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THE GLOBAL TEACHER IN THE EFL CLASS

Larsen-Freeman's quotation is a most appropriate way to start developing my thoughts, aiming at showing the importance of cooperation between theorists and practitioners in the field of Foreign Language learning. This is a most important parameter to be further considered by all parties involved in the EFL field of research and it will be the central point of discussion in this paper.

> "*While I might dispute the suggestion that teachers carry out their activities without much conscious attention to what they are doing, I would concur that at times it seems as if practitioners are ahead of theorists. I would hope, however, that the two would not see each other as competitors, but rather as informing and being informed by each other in such a way that mutual benefits and respect obtain*"
>
> (D. Larsen-Freeman, 1991:260)

A. Multicultural/Multilingual Societies and the teaching of English as a lingua franca.

Getting to know other languages, apart from our mother tongue opens up the world and facilitates exchange. People, who understand foreign languages, can also understand different opinions and respect different ways of thinking. People, who come closer through the learning of languages, feel that the others are not enemies, but they are simply different. Therefore, we may say, that in the long run, apart from widening cooperation and progress among people, the teachers of foreign languages, also contribute to establishing mutual understanding and peace in the world.

The belief, which prevailed some years ago, that monolingualism is the norm, is no longer correct. Nowadays, people are able to function effectively, in two or more languages and cultures. English, in particular, is used widely, in many countries, even if it is not the official language or the mother tongue of the native speakers. People usually learn English for a variety of reasons: professional, employment, social interaction, further education (Ashworth, M. 1985: 19).

In our world of globalization and of the dominance of the English language as the lingua franca of the era, the teachers of English as a Foreign Language must consider not only the linguistic factors, but also the political, cultural, philosophical and moral implications that intervene to the teaching of English.

In some countries the lingua franca is the official or the national language itself, while in others it develops initially as a trade language illustrating the influence of the economic factors on language change.

In a publication on the use of vernacular languages in education, published in Paris, in 1953, UNESCO defined a lingua franca as

> "*a language which is used habitually by people whose mother tongues are different in order to facilitate communication between them*"
>
> (R. Wardhaugh, 1986:55)

One of the main reasons for speech varieties that may occur in groups living in the same community can be the different ethnic backgrounds. Out of this reality many problems may be arisen for minorities. They face a great danger of language disappearance, because of economic, social and political reasons. People for example, in English dominated countries learn English to get good jobs. This results in English dominance. Also, since the minority ethnic language does not offer any help to its speakers, people don't take any active steps to maintain it. People are anxious to get on in society and leave their mother tongue behind.

However, Holmes says that some communities try to maintain their L1, as for example, in the Greek community, in Wellington. All people belong to the Greek Orthodox Church, where Greek is spoken. They have established shops, where they speak Greek to each other and they go to school to learn their ethnic language, so as to keep their traditions always with the prospect of going back to their home country, Greece (J. Holmes, 1997: 71).

It should be realized that language is an important component of identity and culture. Maintaining their distinct identity is important to minority group members' self esteem and this is something which will affect the degree of success achieved in society. Consequently, a minority language can and should be maintained, if it is considered a significant symbol of the minority group's identity, if the families of this group are close to each other and if, in case of immigration, they keep contact with their homeland, as we have seen in the example mentioned above. Besides, institutional support in domains such as education, law, administration, religion can further help the process of language maintenance in multilingual communities and may also help to develop the necessity of making people actively participate in the community in which they live at the moment, teaching them to function through the use of a lingua franca.

Keeping the balance is a very delicate matter for teachers of English as a Foreign Language, in countries, where apart from the official language spoken by the majority of the students in the class, there are students coming from other cultures, with different mother tongues. In this case, we can say, that it is not an absolute truth that

> "*spiritual and intellectual life of a higher order*
> *always grew out of the soil of intense mixing only*"
> (F. Hertz, 1994: 308)

It is true, that such higher order in intellectual and spiritual life is encouraged by the contact and mingling of languages and cultures. And the moral dilemma of a plural society is to promote advantageous and productive contact while simultaneously maintaining the separate languages and the speakers' pride in

them (E. Lewis, 1981: 389).

It is important thus to understand that language is not only a means of expression and communication, but it is also a symbol of one's cultural and ethnic affiliation.

