

CENTRAL UNIVERSITY 'MARTA ABREU'
OF LAS VILLAS
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
ENGLISH LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT



**Creation of a Favourable Environment for the
Teaching and Learning of Intercultural
Communication in the English Introductory
Course**

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Thought

“To accomplish great things, we must not only act, but also dream; not only plan, but also believe.”

Anatole France

Dedication

*To my beloved mother for having faith in the person
I could be and for her great support,*

*To my dearest husband for always being there for me
no matter what,*

*To my two sisters for believing in me and to my
niece and nephew,*

*To all my family, mainly my grandfather who always
encouraged me to go ahead.*

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ABSTRACT

Culture plays an important role in foreign language teaching and learning. However, most frequently it is found that students to a great extent are taught the rules of language, but are not always able to communicate adequately since they are not knowledgeable enough about the target culture. Taking into consideration this matter, it is extremely fundamental that students should have some background about the culture of the language studied from the very beginning.

Taking into account the current situation of the teaching and learning process of English in the Introductory Course, the objective of this Diploma Paper is to propose the creation of a favourable environment for the teaching and learning of intercultural communication in the English Introductory Course in the faculty of Humanities at the Central University “Marta Abreu” of Las Villas.

Key words: culture; intercultural communication; language; foreign language teaching and learning

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INTRODUCTION

Regardless of different points of view, culture has taken an important place in foreign language teaching and learning studies. It has been widely recognised that culture and language is used as a main medium through which culture is expressed. However, “pure information” is useful but does not necessarily lead to learners’ insight; whereas the development of people’s cultural awareness leads to a more critical thinking.

To understand what is intercultural communication in foreign language learning and teaching, it is necessary to take into account first of all the pure concept of culture. Also it requires the acquisition of information about the meaning of language as the principal factor in intercultural communication in foreign language learning and teaching.

Most frequently it is found that students to a great extent are taught the rules of language, but are not always able to communicate adequately since they are not knowledgeable enough about the target culture. Taking into consideration this matter, it is extremely fundamental that students should have some background about the culture of the language studied from the very beginning. In the English Introductory Course at UCLV, teachers emphasise more on the teaching of language rules and forget about the culture of the language taught. Students may know the language but if they do not know enough about its culture, they will not be able to interact with people who speaks it. Consequently, it would be fruitful if teachers add the target Intercultural communication in the teaching of English in the Introductory Course thus getting students familiar with the culture of the language, avoiding culture shock and having a better preparation for the next years of study. Therefore, the previously described situation led to the following **research question**:

- How can the teaching and learning process of intercultural communication be improved in the Introductory Course?

Consequently, the **scientific object** of this diploma paper is the teaching and learning of intercultural communication, and its **field of action** is the improvement of intercultural communication in the Introductory Course.

The **general objective** of this Diploma Paper is:

- To propose the creation of a favourable environment for the teaching and learning of intercultural communication in the English Introductory Course.

In order to accomplish the previous aim, the following **scientific questions** were answered:

- What are the theoretical foundations to support the creation of a favourable environment for the teaching and learning of intercultural communication in the English Introductory Course?
- What is the current situation of the teaching and learning of intercultural communication in the Introductory Course?
- What characterises the specialised classroom and activities to improve the teaching and learning of intercultural communication in the Introductory Course?
- What are specialists' opinions about the proposal presented?

In order to fulfil the objectives above, four **scientific tasks** were accomplished:

- Setting the theoretical foundations that support intercultural communication, teaching and learning of a foreign language.
- Diagnosing the current situation of the teaching and learning of intercultural communication in the Introductory Course.
- Creating a specialised classroom and a set of activities to enhance the process of the teaching and learning of intercultural communication in the Introductory Course.
- Assessing of the proposal by specialists.

For the achievement of the previously mentioned tasks, the following **methods** were used:

Historical and logical method

This method allowed the analysis of the evolution of the concepts related to culture, intercultural communication, language, and the teaching and learning of a foreign language.

Theoretical methods

- Analysis and synthesis
- Induction and deduction

These methods were used for establishing the research process foundations.

Empirical methods

- Analysis of documents: in order to determine the present situation according to the existing official documents dealing with the teaching and learning processes of English in the Introductory Course.
- Survey: to determine professors and students' opinion on the inclusion of intercultural communication in the teaching and learning processes of English in the Introductory Course and its importance in the teaching and learning processes of a foreign language
- Participant observation: the author of the present research paper is a student of the English Language with a Second Foreign Language (French)
- Interview: To determine students and professors' recommendations for the implementation of Intercultural Communication in the teaching and learning processes of English in the Introductory Course and to assess the proposal.

Statistical and mathematical methods

- Percentage analysis: to process data obtained from surveys

The sample chosen for the current research involved 23 students of the English Language with a Second Foreign Language (French) and 8 professors from the English Language Department at UCLV.

To choose the sample, some aspects were taken into consideration:

- **Academic Level of students:**

- Students of the English Introductory Course are currently taking the subject English Language.
- First and second year students have passed the Introductory Course.
- Fourth year students have accumulated experience for four academic years of study.
- Additionally, second and fourth year students have accumulated experience during their period of practice in which they interacted with foreigners from different countries
 - **Academic and scientific degree of professors:** Professors who hold scientific degrees (PhD or MSc) and academic degrees (Assistant Professor, Associate Professor and Professor)
 - **Willingness:** All the students and professors surveyed were willing to cooperate

This research work is necessary because it may contribute to the improvement of intercultural communication of students of the English Language studies with a Second Foreign Language (French), mainly English students from the Introductory Course.

This Diploma Paper is structured into three chapters. Chapter 1 deals with the theoretical foundations of intercultural communication, the teaching and learning of a foreign language. Chapter 2 is concerned with the characterisation of the sample, main methods and instruments used, as well as the analysis of the results obtained from the diagnosis.

Chapter 3 consists of a proposal of the creation of a favourable environment for teaching and learning intercultural communication in the English Introductory Course, and its assessment by specialists. Conclusions, recommendations bibliography and annexes are also provided.

Chapter 1. Theoretical foundations of intercultural communication and the teaching and learning of a foreign language: implications for the English Introductory Course.

1.1. *Concept of Culture*

Culture may differ in meaning to different people or it can be different not only between continents or nations, but also within the same company or even family. In the anthropological sense culture is defined as the way people live (Chastain 1988:302). Trinovitch (1980:550) defines culture as “...an all-inclusive system which incorporates the biological and technical behaviour of human beings with their verbal and non-verbal systems of expressive behaviour starting from birth, and this “all-inclusive system” is acquired as the native culture”. This process, which can be referred to as “socialisation”, prepares the individual for the linguistically and non-linguistically accepted patterns of the society in which he/she lives.

According to Brown (1994:170) culture is a deeply ingrained part of the very fibre of our being, but language –the means for communication among members of a culture- is the most visible and available expression of that culture. And so a person’s world view, self-identity, and systems of thinking, acting, feeling, and communicating can be disrupted by a change from one culture to another.

Similarly, Tang (1999) propounds the view that culture is language and language is culture. He suggests that to speak a language well, one has to be able to think in that language, and thought is extremely powerful. Language is the soul of the country and people who speak it. Language and culture are inextricably linked, and as such we might think about moving away from questions about the inclusion or exclusion of culture in foreign language curriculum, to the issues of deliberate immersion versus non-deliberate exposure to it. In a word, culture is a way of life (Brown, 1994-163). Thus, culture helps us to know how far we can go as individuals and what our responsibility is to the group.

As can be seen, culture is a very broad concept, so to get to know a given culture means to gain extensive knowledge. It seems useful to make a distinction between the so-called *big-C culture* and *small-c culture*. The big-C part of a given culture is usually easy to study, as it constitutes factual knowledge about the fine arts such as literature, music, dance, painting, sculpture, theatre, and film. Small-c culture, on the other hand, comprises a wide variety of aspects, many of which are inter-connected, including attitudes, assumptions, beliefs, perceptions, norms and values, social relationships, customs, celebrations, rituals, politeness conventions, patterns of interaction and discourse organisation, the use of time in communication, and the use of physical space and body language (Kramsc 1995). Culture is a term that has various meanings. For example, in 1952, Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn compiled an enormous list of 164 definitions of "culture" in *Culture*; however, the word "culture" is most commonly used in three basic senses:

- Excellence of taste in the *fine arts* and *humanities*, also known as *high culture*;

- An integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behaviour that depends upon the capacity for symbolic thought and social learning;

- The set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterises an institution, organisation or group.

Back to the conceptualisation of the word 'culture', according to Milton J. Bennett (1998), culture operates with two terms:

- Objective culture: Institutions of culture; social, economic, political and linguistic systems – behaviour that has become routinized into a particular form.

- Subjective culture: the learnt and shared patterns of beliefs, behaviours and values of groups of interacting people. Or in other words, the psychological features that define a group of people. And Intercultural communication studies focuses on the subjective mode.

Summing up, culture is a set of certain peculiar elements belonging to a social group like beliefs, values, art, music, habits, food, etc. Besides being compounded by diverse concepts according to some specialists, it is divided into groups: culture with “C” and culture with “c” and it is interpreted as having a strong link with language.

1.2. Concept of Communication

Communication is the activity of conveying information. Communication has been derived from the Latin word "communis", meaning to share. It requires a sender, a message, and an intended recipient, although the receiver need not be present or aware of the sender's intent to communicate at the time of communication; thus communication can occur across vast distances in time and space. Communication requires that the communicating parties share an area of communicative commonality and this process is complete once the receiver has understood the message of the sender ([http:// en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ Category: Communication](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Communication)).

The definition of communication may be seen as the culture of people who relate to each other through various means. It may also be described as our means of keeping track of the events that occur in our immediate environment and in other places in the world. In the same way, the definition of communication may also be seen in the way we perceive each day of our life by means of our connection with people. It gives us that natural power to be able to attain our goals and feed our curiosity. Since a person is born into the world, various aspects of communication have been used to send information to and from a person. The ability to connect is made evident for personal connections, organisational communication, and in random events. This may be felt and heard through spoken words, written symbols, and even, through facial expression and movement. Needless to say, language touches every single part of our being making it important to provide the definition of communication.

Having a universal definition of communication is vital for people because it helps bring together our ideas and endeavours in life. It is a fact in life that language varies. The communication theory and the means of communication have also evolved and changed the way we see life and how we value it. Even though the means of communication changes over the years and across generations, it still serves the same purpose ([http:// www.importanceofcommunication.org/](http://www.importanceofcommunication.org/)).

