

Culture, Language and Literature: Developing Intercultural Communicative Competence through International Literature

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Abstract

The relationship between culture, language and literature cannot be overemphasized. Culture shows itself in everything-language, literature, performing arts, verbal and non-verbal behaviour of people, etc. We not only represent but also embody our respective cultures. Cultures may differ in codes, conducts, cuisines and culinary delights, coaxing, customs, conventions, contraception, costumes or clothing, courtesies, conversation or communication, clock-time, concepts, conveniences, calendars, currencies, contracts, contacts, queues and quietness, courting, questions, crossing, consumerism, collaboration and competition, collectivism and crafts. The present paper focuses attention chiefly on 'codes' (language and literature), and only cursorily and indirectly on 'conversations' or 'communication' (norms of polite conversation, observance and violation of the cooperative principle, and speech acts) and 'curiosities' or 'questions' (norms of acceptable and appropriate questions). Finally, the paper makes a plea that the multiplicity of cultures and plurality of norms of verbal and non-verbal behaviour necessitate training in intercultural communication and that literature can be used as a rich resource to develop the ability to communicate appropriately in alien cultural settings.

Key Expressions: types of culture, varieties of English, politeness, principle of power, principle of solidarity, intelligibility, comprehensibility, acceptability, appropriateness, intercultural communicative competence

Introduction

The world has become a global village. Gone are those times when every nation was like an island. People in the past did not require communicating with people from other cultures like we do today. Today, people travel from their own countries to other countries for employment, business, tourism, etc. They need to communicate with people from various cultures and so need to be aware of the fact that cultures differ in many ways. What is considered acceptable, polite and appropriate in one culture may not be considered so in another culture. Patterns of behaviour reflect varying perceptions of the principles of power and solidarity. People from different cultures interpret the content of questions quite differently. Anecdotes such as the following heard by the author during conversations are quite revealing. Once some Chinese students of a British lady asked her, “Where are you going?” As a British person, she found this question intrusive and disrespectful. Later she came to know that the question was a friendly greeting. Whereas British English greetings mention the weather and the time of the day, Chinese greetings mention meals, as in “Hello, have you had lunch?” This question is not a preliminary to an invitation, but a warm greeting.

This multiplicity of cultures and plurality of norms of verbal and non-verbal behaviour necessitate training in intercultural communication. Literature, which embodies aspects of the culture of its origin, can be used as a rich resource to develop the ability to communicate appropriately in alien cultural settings. The paper attempts to do two things: a) to raise students’ awareness of cross-cultural variations through examples from international literature and b) to develop their intercultural communicative competence through analysis of the same examples.

Discussion

Before we get down to discuss how we can tap literature as a tool to develop international communicative competence, it is necessary to answer certain background questions such as what is the nature of culture?, what are the types of culture?, what are some vital aspects of culture?, how are language and culture interrelated? and how does literature reflect culture?

What is culture?

Culture is like gravity. We do not experience it unless we jump two metres into the air. It jolts us out of our complacency when we are uprooted from our own milieu and planted into another, either temporarily or permanently. It is so glutinous that it sticks to us from womb to tomb. Although, we can integrate ourselves into our adopted culture to some extent, our own culture stays with us perennially, follows us like our own shadow, wherever we go. Consequently, each one of us is an ambassador of our own culture. Our cultural identity peeps through our personal as well as interpersonal behaviour, both verbal and non-verbal.

As Patil (2002) says, culture, like a banana flower or onion, exists in layers. We can only understand it if we peel it layer by layer, cover by cover. However, it is easier said than done. The outer layer is easy to perceive as it comprises concrete and tangible manifestations like art, monuments, food, language, etc. The middle layer consists of norms and values, and hence it takes us some time to unfold it. The inner layer is rather difficult to penetrate because it subsumes assumptions about birth, life, death, happiness, unhappiness, and so on.

