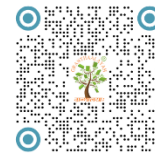


Original Article

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION: A CONTEXTUAL APPROACH IN A GLOBAL WORKPLACE

Dr. Naveen A. H. Dias ^{1*} 

¹ M.A., B.Ed., PGCTE, Ph.D, Associate Professor of English, Government First Grade College Punjalakatte, Belthangadi Taluk-574233, Karnataka, India



ABSTRACT

Intercultural communication has lately become the central focus in ESP. English has developed into the lingua franca of the world. ELT has to update its teaching methodology and linguistic approaches to modernise its teaching methods, synchronising them with ICT. Communication skills are the talk of the day, and teaching this skill is very important to meet the demands of the international standards in which the language is now used. Communicative competence has given place to intercultural communicative competence in the fast-growing business world, specifically the tourism and hospitality industry.

This paper focuses on the necessity to include this component in the business communication paper for MBA and BBA students who specialise in Tourism and Hospitality Management in Karnataka and the sub-continent on the whole. Tourism has now become a way of life. Recognising the importance of the sociocultural context of English as a lingua franca is essential. It is necessary to look at this from a contextual approach in a global workplace.

Keywords: Intercultural Communication, Constructivism, Culture, Cognitive Psychology, ESP, ESP for Tourism, Dynamic Interaction, Social Nature of Learning, Tourist and Hospitality Industry, Global Lingua Franca

INTRODUCTION

Scholars perceive the concept of 'communication' in different ways. For example, neurologists focus on the functioning of the brain and nervous systems during communication; psychologists examine issues related to perception; linguists analyse language in context. Moreover, philosophers speak about thought processes. Similarly, Scientists focus on transferring data, and communication researchers focus on meaning Klyukanov (2021). The main factors embedded in the definition of communications are people, message, channel, and context. Communication is a dynamic process. It is more like a movie than a single photo. A word spoken does not stay frozen. We cannot take back what we have communicated.

Communication is interactive and symbolic, and also contextual. A context is a cultural, physical, relational, and perceptual environment in which it occurs. It would be advantageous to study the concept of communication from seven traditions: rhetorical, semiotic, phenomenological, cybernetic, socio-psychological, sociocultural, and critical. We will look at communication from the sociocultural tradition that exists in social and cultural settings that allow interaction among members. Intercultural communication can occur at different levels, from interpersonal, to group, organisations, and mass communication. A person who knows a language also knows communicative effects says, Widdowson in his book, Teaching Language as Communication. Language is used for a communicative purpose. The language user reveals adequate communicative competence when a person demonstrates ones ability

*Corresponding Author:

Email address: Dr. Naveen A. H. Dias (naveendias71@gmail.com)

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to use his knowledge of the linguistic rules (1- 4). English has gained a status where it is now essential to go one step forward and not just have communicative competence but also intercultural communicative competence.

ENGLISH, THE LINGUA FRANCA OF THE WORLD

English has now acquired a new international identity and has no national or cultural identity. More than eighty per cent of the websites are in English. English has become the language of global advertisements, stock market, trade, economics, medicine, commerce, business, and electronic media. All disciplines use this global language to present all the information in the world. Thus, the market value of this global language has grown tremendously in India also. English for a specific purpose and professional purposes has been placed at the helm of ELT courses.

Mauranen and Raita are of the firm opinion that the English language has reached global status, and the term "lingua franca" is now used to refer to a language functioning as means of interethnic communication. English has acquired the status of a language of global communication, and as such, it presents a unique phenomenon that has no parallel in the history of the world languages (2). Samarin defines the term lingua franca as "any lingual medium of communication between people of different mother tongues, for whom it is a second language" (371). International business is one of the areas that has been affected, and business executives and other personnel have had to face up to the realities and become bilingual or multilingual. As a result, ESP for the tourism and hospitality industry has gained importance, and it also has to focus primarily on intercultural communicative competence.

Scholarly communication is another ground on which ELF is prominent. English has long been used as a lingua franca in international air and sea travel, and there are proposals for designing an effective mode of communication for these purposes. An important insight is the study of intercultural interactions in ELF. There is also a growing cognisance of the unique global role of English and its cultural, ecological, socio-political, and psychological implications. The Global Lingua Franca (ELF) has become a means of universal communication between the native speakers of English and the speakers of English as the second language and between people with different native languages.