Types of communication

The types of communication we use are diverse and complex. Communication is simply the exchange of information; that information can be encoded in multifaceted and varied ways. For simplicities sake, and brevity of time and space, just a handful of varied types of communication will be briefly discussed:

a) Verbal communication - The first type of communication is the one used most by people of all cultures across the planet, that of verbal communication. As it applies to the business world, the business executive or manager will encounter people from different age groups, races, cultures, and gender. Distinct verbal skills may be required for each category or group. As a consequence, one of the key concepts in verbal communication is always knowing and being aware of who your target audience is; some forms of argot, slang, idiom, vernacular, and dialect are specific to only one audience group. There can also be differences between interpersonal communication and public speaking.

b) Written communication- Every single day, most of us engage in the second type of communication, such as is being presented here, that of written communication. The ubiquitous nature of the cell phone has made it possible for near instantaneous communication just about anywhere on the globe, thanks to communications satellites. How many billions of texts (written) messages are sent every hour of every day? Not only do we have the pervasive use of social networking sites, where many millions of words are written, but also in a business setting with emails, memos, reports, articles, ad infinitum. Although many people communicate through auditory methods (speaking on the phone

c) Non-Verbal Communication- A third type of communication is one that is sometimes neglected, or that many are simply uninformed on the nature of and that is non-verbal communication. All of us unconsciously use these types of communication by our eye movements, gestures, body posture, hand movements, and even with what we wear and accessories, such as jewellery (<http://www.importanceofcommunication.org/>).

A good understanding of all the diverse types of communication will result in a superior communicator.

1.3. Intercultural Communication

Intercultural communication can be defined as any interpersonal interaction between persons belonging to different cultural or social groups, which differ from one another because of diverse backgrounds, communication and linguistic behaviours, communication interpretations, word meanings, and communication styles. Intercultural communication interactions include both verbal and nonverbal messages. Intercultural communication is dynamic because the process is always changing and evolving. This means one must continually improve and update intercultural communication skills and cultural knowledge. The concept of intercultural communication combines the concepts of interculturality and communication (Humphrey Fellows, 2008).

Intercultural communication is a form of global communication. It is used to describe the wide range of communication problems that naturally appear within an organisation made up of individuals from different religious, social, ethnic, and educational backgrounds. Intercultural communication is sometimes used synonymously with cross-cultural communication. In this sense it seeks to understand how people from different countries and cultures act, communicate and perceive the world around them. Aside from language, intercultural communication focuses on social attributes, thought patterns, and the cultures of different groups of

people. It also involves understanding the different cultures, languages and customs of people from other countries. Intercultural communication plays a role in anthropology, cultural studies, linguistics, psychology and communication studies. Intercultural communication is also referred to as the base for international businesses. And According to M. Rodrigo (1999), the important conditions to produce an effective intercultural communication are:

- The speakers should be motivated to know the other culture and show empathy to it

- To take conscience of their own culture and their communication processes

- To pay attention to the elements that form part of the nonverbal communication

- To assume that the misunderstanding take part of the intercultural meetings

- To make an effort to interpret the meaning and the intention of the speaker's words

Intercultural Communication Competence

Contact with other languages and cultures provide an excellent opportunity to foster the development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC, or intercultural competence, for short). Once intercultural contact has begun, ICC development generally evolves as an on-going and lengthy process, occasionally with periods of regression or stagnation, but more commonly with positive results and no end point. Different individuals bring differing goals and motivations to the intercultural experience that result in varying levels of competence. Some wish to achieve native-like behaviour in the host culture; others may be content simply to gain acceptance; and for still others, mere survival may be adequate.

Intercultural competence is the ability of successful communication with people of other cultures. A person who is interculturally competent captures and

understands, in interaction with people from foreign cultures, their specific concepts in perception, *thinking*, *feeling* and *acting*. Earlier experiences are considered, free from prejudices; there is an interest and motivation to continue learning. While interacting with people from other cultures they face certain obstacles which are caused due to differences in the cultural understanding between the two people in question. Such experiences motivate people to work on skills that can help them put forward their point of view in front of an audience belonging to a completely different cultural ethnicity and background (Alvino E. Fantini, 2005). Intercultural communication competence has been conceptualised in a variety of ways. Early in the history of scholarship on the construct, the conceptualisations varied according to the researcher's theoretical orientation or specific sample being studied. Some of these conceptualisations were labelled as cross-cultural adjustment, cross-cultural adaptation, intercultural understanding, overseas success, personal growth/adjustment, cross-cultural effectiveness, and satisfaction with overseas experience. In the last two decades, there has been a growing consensus on a conceptualisation of the concept of IC competence. As a reflection of this consensus ICC involves the knowledge, motivation, and skills to interact effectively and appropriately with members of different cultures (Guthrie & Zektick, 1967; Harris, 1975; Ruben & Kealey, 1979).

ICC is not something innate within us, nor does it occur accidentally. Rather, there are necessary conditions that must exist before we are consciously and consistently competent in our intercultural interactions (Spitzberg and Cupach 1984). As a complex phenomenon, ICC encompasses multiple components. These include (Alvino E. Fantini, 2005):

a) Traits and characteristics

It is useful to distinguish traits (i.e., innate personal qualities) from acquired characteristics developed later in life that are related to one's cultural and situational context – a sort of “nature vs. nurture” distinction. This distinction is particularly important in training and educational programs because it poses the question: which abilities form part of an individual's intrinsic personality and which can be developed

or modified through training and educational efforts? Commonly cited traits and/or characteristics of ICC include: flexibility, humour, patience, openness, interest, curiosity, empathy, tolerance for ambiguity, and suspending judgment, among others.

b) ICC involves ability in three areas or domains. These are (Alvino E. Fantini, 2005)

- The ability to establish and maintain relationships;
- The ability to communicate with minimal loss or distortion;
- The ability to collaborate in order to accomplish something of mutual interest or need.

c) ICC also has four dimensions (Coker and Burgoon (1987) :

- Knowledge: refers to our awareness or understanding of requisite information and actions to be interculturally competent. A knowledgeable communicator needs information about the people, the communication rules, the context, and the normative expectations governing the interaction with the member of the other culture. Without this information, the communicator will invariably make misattributions, choose incorrect communication strategies, violate rules of etiquette, or cause the loss of face for self or other. Further, the unknowing communicator may not be able to correctly ascribe the reasons for the errors or be able to remedy them. To obtain the needed knowledge to competently communicate, individuals need to be sensitive to the feedback from others as well as be cognitively flexible to accommodate that feedback.

- Motivation/attitudes: refers to the set of feelings, intentions, needs, and drives associated with the anticipation of or actual engagement in intercultural communication. Factors such as anxiety, perceived social distance, attraction, ethnocentrism, and prejudice can influence an individual's decision to communicate with another. If our fears, dislikes, and anxieties predominate our affect toward the other, we will have negative motivation, and we will be likely to avoid the interaction, even if we feel we have the requisite knowledge and skills to perform. However, if our confidence, interest, likes, and good intentions predominate our affect toward the other, we will have positive motivation, and will seek out and engage in interaction

with the other (Morreale, Spitzberg, & Barge, 2001). Thus, competent communicators must learn to reduce the negative influences and increase the positive influences on their motivation to communicate with members of different cultures.

- Skills: refer to the actual performance of the behaviours felt to be effective and appropriate in the communication context. For Spitzberg (2000), skills must be repeatable and goal-oriented. If a person accidentally produces a behaviour that is perceived as competent, this would not be adequate, since the person may not be able to replicate the same behaviour with the same effect. The person needs to be able to perform the script fluently and with cause. This brings us to the notion that skills must be goal-oriented. There must be some teleological basis for the performance, or else it is just behaviour, not skilled behaviour. The goals may be personal, dyadic, social, or contextual.

- Awareness: is central and especially critical to cross-cultural development. Awareness differs from knowledge in that it is always about the “self” vis-à-vis all else in the world (other things, other people, other thoughts, etc.) and ultimately helps to clarify what is deepest and most relevant to one’s identity. Awareness is furthered through developments in knowledge, positive attitudes, and skills, and in turn also furthers their development.

d) Proficiency in the host language

The ability to communicate in the host language greatly enhances ICC development in both quantitative and qualitative ways. Grappling with another language confronts how one perceives, conceptualises, and expresses oneself; and, in the process, fosters the development of alternative communication strategies on someone else's terms. This humbling and challenging process often facilitates transcending and transforming how one understands the world. Lack of a second language constrains one to continue to think about the world and act within it, only in one's native system, and deprives the individual of one of the most valuable aspects of the intercultural experience.

The development of intercultural competence is mostly based on experiences one comes across while communicating with different cultures. While interacting with people from other cultures they face certain obstacles which are caused due to differences in the cultural understanding between the two people in question. Such experiences motivate people to work on skills that can help them put forward their point of view in front of an audience belonging to a completely different cultural ethnicity and background. This issue is one faced by most people today (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/interculturalcompetencemw-head>).

Intercultural Communication Tips

Working across cultures is a new experience for many people. Intercultural communication can be a dynamic and creative affair but occasionally due to the inability to interpret people correctly it can be a challenge. Building an understanding of other people's cultures, their communication styles and behaviours can go a long way in improving relationships and being more successful in an intercultural environment. Even without trawling through lots of books, articles or even taking part in an intercultural communication workshop it is possible to implement some basic principles to help improve one's intercultural communication skills. The following intercultural communication tips are provided to help people working in international and multicultural environments get some basic insight into dealing more effectively with people and not letting culture become an issue(<http://kwintessential.co.uk/cultural-services>).

- Be Patient: Working in an intercultural environment can be a frustrating affair. Things may not get done when expected, communication can be tiresome and behaviour may be inappropriate. Patience with yourself and others helps move beyond such issues and address how to avoid similar incidents in the future.
- Establish Rules: Sometimes if working in a truly intercultural team it may be necessary for all to take a step back and set down some ground rules. I.e. how do we approach punctuality, meetings, communication, emails, disagreements, etc.? It

is always a good idea to try and develop the rules as a group rather than have them imposed.

- Ask questions: When you don't understand something or want to know why someone has behaved in a certain way, simply ask. Asking questions stops you making assumptions, shows the question you did not understand and helps build up your bank of intercultural knowledge.

- Respect: The foundation of all intercultural communication is respect. By demonstrating respect you earn respect and help create more open and fruitful relationships.

- The Written Word: Sometimes people who do not have English as their mother tongue will read more proficiently than they speak. It is a good idea to always write things down as a backup.

- Time: Not everyone in the world thinks "time is money". Understand that for many people work is low down on the priority list with things like family taking a much higher precedence. Do not expect people to sacrifice their own time to meet deadlines. It is good practice to always leave a bit of spare time when considering deadlines.

- Humour: In an intercultural environment one man's joke is another's insult. Be wary of differences in the sense of humour and also the acceptability of banter and the like in a business environment.

- Always Check: The easiest way of minimising the negative impact of intercultural communication is to check and double check. Whether agreeing something or giving instructions, a minute spent double checking all parties are 'reading from the same sheet' saves hours of work later on down the line.

- Be Positive: When faced with incidents of an intercultural nature steer clear of blame and conflict. Stay positive, analyse the problem areas and work as a team to build strategies and solutions to ensure the same never occurs again.

-Self-Reflect: A good intercultural communicator not only looks outwards but also inwards. Take time to reflect on your own communication, management or motivation style and see where you can improve as an individual.

