

THE INTEGRATION OF THE MOTHER CULTURE IN THE PROCESS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Abstract. *The paper illustrates the integration of the mother culture of students belonging to the Serbian speech community and the culture of the English language studied as a foreign language. The particular illustrations refer to classes based on text and dialogue by means of which the mother culture of the students is put into constant interaction with the culture of the English language. The technique has actually been tested in a language classroom where English is a foreign language and the students are of a multicultural and multilingual background. In brief, the integration of the mother culture and the culture of the English language proves to be of utmost importance in the process of learning English as it can further the process and make the study of English more successful.*

Key words: *mother culture, culture of the English language, integration, interaction*

1. INTRODUCTION

The mother culture of the students learning English as a foreign language may be a huge obstacle. A student learning English in Africa will have different problems to face than a student in a European country. The same applies to students of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds learning English in an English-speaking country. The difficulties will not always be based on the mother tongue, but more often and more obviously on the mother culture. Nevertheless, the influence of the mother culture may be turned into an advantage by incorporating it into the syllabus and using it as part of the study material. What should be acknowledged at the very beginning of this paper is that the suggested technique is not intended to be a substitute for existing teaching methods but a supplementary device to help teachers spice up classes and rebuild enthusiasm both among the students and among themselves.

Since there is no modern country in the world which might declare itself as monocultural and monolingual, there is obviously a huge problem English language teachers are faced with. The mother culture, more often it shall be the mother cultures, may affect the

process of learning English either positively or negatively meaning that it may either further the process or interfere with it. In multicultural and multilingual countries the identity of every individual is immensely influenced by all the cultures living together in a particular environment. The members of the language majority in a certain speech community are being influenced by the language minorities and vice versa. What is more, the minorities are under the constant pressure of being obliged to acquire the language and the culture of the language majority. Naturally, language and cultural groups sharing a territory cannot live in isolation from each other which is why their languages and cultures are in permanent interaction. Such interaction is inevitable and along with it the identity of each individual living on the crossroads of such interaction is being constantly shaped and altered because language and culture are inseparable elements of an individual's personality and they evolve together with all the other changes an individual goes through.

Furthermore, members of a language majority are not necessarily of the same cultural background. This actually means that people speaking the same language and acknowledging that language as their mother tongue might be of different cultural origins. For instance, immigrants and their children living in any English speaking country in the world probably do not use their mother tongue in everyday communication since they have to communicate in English but they will always declare themselves as being of some particular cultural origin and that is again an inseparable part of their identity. A Greek in America will always be a Greek regardless of the language – the English language – he has to speak. And if a country, for instance Canada, has a governmental policy acknowledging and even supporting multilingualism and multiculturalism, the responsibility to integrate the mother culture into the English language speech community is even greater.

As far as the Serbian speech community is concerned, a fact of crucial importance is that it is inhabited by members of different ethnic, religious, political and cultural communities (Serbian, Albanian, Roma, Bulgarian, Romanian, Hungarian, Jewish, Catholic, Orthodox, Muslim, etc.). More importantly, the Serbian language is not necessarily the mother tongue of the people living in Serbia. In Vojvodina, for instance, members of the Hungarian ethnic community may speak Hungarian as their mother tongue and Serbian is their second language. In the South, for example, Roma children may have spent several years living in some European country meaning that their mother tongue is Roma, the language of the European country is the second language and Serbian is the third one if we follow the language acquisition chronologically. If we now add English as a foreign language, it will be the fourth language in the row! Even more complicated is now the issue of the mother culture. Which one will it be? Is it the culture of the speech and/ or cultural community or is it the culture of the Serbian language as being the official language of the country the individual is living in? Furthermore, is it possible to single out one mother culture on a territory characterised by the mentioned diversity of different language, cultural, religious, political communities? Obviously, there can be no exact differentiation. What has to be acknowledged is that the Serbian speech community is multilingual and multicultural, inhabited by individuals of different ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious, etc. background.