Cultures may differ in codes (language, literature, law, etc.), conducts (verbal and non-verbal behaviour), cuisines and culinary delights (e. g., curry, pasta, pizza, sushi and sashimi and so on), coaxing (hospitality, the way guests are perceived and treated), customs, conventions, contraception, costumes or clothing, courtesies (norms of politeness, the power principle and solidarity principle, etc.), conversation or communication (greetings, topics, turn-taking, opening and closing sequences, patterns of interruption, etc.), clock-time (how people perceive and manage time), concepts, conveniences (toilet habits, fast food habits, household devices, etc.), calendars (solar, lunar, etc.), currencies (pictures of national heroes, national animals and national birds, etc., heritages, and language/languages we find on paper currencies), contracts (negotiation tactics, clarity or ambiguity in terms and conditions of business agreements, etc.), contacts (eye contact, physical touch, physical distance people maintain when they converse, etc.), queues (have a look at how people in most South Asian countries board trains and buses), quietness (see the difference between levels of sound pollution caused during festivals and wedding ceremonies in countries such as India on the one hand and those in Europe or Japan), courting (arranged and love marriages), questions (which questions to ask and which to avoid), crossing (observance and violation of traffic rules), consumerism (attitude to material

possessions and physical gratification), collaboration, cooperation and competition, collectivism (whether individuals are secondary to society or vice versa) and crafts (handicrafts, souvenirs, etc.).

Culture is a very complex phenomenon. It takes even the most thoughtful, honest and introspective person many years to understand even a small part of their own culture. How, then, can we be sure about what constitutes another culture? Time and again, we come across people who talk as if we could measure the contents and list the characteristics of another culture as easily, accurately and fully as the contents of a suitcase. This is not to say that we ought not to try to understand more about other people's cultures, but only that we must be very modest and tentative about what we think we have found out. There is an old story about two men on a train. One of them saw some naked looking sheep in a field and said, "Those sheep have just been sheared." The other looked a moment longer and then said, "They seem to be – on this side." It is in this cautious spirit that we should say whatever we have to say about the workings of a culture.

What are the types of cultures?

We usually classify cultures into two main types: (i) universalist, individualist, neutral, self-centred, non-ascriptive, and (ii) particularist, communitarian, emotional, other-centred, ascriptive cultures. In the former type of culture, rules and regulations are considered universally applicable. In other words, relationships, connection, influences do not meddle with their application. Secondly, this type of culture prioritizes individual freedom and privacy. Thirdly, in this type of culture, rational thinking gains the upper hand over the emotional approach. To put it differently, the head dominates the heart. Fourthly, people pursue personal comforts and pleasures almost hedonistically. Finally, individual achievements rather than seniority, connections, and relationships are accorded weight. Cultures that belong to the second category exhibit different behaviour patterns. Here, no doubt rules and regulations are important, but very often personal preferences, relationships and connections tend to wield control over them. Secondly, the needs of the community take precedence over individual requirements. Thirdly, people tend to put a premium on emotional appeal rather than on rational argument. It seems that these people are more inclined towards the dictates of the heart than those of the head—

sentiments, emotions, feelings play a decisive role in interpersonal, social, and even business relations. Fourthly, in such cultures people take great care and pains to make the 'other' person happy and comfortable. They are willing to minimize comfort and benefit to themselves in order to maximize the other person's happiness. Finally, in such cultures seniority, kinship status and friendship command supreme respect and can influence important decisions.

What is the relationship between culture and language?

The relationship between culture and language has two main aspects to it. First, it is similar to that between generality and specificity or that between a super-ordinate lexical item and a hyponym: language is one aspect of culture. Secondly, language and culture are as inseparable as dance and dancer. It is this inseparability which offers English language teachers opportunities to familiarize their learners with various cultures, and lexical, idiomatic, grammatical and pragmatic properties of different varieties of the English language. At the same time, the synchronous existence of culture and language poses pedagogical challenges for teachers of English as a second/foreign language. The thrust of this paper is to highlight these challenges, which are compounded when a teacher undertakes the job of teaching English to learners coming from widely heterogeneous cultural backgrounds: universalist and particularist, collectivist and individualist, other-centred and self-centred, competitive and cooperative, assertive and reticent, prolix and precise cultures.

