

CROSS-CULTURAL AWARENESS RAISING IN TEFL PRE-SERVICE PREPARATION COURSES

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Abstract

The issue of culture can never be separated from the area of teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL). Thus the awareness of cross-cultural differences is crucial for native speakers of English who want to teach EFL abroad. This paper investigates the relationship between cross-cultural understanding and native speaker teachers' adaptability to teaching and living in a new environment through the findings of a small-scale survey of teachers and trainers, and discusses the implications for initial teacher preparation schemes.

Introduction

As the world has become a global village, the learning of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has been blossoming. The need for a 'teaching force' is massive, so more and more short (4-5 week) preparatory TEFL certificate training programmes have been established to produce 'qualified' teachers. Many trainee teachers finishing such courses immediately take up teaching EFL in a new country, where they may find it very difficult to cope with cultural differences because they are not sufficiently prepared for these. That is not to say that this area is neglected at the pre-service training stage. In fact, it is difficult to ignore the topic of cross-cultural understanding during the discussion of TEFL, because there are always at least two countries involved. However, many TEFL trainees, or even trainers, do not realise that it is not just *information* about culture that is needed, but also *sensitivity* to cross-cultural differences that must be fostered.

This article is based on the findings of a research project (Lee 1998) which investigated the relationship between the way cross-cultural awareness is raised and the trainee teachers' adaptability to teaching and living in a new environment. It claims that the discussion of cross-cultural understanding should not only be raised, but also be carefully schemed in TEFL pre-service preparation courses. The small-scale survey of teachers provides data that allows examination of the conflicts between expatriate teachers and local students/staff in terms of cross-cultural miscommunication. Three interviews with trainers reveal existing modes of input and trainers' beliefs regarding cultural issues at the TEFL pre-service training stage. The following questions are addressed:

1. How does cross-cultural understanding affect EFL teachers' adaptability to living and working in a new environment?
2. How should cross-cultural awareness be raised at TEFL pre-service training stage?
3. What are the foreigner teachers' roles and tasks concerning cross-cultural communication?

In addition to looking at EFL teachers' and trainers' roles as well as their responsibilities in respect of cross-cultural communication, I will also recommend an approach for developing EFL teachers' cultural awareness.

The impact of culture shock and TEFL

For those EFL teachers who have never travelled abroad before teaching English as Foreign Language, the first experience might prove to be very challenging. Those who have had previous TEFL experience or have travelled a lot still require adjustment when working and living in a new culture. Culture shock might easily occur when teachers are not prepared well enough in advance to alter their pace, attitudes or behaviours in order to fit a myriad of social contexts. When the 'honey moon' period is past, the following feelings such as homesickness, frustration, anger, can seriously strike at a person's mental state (Brown 1994: 170-171). Consequently many teachers have become the 'carriers' of their students' culture shock in the classroom.

Context, language, values and behaviours are inseparable. EFL teachers are not simply facing problems inside the English classroom. Their daily encounters with cross-cultural differences take place at 3 levels from general to specific: national, institutional and in the classroom. The three spheres may look as if they exist separately. In fact, they are coherent as the layers of one core culture. They influence each other and affect EFL teachers' life and work in all aspects. In a monolingual classroom, the collective cultural traits dominate students' learning styles and even the classroom dynamic. Foreigner teachers are forced to interact with their students in a certain way due to the social constraints (Holliday 1994:

51). Within the institution, local and expatriate EFL staff often undergo power struggles in making decisions (Stephenson 1996:81). Teachers who are from 'BANA countries' (Britain, Australia, and North America) may face the criticism that their methodologies are culturally imperialistic (Holliday 1994). New teachers often feel overwhelmed and confused when they find that teaching EFL is much more complicated than they expected.

It is not surprising that there are misunderstandings between Western teachers and local students when there is a lack of cross-cultural awareness from both sides during the interaction (Ellis 1996: 217). One of the major problems comes from the mismatches of teachers' and students' expectations due to their different backgrounds. In some Asian countries, teachers are expected to only stand in front of the classroom and write notes on the board for students to copy. It can happen that the students complain that their foreigner English teacher is 'lazy' because he uses many oral activities instead of handouts of grammar points. As they usually do in their culture, the students do not communicate with the foreigner teacher but report direct to the language centre director. The gap between the teacher and the students therefore becomes bigger and brings more distrust. Also, the negative effects of cultural stereotypes may become the obstacles in the cross-cultural understanding between EFL teachers and their students or colleagues. It is dangerous when the teacher judges an individual's performance based on the generalisation he/she has made about the country. Conversely, students' stereotypes about the teacher's culture may also deepen their feelings of insecurity in learning a new language (Brown 1994: 165-167).