In brief, as far as the English language classroom is concerned, it may be of crucial importance to let students of different cultural and linguistic origin express their identity freely in the new English (target) language environment. The best way to achieve that is by applying the communicative approach¹, that is dialogue, in the teaching process. Students

¹ Breen and Candlin defined the essential characteristics of the communicative curriculum as "a process which grows out of the interaction between learners, teachers, text, and activities in a classroom context whereby a

can be motivated to talk about their culture all the time because every topic may serve the purpose of interaction between the mother culture and the culture of the target language. In that way, students feel motivated to communicate in English, they are not afraid of bad performance because they soon realise that everybody else's knowledge of English in that new environment is more or less equally bad. They are all members of the same group of (in)competent learners of English. The obvious benefit of such an environment, where cultural and linguistic diversity is identified, acknowledged and tolerated, is that students learn how to fit into an environment, how to accept others who are different, how to tolerate them and how to coexist with them. Eventually, such a foreign language environment is motivating for its inhabitants – the students – and it can bring about nothing but successful learning. What happens when that sense of tolerance is taken out of the classroom is a topic for another study; not completely irrelevant at this point, though.

2. UP-TO-DATE RESEARCH ON THE INTEGRATION OF MOTHER CULTURE AND LANGUAGE WITH THE CULTURE OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

The prevailing attitude among English language teachers is still that culture in the process of teaching English is a fifth skill that can simply be attached to the process of teaching generally accepted as including speech, comprehension, reading and writing. However, culture is always there and it will prove difficult even to the most competent and accomplished student of English. When it comes to understanding the cultural context of the language being studied, communication might be unsuccessful because of the lack of knowledge of some cultural artefact in the target language. Similarly, communication may be bad because of the negative transfer of elements from the mother culture into the target culture. Imagine a male teacher from America in an Arabic language classroom with only young women attending classes! Or, a female teacher from Britain in Pakistan with male students! Those two, regardless of their immense knowledge of English and teaching experience, are doomed to fail and probably risk being arrested if not aware of certain cultural issues.

Fortunately, current trends in sociolinguistic and sociocultural studies show that scholars are aware of the fact that English is the language of communication for members of different nations and cultures. Extensive research conducted by important people in the world of sociolinguistics includes the work of D. Graddol (2001, 2006), D. Crystal (1997), U. Jessner (2003, 2006), P. Freire (1972), C. Kramsch (1993), R. Lado (1957), J. Cummins (1986), J. V. Wertsch (1985) and of course the immense contribution of L. S. Vygotsky (1962, 1978) whose icebreaking ideas enabled the bold venture into multiculturalism as it is understood today. All these authors, along with many other teachers and language practitioners, have been pointing out the crucial importance of acknowledging and integrating the individual linguistic and cultural characteristics of every single participant in the English language classroom in a multicultural and multilingual environment.

The first cornerstone laid in sociolinguistics may be found in the work of Vygotsky and his idea that the human mind is indirectly influenced by physical and symbolical tools among which language and speech are the most important ones. The relationship between people and their speech is interactive as human beings are influenced by language whereby at the same

communicative methodology will therefore exploit the classroom as a resource with its own communicative potential". (Breen & Candlin, 1980: 95-98)

time they influence language. However, the interaction does not end at this level because human beings can and do influence other people via the language they use and at the same time they are being influenced by other people and thus themselves in that interaction, also referred to as communication. The social and mental activities performed by man, Vygotsky pointed out, are being organised by means of cultural artefacts created by man himself while interacting with his environment. Since symbolical artefacts are integrated into the process of thinking, the more complex these artefacts are the more the human mind will develop. This naturally means that man's mental activities will be far more complex and that his cultural identity will develop accordingly. To conclude, both the identity and the mental abilities of an individual are to a large extent the products of the culture the individual originates from and belongs to. More importantly, both the identity and the mental abilities are constantly subjected to the same changes the individual's environment is undergoing. Therefore, the individual, his environment as well as the artefacts created and used are involved in a constant and dialectical interaction affecting each and all of them.

Human behaviour is thus a complex process determined by the sociocultural environment the individual is living in, the relationships he enters, the interaction and communication he has with other individuals in and outside that environment as well as all the other artefacts created and used in that particular environment.

