INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE OF A FOREIGN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE INSTRUCTOR: Insights of Teaching in a Multicultural Classroom in Various Cultural Settings

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ABSTRACT

The paper focuses on an educator's cultural awareness and intercultural communicative skills in relation to foreign language acquisition, cultural integration and cultural sensitivity of local and international students learning the language in various cultural settings. The author shares experiences of teaching two foreign languages, Russian and English, in the university Preparatory Year Programs in Ukraine and Saudi Arabia, as well as postgraduate academic disciplines in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. As a result of analysis of field notes and students' academic progress, it has been concluded that international students, who are better culturally integrated, achieve higher results than those learners who stay isolated within their communities. One of the essential factors in facilitating students' cultural integration is intercultural competence of educators, which is especially meaningful in a multicultural classroom, where the competent instructor becomes an anchor, balancing and unifying students with different educational, social and religious backgrounds. Ultimately, some ways of the development of the instructors' intercultural competence are suggested based on the study.

Key words: International Student, Multicultural Classroom, Foreign Language Acquisition.

INTRODUCTION.

The end of the 20th century though the beginning of the 21st century is being marked by the process of globalization. No more are countries isolated entities having solely their own ways of development and their own ideology. Specifically, post-Soviet countries, in contrast to their condition as a part of the USSR, are becoming more and more integrated into European and worldwide political and social life. Ukraine has already achieved a lot in this integration. Ukrainian education, as one of the most developed and time-tested social institutions, has been attracting foreign students since the Soviet epoch. This interest is constantly increasing due to a greater degree of openness in the country and attractive price-quality correlations in the global market of educational services.

Furthermore, if thirty years ago international students were coming to study in the capital and only some regional centers of Ukraine, today they are scattered all around the country and may be met even in the most remote settlements. Educators who work at a tertiary level are no longer surprised seeing foreign students in their auditoriums. The question is whether these teachers are prepared enough to apply, in practice, their communicative and pedagogical skills in a multicultural setting, given that most educators have not had any official training in intercultural or cross-cultural communication. Consequently, we are arriving at an understanding of the importance of the issue of intercultural and cross-cultural orientation for university teachers.

Unfortunately, it has been noticed that not only academics of Ukrainian universities, but even some teaching staff of the Preparatory Year programs, which are aimed at helping foreign student to become ready to speak an academic foreign language and adapt to a new culture, are not aware of the necessity for cultural sensitivity as a part of successful teaching and learning. Thus, instead of understanding and continuous support, foreign students may be treated in their academic milieu with incomprehension, negligence and in some cases even annoyance. That is how the lives of international students in Ukraine turn into a struggle for survival. Therefore, in order to prevent miscommunication and another negative outcomes of the intercultural interaction in tertiary education, the research is devoted to the problem of how several polar cultures interact in different educational settings in relation to their effects upon a foreign language acquisition, intercultural integration of international students, establishment of a teacher-student rapport and the overall learning process.

It is widely acknowledged that teaching a language is not effective without teaching the culture from which that language sprung, where both are naturally tightly interrelated (Brown et al., 1953; Kirch, 1973; Crawford-Lange & Lange, 1987; Shanahan, 1997; Matsumoto & Okamoto, 2003; Scollon, 2004; Byram & Kramsch, 2008). This issue is more complicated in Ukraine due to its natural Russian-Ukrainian bilingualism and mixed cultural context. Teaching Russian or Ukrainian as a foreign language to international students in a multicultural classroom is very challenging for instructors because they are responsible to take into consideration different cultures of their students. Additionally, the educators present an image of a typical culture beam that exists in a bicultural Russian-Ukrainian context.

Another issue rarely engages attention of professional trainings for teachers. It is the importance of the relationship between management of a multicultural classroom and an educator's intercultural competence, the criteria of which are effectiveness, success, and adaptation (Wiseman, 2003, p. 191). A few would dare to assert that managing a classroom comprised of different ethnic and religious communities is not worth the trouble. Entering such a classroom, a teacher should not only keep in mind subject-related objectives, but think of how to promote the unity of dissimilar elements, activate the team-spirit and, at the same time, conduct a personality-oriented lesson where each student is treated in accordance with his cultural singularity yet still equal in prestige to the other students who represent another ethnic and religious community.

Therefore, the aim of the current research is to comparatively present participant observation of teaching foreign languages and literature in multicultural classrooms in Ukraine, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq at different educational levels. As a result of this comparative study, several possible ways of the development of the instructors' intercultural competence will be suggested.

METHODOLOGY.

The genre of the research is self-study of practice, which, according to Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009, p. 3), has seriously attracted teaching scholars since early 1990s and can be characterized as

the study of one's self, one's actions, one's ideas [...]. It is autobiographical, historical, cultural, and political [...] it draws on one's life, but it is more than that. Self-study also involves a thoughtful look at texts read, experiences had, people known and ideas considered. (Hamilton and Pinnegar, 1998, p. 236)

The primary method of the present study is participant observation, the major activity of which is spending a prolonged period of time in contact with subjects in their natural environment and collecting field notes (Bogdan, 1973). The subjects of the research are groups of adults of both genders belonging to different national and territorial entities with various combinations of native and second native languages. The environment, or educational setting, is of two types: the university located in the students' homeland with local students and the overseas university with international students. The main field notes were taken in the Russian Language Foundation classroom (group 1) which was comprised of 14 male students of mixed, primarily Middle Eastern, Arabic nationals from 19 to 36 years old. It was a Preparatory Year program for foreign citizens specializing in civil engineering in Lugansk National Agrarian University in Ukraine in 2009-2010. The secondary field notes were taken in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

The Saudi groups numbered 2 and 3 consisted of 30 and 28 (respectively) adult Arabic-speaking females from 17 to 22 years old learning English as a foreign language in the Preparatory Year program of Princess Noura Bint Abdulrahman University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in 2010-2011. The groups were formed based on the level of English language proficiency, from A1 to B1 (group 2) and from A1 to B1+ (group 3).

Another educational setting used in this study was at the University of Kurdistan Hewlêr, which is located in Erbil, the capital city of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. In academic year 2017-2018, I taught three groups, numbered 4, 5 and 6, and observed them in this context. Group 4 was a medical foundation group of mixed nationality and gender adults, from 17 to 21 years old, learning English as a foreign language with English language proficiency at the level ranging from B1+ to C1. Group 5 comprised 14 mixed gender adults with primarily Iraqi Kurdistan origin, from 17 to 29 years old, learning English as a foreign language (within the discipline titled Academic Reading and Vocabulary) in the Foundation Year program with further specialization in English language and literature. English language proficiency of this group ranged from A2+ to B1. Group 6 united 12 mixed gender and background professional adults from 24 to 48 years old enrolled in the MA program in English Language and Literature. Their English language proficiency ranged from B2 to C2.

The following indicators have been considered as having a great impact from the perspective of cultural sensitivity and cultural awareness: location of the research field or cultural context of the research, educational establishment, time frame, the origin of the instructor (local or foreign staff), the level of study (foundation, undergraduate, postgraduate), academic discipline, the number of students in the group, age, gender, the level of English language proficiency, the major country/location of upbringing, the language of instruction, the native language or dialect, the second native language or dialect and religion (see Table 1).