Language orchestrates the culturally conditioned patterns of perception, attitude and behaviour of its community. It encodes these patterns through propositional, expressive, presupposed and evoked meanings. Viewed against the background of these complexities the learning of a second/foreign language resembles an echo. The resonance and dissonance of the echo will depend on the similarities and differences between the mother tongue of the learner and the other tongue s/he is learning. At the individual level, the learning of the target language is similar to a duet in which the voice of the mother tongue and that of the other tongue frequently sing disharmoniously and only occasionally sing synchronously. At the level of a culturally heterogeneous classroom, it approximates a choral song in which we hear voices of several languages so distinctly that they seem to disrupt harmony. This happens because of non-equivalence of various types between the learner's first language and her/his target language. Let me list some major kinds of non-equivalence that Baker (1992) discusses. One, one of the two

cultures does not have some of the concepts that the other culture has. Two, one of the two languages does not have a word for a particular concept. Three, the two languages make distinctions in meaning. Four, an equivalent word in one language has more a complex meaning than its counterpart in the other language. Five, one language has a generic word, but the other one does not have it. Six, one has a specific word, but the other does not have it. Seven, the two languages differ in physical perspective. Eight, they differ in interpersonal perspective. Nine, the two languages differ in the linguistic realization of speech acts. These non-equivalences do not include those that fall under 'body language', which also affect the teaching and learning of a foreign language.

We experience the difficulties these linguistic and cultural specifics pose when we attempt to translate meanings and messages from one language into another. Teachers too experience such difficulties. Teachers teaching English as a second/foreign language to linguistically homogeneous groups experience occasional mild seismic shocks due to these non-equivalences. And teachers teaching English at an institute where we find learners from across the globe speaking diverse languages experience big and small seismic shocks almost every moment because here three cultures meet – the culture of the native English language, the culture of the non-native teacher, and the culture of the foreign learner.

So intimate is the relation between a language and the people who speak it that the two can scarcely be thought of apart. A language lives only so long as there are people who speak it and use it as their native tongue, and its greatness is only that given to it by these people. A language is important because the people who speak it are important – politically, economically, socially and culturally.

Any discussion of language without properly contextualizing it in the matrix of the various aspects of the culture of its use is bound to be incomplete. The relationship between language and culture has been a matter of dispute generating quite opposite views. Gilbert (1983), for instance, argues that in spite of its interpersonal function and intelligibility claims, language is not a social phenomenon. She refutes the arguments put forth by the commentators on Wittgenstein that support the thesis that language is a social instrument. On the contrary, Sharrock and Anderson (1986) comment that Wittgenstein does make a distinction between rules and communities in that he treats rules as social and collective phenomena as customs, uses and

institutions are. It follows that language, which is a rule-governed behaviour, is by its very nature a social entity.

The most widely accepted views on the relationship of language and culture are probably those of Malinowski (1964) whose focus on the study of culture as a system led him to the conclusion that linguistic behaviour could best be delineated and interpreted in its appropriate socio-cultural contexts. Thus the basic tenet of Malinowski's functional theory that all aspects of culture are interconnected is perhaps the most widely prevalent idea in cultural linguistics. Language, then, is a part, product and vehicle of culture. Therefore, it is essential to take into account the relevant socio-cultural contexts of their communication (Behura, 1986). Implementation and violation of communicative rules and the positive and negative sanctions of language should obviously be considered in specific cultural contexts (Albert, 1972) because language is nothing but a set of social conventions (Lander, 1966). As Grimshaw's (1971) diagrammatic representation of the relationship between language and reality shows, reality creates language and language creates reality; reality creates culture and culture creates reality; and language creates culture and culture creates language. Language, therefore, must be investigated within the social context of the community that uses it.

In this context it would be appropriate to discuss the status of non-native varieties of English. In my opinion, these non-native varieties are twice-born languages. Now, what is a twice-born language? A language that is transplanted from its native soil to an alien soil is a twice-born language. We say that such a language is born again in the sense that it has to carry the weight of new cultural experiences. English is a twice-born language in those countries where it is used as a second or third language. One can think of the use of English in terms of Kachru's (1982) three circles: the inner circle, the outer circle and the expanding circle. English is a once-born language in the countries that fall in the inner circle, whereas it is a twice-born language in the countries that fall in the outer and expanding circles. The non-native varieties are characterized by sociolinguistic or pragmatic transfer. There are two types of transfer: unconscious or unintentional and conscious or intentional (Pandharipande, 1987).

