FROM CULTURE LEARNING TO TEACHING: UNDERSTANDING CULTURES TO ACHIEVE INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

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ABSTRACT

It is undeniable that communication breakdowns due to misunderstandings, leaving communicants in frustration or anger, are commonly evident in cross-cultural contexts. Learners of any foreign languages therefore do not simply require the linguistic knowledge of the target language alone, but intercultural communication competence must be taken into account in achieving cross-cultural communicative purposes. Given that both are important skills needed in any interactions held by people of cross-cultural backgrounds, a TESOL practitioner or an instructor of other languages should realize and implement some cultural issues into class, aiming not to create a fluent fool in the real contexts of intercultural communication. In contributing to the profession, this bibliographic journal has been written to reflect the path along which I, as a language teacher, have been through from experiencing communication breakdowns which directed me to explore different cultural issues in the following steps: (1) challenges of intercultural communication, (2) intercultural sensitivity, (3) values and rules, (4) kinesics and cross-cultural understanding, and (5) cultural-intercultural dimensions of the language, in which the content inspired me towards implementing cultural issues into my teaching contexts. This article also includes

an example class implementation on intercultural sensitivity and tolerance relating to nonverbal behaviors, face management, and politeness to demonstrate the possibility to integrate cultural issues in any language lessons, and to prove the significance of direct fact-teaching method. The trial was carried out with two groups of English for Communication-majored students taking English for Presentation by using different teaching approaches: Teaching first – Experience later and vice versa. Both observation and student reflections through interview were made during and after Experience step respectively, resulting in a supporting nuance of the role of direct-teaching of cultures particularly for the contexts in which most of the learners share basically similar cultural backgrounds.

Keywords: cross-cultural communication, inter-cultural communication competence, cross-cultural integrated teaching

Introduction

Passing through the previous century now for almost two decades, we all have fully entered the third millennium in which the trend of globalisation has been still increasingly intense. Therefore, the contact between people from different parts of the world, who come with different languages and cultures, is unsurprisingly increasing. It is then undeniable that the world's communicative tools such as English, Mandarin Chinese, Arabic or Spanish still play their roles, and those who master them well are much in demand.

In cross-cultural contexts, the language differences are likely to be the primary concerns in achieving a successful intercultural communication as it is perceived that most conflicts are generated mainly from language difficulties. However, according to Andersen (2000), the language differences are merely "the tips of a very large cultural iceberg" (p. 258) that obstructs the smooth, successful intercultural communication. Mastering the linguistic competence alone, therefore, does not guarantee a success in communication, except when one could realize what actually lies beneath the iceberg of misunderstandings, and that was where this bibliographic journal began exploring different issues on cross-cultural communication in hoping to better understand these invisible but existing factors resulting in communication failures. Since the intercultural communication competence enhances a greater success in cross-cultural communication,

a language classroom, in a perspective of a TESOL practitioner, is then aimed to be the place where language learners should learn not only to master the language alone but also to cultivate cross-cultural understanding and sensitivity.

Objectives of the study

This paper consists of two major sections: the bibliographic journal and the example class implementation with its trial results.

(1) This bibliographic journal aims to summarize key ideas regarding cross-cultural issues in order to facilitate language instructors and learners to understand the interrelationship between culture and communication, hoping that the intercultural communication competence will be cultivated and well developed by the assistance of language teachers by integrating basic cross-cultural aspects into their classroom practice.

(2) The class implementation is shown as an example for any foreign language instructors to step from in integrating cross-cultural issues in their lessons as Brown (2002) stated that language and culture be not be taught separately, and to strengthen the idea that direct-teaching of cross-cultural issues is necessary as the preparatory stage for either created or real intercultural communication opportunities for language learners to experience.

Scope of the bibliographic article

This article is empirically developed in a quest for answers to the questions obtained from real experience of cross-cultural communication failures. It begins with the challenges in the course of intercultural communication in which misinterpretation and misunderstanding occur due to different cultural values and rules. Then, it deals with the commonest cause of communication breakdowns in regards to kinesics and cross-cultural understanding, and leads to a crucial concept – intercultural sensitivity, which is necessary to be cultivated among all language learners. Finally, the article ends by pinpointing on the reasons why the intercultural communication competence should be developed along with the linguistic competence in the language teaching contexts.