Parameters of Intercultural Communication

There are several parameters that may be perceived differently by people of different cultures, these may include (<http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/language>):

- Perception of Time: In some countries like China and Japan, punctuality is considered important and being late would be considered as an insult. However, in countries such as those of South America and the Middle East, being on time does not carry the same sense of urgency.
- Perception of Space: The concept of "personal space" also varies from country to country. In certain countries it is considered respectful to maintain a distance while interacting. However, in other countries, this is not so important.
- Non-verbal Communication: Cultures may be either Low-context or High-context: Low-context cultures rely more on content rather than on context. They give value to the written word rather than oral statements. High-context cultures infer information from message context, rather than from content. They rely heavily on nonverbal signs and prefer indirectness, politeness & ambiguity.

So in summary we can define ICC as the capacity of human beings to understand, interact, adapt and assimilate some characteristics of a foreign culture by being in contact with people from different cultures and besides it is encompassed by multiple components, four dimensions, three areas of domain and composed by some aspects that may help people working in international and multicultural environments.

1.4. ***Concept of Language***

Language is a collection of symbols governed by rules and used to convey messages between individuals or is rule governed, that is to say is governed by phonological rules: how we pronounce words ,semantic rules: how we assign meaning to specific words and symbols and pragmatic rules: tell us how to interpret a message in a particular context.

The goal of language learning consists in communicative competence of expression, interpretation and negotiation of meaning, involving two or more people or between a person and a written text. Also as a concept considered one of the traits to identify certain culture, its tasks should enhance awareness of one's culture and identity, language awareness of and respect for cultural diversity, openness, flexibility, tolerance to other people's culture and difference. Moreover language is a reflection of culture and each culture's language emphasises specific words and meanings that are of importance to that particular culture. The parallel between language and culture can then be understood as analogue to the parallel between a linguistic sign, consisting for example of the sound [kau] and the meaning "cow", and a cultural sign, consisting for example of the cultural form of "wearing a crown" and the cultural meaning of "being king". In this way it can be argued that culture is itself a kind of language. Another parallel between cultural and linguistic systems is that they are both systems of practice; that is, they are a set of special ways of doing things that is constructed and perpetuated through social interactions. Children, for example, acquire language in the same way as they acquire the basic cultural norms of the society they grow up in – through interaction with older members of their cultural group. However, languages, now understood as the particular set of speech norms of a particular community, are also a part of the larger culture of the community that speaks them. Humans use language as a way of signalling identity with one cultural group and difference from others (Herder, romanticist of 19th century).

Summarising, the way of speaking makes part of a community culture; i.e., the language used is a way of establishing and displaying a group identity, in the correct definition a complex group of signs and symbols with function, not only to facilitate communication but also to identify the culture of the speaker.

1.5. Intercultural Communication and Language

Language and Intercultural Communication promotes an interdisciplinary understanding of the interplay between language and intercultural communication. All experts, commentators and linguists are unanimous that without knowledge of the language the culture can never be appreciated. A cross cultural consultant will therefore have this insider knowledge not only through living and working in a country but also by using and understanding the language (www.tandf.co.uk/journals/1470-8477).

English is without doubt the *lingua franca* of the modern business world. Although most people accept it as the international language, most do not have native language speaker proficiency. This creates communication problems and misunderstandings. Those that have English as a second language will of course have a tendency to misspell words, invent new words, use poor grammar and generally not make themselves clear. Reading such an email can be a struggle and if one word is out of place the whole meaning can be misunderstood. It is important for those communicating across cultures to bear in mind that this is to be expected. The best way to approach such emails is to look beyond the form to the intent. If that is not possible then a simple email should be sent back asking for clarification on points or even sending back closed-ended questions which can only have a 'yes' or 'no' answer. We all know about language problems, but how can we help people who are not English teachers to deal better with International students. Second language speakers may:

- Be unfamiliar with much idiomatic or technical English;

- Be unfamiliar with jargon/acronyms;
- Not be used to hearing English - speed of delivery is a problem;
- Not be used to the pronunciation of some words;
- Not be familiar with complex language;
- Have particular difficulty with some areas of language.

Improvement of intercultural communication through language

It is essential that people research the cultures and communication conventions of those whom they propose to meet. This will minimise the risk of making the elementary mistakes. It is also prudent to set a clear agenda so that everyone understands the nature and purpose of the interaction.

When language skills are unequal, clarifying one's meaning in five ways will improve communication (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/intercultural_competence#mw-head):

- Avoid using slang and idioms, choosing words that will convey only the most specific *denotative* meaning (and Explain in Simple words);
- Listen carefully and, if in doubt, ask for confirmation of understanding (particularly important if local accents and pronunciation are a problem);
- Recognise that accenting and intonation can cause meaning to vary significantly;
- Respect the local communication formalities and styles, and watch for any changes in body language;
- Investigate their culture's perception of your culture by reading literature about your culture through their eyes before entering into communication with them;

- Judge the behaviour of people according to their cultures.

To sum it up, it can be said that language is one of the most vital ingredient that should always be present when the process of intercultural communication is being fulfilled. Besides it can be considered that there are many ways to improve intercultural communication through language which will allow people to prepare themselves for projected views of the culture of the language taught where they will be bearing as a visitor in their culture.

1.6. Language learning process

Learning a language is a process that requires the operation of an innate capacity possessed by all human beings and it normally occurs most intensively during childhood. Learning another language develops the tools necessary for dealing with various types of survival challenges. A foreign language learner develops a rainbow way of thinking, a variety of technical skills and interpersonal exchanges across and among cultures. As well it is culture learning, to be precise learning a foreign language makes the pupil acquainted with the life, customs, and traditions of the people whose language he or she studies through visual material and reading material dealing with the countries where the target language is spoken.

Language learning strategies

-Code switching- that is, changing between languages at some point in a sentence or utterance, is a commonly used communication strategy among language learners and bilinguals. While traditional methods of formal instruction often discourage code switching, students, especially those placed in a language immersion situation, often use it. If viewed as a learning strategy, wherein the student uses the target language as much as possible but reverts to their native language for any element of an utterance that they are unable to produce in the target language (as, e.g., in Wolfgang Butzkamm's concept of enlightened monolingualism), then it has the

advantages that it encourages fluency development and motivation and a sense of accomplishment by enabling the student to discuss topics of interest to him or her early in the learning process—before requisite vocabulary has been memorised. It is particularly effective for students whose native language is English, due to the high probability of a simple English word or short phrase being understood by the conversational partner (<http://www.dmoz.org/Science/SocialSciences/Linguistics/Languages/Education/>).

Furthermore Oxford (1990b) has developed a fairly detailed list of LLS in her taxonomy, so she first distinguishes between direct LLS, "which directly involve the subject matter", i.e. the L2 or FL, and indirect LLS, which "do not directly involve the subject matter itself, but are essential to language learning nonetheless". Second, each of these broad kinds of LLS is further divided into LLS groups. Oxford outlines three main types of direct LLS:

- Memory strategies - aid in entering information into long-term memory and retrieving information when needed for communication.
- Cognitive LLS - are used for forming and revising internal mental models and receiving and producing messages in the target language.
- Compensation strategies - are needed to overcome any gaps in knowledge of the language (Oxford, 1990b, p. 71).

Oxford (1990a, 1990b) also describes three types of indirect LLS.

- Metacognitive strategies which help learners exercise 'executive control' through planning, arranging, focusing, and evaluating their own learning.
- Affective LLS which enable learners to control feelings, motivations, and attitudes related to language learning.
- Social strategies which facilitate interaction with others, often in a discourse situation" (p. 71).

Communicative language learning

Communicative language learning seeks to bring students beyond grammatical competence to a point where they are able not only to decode a language but also to manipulate it in a private dialogue and this is known as communicative competence. By encouraging oral ability as well as literacy, communicative language learning embeds the language at a deeper level. A language employed for private dialogue will resist atrophy longer than a language learnt strictly through grammatical explanation and translation exercises. In order for learners to progress, they must move from a stage in which the facts of the environment control the learner to other in which an 'expert' mediates by providing strategies and finally to the next in which the learner controls the activity. Important to the emergence of this stage, it is the use of private speech or private dialogue, as Wertsch, 1980 refers to it. It should be kept in mind that auditory learning is vital to enabling communicative competence. Particularly in the early stages of language learning, students are unsteady when it comes to vocalising words. They feel intimidated, afraid of embarrassing themselves. They very much need to hear what the language sounds like before they will attempt to vocalize for themselves. After crossing this barrier, they will be able to progress toward communicative competence (Paul Overland, 2004)

Language Learning and Intercultural Communication

Language is a fundamental tool that humans use to construct and exchange meaning with one another. Meaning making through linguistic exchanges is an activity that is situated in a shared social and cultural context. Therefore, in order to be able to communicate successfully, it is necessary to understand the cultural context in which language is used. Consequently, learning to use the same language as our interlocutors provides us not only with a tool to facilitate interaction on the simplest and most practical level, but also with insight into the other's culture, facilitating mutual understanding. In Samovar and Porter's words, language gives people a means of interacting with other members of their culture and a means of thinking. Language thus serves both as a mechanism for communication and as a guide to social reality (1982:17).

In the world that we live today, the development and learning of languages is a desirable and expedient activity. It is important to note that second language acquisition (SLA) stands in contrast to first language acquisition. SLA research is the study of how people learn additional languages beyond acquiring their mother tongue or first language and constitutes a complex network of inter-related variables that influence success (Ellis, 1999).

There is no single way in which learners acquire knowledge and this holds true in acquiring knowledge of a second language. SLA is the product of many factors pertaining to the learner on one hand and the learning context on the other. It is, therefore, important to recognise the diversity and complexity of the interaction of the two. While appreciating the individual nature of language learning, in order to understand the processes of SLA, it is necessary to focus on those issues or variables that are relatively stable and hence generalizable, if not to all learners then at least to large groups of learners.

Such process is accompanied by some indispensable strategies and it is unbreakable bonded to intercultural communication which is the part that makes relevant the connection between language and culture. As for communicative language learning, it can be understood as an engaging development in the field of ancient language acquisition as it opens numerous opportunities for creative instruction, and may serve to captivate students and teachers alike for years to come.

1.7. Language teaching process

The language teaching process is based on the objective of teaching a language which is what the learners should be able to do (skills), know (knowledge) and feel (attitude). In other words (Antich, 1975), is a specific, useful skill, knowledge or attitude which should be developed as the result of learning. The objective has three main functions: to determine the teaching content, to lead the learning process and

to assess its results. In addition, it is observed that foreign language teaching should promote pupil's general educational and cultural growth by increasing their knowledge about foreign countries, and by acquainting them with progressive traditions of the people whose language they study.

Language teaching strategies

Blended learning- combines face-to-face teaching with distance education, frequently electronic, either computer-based or web-based. It has been a major growth point in the ELT (English Language Teaching) industry over the last ten years.