B. Teachers of English in the Global Age

Nowadays, the teachers of English as a Foreign Language face a new situation, since the reality in which they are invited to function is not a monolingual class, but a multicultural one.

Teachers of English in multicultural classes deal with students, who do not share a common mother tongue and a common cultural background. It is obvious therefore, that the problems they encounter are not the same with those in monolingual schools. The teacher of English therefore, has to pay special attention to problems s/he observes in the classroom environment and has to be sensitive, flexible and well prepared so as to face them appropriately. S/he has to prepare students, to interact, using the same foreign language, English in our case, in order to function in a global way, sharing the common traits of their different cultural backgrounds, reducing matters of racial, psychological or personality differences.

E.F.L teachers therefore, should develop special competencies as cross-cultural mediators and intercultural communicators. But what is more important, is that they have to support their students on a psychological and human basis to learn to survive in a world of global understanding and/or misunderstanding. So this is how the *global/humanistic teacher* should be viewed. S/he is the kind of teacher who attempts not only to train, but also to educate and shape people *globally*. It is an ability that the E.F.L teacher should develop so as to shape his/her students to survive in a society which *is open to outside influences and inside differences.*

B.1 . How Globalization connects with EFL teaching

Scholars, business leaders and policy makers are increasingly concerned with globalization, yet the study of this phenomenon is still in its infancy. It tends to bring common standards in the exchange of content and in the trade of goods, and

we may claim that it tends, in a way, to lead to homogeneity. In an article in *The Economist* the journalists John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge write that globalization is the single most important force in the world today. This kind, however, of world economy is not only reshaping business, but it is also rendering the lives of individuals, by creating new social classes, different jobs, unimaginable wealth and occasionally, wretched poverty.

Globalization removes any restrictions on where people can go, what they can buy, where they can invest, and what they can read, hear or see. Globalization by its nature brings down the barriers and gives to the individual the chance to choose. If we read what the great economist John Maynard Keynes has written, just before the start of World War I, perhaps this does not sound so remote and unfamiliar, but it rings a bell, instead.

> *"the inhabitant of London could order by telephone, sippinghis morning tea in bed, the various products of the wholeearth, in such quantity as he might see fit, and reasonably expect their early delivery upon his doorstep, he could at the same moment and by the same means adventure his wealth..."*

No doubt globalization and technology have given people new ways to express the notions of power and freedom, but they have also opened up new questions and areas of investigation. For many people it has become a necessity to learn a foreign language, because of the need to communicate. And in fact, it has become much more easier to learn foreign languages through the use of modern multimedia and the many resources available online. The world gradually becomes more and more interconnected and this global, interconnected world is shaped with free movements of people, goods and capital. This world, under the big force of homogeneity, is pushing towards a common standard, a common language, which in many places of the world is English. Naturally, this tendency weakens other languages at the same time and the consequences of it are to be traced in many areas: political, cultural,

linguistic, psychological or the value system, itself.

As it is evident, a new type of politics emerges, with on one hand the *globalizers*, who want to see the world reshaped in their own image, and on the other hand the traditionalists, who wish to preserve fragments of the traditional culture and local independence. In other words, globalization can be considered both as a threat and as an opportunity, depending on which side we stand. Perhaps though the borderline is more open and the answer to all these is not *black or white*, since there are many nuances offerred to make a choice.

A very serious issue therefore, for a teacher, before even deciding *what* to teach, is the kind of people s/he wants to shape and *how* to do it. The easiest of all things is to make good learners. However, this must not be our only quest and desire, if we really wish to bring some kind of change. Taking into consideration all the things that happen around, the Humanistic E.F.L teacher tries to educate his pupils globally. This global mode of knowing is the opposite of the analytical, stabilizing mode. The one who learns in a global way does not isolate parts, characteristics and activities. The individual learns, alongside with the input material s/he gets, to understand and respect the values each individual member of the group carries with him/her, in class, because as Plato said

> *"the part cannot be well unless the whole is well"*
> (Plato, in Neher 1980)

We need thus to shape people who really care and share; people who care about culture, ecology, art, politics, racism, human relations, history and whatever could change a human being from a mere consumer and passive TV viewer into a responsible citizen of the globe.

