the culture of that target language not only because of the theories that interrelate language and culture but because of the inevitable exposure learners will have with native speakers (and consequently natives) from that culture. However, learners do not face these new cultures with a blank slate, all learners have prior experiences and prior knowledge which they use to learn languages and about those new cultures; this experience and knowledge is normally taken from their own culture. The decoding process and the process of negotiation with another culture involves establishing comparisons between what is similar and what is different from the learner's own culture. As Neuner and Zarate stated: Learning about the foreign world and learning to use the foreign language is more than just 'habit formation' or imitation and reproduction of speech patterns. It comprises a cognitive dimension of learning that is realised in procedures of comparing, inferring, interpreting, discussing and similar discursive forms of negotiating the meaning of phenomena in the foreign world. (Neuner and Zarate, 1997:75) A lack of understanding at this level can lead to misinterpretation of the behaviour and

meanings of the native language speakers as non-native learners can interpret them incorrectly because their true (and hidden) meanings can only be found within the totality of the culture, which is acquired socially and through formative experiences within that culture. Therefore, the same way isolated words heard out of context can express several possible meanings, when people observe behaviours isolated from their cultural context, they are usually interpreted from the perspective of the non-native culture of origin. Because each of these dimensions or categories exist in every culture Gudykunst and Kim (1996) note that learners can easily understand them if they are first aware of their own culture's perspectives of them. Once this is understood they can then compare their culture with that of their target language culture, understand the differences and finally accept and internalise the target culture's perspective of them. Each culture's perception of a dimension is located along a continuum. According to Gudykunst and Mody (2002), there is no one perspective that can be found at one end of the continuum. All cultures have parts of both the opposite ends of the dimensions but they generally tend to belong mostly to one of the opposites. Categorising dimensions of culture can be defined as the process of grouping phenomena that are discriminately different into categories. Lakoff (1985) writes about this cognitive process: Without the ability to categorize, we could not function at all, either in the physical world or in our social and intellectual lives. An understanding of how we categorize is central to any understanding of how we think and how we function, and therefore central to an understanding of what makes us human. Most categorization is automatic and unconscious, and if we become aware of it at all, it is only in problematic cases. In moving about the world, we automatically categorize people, animals, and physical objects, both natural and manmade. This sometimes leads to the impression that we just categorize things as they are, that things come in natural kinds, and that our categories of mind naturally fit the kinds of things there are in the world. But a large proportion of our categories are not categories of things; they are categories of abstract entities. We categorize events, actions, emotions, spatial relationships, social relationships, and abstract entities of an enormous range: governments, illnesses, and entities in both scientific and folk theories, like electrons and colds. Any adequate account of human thought must provide an accurate theory for all



our categories, both concrete and abstract. (Lakoff, 1985:6) As an interactive process, it is communication that allows interculturalism to take place; it makes it tangible and objectifies it. Intercultural competence contributes to ICC by fostering understanding among individuals. Understanding intercultural relations in a communicative situation means understanding both cultures that come into contact. ICC is performed where there is contact between two or more meanings and significance structures, and when one of the members of one of those structures begins to understand - in the sense of internalising - the meaning and value of symbols, signs and objects that belong to the structures or culture of the other. This does not mean that these meanings and significance structures are completely accepted, it refers to an understanding of them which in turn fosters or facilitates a comprehension that can help overcome the differences or boundaries that exists when two groups have different meanings and interpretations of those signs (what they say). It is, above all, about creating the conditions for a shared, common, accessible context, through comprehension and negotiating, where differences can enrich human interaction because of the different ideas both groups can learn. To paraphrase Casmir (1997), the construction of a third culture from two initial cultures is not simply the sum of the two, it is the creation of a different one where connecting exchanges are structured and objectified. A third culture is the intercultural perimeter where intercultural exchanges, interaction and communication take place between two cultures. Communicative effectiveness necessarily faces a challenge in such a communicative encounter. As communication between different cultural parties does not recognise nor share given codes or common signals, there is a breakdown in the understanding of the messages that are exchanged. Communication is effective if an acceptable degree of understanding exists between the parties or in other words: if they adequately share the meanings of what they say. The pursuit of effective ICC is thus achieved with a communicative competence through the establishment of guidelines that shape communicative interaction into a 'shared' experience. Participants who engage in communicative interaction rely on their cultural assumptions to interpret messages: they are (unintentionally) used to filter the messages that are exchanged. When these participants engage in intercultural communicative interaction the cultural framework in which each of

those participants interprets messages may vary. Therefore, the success or failure of the interaction depends largely on participants' familiarity with the cultural meaning given to the messages of their interlocutor as well as their awareness of the differences between them. This is how a communicative interaction experience can move from an individual experience to a 'shared' experience. Thus, following from this idea, the limits of ICC are found in the lack of knowledge participants have of their interlocutor's culture, the particular representations and cultural meanings each individual refers to during the intercultural interaction, the places from where their values, beliefs and meanings have been created. These limits result in a mental boundary from which individuals are defined and perceived and from which they define and perceive their interlocutor's messages.

If language learners do not have intercultural competence they might interpret other cultures from their own cultural perspectives, which, because it is conditioned by their own cultural beliefs, can be incorrect. Making learners aware of this idea is important when learning a foreign language and thus acquiring intercultural competence: how behaviours and perceptions develop from cultural values. This idea is explored in a separate section below. One method that has proven to be productive when explaining and learning about cultural differences is to teach learners about the categorisation of general cultural features into dimensions of cultures that will be explored in the following section: categorising fundamental issues that exist in all cultures and then analysing and explaining the different ways each culture deals with them.

RESOURCES:

1. Abdallah-Preteille, M. (1998). Apprendre une langue, apprendre une culture, apprendre l'altérité. *Les Cahiers Pédagogiques*, 360, 49-51.
2. Brooks, N. (1960). *Language and language learning*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World
3. Buttjes, D., & Bryam, M. (1991). *Mediating Languages and Cultures*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters

4. Byram, M. (1997). Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence . Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
5. Casmir, F. (1997). Ethics in intercultural and international communication. New York: Routledge .
6. Fleming, S. (2002). Foreign language distance education: The University of Hawaii experience. In C. A. Spreen, New technologies and language learning: Cases in less commonly taught languages (pp. 13-54). Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, Second Language Teaching & Curriculum Center.
7. Garrison, D. (1989). Understanding distance education. A framework for the future. London: Routledge.
8. Gudykunst, W., & Ting-Toomey, S. (1988). Culture and interpersonal communication. Newbury Park: SAGE Publications.
9. Hiple, D., & Fleming, S. (2002). Models for distance education in critical languages. In Spreen, 1–12.
10. Hofstede, G., & Pedersen, P. (2002). Exploring Culture: Exercises, Stories and Synthetic Cultures. London: Intercultural Press.
11. Holmberg, B. (1995). Theory and practice of distance education. London and New York: Routledge
12. Holmberg, B. (2005). Distance education and languages: Evolution and change. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
13. Kramsch, C. (1998). Language and Culture. Oxford: Oxford University Press
14. Meyer, M. (1991). Developing Transcultural Competence: Case Studies of Advanced Foreign Language Learners. In B. a. Byram, Mediating Languages and Cultures (pp. 136-158). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
15. Moore, W. (1968). The Tutorial System and its Future. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
16. Simonson, M. (2000). Teaching and learning at a distance: Foundations of distance education. Boston MA: Pearson Education