Skills teaching -when talking about language skills- the four basic ones are: listening, speaking, reading and writing. However, other, more socially-based skills have been identified more recently such as summarising, describing, narrating etc. In addition, more general learning skills such as study skills and knowing how one learns have been applied to language classrooms. More recent textbooks stress the importance of students working with other students in pairs and groups, sometimes the entire class. Pair and group work give opportunities for more students to participate more actively. However, supervision of pairs and groups is important to make sure everyone participates as equally as possible. Such activities also provide opportunities for peer teaching, where weaker learners can find support from stronger classmates.

Sandwich technique - in foreign language teaching, the sandwich technique is the oral insertion of an idiomatic translation in the mother tongue between an unknown phrase in the learned language and its repetition, in order to convey meaning as rapidly and completely as possible. The mother tongue equivalent can be given almost as an aside, with a slight break in the flow of speech to mark it as an intruder. When modelling a dialogue sentence for students to repeat, the teacher not only gives an oral mother tongue equivalent for unknown words or phrases, but repeats the foreign language phrase before students imitate it: L2 => L1 => L2. For

example, a German teacher of English might engage in the following exchange with the students:

Teacher: "Let me try - lass mich mal versuchen - let me try."

Students: "Let me try."

Mother tongue mirroring - is the adaptation of the time- honoured technique of literal translation or word-for word translation for pedagogical purposes. The aim is to make foreign constructions salient and transparent to learners and, in many cases, spare them the technical jargon of grammatical analysis. It differs from literal translation and interlinear text as used in the past since it takes the progress, learners have made into account and only focuses upon a specific structure at a time. As a didactic device, it can only be used to the extent that it remains intelligible to the learner, unless it is combined with a normal idiomatic translation.

Back-chaining - is a technique used in teaching oral language skills, especially with polysyllabic or difficult words. The teacher pronounces the last syllable, the student repeats, and then the teacher continues, working backwards from the end of the word to the beginning. For example, to teach the name 'Mussorgsky' a teacher will pronounce the last syllable: -sky, and have the student repeat it. Then the teacher will repeat it with -sorg- attached before: sorg-sky, and all that remains is the first syllable: Mus-sorg-sky (<http://www.dmoz.org/Science/SocialSciences/Linguistics/Languages/Education/>).

Communicative language teaching

Communicative language teaching (CLT) is an approach to the teaching of second and foreign languages that emphasises interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of learning a language. Communicative language teaching can be also understood as a set of principles about the goals of language teaching, how learners learn a language, the kinds of classroom activities that best facilitate learning, and the roles of teachers and learners in the classroom. It is also referred to as

“communicative approach to the teaching of foreign languages” or simply the “communicative approach”. The communicative approach in language teaching starts from a theory of language as communication. The goal of language teaching is to develop what Hymes (1972) referred to as "communicative competence." Hymes coined this term in order to contrast a communicative view of language and Chomsky's theory of competence. Chomsky held that linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener in a completely homogeneous speech community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitation, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance. (Chomsky 1965: 3)

Language teaching and intercultural communication

For Chomsky, the focus of linguistic theory was to characterise the abstract abilities speakers possess that enable them to produce grammatically correct sentences in a language. Hymes held that such a view of linguistic theory was sterile, that linguistic theory needed to be seen as part of a more general theory incorporating communication and culture. Hymes's theory of communicative competence was a definition of what a speaker needs to know in order to be communicatively competent in a speech community.

Some of the following teaching tools and methods may be used to promote intercultural communication skills (<http://www.lanqua.eu/theme/interculturalcommunication>):

- Simulation activities, followed by reflective discussion and/or written analysis;
- Informal face-to face interaction in hypothetical contact situations;
- Guided group activities;
- Learner diaries;
- Questionnaires;
- Peer teaching;

- Tandem exchanges;
- Study visits abroad or local contact with speakers of other languages;
- Cross-cultural study projects;
- Reports;
- Oral presentations;
- Ethnographic projects.

To conclude, language teaching is a process that does not just contribute to the learner's acquaintance but also it is accompanied by some strategies that are fundamental to the students' training in terms of culture and education. Moreover, communicative language teaching is another concept that is very linked to language teaching, to be exact; no one could teach a language without being familiar with the concept of communication as such because language certainly is the main factor of communication. Teaching a foreign language implies the knowledge of the culture of countries of the language taught, and to reinforce it, it is required to take into account some methods that collaborate with the process in the classroom. Such methods create much easier conditions for teachers to do their work and fulfil their goals.

1.8. English Introductory Course

Students of the English Language with a Second Foreign Language in Cuba should be able to have an integral solid verbal system ability in the communicative competence (linguistic, discursive, strategic, and sociolinguistic) for achieving the development of the textual procedural capacity in English (analysis and production of texts) and for the implementation of translation and interpretation. Also, the graduate of this course should take advantage of a second foreign language as a professional language. English is the main pillar of this professional training course. It is taught from the Introductory Course up to the second year (Curriculum C) and

third year (Curriculum D); it should provide students with knowledge, habits and abilities necessary for their professional life.

According to Curriculum D, the English Introductory Course is a basic intensive main English Course having as the main objective the development of students' capacity of the four skills (reading, listening, writing and speaking) which allows them to have an appropriate performance in the rest of the academic years. At the end of the academic year the students should take a final exam and be able to pass it with a high mark to continue to study the rest of the academic years.

Taking into consideration this essential year, it should be well instructed because it will be reflected throughout the academic years and in the graduates' professional life.

Language teaching and the English Introductory Course

In view of English Introductory Course, language teaching is a process that also involves the four main skills however to a certain extent because in this point it is verified what students are able to do with what have been taught. In other words, the teaching process takes place when students practice the lessons taught. It is relevant also to point out that teachers in the English Introductory Course should be more than cooperative and closely attentive to students during this process in order for them to be well prepared and extremely familiar with the language being studied also its cultural background. The teachers' role in the organising of activities is very significant since it is not only the learning of the contents but also the teachers' role which is also seen as a relevant factor and the application of adequate methods to facilitate the process of language learning.

Language learning and the English Introductory Course

In the Introductory Course as was mentioned before, English Language is the main subject. Furthermore language learning in this period should be very intensive taking into account that when students commence, their level of knowledge of the language

is not sufficient. In the course of English Language with a Second Foreign Language (French), the learning process is accompanied by the teaching of the four main skills (writing, speaking, listening and reading). The writing skill consists of teaching students to write paragraphs in order to stimulate them to develop their capacity of writing and practice of new words or vocabulary learnt also to use grammatical structures, while the speaking skill tends to simulate students to extend their capacity of using the language taught with confidence and learn from their own mistake when talking. As for the listening skill, learners are encouraged to listen to audio lessons with the objective of being familiar with the language as well as listening attentively to the pronunciation of each word; on the other hand the reading skill motivates students to learn the language and to develop reading strategies. On the contrary, if students are not capable in terms of these four abilities, it means that there are not ready to initiate the first year of the course.

In fact, it can be said that language teaching and learning are two unquestionable process required in the English Introductory Course which consists of a very intensive preparation of students as future professionals and beyond it, such preparation will be later reflected in the following academic years.

1.9. *Conclusion of the chapter 1*

First of all, to conclude this chapter, it was necessary to analyse some theoretical foundations about intercultural communication and the teaching and learning of a foreign language. To make a simply study of such subject, it was required to carry out various research on the concepts of culture, communication , intercultural communication, language, intercultural communication and language, language learning, language learning and intercultural communication, language teaching and language teaching and intercultural communication. Some notions of the English Introductory Course were also analysed.

Chapter 2. Diagnosis of the current situation of the teaching and learning process of English in the Introductory Course at the Central University “Marta Abreu” of Las Villas related to intercultural communication

2.1. Methodology and stages of research

The methodology of the research corresponds to a qualitative paradigm since it is based on the experiences, perceptions and suggestions of both, students and professors regarding intercultural communication and its implications in the teaching and learning of a foreign language in the Introductory Course. Nevertheless, methods of the quantitative paradigm were also used to complement the findings obtained.

The research consists of three stages:

- Determining the students and professional's perception of intercultural communication.
- Creation of a specialised classroom and a set of activities to improve the teaching and learning of intercultural communication.
- Assessing the proposal through specialists' criteria.

2.2 Sample and context of research

The research was carried out at the Central University “Marta Abreu” of Las Villas, where students and professors were surveyed and interviewed.

Seventeen (17) students of the Introductory Course, first and second years of English Language with a Second Foreign Language (French) were given a questionnaire. It was aimed to find out their understanding about intercultural communication, its importance for the learning of a foreign language in the Introductory Course, and their opinion about their necessity to improve their performance related to this topic (Appendix # 1).

Six (6) professors from the Department of English Language Studies at UCLV were given a similar questionnaire with the same purpose (Appendix # 2).

Six (6) students of fourth year of English Language with a Second Foreign Language (French) and four (4) professors were interviewed with the objective of obtaining their point of view and recommendations on the introduction of intercultural communication issue in the Introductory Course (Appendix # 4 and 3) .

In order to choose the sample some criteria were taken into account:

- Academic Level of students:
 - Students of the English Introductory Course are currently taking the subject English Language.
 - First and second year students have passed the Introductory Course.
 - Fourth year students have accumulated experience for four academic years of study.
 - Additionally, second and fourth year students have accumulated experience during their period of practice in which they interacted with foreigners from different countries.
- Academic and scientific degree of professors: Professors who hold scientific degrees (PhD. MSc.) and academic rank (Assistant, Associate Professor and Professor).
- Willingness: All the students and professors surveyed and interviewed were willing to cooperate.

2.3 Methods

In this research, some methods were applied:

- Historical and logical method;
- Theoretical methods: analysis, synthesis, induction and deduction;
- Statistical and mathematical: the percentage analysis;

- Empirical methods: participant observation, analysis of documents, surveys and interviews.

2.3.1 Analyses of documents

Documents analysed:

- *English Language Course Curriculum with a Second Foreign Language (French)*
- *English Introductory Course Syllabus*

According to Curriculum “C” and Curriculum “D”, bachelors of the English Language with a Second Foreign Language (French) should be able:

- To work as translators and/or interpreters in a concrete historical situation;
- To contribute to the communication between Spanish speakers and non-Spanish speakers;
- To teach English efficiently in order to contribute to the cultural development of a foreign language in Cuban society.

Therefore, graduates of the English Language with a Second Foreign Language (French) should have acquired and developed the necessary abilities in order to play an outstanding role as mediators between people in the communication process. For this purpose they should be interculturally competent professionals.

However, the syllabus of the English Introductory Course besides having concentration in what concerns the main four language skills, it does not have enough cultural elements to prepare students to proceed to the next academic years. The English Introductory Course has as its objective to stimulate students to be capable to dominate English language taking into account the main four language skills, but it does not contain enough elements related to the intercultural issue.

2.3.2 Survey to students

The data for this study was obtained from the analysis of the survey carried out with students of the academic year 2011-2012. The study explored undergraduate students' general views on intercultural communication and its implications for

learning of a foreign language in the English Introductory Course. The study involved seventeen (17) students from Introductory Course, first and second years of English Language studies.