B.2. Cultures in contact in the E.F.L class

Culture, although largely invisible, influences instruction, policy and learning, in schools. EFL classes more specifically are the primary places in which children of various cultures learn about both the target and the mainstream culture.

Teachers, however, are not always aware of the deeper elements of culture, beyond superficial aspects such as food, clothing, holidays. They must be therefore trained to understand the deeper structures of crosscultural understanding that will allow them to educate their students to the greatest extent possible.

Theorists agree on a few central ideals that underlie cultures. According to Damen (1998) there are 4 main concepts about culture.

1) *Cultture is universal.* Everyone in the world belongs to one or more cultures.

2) *Culture simplifies living.* Through it we avoid difficulties in everyday life.

3) *Cultural patterns are so familiar,* that it is difficult to accept other ways of living.

4) *Cultures change over time,* so learning about culture is a lifelong pursuit.

These are concepts on which the teacher relies, in order to understand the diversity of his/her students in the class and to be prepared to offer his/her students equal opportunities to develop their capacities and to work together to resolve conflicts and misunderstandings in the microcosm of the EFL classroom.

Experiencing a second culture causes emotional ups and downs. Reactions to the new culture vary, but there are distinct stages in the process of experiencing it (Brown, 2000), through which both individuals and students go. These stages are characterized by typical emotions and behaviours, which are useful to be remembered by the teachers. Great care must be taken that the teacher does not belittle or reject a student who is experiencing any of the stages to be mentioned below.

a) *Euphoria* may result from the excitement of experiencing new customs, food or sights. This may be considered as a "honeymoon" period, in which the new student or "newcomer" is fascinated and highly motivated and stimulated by experiencing a new culture.

b) *Culture shock* may follow the previous stage, as

cultural differences begin to intrude. This understanding may result in frustration, depression, anger or even withdrawal.

c) *Adaptation* may take several months or even years. Successful adaptation results in finding value and significance in the differences and similarities between cultures and in being able to actively express oneself and to find meaning in the new situation.

The EFL teachers, who act as the mediums for unifying two, three or more distinct worlds into one global reality in the classroom, have to work on and understand the variables that have to do with cultural differences. Teachers, acting as intercultural educators, promote a tolerance for diversity and a willingness to communicate among their students.

B.3. The Global teacher in the EFL class

In the multicultural humanistic class the teacher has not only to work on a linguistic level, but also it is important to understand that his/her personality and cultural background influences the learning pace and the communicative competence of the pupils. In the E.F.L class, the teacher obtains a more important position than that of the role of facilitator.

It is a commonplace to say that students tend to adopt the attitude of their teachers and that human beings tend to mimic those they identify with (A. Papaconstantinou, 1991: 65). It is important therefore, to consider not only the personality of the teacher and his language abilities, but also such details as his/her bodily posture and facial expressions, the gestures and all paralinguistic features, as the tone and pitch of the voice, the colour and expression s/he uses when speaking.

The feeling the global/humanistic teacher must convey is that of an orchestra conductor. His/her task is to establish harmony between active and passive students, extroverts and introverts, fast and slow learners, high and low motivated ones, among students from different cultures and with a different L1, who go through various emotional stages. His/her attitude must indicate that s/he is the one who tends to fly into higher spheres, and has the will and wish to take with him his students, to fly and pull himself and the others, above everyday's problems, towards a more creative reality and with a deeper understanding.

A similar approach can be found in the work of Paul Ekman (1971). He argues that facial expressions for primary emotions, such as surprise, fear, anger, disgust, sadness and happiness are universally the same and are consequently cross-culturally perceived. In a Humanistic class, however, we are primarily interested in transmitting the positive emotions and not the negative ones, since we wish to shape the persons into positive and creative entities. So, in a Humanistic class we are mainly interested in the expression of positive emotions by the teacher, such as *surprise* and *happiness.*

The expression of *surprise* is of primary importance, since it gives the opportunity to the students to use language in order to clarify what they want to express. In that case, the use of a paralinguistic feature, such as the facial expression of surprise, by the teacher, results in boosting students' confidence and make them use language, and more specifically, foreign language, no matter how accurate and appropriate it will be, in order to make the others, and in this case their surprised teacher, to understand what they mean.