1. Challenge of Intercultural Communication: Misunderstanding People from Other Cultures – It is undeniable that the path to successful intercultural communication is not always smooth as expected. Misunderstandings usually occur

and leave people with wrong impression, anger, frustration and intolerance, leading them to communication breakdowns. To achieve the successful interactions, it is a good start for both teachers and learners of a language to understand the possible factors of misunderstandings and take them into account while planning lessons and communicating with others.

An overview of the factors of misunderstanding is elaborated by Gallois and Callan (1997). The work helps realize the fact that mastering only the language does not guarantee successful interactions across-cultures. However, the misunderstanding of people from different cultures usually stems from not only the target languages, but also non-verbal behaviours, differences in style, conventions and practices including cultural values.

Several misunderstandings, as noticed, are commonly developed from the cultural differences held by the people from different cultural backgrounds. This is not limited to those speaking different languages as even among speakers of the same language, such misunderstandings are likely to happen, not from language difficulties, but from different patterns of the sub-culture. Moreover, each culture differs greatly not only in the use of non-verbal behaviour, in register and style, i.e. forms of address, expression of politeness or face, but also in the values of the community in which one lives.

In this paper, the concept of cultural differences is emphasized and it should be taken into account as major features leading to misunderstandings in intercultural encounters. It is therefore necessary for learners of languages to be aware of different cultural rules while having respects and tolerance for the practices of others in order to avoid being trapped in the intercultural miscommunication; whereas, for teachers, it is also more challenging to cultivate the state of being a multicultural communicator among learners as it is important for cross-cultural communicants to "take on many characteristics of a new culture without losing the essential parts of one's own" (Gallois & Callan, 1997, p.18).

In conclusion, there are some cross-cultural insights to be taken into account as follows: (1) respect loyalty to culture, (2) cultural bias is inevitable, (3) social rules influence communication and they are learned without being taught, and (4) cultural differences are not the only differences.

2. Values and Rules: The Impact of Culture on Communication – It is noted

that cultures may differ in both obvious and subtle ways, and it is the fact that intercultural communicants need to understand; however, it is impossible to know all aspects belonging to all cultures in detail. According to Gallois and Callan (1997), some underlying principles on cultural values and social rules are presented in managing intercultural communication.

This paper effectively brings in the overview of various cultural dimensions derived from Hofstede's approach, including individualism versus collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity versus femininity to remind the fact that all cultures have held different values and norms about individual freedom and how power should be distributed, and so forth. Hence, to overemphasize the similarities between cultures often leads people into misunderstandings. The significant insight on this issue is that no culture belongs to an extreme side of each dimension, instead it falls somewhere in between.

The concept of social rules is also discussed in this article as "[they are] shared expectations about the behaviour that should and should not occur in a specific social situation" (Gallois and Callan, 1997, p. 33). Such behaviours are mostly culture-bound, while some are context-bound. This perspective strengthens the idea that culture is closely related to the ways people behave in their daily life. Learning the rules differences and becoming more aware of them can therefore lead to the achievement in intercultural communication.

The authors, throughout this chapter, pointed out some worthwhile insights in the hope to attain cultural awareness by being open-minded about cultural differences in regards to values and rules. This can be achieved by becoming more aware of one's own rules about behaviours first before becoming aware of those from other different cultures. This understanding, as suggested, prevents communicants from drawing too soon the negative conclusion towards people from different cultural backgrounds.

In conclusion, it is important to keep in mind that all cultures derive their values for good reasons; even they are much different from one's own. The concept of "ethnorelative" (Brislin & Yoshida, 1994, as cited in Gallois & Callan, 1997, p. 40) works well in reminding all cross-cultural communicants that one's own ways to do things are not the only ways. There are others that based on values and principles that are just as important

as the ones each individual communicant holds. In any teaching contexts, this point of view helps cultivate an open mind, and it is necessary to take it into account that this does not mean all values are equally right. Instead, language learners should learn their own cultural "bottom line" (Gallois and Callan, 1997, p. 42) where the cultural values can be negotiated, but cannot be compromised. Therefore, one of many challenges for language teachers is to build the understanding among the learners on the importance and value of allowing other people to be different while still respect their differences.