Results:

Introductory Course (5 students)

- 2 (40%) students have encountered cultural difficulties when interacting with people from another culture but 3 (60%) do not.
- Considering their experience as foreign language students, 1(20%) of them is prepared to have an intercultural interaction while 4 (80%) are not.
- They all (100%) believe that they have been motivated in the classroom to be curious about the culture of English-speaking countries.
- All of the students reported that the materials used are not enough to improve their knowledge.
- All of the students said that teachers organise activities related to this topic but it is still not enough.
- The majority have at least an idea of what is intercultural communication.
- All of the students (100%) agreed that intercultural communication plays an important role in the learning and teaching of a foreign language but 3 (60%) of them could not support their answers.
- 3 (60%) believe that their teachers are prepared, with respect this issue while the others classified them as enough but just 1(20%) could support his answer.
- 2 (40%) considered that the method used by their teachers are not related to this topic, whereas 3 (60%) do not share the same answer.
- All students believe that language and culture are connected.

First Year (7 students)

- Taking into account their difficulties when interacting with people from another culture, 5 (71.4%) students have not had such an experience yet, but 2 (28.6%) of them have been already in such a situation.
- Making an allowance for their cultural background knowledge, 3 (42.8) of them are not well prepared to do it, and 4 are not totally ready.

- 7 (100%) students confirmed that they have been motivated in the classroom to be familiar with the culture of the language studied.
- Students are not satisfied with the materials used that are related to this target.
- 3 (42.8%) students do not know the meaning of intercultural communication and 4 (57.1%) do know.
- All (100%) students believe that language and culture are connected.
- All (100%) students confirmed the importance of intercultural communication in the process of learning and teaching a foreign language but 5 (71.4%) of them could not support their answer.
- 2 (28.6%) students declared that their teachers are prepared to deal with this issue while 5 (71.4%) classified it as enough.
- 6 (85.7%) students classified the method applied by their teachers as enough, while 1(14.2%) as good.

Second Year (5 students)

- 3 (60%) students stated being in a difficult situation, but they consider themselves prepared, nevertheless 2 (40%) have not yet been in such a situation and they feel more or less prepared.
- 2 (40%) students are not motivated to know other cultures and 3 (60%) are.
- 5 (100%) students believe that they are not exposed enough to materials related to this matter.
- All of the students affirmed that teachers organise interactive activities with foreign students that speak the language taught but they are not sufficient.
- 2 (40%) students do not know the concept of intercultural communication, while 3 (60%) do know.
- All (100%) of the students believe that language and culture are connected.
- All (100%) of them think that intercultural communication has its role in the process of learning and teaching a foreign language and 2 (40%) supported their answer but 3(60%) did not.
- All of the (100%) students classified their teachers' knowledge about this topic as enough.

- 4 (80%) students declared that the method used by their teachers is not related to this issue although 1 (20%) did not share the same answer.

2.3.3 Survey to professors

The data of this study were obtained from the survey of six (6) professors of the Department of English Language Studies at the Central University “Marta Abreu” of Las Villas. These professors hold scientific degrees of PhD and MSc and academic rank of Assistant Professor, Associate Professor or Professor.

The study investigated how they valued the importance of intercultural communication in the teaching and learning process of a foreign language as well as their awareness about intercultural communication.

Results:

- 6 (100%) professors agreed with the importance of intercultural communication in the process of learning and teaching a foreign language as well the boundary between culture and language.
- All the teachers surveyed (100 %) emphasised that intercultural communication has a significant influence in the teaching and learning of a foreign language.
- 4 (66.6%) of them believe that students should have more and better preparation in what concerns this topic while 2 (33.3%) of them declared that they are prepared.
- 4 (66.6%) of the respondents confirmed that the subject given by them is related to the topic to a certain extent, but 2 (33.3%) of them confirmed the opposite.
- 4 (66.6%) professors answered that their method of teaching are connected to intercultural communication.
- 2 (33.3%) professors declared that their method do not link to the topic.
- 1 (16.6%) professor stated that the evaluation method used allows her/him to measure the extent of students' knowledge in what refers to this issue, 4 (66.6%) do not share the same answer and 1 (16.6%) partly.
- Professionals recommended that for the inclusion of intercultural communication in the learning and teaching of a foreign language it should be taken into consideration some aspects like the improvement of the evaluation, traditions, interpersonal relations and extra linguistic communication, among others.

2.3.4. Interview

Six (6) students of fourth year were interviewed based on their vast experience from the Introductory Course up to the end of their studies, as well as four (4) professors, in order to know their recommendations of what can be done to include the intercultural issue in the Introductory Course.

Results:

- All of the students and teachers agreed that intercultural communication is an issue that should be implemented in the Introductory Course as a complement of the English subject.
- All of the students stated that English in the Introductory Course is not interculturally taught.
- All of the students reported a lack of intercultural resources during classes.
- All of the students reported lack of intercultural information.
- Students and teachers believe that professors should be interculturally prepared.
- Students declared that practice period during their studies are not enough to act interculturally correct.
- Students think that students in the English Introductory Course should be submitted to an interactive and intensive cultural training.
- Professionals and students agreed that from the very beginning students should have some cultural background taking into consideration that language reflects culture.
- Teachers and students consider that the English Introductory Course syllabus should be programmed in order to emphasise this issue.
- Students suggest that teachers with real experience with English speaking countries should share the same with them.

2.4. Regularities obtained from analysis of documents, surveys and interviews

After analysing Curricula C and D of the course English Language with a Second Foreign Language (French), *English Introductory Course Syllabus* as well as the

results from the application of the surveys and the interviews, the following regularities can be pointed out:

- Intercultural communication is not considered as an issue to be taught and learnt in the Introductory Course in the Syllabuses C and D.
- There is a need to include intercultural communication in the Introductory Course as a complement in the English subject.
- Both, professors and students maintained that intercultural communication should be considered in the Introductory Course as a complement of English subject.
- Professors and students believe that it would be very helpful to prepare students from the beginning of the English language course.
- The majority of the surveyed subjects think that the inclusion of intercultural communication in the Introductory Course would be very useful for the enrichment of both, professors and students.
- Most of the students as well as the professors surveyed and interviewed said that there is a lack of information and resources concerning intercultural communication.
- Professors and students consider that the English Introductory Course syllabus should be designed in order to emphasise this issue.

The findings obtained from this diagnose stage will be considered in order to provide a specialised classroom and activities to include intercultural communication in the Introductory Course of English at UCLV.

Chapter 3. Creation of a favourable environment for the teaching and learning of Intercultural Communication in the Introductory Course

According to the theoretical foundations stated in Chapter 1 and the regularities resulting from the diagnosis of Chapter 2, the current Chapter emphasises the creation of a favourable environment for the teaching and learning of intercultural communication in the English Introductory Course.

3.1. Foundations of the proposal

Numerous principles have contributed to the teaching of foreign languages. First of all, teachers must take into account different contexts, circumstances, and learners' needs in order to choose the appropriate language learning principles or a combination of them for a successful language teaching.

Nowadays linguistic, psychological and socio-cultural factors play a key role in the process of foreign language teaching; therefore, it is of high importance to combine intercultural knowledge and skills with language knowledge and skills. In the present proposal the author has decided to focus particularly on intercultural competence as being the one less developed in the language lessons observed.

3.2. Characteristics of the proposal

The proposal consists of a creation of a favourable environment for the teaching and learning of intercultural communication which is composed by a specialised classroom for the Introductory Course and a set of activities with the intention of improving the teaching and learning process of intercultural communication.

Firstly, it is presented, as a way to a better teaching and learning of intercultural communication in the English Introductory Course, a specialised classroom with all the physical conditions in order to facilitate the teaching and learning process. This classroom will offer students and teachers a better

environment and it will be adequate to practice the activities which will be presented as the second part of the proposal.

The first part (a specialised classroom) according to the diagnosis made in Chapter 2:

- Provides better cultural background environment for teaching and learning;
- Facilitates cultural teaching process;
- Stimulates students to learn about intercultural communication (English culture mainly);
- Increases motivation;
- Allows them to manage situations related to intercultural communication;
- Helps them to have a closer image of intercultural communication situation in real life;
- Allows students to participate actively in the process of teaching and learning of intercultural communication.

Secondly, it is also proposed as a second part of the proposal a set of amusing activities such as games that involve both teachers and students; such activities will complement the bibliography used in the English Introductory Course and will integrate the four main skills of language providing enough cultural practice within the classroom.

Moreover, they are designed according to the students' level and knowledge. On one hand, all these activities are meant to help students to gain and increase their knowledge in what concerns intercultural communication and English cultural background, likewise, considering this issue, it will allow students to be more confident and prepared when they continue their studies, mainly when they interact with foreigners in the practice period. On the other hand, they are a very useful pedagogical tool in the teaching and learning process in what concerns intercultural communication. These activities will allow professors to use any kind of text or even pictures related to English-speaking countries, no matter if it is an article, a song, a narration, a note, a letter etc., each of those texts consists of an adaptable

opportunity provided by the book *Spectrum* for teachers to use as a tool in an intercultural communication class. The second part of the proposal was also selected according to the diagnosis from Chapter 2 which is meant to:

- Expand students' intercultural communication knowledge;
- Overcome their necessities, level and interests;
- Support linguistic complexity;
- Aid students to notice differences between their culture and the studied language culture;
- Aid them to manage intercultural communication situations;
- Help them to understand the concept of otherness;
- Provide teachers and students with updated English cultural activities;
- Facilitate cultural interchange among teachers and students;
- Integrate the four main skills;
- Be adaptable to the bibliography used in the English Introductory Course;
- Allow students to participate actively in the process of teaching and learning of intercultural communication.

3.3. Description of the proposal

First of all, it can be said that the two parts of the proposal complement each other. The first is meant to be a specialised classroom gathering all the attractive and educational conditions which focus on the decoration and equipment seen as teacher aids. Such a classroom composes a better environment which could be seen as a sort of stimulation for the practice of the set of activities in the second part of the proposal in order to enhance the teaching and learning of intercultural communication in the English Introductory Course at UCLV.

Characteristics of the specialised classroom

The classroom environment can influence the process of teaching and learning positively or negatively. According to the diagnosis made in Chapter 2, it can be said that a better teaching and learning of the culture of any country it is necessary to

create conditions for it and this starts in the classroom considering that the students' motivation also comes from external sources such as decoration and equipment seen as teaching aids.

Furthermore, it can be added that teachers are responsible for creating safe and productive classroom environments. Teachers need to know how to create classroom environments where all students can learn. This involves knowing how to manage the activities and organise classrooms so that students and teachers are intellectually productive.