Surprise is expressed with the help of brows and forehead, the eye-lids and the lower face. More precisely, the EYE BROWS are raised and there are horizontal wrinkles on the forehead. The EYES are kept wide open and expressive. The MOUTH is kept dropped-open with no stress or tension in the corners of the lips and the lips are parted into a BIG SMILE, a smile of approval compassion, understanding and wondering.

Happiness is mainly expressed with the EYES. They are often narrowed pushed by lower face action on the MOUTH. The whole face is lighted up by the feeling of acceptance and approval of the other human beings and there is a tendency for a rising feeling, which illuminates the whole face, reaching from the outer corner of the eyes towards the hairline.

Another parameter in the way of teacher's behaviour in the class is the *posture of the body.* The teacher is always standing, and the significance of this standing position denotes that the teacher is the figure of "authority", who has got the know how to manage the classroom situation appropriately. In some interesting experiments, conducted by Barry Swartz (1982: 114-120) four bodily positions were found to be exercised in the classroom by the teacher:

left/right
front/back
standing/seated
elevated/non-elevated

These bodily positions were used in thirty-two combinations to measure the perception of social dominance, perceived by subjects, who observed the displays. The results confirmed that perceived social dominance is most likely to be associated with "elevation, standing position, foreground and position on the right (Swartz, Tesser and Powel 1981: 47).

The body is not simply a system of mechanical levers. It is a subtle organ of expression, in which emotional states modify and are modified by muscular tension states. When the body is used rightly, all the structures are balanced in such a way, that there is no strain. The physical processes are then at their best, the mental functions are performed more easily and the personality is found at its greatest strength. At that moment, even if our spontaneous cheerfulness is lost, we can easily rebuild it and act in a positive way, even in a most negative environment. Sitting up cheerfully, plays therefore the role of a positive suggestion to the mind-muscle relationship.

As far as the position of the body is concerned, we find in most people tiny use patterns, which unconsciously, automatically and unintentionally transmit a certain mood, often quite contrary to our intentions. Such tensions are liable to build up into attitudes, which undermine our interpersonal relationships.

Darwin (1872) using the term *"expressive action"*, to denote movements, gestures and attitudes, considered that:

"such movements of expression reveal the thoughts of others more trully than do words which may be falsified"

(Darwin, 1872)

Hymes in 1972 introduced the term *"communicative competence"* which has to do with the aspect of the language user's competence. Developing this idea Canale, in 1983, identified four

components of communicative competence, i.e
    a) grammatical competence
    b) sociolinguistic competence
    c) discourse competence
    d) strategic competence

Grammatical competence is evident that it becomes increasingly important in more advanced stages of language proficiency and it has to do with accuracy in language use.

Sociolinguistic competence has to do with the appropriateness of an utterance when interacting.

Discourse competence involves the ability to combine and connect spoken utterances and written sentences into a meaningful whole.

Strategic competence involves the manipulation of language in order to meet communicative goals. It involves both *verbal* and *non verbal behaviors*, and he notes that speakers employ this competence for two main reasons:
    a) to paraphrase or gesture to get the idea across
    b) to promote the effectiveness of communication by raising and lowering the voice.

Therefore, all the afore mentioned "positive" facial expressions and body postures play their role in the awakening of memory. The learning process is no doubt based on memory. So the teacher's aim is to make the students use their memory by creating powerful associations in their minds. To work with memory, however, demands that the teacher builds on the individual characteristics of the pupils and their individual memories, which spring out from their cultural value system.

93% of communication is estimated to be achieved through the non verbal system.

The American Heritage Dictionary (1992) defines body language as:

> "*the bodily gestures, postures and facial expressions by which a person communicates non-verbally*". (p. 211)

Body language thus is one way in which teachers communicate their authority. Postures, facial expressions,

gestures, eye contact, tone of voice involve the ways through which we are sending and receiving messages, through which we facilitate understanding and learning and through which we erase all cultural differences in the EFL class.

The classroom is a home for the language students and the teacher is the host. S/he has to be gentle, reassuring, accepting and promoting the students' voice, their individuality, differences and cultural diversity.