What modern applied linguistic theory should bear in mind especially when organising the process of teaching English as a foreign or second language is the following:

If the semiotic system (the language) is the basic tool by means of which human conscience is realised and physically shaped, and if the the semiotic system is both the cause and the result of the sociocultural environment the individual is part of, the one conclusion to be drawn is that only in the interaction and constant process of mutual and simultaneous activities can language and culture enable not only the development and realisation of conscience but their understanding as well. Language and culture are not two isolated systems, but one unified frame without which the individual could not exist as a conscious being. The reason for that is that the cultural background defines the individual as belonging to a certain cultural group and the language of that group helps him communicate with other members of the group and thus exist, participate and act in it. Therefore, if the language of one culture is naturally tied to a particular group, being the product of that group and at the same time its basic tool, it may be concluded that the individual when learning a language actually acquires the culture as well. In accordance with that, the more languages one studies, the more cultures one acquires, which again means that each language and each culture contribute to the identity of the individual and may not be separated from it. The essence of multilingualism and multiculturalism is exactly the necessity of acknowledging, accepting and tolerating every single aspect of one's identity including all the languages and all the cultures that an identity is composed of.

Modern English language teaching has the obligation to develop and further a system of teaching which will do exactly the same thing: acknowledge, accept and tolerate every single aspect of its participants' identities including all the languages and all the cultures they are composed of.

3. INTEGRATION OF MOTHER AND TARGET CULTURE IN PRACTICE

The following presentation of different techniques of integrating the mother and the target language culture should be regarded as a suggestion only. None of them is

a ready-made manual and as such it should be adjusted to the particular group. Furthermore, none of the suggested techniques is prescriptive. The teacher should adapt them to their personal inclination and affinity. Not every teacher is talkative, not every teacher likes walking around building up enthusiasm. Therefore, what should be regarded as instructive are the steps to be taken before, during and after the class since they will give the teacher security and guidance in the process. Every other suggestion illustrated here should be no more than a suggestion.

3.1. Text and dialogue

One of the many symbolic products of culture is the text and as such it may serve as a primary resource to motivate dialogue in class. At the same time a text can also be a device by means of which the integration between the mother and the target culture can be realised in class.

Basically what the reader finds in a text is the context that the author has built around their text. On one hand, that context embodies all the information and characteristics related to that author; on the other hand, the context also displays the society (culture), the period and the milieu the text was embedded in. As soon as the student (reader) has gathered all these different types of information and compared them to his/ her personal experience, knowledge and attitudes (personal culture), the text assumes a new context and meaning (Kramsch, 1993:23). That is the context created by every individual student in accordance with their attitudes and personal experience. Through the dialogue that the teacher initiates in accordance with the communicative methodology of teaching language, the students, both among themselves and with the teacher, exchange opinions about the meanings they have created, that is contexts. What happens on this level is that they all together create a completely new context around the read, interpreted and analysed text and that context is related only to that particular classroom and only to those participants in the ELL process. What is more important is that they are all equal as far as that particular context is concerned and the differences among them are easier to respect since they all know/ don't know the text and the context around it. And that context is their culture, a new culture existing only in that particular classroom and all the students and the teacher are the main characters in it.

When Claire Kramsch defines the process of English language teaching in relationship to the communicative approach (Kramsch, 1993), she refers to the English language studied by immigrants in an English speaking country saying it is an "initiation into a kind of social practice that is at the boundary of two or more cultures ... (creating thus) a social, linguistic reality that is born from the L1 speech environment of the learners and the social environment of the L2 native speakers (that) is a third culture in its own right." (1993: 9). The results of her research may be applied to any ELL environment because

"teachers and learners in educational systems are subjected to the ideology of the institution, which itself responds to national and international imperatives. However, ... learners as well as teachers repeatedly use the system to promote their own local and personal meanings as well as for their own pleasure. In the interstices of the native and the target cultures, they are constantly engaged in creating a culture of the third kind through the give-and-take of classroom dialogue."

(Kramsch, 1993: 23).

Therefore, both the classroom and the dialogue created in it as based on the text studied are the foundations of a new type of culture, a third culture everybody in the classroom is familiar with. This new culture is a kind of derivative produced from the culture of the speech environment (mother tongue or not) and the target (English language) culture being studied. The most important aspect of this new culture is that all the participants in the teaching process are in a constant and dialectical interaction among themselves and at the same time with the text and the context(s) build around the text. All the existing educational, moral, cultural, social, ethnical, religious and political aspects of the classroom environment may be discussed, questioned and analysed. The students can rely on the amount of language knowledge they have, in a way they need not be ashamed of because they have the confidence of being acknowledged for who they are and not for the level of competence they can exhibit. In one word, all the inhibitions accompanying a regular foreign/ second language classroom because of the lack of competence can be either disregarded or surmounted. The result of such an approach is a more tolerant approach to cultural diversity among students, better motivation for the ELL process and, eventually, efficiently realised targets set up at the beginning of any foreign/ second language teaching process, the most important one of which is to have students communicate in the target language.

