Research Article

THE ROLE OF SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE IN DEVELOPING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

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ABSTRACT

Intercultural communication has become a crucial area of the study today because of the importance in the understanding of the cultural diversity, multicultural communities of the world. Daily interaction between people of different cultural backgrounds is improving to some certain extent such as immigration, urbanization, international employment, study exchange programs and ease of foreign travel and so on. Therefore, intercultural communicative competence and the use of symbolic language are of the importance of the article due to developing the attitudes and the communication skills in multicultural exchange, in everyday life and even within organizations. Learning about other cultures and developing intercultural communication competences and skills can help overcome any barriers among the multicultural encounter and lead to more openness and welcoming in interaction.

KEYWORDS

Competence, intercultural communication, intercultural communicative competence, symbolic language, culture shock, conflict, cultural awareness

INTRODUCTION

In modern methodology of foreign language teaching, there are various competences which have been identified to improve the language acquisition.

G.Widdowson defined "competence" is a skillfully built knowledge based on the communicative capacity of the individual to create meaning so as to facilitate

communication. In order to gain effective communication, linguistic and communicative competences should go together in human interaction. Many other linguists debate on the distinction between linguistic and communicative competences. According to A. Lyons, the ability to use language grammatically in a variety of different social situations is "a linguistic competence". In addition, U.Ammon agreed that linguistic competence is a "purely structural characterization of linguistic knowledge in terms of abstract rules, not seen as the direct cause of the subject's performance." M. Canale and M. Swain considered communicative competence as a system of both knowledge and skills decisive for communication. K. Hymes believed that communicative competence melts together and in the same pot linguistic competence and the knowledge of sociolinguistic codes. From his point of view, "the most general term for speaking and hearing capabilities of a person – communicative competence - is understood to be dependent on two things: (tacit) knowledge and (ability for) use". Communicative competence includes:

- Grammatical Competence embodies the theoretical aspects of language;
- Sociolinguistic Competence is concerned with human interaction in natural contexts; the utterances, as they are produced and meant in various sociocultural contexts. The sociolinguistic competence is quite important since it is genuine for real communication;
- Discourse Competence embodies the skills and capabilities to produce language at sentence and text level by meeting the standards of cohesion and coherence;

- Strategic Competence incorporates the strategies of non-verbal and verbal communication in order to avoid communication breakdowns. In other words, the strategic competence sustains communication through strategies to provide efficiency, effectiveness and fluency.

Intercultural communication competence (further ICC) as a new branch of communicative competence should be highlighted as an important and inseparable part of English language teaching, because English language teaching is not only about learning heterogeneous culture, but also to communicate. As Rodger and Richard (1986) pointed out, "the primary function of language is for interaction and communication." This is mainly because language learners may interact people who are fluent in this language. Accordingly, intercultural communication competence might become more and more important in language teaching. (Zhang, 2015)

LITERATURE REVIEW

ICC is one of the approaches that focuses on the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in various cultural contexts which are manifested at the national, cultural, ethnic and social levels of communicants. In the opinion of many researchers, developing ICC is one of the most optimal objectives in teaching and learning languages that provide real communication skills. S.S.Kunanbayeva pointed out that foreign language education is currently recognized the theory and practice of intercultural communication. According to her theory, the instrument of intercultural interaction is the language as the expresser and mediator reflecting the national and cultural identity of peoples in the interaction and communication of various linguistic societies. All this leads to consideration of intercultural communication as a new scientific and educational sphere of the research.
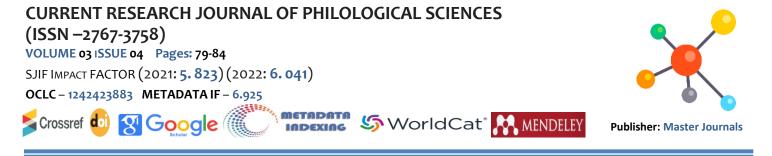
The basic category of intercultural communication is to synthesize «language-culture» into an organic whole. Moreover, as she stated, an interdisciplinary construction of «language - culture» reflects the material and spiritual identity of linguistic groups allowing the subject of developing intercultural communication skills to effectively interact in the global living space through the cooperation of using the language and culture of communication partners. Because they remain a national-ethnic self-identified personality who reflects the national-cultural mentality of their own nation, the generic bearer of this culture and language (Kunanbayeva, 2016).

