

Intercultural Linguistic Globalization and 21st Century Teaching Practices

by

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Education being upstream and downstream of all civilizations, it is inevitably done through means of linguistics and communication. Among those, language as a communication system is one of the most sophisticated means, perhaps the most sophisticated one, common to any linguistic community. Nowadays, the global trend is increasingly oriented towards multilingualism, hence the need for studies on foreign language teaching practices. Moreover, globalization and the Internet make the inter-communicability between the world's population increasingly easier, reinforcing the so-called need for agreement on the most efficient content of foreign language classroom. According to Kramsch (2014),

There has never been a time when language teaching and learning has been more interactive and more imaginative than today. Communicative pedagogies have made the classroom more participatory, electronic chatrooms have loosened the tongues and the writing of even the shyest students, video and the Internet have made authentic materials available as never before, telecollaboration and social networks have increased students' access to real native speakers in real cultural environments and yet there has never been a greater tension between what is taught in the classroom and what the students will need in the real world once they have left the classroom. In the last decades, that world has changed to such an extent that language teachers are no longer sure of what they are supposed to teach nor what real world situations they are supposed to prepare their students for. (p. 296)

Evidence suggests that intercultural communicative competence is among the most important factors for efficiency in 21st century practices of second language acquisition. This observation couldn't certainly be without a critical and updated review of the said practices, which moreover, will be the subject of this study. Indeed, the aim of the present article is to explore intercultural communicative competences as a major area of interest within the field of 21st century globalization in foreign language acquisition practices.

The overall structure of this study takes the form of two sections including first, a brief overview of the High-Leverage Teaching Practices (HLTP) illustrated in Glisan and Donato (2017) while determining the most relevant. The second section begins by laying out the effectiveness of learner's language critical thinking proficiency and looks at the findings related to the input on my own experiences focusing on the key themes of external and internal connection to the language classroom.

I. THE HIGH-LEVERAGE TEACHING PRACTICES (HLTP)

A. TEACHING PRACTICES AND THEORIES

Through a teaching practicum study, I had the chance to discover what Glisan and Donato (2017) called HLTP. Indeed, in their goal to assist teachers in Foreign Language classroom, Glisan and Donato (2017) have developed six specific practices referred to as high-leverage teaching practices described as follows: 1- Facilitating Target Language Comprehensibility (in an engaging contextualization of any new grammar and vocabulary concepts); 2- Building a Classroom Discourse Community (creating a meaningful oral interaction context between : the teacher and students on one hand; the students themselves on the other); 3- Guiding Learners to Interpret and Discuss Authentic Texts (elicit literal comprehension and interpretation of authentic texts by series of tasks); 4- Focusing on Form in a

Dialogic Context Through PACE (facilitating class discussion and interpretation of authentic documents by co-constructing understanding of form beyond grammatical rules); 5- Focusing on Cultural Products, Practices, and Perspectives in a Dialogic Context (engaging reflection on cultural perspectives through varied kinds of cultural tools); 6- Providing Oral Corrective Feedback to Improve Learner Performance (use of oral feedback to help the whole-class conversation to move forward).

The HLTP have personally enabled me to carry out several aspects that were previously lacking in my own conception of effectiveness in learning and teaching foreign language practices. Indeed, with the HLTP, I understood that trying to teach grammar the way I was taught (through memorization of verbs conjugation or other grammatical rules) is practically pointless. Nowadays purpose of foreign language learning being mostly communicative, it would be a waste of breath and time memorizing various concepts around a language without being able to use them. Therefore, there is a need to rethink the measurement of a meaningful grammatical concepts integration to sharpen its usage by learners. The use of the so-called grammatical concepts becomes then a natural reaction to dialogic communication in the target language. That is how, I found myself introducing grammar without isolating it from the significative context of the lesson's topic. I may confess I haven't yet resolved myself, at least in a quasi-total way, to completely get rid of the teaching practice through which I have so far made my journey in second language acquisition. My resistance to the new practice as a teacher is also found to be a challenge to learners. According to Vogel, Herron, Cole and York (2011)'s investigation findings, "students prefer to be taught the grammar rules first prior to engaging in a practice activity. While a majority of students appeared convinced that they learned grammar better this way, the quantitative results supported the finding that guided inductive teaching strategies have,

on the contrary, a significant positive effect on students' immediate learning" (p. 370). Even though I occasionally isolate the grammatical concept just for some few two minutes of the class, I can still stick to the new practice through PACE. From now on, into my teaching practice, integration of new grammatical concepts is increasingly built through significant learner's daily life context.