Native speaker EFL teachers' roles, tasks, and attitudes

Native speaker teachers may show one of two extreme responses to a different culture when they first arrive in a new country: they either accept everything or do not like anything at all (Ellis 1996: 215). However, these responses do not help when an EFL teacher needs to display the qualities of a successful *cultural negotiator*. In TEFL, this role is equally important as being a good language teacher, because EFL teachers are the windows to the world of English for their students. As a cultural mediator, *flexibility* is important in accommodating different learning styles and in adjusting oneself into a new environment. However, changing the cultural perception does not mean that one has to lose one's identity or deny one's own culture. Observation, comparison, and understanding are

the three essentials of forming positive and healthy attitudes towards cultural differences, which are the corner stones of a good cross-cultural communication (Robinson 1985). It would be much easier for EFL teachers to lower the cultural barriers if they could try to understand the fact that, any aggressive behaviour they may have experienced is actually nothing personal. Of course it is not solely the EFL teachers' responsibility to soothe the tension between the two cultures, although they may have an advantage over their local colleagues and students in comparing and understanding the differences in two cultures since they have experienced both. EFL educators need to be aware that becoming multicultural is part of the profession (Robinson 1985: 100).

Survey: Native speaker teachers' needs and experiences abroad

In a recent small-scale survey of EFL teachers' experience overseas (Lee 1998), I found that it is cultural issues that have a major influence on the adaptability of teachers to living and working in a new environment. The teachers' responses to the questionnaire survey are summarised in table 1 below.

Background information

Gender of subjects

11 males, 4 females

Home country

8 British, 4 American, 3 Canadian

Living abroad and travelling experiences

All of those who participated in the survey have lived abroad for at least one year or more, and have travelled extensively.

Previous TEFL experience

Only 4 of the 15 surveyed had any TEFL experience before working abroad.

Type of institution

11 of the 15 surveyed have worked exclusively for private EFL institutions.

TEFL training prior to teaching

Only 4 of the 15 survey actually participated any TEFL training prior to teaching. All 4 took one-week induction courses, workshops, and class observations held by the local institutions. None of them had received any certifying training schemes before they started teaching EFL.

Adapting to living in a new environment

10 of the 15 surveyed said they adapted well to life in a new environment.

Easy/pleasant/interesting (living)

- Learning new things (interesting environment, traditions, etc) about a country
- Making new friends
- Being aware of one's own ignorance and becoming more open minded
- Nice food, weather, view...

Difficulties (living)

- Overcoming cultural barriers between oneself and the native people
- Poverty, low pay, low standard of living
- Not knowing anyone, loneliness
- Being misunderstood in terms of cross-cultural communication
- Language problems
- The primitive services in the developing countries
- Not being treated friendly, prejudice
- Theft, health worries

Adapting to working in a new environment

More than half of those surveyed indicated that they had a great deal of difficulty adapting to working in a foreign environment.

Easy/pleasant/interesting (working)

- The novelty of working in a different environment
- Friendly colleagues
- Eager students
- Lots of freedom and willingness in trying new techniques that made teaching more enjoyable
- Learning a lot about teaching, receiving ideas from experienced others
- Meeting people from all over the world
- Making money and travelling at the same time
- The cultural exchange with students

Difficulties (working)

- Lack of training, very little or no introduction course to the school
- Lack of safety regulations
- Lack of cultural awareness
- Lack of cross-cultural understanding between 2 sides
- Having to meet high expectation without any previous training
- Bad schedule and teaching hours, overwork
- Irresponsible administrator
- Bad benefits system
- Being criticised for not conforming the school methodology
- Lack of grammatical knowledge
- Discipline and expectations
- Difference in work ethic
- Lack of in-service education for teachers
- Low standard classroom setting/hardware
- Poor communication between the Head Office and the branch schools
- Bad contracts, employers taking advantages of the teachers
- Other undesirable foreigner teachers

Problems with students/parents/colleagues

- Controlling difficult and disruptive students
- Having problems with the Headmaster

