

Crossing the Cultural Boundaries: Developing Intercultural Competence of Prospective Teachers of English

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Abstract- Intercultural competence can be viewed as the ability to communicate successfully with culturally different others using one's intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes. This also is the ultimate goal of learning a foreign language. Nevertheless, this aspect of having an intercultural dimension to foreign Language learning is a completely neglected aspect of English language learning in Sri Lanka, though English is prescribed as the lingua franca or the link language by the country's constitution. On the other hand, to become a competent teacher in English, one needs to be interculturally competent as the teachers of English are constantly required to handle students in linguistically and ethnically segregated Sinhala and Tamil medium schools. Thus, this study is very significant as there have been no empirical studies conducted in the similar nature, in the country and few elsewhere in the world. The study explores the possibilities of developing Intercultural Competence of prospective teachers of English at a preservice teacher education institute in Sri Lanka, through a curriculum intervention which provides them with extensive opportunities to engage in intercultural interactions while learning English in the classroom together with their counterparts from other major ethnic groups. A specially designed intercultural syllabus was implemented in order to facilitate new understandings and insights around cultural diversity and contribute to development of intercultural competence of the student teachers improving their English language skills at the same time. Using an approach of action research the project tried to identify answers for four broad research questions by using both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods. It attempted to identify teacher trainees' perceptions on cultural diversity and understand effective strategies to develop intercultural competence by assessing their response to a specially designed intercultural syllabus.

Index Terms- Intercultural competence, CALD students, prospective teachers, English Language Teaching

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's extremely connected and extremely divided world intercultural interactions have become a salient feature. Even in developing countries like Sri Lanka, where they have limited access to international travel and communication, people get everyday opportunities to interact and communicate transversely national borders for different reasons. As Fantani (2009) states today people are required not only to communicate across their

language using their mother tongue, the interlocutors language, or a third language not common to either party, but also to make them understood in a different cultural context by using may be new behaviours and different interaction styles from their own system. Consequently, one essential survival skill of this global village is the ability to interact across cultural boundaries. The "ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes" (Deardorff 2006, p. 247) is termed as 'Intercultural competence' by the scholars in the field and has gained a great deal of attention from various sectors such as sociology, psychology, management and education in recent times.

On the other hand this type of interaction is everyday reality for a pluralist country like Sri Lanka, because domestic intercultural interactions between different ethnic groups is one outstanding feature of day to day communication in its polity. Unfortunately this has been an aspect neglected for a long time despite the fact that many reforms were introduced to political, educational and social spheres to promote harmony between different ethnicities. It is agreed by everybody concerned that the system of education in a country ought to address the issues in its society and must have reconstructionist elements in its approach to build a new society. Therefore, one timely need of policy makers in education in Sri Lanka is to incorporate intercultural competence as one of the major goals in every field related to education such as curriculum design, material development and teacher training etc if they want to change the mindset of the people in a conflicted society. As Deardorff (2006) rightly points out, ".....Intercultural competence doesn't just naturally occur in most people; rather, intercultural competence must be intentionally addressed through education"(p. 259).

Intercultural contact is also a key issue in second language learning and teaching because one major goal of learning a second language is to communicate across cultures. Foreign language education is, by definition, intercultural (Sercu et al., 2005). Bringing a second language to the class always means connecting learners to a culture different to their own. Thus, teachers who teach a second language are faced with the challenge of promoting students' acquisition of intercultural competence through their teaching for meaningful learning to take place. The era of teaching a second language for communicative competence has long gone and today the requirement is to achieve intercultural communicative competence, because in learning a foreign language, learner is always expected to express his ideas using a language not his

own which requires new perceptions to interpret an old world. Because we as teachers always come across students complaining not only about the concepts and ideas but also about the structures and pronunciation in the foreign language "strange", "funny" or even "weird". Thus, learning a foreign language is always an intercultural business. Although people engage in foreign language learning and teaching accept and believe intercultural competence is part of foreign language learning, these theories have rarely being put into practice and only a few empirical studies have being implemented throughout the world (Byram et al., 2000).

Intercultural competence is a prerequisite for the Sri Lankan English teacher too because at times they are required to teach in schools in which the students belong to a different ethnic group to that of their own. Hence, in a country like Sri Lanka where two major ethnic groups are in the eve of reconciliation after thirty year long atrocious war, the English language teacher has a singular role to play. It is they who have the opportunity to work in any school that is segregated, based on the medium of instruction or rather ethnicity as major ethnic groups in the country speak two different languages i.e. Sinhala or Tamil. As a consequence the teachers of English need to be equipped with knowledge, skills and attitudes essential for interacting with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Also they can set examples for their students by showing how to be culturally responsive to their counterparts from other cultures in a diverse society and subsequently become agents of change in a divided society.

II. REVIEW OF RESEARCH

This research is carried out in a language teaching context focusing on the development of four skills of the target language in the learners and therefore it is important to find out whether intercultural competence consist of components which have some relation to the competencies the foreign language teacher traditionally attempts to develop in the learner. It is clear that objective of the course is the mastery of communication using English. But the problem we face here is whether successful communication means only acquiring a linguistic code? It is the accepted notion today that language is for communication and therefore communicative proficiency of language is more important than mere mastering of structures (Widowson,1970) and it is not simply linguistic interaction in the target language. As Haliday (1970) correctly states we do not use language to communicate 'something'. "We use it to represent our experience in processes, objects, persons, abstractions, qualities, states, and relations of the world around and inside us"(p.145). Chomsky has defined the concept of '**linguistic competence**' as "the ideal speaker-hearer's intrinsic competence' and such a speaker is likely to become institutionalized if he simply produces any and all of the grammatical sentences with no regard to their appropriateness (Hymes,1972). Hymes (1967) has suggested a term for knowledge of understanding and producing both the referential and the social meaning of language as '**communicative competence**'.

The main difference between the Communicative competence and the linguistic competence is that the linguistic competence belongs to the whole communicative competence

or language knowledge that the students or native learners have. So according to Paulson and Tucker (2003) linguistic is a component from communicative competence. In other words Communicative competence is made up of four competence areas: linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic and she further describe them as follows.

- Linguistic competence is knowing how to use the grammar, syntax, and vocabulary of a language. Linguistic competence asks: What words do I use? How do I put them into phrases and sentences?

- Strategic competence is knowing how to recognize and repair communication breakdowns, how to work around gaps in one's knowledge of the language, and how to learn more about the language and in the context. Strategic competence asks: How do I know when I've misunderstood or when someone has misunderstood me? What do I say then? How can I express my ideas if I don't know the name of something or the right verb form to use?

- Discourse competence is knowing how to interpret the larger context and how to construct longer stretches of language so that the parts make up a coherent whole. Discourse competence asks: How are words, phrases and sentences put together to create conversations, speeches, email messages, newspaper articles?

- Sociolinguistic competence is knowing how to use and respond to language appropriately, given the setting, the topic, and the relationships among the people communicating. Sociolinguistic competence asks: Which words and phrases fit this setting and this topic? How can I express a specific attitude (courtesy, authority, friendliness, respect) when I need to? How do I know what attitude another person is expressing?