B. MOST RELEVANT TEACHING PRACTICES AND THEORIES

Combined Focusing on Form in a Dialogic Context Through PACE, Building a Classroom Discourse Community associated with Focusing on Cultural Products, Practices, and Perspectives in a Dialogic Context of the target language are from my humble point of view the most efficient trio of the six practices. From this logic of mine at this specific moment while I am writing the present article, no matter how meaningful integration of new concepts might be, if the learning environment is neither supported by cultural aspects of the target language, nor qualified as an area without anxiety, the acquisition of the target language by learners will undergo inefficient. Reality check, it all starts with the free anxiety zone within the language classroom. This aspect of the foreign language class is crucial to the sense that the only way to unleash language tongue from a human being is to put him in his comfort zone. It is therefore important for the teacher to transform his language classroom into a comfort zone for his learners. Once the comfort zone has been created, it will be not much of a use to introduce the outlines of the target language in an isolated way. Rather, a contextualization of new concepts around the language through cultural perspectives would make all the difference in negotiating a much deeper understanding of its linguistic aspects and its grammatical rules. Data from Drewelow (2013) pedagogical study have demonstrated that:

At the beginning level, the reflection on the interconnection between a language and its culture needs to be nurtured within the course content itself in order to encourage the process of developing cross-cultural understanding. While learning words introduced a reality to the students that rendered the French language and the people closer to the frames of reference present in the native culture, simply learning vocabulary did not challenge learners to consider the cultural acts and meanings behind the words in order to better understand their meaning from the target language perspective. (p. 169)

These findings not only confirm my views on the matter but also shows those practices will make it possible for second language teachers to form future foreign language speakers with better dialogical tools.

II. EFFECTIVENESS OF LEARNER'S CRITICAL THINKING AND CONNECTIONS

A. CRITICAL THINKING PROFICIENCY

All indicators resolve success of learner's language proficiency around the three pedagogical practices I have mentioned earlier. I have come to that proposal based on my analyses, that the only way to push learners into deep critical thinking within the language class is to find the best point of interest to them. This cannot be claimed as archivable in advance due most of time to the gap of age between the teacher and his students. It is not a secret for anyone that whatsoever might be exciting for a given generation may not be as exciting for the other. Worse, with the event of the Internet and the evolution at a cruising speed of all its linked gadgets, the 21st century language teacher finds himself in a perpetual quest of reaching his learner's level to pretend being able to have an impact on their interests. In other words, the teacher is faced with the challenge of being able to speak the same language as his learners, language representing here the generational conception of judgement in what is meaningful of

interest or not. I therefore righteously proposed in this study that the most important act is the free anxiety zone in foreign language classroom. I will not pursue without saying that any teacher who manages to break the generational code of interest design will surely succeed in establishing a classroom area with no anxiety whatsoever. In the same way, the same generational code will better and significantly contextualize grammar rules related to the target language according to PACE logic. Better, the code would serve as a guide to the cultural integration of the foreign language. Perhaps it is somehow a thing to talk about culture, but it is quite another one to talk about cultural aspects that force learners' attention. The study by Magnan, Murphy, Sahakyan, and Kim (2012) offers probably the most comprehensive similar analysis which "support an argument for the inclusion, as top priority, of the Communities Standards along with only the interpersonal and interpretive modes of the Communication Standards. For all students, but for students of LCTLs [less commonly taught languages] in particular, Cultures and Connections should also be prioritized" (p. 184). In short, any teacher who wants to promote his learners' critical reflection is obliged to break the generational barriers to be able of combining within the language class, daily living cultural interests and language. This appears to be positively related to Terantino and Graf (2011)'s generation concept of foreign language class:

