

Promoting Cultural Intelligence within the EFL/ESL Curriculum¹

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Abstract

Culture is an important component in ESL/EFL courses because culture has profound effects on language and how it is used and affects society. The last half of the 20th century witnessed significant changes with regard to language teaching methodology, reflecting advancements in the areas of linguistics and language learning theory. The goal of language learning has also evolved together with world realities that oblige language teachers to focus primarily on English in terms of the communicative process between two or more individuals who may or **may not** be native speakers. Worldwide, more people speak English as a second language than there are actual native speakers. Although English language instruction has evolved greatly, culture is still sometimes taught in traditional, often superficial terms. This article will discuss how the ESL/EFL curriculum needs to revisit what the role and purpose of culture is in the classroom. It then presents the concept of Cultural Intelligence (CI) and provides suggestions about how to incorporate CI into the ESL/EFL curriculum. Finally, it proposes providing more relevant and real-life activities to help develop CI in conjunction with communicative activities to better establish both professional and personal relationships with people from other cultures.

Introduction

One of the primary goals of learning a second language is to help students actively and productively employ it in a variety of real-world situations that may present themselves in both their private and professional lives. Today, the English language has virtually become the *lingua franca* of the world economic phenomenon of globalization. In many countries, the English language represents part of an integral strategy to produce more competitive human capital in the industrial, technological, and commercial sectors of their economies, or more involved citizenry in the case of social and cultural development.

The importance of the English language cannot be overemphasized. The Asia Pacific Economic Conference (APEC) currently consists of 21 countries and represents nearly 50% of total world trade. At an event hosted by the New Zealand Asia Institute, University of Auckland, New Zealand in March, 2004, Ambassador Mario Artaza, Executive Director of the APEC Secretariat, stated that English is the official language for interaction and discussion within APEC, not

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because it is the most widely spoken language in the region, but because APEC recognizes that for business and official interaction, English is the most commonly spoken language with regard to economic activity and is the greatest bridge to cross-cultural interaction (Artaza, 2004).

Burt (2005) estimated that in 1997 between 1.2 and 1.5 billion people had near-native command of the English language, yet less than 50% of these speakers lived in countries where English was the first or official language. The use of English has grown to where the majority of English speakers in the world are actually speakers whose mother tongue is not English, resulting in an estimated 80% of verbal exchanges in which English is used as a second or foreign language by at least one of the participants (Burt, 2005).

English language instruction changed significantly during the last half of the 20th century in response to learner needs and demands. Early 20th century teaching approaches were based on grammar, structure, lexical knowledge, and reading comprehension, with limited superficial cultural knowledge. The primary reason for studying a second language was to "gain culture" by reading the great literary masterpieces or tales of adventurers who traveled the globe to far away and exotic places (Lessard-Clouston, 1997). This philosophy was best represented by the Reading Approach or the Grammar Translation Approach (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). These approaches reflected that only a small number of individuals would actually have contact with speakers of other languages or their cultures.

However, the second half of the 20th century witnessed great changes related to travel, communication, and business. English students now wished to learn a language in order to travel, do business, or otherwise have contact with other speakers of English; whether they spoke English as their mother tongue or as a second language made little or no difference. This reorientation of goals was reflected by changes in how languages were taught, as well as in a growing emphasis on sociolinguistics and communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980). Language teaching approaches or methodologies that were based on aural/oral proficiency and communicative content rather than structure became the norm. Total Physical Response, Counselor Learning Method, the Natural Approach, as well as other humanistic language approaches shared the goal of bringing people together through language, and that language was oral, interactive, and purposeful (Larsen-Freeman, 2000).

Teaching culture in the ESL/EFL classroom, however, did not evolve similarly. English classrooms, textbooks, and materials generally presented a very limited and superficial view of culture, and usually assumed that the communicative interaction would be in an English-speaking country with a native speaker. Consequently, the ESL/EFL materials and curricula tended to be Anglocentric and presented topics that were based on very specific interactions. Culture still consisted of learning about the landmarks, celebrations and cultural objects of the people who used the target language.