3.2. Classes based on text and dialogue

Obviously, the most popular teaching material all around the world is the text and there is nothing wrong with it. What is wrong is the way it is utilised in class. Most teachers come to class, open the textbook, start reading, have their students read, maybe translate portions of the text or all of it and that is it. Some teachers do the comprehension exercises following the text but without any actual participation, motivation, creativity or resourcefulness coming from the students.

The main reason why the text should remain the basic study material in any textbook is not that it fills the pages but it is easy and cheap to use. More importantly, it offers tonnes of possibilities! In the following section of this paper, a few types of classes based on text and dialogue shall be illustrated and they may all be organised around the following activities:

- a) read and ask questions
- b) read and compare
- c) true or false
- d) pro and con

Each of the suggested activities can be a single class; however, in order to motivate students, the teacher should probably combine activities to spice up the class and keep the students engaged all the time.

3.2.1. Step One: Preparation

Almost any text may be used for a class based on text and dialogue because the teacher can organise accompanying questions and activities individually. What would be ideal is write the text and compare and contrast particular cultural artefacts in the text so as to have the students see the differences and similarities in writing already and make it easier for them to talk about them. One possible way would be to write the text in two columns, one for each culture and present similari-

ties and differences parallelly. For instance, Christmas as celebrated in the USA can be explained in several sentences in the left column, whereas in the right column Christmas, with or without differences or similarities, may be presented as celebrated in the particular speech community if it is a Christian one.

Table 1. The celebration of Christmas in an English speaking speech community compared to Christmas in an Orthodox community:

<p><u>Christmas – 24th December</u></p> <p>The tradition of Christmas Day has become a huge industry especially in the USA. The whole season starts the day after Thanksgiving and is marked by Christmas shopping and preparations for the big event. Though considered a family holiday, Christmas parties are becoming more and more popular. A wonderful tradition for children is the idea that Father Christmas in the UK, or Santa Claus in the USA, brings them presents during the night and puts them under the Christmas tree. On the morning of the 25th children can open the presents. Being a family holiday, Christmas dinner is planned for many family members. In the USA Christmas is a time for <i>scattered</i> family members to spend some time together.</p>	<p><u>Christmas – 6th January</u></p> <p>Christmas Eve in Orthodox countries, such as Russia, Serbia, Bulgaria, etc. is a very solemn event. Family members have their Christmas dinner together. In Serbia, for instance, men go to the woods to find an <i>oak</i> branch called "badnjak" a symbol of Christmas Day. Since it is still Lent, the dinner consists of fish, cabbage pie, beans, all sorts of fruit, such as <i>dates</i>, <i>figs</i>, <i>prunes</i>, <i>raisins</i>, etc. All the dishes are prepared according to traditional recipes. The most important thing is a small round flat bread roll with a coin hidden in it. Before dinner, the bread is divided into pieces. Every family member gets a piece and the one who gets the piece with the coin will be very lucky in the year to come.</p>
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If it is a Jewish community, Hanukkah can be described.

Table 2. Christmas as celebrated in an English speaking speech community compared to the Jewish holiday Hanukkah:

<p><u>Christmas – 24th December</u></p> <p>The tradition of Christmas Day has become a huge industry especially in the USA. The whole season starts the day after Thanksgiving and is marked by Christmas shopping and preparations for the big event. Though considered a family holiday, Christmas parties are becoming more and more popular. A wonderful tradition for children is the idea that Father Christmas, or Santa Claus in the USA, brings them presents during the night and puts them under the Christmas tree. On the morning of the 25th children can open the presents. Being a family holiday, Christmas dinner is planned for many family members. In the USA Christmas is a time for <i>scattered</i> family members to spend some time together.</p>	<p><u>Hanukkah (also Chanukkah, Chanukah)</u></p> <p>The tradition of Hanukkah is celebrated in the form of an eight-day Jewish festival and holiday in November or December when Jews remember the occasion when the Temple in Jerusalem was dedicated again in 165 BC. This occasion actually symbolises the celebration of the victory in Israel. Children like this holiday because they get presents for it.</p>
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However, such an approach cannot be applied too often because there will not be enough time to cover all the other texts in the (prescribed) textbook as suggested by the syllabus and the curriculum of the education system, which is why a class like this could be introduced once in a while. The students will still love it.