- Prejudice regarding the teacher's appearance (long hair) and nationality
- Being seen as an object of entertainment by the students
- Uncreative, unmotivated students

Aspects of culture shock experienced

- Language barriers
- Different customs, traditions, or values
- Feeling of loneliness, insecurity, and homesickness
- Being stared at on the street because of appearance
- Personal space being intruded
- Difficult political situations

Table 1: Summary of results

These findings can be summarised as follows:

1. Most of those surveyed adapted well to life, but most of them had difficulties in adjusting themselves to work. They admitted that they did not have any real idea about TEFL before they went to another country. One said, "Like many native speakers, I just saw TEFL initially as a short term ticket to see the world".
2. One third of the problems the teachers had within the working environment were a consequence of miscommunications between the foreigner teachers and the host country. Language barriers are their greatest concern and often lead to misunderstanding.
3. The differences in professional practice, which result from the differences between two cultures, often caused major disagreements on methodologies and some administrative issues.
4. Some teachers experienced prejudice towards their appearance. One American teacher said he was seen as "object of entertainment" and complained that he was not treated with respect by the students.

5. The 'cultural barriers' that exist in the classroom, in the school and everywhere affect EFL teachers' teaching and living to a large extent. As one teacher remarked, "I was astonished by the incredible amount of bureaucracy in Germany... Sometimes I just want to give up teaching EFL and this made me very homesick."
6. The foreigner teachers usually find it difficult to meet students' and their own expectations. They are often asked to conform to the host environment.
One tends to perceive things in a negative way when undergoing culture shock.
7. Three teachers experienced "reversed culture shock" when they returned to their home country after having lived abroad for a while.
8. Culture shock also took place when moving from one foreign country to another.
9. Those who had input on cross-cultural understanding prior to teaching abroad did find it helpful in adapting to a new environment.

The number of teachers participating in the survey was small, so these results can only be considered indicative, but it is worth noting that the four 'trained' teachers did feel they had fared slightly better (see 10 above) than those who commenced teaching with no prior training.

Awareness raising at the pre-service TEFL preparation stage

"(Cross-cultural) understanding does not mean just decoding someone else's verbal system or being aware of why someone is acting or feeling the way they do. Understanding refers to empathising or feeling comfortable with another person."

(Robinson 1985)

It seems clear from the findings reported above that cross-cultural awareness (or lack of it) is indeed an issue for new foreigner teachers. We need, then, to ask two main questions concerning EFL teachers' cross-cultural awareness:

1. Can we minimise the impact of culture shock of the EFL teachers and students by giving input at the pre-service training stage?
2. Can cross-cultural understanding be taught?

Robinson has suggested, "Knowledge may work particularly well for learners who do not already have an established negative frame of reference regarding members of the target culture." (1985: 62). Once an impression has been formed, no matter whether it is a positive or a negative one, it usually takes longer to alter the fixed perception than to introduce a new one. However, at the TEFL pre-service training stage, regardless of whether trainees have any pre-set ideas about cross-cultural communication, input on cross-cultural understanding may help them establish or re-establish a more positive way of perceiving other cultures before they go abroad.

The approach to cross-cultural understanding is to sensitise the trainees to cross-cultural differences, and further to equip them with positive attitudes as well as a sense of responsibility as a cultural mediator. It is a process to which time and energy must be devoted (Robinson 1985: 3). Trainees become aware of cross-cultural differences through their own mistakes, experiences, observation, reflection, comparison, and empathising (Ibid.). This observation has implications for course designers and trainers concerned with how and to what extent the issue of cross-cultural awareness should be introduced to teacher preparation courses. Methodologies can be taught. Can cross-cultural understanding be formally taught or be trained? This is debatable. Various TEFL reference books talk about coping strategies or cultural simulation activities. They all look quite helpful and stimulating. However, there is a danger that some of them have over simplified the issues and fallen into the pitfall of misleading readers. Besides, do those strategies really help when the future situation is so unpredictable?

Case Studies: Trainers' beliefs and attitudes on cultural input

The best way to answer the questions above is to look at some examples of current practice on pre-service courses. From the case studies of the three CELTA courses in the UK (Lee 1998), I found that, regardless of their different backgrounds and purposes of training, the three trainers interviewed shared many similar view points in terms of cross-cultural awareness raising.