The author, like many teachers of English as second/ foreign language, has observed that learners of English as second/foreign language, for instance, unconsciously transfer the rules of use from their mother tongue. Similarly, they unwittingly impose the rules of their mother tongue on the

other tongue. Characters in Indian English fiction, for example, unconsciously deviate from the norms of native varieties. On the other hand, Indian creative writers writing in English consciously deviate from the norms of the native variety of English. The very idea of standard implies stability, but language is by its nature unstable. It is essentially protean in nature, adapting its shape to suit changing circumstances. It would otherwise lose its vitality and communicative value. The non-native users of English exploit its protean potential and fashion it to their needs. The deviations indicate that non-native users of English learn the language not just as a set of fixed conventions to conform to, but also as an adaptable resource of meaning making. Meaning making is a personal as well as a societal activity. Non-native users of English as a second/foreign language are proficient in it to the extent that they make it their own, possess it, bend it to their will, assert themselves through it rather than submit to the dictates of the native variety. They take possession of the language and turn it to their advantage. That is what the Nigerian writer Achebe (1975, p.67) means when he says this: “I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience...But it has to be new English, still in communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit new African surroundings”.

Achebe is a novelist and here he is commenting on creative writing; but what he says has clearly wider relevance and applies to other varieties of English. The point is that all users of language are creative in the sense that they draw on linguistic resources to express different perceptions of reality. English is required to carry the weight of all kinds of experiences, many of which are quite remote from the experiences of the users of the native variety. The new English which Achebe refers to is locally developed.

Ojaide (1987, pp. 165-167), as cited in Patil and Patil (2013) expresses a similar view: “The English I write is neither mainstream British nor American, and I cherish this uniqueness. In addition, I express African sensibility in my writing. This sensibility is different from the Western and the Asian, a little closer to the Asian. Western universals crumble in the African worldview... Knowing my audience and deliberately not aiming at British or American cultural tradition, I emphasize content and meaning in my poetry. I write not to develop the English language, but to articulate ideas as clearly as possible. I do not follow English metric patterns; that is not relevant to my message. For me English is the supra-language on top of my own

personal language...My writing, though in English, has its roots in Africa, not in England or North America...”

Similarly, literature, which is manifested through language, can only be understood and circumscribed by bringing it into a theoretical relationship with cultural and societal phenomena. It is wrong to insist on the singularity of art and divorce it from its context for it leads to a partial and biased understanding of the processes of literary creation. A work of literature can only be fully grasped by relating it to the total dynamics of social and historical events because the medium of its realization is a part of cultural tradition. The interaction between language and other aspects of culture is so close that no part of the culture of a particular group can properly be studied in isolation from the linguistic symbols in use (Hoijer, 1964). Since language is an important part of a particular group, and its pattern, linguistic changes must take place, at least partly, in response to cultural changes in general. Linguistic change is rapid if the culture of a society is dynamic. An obvious connection exists, of course, between semantic change and cultural change. Cultural innovations call for lexical additions, either through borrowings or through coinages or neologisms. Formation of compounds and similar derivations to express newly acquired aspects of culture are yet another way in which lexis reflects cultural change. Thus it goes without saying that there is an intimate relationship between culture and the content of language. Hoijer's (1964) view that the vocabulary of a language more or less faithfully reflects the history of language more along parallel lines is readily acceptable. Language is a cultural complex with a body of customary forms transmitted from generation to generation and from society to society in no different way from other cultural forms (Swadesh, 1964).

The correlation between the structure of language and the structure of culture are probably best illustrated by the use of pronouns. The relationship between the social and cultural factors and pronominal usage is by no means arbitrary. These factors find an explicit manifestation in oral communication because the social, cultural and economic structures of a society underlie, determine and are realized in pronominal usage. Further, social stratification is reflected in speech communication; pronominal variants used by the so-called “inferiors” in speaking to the supposedly “superiors” are markedly different from those used by friends for friends within the same social stratum. Studies of pronominal usage (Palakornakul, 1975) have provided ample evidence for this interconnection.