A much safer and less time-consuming way may be to integrate the elements of the different cultures when doing a text from the textbook. Several extra questions introduced now and then will not steal away the time. The topic to be covered as predicted by the syllabus for the particular class will determine the dialogue in class. For instance, if the text in the textbook used in class is about shopping habits and malls in Britain, Canada, Australia and/ or the USA, the teacher could distribute sheets with short excerpts about similar habits in the speech community the students belong to and have them confirm or correct the explanations. If it is a language group consisting of members of several different cultural backgrounds, such as is the case in Serbia, the teacher might prepare questions for them regarding similarities or differences and have the students talk about them. Of course, no teacher can predict everything but they can have an organisational plan for the class so as to avoid awkward silences and frustration.

Table 3. Questions that can be prepared to be asked in a class about shopping habits and malls:

- | |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are there malls in our country? 2. Do teenagers spend much time in malls in our country? 3. Does your family go shopping once a week or every day? 4. Are credit cards used in our country? |
|---|

3.2.2. Step Two: Realisation

The first thing worth doing in class, regardless of the way a text is usually presented in, should be the introduction of new vocabulary. If the teacher has written the text on a separate piece of paper, a glossary should be added at the end. If the text from the book is used, the new vocabulary should be written on the board, including pronunciation. In order to save time, the teacher can write the new vocabulary on the board before the class starts if the classroom facilities allow this. If not, the teacher can prepare a poster with the vocabulary at home and hang it on the wall of the classroom and discuss it with the students. It goes without saying that the teacher should ask the students whether there are other unknown words after the text has been read once.

The next step is to read the text. Teachers generally stick to one routine because they think the students like the safety of routine. Though this is true to some extent, it could be a good idea not to have a routine as far as this step is concerned. If it is a difficult text, with lots of unknown words and otherwise difficult vocabulary, the teacher should read it. If not, the students could do it as well and the teacher should correct them when and if they make mistakes. Sometimes the teacher could read the first part to break the ice and then ask the students to read the rest. Some teachers prefer reading the whole text and then do the activities. If the text is used for the interaction suggested in this guide, it would be better to read the text part by part and talk about each part as the reading proceeds.

The reason for this portioned reading is that it makes the students pay attention. If the whole text is read at once and if it is a longer text, most of the students stop following the reading. But if the teacher constantly asks questions and makes them read, think, talk, give opinions, the students will eventually beg for being allowed to read a part and say something.

If the teacher is in a multicultural group, the questions prepared ahead should be used sparingly per each portion so as not to end up with no more time to finish the text. Also, not everybody likes talking. The teacher should know the group well and pick students who like to talk first and then later try asking shy and less talkative students by posing questions referring to their particular culture. Sometimes a shy student simply waits to be picked out of a million to say something.

Regardless of the way the teacher proceeds, the reading should be accompanied by the talking. The teacher should ask different questions all the time, answer even parts of their own questions, help the students finish sentences, give them the word they need, let them speak in Serbian if unable to utter a thought and, if necessary, have the thought translated by some other student; or the teacher might even utter the complete thought of the student if they understand it. If presented like this, the text will be completely clear to everybody. The best thing about such a text presentation is that it generally takes 10-15 mins to do a text from the book usually used in class. If the text is longer, the syllabus will have to be adapted so that the particular text can be done in two classes whereas some other less demanding unit predicted to be covered by two classes can be done in one class only.

The activities that can follow the reading can be from the book since most textbooks have comprehension activities, such as questions about the text, true or false, fill in the blanks etc. If the teacher comes to class with their own text, they can prepare the follow-up activities as well. If only portions of a text are prepared, the questions and other activities to follow them can be prepared as well and realised in class along with the activities from the book.

Table 4. 'True or false' exercise to follow the excerpts about Christmas in English speaking and Orthodox communities:

- | |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In the USA, Christmas is a time for <i>scattered</i> family members to spend some time together. 2. Christmas in Orthodox communities is celebrated after Lent has been over. |
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Table 5. 'Fill in the blanks' exercise to follow the excerpts about Christmas in English speaking communities and Hanukkah in a Jewish community:

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|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A wonderful _____ for children is the idea that Father Christmas, or Santa Claus in the USA, brings them presents during the night and puts them under the Christmas tree. 2. This occasion actually symbolises the _____ of the victory in Israel. Children like this holiday because they get presents for it. |
|--|

A nice activity to round up comprehension is a summary done on the board. The teacher can actually make two (or more) columns on the board and have the students suggest items regarding the particular cultures discussed to be classified under the

appropriate headings. For instance, after having done the text about shopping habits and malls referring to the English speaking world, and after the students have answered the questions about shopping habits and malls in their country, the teacher can have them think of words associated with shopping in other countries, put the words on the board as subtitles under the respective heading and present the differences and similarities parallelly. Students will actually understand that being different is nothing to be ashamed of but mainly a trade that goes along with one's identity.