Today, because English is spoken as a second language by many people who do not share similar linguistic or cultural backgrounds, the majority of interactions are now between two people who share a common need or goal, but come from different cultural backgrounds. In a 21st century world economy, students need to interact with non-native English speakers with diverse cultural backgrounds. The traditional emphasis on presenting Anglo Saxon culture, while still important, does not meet the expectations or needs of an increasingly communicated world. To better address student needs, a new view of culture known as cultural intelligence proposes a more in-depth analysis of individual, national and organizational cultures. Earley and Ang (2003) more broadly define cultural intelligence as one's ability to adapt to new dynamically-changing cultural contexts.

The manner in which culture is presented within the ESL/EFL curriculum and how it is actually taught in class needs to present culture as a linguistically and culturally adaptive behavior, instead of as knowledge about landmarks, celebrations, fine arts, handicrafts, etc. Including CI as an integral part of language classes provides the most appropriate setting for providing linguistic and culturally specific appropriate examples of how the English language ensures communication on one level. However, culturally appropriate behaviors, combined with contextually correct verbal expression, can reduce cultural distance and provide the basis for improved relationships.

Definitions of Culture

Culture flows through language and language expresses the ideas, thoughts, and beliefs of a social group. Without language to transmit culture, the rules by which a culture functions would be lost. Therefore cultural knowledge should represent a more important part of language instruction.

According to Hinkel (2000) "culture has diverse and disparate definitions that deal with forms of speech, the rhetorical culture of texts, social organization and knowledge constructs" (p.1). Adaskou, Britten & Fahsi (cited in Leesard-Clouston, 1997) contribute to an understanding of culture by providing four different senses of culture:

- Aesthetic sense: includes cinema, literature, music and media.
- Sociological sense: refers to the organization and nature of family, interpersonal relations, customs, material conditions, and so on.
- Semantic sense: encompasses the whole conceptualization system which conditions perceptions, and thought processes
- Pragmatic and sociolinguistic sense: emphasises the background knowledge, social and paralinguistic skills, and language code which are necessary for successful communication. (p.5)

Rosaldo (cited in Hinkel, 2000) argues that "cultural models derive from the world in which people live and the reality they construct" (p.1). According to Fiske (cited in Kramsch, 2004), culture is a process which produces and reproduces meaning. She also describes one form of culture that she calls popular culture. According to Fiske, popular culture is the culture that second language learners adopt while they are learning the target language. This popular culture helps the learner become more competent in learning the second language. Finally, Buckingham (1998) adds that "popular culture is seen as an authentic part of students' experience" (p.8).

Kramsch (2004) discusses the culture that arises in the language classroom. She describes it as a type of "third culture." The emergence of this culture depends on its integration with a critical pedagogy. This third culture as Kramsch calls it, "includes a systematic assessment of the situational context in the production and the reception of meaning based on observation, analysis, and personal response" (p.243).

In sum, many definitions of culture exist and authors tend to disagree on some of the particulars, however some points become very clear:

- 1) Culture and language are intertwined and one cannot exist or be transmitted without the other.
- 2) Interacting appropriately within a culture is convenient and necessary in order to achieve one's goals.
- 3) Learning about culturally specific and appropriate behaviors is pragmatic in terms of optimal interaction with a target group and has a multiplying effect on linguistic competence.

The influence of culture in language teaching

Today, culture generally represents a significant part of the language curriculum. Through "the study of other languages, students can gain knowledge and understanding of the cultures that use that language: in fact, students cannot truly master the language until they have also mastered the cultural contexts in which the language occurs (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1996 p. 27). Kilikaya (2004) contends that "any language is embedded in a particular culture and when you learn a language inevitably you learn about its underlying culture" (p.5). For Genc and Banda (2005) "culture has a humanizing and a motivating effect on the language learner and the learning process. They help learners observe similarities and differences among various cultural groups" (p.3).

Presenting students with a more profound and contact-based concept of culture might linguistically benefit language learners. Genc and Banda (2005) concluded that, "a culture class is significantly beneficial in terms of language skills, raising cultural awareness, changing attitudes towards native and target

societies and contributing to the teaching profession" (p.81). Today, language instruction might wish to incorporate cultural universals and the concept of CI. In many classroom settings, unfortunately, the study of culture does not concur with the sociolinguistic or sociocultural paradigms that characterize the 21st century. Culture is still taught in very traditional ways. An example of a traditional treatment of culture can be found in Cullen & Sato (2000), who suggest creating a cultural context by exploiting a wide range of materials and activities. After presenting culture using different information sources, the authors suggest pair discussions about true or false statements:

1. Ireland is totally dark during the winter.
2. There is little snow except in the mountains.
3. The population of Ireland is less than that of Aichi Prefecture.
4. Ireland is about the same size as the island of Honshu.
5. The United Kingdom includes the Republic of Ireland.
6. The Coors, the Cranberries, U2, the Beatles and Enya are Irish musicians.
7. Some Irish people think the Shinkansen connects Tokyo to Hong Kong.
<http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Cullen-Culture.html>

This exercise focuses on discrete information, which although useful in terms of conversation practice, does not present any information or practice that permits students to develop a broader concept of culture.