Table 1. Research Subjects, Settings and Indicators

Indicator	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6
Location	Ukraine	Saudi Arabia	Saudi Arabia	The Kurdistan Region of Iraq	The Kurdistan Region of Iraq	The Kurdistan Region of Iraq
Educational establishment	Lugansk National Agrarian University	Princess Nourah Bint Abdulrahman University	Princess Nourah Bint Abdulrahman University	University of Kurdistan Hewlêr	University of Kurdistan Hewlêr	University of Kurdistan Hewlêr
Time frame	2009/2010	2010/2011	2010/2011	2017/2018	2017/2018	2017/2018
The origin of the instructor	local staff	International staff	International staff	International staff	International staff	International staff
Level/ specialization	Preparatory Year Program for Foreign Citizens with Further Specialization in Engineering	Preparatory Year Program	Preparatory Year Program	Medical Foundation Program	BA in English Foundation Program	MA in English Language and Literature
Academic discipline	Russian as a Foreign Language with Focus on Engineering	English as a Foreign Language	English as a Foreign Language	English as a Foreign Language with Focus on PTE Preparation	English as a Foreign Language: Academic Reading and Vocabulary	• Literary Criticism; Classical Approaches and Innovations; • Methodology of Teaching Literature
Total number of students in the group	16	30	28	12	14	12
Age	19-36	17-21	17-22	17-21	18-20	24-46
Gender: male (m) female (f)	m: 14 f: 6	m: 0 f: 30	m: 0 f: 28	m: 5 f: 7	m: 3 f: 11	m:2 f: 6
The level of the target language (Russian, English) proficiency	B—B1+	A1—B1	A2—B1+	B1+—C1	A2+—B1	B2—C2
Major country/location of upbringing	• Iraq: 3 • Jordan: 3 • Palestine: 1 • Syria: 3 • Nigeria: 2 • Somalia: 1 • Congo: 1 • Djibouti: 2	Saudi Arabia: 29 Palestine: 1	Saudi Arabia: 27 Syria: 1	Iraqi Kurdistan (Erbil): 2 Iraqi Kurdistan (Duhok): 1 Iraqi Kurdistan (Sulaymaniyah): 1 Syrian Kurdistan: 1 Iraq (Baghdad): 2 Turkey (Istanbul): 1 Iran (Tehran): 1 Great Britain: 1 Germany: 2	Iraqi Kurdistan (Erbil): 8 Iraqi Kurdistan (Sulaymaniyah): 2 Iraqi Kurdistan (Garmian): 2 Iran (Tehran): 2	Iraqi Kurdistan (Erbil): 8 Iraqi Kurdistan (Garmian): 1 Iraq (Baghdad): 1 Syria (Damascus): 1 Netherlands: 1
Language of instruction	English/Russian	English	English	English	English	English
Native language/dialect	Arabic: 10 Yoruba: 2 Somali: 3 Kurdish: 1	Arabic: all	Arabic: all	Kurdish (Soranî): 5 Kurdish (Sulaymaniyah): 2 Arabic: 2 Persian: 1 German: 2	Kurdish (Soranî): 11 Persian: 3	Kurdish (Soranî): 5 Kurdish (Sulaymaniyah): 2 Arabic: 1
Second native language/dialect	Arabic: 3 English: 2 French: 2	None	None	Kurdish (Soranî): 2 Arabic: 1 Turkish: 1 English: 1	Kurdish (Soranî): 2 Persian: 1	Arabic: 1 Dutch: 1
Religion	Sunni Muslim: 12 Protestant Christian: 4	Sunni Muslim: all	Sunni Muslim: all	Muslim: 9 Atheist: 3	Sunni Muslim: all	Sunni Muslim: 11 Atheist: 1

The research operates with the following terminology:

PTE—Pearson Test of English—is a computer-based test which assesses the listening, reading, speaking and writing skills of non-native speakers of English, along with the other international tests, i. e. IELTS and TOEFL.

Culture is understood, following Corder and Meyerhoff (2009), as well as Scollon and Scollon (2007), in its broad anthropological sense as "a way of life shared by a group of people", and

this way of life consists of cultivated, i.e. learnt, behaviours, and that these—as well as the experiences that underlie them, and the knowledge or values they are understood to validate—are accumulated over a period of time and reproduced even as the members of the group might change. (Corder & Meyerhoff, 2009, p. 442)

Along with that, cultural is taken as "those social things which are relatively stable and widespread" (egarac, 2009, p. 33).

Cross-cultural communication (CCC) "involves comparisons of communication across cultures"; while intercultural (ICC) is "communication between people from different national cultures" or "the exchange of cultural information between two groups of people with significantly different cultures" (Gudykunst, 2003, p. 1, 163; p. 260). Cultural awareness plays a crucial role in ICC and presumes "a gradually developing inner sense of the equality of cultures, an increased understanding of your own and other people's cultures, and a positive interest in how cultures both connect and differ" (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2004, p. 7). It is internal, dynamic, variable, multidimensional and interactive (Ibid. p. 6). Cultural awareness is the starting component of intercultural competence, and it should be distinguished from cultural knowledge, which, according to Tomlinson & Masuhara (2004), is a more stereotypical generalization of cultures, external and static, and often omits the dynamic nature of culture.

Competent communication "consists of behaviors that are regarded as effective and appropriate" for the context (Wiseman, 2003, p. 193). In our case, the term is expanded to competent intercultural communication.

1. CONTEMPORARY STUDIES IN MULTICULTURAL CLASSROOM AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION: THEORY IN PRACTICE

Contemporary studies in the theory of multicultural classrooms are represented by an ample quantity of monographic works and articles. Scholars that made essential contributions to the research are Cohen (1990), Hidalgo (1993), Chetty (1997), Imel (1998), Blake, Clapper, Fantini & Fantini and Sakamoto (2000), Buckingham, Finck, Hulnick and Drapelick (2000), Yang (2002), Witsel (2003), Kalfadellis (2005), Saffold (2008), Scherr (2009) and Pirjo (2011). The topic of the research is closely connected with the theories of intercultural and cross-cultural communication. Significant ideas focusing on ICC and CCC, introduced by Hall (1959; 1976), Gudykunst (2003), Scollon & Scollon (2007) and others, were also incorporated.

All the scholars listed above agree on the point that an international teacher entering a multicultural classroom should be aware of several main issues he or she would have to consider:

- differences in a teacher's and students' value system and beliefs;
- difficulty of choice of an appropriate teaching style and level of instruction;
- the role of native tongue in the world-view formation;
- influence of low-context communication culture (LCC) and high-context communication culture (HCC) upon the perception of information and understanding between a teacher and students;
- classroom management.

Teachers should be aware of how their own beliefs and behavior are culturally conditioned and the extent to which their system of beliefs is similar to or different from their students' beliefs. Initially, "multicultural education is aimed at the development of the ability amongst different population groups to communicate mutually, to understand each other and to appreciate each other's life-world, traditions, customs, perceptions and point of view without loss of one's own culture" (Chetty, 1997, p. 81). Teachers often only contemplate about multiculturalism at a concrete level (music, foods, artistic works, etc.); whereas, the more essential level (implicit) is not typically addressed at all, even though it is at this level where the most fundamental beliefs and values of humanity are accessed (Hidalgo, 1993, p. 99, 101).

