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BAKU INCREASES FUNDING FOR STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM

Paul Goble
Publications Advisor
Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy

Last month and despite the difficulties of the current economic situation, the Azerbaijani government announced that it was increasing by nearly 50 percent its funding of a program that supports Azerbaijanis studying at universities abroad, both a recognition of the success this program has had over the last decade and an indication of the importance Baku is now attaching to using such training to transform domestic educational institutions and promote the development of the country.

For a country seeking to overcome the constraints of the Soviet past and to move into the future, there is perhaps no greater challenge than the transformation of the

educational system. The Soviet system often provided extraordinarily good training in certain technical fields, but its stress on rote learning seriously limited the kind of innovative thinking that a modern society requires. Consequently, Azerbaijan, more than many of the other post-Soviet states, is making use of training abroad to overcome the Soviet legacy in its own educational system and change the mindset of the next generation of its citizens.

Education Minister Misir Mardanov recently announced that in 2010, "the funds allocated for studying abroad under the presidential program will be increased from seven to ten million manats," roughly from 8.4 million to 12 million US dollars. At present, the country's top education official said, approximately 500 young Azerbaijanis are receiving assistance under this program, with the number slated to double to 1000 over the next few years.

The program, which was launched by President Ilham Aliyev, has contributed to part of what is a much larger flow of Azerbaijanis studying abroad. At the present time, Mardanov added at his press conference, "nearly 10,000" Azerbaijanis are attending universities abroad, a remarkable number for a country which only 20 years ago had only a handful of such students in any given year and one that is projected to rise to 15,000 by 2015 (Today.az 2009).

Making use of training opportunities abroad represents an effort not only to overcome the Soviet legacy but also to promote higher educational standards in Azerbaijani instruction. Because those trained abroad often are better educated than those trained at home, pressure is increasing on the Azerbaijani universities to change their methods of instruction and redress their reputation among some employers as "corrupt and out of step with international standards" (Abbasov 2007).

Government support for training abroad is especially important, because it means that qualified candidates from all income levels have the opportunity to participate. In many post-Soviet states, only the children of the elite are able to do so. In Azerbaijan, a far higher share of the students come from other social strata, although education activists in Azerbaijan are concerned that the government may be selecting people now more in terms of what its needs are at present than with regard to what Azerbaijan will need in the future.

Equally important is that this project is designed to limit the risk of a continuing "brain drain" from Azerbaijan, the tendency of those who study abroad to remain there after graduation because of higher incomes or greater personal and professional opportunities. Before the government program was instituted, almost half of those who studied abroad did not return. Now, because the government program requires a commitment to return and work in Azerbaijan, that percentage appears to be far lower, although exact statistics are not available yet.

One indication of the importance of this program and also of the way that it is promoting change within Azerbaijan itself was the launch last summer of a dedicated government website: <http://xaricdetehsil.edu.gov.az>. This site promotes both the kind of transparency that is often lacking in domestic programs and a way of keeping track of the program graduates that will help the government adjust such efforts in the future. As such, this Azerbaijani program, however small it may appear compared to the number of students in domestic universities, is playing a role in transforming Azerbaijani education and hence of Azerbaijan itself.

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ENGLISH IN GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTS: COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Lisa Sanders Luscombe
Monterey Institute of International Studies

The spread of the English language across the world over the past 50 years has led to its status as a global language, a *lingua franca* in institutions such as finance, business, media, science, education, and diplomacy. People teach English for a variety of reasons, from a love of teaching and language, to the opportunity to travel and learn about cultures around the world; my motivation is the prospect of fostering communication with the goal of understanding and resolving conflict. My students are scientists, diplomats, educators, and graduate students in international affairs, primarily from Asia, Russia, Central Asia, and the Caucasus. Like many English classrooms today, mine are microcosms of the world, where the best and worst of human history enter through the doors in the memories and experiences of learners. Whether my classroom is at the Monterey Institute of International Studies in California, or across the world, at the Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy where I taught last summer, I like to think of my classroom as more than a place to learn English; it is a small country where "the fundamental condition of life is the condition of relationship, relationship of oneself and to the surrounding world ... relationships that we weave with others and with the history that we make and that makes and remakes us" (Freire 2006, p. 75).

The growth of English holds tremendous potential for enhancing communication and mutual understanding across cultures. However, given the colonialist history of the proliferation of English, its spread cannot be accepted as neutral or merely the result of "inevitable global forces" (Pennycook 1994, p. 9). Indeed, this view masks the realities of information flow from wealthier nations to poorer ones, power in agenda setting, diffusion of knowledge and culture through media, the role of international organizations in world affairs, and how we view war and peace (Pennycook 1994). With the spread of English comes a Western view of nation building, national security, modernization, and education. Whether consciously or subconsciously, students of English know there are power relations inherent in the use of English, and without an acknowledgement of this reality by both native-speaking teachers and English learners, communication—so essential for conflict resolution—will be an elusive outcome.