In language teaching situations we always deal with cross-cultural interactions and there is a tendency for learners not only to use the linguistic code of their first language but also social code of their particular culture which may result in misunderstandings. On a superficial level 'communicative competence' maybe described as tact and good manners and those who does not have that may be considered as tactless and rude by others using that system (Paulson,). This shows although it is easy to become bilingual it is not easy to become bicultural because we always bring our social and/or cultural identity to our social interactions. In the same way linguistic competence has some influence on communication between two speakers belong to different cultures because what is more important in a situation of social interaction is the social identity of the interlocutors. This social identity is more or less a result of the socialization process of the particular culture they belong to. Moreover foreign language learning today is more or less concerned with communication nevertheless has crossed over the boundaries of just exchanging of ideas or information as emphasized in communicative language teaching methods. Since successful communication include establishing relationships much more than exchanging a wealth of information (Byram, 2004). In this sense the effectiveness of communication depends on how the information perceived by the listener, the ability of the communicators to relate to each other and their politeness etc rather than the choice of language full of information. The politeness does not merely include words but ones attitudes and beliefs related to people from 'other' social and cultural contexts

an ability rightly termed as '**Intercultural Communicative Competence**'.

What is Intercultural Communicative Competence ?

What is intercultural communicative competence? Chen and Starosta (1999) define 'intercultural communication competence' as "the ability to effectively and appropriately execute communication behaviors that negotiate each other's cultural identity or identities in a culturally diverse environment" (p. 28). They outline three key components of intercultural communication competence: intercultural sensitivity (affective process), intercultural awareness (cognitive process), and intercultural adroitness (behavioral process), defined as verbal and nonverbal skills needed to act effectively in intercultural interactions. Wiseman (2001) suggests that intercultural communication competence is comprised of knowledge, skills, and motivation needed to interact effectively and appropriately with persons from different cultures. In this definition, motivation is a unique element not included in some of the other definitions of intercultural competence and is further defined as "the set of feelings, intentions, needs and drives associated with the anticipation of or actual engagement in intercultural communication" (p. 4). Kim (1992) sees adaptability at the heart of intercultural communication competence and defines it as "the individual's capacity to suspend or modify some of the old cultural ways, and learn and accommodate some of the new cultural ways, and creatively find ways to manage the dynamics of cultural difference/unfamiliarity, intergroup posture, and the accompanying stress" (p. 377). Byram (1997), in his model of intercultural communicative competence, stresses the importance of language (linguistic competence) and also includes identity and cultural understanding in his conceptualization. He argues that a comprehensive definition of intercultural communicative competence should include the social context and non-verbal dimensions of communication. In the discussion on 'intercultural communication competence', the terminology specifically included the word 'communication'. Other scholars tend to cite communication in the definition rather than in the terminology itself. For example, Fantini, Arias-Galicia and Guay (2001) discuss "cultural competence" as the "language-culture ability individuals develop for use in their native societies" (p. 4). They refer to cultural competence as an "acceptable and intelligible" performance within one's society. "Intercultural competence," on the other hand, refers to the "multiple abilities that allow one to interact effectively and appropriately across cultures" (p. 8).

Arsaratnam (2005) quoting Gudykunst says it is communication between people from different national cultures. Ting Toomey's (1993) identity negotiation model describes ICC as an effective negotiation process between two interactants in a novel communication episode. According to her variables that are relevant to intercultural communication also relevant to competence in intercultural contexts. Arsaratnam (2005) further explains that intercultural communication means people of two different ethnic groups or cultures trying to communicate perhaps despite their differences and concludes that intercultural does not indicate only people from different nationalities but also people from different ethnicities and religions and adds 'intercultural' encompasses ethnic, religious, cultural, national, geographical variances and 'communication' perceived to be verbal exchange

of ideas and messages through the use of language and involves an element of understanding on the part of participants. Arsaratnam and Dorfel's (2005) model declares that there are eleven unique dimensions of ICC for instance heterogeneity, transmission, other-centered, observant, motivation, sensitivity, respect, relational, investment and appropriational.

It is obvious that most variables are cognitive, affective and behavioural components of communication competence according to these models. Thus, it can be concluded that for effective communication to take place between people from different cultures they need to have intercultural competence. If so what is intercultural competence and what are its components?

Intercultural Competence

Historically the first focus on intercultural competence begins with the westerners started working as Peace-corps volunteers in 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s in other countries who found communication with people from those cultures is hampered by their cultural differences. Yet, it became more popular after 1980s with the expansion of communication technology and multinational business, study abroad programmes and immigrant issues. As a result research on intercultural competence too widened in spectrum by including aspects from descriptions to assessment of it. Nevertheless, after nearly four decades Ruben (1989) declared the need for clarity of the concept. While much progress had been made after Hall (1959) who is considered to be the father of the area a multiplicity of frameworks and approaches defining and assessing intercultural competence persists today. Even though the availability of broad range of theories and models provides language educators with a variety of approaches to understand and investigate intercultural competence, it also complexifies the task of communicating about related ideas in a systematic and consistently interpretable way. As a consequence, many other scholars too agree that finding a definition for intercultural competence is difficult (Hammer, Gudykunst, & Wiseman, 1978; Bennett, 1993; Gudykunst, 1994; Chen & Starosta, 1996; Byram, 1997; Fantini, 2000; Deardorff, 2006; Arsaratnam & Doref, 2005). Subsequently they have interpreted it in different ways. On the other hand Different terms, such as cross-cultural competence, global competence, intercultural competence and global citizenship (Deardorff 2006) too are referred to in the literature as similar concepts.

Kim and Ruben (1992) who advocate a similar concept, "intercultural transformation" which is defined as the "process of change in individuals beyond the cognitive, affective, and behavioral limits of their original culture". Paige (1993) concludes that intercultural effectiveness is a complex phenomenon that is influenced by six factors such as knowledge of target culture, one's personal qualities i.e., flexibility, tolerance of ambiguity, sense of humor, openness, behavioral skills i.e. communicative competence, self-awareness i.e. one's values and beliefs, technical skills i.e. ability to accomplish tasks, situational factors including clarity of expectations, psychological pressures, etc. (p. 171). Hammer, Bennet, and Wiseman (2003) too attempted to overcome some of the foggy of IC definitions by drawing a main difference between intercultural sensitivity and intercultural competence. From their perspective, intercultural sensitivity is "the ability to

discriminate and experience relevant cultural differences" whereas intercultural competence is "the ability to think and act in intercultural appropriate ways" (p. 422). Their distinction between knowing and doing in intercultural competent ways offers an appropriate introduction to the themes that have emerged from most contemporary work on IC. Heyward (2002) viewed 'intercultural literacy' as "understandings, competencies, attitudes, language proficiencies, participation and identities necessary for successful cross-cultural engagement" (Heyward 2002, p.10). Heyward proposes "first it conceives of literacy as including competencies, attitudes and identities an addition to understandings, and second, it suggests a literacy that crosses cultural boundaries" (Heyward 2002, p.10). Lustig and Koester (2003) use the term 'intercultural competence' and stress three key elements of intercultural competence: interpersonal and situational context, the degree of appropriateness and effectiveness of the interaction, and sufficient knowledge, motivations, and actions. Specifically, they emphasize that competence is dependent on "the relationships and situations within which the communication occurs" (p. 65). Thus, with its broadest sense, intercultural competence can be defined as Fantini (2006) does, "a complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself" (p. 12). She further notes that the "effective" aspect as relating to the individual's competencies and the "appropriate" aspect as relating to the receiver's perception of the individual's competencies and states that there are four dimensions to intercultural competence: knowledge, skill, attitude, and awareness.