Differences in Value System. How do these 'teacher-student' and 'student-student' differences in value system and beliefs influence the educational process? To answer this question I recall one indicative situation illustrating 'teacher-student' difference in value system:

In the middle of the lesson, when I was presenting new grammar material to beginner-level Russian Language Foundation students (refer to group 1, Table 1), one of the students stood up and having a cell phone ringing in his hand addressed me in English:

"Teacher, can I please go out and pick up a call?" He rather demanded than asked me, with his eyes full of worry intensified by impatient movements.

"No, Ahmed , you are aware of our class rules. No phone calls during a class. Please sit down and work," I answered trying to control my negative emotions as this subject had been discussed many times before.

"But this is my father!" His face showed confidence in the validity of this argument.

"Please, sit down and work. You will return a call during the break," I answered as felt I had to be consistent in refusing all the students. For me, a family member's call was an invalid reason for missing an important explanation of new grammar topic.

He looked at me and left the classroom. His face reflected a shock. How doesn't the teacher understand that his father is calling him? The door was shut noisily behind Ahmed. Students in the class reacted differently. Some Middle Eastern students were gazing at me with the same anger as Ahmed, reflecting their disapproval of my refusal to allow him to receive his father's call. Some Nigerian and Congo students in the classroom were happy I said 'No' to their "aggressive Arab" peer.

Conclusion: As the student comes from a culture in which family relations mean more than any scholastic task, his family, especially a father as a source of family's well-being and the ultimate authority on Earth, is consequently an overriding priority in his value system. The teacher (in this case, myself) comes from a task-oriented culture. Of course, my teaching responsibilities and the good grammar explanation I was engaged in, and my perception of what was significant in this exchange, prevailed over the student's perception of the urgency of a family call. What would have been a more culturally sensitive reaction to the situation? I would have done better to allow him to exit the classroom and continue explaining the grammar. Next class, I could have checked if he asked his peers to summarize the main points of the lesson for him. In this way, I could have saved myself, Ahmed and the classroom considerable agitation while strengthening my bond with the class and my reputation, and consequently, my ability to negotiate and maintain discipline in future encounters.

Teaching and learning styles differ from country to country. "The style used in the 'home' country will influence the study skills that the students will have developed, and the way in which they deal with the sorts of study skills that are expected of them" (Witsel, 2003). According to Witsel (2003), differences in educational styles may be found in several areas: lecturer-student relationship (formal versus informal, big versus small power difference); interaction in class (not done versus questions and answers can be exchanged); relations between students (harmony in the group versus individual performance); time (being on time is not relevant versus being on time is important); regulation of learning process (mainly by the lecturer versus mainly by students); aim of learning (emphasis on theory versus emphasis on understanding and application); uses of technical resources (limited versus heavy reliance)". To illustrate some of these points, I shall recount several of my teaching experiences in these different cultural settings.

Relations between Students. I had strongly favoured peer correction in EFL classes before I started working in Saudi Arabia (see groups 2 and 3, Table 1), where I found students were reluctant to correct their peer's errors on teacher's request as they thought it might harm their relations with class-mates. It was especially obvious when they had to exchange their written pieces and correct their peer's work. They simply could not find errors or were even not looking for them! To my question why they did not correct the writing they always responded the same way:

"Teacher, you correct it!"

Conclusion: Students' interpersonal relations had a greater meaning for them than the accomplished task in English class.

There was a similar task-oriented and relation-oriented opposition in a course I taught in the Kurdistan Region. It was Methodology of Teaching Literature for post-graduate students (see group 6, Table 1). Peer observation was a part of their course activity and was weighted at 10% of their total grade. Students had to comment on their peers' micro-teaching and were required to evaluate what had been done well and which areas required improvement. In other words, they had to identify the positives and negatives of their peers' teaching. The grade given by the lecturer to an observer was proportionate to the importance and validity of his or her comments. What surprised me was that students were reluctant to comment on the negatives of the lesson and showed that they did not want to give suggestions for improvement. The lesson observation activity involved filling in the scores in the Lesson Observation Rubric. 7 out of 8 students gave the full score for all the lesson components in spite of the fact that some components were not even used in that model lesson. Here is the typical oral peer observation comment:

"Thank you very much for your lesson, Media-khan. It was an amazing lesson and I enjoyed it very much. It was well-prepared and engaging. I have not found any negative points. It was perfect."

Conclusion: The students' priority was their interpersonal relations, not the individual performance. They were ready to sacrifice their grades given for observation comments for the sake of harmony in the group. This tendency is deeply rooted in the Kurdish culture; being nice, supportive, indirect, not critical and kind to each other is something of an honour code. Even constructive peer criticism is usually considered as being rude, unfriendly and disrespectful. Because the teacher's authority is taken as natural, I had to adjust the style of teaching practicum and the use of peer observation comments in particular. I saw that it was more effective to switch to a traditional 'teacher-student' observation procedure so that students could learn teaching methods solely listening to constructive instructor's comments and suggestions because the instructor's authority and criticism are respected and do not converge on the social dynamic which exists in the culture.

Aim of Learning. Comparing the general pattern of Ukrainian, Arabic and Kurdish students from the perspective of the pedagogical goals, it is easy to notice that students coming from the Middle East are more practically oriented; whereas the Slavic students are more abstract thinkers. Based on my observations, while Ukrainian post-graduate students specialized in English Literature prefer such theoretical courses as Literary Criticism, the History of Anglo-American Literature of the 20th Century, Kurdish students specialized in the same field prefer Methodology of Teaching Literature. The value of knowledge in this case seems to be conditioned by its practicality. This consideration, along with the university requirements to the module's content, mandate an adjusted teaching style: the focus in the latter case is shifted from general theory to the practical concerns of learning from students' own experience, their teaching modeling and on-site teacher's correction. The study of theory and reference resources are more effectively replaced by vivid discussions, explanations and passionate debate.

Another consideration for foreign teachers in the Kurdistan Region is the necessity to mold the kinds of content that students use to learn language skills as there is a strong resistance by them to engage material that is not directly and practically related to their own area of study or interest. Multiple students expressed a need for a detailed explanation of how the assignment would practically help them as well as a need for a change in reading content for in-class activities that would justify their energy and attention for a given assignment. Following is a typical dialogue with students; I have had this kind of interchange at least 3 times within a semester of teaching PTE Preparation course for intermediate/upper-intermediate level Kurdish students (refer to groups 4 and 5, Table 1):

"Let us have a look at this article from New York Times. Have you heard about this newspaper?" I addressed the question to the group. Students acknowledged their familiarity with the newspaper and I continued:

"This article has been cut into paragraphs, and the paragraphs have been mixed up. Please work in pairs and try to place the paragraphs in order."

"Teacher," one of the students said, "why should we do that? Will it help us to take PTE?"

"Of course, my dear, it will. First of all, one of the PTE reading section tasks is to rearrange paragraphs. Secondly, you will learn some more new words and increase your abilities to understand the text, not even mentioning that reading an authentic text helps you on your way to your main goal—mastering English language at near-native level."