Another issue that is fairly closely related to pronominal usage is that of politeness. As we know, norms of politeness vary from culture to culture. The phenomenon of politeness varies in terms of its linguistic realization and its strategies. Two main points need to be addressed in characterizing politeness strategies: (a) Do standard strategies exist? and (b) Is this a universal phenomenon? An analysis of the ways of expressing cordiality, camaraderie and courtesy in British English and Indian English is quite revealing. Though the basic intent or purpose of a speaker in both the varieties is to show considerateness towards the hearer, there are dialect-specific ways of manifesting politeness. Such speech acts as making statements, asking questions, and issuing demands might be said to be universal in the sense that in every human society acts of this kind have some role to play. Many illocutionary speech acts can be seen as belonging to the domains of one sub-class or another of these basic speech acts. For example, as Lyons (1981) argues, swearing on oath that something is so is obviously a culture-specific act; but is also one way of making a strong statement.

However, there are no common criteria of politeness across societies and cultures. Thus the standards of politeness change from place to place. Moreover, the norms of politeness vary from time to time. Criteria of politeness change diachronically and synchronically. The third dimension of the relative nature of politeness is related to differences of class, age-group, distance, power and ranking (Trudgill, 1983). Furthermore, there is no single type of linguistic behaviour that can be described as appropriate for all members of even the same speech community at all times and on all occasions (Khubchandani, 1983). Gumperz (1970) illustrates how speech functions like complimenting differ from society to society. For example, in America compliments are very brief and concise whereas in Japanese culture complimenting is a prolonged activity involving several exchanges of praise and ritual denials. To a Japanese person it seems impolite to accept a compliment with a mere thank-you. This cultural difference between American brevity and Japanese prolixity might sometimes cause, to use Crystal and Davy's (1969, p.5) words, "general confusion, probably criticism and embarrassment as well".

Indians seem to give very important role to positive politeness strategies, i.e. politeness constructions intended to increase companionship with the listener. The function of this strategy is to present information in such a way that although it lies strictly in the speaker's territory of information, it appears to belong to the hearer's territory of information. This strategy tends to

make the boundary between speaker and hearer less distinct. Overall, we can derive the following predominant principles of politeness observed in Indian English conversational exchanges: familiarity (treating others like members of the family), sincerity, reciprocity (repaying politeness on the part of others), and indirectness. However, this statement by no means implies that other cultures do not resort to these politeness strategies.

Differences between British and Indian English in the area of speech acts can be linked with different cultural norms and assumptions. A significant difference between British English and Indian English is observed in the domain of complimenting. Unlike British and American compliments, Indian compliments are two dimensional. The person who offers a compliment maximizes praise of the hearer and simultaneously maximizes dispraise of himself/herself. Here is an example from Singh (1959, p.27): “Sardar sahib, you are a big man and we are but small radishes from an unknown garden.” This compliment is both an overstatement and an understatement. One remarkable feature of the compliment is the use of the honorific ‘sahib’. It is important to note that Indian culture shares with some other cultures this ceremonial show of respect for almost every individual irrespective of their status. The courtesy aspect of Indian culture is manifested particularly in the forms of address. The above compliment is a literal translation of its equivalent in Hindi. A British compliment would not be appropriate in this context. Had the author adopted British norms of complimenting, the compliment would have lost its illocutionary force. Therefore, he replaces the norms of the native variety of English by norms of the non-native variety of English. He warrants the perlocutionary force of the speech act in a way analogous to that in which the Indian speaker would have fulfilled the conditions for his speech act to be successfully appropriate and effective (cf. Broeck, 1986).

It has been observed that Indian English is generally discussed in negative terms. It is often argued that Indian English lacks certain devices characteristic of British English. However, it would be unreasonable to say that ‘standard English’ speech acts reflect certain cultural values whereas India English speech acts reflect an absence of these values. It is needless to say that Indian English reflects values that are characteristic of Indian culture. To talk in absolute terms would mean that one is ignorant of and insensitive to cultural and linguistic differences. The following example from Mehta (1977, p.30) reveals how Indians treat their guests: ‘Bhagwat Singhji’s wife with her elder relatives went around coaxing the guests, ‘have some more rice’,

“one more puree”, “at least a ladoo”. There were protests, but finally they were persuaded to take something more.’