Presenting culture in the ESL/EFL classroom or curriculum involves more than a casual study or a few lessons related to celebrations, folk songs, or the traditional costumes of the people who speak the language. Cultural intelligence involves a much broader concept of why people learn English and how they intend to use their linguistic knowledge in, what for them, is their foreseeable future.

Cultural Intelligence

The increased exchange of goods and services on an international level the last quarter century has prompted specialists to study and comprehend their respective cultures in a much more profound way. Consequently, the sociocultural and sociolinguistic aspects of language learning have become increasingly important as they are directly applicable in situations where participants in the communicative act do not share the same linguistic or cultural background, yet have to interact to achieve a common goal.

As a result of this, a new concept of "culture," as well as the roles individuals, countries and organizations play as they interact has emerged. This new point of view of culture is known as cultural intelligence. According to James (2005) "cultural intelligence is the ability to recognize cultural myths, our own and those of others" (p.7). For Tan (2004) cultural intelligence can be defined as

"a person's ability to successfully adapt to new cultural settings, that is, to unfamiliar settings attributable to cultural context" (p.20).

Recent attempts to develop a measure of cultural intelligence have used similar definitions. Ang, Van Dyne, and Koh (2004) define cultural intelligence as "an individual's capability to deal effectively in situations characterized by cultural diversity" (p.3). Organizations such as Novartis, Nike, Levi Straus, Lufthansa, among others, see the strategic value of cultural intelligence and are beginning to screen applicants for cultural intelligence (Tan, 2004). They have discovered that people with cultural intelligence work better in a more pluralistic society and better adapt to the workplace, particularly if that workplace is located in another country or includes people from other races or cultures.

Earley and Ang (2003), Ang, S., Van Dyne, L., & Koh, C. (2004), and Earley & Peterson (2004) linked the construct of cultural intelligence to other types of intelligence, including emotional and social intelligence (Cantor & Kihlstrom, 1985, Goleman, 1998), which emphasize intelligence as the ability to adjust to one's environment (Sternberg, 2000). According to Earley (2003, 2004) cultural intelligence differs from both emotional intelligence and social intelligence in that emotional and social intelligence imply that the participants have sufficient cultural and personal intimacy to be able to infer emotional states. Cultural intelligence does not necessarily imply intimacy among the participants, but a desire to communicate and work together to achieve a goal.

These perspectives may provide a rich basis for understanding cultural intelligence. Mischel (2004) argued that, "Adaptive behavior should be enhanced by . . . the ability to make fine-grained distinctions among situations—and undermined by broad response tendencies insensitive to context and the different consequences produced by even subtle differences in behavior when situations differ in their nuance" (p.5).

Mischel (2004) touches upon the very essence of cultural intelligence in that it allows the non-native participant in a new cultural and linguistic setting to employ training and knowledge in order to bridge potential barriers and lower possible affective barriers that can be created either linguistically, racially or culturally. Borrowing from this person-situation approach, there are three basic possibilities here. One possibility is that an individual's behavior is invariant across cultures; a second possibility is that an individual's behavior varies across cultures, but in a way that is not consistent with what is most appropriate for each culture. A third possibility is that an individual's behavior varies across cultures, in a way that is consistent with what is most appropriate for each culture (Mischel, 2004).

Both verbal and non-verbal behavior must be interpreted in a consistent manner for true communication to be effective. If what a person says is accompanied by inappropriate actions, the communication processes, affectivity and the ultimate success of the interaction between participants may become

seriously jeopardized. Therefore, in a globalized economy where communication can take place between almost anybody from any culture at any time, it is necessary for there to be a much more in-depth understanding of how language and culture interact. In class, teachers need to be more effective in relating the complications resulting from possible miscommunication due to a lack of understanding appropriate non-verbal behavior

The Papadopoulos, Tiki, and Taylor (1998) Cultural Competence Model (CCM) forms part of the nursing curricula at the Royal College of Nursing in the United Kingdom, and its goal is to teach nursing students how culturally sensitive behaviors are conducive to improved health care practices. The CCM consists of four stages, including: cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, cultural sensitivity and cultural competence. These authors relate that the CCM may be applicable to other areas of instruction and suggest the CCM can be modified to meet different curricular needs.