There are more EFL speakers than ENL speakers, says David Crystal (438). The tourist and hospitality industries are typical examples of how the global language is constantly used. Whether it be national or international tourism, it can be seen that the knowledge of English gives the employees an edge over others who do not. Jane Jackson, in her book, *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Intercultural Communication*, explains in her introduction that there is "a complex connection between language, culture, identity, agency, power and context and highlights the need for intercultural contact and competence in diverse settings" (2).

FROM ESL TO ESP

ELT has fast become an international activity and a large business industry for the past five decades. English is playing an essential international role in the world arena. ELT can be broadly divided into ESP, and EGP, explains Hutchinson and Waters (3). ESP is more focused, practical, and object-oriented, hypothesizes Dudley Evan and St. John 1998 as compared to EGP. Then came globalisation and the global language. The world became smaller with the advance of science and technology and the internet and turned into a global village. The English language became a part of the electronic revolution. English has become a global phenomenon. Huntingdon makes the following observation: "English is the world's way of communicating internationally and interculturality, just as the Christian calendar is the world's way of tracing time, just as the Arabic numbers are the world's way of counting, and as the metric system is, for the most part, the world's way of measuring" (6).

It is generally accepted that the maximum common area of teaching English as a second language is General English (G.E.) or English for General Purposes (EGP). It is generally thought that English is only needed by linguists, grammarians, and English linguistics. However, the reality is that English is vastly used in almost all professions.

According to David Crystal, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) can be simplified as using a particular variety of the language in a specific context of use (434-439). In addition, Robinson has talked about ESP as a 'language in context', and the courses are designed based on the learners' communicative needs quotes Munby in his book, *Communicative Syllabus Design* (75). Robinson has stated that: "ESP courses are those where the syllabus and materials are determined in all essentials by the prior analysis of communicative needs of the context." (20). David Carver recognises three categories of ESP, namely English as a restricted language; English for academic and occupational purposes; and English for specific topics (20).

In their seminal book, *English for Specific Purposes: A Learner Centred Approach*, Hutchinson and Waters write distinctly about the birth and growth of ESP. ESP was not a 'planned and coherent movement', but it has developed because of numerous unified trends based on especially three main reasons that have been identified in the emergence of ESP: the demands of a brave new world; a revolution in linguistics; and focus on the learner (6 - 8).

English is significantly vital; it has created a new additional type of learners who comprehend why they need to master English, and they surely know how to strike while the iron is hot. In addition, the Oil Crisis of the early 1970s was one of the factors that contributed to the development. English had suddenly become a big business, and due to this, it had created time and money

constraints that led to 'the need of cost-effective courses with clearly defined goals.' English has now become 'subject to the requirements, desires, and demands of people other than language teachers' [Hutchinson and Waters \(1987\)](#).

Widdowson writes about the importance of learning a language to communicate primarily. Learning a language is related to knowledge abstracted from experience as systems, schemata, formulae to actual instances by procedural, problem-solving activity. He goes on to write about the distinction of ESP. English language teaching tries to develop the ability of the student to cope with language as a means of conceptualising and communicating. ESP is, thus, integrally linked with areas of activity that may be academic, vocational, or professional (40).

Widdowson continues that the other motive that leads to the origin of ESP is the focus on the learner, which in this case is the area of psychology. Educational psychology has vastly developed and has contributed to the emergence of ESP by focusing on the learners and their learning attitudes. Nowadays, even learning a language leads to a super speciality. The focus is now on intercultural communicative competence, as English has grown in status to become the global lingua franca (8).

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Culture and communication are interrelated, or mostly we can say unified: "culture and communication are not separate entities or areas. Each is produced through a dynamic relationship with the other." [Schirato and Yell \(2000\)](#) Intercultural communication is the communication between two people who share different systems of symbolic resources. Within the context of the international workplace, like an international resort or hotel, intercultural communication analyses how people communicate verbally and non-verbally, manage, work together, approach deadlines, negotiate, meet, greet, build relationships, and much more. International businesses like tourism and hospitality are finally the result of people communicating effectively to meet their needs. Commercial activities are highly competitive and fast-changing. People working in the tourism industry need to get it right and get it right the first time.

E.T. Hall, the anthropologist, is believed to be the father of the field of intercultural communication. In their article, Everett, Hart, and Yoshitaka, "Edward T. Hall and the History of Intercultural Communication: The United States and Japan," discuss how the term "intercultural communication" was introduced by Edward T. Hall in his influential book, *The Silent Language*. In his book, Hall writes about the importance of culture in communication, and the book has vital chapters like, "What is Culture?" "Culture is Communication", "Time Talks", and "Space Speaks". In addition, he wrote about the hidden dimensions of human communication, particularly proxemics (how space affects communication) and chronemics (how time affects communication). Thus, E. T. Hall laid the intellectual foundation for intercultural communication upon which others built. E. T. Hall's work has also directed scholars and language learners to nonverbal aspects of communication (3 – 36).