"But teacher, reading is boring…"

"Sara , what do you like the most in life? What is your hobby?"

"I like fashion. I am really passionate about it."

"Please bring me your favourite fashion journal tomorrow and we will see how it can be interesting to read about something you like."

Conclusion: The deeply enrooted practicality of Kurdish culture to some extent necessitates a reevaluation of teaching methods and in-class activities. In order to turn this factor into beneficial, by adjusting to the interests and concerns of the students for a specific field, the educator can motivate students through emphasis of the practical value of one or another activity and the areas of potential application of their theoretical knowledge.

Time. International higher education establishments are heavily structured by the Western conceptions of temporal dictates. Strict adherence to time schedules is one of the pillars of Western civilization. An educator, coming from the West with this perception of time, will undoubtedly expect his or her students to adhere to the basic requirements of international academic setting— to come to class on time and meet the deadlines for submission of papers and other activities. However, the reality is that students have a completely different perception of time which is conditioned by their culture. In the following anecdote, I will illustrate a typical example of differences in time-perception between cultures and the difficulties an instructor may encounter:

It had been about two months since I joined the University of Kurdistan Hewlêr. After the coordinator of English Language Centre (ELC) had observed my lesson (refer to group 5, Table 1) and watched as several students arrived late to my class, I was told to adhere to ELC policy and not to allow students enter the class if they are late more than 15 minutes. It is worth noting that some of my ELC colleagues let students be late no more than 5 minutes. I had previously taught in Saudi Arabia and was aware of a difference in perception of time between the West and the East. Of course, when I started teaching in the Kurdistan region, instead of reproaching students for being late, I used a couple of humorous remarks and allowed them join the class. But how could I continue to do that when I was told that I was required to follow the established rules and regulations in order to maintain consistency within the department and the university? I understood that the university policy was based on primarily British standards which were imposed on students most of whom were brought up in completely different cultural environment. It was a situation where I had to choose.

The next morning, my coordinator was ready to observe my 10.30 lesson. At 10.50, the door opened and one of the usual late-comers made two steps into class, but having noticed my discouraging look, stopped.

“You cannot enter the class if you are late more than 15 minutes, my dear. I cannot let you in.”

Zainab looked at me with her big wet eyes and left. I felt really bad. But there was nothing much I could do.

Did students stop coming late after that incident? Did they submit their course papers on time? The answer is ‘No’. All in all, educators have to learn to adjust to culturally conditioned attitudes to time.

According to Sapir-Whorf’s hypothesis of linguistic relativity (Sapir, 1921; Whorf, 1940), the native language we use determines the way in which we view and categorize the world including such deep-seated cognitive processes as the way we deal with space and time. Educators should take this issue into consideration before they start punishing students for being late. Of course, responsibility and punctuality may be developed; these developed soft skills are highly appreciated in the modern labour market, and it is one of the educator’s secondary objectives—to facilitate their development. But how? To answer this question, I will offer a technique I devised while delivering the course in Literary Criticism in the University of Kurdistan Hewlêr (see group 6, Table 1) which I believe is a step towards reconciling these disparate attitudes to the notion of time:

Every lecture was followed by a three-hour’s seminar on that topic. A week before the seminar, I distributed to students the seminar plan with the discussion agenda and bibliography. Each discussion item was assigned to a number of presenters with the scheduled time for presentation for each student and for the post-presentation group discussion. Here is the typical seminar handout:

Postcolonial and African-American Literary Criticism

DISCUSSION PLAN

1. Postcolonialism: A Historical Overview (2 presenters—10 min. per each presenter followed by 10-min. group discussion—30 min. in total; refer to Bressler, 2011, p. 197-206).

2. Edward Said and His Work Orientalism (1978) (2 presenters—10 min. per each presenter followed by 10-min. group discussion—30 min. in total; a note to the presenters: as the source is quite lengthy, please focus on the Introduction and summarize the main thoughts of the work based on that part).

3. Racial Issues and African American Literature (2 presenters—10 min. per each presenter followed by 10-min. group discussion—30 min. in total; a note to the presenters: 1. please speak about the historical context related to the topic; 2. define 'race' and 'ethnicity' and discuss the issues related to these notions and how they are reflected in literature; 3. talk about several major literary works on the topic; refer to Bressler, 2011, p. 210-219).

4. How Can We Use Postcolonial and African-American Literary Criticism in Contemporary Text Analysis? (1 presenter—15 min. followed by 10-min. group discussion—25 min. in total; please refer to Bressler, 2011, p. 206-209, 218-219; the presenter should summarize 2 theories and their methods).

Break: 10 min.

5. A Critical Analysis of Like a Winding Sheet (1945) by Ann Petry (1 presenter—10 min. followed by 40-min. group discussion—50 min. in total; a note to the presenter: try to apply African-American Criticism in your text analysis; you can divide your response into 2 parts based on the following: 1. Ann Petry as a writer. Characters in the short story; 2. Narration and the narrator in the short story, language, details, and another literary devices. The author's message/ the meaning of the short story from the perspective of African-American Criticism).

A note to everyone: Like a Winding Sheet (1945) by Ann Petry is mandatory. Please read it at home, bring a hard copy to class and be ready to participate in the discussion. Failure to do so affects your participation score.

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Required texts:

1. Bressler, C. E. (2011). Postcolonialism. African-American Criticism. In C. E. Bressler, Literary Criticism: An Introduction to Theory and Practice (pp. 197-219). 5th edn. Longman. – our textbook

2. McLeod, J. (2000). Beginning postcolonialism. Manchester, England: Manchester University Press. – available in the library; includes chapters on literary criticism

3. Said E. W. (1979). Orientalism. New York, NY: Vintage Books, Random House.

Recommended texts:

1. Goldberg, D., Quayson, A. (Eds.). (2002). Relocating postcolonialism. Oxford, England: Blackwell Publishers. – available in the library

2. Loomba, A. (2005). Colonialism/postcolonialism. 2nd edn. Abingdon, England: Routledge. – available in the library

3. Loomba, A., Kaul, S., Bunzl, M., Burton, A., Esty, J. (Eds.). (2005). Postcolonial studies and beyond. Durham: Duke University Press. – available in the library

For the first 4 seminars, students had struggled with time management, but they got used to it later. The most difficult task for them was to select the most important information out of a number of sources. They were primarily retelling what they had read. Synthesizing information was not an easy task for the students. Appointing one of them to watch the time and remind the presenter about the remaining minutes was also helpful.

Conclusion:

fourteen weeks after we had started practicing the timed reports and discussions, I noticed a significant change in students' perception of time. They became more punctual, prepared, focused. Their synthesizing and summarizing skills also remarkably improved. What this shows is that time management and perception are culturally determined but also malleable insofar as they are skills which can be learnt through repetition and practice. Therefore, it seems sensible to offer opportunities whereby students can learn these skills over the course of a semester by employing less stringent punishments and applying requirements such as these to allow students to learn the value of gradually recognizing and implementing time etiquette for their own good rather than simply to comply with an authoritarian mandate.