1. *Cross-cultural awareness ought to be raised during TEFL pre-service preparation stage.* Cross-cultural awareness raising is a very subtle subject and should not be

treated superficially. This subject is coupled with all other areas of TEFL and can hardly be singled out for an independent session. Through group discussion, feedback from teaching practice, or reflective tasks, trainees' cross-cultural awareness can more or less be raised. The outcomes will be varied because of individual differences.

2. *Cultural awareness can be raised, but can not possibly be taught.* Facts about one country can be introduced, but values or attitudes towards a country can not be formally taught. They also pointed out the danger of 'culture teaching or culture training'. Since culture, the way of people, changes over a period of time, the only way of knowing it is to live in it, to take a close look at it. Teaching trainees about one country may mislead them by giving stereotypes of it.
3. *Appropriate methodology is another essential topic for new EFL native speaker teachers in addition to the adaptability to living in a new environment.* One of the big mistakes the teachers from 'BANA countries' (Britain, Australia, and North America) (Holliday 1994) frequently make is that they tend to impose their own methodology on learners from different countries, regardless of its inappropriateness and learners' needs in the host country. To avoid the 'instructional imperialism' as such, foreigner teachers need to reconcile their methods with the social context as well as different learning styles. Teachers from BANA countries may feel frustrated if they expect to see their Asian students performing as expressively as the students from European or Latin American countries do. It is necessary for them to be aware of the cross-cultural differences while exploiting TEFL methodologies.
4. *Culture shock might be avoidable to some extent. However, no matter how well or how much the trainees are prepared for culture shock in the future, what they will go through is still somewhat unpredictable. Therefore they need to have a sensitive mind and learn through real living and teaching experiences abroad.* The best chance for trainees to consider cultural differences before going abroad is during teaching practice. The hands-on experience help trainees learn from their students. Trainees also learn by sharing experiences/opinions with their fellow trainees as well as tutors of different cultural backgrounds. In brief, the TEFL pre-service course itself is a miniature occasion of cultural exchange, where trainees' cross-cultural awareness is raised through observation/reflection instead of being formally taught.
5. *Activities.* The importance of teaching practice and the group discussion is emphasised during feedback sections. By reflecting on their teaching practice, trainees are able to

build up a rapport with the students and realise that there is not one particular way of thinking more valuable than the others. Certain simulation activities such as 'foreign language learning' and 'Multilingual versus Monolingual learner groups' can be useful. Group discussion is still the leading activity for cultural topics. Sometimes some tips might be useful to avoid embarrassment on occasion. For example, gestures or language expressions should be used with caution in order not to offend the local people.

6. *Cross-cultural understanding is not a unilateral effort.* Both foreigner teachers and local institutions are responsible for establishing a mutual work ethic. Teachers should be confident in their own methodology, and be understanding when they need to revise it to accommodate their students according to the social context. The trainees are told to face the problems but not to relate problems to personal reasons.
7. *Being open-minded.* The last outcome the trainers want is to instil in trainees stereotypes of other countries. Therefore they strive to maintain objective attitudes and expect their trainees to be sensitive and open-minded when they come across any difficulties due to cultural differences.

Institution/school name	Solihull	Handsworth	Brasshouse
Location	Birmingham, UK	Birmingham, UK	Birmingham, UK
Institution/school type	College	College	Language Centre
TEFL scheme	CELTA	CELTA	CELTA
Length of the program	4 weeks intensive course	One-year-long part-time course	Six-month-long part-time course
Hours per week	30 hours	6 hours	12 hours
Size of the class	8-12 per class	10 per class	8-16 per class
Numbers of trainees	N/A	13	9
Tutors	Master's degree with wide experience in TEFL/TESL	Master's degree with wide experience in TEFL/TESL	Master's degree with wide experience in TEFL/TESL
Numbers of tutors	1 tutor to 6 trainees	1 tutor to 5 trainees	1 tutor to 4 trainees