Consequently, it is obvious that there is no conclusive agreement on the use of terminology, while many scholars agree that intercultural competence comprised of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, further delineations of these constructs vary by scholar. Furthermore, some scholars include other specific components such as motivation and adaptability. Also, there is disagreement over the role of linguistic competence and the role of context.

Hence, it is in this context the study of Deardroff (2006) attempts to document consensus among top intercultural scholars and academic administrators on what constitutes intercultural competence and the best ways to measure this complex construct, thus, representing the first crucial step toward definition and measurement. She precisely identifies that "lack of specificity in defining intercultural competence is due presumably to the difficulty of identifying the specific components of this complex concept" (p.241) and used a combination of two research methodologies in analyzing the concept and measurement of intercultural competence. The two methods were a questionnaire completed by U.S. institutional administrators of internationalization strategies and a Delphi technique used to develop consensus by a panel of nationally and internationally known intercultural scholars on a definition and components of intercultural competence, and as well recommended ways for assessing intercultural competence. According to her findings intercultural competence is defined as "the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and

attitudes" (p.247) which will be used as the working definition throughout this research.

Assessing Intercultural Competence

This study is concerned with what specifically constitutes intercultural competence in an effort to assist teacher education institutions to more effectively assess intercultural competence as an outcome of English language teacher training courses. Thus, the evaluation and assessment components become critical to this study.

During the formative years, research on intercultural competence utilized assessments of individuals' attitudes, personalities, values, and motives, usually through short self-reports, surveys, or open-ended interviews. The purpose and focus of ICC assessment using these tools centered around four main goals: "(1) to explain overseas failure, (2) to predict overseas success, (3) to develop personnel selection strategies, and (4) to design, implement and test sojourner training and preparation methodologies" (Ruben, 1989, p. 230).

Today, intercultural competence research spans a wide spectrum, from international schools to medical training, from short study abroad programs to permanent residency in foreign cultures. The purposes of research also range widely, from the selection of appropriate participants for sending abroad to cross-cultural mediation to the determination of learning outcomes associated with a variety of educational experiences. As the focus and purpose of intercultural competence research has expanded, approaches to its description and assessment have evolved as well, from short attitude and personality surveys to more complex behavioral self-assessments, performance assessments, portfolio assessments, and others. In the following sections an attempt would be made to discuss some important models evolved to assess and evaluate intercultural competence. Several models representing the development of intercultural understanding and competencies and associated concepts have been conceptualized in the literature. These models reflect a range of different theoretical approaches and methodologies from both qualitative and quantitative data (Freeman et al. 2009) and are discussed follows in order to get an insight of the data collection instruments used for this research.

Ruben's Behavioral Approach to Intercultural Communicative Competence

One of the earliest comprehensive frameworks was Ruben's behavioral approach to the conceptualization and measurement of intercultural communicative competence (Ruben, 1976; Ruben & Kealey, 1979). In contrast to the focusing of personality and attitudinal factors of previous approaches, Ruben (1976) supported a behavioral approach to linking the gap between knowing and doing, that is, between what individuals know to be intercultural competent and what those individuals actually do in intercultural situations. He rightly points out that people can very well know about the concept of intercultural competence, have genuine inspiration to show them, but unable to behave accordingly. Therefore he argued that to understand and assess individuals' behaviors, it would be necessary to employ "measures of competency that reflect an individual's ability to display concepts in his behavior rather than intentions, understandings, knowledge, attitudes, or

desires” (p. 337). Hence he acknowledged seven dimensions of intercultural competence:

1. Display of respect which describes an individual’s ability to “express respect and positive regard” for other individuals.

2. Interaction posture refers to an individual’s ability to “respond to others in a descriptive, nonevaluative, and nonjudgmental way.”

3. Orientation to knowledge describes an individual’s ability to “recognize the extent to which knowledge is individual in nature.” In other words, orientation to knowledge describes an individual’s ability to recognize and acknowledge that people explain the world around them in different ways with differing views of what is “right” and “true.”

4. Empathy is an individual’s ability to “put himself in another’s shoes.”

5. Self-oriented role behavior expresses an individual’s ability to “be flexible and to function in initiating and harmonizing roles.” In this context, initiating refers to requesting information and clarification and evaluating ideas for problem solving.

Harmonizing, on the other hand, refers to regulating the group status quo through mediation.

6. Interaction management is an individual’s ability to take turns in discussion and initiate and terminate interaction based on a reasonably accurate assessment of the needs and desires of others.

7. Lastly, tolerance for ambiguity describes an individual’s ability to “react to new and ambiguous situations with little visible discomfort”. (Ruben, 1976, pp. 339-341)

For assessment purposes, Ruben operationalized the seven dimensions with observational procedures and rating scales. Ruben’s call for a behavioral model and the assessment of behavioral outcomes, that is, describing an individual’s competence based on observed actions, can also be considered as a forerunner to performance assessments of ICC.

Byram's Model

Byram(1997) describes intercultural (communicative) competence as “Knowledge of others; knowledge of self; skills to interpret and relate; skills to discover and/or to interact; valuing others’ values, beliefs, and behaviors; and relativizing one’s self. He further adds that Linguistic competence plays a key role and views communication between two people belonging two different cultures as an intercultural dialogue (p. 34). He further states quoting Council of Europe (2008: 9) for the purpose of clarifying what intercultural dialogue is and states it as a process that comprises an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different ethnic,

cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage, on the basis of mutual understanding and respect. It requires the freedom and ability to express oneself, as well as the willingness and capacity to listen to the views of others. According to him this type of interaction requires not just linguistic competences but also ‘general competences’, described as a number of ‘savoirs’ which he developed further and presented as a model of intercultural competence as follows (Byram, 1997):

1. Skills (savoir comprendre) of Interpret and compare
2. Knowledge (savoirs) about ‘other’ and ‘own’
3. Education (savoir s’engager) to Critically evaluate
4. Attitudes (savoir être) of Openness and curiosity
5. Skills (savoir apprendre/faire) to acquire new knowledge (and apply in real time)

If further analyzed the above five-factors they comprise the following:

1. The attitude factor refers to the ability to relativize one’s self and value others, and includes “curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one’s own” (p. 91).

2. Knowledge of one’s self and others means knowledge of the rules for individual and social interaction and consists of knowing social groups and their practices, both in one’s own culture and in the other culture.

3. The first skill set, the skills of interpreting and relating , describes an individual’s ability to interpret, explain, and relate events and documents from another culture to one’s own culture.

4. The second skill set, the skills of discovery and interaction , allows the individual to acquire “new knowledge of culture and cultural practices,” including the ability to use existing knowledge, attitudes, and skills in cross-cultural interactions (p. 98).

5. The last factor, critical cultural awareness , describes the ability to use perspectives, practices, and products in one’s own culture and in other cultures to make evaluations.

Byram further clarified that the interaction factor (skills of discovery and interacting) includes a range of communication forms, including verbal and non-verbal modes and the development of linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse competencies. Of these components, he views attitudes as fundamental to intercultural competence.