High and Low Contexts in Communication. Another reason for misunderstandings between a teacher and a student or amongst the students themselves is due to low or high contexts in communication (Guirdham, 2005, p. 195). High-context communication is based primarily on the physical context and relationship, while explicitness is minimized, meanings are internalized and nonverbal codes are accentuated (Hall, 1976; Lustig & Koester, 1999). On the contrary, communication in low-context cultures is built on the messages that are coded in a plain and explicit manner (Lustig & Koester, 1999). If a teacher uses codes of high-context culture (HCC), the problem of a low-context culture (LCC) student is to grasp the meaning: so much is left unsaid. Indirectness and emphasis on relationship data compound the problem. On the contrary, when the teacher uses codes of LCC, the problems of HCC students are over-interpreting and assuming inferences that may not be present. HCC students may also be confounded by directness or the "brutality" of the concentration on hard content or simply suffer from information overload.

There is one more aspect of HCC to take into consideration when embedding teachers into a class with a culture that is foreign to them. It is the teaching style with which the teacher arrives. While many strategies work well in our native countries, these same strategies could have an adverse effect on individuals and groups overseas. This became quite clear to me when it was time to open and read my first class evaluations:

Every educator feels how the heartbeat increases when it comes time to read students' class evaluations. I was about to open the envelope after the first literature course I delivered for a new MA program in English Language and Literature at the University of Kurdistan Hewlêr (refer to group 6, Table 1). I opened the envelope, quickly went through the feedback report and sighed with relief as it was generally good, but some students' comments struck me:

"She talks, displays slides and asks us to take notes at the same time. It is hard to cope with this."

"We feel a kind of overloaded."

"With due respect, Dr. Olga could calm down at times."

This turned out to be the most beneficial evaluation of my teaching career to date. Based on these honest reactions, I could see that my teaching style was too strong for these students (and quite possible for many more).

Conclusion: I decided to adapt my teaching strategies, narrow down the content of the course and intensity of each seminar. I also started sharing my Power Point Presentations with students before the seminar so that they could be more familiar with the movement of my explanations and take notes easily. Of course, the effect of surprise and intrigue which I had enjoyed in my previous teaching positions was lost, but I realized that it is more important to take into account the challenges of a group whose cultural grounds are vastly different from my own and to do my best to mitigate them for the sake of enhancing their learning potential.

Another aspect to consider regarding high-context learners has to do with the level of clarity they will demonstrate versus low-context learners. If a person was brought up in a high-context system, he or she expects others to be more understanding than do people raised in low-context societies (Hall, 1976, p. 113). When they speak, those high-context individuals expect their interlocutors to know what they are talking about; they are rarely specific and often talk about and around the point without referencing points that really matter. Therefore, the onus is put upon the listener to understand the main point (Ibid.). In our case, these high-context individuals are Middle Eastern students studying in their natural environment and having a teacher from low-context culture or even more complex—international students who study in a low-context country. As an illustration of a typical misunderstanding between a high-context student and a low-context teacher, I will bring up a situation I found myself in when teaching Academic Reading to English Foundation at the University of Kurdistan Hewlêr to students with A2+—B1 level of language competency (see group 5, Table 1):

As a part of a weekly formative assessment, I was conducting vocabulary tests, asking students to do the following: 1. write a word from dictation (spelling assessment), 2. define it (understanding of the meaning, possibility of multiple meanings) and 3. write a sentence with this word (the use of a new vocabulary unit in the context). I delegated correction of tasks 1 and 2 to one of the students and checked task 3 myself. There were two reasons for that: to allow each student to benefit from error correction practice and to reduce my own correction load. I considered this approach as mutually beneficial for students and myself and was happy to proceed with such an advantageous strategy.

One day Shillan came to my office. She looked sad and wanted to talk to me. I let her in; she sat down and said:

"Teacher, I want to change my group please."

"Why, my dear? What happened?" I was astonished as Shillan was one of the best students in that group.

"I do not feel comfortable there. Nobody likes me."

"How do you know that? Did anyone tell you something offensive? How have you found it out"

"No, no one told me anything. But I see it. I feel it."

"Could it be only in your imagination, dear"

"No, I feel it. I do not have any friends."

"You will have them. We have just started the program."

"I see how they all look at me."

"You have to rest, dear. Let us meet in a couple of days and decide how we deal with this."

"Yes. Thank you, teacher."

Conclusion: Although Shillan did not reveal directly what the source of her anxiety was, she left it to me to understand that her troubles were stemming from the peer correction portion of the class. Students took peer correction personally and rebelled against Shillan's authority in marking as she was a strict and honest marker. After trying them all in a peer corrector's role, I returned to a traditional 'teacher-corrector' scheme. But what struck me in this situation was how Shillan, who originated from high-context culture, expected me to guess what was the source of her problems; and it took me a while to understand what she really meant as I believed that frankness and directness were my best companions in face-to-face meetings with my students.

Classroom Management. Another issue that a teacher should contemplate in a multicultural educational setting is classroom management. The main question here is how to unite a heterogeneous formation and how to pay attention and show respect to each individual not abasing any student. One of the successful techniques in management of a multicultural classroom is that a teacher makes a shift from routine, bureaucratic management to delegation of his or her authority to students, so that lateral communication between students increases (Cohen, 1990, p. 15). Students will keep each other on task, enforce safety procedures, make sure that work is completed and reduce uncertainty through procuring help when needed. This method of shifting authority is not often used by teachers due to their fear of losing control over the class, but it may be effective enough to unite students from different ethnic and religious communities. This method of cooperative learning helps to decrease prejudice towards some class members. As Cohen (1990) says, "cooperative learning will produce increased friendliness and social acceptance that is so important in the multicultural classroom" (p. 20).

Educators should also be ready to use status-treatment tasks to prevent the domination of high-status students in the class. These can be Multiple-Ability Treatment and Assigning of Competence to Low-Status Students (Cohen, 1990, p. 18). In the first task type, the educator convinces students that everyone in a group has at least one developed skill. Therefore, each student is as valuable as any other student. In the second task type, the teacher aims at improving the image of unpopular students. When working on a task in a team, those students might demonstrate competence in areas other than English language usage (general erudition, science, literature, etc.), and the teacher can the give a positive public evaluation of the students' abilities.

Teachers of a multicultural class generally focus on the ethnic differences of their students, but it is important to remember that this focus is best when it acknowledges interesting differences and is not used for social exclusion; cultural differences become celebrated when they are recognized as legitimate, distinctive characteristics of individuals (Pirjo, 2011). Teachers of a multicultural class must be on guard against any form of stereotyping and stigmatizing. The aim of the intercultural approach to teaching is understood, firstly, as the promotion of a healthy individual with an integrated/balanced sense of self, with a functional bilingualism and competence in two and more cultural contexts (Pirjo, 2011). In addition, to reach this aim, teachers would do well to work on motivating each student to become a bicultural actor with a profound understanding of cultural values, a respect for one's own value system as well as respect for the values of others, appreciation of diversity, and a tolerance for inconsistency and otherness. When students have integrated these perspectives, they can be said to have gained a metacultural knowledge which can be seen as valuable as the more overt aims of simple language acquisition.