Criterion of admission	A level or equivalent, or mature students showing the ability of completing the CELTA course Written application 3 hours of interview	A level or equivalent, or mature students showing the ability of completing the CELTA course Written application 3 hours of interview	A level or equivalent, or mature students showing the ability of completing the CELTA course Written application 3 hours of interview
Years of running	2 years	2 years	5 years
Daily schedule	Teaching practice: 1.5 hours Feedback: 1.5 hours Input session: 1.5 hours	Teaching practice: 1.5 hours Feedback: 1.5 hours Input session: 1.5 hours	Teaching practice: 1.5 hours Feedback: 1.5 hours Input session: 1.5 hours
Cultural cross-awareness issues	No formal sessions on cross-cultural understanding, but think cross-cultural awareness raising is necessary at the preparation stage	No formal sessions on cross-cultural understanding, but think cross-cultural awareness raising is necessary at the preparation stage	No formal sessions on cross-cultural understanding, but think cross-cultural awareness raising is necessary at the preparation stage
Graduates	Most will teach abroad	Most will stay in the U.K. and teach part-time	Some will teach in the U.K., some will teach abroad

Table 2: General information about the three CELTA programmes studied.

Discussion

The results of the survey and case studies reported above raise a number of issues worthy of further discussion.

Foreigner teachers' awareness

The existence of 'Ethnocentrism' is frequently seen in many TEFL/TESL teacher preparation schemes (Liu 1998: 3-10). Among the TEFL methodologies taught within BANA countries, there is often a gap between what is believed and what is true, and between the way the English native speakers teach their students and a way which is acceptable to the students. This phenomenon explains why it is that, although the foreigner teachers do not mean to neglect the needs of the local students, they put in little effort to

find out why so many misunderstandings occur. Their experiences and views are limited because they only perceive things from their own cultural standpoint (Holliday 1994). In consequence, with their limited views, the foreigner teachers' ability of spotting and solving problems that resulted from cross-cultural miscommunication is unsatisfactory. In the survey of EFL teachers' experience overseas, one teacher urged that foreigner teachers should "be aware of one's own ignorance."

"It's easy, and therefore common, to blame misunderstanding or lack of communication on the perceived stupidity/belligerence/insensitivity/lack of culture/foolishness on the part of native people of a country instead of facing one's fear of being misunderstood."

(Author's data, Lee 1998)

When culture shock is taking place, a clear mind and balanced views are essential in analysing the problems as well as overcoming the difficulties. Conflicts could be caused by the ignorance of the local people, by the foreigner teachers' resistance to comply with certain social standards, or a combination of both.

Person as social being

The scope of EFL teacher preparation should be beyond general teaching skills; the definition of EFL teachers' roles is also more than just a 'person with the knowledge of English'. Roberts (1998:36) has suggested the language teachers' roles in terms of "person as social being". He says, "...learning to teach is not a private journey, but it involves the adoption of a social role...in learning to teach, each individual is developing a social identity, so as to fulfil a significant public role". As a part of the host society, it is difficult for the foreigner teachers to exempt themselves from certain social constraints and responsibilities. The foreigner teachers need to learn to accept their role as a member of the society in conjunction with their role as a foreign language teacher (Byram 1989: 48-49).

Two aspects of the students' expectations

In terms of students' expectations, there are two aspects where the EFL teachers need to pay special attention. The first one is *what should be taught*. This aspect has to do with the learners' interests, needs and goals. The content of the EFL syllabus should vary to cater to

different needs. In addition, it will often have to cover areas specified in a national curriculum or set course book. Where these exist, 'getting through' the syllabus may or may not contribute to student expectations. The second aspect is *how it should be taught*. Again this aspect is subject to change according to the environment. The term 'appropriate methodology' indicates that there is not one method 'better' than another is, but one method which might be more suitable than another is in certain social contexts (Holliday 1994). Thus, certain activities might be considered 'inappropriate' because of cultural differences.

Many Asian students see teachers as 'authority' or as 'guru', and may feel uncomfortable if the foreigner teacher asks them to do most of the talking in class. Their expectations of the teacher's figure reflects their national culture that deeply influenced their viewpoints and behaviours. If we draw a continuum to describe the nature of those expectations from 'personal' to 'cultural', the first aspect would be close to the 'personal' side while the second one would approach the other end of the scale. For the foreigner teachers, being aware of their students' expectations of their roles is one way to better cross-cultural communication in the EFL classroom.