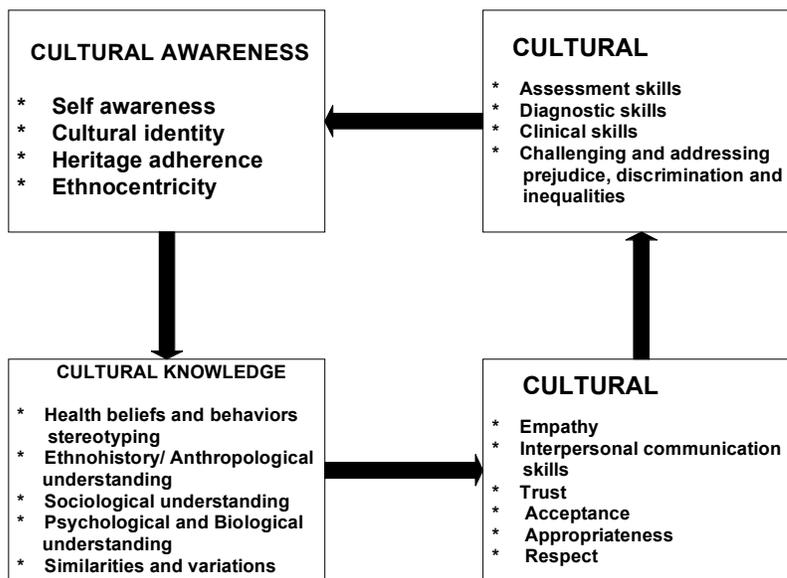


Figure 1: The Papadopoulos, Tiki and Taylor Model for Developing Cultural Competence

(1998, p. 197)

We suggest that this model can be employed, with appropriate modifications, to introduce culture in the ESL/EFL classroom in a more meaningful way. In fact, a parallel curriculum can be introduced into the English classroom to promote the four language skills and to better contextualize language use within communicative methods. Carl Rogers (1969) believed that the communicative

approach to language learning is largely based on humanistic approaches, less teacher control, more student self-exploration and more perspective transformation that result from reflective learning. Transformative learning produces change that, upon causing an individual to reflect, has an important impact on later experiences. Perspective transformation is an important part of transformative learning and involves the process of becoming aware of our perceptions, how we came by them, and how they affect the way we perceive the world around us (Mezirow, 1990). The reason for including cultural intelligence in the curricula is that teachers can combine major aspects of the communicative approach, humanistic teaching principles, and reflective learning to better consolidate language learning and provide students with experiences that will positively affect their personal lives and create more flexible professionals in the future.

Cultural intelligence and the ESL/EFL curriculum

In some cases language instruction is based on a curriculum that reflects an instrumental approach whose main goal is to learn communicative functions. Often, language instruction does not permit culture to play a significant role in the learning-teaching process. Paricio (2001) writes that the communicative approach often focuses on the acquisition of linguistic competences, separating culture from learning development.

Byram (2000) also holds that "the 'communicative turn' in language teaching, particularly in English as a Foreign Language, tends to emphasize the speech act and discourse competence, rather than (socio-) cultural competence" (p.1).

ELT/EFL professionals can use or modify the Papadopoulos, Tiki, and Taylor Cultural Competence Model or any similar model to provide the basis for a parallel curriculum that can be added to English language instruction. With the goal of presenting such a possibility, this article will develop the CCM as the basis for introducing culture into the classroom.

The first stage of the Cultural Competence Model is to help students develop cultural awareness, which begins with a self evaluation of their personal values and beliefs in order to permit them to gain greater self-awareness. There are many self-assessment instruments to help individuals become more aware of their personal culture. Table 1 presents 10 items of the 28-item Diversity Change Agent: Self-Assessment Questionnaire (1998) developed to help persons reflect upon how they react to cultural diversity. Each one of these 28 items, if integrated into the ESL/EFL curriculum, can represent a variety of communicative activities such as group discussions, role playing, or more traditional writing activities.