In the Indian socio-cultural context involving a host-guest situation, the host is expected to repeatedly coax and the guest is supposed to show considerable coyness. The native English forms such as “Won’t you have a second helping?” or “Sure you don’t care for more?” will be ineffective or even considered discourteous. The way one treats one’s guests is communicative of symbolic messages. It gives off signals of the clearest type as to what kind of person one is. Though to an Englishman, the Indian way of coaxing might sound like some sort of imposition, the overriding rule of Indian table manners is deference. It is rather poor manners not to coax. The example shows that the hosts are required to make a certain amount of fuss and the guests are expected to show a certain amount of reluctance. Now the issue here is that the phrasing of offers in native British English implies that the speaker is trying not to impose his/her will on the hearer, but that he is merely trying to find out what the hearer wants and thinks. In Indian English, as in Indian languages, literal translations of this would sound, as has already been pointed out, inappropriate. To ask the guest if s/he wants another helping is to break the tacit rule of Indian hospitality according to which the host does not try to establish the guest’s wishes as far as eating and drinking are concerned. On the contrary, the host tries to get the guest to eat and drink as much as possible and even more. A hospitable Indian host, like the hosts in the illustration cited above, will not take a negative response for an answer. That is why Bhagawat Singhji’s wife and her relatives in the above example assume that the guests can have some more, and that it would be good for them to have more food, and therefore the guests’ resistance or refusal, which is construed to be due to politeness, should be disregarded.

This can be quite consequential. An Indian in Britain, after being offered a meal and refusing politely, could be unpleasantly surprised to be given nothing to eat, and might even think that the British are stingy with food. The British host would not realize that refusing food is a sign of modesty and that the person offering the meal should insist. Saville-Troike (1982) reports a very interesting experience related to host-guest situation. Once, some Asians visited the United States. Their hosts asked them if they would like to eat something. They said they were fine and said, “No, thanks”. The hosts being ignorant of Asian table manners did not offer them anything to eat. As a result, they waited for the host to insist for a meal. The host did not offer them

anything to eat and so the Asian visitors starved. The American host failed to understand the illocutionary force of the negative and mistook it for a genuine negative. An American friend of the author once said to him, “I don’t understand you Asians: you say ‘yes’ when you are supposed to say ‘no’ and ‘no’ when you are supposed to say ‘yes’ ”.

What is the relationship between culture and literature?

Literature is a slice of life; it holds a mirror to life. Literature, they say, is a seismograph of the society it portrays. George Bernard Shaw was perhaps one of the best advocates of the ‘literature for life’ camp. His plays were professedly propaganda plays, which aimed at exposing and correcting social follies and foibles. Charles Dickens’ novels depicted the contemporary social realities. Thomas Hardy’s novels are yet another example. His fiction reflects the conditions prevalent during its production. These conditions include climatic conditions as well. In fact, weather is an important character in Hardy’s novels. As we know, sunny weather being a rare condition in Britain, it is a dominant topic of British conversations. Therefore, there are many words to refer to sunlight – shine, gleam, glisten, glitter, glimmer, shimmer, etc. Summer in India gives you a scorching experience whereas summer in Britain offers you a pleasant experience. That is why in one of his sonnets Shakespeare says to his ‘dark lady’: “Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?” In the context of British weather, this line will be interpreted as a positive rhetorical question, as a compliment; but in the context of Indian weather, it will be construed as a question carrying negative connotations. Thus literature is loaded with cultural connotations and assumptions.

To further illustrate the relationship between culture and literature; let us consider another example, this time from an Indian English novel written by Anand (1932). This example is similar to the example we cited on the previous page:

The Babu took up two dishes in his hands and brought them up to Mr. England’s nose...He recoiled from the attack of the syrupy stuff on his senses with a murmur of ‘No, thank you.’

‘Oh yes, sir, yes, sir’, urged Babu Nathu Ram.

‘Some pakoras, then?’ said Babu. ‘They are a specialty of my wife.’

The peon brought up the dish of the maize-flour dumplings.

Mr. England looked at it as if it were poison and said, 'No, no thank you, really, I had a late lunch.'

'Well, if you don't care for Indian sweets sir,' said Nathu Ram in a hurt voice, 'then please eat English-made pastry that I specially ordered from Stiffles. You must sir.'...

'No thanks. Really, I can't eat in this hot weather,' said Mr. England, trying to give a plausible excuse.

'Sir, sir,' he protested, thrusting the food again under Mr. England's nose. 'Do please eat something—just a little bit of a thing.'

'No, thank you very much, Nathu Ram.'