3. Intercultural Sensitivity – The intercultural communication competence is also strengthened as a necessary ability for people in the global society to "survive and live meaningfully and productively" (Chen and Starosta, 2000, p. 406). Interestingly, the article suggests people to learn to live together, without being adversely influenced by the differences among groups of people, but by focusing on intercultural sensitivity (affective), particularly on the affect and emotion of the communicators. Intercultural sensitivity, according to the article, is perceived as a dynamic concept that should be developed among people. The sensitivity is the prerequisite

for intercultural effectiveness, which is developed from intercultural awareness (cognitive) that in turn leads to intercultural competence (behaviour).

For language teachers, it is beneficial to implement the intercultural sensitivity concept into classroom practices. This concept can be integrated in several forms of classroom activities, both direct and indirect. However, the challenge is the fact that it is difficult to find language teachers who also have expertise in this field. Therefore, language teachers should be trained in the intercultural communication programmes to find appropriate methods in applying the knowledge in pedagogy through which a positive emotion towards understanding and appreciating cultural differences will be developed.

In conclusion, to develop intercultural competence among language learners, language instructors can cultivate some important characteristics that intercultural "sensitive" persons must possess, e.g. self-esteem, self-monitoring, open-mindedness, empathy, interaction involvement, and suspending judgment.

4. Kinesics and Cross-Cultural Understanding – The perspective that language competency is not the only factor in achieving cross-cultural understanding has

been a long-while emphasized by Morain (1986). It stated that knowledge of sounds, grammar and vocabulary of the foreign language is important in sharing information; however, the abilities to read and to speak do not guarantee perfect understanding as words are rather limited in dimensions. Cultural aspects, which include several dimensions of nonverbal communication beyond the lexical, are instead the keys for successful communication.

Barnlund's formula for measuring communicative success in person-to-person interaction is interestingly brought in for the "interpersonal equation" to be discussed. Morain (1986) reemphasized that understanding between people depends greatly on the degree of similarity in belief systems, perceptual orientations, and communicative styles in which the congenial communicants operate intelligibly on verbal band, but understand each other on the nonverbal level (p. 65). The study strengthened the idea that understanding nonverbal behaviours will enhance success in personal interactions.

Since nonverbal behaviours play a significant role in communication, it is then worth focusing on this article where the body language or "kinesics", which was named by Birdwhistell in referring to the discipline concerned with the study of all communicative bodily movements, was explained. It stated that kinesics - posture, movement, facial expression, eye management, gestures and proxemics differ across cultures, especially those through which the emotions are conveyed seem to be largely determined by culture. Gallois and Callan (1997) also focused an important role of nonverbal elements in communication as a language is accompanied by a continuous flow of nonverbal communication, i.e. voice, face and body, which may be determined by cultural norms. As noticed, culture differs greatly in the way people use the kinesic behaviours. People from different cultural backgrounds have different set of rules and beliefs governing the area of nonverbal behaviours. It is regarding their interpretation and their judgment on what is appropriate in a particular interaction; for example, with different perceptions regarding self-boundaries, the interaction zone is critical to harmonious relation while it is often violated by non-members of a particular culture. From this point of view, the speakers of other languages who lack the understanding of nonverbal cues used in the target language probably find themselves awkward or "seriously handicapped" (Gallois and Callan, 1997, p.

75) in using appropriate kinesic behaviours in the course of communication. According to the article, it is agreeable that many gestures differ in their meaning across cultures; however, there might be some basic behaviours of expression common in all mankind across cultures as "kinesic universals" (Gallois and Callan, 1997, p. 74); however, from my own perspective, it sounds over-generalized and dangerous if one would take what they are familiar with as the common set of gestures.

In conclusion, there are many interesting issues about nonverbal behaviours that could possibly be integrated into language classrooms and it would be beneficial to language learners. So, to understand the idea of kinesic behaviours as social control, it is recommended that teachers have to cultivate the sensitivity towards other people from different cultures, while deepen the understandings of one's own kinesic systems. As the author stated, however, that language teachers who are oriented towards the verbal channel of expression tend to see the word as the central carrier of meaning, resulting in that they are less inclined to apply the knowledge of nonverbal behaviours of that target language into the classroom practice.