C. Conclusions

As traditional forms of education and authority in Western cultures are gradually abandoned, a reconsideration of the aims and methods used in education has to be made. A "*de-schooling*", not in the sense of abolition of education, but in the sense of integrating intellectual concerns with more up-to date areas of human experience is needed. What seems to be the most serious educational problem, in our days, is not how to increase the efficiency of our schools, but how we will be able to create and maintain a humane society (A. Papaconstantinou, 1997: 31-32). And this has to be considered with our deep concern about the different elements that have to be respected and combined so as to have the best possible results.

With humanistic education we want to help the school, where teachers and students feel bored and alienated to generate the excitement we all had as children, discovering a world of surprises and wonder. The world can still be a wondrous place. It is the educational practices that have dehydrated it. The classroom is a living microcosm, full of learning activities, where students are invited to participate as equal members. The classroom is the mirror of society and it has the same claims and responsibilities.

Societies are becoming more open than in the past. There is more free trade and free movement of people. There is more information that reaches people in every corner of the earth, which no political powers can restrict. People have better knowledge of how the world works and in a way they are all becoming citizens of the world.

The contemporary world, in its turn, experiences rapid and unstoppable changes, that affect the everyday lives of

people and often result in cultural clashes. Quite often these clashes lead to a more homogeneous culture. But it takes time to resolve.

In the same way it will take time to resolve the difficulties in the multicultural E.F.L classrooms. As Holiday pointed out, a main reason for misunderstanding in the classroom is "*the learner and the diverse cultures she or he represents*" (A. Holliday, 1994: 175). The teachers lack adequate information about the different cultural backgrounds of their students and this may result in making their students feel uncomfortable. Furthermore, some students experience culture shock, when they are exposed to a new culture and a new way of thinking, completely or quite different from their own. They experience signs of fatigue, anxiety, depression, anger. What does happen then, if they experience the outcome of a double culture shock, that has to do with the language and culture of the host country and with the language and culture of the foreign language they are supposed to learn?

Another difficulty of teaching English as a Foreign Language in multicultural schools is that the existing textbooks are not yet adjusted to the new situation, since they address monoligual students. This fact is pointed out by Damen, who says

> "*until recently only a few textbooks or methodologies have been available to aid us in the direction of culture learning*"
>
> (Damen, L. 1987:5).

Another distractor is that there is not enough data about the problems of the students. Therefore, it is difficult to form an appropriate methodology if we have not yet spotted the problems of the students in the multicultural classes. As Holliday points out, a number of teaching methodologies were designed with a particularly instrumental approach in mind (A. Holliday, 1994: 12). So the teacher of English, in our days, discovers that the existing methodologies have to be remodified and be readjusted to conform to the new situations.

Open societies experience revolutionary changes. Humanistic education, in the sense that it is open to change, has to do with those who want to move education in the direction of life, by

combining the cognitive with the affective domain and by attempting to shape individuals who will be able to live in the ever changing society. By paying attention to the process rather than to the product and the end results, we become aware of what is happening here and now. Learning to distinguish what is real and what is fantasy, what is playing and responsibility, we train ourselves and our students to become responsible for their choices and sensitive to the individuality of the others.

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Περίληψη

Αναστασία Παπακωνσταντίνου

Στην παρούσα εργασία τονίζεται ο ρόλος του δασκάλου ως εμπνευστή ενός διαπολιτισμικού πρότυπου στην ξενόγλωσση τάξη με ιδιαίτερη έμφαση στην περίπτωση του διδάσκοντα την Αγγλική ως ξένη γλώσσα. Ειδικότερα εξετάζεται η πολυ-πολιτισμική, πολυγλωσσική κοινωνία και ο ρόλος της Αγγλικής γλώσσας στην εποχή της παγκοσμιοποίησης. Εφόσον η ξενόγλωσση τάξη αποτελεί τον αντικατοπτρισμό της κοινωνικής πραγματικότητας, συζητούνται οι τρόποι που οι πολιτισμοί εμπλέκονται τόσο στον κοινωνικό μακρόκοσμο όσο και στο μικρόκοσμο της τάξης. Πιο συγκεκριμένα γίνεται ανάλυση του τρόπου που πρέπει να λειτουργεί ο διδάσκων ώστε να διευκολύνει στην αλληλοκατανόηση και τον σεβασμό προς το "άλλο", το "διαφορετικό", μέσα από μια παραγλωσσική προσέγγιση που διευκολύνει στην αποδοχή της διαφορετικότητας.