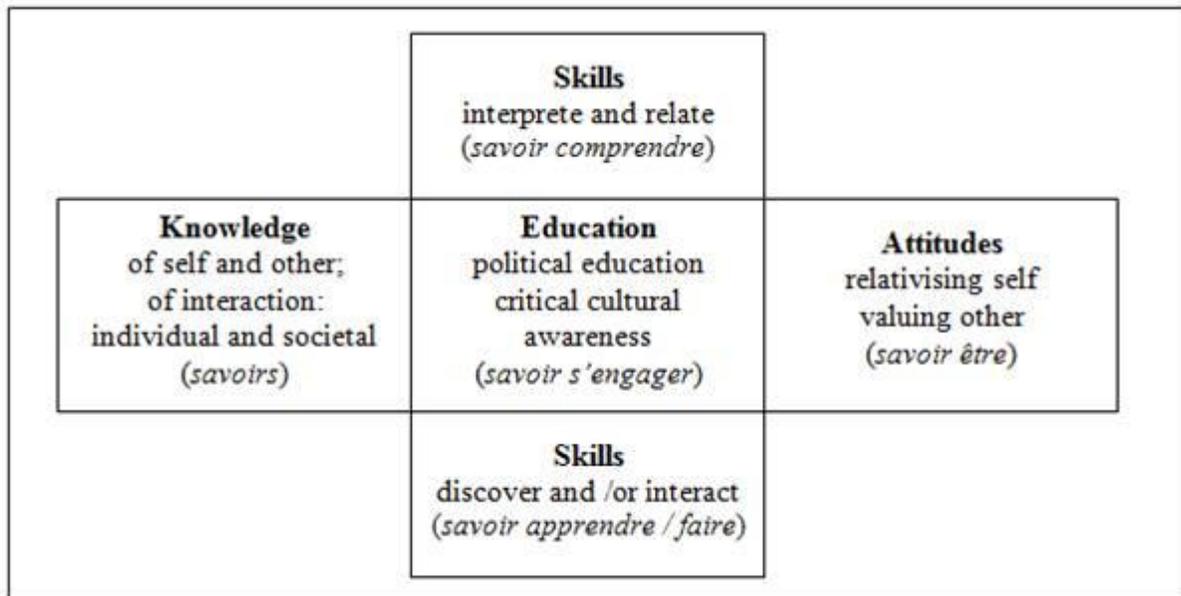


Figure 1. Five factor Model by Byram(1997)

The central feature of this representation of intercultural competence placed symbolically at the centre of the diagram - is the concept of critical cultural awareness or 'savoir s'engager', which is crucial to the educational value of teaching intercultural competence, in a foreign language teaching. The choice of the phrase 'savoir s'engager' ".....with its political connotations was deliberate, and related to the German tradition of 'politische Bildung' "(pg. 102). The 'critical cultural awareness' is defined as: an ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria (some of the) perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries. What is important here is the emphasis on reflection about whatever learners encounter in other cultures and countries, an emphasis on 'criticality'. He argued that, with respect to intercultural competence, it is better to conceptualize the learner and user of foreign languages as an 'intercultural speaker', rather than as someone who is likely to remain a failed native speaker. Probably more frequently, the approach has been cited by researchers who use it to clarify the competences that learners might acquire, and as the basis for attempting to describe and measure their intercultural competences which offers "a descriptive model of intercultural communicative competence (ICC)" which would be "a description of the components which contribute to the ability to understand and relate to people from other countries, and is intended to be a comprehensive and rich description of what is required in the most complex and also the most favourable circumstances of intercultural communication". Here it is evident that the intercultural competence which learners acquire would be used in interactions with people of another language and the intercultural competence would be linked to communicative competence.

Bennet's Model

In the North American context, a different model of intercultural competence has been gaining major attention over the years, Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural

Sensitivity (DMIS) (Bennett, 1993). The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) was developed with a grounded theory approach, on the basis of research in the 1970's and 1980's, which is a dynamic model that explains how individuals respond to cultural differences and how their responses evolve over time. The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) consists of six stages grouped into three ethno centric stages (the individual's culture is the central worldview) and three ethno relative stages (the individual's culture is one of many equally valid worldviews) as follows:

1. In the first 'ethnocentric' stage, 'denial' , the individual denies the difference or existence of other cultures by erecting psychological or physical barriers in the forms of isolation and separation from other cultures.
2. In the second ethnocentric stage, 'defense' , the individual reacts against the threat of other cultures by denigrating the other cultures (negative stereotyping) and promoting the superiority of one's own culture. In some cases, the individual undergoes a reversal phase, during which the worldview shifts from one's own culture to the other culture, and the own culture is subject to criticism.
3. Finally, in the third ethnocentric stage, 'minimization' , the individual acknowledges cultural differences on the surface but considers all cultures as fundamentally similar.

The three 'ethnorelative' stages of development lead to the acquisition of a more complex worldview in which cultures are understood relative to each other and actions are understood as culturally situated.

1. (4) During the 'acceptance' phase, the individual accepts and respects cultural differences with regard to behavior and values.
2. (5) In the second 'ethnorelative' stage, adaptation , the individual develops the ability to shift his frame of reference to other culturally diverse worldviews through empathy and pluralism.

3. (6) In the last stage, 'integration', the individual expands and incorporates other worldviews into his own worldview.

illustrate a dynamic way of modeling the development of intercultural competence.

Together, these six stages comprise a continuum from least culturally competent to most culturally competent, and they

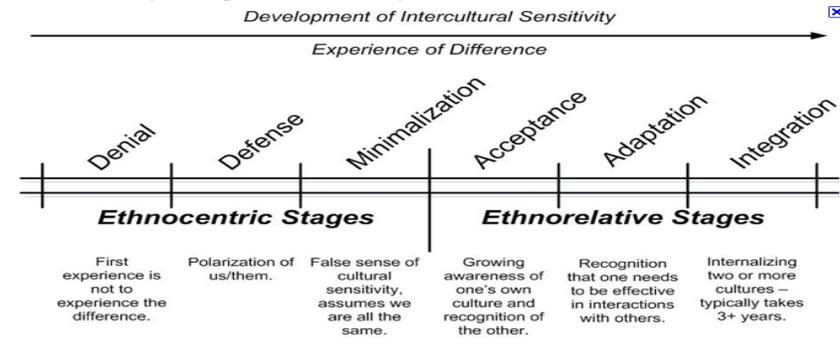


Figure 2. DMIS Model by Bennet (1993)

The most basic theoretical concept in the DMIS is that experience (including crosscultural experience) is constructed i.e. we do not perceive events directly. Rather, our experience of events is built up through templates, or sets of categories, that we use to organize our perception of phenomena. So, for instance, an American person who happens to be in the vicinity of a Japanese event may not have anything like a Japanese experience of that event, if he or she does not have any Japanese categories with which to construct that experience. Instead, he or she will have an ethnocentric experience, meaning that one's own culture is the only basis for perceiving events (p.)