5. Language: Its Cultural and Intercultural Dimensions – The author claims to bridge the world of language education and intercultural communication by detailing a rationale for exploring new ways in teaching culture. This article helps better understand the interrelationship between languages and (inter) cultural aspects.

Three principle abilities that are parts of "intercultural and interpersonal relations" (Fantini, 1997, p. 3) are mentioned. They are abilities to establish relations, to communicate with minimal loss or distortion, and to achieve or attain a level of compliance among involving communicants. The difficulties occur when individuals interact with others across cultures because they share fewer commonalities; whereas other variables that mediate the interactions, i.e. differences in languages, cultures and worldviews increase.

The author also emphasized that intercultural competence requires insights drawn from both language and intercultural areas. It inspires language teachers to take part in developing intercultural ability as it is the shared goal that educators in many fields strive to develop. The awareness, attitudes, skills and knowledge of cross-cultural communication will take one

"beyond one's native paradigm while grappling with another that is intrinsically and provocatively different" (Fantini, 1997, p. 4).

It was suggested that language educators could take a significant part in this revolution in which the chance in contacting with other world-views could result in a shift of perspective, with appreciation for the diversity and richness of human beings. Regarding the second or foreign language development, the concern with cross-cultural effectiveness and appropriateness will lead however a step beyond simply tolerance and understanding towards "a truly appreciation of others" (Fantini, 1997, P.13). Therefore, as a language teacher, I found it truly necessary to develop awareness, attitudes, skills and knowledge of cross-cultural aspects among language learners so that they will become, with understanding and empathy, better participants on local and international levels.

6. How Not to Be a Fluent Fool: Understanding the Cultural Dimension of Languages – Interestingly, Bennett (1997) brought in a provocative insight to the teaching profession by addressing a common view towards languages that they are just communication tools. Languages,

from this viewpoint, are sets of words tied together by rules. Therefore, learning a second or a foreign language is a simple process of substituting words and rules to get the same meaning in the target language. Such notion can lead languages to become "fluent fools" (Bennett, 1997, p. 16) who can speak the language well, but not understand the social content of that target language.

The word "fluent fools" made me truly realize the significance of learning and understanding cultural dimension of the language. It is not just knowing what people in other cultures eat or drink, but it is to avoid giving or taking offense, and actually to avoid intercultural communication misunderstandings and breakdowns. Therefore, the author recommended language teachers to provide wide opportunities for students to experience different basic beliefs and values that they tend to experience in real cross-cultural interactions. It was emphasized that language largely determines the way in which one perceives the reality (Whorf, 1956, as cited in Bennett, 1997, p. 17). The perspective that language represents experience was brought in to support the idea that language is not only a tool for communication, but it is also "a system

of representation" (Bennett, 1997, p. 16) for both perception and production in which all are interrelated. It is common for many people to perceive that the world determines the language one uses; however, it would be more sensible to build the understanding that both language and worldviews are tied together. It is dangerous for learners to know only the language but understand nothing about the worldviews of native speakers of the target language. It often leads many fluent communicants to fall into the trap of intercultural communication.

Therefore, the implication for second or foreign language teaching should also include methods of how to experience reality in a different way. As the author ended this article by emphasizing the role of language teachers in avoiding turning out fluent fools through classroom practices, a "culture-contrast" (Bennett, 1997, p. 19) approach is suggested. With this approach, students should first understand how their native language is related to basic values, beliefs, thought patterns and social actions in their own cultures. Second, language learners will compare their native language-culture patterns to those of the target language or of other communicants. Finally, teachers will assess the achievement in terms of pragmatic dimensions of culturally appropriateness.

I, therefore, at this point realized another role of a language teacher in exposing learners to another aspect of communication – cross-cultural elements – through regular classroom activities in hoping that it could enhance cross-cultural sensitivity among young learners. My first trial is as follows.

Backgrounds and steps for class implementation

Course and Lesson – I decided to integrate cross-cultural issues into a regular lesson regarding non-verbal elements in English for Presentation course. This course is for the second-year students majoring in English for Communication.