Today's so-called "Net Generation" students are connected, digital, and highly social. Internet and social media sites like Facebook play a critical role in the lives of these students. Therefore, it is essential that educators design the Net Generation curriculum with these characteristics in mind. This curriculum should be derived from social and student-centered views of learning such as Vygotsky's

sociocultural theory or Bruner's social constructivism, which are best suited to tap into the collaborative nature of the students. (p. 44)

There is certainly not an ultimate practice in promoting critical thinking in foreign language class but finding the triggering point of learner's cultural interest would be a major asset to the success of this kind of promotion.

B. EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL CONNECTIONS

In general, it seems too often being said that only fools don't change. Overall, not being open minded to one self's pedagogical practices in relation to external expertise would result in an intellectual resistance that cannot be tolerated in educational world. The best training of learners must be any teacher's leitmotiv. No one is in title of claiming to be smart alone. Therefore, connecting to external expertise is a major concession in improving second-language teaching practices. I would love to acknowledge, as I have already pointed out in this study, that the various external expertise I discovered through a unique experience teaching practicum, brought a very wide and positive change to my own pedagogical knowledge.

I underlined the positive outcome of this change because from then one, the comparative analysis of my old and current teaching methods revealed an important and efficient improvement in terms of personal satisfaction of my students. I can however be mistaken, but I have the feeling of a better connection between myself as a 21st century instructor and my 21st century students who, I must confess, have the world at their fingertips. It is therefore mine to note that indeed, the external expertise has allowed me to greatly improve the internal expertise of my language classes in terms of connection. The primary goals of my language classes have thus shifted from the simple linguistic knowledge exchange to a thorough and above all relevant

connection, not only between the students themselves but also between them and I as their instructor.

The so-called external expertise allowed me to understand that the language class far from being a semester period class, has become an “Ad vitam aeternam” class. I am referring to the Facebook group I have created for each of my language classes. With the event of 21st century's tools like social network, a connection is made between my learners as well during as after the semester period. And that, for me is an advanced progress. Such an initiative can however go a step further by creating a virtual social learning space of the target language. This might be seen as equivalent to Murray, Uzuka and Fujishima (2017)’s Social Learning Spaces which are defined as follow:

Places where learners can come together to learn with and from each other. In the case of social learning spaces for language learning on the campuses of Japanese universities, they are places where Japanese and international students can meet, make friends, practice their target languages and gain firsthand knowledge about other cultures and their people. (p. 236)

In my logic, it might be interesting to negotiate a class of the same age level in the target culture, which will allow learners to actively interact with peers in the target culture without moving from their own living environment. This would be a kind of virtual immersion for foreign language learners. Certainly, this might not be easy to implement, but impossible is however not human. This implementation is already done in a physical way with for example the French or Spanish Club in some universities. The difference here is that the discussions mostly swing to local language. It absolutely matters that foreign language learners interact with interlocutors which only have in common with them the target language as means of communication.

This project was undertaken to evaluate and explore intercultural communicative teaching practices within 21st century globalization foreign language acquisition class. Overall, it appears from this study that among the six practices known as High-Leverage Teaching Practices (HLTP), even though they are all truly relevant in improving the performance of foreign language teaching, three of them have particularly attracted my attention. These include the combination of the practices II, IV and V which are: Building a Classroom Discourse Community, Focusing on Form in a Dialogic Context Through PACE and Focusing on Cultural Products, Practices, and Perspectives in a dialogic context. Indeed, this trio has been the subject of the most important changes I have made to improve my language classes.

Beyond these practices, I have noted the special concept of generational contextualization in the field of promoting critical thinking within the language class. This last notion only fosters the free anxiety zone of the foreign language class, which strengthens the connection between learners on one hand, between them and their teacher on the other. All this could not be achieved without the revolutionary effect of the external expertise which I, as language instructor, have openly incorporated into my own pedagogical practice. I would not finish the current article without pointing back out the significant importance of extending the language class to a virtual sociolinguistic learning space.

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