Bridging the 'culture gap'—learning from the local teachers' experiences

Trying to put the existence of the 'culture gap' in perspective, we can view it as a great opportunity to promote better cross-cultural understanding between local and expatriate teachers. Although in EFL projects, there is not one method 'better' than another is, the local teachers do know better in catering for local students' learning styles (they are from the host country as well). The observation of local teachers' teaching would be a quick and powerful means of getting a good sense of the culture in the local EFL class. This is a 'second-hand' (Roberts 1998: 138), but a rather useful experience by which the foreigner teachers could familiarise the interaction in the EFL classroom. The expatriate teachers need to constantly switch between the role as a teacher in foreign language education and a learner in cross-cultural relations (Byram 1989: 3-4).

Developing a model of EFL teachers' cultural awareness raising

The repertoire of TEFL preparation courses

It is an art to integrate language and culture in foreign language teaching, as it is in foreign language teaching training. Cultural issues are so subtle that they can not be formally taught. However, the raising of cultural awareness ought to be carefully schemed at TEFL preparation stage (Byram 1989: 51). In the repertoire of TEFL training programmes, the term 'culture' needs not only to be mentioned, but also to be specified to avoid ambiguity. Douglas Brown has classified 'the awareness of cross-cultural differences and sensitivity to students' cultural traditions' as one of the essential interpersonal skills on his list of 'good language teaching characteristics' (1994: 430). For trainees who are going to work abroad, I suggest that the emphasis should be on 'cross-cultural understanding in a monolingual classroom', or on 'cross-cultural awareness in teaching in the host country'.

Trainers' awareness

It is crucial for trainers to enlighten trainees on finding out 'who they are', 'where they come from', and also 'what they need to bring with them' by the end of the training (Wallace 1991:50-51). To establish trainees' autonomy, the advisory work ought to be done collaboratively instead of prescriptively. During the process of TEFL preparation, ideas and concepts should be elicited inductively from the trainees (Wallace 1991: 108-112). With its abstract nature, cultural understanding is a subject to be experienced rather than taught. Since the pre-service preparation stage is a somewhat artificial environment where trainees simulate the situations of TEFL, providing views and opinions from different perspectives and cultural backgrounds is a challenging task for trainers. To build up trainees' awareness and sensibility to cross-cultural differences, trainers themselves also need to be sensitive about their way of bringing up the issues of culture. They have to grasp any opportunity to draw trainees' attention to the topic of cross-cultural understanding during the discussions.

Developing a model

A good way to make trainee teachers aware of their tasks and responsibilities in this respect is to 'put them in others' shoes'. In other words, trainee teachers can best understand the feelings of their students by having a similar experience. Many TEFL training courses have used the technique of foreign language learning to simulate EFL students' experience and feelings (Lee 1998). This exercise brought the trainee from the teacher level to another level—the student in the FL classroom. Thus we can draw a parallel between the EFL

students and the trainees teachers in this case. Woodward has proposed the term *the stack* to explain the different roles and levels of the EFL teacher training group (see figure 1). She said, 'any individual can belong to different levels of the stack at the same time' (1991: 5).

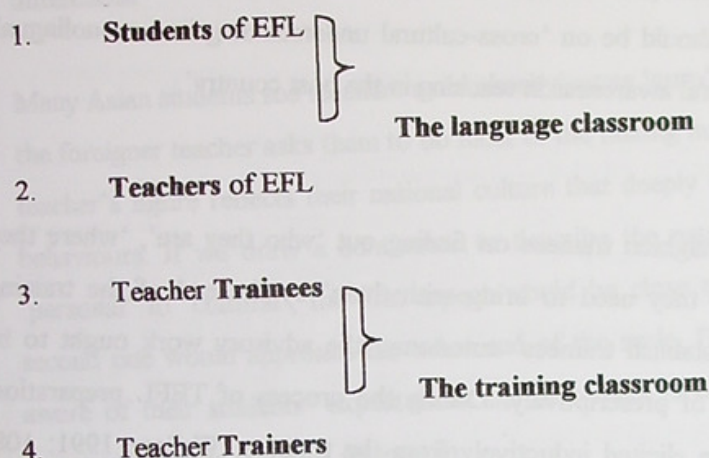


Figure 1: *The stack* (Woodward 1991: 5)

In the foreign language learning activity, trainees take the role as language students. They experience the challenge of using a new language to communicate with others, the fear of being exposed to an unknown situation, and the information about another culture. At this moment, what trainees need to know is not the pleasure of learning or the friendly environment they will create for their students, but the intimidating atmosphere due to cultural differences they are going to bring to the local students. Hence, trainers might need to draw trainees' attention to the negative side of the experience. For example, the difficulties they encountered during the communication in a new language, or the misunderstandings they had because of different values and beliefs.