Earlier in this course, nonverbal elements, e.g. posture, gestures, eye contact, and voice inflections are explicitly taught and emphasized following the standards in making a presentation. However, from my class observation, frustration, irritation and misunderstanding happened simply due to some unexpected non-verbal conducts used during a presentation, e.g. pointing at the audience, avoiding eye-contact, laughing and smiling, sitting or standing postures. Therefore, I found it a good start to implicitly integrate cross-cultural communication

issues e.g. nonverbal behaviours, power distance, values, conventions, styles and face management into the pedagogy, hoping to cultivate cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity among learners so that such gossips and unnecessary misunderstandings would be lessened.

Situations to Test – Gallois and Callan (1997) also emphasized that misunderstandings in communication stem from non-verbal behaviours and differences in style, conventions and practices. Those misunderstandings caused by non-verbal behaviours are basically from misinterpretations as the fact that cultures differ greatly in their use of non-verbal cues and in their beliefs about appropriateness. This type of misunderstandings is hard to detect because they are produced and received out of conscious awareness. In addition, the latter cause of misunderstandings is from the style in which one speaks, including the register one adopts. Cultures are different in their rules about which style and register to use in which context, including the form of address. One important feature in this aspect is the expression of politeness or face as found in both face management and communication repair. At this point, it is also necessary to take into account that these awkward situations are not restricted only to the communication within the main different cultures, but sub-cultures within the same culture are included.

In this trial, I therefore focused on the vulnerable situations related to both non-verbal behaviours and style that relate to face and politeness. The situations used in this trial are those, from my empirical information, likely to happen naturally during a class presentation so that they would not look obviously acting. There were four situations used in this implementation, where one of the acting interlocutors, either the audience or the presenter, acts in the following situations.

(non-verbal conducts)

Situation A (audience) – asking questions or giving comments while crossing arms or legs, or leaning back on the chair's backrest

Situation B (presenter) – while presenting, pointing or moving things on the floor with a foot

(non-verbal conducts & style relating to face)

Situation C (presenter and audience) – avoiding eye contact while asking or answering questions, giving or listening to comments

Situation D (audience) – giving negative comments and feedbacks for improvement, or asking questions

Besides the possibility of the four situations to happen, Situations A, B and C all contain non-verbal cues against Thai culture in general. For Situation D, it has a controversial issue of eye contact as it should be avoided to show respect in a high power-distance culture; however, eye contact is highly recommended as an effective non-verbal conduct in making an English presentation. These non-verbal cues can be used to teach cultures by contrasting the native culture, which is Thai, with those of the target language, English, or of others who speak English as a medium of global communication as stated by Bennett (1997). *Participants* – The participants involving in this class implementation were 2 groups of students, majoring in English for Communication, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Rajamangala University of Technology Suvarnabhumi, Suphanburi Campus. Group A was EIC36141N of 12 students and Group B was EIC36241N of 18 students, taking English for Presentation course in their second year at college.

Teaching and Implementation Methods – Regarding the teaching, my first intention was mainly to introduce and develop the understanding of certain cross-cultural aspects in a hope to cultivate cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity among the students. However, due to the constraints i.e., time and the context that lacks real intercultural interactions; an effective method to teach cultures was hence looked for. Therefore, two teaching approaches were decided, following basic instructional methods: 1) direct instruction (lecture) and 2) indirect instruction (experience). Moreover, in order to compare the effectiveness between the two teaching methods; therefore, in this trial two introducing methods were tested: 1) teaching first – experiencing later and, vice versa, 2) experiencing first – teaching later with the students in Group A (EIC36141N) and Group B (EIC36241N), respectively.

For both groups, besides the class observation done by the teacher during the presentations, the individual student's reflections along with an interview were carried out after the Experiencing step. Due to the fact that the tested context had limited contact among participants from cross-(major) cultural backgrounds, the interview therefore included thought-provoking conditional questions to reflect the participants' feelings towards the four tested situations where the target

non-verbal behaviours were conducted by people from other cultures and with different positions, ages, and origins, e.g. How do you feel if this action is conducted by a teacher/aged or young teacher/origin country of the teacher: Asian or others? How do you feel if this action is conducted by a non-Thai classmate/ country of origin: Asian or others? to observe their cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity.