Indirectness might be noticed in the routines for various illocutionary acts. As we noted previously, Saville-Troike (1982) reports a very interesting experience of indirectness related to a host-guest situation. It shows how visitors from Asia may remain hungry in Britain and the States because they are ignorant of English and American table manners. When the western host asks them whether they would like to have another helping, they say 'no', which in fact, means 'ask me again'; but the hosts, equally ignorant of the table manners prevalent in the respective countries of the guests, fail to understand the indirect illocutionary force of the negative and mistake it for a literal negative and do not offer the guests any more food or drinks. Englishmen have probably the opposite experience in countries such as India where their 'no' is interpreted as polite refusal and consequently, they may be forced to eat food they really do not want to.

An important feature of the speech act of coaxing is its cultural relativity. Languages and dialects of the same language differ in their interaction-structuring strategies. It is these socio-cultural differences of organizing process that cause problems of comprehensibility in international communication (cf. Loveday, 1983). As Tannen (1984) remarks, all aspects of the content and form or matter and manner of human communication are culture-specific. Cultural relativity is an intrinsic feature of communication. People learn to communicate meanings in their specific social networks, which by their very nature cannot be global but only local. One wonders with Wierzbicka (1985) that in spite of this obviously 'local' nature of communication it is wrongly claimed that there exist identical strategies across languages and cultures. The tendency to draw

conclusions and make generalizations on the basis of observations of a particular language is a consequence of an ethnocentric bias which ignores the anthropological and linguistic reality that norms differ from culture to culture, language to language and even from dialect to dialect. Wolfson (1986) observes that comments which are accepted as compliments by Americans are often interpreted as insults by some other societies. Speech acts differ from culture to culture in a variety of ways: in their content, in their linguistic realization, their distribution, their frequency, and their functions. For instance, compliments in Indian languages including Indian English display a dual feature of addresser-lowering and addressee-raising; compliments in American English do not show this feature.

We have considered the connection between culture, language and literature from the point of view of *intercultural communication*. Language and literature display certain salient features of communication that distinguish one culture from another. Let us now mention some of the major facets of interaction that language and literature reflect. One, there is something called the situation of communication. Participants share certain norms of interaction and interpretation. Two, they construct a shared sense of reality. Three, they entertain certain stereotypes of each other as individuals and as members of a social group. Four, they exhibit identical patterns of non-verbal behaviour. In other words, they share the silent language of gestures and movements. Five, they perceive time in their own culture-bound manner. Six, they have their own face saving and face threatening strategies. Seven, they structure their discourses in very similar ways. Eight, they share attitudes, values and beliefs. Nine, they pay compliments, respond to compliments, offer apologies, express gratitude, voice complaints, offer suggestions and perform other speech functions in shared ways. Ten, their patterns of communication differ depending on whether they come from 'high context culture' or 'low context culture'. In 'high context communication', most of the information is implicit because it is located in the physical context or part of a shared world-view (for example, Chinese style of communication or Chinese communication style), and in 'low context communication', the bulk of the information is to be found in the words uttered (for example, Northern European style communication). Cultures differ with respect to turn taking as well. I am aware of three predominant turn taking patterns in the world. These patterns can be stated in the following manner. One conversational interlocutor completes his turn and the other one immediately starts his turn. The second conversational partner shows he has

understood what the first partner has said and would like to respond immediately. This pattern is predominant in Europe. In the second pattern, one interlocutor completes her turn, but the second interlocutor does not start her turn immediately; she waits for several seconds and then starts her turn. This pattern is found in countries such as Japan. The second conversational participant wants to indicate to the first partner that whatever the first interlocutor has said is so significant that it requires time to be understood. In other words, the pause is one way to show deference to the partner. The third pattern may be irritating to Europeans and quite annoying for the Japanese. The first conversational interlocutor is saying something, but the second partner impatiently interrupts.

Pedagogical Implications

Language and literature carry the cultural load of the above listed patterns of thinking and private and interpersonal, social behaviour. Language and literature teachers need to highlight prominent aspects of culture that language and literature manifest. Vocabulary, pronominal usage, vagueness or explicitness of language, indirectness, honorifics, kinship terms, discourse structuring, turn-taking, speech acts are some major indicators of specifics of a culture.