Kosak Sinan et al. in their masters' course assignment on "Development of Intercultural Management Competencies", show how important it is when they record that:

"Intercultural Communication is a focus of interest in many different subject areas, especially in anthropology, communication studies, social and organisational psychology, sociology, marketing, management studies, foreign languages, and foreign language education, applied linguistics, pragmatics, and discourse analysis"(9).

Byram, Adan, and Stevens, in their introduction to their book, *Developing Intercultural Competence in Practice*, write that components of intercultural competence are knowledge, skills, and attitudes, complemented by the values one holds because one belongs to several social groups. These values are part of one's belonging to a given society (5).

Kosak Sinan et al. also write about etiquette and protocol. People with intercultural communication skills are those with specific vital competencies and characteristics. Those who can negotiate well with other cultures usually demonstrate open-mindedness, inquisitiveness, patience, and self-awareness. Employees in the tourism and hospitality industry need to nurture a sympathetic, personal and intuitive approach to doing business that lends itself to working with the unknown. People working in an interconnected global economy need to build good relationships with people from other cultures. It enhances better business (12-14).

Martin & Nakayama, in their book, *Intercultural Communication in Contexts*, present the following imperatives as to why we have to acquire intercultural communicative competence:

- Technological Imperatives – new technology is creating complex relationships between different cultures
- Demographic Imperative: Cultural diversity is an element of life
- Economic imperative: Having the capability to interconnect with other cultures is good business
- Peace Imperative; the ability to communicate with other cultures brings peace and stimulates healthy relationships
- Self-awareness Imperative: The better we communicate with people from other cultures, the better we understand ourselves as individuals
- Ethical Imperatives: I.C. forces us to think about the consequences of our actions and words (2-3).

Societal changes influence culture and communication, and those changes need to be acknowledged in theoretical development, practical application, and classroom instruction (2). To understand what transpires during communicative interactions between people with varied cultural backgrounds, it is necessary to study some essential variables such as perceptual elements, cognitive patterns, verbal and nonverbal behaviours, and social context (3). Saint-Jacques sees people in modern society as "living simultaneously within particular cultural settings on the one hand, and between different cultural environments on the other one", which results in multiple identities (3).

Saint-Jacques writes that culture can no longer be described as the property of a single nation. Globalisation has changed the concept of culture. Globalisation stands for the overlapping of global and local factors (16). Robertson comments that teaching a second language could be an excellent way to access another culture and improve intercultural understanding and communication. However, this will be possible only if we learn and teach language and culture learning are fundamentally interrelated, and this interrelationship is the central focus of the teaching and learning process. 'A language is a window into the culture of the people speaking this language.' (87 - 124).

The increased interconnectedness requires employees in the tourist and hospitality industry to communicate competently with people of varying cultures from our own and, therefore, engage in intercultural communication. It is essential for people working in the tourist and hospitality industry to communicate effectively and efficiently in our increasingly diverse society. Tomlinson comments that 'Globalisation lies in the heart of modern culture; cultural practices lie at the heart of globalisation' (1). Stella Ting-Toomey, in her chapter, "Intercultural Communication Ethics: Multiple Layered Issues" in the book, *The ICA Handbook of Communication Ethics*, explains Intercultural communication training as:

an interactive facilitation process in which learners can acquire culturally- relevant knowledge, increase self-awareness and other-awareness, manage emotional challenges, and practice competent intercultural communication skill-sets (335 – 352).

She also explains that through practical intercultural training, trainers can intentionally transform the mindsets, practical habits, and behaviours of the trainees for them to communicate competently and adaptively across cultures (335 – 352).

The onset of print, telephone, broadcasting, television, and the internet has gradually expanded communication beyond the immediate cultural and geographical borders. It is now valuable and prompt, and high-speed global interaction in business, politics, education, and travel has brought people from diverse parts of the world into face-to-face contact. Shuang Lui, Zala Volcic and Cindy Gallios, in their book, *Introducing Intercultural Communication: Global Cultures and Contexts*, talk about the characteristics of the globalised world. For example, we can call a localised globalism at tourist sites in many cities of the world and famous tourist sites. In these tourist sites, the tourist's consumption involves the strategic mobilisation of resources on a global-local continuum (3 – 73).

These factors highlight that intercultural communication is an essential part of business communication, an integral part of communication for people who pursue their management degree in tourism and hospitality and work in global workplaces like the tourism and hospitality industries.