Results and discussion

For the tested situations A, B, and C regarding non-verbal behaviours, it resulted in slight difference in terms of both cross-cultural awareness and tolerance among students introduced with both implementation approaches. From my observation in general, both groups of students, as the audience, showed reactions towards Situation B the most obviously. It could be seen from their facial expressions (raising brows, frowning and smiling), and they looked at their peer. However, as the presenter in Situations A and C, no obvious reactions were shown for both groups; whereas, as the peer audience, 3-4 students from Group B reacted to Situation A by signaling others to look and talking among themselves. But it was not obviously seen in Group A.

From the student's reflection, it was interestingly revealed that 20 students (Group A = 7, Group B = 13) or around 70% of all the students felt unhappy, not respected and irritated in Situation A, and almost 90% of the students (Group A = 10, Group B = 16) could not accept and was completely unhappy towards Situation B as they found the action showed disrespect and impoliteness. It showed that what these language learners experienced in class was different from what most of them possessed as values, norms, or rules. Although most students found themselves awkward in Situations A and B; the rest found both situations acceptable and neutral. However, the level of cross-cultural sensitivity was higher in reflecting on the if-situation where the tested non-verbal behaviors were conducted by classmates of non-Thai cultural backgrounds as neutral reflections were given more from 33% to 86% (Group A = 11, Group B =15) towards Situation A and from 13% to 36% (Group A = 6, Group B = 5) towards Situation B.

It was not as expected to learn that the effectiveness of both tested approaches in teaching cross-cultural issues yielded no distinctive difference as the level of tolerance was shown higher towards Situation A at 50% and 55% and Situation

B at 33% and 27% of Groups A and B, respectively. Here, for Situation B, direct-teaching method gave a better outcome of 16% higher, similar to indirect-teaching method.

The interview also showed that the tolerance was influenced by the students' cultural value that is power distance as Situations A and B can be more accepted if they were acted by their teachers, not classmates, in older age group, and native Thai rather than those from other countries, especially in Asia, except familiarized people such as their classmates. However, in considering the origins, others than Thai, of the doers of the observed situations alone, more tolerance was reflected towards the conducts by the people of non-Asian origins at almost 50% (Group A = 9, Group B = 5).

In regards to the differences in uses of eye-contact and style relating to politeness and face management were observed in Situations C and D, respectively. From class observation, I found the students of both groups respond similarly to Situation C by not posing further questions, excepting 2 students in Group B who tried to push the presenter with more questions. In Situation D, some participants (<20%) of both groups showed disapproving reactions through facial expressions (frowning, sighing and pressing lips), and an unexpected verbal reproach made by a student from Group B was observed.

From the student's reflection, eye contact avoidance from the part of the presenter in Situation C caused negative feelings, i.e. disappointment, confusion and frustration among the audience from both groups, but higher in Group B (Group A = 2; 16%, Group B = 4; 22%). The comment "neutral" was reflected from both groups, but higher in Group A (Group A = 7; 58%, Group B = 6; 33%); whereas, the comment "trying to understand" was reflected by 2 students from Group A only. The students viewed that their friends might be nervous and worried. However, what I did not observe in class was negative feelings from the part of the presenter towards Situation C when comments like "dishonored", "irritated" and "loss of confidence" were reflected (Group A = 4, 33%, Group B = 8, 45%) as they felt the audience were not interested in their presentation. In contrast, almost 40% of the students from both groups (Group A = 3, Group B = 8) reflected that direct eye contact caused them pressure and awkward moments while making a presentation. For Situation D, it was not a surprise to see that there were some students from both groups

showing irritation and dislike as they found the action was inappropriate, and they felt losing-face (Group A = 2, 16%, Group B = 10, 56%). However, the comments "neutral, acceptable, and good" were reflected by more participants towards Situation D (Group A = 10, 83%, Group B = 8, 39%).