The term «intercultural communication» was introduced by Americans E. Holl and D. Traher in their book «Culture as communication: Model and Analysis» in 1954. They focused on the specificity of intercultural communication as a sphere of human relations. E. Holl (2005) affirmed that culture is communication and communication is a culture. Another American Researcher D. Teylor in his book «Intercultural Communication: an important dimension of effective education», contends that communication is a product of culture. The notion of intercultural communication has become particularly prevalent in the following features.

- There are cultures which differ from each other;
- Communication and culture are closely related;
- Elements of culture are reflected in communication;
- Similar cultures facilitate communication, but different ones make it difficult;
- Belonging to a particular culture suggests specificity of communication. (Cited from Zainchukovska, 2017)

From the 1960s, the intercultural communication has become the subject of many American studies. In Europe, an interest in intercultural issues appeared later, in the 1970s, and the establishment of intercultural communication occurred in the 1970s and 1980s. Today, it is one of the most dynamic new sciences. The researchers consider that intercultural communication has an interdisciplinary character and they have indicated the following disciplines related to intercultural communication: social psychology, ethnology, ethnic psychology, linguistics, cultural linguistics, sociology, political science, ethnocultural science, anthropology, pragmalinguistics, theory of communication, folklore and etc.

Intercultural communication is an interaction across different nations. It focuses on how variance in cultural symbols, values, and behaviors affects communication across cultures. The reason why all cultures has their ways of life, embodiments of cultural values, patterns, etalons, symbols that make the culture be specific and more nationally relevant. That's why, main characteristics of IC are the followings: cultures are learned; cultures are shared; cultures are multifaceted; cultures are dynamic; cultural identities are overlapping. It may be highlighted that language, culture and communication are main defining tools of intercultural communication: language as "a system of symbols and rules that enable us to communicate"; culture is how a group of people create a system of shared symbols, values, and behaviors over time in an effort to maintain social cohesion, survive, and instruct future generations whereas communication is the process of sharing and interpreting meaning and information using symbols and behavior. Thus, intercultural communication involves understanding symbols, values and behaviors as they vary culture by

culture and how they impact communication interactions.

Within intercultural communication studies, the notion of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) developed by M. Byram (1997) has been played central role in language learning and teaching. It is an extension of communicative competence that involves not only develop the appropriate knowledge, skills and also the awareness of our own and others' cultures, the ability to compare between cultures, an awareness of the relative nature of cultural norms and the ability to mediate between different cultures. Intercultural communication competence involves not only communicative competence in linguistic and pragmatic terms of the language used in the intercultural encounter, more importantly it demands awareness of different sets of cultural scripts and the ability to mediate between different cultural identities (Byram, 1997).

Li Song defined intercultural communication competence as a person's ability to engage in productive intercultural dialogues of meanings and relationships with people from different cultural backgrounds. To make the intercultural interaction productive, communicants need to have the ability to construct the meaning and rapport with people from different cultural backgrounds through appropriate and effective use of verbal and nonverbal language (Song, 2009).
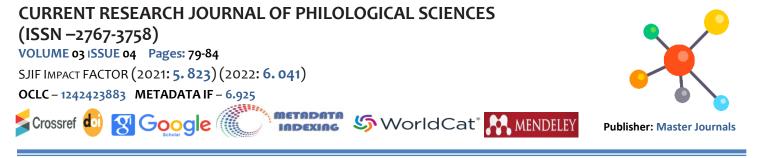
The alternative element or notion of ICC is "symbolic language or competence" offered by C.C. Kramsch. As he noted, symbolic language is a more reflexive perspective that addresses the ideological, historic and aesthetic aspects of intercultural communication and language teaching. There is the third culture that must be seen less. This third world is known as symbolic language that is described as a "dynamic,

flexible and locally contingent competence". This due to the fact that symbolic language is associated with the knowledge of the cultural and communicative practices of particular groups. According to his theory, "an effective communication has increasingly come to mean not only 'getting things done in the real world', but 'redefining the symbolic reality of the real world'" (Kramsch, 2010).

The symbolic language represents language and culture that will be a challenge for interpretation in diverse communicative situations. Therefore, foreign language teachers should be not only language teachers but also teachers of culture during the lesson. We will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of ICC through symbols. Let's look through advantages first.

Communicating and establishing relationships with people from different cultures can lead to a whole host of benefits, including healthier communities; increased international, national, and local knowledge; reduced conflict; and personal growth through realia: symbols, historical heritages and so on.