More successful intercultural communication similarly involves being able to see a culturally different person as equally complex to one's self (person-centered) and being able to take a culturally different perspective. Thus, greater intercultural sensitivity creates the potential for increased intercultural competence. The crux of intercultural adaptation is the ability to have an alternative cultural experience. Individuals who have received largely monocultural socialization normally have access only to their own cultural worldview, so they are unable to experience the difference between their own perception and that of people who are culturally different. The development of intercultural sensitivity describes how we gain the ability to create an alternative experience that more or less matches that of people in another culture. People who can do this have an intercultural worldview. The DMIS supposes that contact with cultural difference generates pressure for change in one's worldview. This happens because the "default" ethnocentric world view, while sufficient for managing relations within one's own culture, is inadequate to the task of developing and maintaining social relations across cultural boundaries. Each change in worldview structure generates new and more sophisticated issues to be resolved in intercultural encounters. Each orientation of the DMIS is indicative of a particular worldview structure, with certain kinds of cognition, affect, and behavior vis-à-vis cultural difference typically associated with each configuration. It is important to note that the DMIS is not predominately a description of cognition, affect, or behavior. Rather, it is a model of how the assumed underlying worldview moves from an ethnocentric to a more ethnorelative condition, thus generating greater intercultural sensitivity and the potential

for more intercultural competence. Changes in knowledge, attitudes, or skills are taken as manifestations of changes in the underlying worldview. This distinction is important because developmental interventions such as training programs are appropriately aimed at the worldview, not at any particular knowledge (such as in area studies programs), any particular attitude change (such as in prejudice reduction programs) or any particular skill acquisition (such as role-plays or cultural assimilators).

Arsaratnam and Doerfel Model

The most recent development in intercultural competence theory have emerged in the research of Arasaratnam and Doerfel (2005) which they say triangulates and updates past study on intercultural competence by integrating the theoretical backgrounds of social psychology, interpersonal communication and anthropology to create a multidimensional understanding on intercultural communicative competence. In their work, Arasaratnam and Doerfel call for a new, culture-wide model of intercultural communication competence. Previous models, they argue, have often been subjective and limited by the cultures of the individuals involved in their conceptualization and assessment. Instead of imposing factors and dimensions in a top-down fashion, Arasaratnam and Doerfel have adopted a bottom-up approach, in which themes and dimensions came to light in interviews conducted with participants from 15 countries. From this study 10 unique dimensions of intercultural communicative competence were identified namely heterogeneity, transmission, other-centeredness, observant, motivation, sensitivity, respect, relational, investment, and appropriateness. Although this approach has not led to the development of widely practiced assessment methods, it promises a culture-generic, bottom-up approach to eliciting definitions and dimensions of intercultural competence that may be used in future assessment tools.

Deardorff's Model

Deardorff (2004) developed a cyclical or process model that visualizes intercultural competence as the movement from the personal level to interpersonal level of intercultural interactions. According to her the individual level starts with the attitudes and interactional level is the expected outcome. The model was

based on a working definition of intercultural competence that is “the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes” (Deardorff 2006, p. 247) which consist of the 22 elements of intercultural competence agreed on by the international scholars and administrators in her study as follows.

Attitudes: Respect, openness, curiosity and discovery. Openness and curiosity imply a willingness to risk and to move beyond one’s comfort zone. In communicating respect to others, it is important to demonstrate that others are valued. These attitudes are foundational to the further development of knowledge and skills needed for intercultural competence.

Knowledge: Cultural self-awareness (meaning the ways in which one’s culture has influenced one’s identity and worldview), culture-specific knowledge, deep cultural knowledge including understanding other world views, and sociolinguistic awareness, understanding the world from others’ perspectives (agreed upon by all the intercultural scholars)

Skills: Observation, listening, evaluating, analyzing, interpreting, and relating (these are necessary for acquisition and processing of knowledge)

These attitudes, knowledge, and skills ideally lead to an internal outcome that consists of flexibility, adaptability, an

ethnorelative perspective and empathy. These are aspects that occur within the individual as a result of the acquired attitudes, knowledge and skills necessary for intercultural competence. At this point, individuals are able to see from others’ perspectives and to respond to them according to the way in which the other person desires to be treated. Individuals may reach this outcome in varying degrees of success.

The summation of the attitudes, knowledge and skills, as well as the internal outcomes, are demonstrated through the behavior and communication of the individual, which become the visible outcomes of intercultural competence experienced by others.

This then becomes the agreed upon definition of the intercultural scholars, that intercultural competence is “the effective and appropriate behavior and communication in intercultural situations.” However, it is important to understand that this definition is predicated on the elements highlighted above. It is also important to understand the implications of “effective” and “appropriate” behavior and communication: Effectiveness can be determined by the individual while the appropriateness can only be determined by the other person with appropriateness being directly related to cultural sensitivity and the adherence to cultural norms of that person.

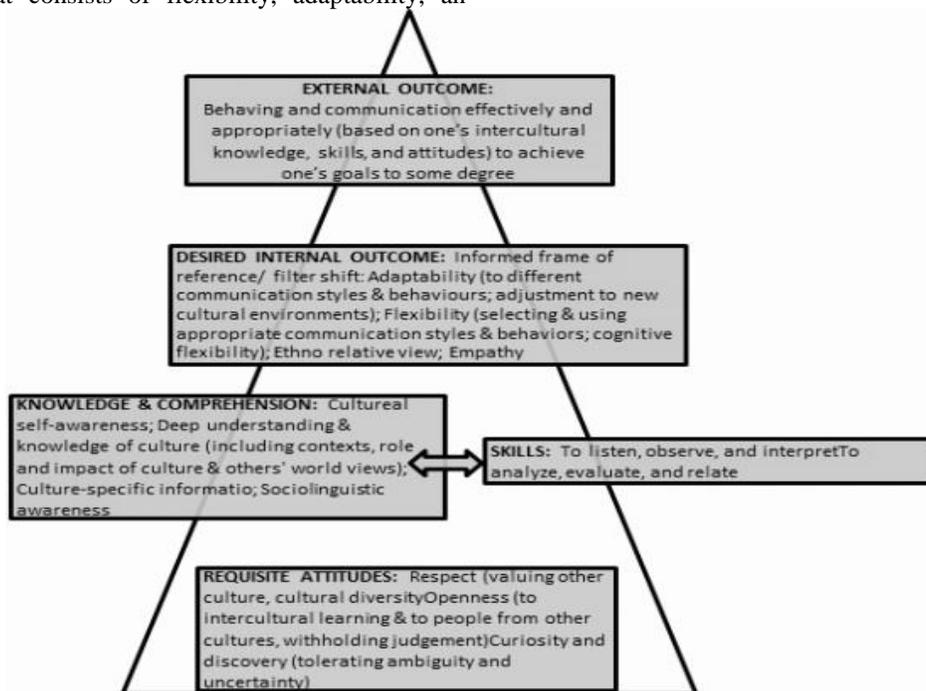


Figure 3- Deardorff's Pyramid Model

She further declares that these components of intercultural competence can be assessed using a mix of qualitative and quantitative measures. The following assessment methods can be used to measure student outcomes of intercultural competence: analysis of narrative diaries, self-report instruments, other-report instruments, triangulation (multiple methods), and a bottom-up approach involving such techniques as focus groups, dialogues, and workshops. Specifically, case studies and interviews received the strongest agreement, followed by analysis of narrative diaries, self-report instruments, observation by others/host culture, and judgment by self and others. In fact, it is

important to note that only 65% of the scholars felt that pre- and posttesting should be used as a way to assess intercultural competence, whereas administrators (90%) overwhelmingly agreed on the use of pre and posttests. The reasons for this controversial view on pre- and posttesting are numerous and warrant further investigation. The premise is that administrators find the use of pre and posttesting generally easy to administer and are hopeful to find that the intervention has indeed made a difference, thus providing a more meaningful and measurable outcome. Delphi participants, however, expressed skepticism over the use of self-report instruments (which are often used in

pre and posttesting), particularly as the sole method, to measure the outcomes of an intervention.