Learning a Foreign language. Let us return to another crucial factor which influences teacher-student rapport and mutual understanding in international educational environment. It is the psychological effects of learning a foreign language. A teacher has to support and encourage students learning a foreign language and help them to overcome the feeling of being weak due to insufficient mastery of a non-native language. The psychological impacts of learning to speak a second language can be momentous, engendering feelings of vulnerability, of being inadequate and of frustration in not being able to express one's intelligence in a way one is accustomed to. Many of these negative effects can be mitigated by a teacher who can make a positive impact in the classroom and outside of it. Teachers, who are friendly, helpful, supportive and approachable, find that students are willing to accept them positively and that students have respect for them and trust them. Students easily identify with teachers whose classes they enjoy and often work hard so as not to disappoint their teacher. Such a teacher also helps students to strengthen their own value system when it comes to academic integrity and motivation.

2. PECULIARITIES OF INTERNATIONAL TEACHING AND LEARNING IN UKRAINE, SAUDI ARABIA AND THE KURDISTAN REGION OF IRAQ

In 2018, according to the Ukrainian State Centre for International Education, a division of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, the country hosted 66,310 foreign students from 147 countries (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2018). The top 10 countries of origin of international students in Ukraine are as follows: India—16.4%, Azerbaijan—11.3%, Morocco—8.8%, Turkmenistan—6.7%, Nigeria—4.9%, Georgia—4.2%, Turkey—4.1%, Egypt—3.8%, Uzbekistan—3.5%, Jordan—3.2%, others—33.1%. International students from post-Soviet countries form 29.47%, whereas the rest (70.53%) come from the other countries. The top 10 most popular Ukrainian universities among international students are Kharkiv National Medical University—5471 students, V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University—4273 students, Odessa National Medical University—3543 students, Zaporizhzhya State Medical University—2588 students, Bogomolets National Medical University—2307 students, National Pirogov Memorial Medical University—2020 students, Interregional Academy of Personnel Management—1892 students, Dnipropetrovsk Medical Academy of Health Ministry of Ukraine—1807 students, European University—1728 students, I. Horbachevsky Ternopil State Medical University—1674 students. The number of international students increases each year; the academic year 2015-2016 brought to Ukraine 185 new international students, whereas this number increased up to 228 students in 2016-2017, and finally Ukraine hosted 239 new international students in 2017-2018.

The main complaints of foreign students studying in Ukraine are the quality of information acquisition, university and hostel facilities and prejudged negative attitudes of police officers. Taking into account that these issues represent only a short list of official complaints, we must assume that there many more problems than were reported

and that there are actual problems that are more serious in the content than were reported. We know, for instance, that foreign students' most fundamental issues start in their classrooms. Their first-year Preparatory Program, which is factually aimed at cultural integration, is complicated by the diversity of nations forming the group and sometimes by the cultural insensitivity of a teacher. Over time, the 2nd, the 3rd year or even graduate students become accustomed to being isolated, solitary and insecure entities in their classes and are comforted and regain confidence within their ethnic groups only. The negative effects of mishandled multicultural classrooms result in low academic achievements and even psychological trauma which can and do result in mental disorders.

The preparatory year is essential for an international student who has committed to spend 5-7 years of his or her life abroad. It establishes the basis for the student's further academic success or failure. That is why the role of a preparatory year language teacher is vitally important. In Ukraine, a teacher of a second language may not even have an international and intercultural experience which often results in cultural narrowness and callousness. However, even in these cases, a teacher who desires to succeed could be trained to appreciate and adhere to the basic principles of teaching in a multicultural classroom.

In Ukraine, second language classes (Russian or Ukrainian, rarely—English) are given to a group of 12–16 foreign students, who are grouped by the category of their chosen specialization. Therefore, there may be, in a single class, students from the Middle East (Iraq, Jordan, Palestine, Syria and others) and Africa (Morocco, Tunisia, Nigeria, Congo and others) with different educational and religious backgrounds. The first teacher's task is to determine how to make this group work effectively and create a friendly respectful atmosphere for every student in spite of their diversity. Language barriers may make new relationships most improbable. The result is often self-segregation of the various language and cultural groups. There is, however, a solution for this issue: "If the teacher uses traditional, competitive methods of evaluation and tasks that are standardized for all students, there will be a high level of agreement between students on the ranking of their classmates in an academic status-order" (Cohen, 1990, p. 9).

Cultural diversity in a classroom is not the only problem that a teacher has to deal with. Students come from different countries with different teaching and learning styles. They have different academic achievements and abilities as Ukraine accepts a wide range of students with varying strengths and aptitudes. Therefore, the next problem is the varied levels of language ability and study skills in a classroom which influences and creates challenges for the chosen modes of instruction. Very soon a multicultural classroom becomes even a more complicated formation—a multilevel classroom. Sometimes students come to Ukraine even without basic knowledge of English or any other foreign language, and a teacher having English or French as a language of instruction will have problems delivering information to those students. Primarily, these problems occur to Arabic-speaking students coming to study in Ukraine. Thus, another teachers' problem is the language of instruction, which, of course, often enough is the target language. From my own experience of teaching at the preparatory year program , bilingual or multilingual students may be employed as a bridge to assist the teacher in communicating basic tasks and lesson material. At the same time, it is important to ensure that information, which is conveyed, is not misinterpreted while a bridge-student is translating it from English into the native language of the group. Due to a culturally conditioned high level of pride, for example, Middle Eastern male students will rarely admit lack of understanding and ask questions. Middle Eeastern female students also do not show that they do not understand a teacher's message due their natural shyness and pride. To avoid this problem, a teacher can regularly check whether the material is understood by all the students through the use of various techniques and back-ups which ensure faithful reception and understanding.

Religion. Another important factor for a language teacher to keep in sight is religion. Even though religion serves as a source of consolation and motivation, it is also a source of a conflict. In light of this, the art of teaching relies heavily on the perceptions of the educator towards the group formed by representatives of different religions. A teacher must not show even the slightest sign of preference of any religion. He or she must be equally respectful to Muslims, Christians, Hindus or others regardless of his or her own religious belief. This need for tolerance applies equally to the choice and treatment of teaching materials for the class. If a teacher brings a text about Christmas in Ukraine, this could be balanced with a group discussion about the students' religious holidays, for example, the characteristics and fundamentals of Eid Al-Fitr or Eid Al-Adha celebrations. Students who are allowed to speak their own beloved traditions and beliefs usually react positively and are happy to share their cultural insights with others. Of course, by avoiding such topics as sex, alcohol and drugs which are taboo in some cultures, teachers can secures themselves from offending or confusing their students as well as associated administrative problems.