From situational reflection, the students from both groups showed acceptance and tolerance towards the people with higher position and older age as they showed higher acceptance to the actions conducted by aged Thai teachers than they did towards those of younger age, or non-Thai cultural backgrounds (Group A = 7, Group B = 16). This showed that the participants' cultural background regarding power distance, which is high in many Asian cultures including Thai, played its role in these situations, especially Situation D where all of the students reflected that they could accept with not much clash on face value when feedback, and negative comments were given by the teachers or people of older age. Instead, some students found it good for further improvement and felt being interested (Group B = 5). However, it is interesting to see that in Situation D, if the action was done by a non–Thai, whether it is a teacher or a classmate, those from non-Asian origins tended to be more

tolerated and easily accepted (Group A = 7, Group B = 15).

From the reflection above, it showed that direct-teaching method of teaching first – experiencing later model worked in introducing some cross-cultural aspects, i.e. politeness, power distance and face management found in Situations C and D, where the avoidance of direct eye contact that shows respect and politeness and the style in making direct comments that is valued in some cultures were more tolerated by the students from Group A. In Situation C, "neutral" feeling was reflected more from Group A in which a good sign of cross-cultural sensitivity was shown by "trying to understand" for nearly 20%. In Situation D, likewise, giving a direct feedback, especially a negative one, is what goes against face value since face-saving is an important issue in any high context cultures, and when it is given by someone of the same status, it might be unacceptable in a high power distance culture. Here, the students from Group A reflected their realization and acceptance of the challenges on face value by making the comment "neutral" at about 40% higher than Group B did. The situations were like challenges for communicants from different cultural backgrounds as they

might cause misunderstanding or frustration among those who had little cross-cultural awareness or sensitivity.

Conclusion and recommendations

In conclusion, this bibliographic journal has served the purpose of a reflective resource in cross-cultural communication showing my own path of cross-cultures learning, by exploring issues and raising major insights in the hope of achieving a successful cross-cultural communication. The first part is the fundamentals that could serve both learners and teachers of foreign languages. The journal is ended with a class implementation aimed as a good start in integrating cross-cultural issues into my regular lessons and this trial could be used as a stepping stone for language teachers who are looking for possibilities to teach cultures. The trial revealed major remarks as follows:

(1) The direct-teaching method as in teaching first – experiencing later model was likely to be effective in introducing unexpected or unfamiliar cross-cultural behaviours as indicators of tolerance were found in Situations B, C and D. It is suitable in a context with time constraint.

(2) The indirect-teaching model as in experiencing first – teaching later was

observed helpful in introducing general or familiar issues. It is good to get learners involved in a discussion on cross-cultural issues as modifying teaching approaches will enhance student's learning outcome as each individual student has different learning approach (Cannon & Newble, 2000).

(3) It is interesting to find from the conditional reflection that most students, influenced by high power distance context, had higher tolerance to older Thai teachers, in comparison to the teachers of non-Asian origins (European, Australian, American) and other Asian cultures (Pilipino, Burmese) respectively.

(4) The overgeneralization seen in (3) on origins and cultures of other communicants is a sign showing that the cross-cultural sensitivity is needed to be cultivated among these learners.

Finally, I would like to leave some thoughts here as the back cover page of my bibliographic journal.

As cross-culture is a complex matter and the process of cross-cultural cultivation requires time and constant exposures to a variety of cross-cultural situations, teachers of English or other languages in a mono-cultural context must take on a challenge in designing cross-culture integrated lessons where

teachers draw cultural assumptions, which are normally presupposed, but not made explicit by native speakers, to the attention of language learners of other cultures explicitly (Brown & Yule, 1983, as cited in Shumin, 2002, p. 210), and teachers may not choose one single method for the sake of others as culture learning is suggested to be illustrated by activities and strengthened through real physical experiences (Shumin, 2002).

This is to remind both foreign language teachers and learners that it is impossible to teach and to learn every culture to avoid failures in future cross-cultural communication. Instead, cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity should be cultivated among language learners as both are the fundamental skills for success in communication.

The language education and intercultural communication have not often walked together. This separation is noticed as cultural or intercultural issues are not explicitly or consistently incorporated. So, with the creativity in designing intercultural communication integrated language lessons and the intention from the part of language teachers to help students to be more aware of cultural differences, I believe that "fluent fools" will be replaced by fluent communicants who are well-equipped with inter-cultural communication competence.

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