Table 1: DIVERSITY CHANGE AGENT: Self-Assessment (First 10 Items)

	Item	Scale
1.	I value having close relationships with people who are culturally different from me	1 2 3 4 5
2.	I avoid assuming that I understand other people's motivation or intent	1 2 3 4 5
3.	I seek out new information about people who are different from me in order to improve our communication	1 2 3 4 5
4.	I try to find objective reasons why others may behave in a way I perceive negatively	1 2 3 4 5
5.	I react to confusion or conflict with little visible discomfort or irritation.	1 2 3 4 5
6.	I try to understand others' experiences from their perspective	1 2 3 4 5
7.	I try to identify others' emotions when we communicate	1 2 3 4 5
8.	When there is a misunderstanding I make a point to determine why	1 2 3 4 5
9.	I refrain from blaming others when miscommunication causes problems	1 2 3 4 5
10.	I balance emotion with reason when I am in conflict with someone	1 2 3 4 5

Source: American Council for Voluntary International Action (2002)

Each of the 28 items of the questionnaire can also be followed by a great variety of questions for further discussion. For example, a few discussion topics for item number one might include:

- What is your definition of a relationship?
- Who do you have close relationships with?
- What is necessary in order to have a close relationship?
- Can you have a close relationship without trust?
- Can you have a close relationship without honesty?
- Can you have close relationships with people who are different from you?
- What are some of the barriers to establishing a close relationship?
- Are the barriers for establishing close relationships with people from other cultures the same as or different from establishing relationships with people from your own culture?
- Can you name a few things that make relationships with people from other cultures different?

With a little imagination, teachers can develop many different lines of questioning and develop activities that can make the class environment much

richer in terms of communication, including: group discussions, debates, role playing, prepared oral or written reports, etc.

It is important to note that this 28-point scale and subsequent complementary discussion and related activities only refer to the topic of self-awareness under the section cultural awareness. If teachers develop each and every point within each of the four stages, the communicative opportunities are potentially endless.

The second stage of the Cultural Competence Model, called cultural knowledge, implies actually studying different topics related to what culture is and how it is expressed. Almost all cultures share many of the same basic points of reference. Basic cultural features common to almost all cultures are: concepts of time and space, language use, health, values, ethics, resilience, spirit, sex roles, relationships, tabus, heroes and myths, gestures, esthetics, religion, education, play and leisure, ownership, ceremonies, and bonding, among others.

Many of these topics can be easily included as part of the ESL/EFL curriculum because language performs a fundamental function in life and expresses culturally universal elements. In the classroom, for instance, the concept of how the concept of time is culturally determined, readings and other information can be provided to students. Subsequent role plays or discussions can include topics such as punctuality and how different cultures view it. Some discussion questions that arise from examining the concept of time might include:

- Is punctuality the same for different groups (family members, friends, adults) within your culture?
- Is punctuality the same for people living in urban and rural settings?
- Does punctuality have the same relative importance across cultures?
- How might people express their disapproval if you arrive late to an appointment?
- Are there acceptable excuses for explaining tardiness?
- Can you name some common excuses you have used or heard to justify tardiness?
- Is time relative? Does time really go faster or slower, depending on the situation?
- Do religions have different views of time? Explain how different religions view the concept of time.

An interesting role play can be developed on this topic. For instance, the teacher can select a student to be the English student teacher for the following day and assign him to teach a topic to the class. Without advising the student teacher, the English teacher can then instruct some students to enter on time, others to arrive five minutes late and still others to arrive ten minutes tardy to class. After the final student has taken a seat, the English teacher can ask the student teacher how he felt having students arrive late to class. The students who arrived late to class can then explain how they felt when they interrupted the

ongoing activities or how they actually feel when people are not punctual for meetings or dates.

Punctuality, however, is only one culturally determined point of reference related to the concept of time. Meal times as well as the amount of time people dedicate to eating, celebrating, socializing, dating, etc. are largely determined by culture. The relative importance of time itself and its importance in daily life can also vary greatly. Time, for instance, is an important aspect of religion and one's view of nature and the universe. Consequently, cultural aspects that are universally shared are practiced differently across cultures and these differences can provide many topics and activities to enhance the communicative syllabus.