From the mentioned diagnosis, it was realised that if students of the English Introductory Course had a specialised classroom, they would have a better understanding of what intercultural communication situation means in real life, they would have more stimulation and interest in learning mainly about English culture and, of course, it would be easier for teachers to give classes related to intercultural communication. Such a classroom may gather the following features:

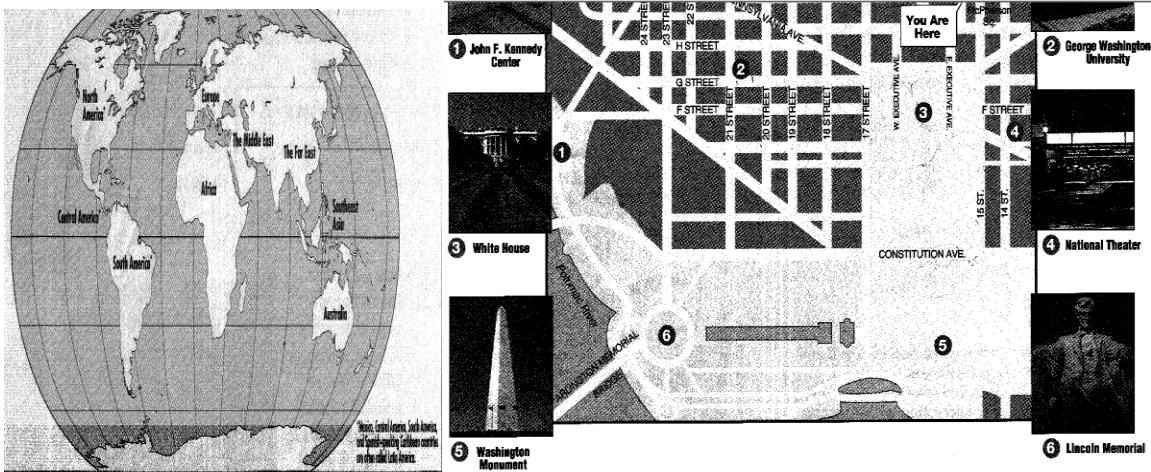
Teaching aids

- a) The classroom will be provided with cultural objects from different English-speaking countries (e.g.: a mannequin dressed on with a traditional cloth) for students to learn from objects that connect them to real life (e.g.: For them to touch it,). And it can be implemented in the lesson number 45, Unit 8, page 84 'That's nice dress!' Spectrum 1

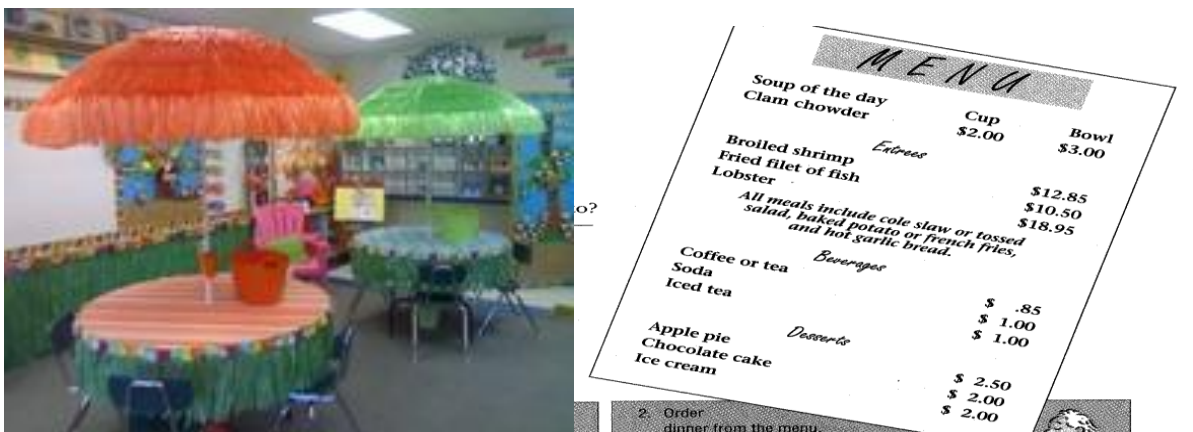


- b) Maps of English-speaking countries (e.g.: white curtains with maps drawn on it) which will help them to locate and identify English-speaking countries for instance in

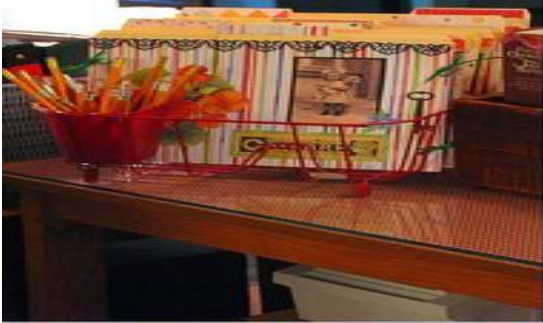
Unit 11 or 10, page 118 or 107 from the Spectrum Book 2 which talks about location of countries and cities and streets of USA.



c) Little space reserved and decorated for smalls dramatisations (e.g.: practicing the kind of food offered by a restaurant in an English-speaking country). It will provide them with a sense of a vivid lesson and it can be adapted to the exercise number 4 page 65 Spectrum 2.



d) Scrapbook paper which can be used as file folders to stick newspaper, articles, pictures, etc., related to English-speaking countries culture to keep them informed about recent cultural information.



e) Teachers board with cultural motivational quotes (like jokes from a specific English speaking country) to prepare them to be ready for each lesson and help them to keep it in their minds. Moreover, it can provide useful discussion for students by comparing jokes from their own country with the ones from the country studied or even try to decide their meaning from the point of view of different cultures.



f) Little classroom library organisation. The teacher must label them with names of English countries to make them identifiable. It must be organised with English countries literature as well as varied, providing students with more bibliography.



g) Board with cultural and historical anniversaries related to the English-speaking countries.

- h) Cultural posters and other wall decoration that include pictures of people from many cultures, artwork by international artists, and photographs and drawings from other cultures. They remind students of key concepts.
- i) Equipment (projector, radio, television, computer, DVD player, tape recorder). They can be used for visual expositions, seminars, open talks, presentations, etc. If, for example, the classroom has a TV or video recordings of popular comedy programmes from any English –speaking country, these can form a fantastic resource for exploitation in the language class. They can be used in many ways, for general listening activities or activities related to intercultural communication since a lot of amusing activities on TV are very rich in cultural references and this too can be interesting, though a very challenging area to explore.
- j) ‘Post Secret Style Project’ which is made of graffiti wall where students put on a couple of anonymous cultural post-it notes about what they have been learning during each class. It is a great way to receive immediate feedback about a lesson given.
- m) Windows should be decorated or painted with some English-speaking country flag colours.

Even though all these suggestions for providing a better environment of teaching and learning of intercultural communication, it is essential to point out that the colour of the decoration and equipment should be adequate (not too much different colours), that is to say, the major colour used should be bland white because according to Deborah O’Banion (2010) white is considered as a colour that brings peace to the mind and it can be used to increase work productivity and stimulate creative thinking. The decoration and some equipment of the classroom proposed are economical and it can be done from recycled materials which at the same time will educate students in what concerns the environment, further, it can be done by students and teachers together in order to facilitate the interaction among them.

The second part of the proposal depends on the first because the set of activities are meant to be executed in a specialised classroom. It constitutes a set of fun activities that includes the four main skills and they are adaptable to the

bibliography used in the English Introductory Course. The activities are accompanied by texts from Spectrum 1 and 2 which are the two Textbooks used in the English Introductory Course. Also they are intended to demonstrate students how respect is the basic aspect to live in a different society, to make them understand that every culture has its ideological and historical context, to play the role of people from another culture, to make an evaluation of the sense of their own culture and comparing it with the sense of the English culture studied, lead them to interchange cultural ideas and help them to be more expressive and confident in the classroom. They are composed of fun activities that implicates the use of the specialised classroom features. A text will be chosen from the book Spectrum that after being analysed, activities related to the teaching and learning of intercultural communication through English language will be applied to students during the given class. Such activities will include students, teachers and visitors from any English-speaking country or other.

Characteristics of the activities proposed

The second part of the proposal consists of a set of activities which provide amusement to students in order to motivate them to be more interested to learn about the culture of the target country. It is widely agreed that motivation has a great effect on a students' capacity to learn. Additionally, many researchers, and particularly Stephen Krashen, have written about the negative effects of anxiety on students' ability to learn. Using amusing activities can play an important part in helping to relax students and help them overcome stress and nerves and so make them more receptive to learning, in this case about intercultural communication. Amusing activities implemented in the process of learning and teaching of intercultural communication can also help to improve the classroom atmosphere. So this set of activities is considered as an easy way for teachers to manage an intercultural communication class. Such activities are composed of:

- Topic;
- Objective;
- Function;

- Type of activity;
- Level;
- Time;
- Evaluation;
- Name of the game.

The specialised classroom and all those activities can help students of the English Introductory Course to have a better understanding of what intercultural communication situation means in real life. They can also provide teachers with a better way to manage an intercultural communication lesson.

3.4. Evaluation of the proposals by specialists

A very short interview was applied to six (6) professors from English Department who hold master and doctor degrees. They don't share the same year of experience but their point of view is considered very relevant to the present research, besides each professor gives different subjects but all of them are related to the topic of research.

These specialists were interviewed with the objective of finding out their opinion in relation to the creation of a favourable environment classroom intended to contribute to the teaching and learning of Intercultural Communication in the English Introductory Course in the English Department at UCLV

From the interview carried out, all of the professors agreed that the proposal is a very good idea. They approved that a foreign language learner should be aware of the target language culture and that it is paramount not to divorce intercultural approach from the curriculum established. Also, it was highlighted that a proposal adaptable to the Spectrum series would be useful to develop intercultural competence which has to be intentionally included in language studies curricula. At the same time, specialists considered this would be an attractive way of teaching not

only culture but also values of solidarity, tolerance and respect to diversity. Furthermore, it was agreed that the idea of introducing games as part of the proposal to stimulate students to learn about the topic will really work and it will allow them to recognise people's behaviour in intercultural settings or behaviour related to how the concept of otherness is expressed in an intercultural setting.

Additionally, it was pointed out that the idea of creating a specialised classroom and activities related to the topic will be seen as a type of solution for the lack of information, materials and motivation to the Introductory Course. The proposal will reinforce teacher/students interaction and it should be included in every second language lesson since early stages with the final goal of being interculturally competent.

3.5. Analysis of the results

To sum up the professors' evaluation, it was significantly pointed out that such a proposal is seen as an essential tool which will provide students with motivation to learn and more options for professors to teach about the subject studied.