Creating healthier community

Without any hesitation, communicative ability is developed. Through learning symbols, learners may not face the language barrier which is created in interaction of people from diverse cultural, ethnic and religious background. As a result, an addressee and an addresser can get into interaction straightforwardly regardless of group or cultural orientation and create healthy community that supports the participants and strive to understand, appreciate, and acknowledge each member. To exemplify, religious symbols which leads to a difficult conversation if communicants do not know their symbols." "A Cross" is a representation of Christianity. The Christians believe that it is a symbol of Jesus who sacrificed himself for all people." A Dharma Wheel" is a representation of Buddhism. Its eight points are the symbols of various types of living, namely, popularized with "Eightfold Path." In Islam, "A Crescent and Star" are considered the faith of Islam that represent progress and the light of knowledge respectively. The Crescent as a early phase of the moon represents progress while the Star signifies the light of knowledge.
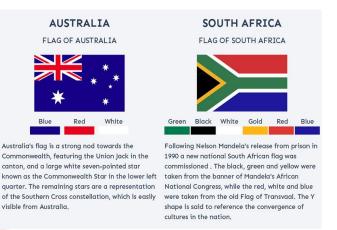
Expanding international, cultural, national knowledge.

 In using symbolic language in ICC, learners possess the deep knowledge about the culture, nation, religion and even may memorize the way of living, their beliefs. This may result in differentiating culture, nations each other. For instance, flags are an example of symbols which students can differentiate the country straightforwardly.   The following picture below shows the proof of it.
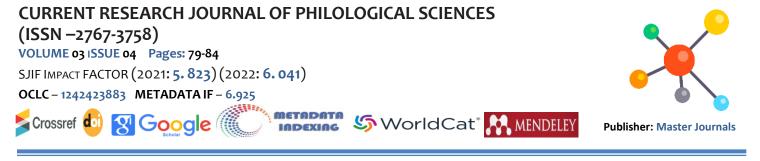
Enriching the vocabulary

By using symbols, people can represent their thoughts and ideas through speaking. As a symbol is an arbitrarily selected and learned stimulus that represents something else, people learn new meaning

of the word and transfer it among nations. For instance, a cat is a domestic animal, yet symbolically it is a bad omen or fuzzy, cute character of the people in some cultures.

Ensuring effective communication

AUSTRALIA
FLAG OF AUSTRALIA

Blue   Red   White

Australia's flag is a strong nod towards the Commonwealth, featuring the Union Jack in the canton, and a large white seven-pointed star known as the Commonwealth Star in the lower left quarter. The remaining stars are a representation of the Southern Cross constellation, which is easily visible from Australia.

SOUTH AFRICA
FLAG OF SOUTH AFRICA

Green   Black   White   Gold   Red   Blue

Following Nelson Mandela's release from prison in 1990 a new national South African flag was commissioned . The black, green and yellow were taken from the banner of Mandela's African National Congress, while the red, white and blue were taken from the old Flag of Transvaal. The Y shape is said to reference the convergence of cultures in the nation.

Communication occurs when two or more people interact through the exchange of messages. Although communication is difficult to define, we know that people begin to communicate at birth and continue communicating throughout their lives. However, people might experience misunderstanding or fear when communicating with others from different ethnic or a particular situation such as public speaking, class presentations, a first date, or during a job interview because of symbolic language. This circumstance is called Communication Apprehension(CA). If people from different culture know the symbolic language, the communication between them will be more effective and expressive due to a better understanding and rich cultural-based vocabulary.

Like everything has drawbacks, using symbols in communication has its own disadvantages as well. The main disadvantage is that low level students or

learners may face some difficulties to absorb information in interaction as symbols have figurative meanings. The following disadvantages can be highlighted:

Conflict might an inevitable part of communication. It stems from our inability to see another person's point of view in interaction process, especially if that person is from a different culture. the following scheme shows the possible views of conflicts in intercultural perspective.

Uncertainty is a problem people might face when they interact with someone from a different culture. This is because communicants may hesitate anything about the person's culture, values, habits, behavior, dress, and so on. In such circumstance, communication participants may not know what to say or how to interact. As a result, it may lead to stress and anxiety.

Culture shock is precipitated by the anxiety which is caused by being in a complete unfamiliar surrounding or complete ignorance.

CONCLUSION

In general, using semiotic language in interaction has both benefits and drawbacks at the same time. However, the advantages of using symbols outweighs the disadvantages.   Therefore, symbols are a drive for the understanding of cultural identity which stand out by race, ethnicity or nation. By learning symbols, communication partners may have less difficulty in interaction.

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