Time, One More Note. Besides religion, there is one more obvious difficult issue which a teacher must deal with in a multicultural classroom. Some problems related to differences in time perception have been mentioned above, and along with these there are some other challenges that can and often do arise due to variations in the ways that different cultures regard the concept of time. From observation, I have noted that Ukrainian teachers often lose their temper because of their students' regular instances of class tardiness. Let us note that these 'late' students usually come from the Middle Eastern countries. Many teachers will feel offended or disrespected due to the fact that some students do not even attempt to offer an excuse; they simply do not feel guilty for being late. When a teacher observes the same student arriving late in multiple class meetings, he or she will often notice that there is a consistency in regards to how late that student is each time. For example, instead of coming at 9:00 am, this particular student always comes at 9:20 am. A teacher has no choice but to accept that some students are always late because they have different perception of time. Different cultures have different attitude towards time: "Time is perceived via two separate schemata: monochromic time which is quantifiable and limited, and polychromic time which is not quantifiable and limitless" (Buckingham et al, 2000, p. 84). International students from polychromic cultures sometimes complain about the difficulty of completing course requirements and assignments on time; they even say they don't have enough time to take care of their personal needs. Thus, in the face of an inability to change these culturally based time perceptions in their students, educators must adopt patience and understanding while working toward the goal of helping their students shift their time perceptions to the Western standards of the culture whose language the students are attempting to acquire.

By following all the recommendations provided above, a teacher of a multicultural classroom is put in a better position to pursue the main aim which of course is facilitating the successful acquisition of a target language and culture. A teacher can help students not only to acquire a new language, but to immerse themselves in the surrounding culture without fear of losing their own values and beliefs. Thus, we can reconfirm that "successful second language acquisition is accompanied by second culture acquisition, i. e. linguistic competence is accompanied by [inter-]cultural competence" (Korhonen, 2002, p. 46). Achievement of this aim is complicated by mixed Ukrainian-Russian context (in Donbass region, for instance); and a teacher can help students to avoid embarrassment about learning a language in a different or mixed cultural context and show them how to enjoy the advantages of this situation. A teacher can also help students to distinguish the finer points between two interrelated cultures (for instance, Ukrainian and Russian) so that they can benefit from each of them and avoid the consequences of making faux pas.

It is beneficial for our research to study the situations when a foreign teacher comes to a homogeneous conservative class to teach a foreign language. According to statistical data for the academic year 2016-2017 (1437-1438) provided by the Ministry of Higher Education in collaboration with the Ministry of Planning and Information of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, we have the following picture in figures: the total number of new students in Saudi Arabia enrolled that year in language programs at all qualification levels of all higher education institutions was 183,972; the total number of foreign teaching staff in all the higher education institutions in Saudi Arabia was 34,124 for that year. A considerable number of students choose languages, including English and other foreign languages, as their area of specialization. At the same time, the number of foreign teaching staff, as we see in every year's statistical reports, is increasing. These factors emphasize the necessity of intercultural competence of educators as a requirement for successful learning.

Leaving the figures aside, we must notice that educational setting in Kurdish universities has even more complex nature if compared to Ukraine and Saudi Arabia. On the one hand, the majority of foreign language teachers come from English-speaking countries. On the other hand, we have Kurdish students with different cultural and educational background: Arabic-speaking students who have been brought up in Baghdad and the other locations of Iraq, Kurds from the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Kurds from Iran, Kurds from Turkey and Kurds returning home from different parts of the world after forced emigration. The latter ones bear the language(s) and culture of those various countries from which they return. Moreover, depending on the location in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, there are several Kurdish dialects that also present slight differences in the mentalities of the natives of those territories. Adding to that, there is a huge difference between public and private school graduates as the latter have more exposure to international teaching methods, other cultures and languages, more contact hours in foreign languages and literature, and usually a resultant higher level of foreign language proficiency. The complexity of the educational context of the Kurdistan Region can be shown in the following exemplary situation which I witnessed in my Kurdish postgraduate class in Methodology of Teaching Literature:

Delivering a model high school lesson, one of the MA program students (see group 6, Table 1), Akhink, told to one of her peers who was supposed to act among others as a high school pupil:

"Shame on you, Sipan!"

The student did not respond to this remark. But after the model lesson was over, he was commenting on his peer's lesson and mentioned that it was rude for a teacher in this cultural setting to tell her student "Shame on you!"

The other 6 students were divided supporting one or another of the sides, and there was no unity between them. Some were saying this phrase is acceptable, some were arguing against.

Finally, the teaching student uttered:

"I apologize, Sipan," she said, "I did not know that we come from different cultures." It seemed evident that she said that with ironic intonation.

Even though Akhink was a Kurd, she was brought up in Holland; she graduated from school there and behaved with European directness and openness. She preferred a democratic way of teacher-student communication with ironic remarks. Sipan, on the other hand, was a Kurd who was born and brought up in Syria and attained his BA in Damascus. As such, he demanded a more respectful attitude from his female teaching peer. As a teacher and mediator, I was compelled to offer my stance to help resolve the issue. I said: "Dear students, it is very good we have had a chance to experience this argument during the observation of a model lesson. That means that we will not so easily repeat this situation again. As you see, it is not only lesson material which must be carefully selected by the educator. We must also censor our vocabulary and monitor our cultural sensitivity depending on the context."

Conclusion: Our teaching style needs to be adapted to a particular setting. Certain remarks and reaction we have can serve as triggers for others dependent on their cultural values, so once we become aware of what those triggers are, we can work to modify our tactics so that we can make a safe and comfortable environment for the students we would hope to educate.

3. NECESSITY FOR DEVELOPMENT OF INTER- AND CROSS-CULTURAL COMPETENCE IN TEACHER TRAINING

From all the abovementioned material, we can conclude that intercultural competence of educators is highly desired but entails much sensitivity and willingness to accept and adapt to foreign modes of thought and feeling. The role of (inter)cultural competence in contemporary teacher education is crucial (Ikpeze, 2015, p. 9-10). Implementation of this task is engaged from two levels: the administrative level of higher education establishments and through the competence of individual teachers. Moreover, the second one should be arranged at the state level. American scholars, having an elaborated system of effective education in multicultural settings, do not stop underlying the importance of this direction (Imel, 1998; Kalfadellis, 2005). Saffold (2008), working on intercultural sensitivity in urban schools, says that "teachers must be responsive and sensitive to the variety of cultures in the urban schools. Prospective teachers today must be willing to embrace minority children, to deconstruct and redesign curriculum, and to enact fair and equitable practices for all students" (p. 6).

General intercultural competence may be characterized by three major themes (or domains of ability): the ability to maintain and develop relationships, the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with minimal loss or distortion, and the ability to attain compliance and obtain cooperation with others (Fantini, 2000, p. 27). All these components of general intercultural competence may be referred to as teacher's intercultural competence. According to Witsel (2003), teachers should develop such intercultural skills as getting to know the individual, understanding students' behaviour from their perspective, managing stress, gaining the ability to cope with ambiguous situations as well as unpredictable demands, being sensitive to the cultural background of students, adjusting the existing constraints and limitations, expressing their ideas in such a way that students will objectively and fully understand what the teachers have in mind. Teachers also need extensive retraining in methods of classroom organization and management so that they can expand their teaching repertoire to include complex instruction (Cohen, 1990, p. 20). In addition, teachers should work on their second language proficiency as a part of their intercultural competence.

Many Ukrainian teachers do not know anything about the history, culture and geography of the countries from which their students come. These limitations must be addressed by the professionals themselves as the initial step for overcoming intercultural misunderstanding. Teacher's training in ICC may be organized at the state level or by universities and departments. International students bring significant income to the education sector, and the improved quality of educational services could make the image of Ukraine more attractive in the global market.