Ultimately, these models seek to explain the types of attitudes, knowledge and skills individuals need to function in culturally diverse settings and the processes they undergo in developing the needed skills and abilities for being intercultural competent. So when studying the above models the point to be kept in mind is that though individuals can enter these frameworks at any particular point, attitude is a fundamental starting point (Byram, 1997). Lynch and Hanson (1998) highlight the fundamental role of attitude in intercultural competence when they wrote, "After all the books have been read and the skills learned and practiced, the cross-cultural effectiveness of each of us will vary. And it will vary more by what we bring to the learning than by what we have learned" (p. 510). Just as culture is ever changing, scholars' opinions on intercultural competence too change with time. Therefore it is important for research and practice to stay current with scholars' research and thought processes.

Research Methodology

The quality of the research depends on the methodology selected for it. The purpose of this section is to introduce my study as a self reflective practice and there by rationalize my selection of research tools for it. Thus, it attempts to define the research design used to conduct the study, the sample selected, the choice of data collection methods to address the research objectives and questions, and how the data is presented and analyzed. As Hay(2002) says "Ontology logically precedes epistemology which logically precedes methodology" (p.02) , reasons and justifications for the research design and approach, research instruments, data sources, data collection techniques, data presentation techniques and analytical techniques used are given based on my philosophical stance that guided my research through out. Also I present the theoretical overview of my choices in order to situate my research in the usual research tradition.

Action Research Design

Since my study not only means at studying a phenomena but also aims at changing a situation I opted for action research as my research design. Action inquiry does not simply seek to understand and interpret the world but to change it (Cohen et al., 2000; McNiff et al., 2003). Consequently, it clearly suits my purpose of using education for social change based on my research activities. By this I mean that both me and my students who participate in this research will be empowered with the acquired knowledge, skills , attitudes and behaviours to function effectively in the role of agents of social change in our actual context of practice. Furthermore, a main difference between action inquiry and other research paradigms is that "knowing becomes a holistic practice and that theory is lived in practice and practice becomes a living theory" (McNiff and Whitehead, 2002, p.35). Traditionally the difference between research and application is viewed as, research gives priority to knowing through thinking where as application is knowing through doing but in action research the knowledge is considered as inseparable from application and both are necessary for understanding the world and our work in it (Darder et al., 2003). In the world of research subjectivity and bias are rejected as being influencing

the reality and action research paradigm is criticized for the same. Nevertheless, I view reality as subjective and socially constructed in the field of education because education is always an activity of value laden. Therefore, I can assert what I undertake as my study is influenced by my values, is subjective since I express my perspective from it, and the reality is socially constructed because although I do not try to find out a solution for a problem need to broaden my perception related to an issue in the same context. Thus, what is more suitable for my ontological stance than action research.

Mixed Method Approach

I conducted a classroom based research with a small number of participants and did not attempt to prove or refute a hypothesis. Therefore, qualitative methods were more suitable for my research. However, I focused on using mixed method approach because my literature review enabled me to understand measuring a complex concept such as intercultural competence requires both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods (Byram,1997; Deardorff,2004; Arsaratnam and Dorefel,2006). Further, I believe mixed method approach is more suitable for my research, because mixed method research is an approach to knowledge that consider multiple of view points, perspectives and stand points always including both qualitative and quantitative research. On the other hand it can be used as a validation technique for the research too because like Denzin (1978) states the reseracher wished to use all four methods of triangulation i.e. data , investigator, theory and methodological for increasing the confidence in my findings.

The Sample

The participants of the research were young teacher trainees of about 22-23 years old undergoing their training in a preservice teacher training institute in Sri Lanka. The total number of participants was 31 who were in the second year of their training and represented all major ethno religious groups living in the country. However, the majority of the participants were from Sinhala Buddhist group similar to the actual ethno- cultural composition of the country.

Data Collection Methods

"According to the intercultural scholars, the best way to assess intercultural competence is through a mix of qualitative and quantitative measures". (Deardorff,2006: p. 250). Therefore the selection of data collection methods was based on that principle. On the other hand the researcher wished to formulate and reformulate her ideas throughout the research, and flexible data collection methods were necessary for doing it. Also,in an action research everything that happens in the setting could be described and used as data and could be interpreted to understand behavior. Therefore the following data collection methods were used in this research.

- Questionnaires
- Observation
- Reflective journals,
- Student diaries and
- Field notes

In this research questionnaires will be used as it provides for the opportunity to collect information on attitudes and perceptions of a large number of student trainees in the shortest possible time. The questionnaire consisted of sixteen questions which was based on three major areas. The questions from number one to five were aimed at finding personal information of students. The questions six to fifteen were directed to derive information that could have some impact on intercultural competence of the students. The sixteenth question consisted of sixty statements that spreaded on the intercultural competence continuum specified by Bennet (1993) which has six stages basically divided into two ethnocentric stages and ethnorelative stages. There are three i.e. denial, defense and minimization in the ethnocentric phase and the other three i.e. acceptance, adaptation and integration in the ethnorelative phase (please refer to literature review for more information). The sixty statements were designed in such manner they fall into either of the six stages and they are equally distributed in a set of thirty statements for each of the two phases. It was prepared on the Likert scale based on five ratings from strongly agree to strongly disagree on sixty items. Half of them were ethnocentric statements and the other half ethnorelative statements and marks were given in such a way that the respondent needed to acquire more than 60 marks to be rated as in the ethnorelative continuum.

Observation

Observation as it stands is a monolithic label, a broad and even amorphous umbrella term subsuming many and varied purposes and interpretations (McDonough and McDonough, 1997). Nevertheless, in research it is done with intention. In this research observation was used as a tool to understand the nature of changes that occur in the participants. It was used as a method of enriching or supplementing the data gathered by other methods too. Therefore, a colleague teaching the same subject was used as a non participant observer and her field notes were analyzed in order to find answers to the research questions. There was a checklist used for logging the observations. Observation checklist was designed based on the pyramid model (Deardroff, 2005) and five factor model (Byram, 1993) described in the literature review. The checklist was divided into three different components i.e. knowledge, skills and attitudes and once the students become competent in these it is believed that they ultimately will develop critical cultural awareness that will lead to intercultural competence. A rubric system was devised to quantify the observed behaviours and thereby to allocate a total mark for each student for each lesson.

Reflective Journal / Student Diaries/Field Notes

Narrative accounts have become a norm in nowadays classroom-based qualitative research (Reagan and Osborn, 2002), therefore one of the main data sources would be the reflective journal that will be maintained by the researcher during the entire research process. All observations related to "what happens in the classroom" would be documented in this journal together with the thoughts and personal reflections of the researcher. Journal entries would be basically divided into three categories and logged under three columns i.e. what actually happened in

the class, what I think about what happened and what I learnt from what happened.

Student teachers were also instructed to keep a diary during and after the class to document their reflections about the class occurrences. The non participant observer too maintained a field note book and both these two were divided into the same columns as the reflective journal of the researcher for the purposes of comparing and contrasting the observations entered.