A different type of activity based on a similar premise of providing direct experience of potential cultural misunderstanding are games or simulations in which students are grouped, and each group asked to behave according to certain cultural norms while undertaking a task involving members from different 'cultural groups'. These kinds of simulation activities, when followed by active reflection, can be far more powerful than any lectures or readings that talk about cross-cultural communication in terms of 'experience' and in helping trainees to adjust their perspectives.

Indirect experience of cultural difference can be provided through activities such as by asking trainees to conduct culture-focussed case-studies of students from other countries, or studying video footage and materials from classrooms in the target cultures (where these are known).

Discussion sessions devoted specifically to the topic of culture shock, what it is, and how to cope with it can, if nothing else, prepare teachers for the fact that they will almost certainly experience some level of cultural discomfort in their new environment, and reassure them that this is normal.

The examples discussed above indicate that there are many ways other than teaching practice of experiencing and raising awareness of cultural differences at the pre-service training stage. 'Experiential knowledge' often means the knowledge gained prior to training (Wallace 1991), where those experiences are rearranged, discovered, and discussed during the training. Experiential knowledge of inter-cultural issues can also be gained *during* the training course. Teaching practice may be the most direct method of increasing trainees' sensitivity to cultural issues in the language classroom, but it is not the only option.

Using 'experiential knowledge', the reflective model seems a promising approach to raising trainees' cross-cultural awareness, though the most difficult part is not the provision of materials or data (trainees' experiences), but to 'process' the materials in an appropriate way. The awareness of cross-cultural differences might be raised during the course, but trainees still view everything from their own cultural perspective since the reflective system is formed in their 'BANA' setting. It is a great concern when trainee teachers go to the host

country with the same old perspective. They might find it more difficult to adjust their cultural views because they have previously built up a solid value system in the pre-service training.

In the certificate training programmes, it is impossible for trainers to prepare their trainee teachers for every situation that may happen in the future. The best they can do is to equip trainees with the ability to carry out small-scale in-service action research when teaching in the host country. In other words, the foreigner teachers need to be alert and flexible while dealing with the cultural differences and the reactions they got from the local students/people. They learn how to judge the situations and adjust their teaching not based on their own cultural thinking, but their students'. To reinforce trainees' awareness of cross-cultural understanding, a reference to Holliday's ethnographic framework (1994) is worthwhile. This notion is important for expatriate teachers in exploring the differences between their own culture and the social context of the host country.

Assessment and evaluation of cultural sensitivity

Since the topic of culture can not be formally taught, it can not be formally assessed. It would be very difficult to quantify trainees' performance on cross-cultural understanding by scoring or grading. Nevertheless, trainees' understanding about cultural differences can still be shown and evaluated to certain degree. The evaluation of the teachers' cultural sensitivity is an important part of EFL teacher development, and should be carried out continuously (Byram 1989: 1-7). During the training course, the trainers' role is more similar to an advisor than to an examiner in respect of the evaluation of trainees' cultural understanding. Through teaching practice, observation, feedback and discussions, trainers can help trainees form their own small-scale action research system (Wallace 1991: 56-57). This system continues to activate after the training course. In order to examine the cross-cultural communication objectively, the EFL teachers may need to set up their own self-observation/evaluation system while teaching in a new country (Bartlett 1990: 202-214). As what was said earlier, the notion of 'Ethnocentrism' should be discarded from this system. To achieve this, the criteria for self-evaluation should be established upon the local students'/colleagues' feedback instead of the expatriate teachers' own expectations. Moreover, this self-observation/evaluation system should be flexible enough to be applied to different host environments.

Conclusion

Having a unique position in the area of Teaching English as a Foreign Language, the native speaker teachers must learn how to mediate between the culture of the host country and the culture of their own. They should also be aware that their ultimate goal is to become cross-cultural travellers and negotiators. This awareness, in line with open-mindedness and sensitivity to cross-cultural differences, should be raised at TEFL pre-service preparation stage in order to create an objective self-evaluation system when the foreigner teachers strive to adapt to living and working in a new environment. This awareness will also help trainee teachers learn how to effectively apply their experience on EFL in-service teacher development in the future.

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