The third stage, cultural sensitivity, implies developing empathy towards members of other cultures individuals may interact with. In other words, this third stage can be promoted by helping students learn to consider members of other cultures as their true partners and equals. Cultural Intelligence promotes relationships that are symmetrical and equitable. Therefore, activities that promote power sharing are necessary. Activities in the ESL/EFL classroom might include activities that rotate roles (team leader, secretary, treasurer, etc). Role playing activities can be particularly effective in helping observe both correct and incorrect behaviors that result from specific circumstances. An example of this for Mexican students would be to debate the pros and cons of building a fortified structure separating the Mexican – United States border, and what that barrier represents for persons living on opposite sides of the border. Attempting to understand what cultural, political and economic variables might move Americans to fortify their border and how their perceived needs conflict with Mexican dignity can lead to greater empathy. Debates about how appropriate building a wall is, as well as how sensitivities might be offended can result in very dynamic discussions. There are many discussion topics about how bilateral relations between individuals, corporations and countries are affected when communications break down due to a lack of empathy and understanding, trust, acceptance, and respect. How relations can be affected by misguided actions or even inaction can also motivate many class activities.

Finally, the fourth stage, cultural competence, consists of activities that require synthesis, application and evaluation of the previously gained awareness, knowledge and sensitivity. This level of competence is difficult to achieve in the classroom because it almost requires real-world situations in which the students must personally interact with members of other cultures. Still, activities might include discussing how actions in one culture can affect the impressions of and relations with another.

Cultural competence can be encouraged by using the Internet and other communications technology. The Internet now affords students more up-close contact through instant messaging, emails, chats, blogs, and discussion forums, where they can interact and practice cultural competence by actually being in contact with people from other cultures while practicing their English. This

contact can be promoted in the ESL/EFL curriculum by providing topics students can discuss using different Internet tools and reporting their discoveries in small group or plenary class sessions. Internet searches on specific topics can be given to students who can write up summaries and provide oral reports. Excellent Internet resources include different online dictionaries and encyclopedias. Cooperating teachers from different countries can assign the same topics to their students. For instance, a Spanish teacher in the United States and an English teacher in Mexico can assign the same topics to their students and provide contact information for the corresponding peer classmate in the other country. This gives students the chance to collaborate and correct each other's versions of the assignment they are to turn in, as well as to negotiate both linguistically and culturally.

Conclusions

For communication to be "real," it must be purposeful. The authors do not suggest making cultural intelligence the only or primary topic of communicative activities. However, many of these topics can be included in the EFL curriculum, particularly at more advanced levels, where it becomes more relevant as students perceive travel and interaction with other peoples as a concrete and achievable possibility.

Consequently, the inclusion of these topics is of even more vital importance in language programs designed to produce students who must interact not only with native speakers, but also with speakers from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds who must also speak and negotiate meaning in what is, for them, a second or foreign language. Adult advanced-level conversation classes or classes for students wishing to participate in foreign exchange programs represent two exceptional opportunities to include cultural intelligence as part of the foreign language classroom curriculum.

The way languages are taught changed dramatically during the last half of the 20th century as a result of research related to how humans learn or acquire language including second or foreign languages. Changes related to how travel and communication affected the frequency and types of interaction between peoples from different cultures also changed the perceived goal of learning a language. For the last 25 years or so, ESL/EFL students have viewed meeting non-native English speakers as a distinct possibility as the process of globalization reduced the cost of travel and increased commercial exchange. Students now feel that they might actually have the chance to not only go to the United States, England, or another English-speaking country, but to almost any country in the world where they will almost inevitably meet someone who speaks English.

Students, however, do not view learning English necessarily as a function of interacting with native speakers in a native English-speaking country. They view

the English language as a means to travel across the entire globe and as a means to facilitate their travel, commerce, and other interactions with other non-native English speakers. If Russians want to speak to Spaniards, they do so in English; if the Chinese wish to communicate with Egyptians, they choose to use the English language.

Language students no longer view meeting and interacting with people from other languages and cultures as a remote possibility; they now view it as a distinct probability, which they need to prepare for if they want to have a competitive advantage in today's complex world stage. Consequently, if ESL/EFL classes can better prepare students to interact between and among different cultures by reinforcing their cultural intelligence, the language they are actually taught will be more relevant and purposeful. Are these not two of the most elemental tenets of language instruction?

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