The Intervention

In this action research the intervening was done in the form of a curriculum intervention and a specially designed intercultural syllabus was implemented with the student trainees. The first cycle of action was conducted with the sample from the second years. Based on the feedback from it a second cycle is to be conducted with the first years. The intercultural materials were aimed at teaching students English language skills, a subject in the special area of the course of study meant for English teacher trainees. English language skills is taught for six hours a week for the second years and eight hours a week for the first years in the two year training period. However my intercultural syllabus was to be implemented for three months with the trainees. The period consist of sixty hour contact sessions with second years. The rationale of the course was to improve the four skills of English i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing. Although there is a set syllabus for the subject with specified competencies and list of topics no particular content is prescribed for the teacher educator to be used in teaching such as a text book or particular course of lessons. Thus, this opportunity was made use of to design a special curriculum which is referred to as "Intercultural Syllabus" in this report. These intercultural materials were carefully selected to develop student trainees' attitudes, knowledge, skills and critical cultural awareness necessary for them to have better intercultural interactions taking the findings from the literature review into consideration. The target of the activities was to increase their critical cultural awareness and sensitivity to otherness while improving English language skills. The content of the activities were on social and cultural information that promotes reflections on intercultural issues. The ultimate goal was to help student teachers to establish successful interactions with people from other cultures using English. There was a pre and post discussion session for each activity to develop critical thinking of the participants.

The Findings of the Attitudinal Scale

The twentieth question was based on an attitudinal scale of cultural perceptions. The objective of it was to identify whether teacher trainees have ethnocentric or ethnorelative attitudes. Each statement was given the appropriate mark based on its stage as described in the Research Methodology chapter and these marks are analyzed now.

The highest score was 63 and the only one to be specified as in the ethnorelative continuum and the lowest was 09. The mean score of the total sample was 30.2 which is only the half of the required score. The mean score of the Tamils 34 and the Muslims 39. The Sinhala Roman Catholics had a mean score of 19 where as Sinhala Buddhist had a mean score of 29.1.

Accordingly the Muslims had the highest mean score and the Roman Catholic Sinhalese had the lowest mean score.

The highest number of student scores lie in the range between 31-40 which consisted of 35.5% of the total population. The mode of the score was 33. The range of scores of the total sample, and the mean score of each ethnic group varied as presented in the tables below.

Table 1- Mean Score of the Sample

| The Range | Number of Students | Percentage % |
|-----------|--------------------|--------------|
| 0-10 | 1 | 3.2 |
| 11-20 | 8 | 25.8 |
| 21-30 | 7 | 22.6 |
| 31-40 | 11 | 35.5 |
| 41-50 | 2 | 6.5 |
| 51-60 | 1 | 3.2 |
| Over 61 | 1 | 3.2 |

Table 2- Mean Score Based on Ethnicity

| Ethnicity | Tamil | Muslim | Sinhala Buddhist | Sinhala catholic | Roman |
|------------|-------|--------|------------------|------------------|-------|
| Mean Score | 34 | 39 | 29.1 | 19 | |

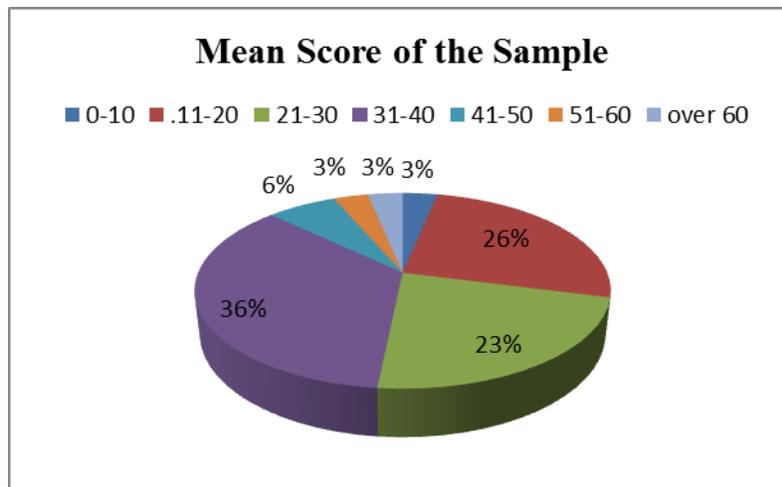


Figure 3

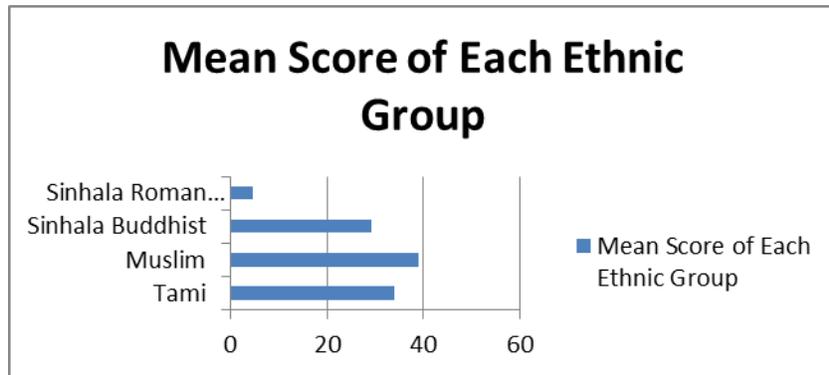


Figure 4

When focused on how far the mean score of each ethnic group deviated from the original it is clear that Muslims have the highest positive deviation where as the Roman Catholic Sinhalese have the highest negative deviation. The Following table displays it.

Table 3- Deviation of scores from the Mean

| Ethnicity | Deviation |
|------------------------|-----------|
| Tamils | 1.9 |
| Muslims | 3.0 |
| Sinhala Buddhists | -1.0 |
| Sinhala Roman Catholic | -3.3 |

Findings of the Researcher's Reflective Journal/Students' Diaries and Field Notes of the Non Participant Observer

The student diaries were maintained with two purposes. The first one was to identify cultural perceptions of the trainee who maintained it and the second was to understand how they responded to the activities in the intercultural syllabus. The entries in the diaries enabled to access personal thoughts, feelings and opinions of the participants which could not have been done otherwise.

Content analysis was used for analyzing data of the students' reflective journals. What is followed here is the content categories method. It was tried to identify in student notes, the content relevant to their attitudes knowledge , skills and critical cultural awareness about intercultural issues. These content categories were not predefined but after close scrutiny of student writings they emerged. They were identified in sets of sentences, a single sentence or in some rare cases even phrases and words were used. Thus, 'emerged coding' was picked for after preliminary examination of data. Nevertheless the coding and categorization were greatly influenced by the theories of intercultural competence discussed in the literature review. Thus, the student diaries were read for several times in order to identify concepts and group them into categories to recognize patterns and infer meaning from them. The group of words with a similar meaning or connotation considered as in the same categories. Similarity based on the words of synonyms were connected to the same ideas /concepts. Tables were drew based on these categories and findings were analyzed by drawing out conclusions based on the major themes worked out previously. The particular focus was on finding out whether the student teachers possess ethnocentric or ethnorelative cultural perceptions and whether the activities in the specially designed curriculum help them to develop intercultural competence.

Therefore, when finding categories of similar ideas focus was also on picking up statements related to them.

For the purposes of triangulation of data the reflective journal entries and observer's field notes based on the same activity were analyzed simultaneously to work out patterns and connections between and among them.

As mentioned in chapter three field notes and reflective journal were divided into three segments as follows.

