

THE CONCEPT OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

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Abstract: Nowadays in the world of work the range of business knowledge and skills needed to perform effectively has increased. Business people are much more likely today to find themselves together with others from different national and cultural backgrounds.

Key words: CLT, communicative approach, student, speaking skills, new pedagogical technologies, fragments.

The communicative approach provides the learners with an opportunity to use language for communication purposes without focusing on accuracy. Since the main goal of communicative language teaching is communicative competence and its emphasis is on communication, theorists state that CLT does not involve teaching grammar at all. This idea has been argued by Thompson who claims that learners will learn better if they themselves are involved in what they learn and see the relevancy in their learning. The other misconception is CLT only teaches speaking skills. As CLT emphasizes communication skills, it seems that CLT ignores the other three important skills in language learning which are listening, reading, writing. Again Thompson points out that communication does not only take place through speech, but it also involves writing and reading. It is a concrete statement because when we write we are actually communicating with our reader and when we read, we are having communication with the text.

Communication skills are culture-universal in most aspects but also contain culture-specific element.

There are two broadly different categories – non-native speakers using English among themselves, non-native speakers using English to native speakers of the language. The problem is that non-native speakers may make «social» mistakes.

Subsequently it is important to consider another level at which we can see communication – namely in terms of its role in a cross-cultural environment.

Intercultural communication may be defined as an ability, possibly more acquired than innate, to engage in successful communicative interactions with people representing different languages, cultures, social mores and norms of behavior. It implies not only mastery and judicious use of language in itself but also skillful application of suitable social conventions with cultural sensitivity, political correctness as well as attention to needs and wants of a given group or a particular individual.

The internationalization of the business world has provided a new challenge for Business English Teachers. However, the role of the Business English Teacher is to teach language and communication. It is not teacher's responsibility to teach culture, change behavior patterns. The teacher should be aware of the interrelationship between language, communication and culture and help the learners to better understand the interrelationship, to avoid conflicts because of innocent use of inappropriate language or communication.

Communication skills are central to the activity of today's business professional. Business people actually needed lots of help with presentation skills, with meetings, negotiating even socializing or writing reports, e-mails. Teaching Business English include an effective communicator alongside and an effective use of language. As a result, the demands on BE teachers have increased to some extent. Teacher of Business English also need to be able to teach communication skills.

Constant language change introduces new forms; communication adapts to evolving behavioral and technological standards; and business both initiates and responds to changing practices. This requires the range of skills needed by the Business English teacher. Teachers should have a high degree of proficiency in the target language since the lesson in the classroom tends to be less predictable, apart from good knowledge of General English, Business English teacher should have good business background that comprise knowledge of Business vocabulary and common business situations which learners are going to deal with.

Language teaching and learning has entered a phase which takes a more constructivist view of learning emphasising personal learning and discovery on the part of the learner, with more task-based, collaborative work between learners, and a more facilitating role for the teacher.

The role of the teacher is not to provide an orchestration of books through a sense of structured activities, nor just to use the book as a source of teaching materials but to:

- Clearly devolve the task of working through the book to the students.
- Ensure that discussion of the task and the project is conducted in the way as it was mentioned using the language of business and professional meetings.
- Act as consultant for the students.
- Direct group activities, provide different types of activities.

There are different thoughts according to the role of teacher. Some schools of methodology see the teacher as ideal language model and commander of classroom activity (Audio-Lingual Method) whereas others see the teacher as background facilitator and classroom colleague to the learners (Communicative Language Teaching).

While Brieger stated that just as there is no single Business English, there is no single profile of the Business English teacher. The profile is fashioned by the characteristics of the working environment and its view of Business English, as well as by the demands of the learners. However, it is important to remember that

the majority of teachers are non-native speakers, largely trained within the local community.

Business English teachers need the following mix of knowledge and skills: ELT methodology, specific communication skills training, knowledge of business content while General English teachers need only ELT methodology and general communication skills training.

Having defined the main scope of Business English it turns out that teaching Business English brings together a range of disparate disciplines. It aims not only at improving grammar or vocabulary knowledge but at developing the ability to combine grammar and vocabulary and at extending communication skills as well.

The teaching of Business English has received contributions from ELT methodologies which teach language knowledge and language skills through communicative activities; communication training which develops the effectiveness of the total communication process; management disciplines which provide professional content on key areas.

The teaching of Business English brings together three areas: teaching, those are pedagogic skills involved in running training programmes; English – knowledge of the language and understanding of the role of communication in professional situations; business that embraces familiarity with the key issues.

Teaching Business communication skills that includes teaching presentation skills, meeting skills, telephoning skills, socializing skills and skills of writing documents can be accomplished through a range of exercises and activities (role play, dialogs).

Teaching communication skills is possible through interaction. The first step is to create a classroom environment in which real communication can take place and can be practiced continuously. Interaction can also be encouraged by not over-correcting, by asking plenty of questions, and by giving people time to answer.

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