Karnataka is a large state where nature can be enjoyed at its best. The government has realised this and has great plans to develop tourism as an economic, social, and cultural ascendancy and asset for the local people and the national and international tourists. Heritage tourism, cultural tourism, and eco-tourism are the main areas where the government of Karnataka is investing and developing to attract domestic, national, and international tourists. Hampi, Pattadakal, Aihole, Badami are great heritage tourism centres in Karnataka.

Culture Tourism in Karnataka is part and parcel of the state. The government of Karnataka has planned an eco-tourism zone stretching from Coorg to Karwar, and it is being prepared, and a chain of nature camps are being established and branded as 'Jungle Trails'. It illuminates that the tourism industry requires people equipped with the necessary communication and intercultural communicative competence to build this industry into a mega-industry.

LINGUISTIC APPROACH THAT SUPPORTS INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

The academic study of intercultural communication and applied linguistics is built on many disciplinary foundations, including the work of critical intellectuals in the nineteenth and early eighteenth centuries. Kumaravadivelu's book, *Cultural Globalization and Language Education* bring out the significance of intercultural communication in an international scenario when he writes about his own experience:

"Proponents of cultural hybridity would expect one to create a third culture or space without allowing either my inherited Indian culture or one American intellectual culture to determine one's values and beliefs fully. A state of ambivalence in-betweenness is supposed to result when individuals displace themselves from one national/cultural context into another. However, one does not believe one is dangling in a cultural limbo. Instead, one lives with ease and sometimes with unease; one does not even have one's national borders to experience cultural complexity" (5).

Bennett, in his chapter, "Constructivism, Intercultural", writes that:

"Constructivism is an epistemological position commonly found in communication theory, cultural anthropology, developmental psychology, and learning theory. It holds that knowledge and experience of the world are constructed, not discovered. Constructivism

is the primary perspective of intercultural communication, which seeks to coordinate meaning and action across cultures. The idea of constructivism is essential to multicultural and intercultural contexts because it supports cultural adaptation, the practical alternative to assimilation”(np).

Constructivism is considered an offshoot of cognitive psychology, and it has originated from the insights of quite a few psychologists and their theories, including Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory, Vygotsky's theory of ZPD, and Bruner's concept of Discovery Learning. Many exponents have studied this theory, and it reveals people's cognitive learning process and has generated many systematic teaching theories and many teaching modes. The constructivist theory recommends a few fundamentals for intercultural communication learning:

- Firstly, students should not be passive receivers, but they should occupy the central position in the classroom and take primary responsibility in the information-processing and meaning-constructing process.
- Secondly, constructivism stresses how real situations and social-communicative activities should be provided for students so that they tend to be more motivated and effective in constructing knowledge and skills through problem-solving in relevant contexts.
- Thirdly, collaborative learning is of great importance. Learners develop understanding in their way, and different individuals perceive the same problem from different viewpoints. Consequently, collaborative learning enhances abundant, profound, and comprehensive understanding of knowledge.
- Fourthly, abundant resources should be provided so that students can use a variety of material to achieve a comprehensive and sharp, and penetrating understanding of knowledge.
- Thus, these significant essentials of constructivist theory, namely situation, collaboration, communication, and meaning construction, have greatly enlightened the teaching of intercultural communication [Widyaningrum et al. \(2018\)](#), [Liu et al. \(2015\)](#).

CONCLUSION

ESP being a learner-centered approach encourages students to demonstrate ownership of their ideas and to reflect on and monitor their thinking as they make decisions and take action. ESP aims to build the student's existing knowledge of English and set it on a scientific basis by establishing procedures for relating language analysis more closely to the learners' professional requirements. It enables learners to function effectually in their "target situation" [Muhammad \(2012\)](#). ESP is a style and a technique to language teaching in which all choices as to the syllabus content and method are based on the learner's motives for learning.

The significant process of successful intercultural communication is recognising differences and adjusting our communication behaviour corresponding to context and communication. The management students should become cognizant of and analyse their society and other societies' cultural phenomena. They should acquire the expertise to analyse and interpret unfamiliar social and cultural data from a foreign society. It is required to step outside the learning space with the help of technology to collect data. It is necessary to investigate the otherness around them that globalisation has brought into their world. The management students can move to their classroom either physically or with the help of technology to explore the world and learn the culture of others. The employees require analytical cultural awareness, which is the ability to evaluate judiciously and based on precise criteria, perceptions, practices, and products based on one's own and other cultures and countries.

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