- What I did
- what happened
- what I think about what happened

General Findings of the Reflective Journal /Student Diaries/Field notes

1. Students who belong to Minority groups are very much culture conscious
2. Religion is the most influential dividing factor between cultures
3. Majority of the students have very much 'culture centered' opinions- most of them believe their culture is superior to others
4. Though they have English as link language- mostly they use Sinhala for informal communication
5. Tamils and Muslims always communicate using Tamil
6. Some students dominate group work may be because they are clever or their English is good- others easily give in to them
7. Majority of Minority students are very silent and passive in the class
8. Some students are obviously ethnocentric - eg, Dilka, Preethi, Rihana, Ann, Mary- they have also scored low marks in the attitudinal test

9. Some students are very tolerant, empathetic, flexible and have scored comparatively higher marks in the test. eg. Dhammi, Yamuna
10. Some have scored higher marks but seems to be very much attached to religion and culture but still friendly and flexible. Eg. Risna, Malithi, Meena. Nymah
11. No one is promoting or inclined towards clashes- everybody follow the principle live and let live

Findings of the Observation Check List

The non participant observer, maintained the check list during the activities. Through the checklist an attempt was made to quantify intercultural competence by allocating a mark for different components of it. Thus a rating system was given to each component as follows.

- Inadequate - 1
- minimal - 2
- moderate - 3
- extensive - 4

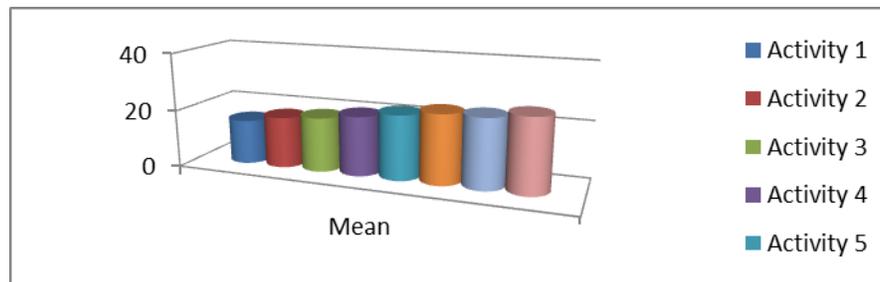


Figure 5. Mean of the Marks of the Sample for Each Activity

The Summary

The data analysis has assisted the researcher to understand the cultural perceptions of her student teachers and how they have responded to the intercultural syllabus. It also paved way to understand better the strategies and material that were more effective in developing intercultural competence of the participants. Although the research was a conducted for a it also helped the researcher to critically analyze her practice through the reflective journal. Also it helped the researcher to understand some ethical dilemmas involved in classroom based research because she always felt the students were compelled to become participants of the research. Nevertheless, the findings have positively motivated her for developing her practice further both as a researcher and a teacher educationist.

This study examined the role of intercultural competence in foreign language teacher training through a specific classroom based pedagogical research intervention. Through an action research it aimed at finding solutions for a timely need of developing intercultural competence of English language teachers and also to enhance researcher's practice as a teacher educator training them.

Discussion of Findings in Relation to the Research Questions

Students' Perceptions of Cultural Diversity

Data analysis show that students' cultural perceptions have more inclination towards ethnocentrism which means they view the reality of the world in relation to their culture. They have a strong attachment to their culture which help to perceive

For each of the activity discussed above the checklist was used for observation and students' knowledge, attitudes, and skills observed were given a mark. In some instances some of the students were not actively participating in the lesson. In such instances it was difficult for the observer to quantify her intercultural competence. Thus, no marks were given. After each lesson the marks of the individuals were totaled up and their progress recorded.

When studying these marks a slight increase in marks in the last four activities evident in most cases. Only few students did not show an evident of change. However when considering the mean we can see that it has increased. This shows that students have some progress by following the course and intercultural material has some impact although not very significant at this stage. This is obvious from the following chart. In the chart It is obvious that some progress has taken place in student performance.

culturally others as 'some inferior set of human beings'. They seem to be having a sturdy influence from their religion rather than language in providing a shelter for their ethnocentric views. This has strengthened the antipathy between the three major ethnic groups since they basically follow three different faiths. further, it seems that the antagonism towards Islam is deeper than towards Hinduism despite the fact that Hindus are Tamils who were at war with Sinhalese for a very long period. This could be attributed to the influence Hinduism had toward Buddhism throughout history and most of the basic principles of both religions being similar. On the other hand recent religious fanaticism of the Muslims in all parts of the world and influence of Buddhist extremist groups erupted in the country in the recent past together with rigid nature of Islam might have contributed to the strong antagonism between Muslims and Sinhala Buddhists which needs further research in the social research arena to be proved.

Critical observation also revealed that students possess limited knowledge of other ethnic and religious cultures despite their existence together in the island for hundreds of years. This was especially evident in the Sinhala group they also being the group with the poorest knowledge of language of the other two groups. May be because they do not need second language of the country for their survival.

The other interesting factor is that despite the low scores they gained from the attitudinal scale showing there ethnocentric nature they have scored high marks in the questions related to adaptation stage of the intercultural competence continuum showing their willingness to adapt to other cultures may be

because Sri Lankan culture is based on the concept of peaceful living who hate violence. The scores reveal that almost all the participants fall into the minimization stage of the IC development process which supports the principle 'live and let live'. This finding could be very informative for those who are interested in transformative pedagogies and also policy makers of education to take necessary steps by exploiting the fact to their advantage.

How the Students Responded to the Intervention

One important aspect of this research was to find out the impact of pedagogical intervention on developing intercultural competence of prospective teachers of English participating in this research. The intervention is of one term duration which is approximately three months with 60 hour contact sessions out of which only 40 hours completed up to now. Therefore it would be difficult to identify a significant change of attitude and behaviour of the participants at this point. However, through observation it was understood some obvious change is taking place may be because the participants were young and intelligent and easily responded to 'change'. This was further attested by the findings of the scores obtained by participants from the checklist used by the non participant observer. Although some participants show little or no improvement, when the overall mean score is compared the change is evident in the group. This in fact is very much rewarding to the attempt made and it promotes a hope a significant impact would be manifested once the entire intervention is completed.

Implications of the Study

The findings of the present investigation tend to support the importance of intercultural competence in English language teacher training as it is a neglected aspect of foreign language teaching that was paid a lesser amount of attention but may pose a greater challenge for the teachers in handling students coming from linguistically and culturally diverse environments. On the other hand it may provide the answer for the failures of the reforms introduced so far related to promoting social harmony in our conflicted society looking for an everlasting solution for ethnic issues. Further, the findings of the research is very conclusive on the fact that none of the participants considered individuals from other ethnic groups as enemies but friends. They have completely forgotten the fact that they belong to different ethnic groups when working towards a common goal. This proved that providing opportunities for extensive intercultural interaction would help in promoting social harmony.

In addition, it is a noteworthy point that none of the student teachers seems to be considering their cultural counterparts as an ethnic/cultural rival but just as their "classmate" or "dorm mate" or "friend" who shares with them the hectic routines of their academic life. In fact, it may be possible to use this attitude as a tool in the reduction of antagonistic attitudes between and among ethnic groups living in Sri Lanka if they were given more opportunity to be mixed up breaking the segregation procedures currently existing in all primary, secondary and tertiary education. In addition, the subjects displayed a keen interest to learn about cultures of each other. This 'spark' of interest could be utilized in making the trainees literate not only in each other's cultures but also their languages, as it was apparent during the intervention

that having a common language promotes positive communication although there was no evidence that it plays role in developing Intercultural Competence.

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