Table 6. Parallel presentation on the board of shopping habits and malls in English speaking communities and the different countries the students come from:

USA and UK	Italy	Germany	Serbia
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - consumers - spendthrifts - malls as places for teenagers to hang out and have fun 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - enjoy shopping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - usually buy what they need - shopping is a form of hanging out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - buy only things they need - hanging out in cafes - malls still not so popular but common

3.2.3. Step Three: Follow-up

Regardless of the way the teacher presents and realises the text, the follow-ups are numerous. All the suggested types of exercises mentioned above can be used for follow-up classes if the teacher has time to do the follow-up in a separate class following the presentation class. If, on the other hand, the teacher has only one class for both the presentation and the follow-up, the teacher can plan the last ten minutes of the class for a short writing exercise.

The different writing exercises that may be used are:

- a) summary
- b) chain story
- c) questions for your partner
- d) answers for you partner

a) The summary

The easiest follow-up for the teacher but the most difficult one for the students is the summary. The teacher could ask the students to write down what they have learned in that class in a few sentences. This should be done on a separate piece of paper so the teachers can take the writings home and correct the mistakes. Sometimes, the teacher could even mark the writings.

b) The chain story

The chain story is a bit more demanding for the teacher because it involves a lot of explaining and walking around the classroom. Furthermore, the chain story is not such a good idea in larger groups as it will take up too much time. But in a group of up to ten students, the chain story can be very effective.

First, the teacher should take a blank sheet of paper and fold it once along the shorter edge in the width of approximately 1 cm. Then the teacher will have to ask a student, preferably the one sitting in the first row or at the first desk, to write any sentence from the text that has been read in class. It is not essential the students repeat the exact words. On the contrary, it would be good to have the students express the ideas in their own words. Then the teacher should fold the sheet along the pre-folded line so that the sentence written by the first student cannot be seen by the next student. The teacher then asks the next student to write down any sentence from the text and then the teacher again folds the sheet so that the second sentence cannot be seen by the third student. The teacher proceeds in the same manner until the last student in the group has written down a sentence. Then the teacher can unfold the sheet and read the sentences in the order they have been written on the sheet. The teacher can then put the sentences on the board and ask the students to copy them. A nice homework assignment for the students would be to put the sentences into the correct order.

Table 7. A chain story done by students who had read about 'Shopping and malls' in the USA (the numbers in brackets indicate the order of the sentences as they appeared in the text which was based on the text from the official site of Mall of America®):

Young and old alike, no longer take wallets with cash when going shopping. (6)
Mall of America® is one of the most visited tourist destinations in the world. (1)
Contemporary life proves that these covered and closed places are greatly <i>affecting</i> especially young people making them more consumer orientated. (7)
Teenagers in America like going to the mall in search for entertainment and fun. (4)
There are about 50 restaurants and attractions <i>galore</i> providing the whole family with a huge range of different entertainment facilities. (3)
They enjoy the different <i>facilities</i> and make use of the <i>convenience</i> that everything they like to do can be found under one roof. (5)
Throughout the mall there are interconnecting <i>walkways</i> enabling visitors to easily walk from unit to unit. (2)

c) Questions for your partner

Another follow-up exercise that can be done during the last ten minutes of the class is 'questions for your partner'. The teacher asks the students to work in pairs and write about five questions regarding the text. Of course each of the students in the pair is to write their own set of questions. Then they can ask each other the questions and discuss the topic orally, or they can exchange their notebooks and write the answers to the questions in each other's notebooks.

d) Answers for your partner

A similar and not at all less effective exercise would be 'answers for your partner'. The procedure is the same as in the previously explained exercise but the teacher will have to instruct the students to write down answers to imaginary questions, that is to questions they expect to be asked by their partners. After that they will have to ask the question for the particular answer. Again the students can do this orally or exchange notebooks and write down the question referring to the respective answer.