Following the example of the USA, Ukrainian and Middle Eastern universities could organize intercultural counseling, which has already justified its existence being "the fourth force" in psychology, complementary to the other three forces or theoretical frameworks of psychodynamic, behavioral, and humanistic psychology (Buckingham, 2000, p. 78). This formation is normally aimed at giving to international students the opportunity to solve the students' culture-related problems with the help of a counselor. "Talk therapy" itself is an effective treatment for mental disorders, and many university psychologists are aware of this, but they are rarely available even for Ukrainian students. Having a lot of paper work, university psychologists are far from students' problems and, consequently, they rarely adequately serve international students. It is a rare case when Saudi Arabian and Kurdish universities have a campus psychologist at all.

Counselors of intercultural counseling would be able to deal with the common problems of trauma, eating disorders, substance abuse, psychological conditions requiring medication and also would be able to support students during normal stress and life cycle transitions. It is known that "some cultures do not make a clear distinction between physical and mental well-being, and, frequently, emotional difficulties are manifested in somatic complaints" (Buckingham, 2000, p. 79). Thus, international students often do not need a physician, but a psychologist, and those students may not admit this. International students affected by external factors over which they have little or no control (financial pressures, sponsorship factors, immigration requirements) are liable to experience mental problems and need continuous support at the university level. Moreover, international students may be grouped or judged, albeit unfairly, by their language or visible differences, becoming the target of ignorance and stereotypes. Many of us have witnessed such a mistreatment towards foreigners. Thus, intercultural counseling can be helpful, especially with students who come from collectively-oriented cultures.

Upon the arrival of international students, Ukrainian and Kurdish universities, like European or American establishments, could organize orientation sessions. Before starting actual studies, it would be a good idea to have introductory meetings and welcoming presentations, and the universities must have explained to the students where they are going to sleep and have their next meal. Hands-on support, such as information about how to make trips to a grocery store, drugstore or a bank, is also helpful. Unfortunately, these orientation sessions are often delegated to teachers and coordinators who may help students with their basic needs if they are sensitive to these needs. Very frequently students are left to fend for themselves to meet their everyday needs. Additionally, Ukrainian culture workshops, together with lessons in law, are most helpful, especially for newcomers from the Middle East. Meetings with current and former international students may be a good source of valuable information and encouragement for newly arrived international students.

The Ukrainian system of higher education might follow the suggestion of European Association of International Education, which aiming at the development of intercultural competence, proposes internationalization of higher education establishments. This means the process of integrating international dimensions into teaching, research and service: "An international dimension introduces or integrates an international/intercultural/global outlook into the major functions of a university or college" (Yang, 2002, p. 83). Going through internalization, the teaching, research and service functions of a higher education system become more internationally and interculturally compatible and attractive for foreign students. Academic study needs an international approach to stimulate critical thinking and inquiry about the complexity of issues and interests that bear on the relations among nations, regions and interest groups (Yang, 2002, p. 86). Hiring foreign teachers and participating in student, faculty and scholar exchanges, Ukrainian universities are taking the first steps in the direction of internalization, but this process should get more attention from the side of educators who are rarely willing to participate in international programs; therefore, they are scientifically isolated, do not address foreign editions and inventions and often prejudge international students based on common stereotypes and prejudices.

4. CONCLUSION

The research has, in a multifaceted way, presented peculiarities of teaching foreign languages and literature in a multicultural classroom in different cultural settings—Ukraine, Saudi Arabia and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The theories on multicultural classrooms acquire some specific characteristics in the Ukrainian ground due to their relative novelty for the Ukrainian educational system. Additionally, Ukraine has not yet resolved its Ukrainian-Russian language and culture collisions, which have recently escalated with the military conflict in the Eastern Ukraine. However, the Ukrainian-Russian question must not overshadow the more general and pervasive challenges that all teachers must face when having a group of students from different parts of the world. The issue of teachers' lack of intercultural competence is still not acknowledged by many educators. None of the countries in this research offer a centralized solution of the problem at the state level. Very few educators are aware that the focus in a multicultural classroom is shifted from subject-related objectives to culture-related issues that have to be solved wisely in order to advance the pedagogical goals that all universities value.

Teachers' intercultural responsibility is most crucial in language classes, as a language teacher teaches about culture and addresses cultural issues more than a teacher of other subjects. Thus, a second language teacher is responsible not only to teach language acquisition, but to expose students to strategies of cultural integration and preservation of cultural identity of each student. A language teacher in this case becomes a teacher of culture, history, literature and etiquette. What may be really helpful for a language teacher in a multicultural classroom is developed intercultural sensitivity which needs to become integrate into the professional qualities of a contemporary teacher.

Ukraine, hosting thousands of foreign students each year, must not neglect the need of the development of intercultural competence in the sphere of higher education. Most of the works, written by our domestic researchers on the topic of intercultural communication, are related to business and marketing, but development in the path of intercultural understanding in language education is at least as crucial and possibly more so. Integration into European and other world communities, which is so desirable for Ukrainian authorities, is impossible without raising the level of intercultural competence of Ukrainian educators. The initiative and responsibility lies on not only individual enthusiastic teachers, but also universities and state authorities, starting from the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. It is recommended that training and orientation in ICC and CCC be made a mandatory program of teaching staff professional development as an initial step toward arriving at these stated goals.

Ukrainian education on its way to intercultural competence may then follow the standards and practices of the USA and Europe with their examples of providing international students with intercultural counseling services, organizing orientation sessions and working on internalization of educational establishments, including the development of appropriate teacher training and research methods. That is how Ukrainian universities may improve the quality of education, increase the value of certificates they are giving, and become more attractive for foreign students, which in turn will be beneficial for the international image of Ukrainian state.

Teaching experiences in Saudi Arabia and the Kurdistan Region offer many lessons and provide a general overview of the kinds of issues that arise in these parts of the world. Whereas in most of Saudi Arabian universities, new teaching staff are given an orientation which consists of short-term programs with the target of the development of survival and adaptation skills of newly arrived Western educators, the primary focus would be better directed at establishing rapport between internationally hired teachers, primarily Western-educated, and local Saudi students. The same point is relevant for the context of the Kurdistan Region. The challenges associated with teaching a foreign language in the region become even more complicated due to territorial disputes (e.g. Iraqi, Turkish, Syrian and Iranian Kurds), genocide and multiple displacements of the Kurdish nation (as well as the waves of emigration to far-abroad countries). The Kurdish nation comprises several ethnic and religious groups each with its own dialect of Kurdish language. Due to these issues and others, both educational acting parties—teachers and students—are forced to interact with widely different cultural and educational backgrounds and standards. In such a context, the role of intercultural competence cannot be overestimated. The excerpts from the research field notes taken during participant observation of 6 various groups in different educational and cultural settings highlight many characteristic challenges that local and foreign educators in these regions must face. In addition, these anecdotal segments offer specific strategies in the spirit of showing that such problems can be overcome through exposure, research, theory, practice, trial and error and an earnest desire on the part of educators and administration to identify and address these issues so that discourse can begin and ideas and experiences can be shared and improvements can be gained thereby.

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