It is clear that the observable and non-tangible aspects of culture influence people's thinking and linguistic as well as non-linguistic behaviour. These aspects determine the expectations and interpretations of other people's linguistic and non-linguistic behaviour. As cultures condition our behaviour and our interpretation of other people's behaviour, there are consequential pedagogical implications. Lack of awareness of the conditioning and determining role of cultures in multicultural classrooms may result into miscommunication, amusing, embarrassing and face-threatening situations or even into conflicts. Therefore, syllabus designers, textbook writers and teachers need to work together to script and implement an agenda to enable learners to switch over with comfortable facility from one non-native variety-specific use of speech functions to another non-native variety specific use of speech acts, and from their own variety specific use of speech acts to native variety-specific speech acts whenever it is necessary.

It is easy to identify and list the distinguishing phonological and grammatical features of a variety, but it is rather difficult to identify non-native manifestations of speech acts. However, we need to provide our learners with a thorough and systematic intercultural training. This, of course, is a tall order, especially in a situation where learners lack mastery of the basics of the target language such as concord, inversion, etc. Nevertheless, it is imperative to develop intercultural communicative competence in our learners and we can achieve this objective through the use of international literature. We can divide the task recognition and production stages. We create dialogues wherein poetic lines are used to perform speech acts such as complimenting, taking leave, criticizing, etc. For example, we can use the following lines to pay a compliment, to take leave and to criticize and to record remembrance respectively:

- (1) I listened motionless and still
And as I mounted up the hill
The music in my heart I bore
Long after it was heard no more.
- (2) The woods are lovely, dark and deep
But I have promises to keep
And miles to go before I sleep
And miles to go before I sleep.
- (3) Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer
Things fall apart, the centre cannot hold
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.
- (4) For oft when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude
And then my heart with pleasure fills
And dances with the daffodils.

We can use the first set of lines, which are from William Wordsworth's *The Solitary Reaper*, to pay a compliment to a friend who sang mellifluously some days ago. We can embed the lines from W. B. Yeats' *The Second Coming* to criticize a teacher who does not have control over his class, who cannot manage his class. We can use the second set of lines from Robert Frost's *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* in a conversation between a host and a guest. The guest receives a phone call and approaches the host in the middle of a party and recites these lines to pay a compliment on the party as well as to take the host's leave. We can use the lines from William Wordsworth's *Daffodils* to express nostalgia. This is use of literature to perform relatively culture-free, universally comprehensible speech acts of complimenting, leave-taking, criticizing and expressing happy memories.

In addition to the above use of literature to develop universal communicative competence, we can use various literatures written in English to develop intercultural communicative competence. Initially, we can provide authentic representative language samples from literatures in English (British, American, Australian, Indian, Nigerian, etc.). We give them opportunities to identify the social and interpersonal functions of speech acts in a respective literature. Then we create opportunities for our learners to use speech acts in given situations in a specified culture. Thus, they need to use culture-specific speech acts such as greetings, expressing gratitude, expressing apologies, and so on. Thus the learner will use "Where are you going?" as a greeting in an Indian context or "Have you had lunch?" as a greeting in a Chinese context, and 'nice weather, isn't it' as a greeting in a British context.

Conclusion

Let me reiterate the propositions that the present paper states. First, the relationship between culture and language is like that between the reverse sides of a coin. Secondly, the relationship between culture and literature is similar to that of a dance and a dancer: they are inseparable. Thirdly, as Larsen-Freeman (2012a, p. 23) remarks, "When we focus on language in use rather than language as an abstract formal system, we see it rooted in the context and culture of the local speech community to which the participants belong. Given the increasing social and

economic mobility of many people these days, English has become an international lingua franca that is not really owned by any one group of speakers.” Larsen-Freeman (2012a, pp.23-24) continues, “...gone is the notion of a homogenized language competence and a mono-cultural identity. In its place is the recognition that one speaker’s resources overlap with others, but they are also distinctive. In other words, within unity there is diversity.” Fourthly, as Larsen-Freeman (2012b, p.32) suggests, “...developing in one’s students an understanding of the attitudes, values, beliefs – the world-view...of a particular target culture is ...important...all too often the other aspects of culture are ignored. They are sometimes addressed through studying literature of the target culture.”

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