CONCLUSION

The present diploma paper represents an important step towards the enrichment of intercultural communication of students of the Introductory Course at Central University “Marta Abreu” of Las Villas. Therefore, the following conclusions can be stated:

- Regarding Intercultural communication, it can be said that it is considered as the capacity of human beings to make use of language as a tool of communication to interact with people from different cultures and it can be accomplished through language teaching and learning process. Also intercultural communication is a crucial issue that should be included in foreign language courses from the very beginning as it is the case of the Introductory Course of the English Language Course.
- From the diagnostic phase it was found that intercultural communication should be given more emphasis as an issue to be taught and learnt in the Introductory Course. Also both teachers and students agreed that the English Introductory Course syllabus should be improved in order to emphasise intercultural communication from the very beginning of the English language course. Therefore, intercultural communication should be considered as a complement of the English subject in the Introductory Course.
- Based on the findings of the diagnostic phase, this diploma paper proposes the creation of a favourable environment for the teaching and learning of intercultural communication in the English Introductory Course. The proposal consists of a specialised classroom and a set of activities.
- Considering the specialists’ opinions about the proposal, they all agreed that it is an applicable and very good idea and it is considered as an essential tool that eventually will be presented to students and professors in order to

facilitate the teaching and learning of intercultural communication in the Introductory Course.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The present research is vital to be taken into account for the English Introductory Course since it has been intended to strengthen the teaching and learning of Intercultural Communication. So it will be advisable:

- To take the present diploma paper as a resource material to increase teachers' effort in the teaching and learning of Intercultural Communication in the English Introductory Course.
- To implement the specialised classroom and the activities proposed in the Introductory Course.
- To apply the current proposal in the author's country.

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APPENDIX # 1

Survey to students from introductory, first and second years of English language with a second foreign language (French) at UCLV

Objective: To determine the students' perceptions about intercultural communication and its implications for the teaching and learning of a foreign language.

Year: Introductory Course_____ First Year: _____Second Year: _____

1- As a language student, have you encountered any cultural difficulties when interacting with people from other cultures?

Yes____ No____

Which?

2- Taking into account your experience as a foreign language student and cultural knowledge, do you consider yourself prepared to interact socially and culturally with people who speak the studied language (English) as their first language?

Yes____ No____

Why?

3- As a language learner, do you believe that you have been motivated in the classroom to know the culture of English-speaking countries?

Yes____ No____

Name how: _____

4- As a language learner, do you believe that you have been exposed enough to materials that are related to the target in the classroom?

5- Do teachers organise activities in the classroom that directly expose you to the culture of the language studied (English). If so, say how.

Yes___ No___

How: _____

6- In your opinion, what is intercultural communication?

7- Do you believe intercultural communication plays an important role in foreign language learning and teaching? Support your answer.

Yes___ No___

8- What is the relation between language and culture?

9- How would classify you teacher's knowledge in the classroom in what concerns intercultural communication?

Good___ Bad___ Enough

How do you know? _____

10- How do you evaluate the methodology of language teaching used by your teachers in what concerns the process of intercultural communication in the learning of English in the Introductory Course?

Good___ Enough___ Bad___

Suggestions:

APPENDIX # 2

Survey to professors from the Department of English Language Studies at UCLV

Objective: To determine the teacher's perceptions about intercultural communication and its implications for teaching and learning foreign languages.

Scientific degree: PhD_____ MSc _____

Academic degree: Full professor_____ Assistant professor_____ Associate Professor_____

Teaching experience _____ (years)

Subject(s)

taught_____

1- In your opinion, what is intercultural communication?

2- Do you believe intercultural communication plays an important role in foreign language learning and teaching?

Yes___ No___ Why?

3- What is the relation between language and culture?

4- How important is the intercultural communication to students in the process of learning a foreign language?

5- How do you evaluate the student's knowledge in the area of intercultural communication and its implications for teaching and learning a foreign language?

Good_____ Enough_____ Bad_____

Why? _____

6 - Does your subject relate to this theme?

7- Does your method of teaching approaches intercultural communication?

Yes___ No___

8- Does the evaluation method employed allows you to measure the extent of the students' knowledge in what concerns intercultural communication?

Yes___ No___

9-In your opinion, what aspects related to intercultural communication and its implications for teaching and learning of a foreign language must be taken into account for the design of a new teaching-learning syllabus?

APPENDIX # 3

Professors surveyed and interviewed from the Department of English Language Studies at UCLV

Name	Academic rank	Scientific degree	Professional experience(year)
Alicia Maria Torres	Assistant professor	Master	21
Daniel Almeida	Assistant professor	_____	7
Dianaleis Maza Amores	Assistant professor	Master	18
Juan Carlos Pozas	Associate Professor	Master	28
Juana Idania Perez	Full professor	Doctor	27
Manuel Llanes	Full professor	_____	33
Humberto Miñose	Assistant professor	Master	26
Oswaldo Rodríguez	Associate Professor	Master	30

Students interviewed from the Faculty of humanity at UCLV

Name	Career/Year
Darien C. Perez	4 th year of English career(French)
Ernesto S. Perez	4 th year of English career(French)
Geraldo G. Bravo	4 th year of English career(French)
Grethel B. Perez	4 th year of English career(French)
Vivian R. Garcia	4 th year of English career(French)
Zayli C. Gonzalez	4 th year of English career(French)

APPENDIX # 4

Interview Questions

Objective: To determine professor and students' opinion about the inclusion of intercultural communication in the teaching and learning of a foreign language in the Introductory Course.

Question 1- Making an allowance for the Introductory Course as the main base of English language career (French), do you believe that intercultural communication should be implemented in the mentioned Course as a complement of the English subject in order to prepare students, from the beginning, to enter in the career with certain knowledge about the topic? Please can you support your answer?

Question 2- Would you suggest some activities that would be helpful in the inclusion of the intercultural communication in the learning and teaching of a foreign language in the Introductory Course?

APPENDIX # 5

SET OF ACTIVITIES

SPEAKING ACTIVITIES

Activity # 1

Topic: Greetings

Objective: Students should be able to compare ways of greetings in different countries so as to value the abroad culture positively to develop their intercultural communication competence.

Function: comparing ways of greetings in different countries.

Type of activity: Dramatisation. Group/ teacher interaction.

Level: Beginners

Time: 30 minutes

Material needed: Paper, cards and board

Procedure:

- The teacher asks students if they understand what the picture from page 45 from Unit 5 of Spectrum Book 1 means.
- Students are asked to analyse it.
- Previously to this analysis the participants have five minutes to describe from the picture some information about greetings around the world, mainly behaviour and gestures.
- The teacher writes on the board the names of the countries that are in the picture.
- Afterwards the students are asked to choose a country and based on the picture describe how the people greet each other in that country.
- In a circle, each student says the characteristics of greetings of the chosen country, the teacher writes the different characteristics on the board. After this, all the differences are analysed by the group and the teacher, to confirm if the information is correct or not.
- The teacher asks students to team up into two groups and gives them cards with pictures that represent people greeting each other and the respective name of

English countries for them to dramatise. With the students' permission the teacher takes some pictures of the dramatisation.

- At the end of the dramatisation the teacher asks them what they learnt about the culture of those countries.
- The teacher finishes the activity by asking the students to reflect about the greeting diversity of different countries that integrate the group work.
- Next the teacher asks students to compare greetings in different countries including their own country .Then in just five minutes, they try to make a list of similarities and differences which, with the pictures from the dramatisation, will be used as decoration in order to encourage students to value their own work and have better productivity in the classroom.

Evaluation: Students are evaluated while they are completing the tasks.

Activity # 2

This activity can be adapted to lesson 12, page 22, Unit 3 Spectrum 2.

Topic: The media as a way to expand culture

Objective: Students should be able to ask and give information on diverse cultures and customs to respect different ways of behaving.

Function: Asking and giving information on diverse cultures through a simulation of a press conference.

Type of activity: Simulation. Individual work

Level: Beginners

Time: 20 minutes

Procedure:

- The teacher asks students what they think about television as a means of communication.
- The students are asked if they agree with the fact that television favours the expansion of culture and why.
- From the previous lesson the teacher divides the class into two groups. The teacher gives them a name of a famous personality of a foreign country which his or

her work is related to the expansion of culture of his or her country. Then the teacher helps the groups by checking the information brought.

- Before, students and teacher built microphones with paper and bring cameras to use during the activity .Each group should prepare themselves to ask questions as well as to answer them.

- The classroom is prepared for an important press conference. The first group chooses someone to play the role of the famous person. The chosen one should act like a real famous personality and the students of the second group should ask questions related to his or her work but playing it like in real life. The chosen one should answer all the 10 questions made by the second group to win the highest grade given by the teacher, if not, the second group wins. Also the microphones and the camera should be used during the press conference.

Note: Also the teacher can invite a foreign student to play the role of an important famous figure for students to interact with someone from another culture.

- After finishing the activity the teacher plays the recording made during the activity for the class and asks them to make a report of the information collected during the activity to hand it in.

Evaluation: The evaluation is made during the activity and through the report.

READING ACTIVITIES

Activity # 1

Topic: Similarities and differences of an English-speaking country found in my own culture.

Objective: Students should be able to scan and compare cultural elements from an English-speaking country with their own culture so they can understand that cultures are dynamic, changeable and adaptable as well as the reason of intercultural interchange.

Type of activity: Game. Group/Individually work

Level: Beginners

Time: 30 minutes

Name of the game: The spider web


Material needed: A hank of wool

Procedure:

- The teacher asks students to read carefully the text below.
- After, the students are asked to scan the words related to New Orleans' tradition from the text and with the teacher's help add more cultural elements of USA to the same list.
- The students are asked to make another list of cultural elements of their own culture.

New Orleans:
A tradition of good living

New Orleans with its famous French Quarter (Vieux Carré) is a never-ending delight for visitors as well as natives. For shopping, dining, entertainment or just the pleasures of walking and watching, there's no place like it in the world.
— *The Greater New Orleans Tourist and Convention Commission*



New Orleans, at the mouth of the Mississippi River, is a city over 270 years old. The French built the first town in 1718 and named it in honor of the French Duc d'Orleans. Today, New Orleans has over 600,000 people and it is an important U.S. port and center for tourism.

New Orleans is a city with a European flavor and an interesting history. In 1762, France gave New Orleans and part of its Louisiana colony to Spain. It belonged to Spain for over 30 years. Then in 1800 Napoleon Bonaparte asked Spain to return the territory to France again. In 1803 President Thomas Jefferson bought the Louisiana Territory, including New Orleans, from France. The cost \$15 million.

The city of New Orleans has a tradition of good living. Perhaps that's why many American writers, such as Tennessee Williams and William Faulkner, lived there at some time during their lives. Its restaurants are famous for French and Creole food. It has many old houses and government buildings. Jazz, a famous musical tradition in New Orleans, dates from the African-American community of the late nineteenth century. And every spring New Orleans celebrates its legendary holiday, Mardi Gras. From colorful celebrations in the streets to formal masquerade balls, it is a magical time of costumes, parades, and parties.

For more information see your travel agent or call or write:
The Greater New Orleans Tourist and Convention Commission
1520 Sugar Bowl Drive
New Orleans, LA 70112
504-566-5011

Unit 9, pg. 102 Spectrum 1

- The professor ties the skein on a pencil while the students sit in a circle.
- The first person of the circle starts the game by throwing the skein to a colleague without releasing it, while the same person says aloud a name of a cultural element of USA (New Orleans) which does not exist in his/her own culture(the cultural elements scanned related to the New Orleans or USA traditions ,a name of a traditional party or a music, anything)
- The ball of yarn passes from hand to hand until it reaches to the last person forming in this way a spider web. Whenever the ball is in someone's hand, the same person should mention a cultural element. To untangle it, the same operation is repeated

but in the contrary way. The last person starts with a name of a cultural element of their own culture which does not exist in the English-speaking country studied.