All the above-described follow-up exercises can be done in a separate class following the text presentation class. Doing these in a separate class will probably be necessary in a larger group since 10 minutes are not enough when more than ten students are attending the class. What the teacher can do is prepare questions and answers on a sheet of paper in case the students fail to come up with good ones. In that way the teacher will be prepared for possible periods of embarrassing silence when the students simply will not work with the teacher.

To conclude, the suggested text presentation accompanied by dialogue in class is the easiest way to have students communicate. Since the questions asked by the teacher are usually short and asking for straight yes/ no answers, the students do not feel intimidated by their own lack of knowledge. In time the questions will become more and more demanding. Even though the first class of text presentation done in one of the ways suggested might seem strange to your students and even leave them shy and unresponding at first, every next class done in a similar or same way will be better and better. The reward for the teacher will be a nice multilingual and multicultural group communicating in English.

4. CONCLUSION

The influence of the mother tongue in an English language classroom in Serbia has proven to be indisputable² and every English language teacher, be it at elementary, secondary or tertiary level has probably had the frustrating experience that 25 out of 30 students are put off by the fact that English is hard to understand not because of the language but because the culture that goes along with it is sometimes completely different from their mother culture. Different phrases and idiomatic expressions, collocations and phrasal verbs, synonyms and specific terms drive many a student into despair and many a teacher into serious self-criticism because those expressions are miles away from the cultural concepts the students are familiar with.

As already stated at the beginning, multicultural and multilingual environments are the trades of modern society and it would probably be difficult to single out a monolingual and monocultural speech community. The mother tongue, being the basic tool of communication and thus the most dominant aspect in an individual's identity profile, has undeniably a huge impact on the process of ELL (English language learning) because students enter the English language classroom as ready-made individuals characterised not only by a particular mother tongue but also by a particular mother

² The PhD thesis "Uticaj višekulture srpske govorne sredine na učenje engleskog jezika", Jasmina Đorđević, defended at the Faculty of Foreign Languages in Belgrade on November 1 2008, explored the influence of the multicultural Serbian speech environment on the process of teaching and learning English as a foreign language at secondary level in Serbia.

culture, sometimes so different from the culture of the English language speech community that it may lead to serious issues in the English language classroom. The influence of deeply rooted characteristics of an individual's identity cannot and must not be ignored because they are hovering in the air of the English language classroom at all times. The teacher cannot simply open the window and clean the air turning diversity into uniformity.

What has to be realised is that the influence of the mother culture, especially in the multilingual and multicultural Serbian speech community, is a latent element which can either further the process of ELL or hinder it. Serbia, being inhabited by members of several different speech and cultural communities (Serbian, Roma, Albanian, Bulgarian, Romanian, Hungarian, Orthodox, Catholic, Muslim, Jewish, etc.), is a very fragile environment since political and social issues can be quite frustrating. Everyday reality is that students of different backgrounds have to share one environment – the language classroom – which is, by the way, yet another culture to add to the already existing diversity in it. The complex situation is becoming even more complicated since the English language may sometimes even be considered invasive because of the strong political implications encoded in the English language and the culture of English speaking nations. All these reasons can make the process of ELL very discouraging for teachers entering such a culturally and linguistically diverse classroom if they are not trained to deal with it.

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UTICAJ MATIČNE KULTURE NA PROCES PREDAVANJA I UČENJA ENGLESKOG KAO STRANOG JEZIKA

Jasmina Đorđević

Ovaj rad ilustruje integraciju maternje kulture učenika pripadnika srpske govorne sredine i kulture engleskog jezika koji se uči kao strani jezik. Pojedinačne ilustracije se odnose na časove zasnovane na tekstu i dijalogu uz pomoć kojih se maternja kultura učenika stavlja u neprestanu interakciju sa kulturom engleskog jezika. Tehnika je zapravo proverena u jezičkoj učionici u kojoj se engleski jezik uči kao strani, a učenici su višekulturnog i višejezičnog porekla. Jednom rečju, integracija maternje kulture i kulture engleskog jezika je očigledno od izuzetnog značaja u procesu učenja engleskog jezika, jer može taj proces da pospeši, a da savladavanje engleskog učini uspešnijim.

Ključne reči: maternja kultura, kultura engleskog jezika, integracija, interakcija