- After the teacher asks them if they found any cultural similarity between the two countries compared and write them on the board.

Some questions for reflection:

-The teacher asks them to check the similarities that have been written on the board and have them answer the following questions:

- Which elements of the exercise do you consider negative or positive?
- Think about some cultural elements of some countries all over the world and answer why some cultural elements brought into our culture are considered ours.
- Nowadays, is it possible that societies could live without having cultural interchanges?

Evaluation: The evaluation is going to be done individually and according to the students' answer in the question for reflection.

Activity # 2

Topic: Legend, gastronomy, story and myth

Objectives: Students should be able to identify and skim information of different culture styles in order to gain cultural knowledge through the study of other countries' legends, gastronomy, habits and others.

Type of activity: Dramatisation. Group work.

Level: Beginners

Time: 30 minutes

Material needed: Pencil, paper and glue.

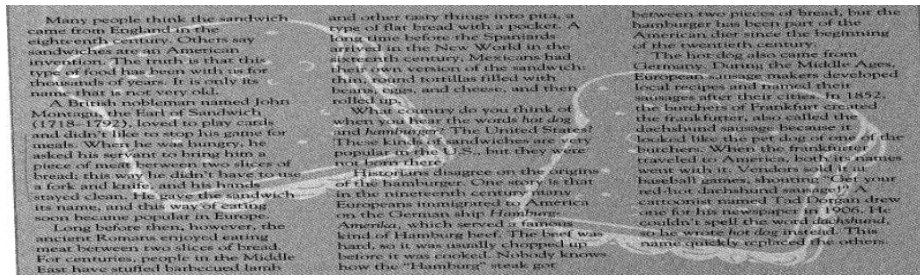
Procedure:

-Teacher asks students if they know some myth or story about any country and share it with the class.

-Teacher asks students to read the text from Unit 6 pg. 66 Spectrum 2

-The teacher asks students to refer culturally about it.





- The teacher distributes some legends of different countries to the half of the classroom and the name of the respective country in a separated paper to the other one.
- Then the teacher tells to those who have the legends to skim information related to the country's legend, its origin, meaning, how people use to tell it etc. if the legend investigated also belongs to their own culture.
- After it starts with any student reading aloud what it is on the paper, the others students that hold the name of the countries read them rapidly one after the other and the student who has the text, in 2 minutes must try to guess the name of the respective country. If the student can't answer it the teacher gives to him or her whom is guessing one clue and 2 more minutes.
- When everyone is paired up, the student who had less time guessing is the winner. All the papers should be stuck on a wall of paper for the decoration of the classroom to stimulate students.
- The teacher gives the students ten minutes to prepare a short dramatisation related to the legend picked up and they should use the information skimmed.

Evaluation: The teacher will evaluate the dramatisation in order to know if the students learnt something about the lesson.

WRITING ACTIVITIES

Activity # 1

This exercise can be adapted to lesson 41, page 74 Unit 7 Spectrum 2.

Topic: Adaptation to a new culture

Objective: Students should be able to develop writing skills through a letter to an emigrant friend in order to understand the values behind the behaviour of overseas cultures and to work out problems related to cultural shock.

Type of activity: Writing a letter. Individual work

Level: Beginners

Time: 20 minutes

Name of the game: Spin the bottle

Material needed: Paper, pencil, an envelope, a box, a bottle and a scarf

Procedure:

-After having studied lesson 41 of the spectrum book 2 page74 Unit 7, the teacher asks students some questions:

- Do you know someone or have a friend from another country?
- If not, imagine you have a friend and you received a letter from him or her telling you about his or her culture. What do you expect him or her to talk to you about?

-The teacher asks the students to imagine that they are in another country and they have to write a letter to a friend in their own country telling them what they did to adapt to the new traditions encountered.

- Next the teacher tells them to write on the board the name of the country of arrival and suggests that each person should find a peaceful place inside the classroom to think about what they have to write.

- Also, the teacher writes some questions on the board to help them write the letter:

- What expectations did you have culturally about the country before you had gone there?
- How did you feel when you reached there?
- What did surprise you when you reach there?
- What did disappoint you in your first days there?
- What did you expect of the people from the new country?
- What did you do before you go there? Did you investigate about its culture?

-The teacher tells them that they have 10 minutes to write it. After writing the letters they should put them in an envelope and next into a box.

-The group sits in a circle and a student with his or her eyes covered spins a bottle until it stops directly on a next person. When the bottle stops the teacher asks the student if he or she brings a letter and the student answers yes and indicates another student.

-The chosen one picks up a letter from the box and reads it to the class. The operation continues with many students until all the letters are read. After that, it would be very interesting to answer those questions:

- What are the main ideas repeated?
- Did the students use the same cultural element? What are they?
- Would you do a list of the good and bad feelings expressed in the letters? Which one is more predominant?

-After the teacher and students work out the predominated one for reflection.

Evaluation: The evaluation is done individually through the letters.

Activity # 2

This activity can be adapted to the lesson 38 page 66, Unit 6 Spectrum 1.

Topic: Culture Shock

Objective: : Students should be able to write two paragraphs giving opinions about living in a foreign culture so as to be culturally appropriate when facing new cultures.

Type of activity: Brainstorm and game. Group and individual

Level: Beginners

Time: 1 hour

Material needed: recorder, paper, scissors, felt-tip pen and glue.

Procedure:

-The teacher asks students to imagine themselves in an English speaking country for a scholarship to major in English. Then he or she proceeds discussing the following questions to activate student's knowledge on the topic and to motivate the activity.

- How would you react in a strange culture?
- What country would you prefer to know about its culture and why?
- How would you solve the problem of adaption in any of those countries without knowing its culture?

- Next, the teacher asks them to write their opinions about living in a foreign culture in no more than two paragraphs and following the questions previously discussed.

- Afterwards the teacher has them interchange their paragraphs to select the negative feelings of living in a foreign culture, its causes and the possible solutions to overcome these negatives feelings. (Group work)
- After selecting these aspects that are written in a tree made of paper which has the size of a person with roots, trunk and branches. (The negatives feelings are written on the branches, the reasons are written on the trunk and the solutions on the roots)
- After completing the paper tree students reflect and make comments of what they have learnt. The paragraphs are handed in. And the tree can be used to decorate the classroom.

Evaluation: The evaluation is done according to students' participation and through the the two paragraphs (individual).

LISTENING ACTIVITIES

Activity # 1

Topic: Food from different part of the world

Objective: Students should be able to retain relevant aspects and understand inferred information associated with different kinds of food around world in order to gain cultural knowledge.

Type of activity: Game and brainstorm. Group work

Level: Beginners

Time: Unlimited

Material needed: Recorder

Procedure:

- The teacher asks students if they like breakfast in the morning and how they like it.
- The teacher questions them if they know about a traditional breakfast of other country.
- After, they are instructed to listen to the article of the lesson # 86, pg.156, Unit 14, Spectrum 1.
- The teacher asks them what they think is the most popular food in the world and why.

- After, the students are questioned if they know any traditional food from other country to write it on the board with their respective country.
 - The teacher adds more names of traditional foods around the world to those ones written by students.
 - After, students are told to read the names on the board more than three times and try not to forget them.
 - The teacher asks them if he or she can erase the board. Then it is erased.
 - Students are asked to make two rows but first the teacher asks them if they still remember the names to start the game.
 - The teacher tells the first student of the row to whisper in the next student's ear one of those names that were on the board before and successively until to the last student of the other row. But much before starting the game the first student should tell the teacher the name for him to make sure of it when it reaches at the last student. The teacher asks the last student what is the message received and if it is changed during the course then, it should be repeated one more time. After this, the teacher and students find out where the message was altered. The person who messed up the message comes out of the game and the professor pronounces the word well.
 - The students are asked what they have learnt about the contents of the game.
 - The teacher tells them to make a summary about it by writing it down and add their opinion about the different food from all over the world.
- Evaluation:** The summary should be handed in for evaluation.

Activity # 2

Topic: Food

Objective: Students should be able to understand inferred cultural information acquired throughout the gastronomy in order to be aware of some traditional food from others cultures.

Type of activity: Game and discussion. Group work.

Level: beginners

Name of the game: The scarf

Time: 30minutes

Material needed: recorder, cards and a white scarf.

Procedure:

- First the students are asked if they know any English-speaking country traditional food. If yes share it with the class and if possible explain how to make it.
- After, the teacher asks them to listen to the recorder of the lesson 35 page 66 Unit 6, Spectrum 2.
- Next they are asked if they think that hamburger is a traditional American food or if sandwich is the traditional food of England. Then, students should discuss about it.
- The teacher gives to each group some cards with information about some traditional food with their respective countries for them to prepare for the game.
- Each group has 5 cards.
- The students are instructed to team up into two groups forming two lines.
- The two groups choose an isolated student, to make questions about the type of food of the countries mentioned in the cards and the teacher stays in the middle of the two groups holding a white scarf.
- Each group chooses a spokesperson to answer the questions and to grab the scarf when competing.
- The teacher gives a sign for students to prepare while the isolated student makes question. Students are given 5 minutes to listen to the question and repeat it if necessary during the given time. Rapidly the teacher count until 3 for the spokesperson to come and grab the scarf for his or her group to have opportunity to answer the question. If the group answers it well it earns 2 point and if not the group loses 1 point to the adversary group.
- After the game finishes the professor asks them to talk about what they have been learning.

Evaluation: The professor will make a general evaluation based on what they have learnt during the game.

APPENDIX # 6

Interview questions to the specialists

Objective: To determine what the specialists' opinion about the proposal of creating a special classroom which gathers all the conditions (decoration and equipment) and a set of motivational activities (amusing activities) aimed at enhancing the teaching and learning of Intercultural communication in the English Introductory Course of the Department of Humanities at UCLV.

Question 1- Considering your experience and instructional level, what is your opinion about creating a special classroom which gathers all the conditions (e.g.: decoration and equipment) to stimulate students and professors in the process of learning and teaching of Intercultural communication in the English Introductory Course? Please support your answer.

Question 2- Taking into account that the first part of the proposal complements the second one, what is your opinion about proposing a set of activities (amusing activities) which would be adaptable to the spectrum book in order to stimulate students and professors in the teaching and learning of Intercultural Communication in the Introductory Course? Please support your answer.

APPENDIX # 7

Specialists who evaluated the proposal

Name	Academic rank	Scientific degree	Professional experience(year)
Alicia Maria Torres	Assistant professor	Master	21
Dianaleis Maza Amores	Assistant professor	Master	18
Juan Carlos Pozas	Associate Professor	Master	28
Juana Idania Perez	Full professor	Doctor	27
Humberto Miñose	Assistant professor	Master	26
Osvaldo Rodríguez	Associate Professor	Master	30