The psychologist Carl Rogers, whose work has been integrated into the field of conflict resolution, states, “real communication occurs ... when we listen with understanding to see the expressed idea and attitude from the other person’s point of view ... to achieve his frame of reference” (Rogers 1951, p. 29). Teaching that emphasizes *transactional discourse* (Kramsch 1993, p. 242), the transmission of information from the teacher to the receiving student, cannot foster “real communication.” On the other hand, teaching that cultivates *interactional discourse* not only transmits information, but also values, experiences, and ideologies inherent in the content, as well as strategies for understanding them. Traditional teaching methods that focus on language as a system of rules and discrete items presented in neat packages are not likely to foster interactional discourse. However, communicative language teaching (CLT) methods—cooperative learning, social interaction, and the construction of learning in students’ own sociopolitical and cultural frame of reference—are designed to transfer the tools for real communication to the students. In traditional methods, language is the object of instruction; in communicative teaching, language is the vehicle of instruction.

Being a predominately Western model, CLT methods may not be readily adopted by English as a second language (ESL) or English as a foreign language (EFL) students; however, the teacher has some advantages in the ESL classroom. ESL takes place in “Inner Circle” (Kachru 1992) countries where English is the official language for communication, education, and other public domains—countries such as Britain, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States. Speakers in these countries are traditionally considered “native” speakers of English, and the native variety of English is usually the classroom “norm.” ESL classrooms can be mono-cultural or multicultural, but all the students are adapting to a mono-linguistic environment of English along with Western concepts of “individualism and self-expression, process rather than product, and meaning at the expense of form” (Burns 2005, p. 11). ESL students may be confused about, if not downright rebellious toward, such methods. But because they are living in the “Inner Circle” countries and the teacher, as a member of the institutional setting, holds the authority of place, the process is part of the learner’s acculturation with the monolingual society.

EFL, on the other hand, takes place in “Expanding Circle” countries (Kachru 1992) representing the growing numbers of English language learners—approximately 750 million to 1 billion of them. For countries of this category, such as Japan, Germany, Russia, and the post-Soviet Commonwealth of Independent States, like Azerbaijan, English has neither a history of colonization, nor an official status. Learners live in their native culture, speak their native language, and typically learn in their native institutions. A local EFL teacher will share the culture, language, and institutional knowledge with the students; however, the foreign or native-English speaking teacher will be the one adapting to a new sociopolitical, cultural and linguistic environment. Bringing CLT methods—with their concomitant Western values, ideologies, and orientations of individualism, process, and meaning—into other cultures is more challenging because in their home countries, students have the authority of place. The classroom is literally, physically, in their cultural environment.

In both ESL and EFL settings, students in CLT classrooms may perceive that they are not being corrected enough, not learning grammar, or not learning the kind of vocabulary or idiomatic phrases that native speakers use. Students from traditional educational systems won’t necessarily connect CLT strategies—e.g., cooperative

learning with peers, debates, and oral presentations—with the acquisition of “native-like” speaking skills. Consequently, students will focus on instruction they *perceive* will meet their academic and professional needs, but may not recognize that acquiring information by discussing a topic relevant to those needs with their peers helps to develop their language competence.

However, with the internationalization of English, especially in “Outer Circle” countries (Kachru 1992) where English is a colonialist language, native English as the classroom “norm” might not be desirable or even appropriate. Non-native speaking teachers can be good role models for students, have a better grasp of English grammar and forms from a non-native learner’s perspective, and better understand students’ cultural expectations in the classroom (Burns 2005). Peers in the classroom can also be models of language use and development, as students can “notice the gap” between correct form and incorrect form with each other. Yet, ESL and EFL students often do not value interaction with non-native speakers or with native language they perceive as being too high register and not “real” English. When students are in an ESL setting, they might notice that they can be understood by their teachers and classmates, but not by servers in restaurants, store clerks, or people on the street. They perceive a difference in language between the classroom setting and the real world. To meet students’ perceived needs for a focus on native English form, the ESL teacher has the advantage of using the native speaking culture as a live, extended classroom.

For example, Korean diplomats in my Monterey classroom have been studying the language of diplomacy in different discourse environments such as politics, economics, and human rights. However, they wanted more exposure to “native everyday language,” not necessarily germane to our classroom discussions on policy. To resolve the issue, I assigned them to conduct interviews of people on the street about our topic of the U.S. policy toward North Korea. They were to videotape and transcribe the interviews, allowing them to study colloquial and idiomatic language, as well as pronunciation. This activity met the needs of the students while incorporating CLT approaches of social interaction and topic-centered learning—in this case the U.S. policy toward North Korea.

Although this kind of opportunity is not typically available to students in an EFL classroom, new and more ubiquitous technologies can help the teacher find ways to bring the native-speaking world to the learners. In the summer intensive program for the Advanced Foreign Service Program (AFSP) at ADA, for example, I used Skype to bring a former South African diplomat now serving in the Conference on Disarmament into our classroom to discuss the art of negotiation with the students. After a brief lecture, the students were able to carry on a virtual, interactive question-and-answer session with a native speaker in their area of expertise.

Language can be the cause of social inequality when students’ perceived needs are not valued or met, or a tool for social transformation when they are. Transformative teachers (Kumaravadivelu 2002) (a) “realize that appropriate knowledge is something that is produced by interaction of teacher and student in a given context”; (b) situate the class “in the words, concerns, and experience of the students”; (c) “familiarize themselves with the linguistic and cultural diversity of their student population”; (d) “conceptualize multiple perspectives on issues that matter to them and to their students”; (e) and consider “both the emotional and logical sides of their students and themselves” (Kumaravadivelu 2002, p. 15). It is hard to imagine

that any one person can master all these aspects of the transformative intellectual all the time.

But these facets of transformative teaching can be incorporated in CLT learning activities, and the EFL classroom can be an especially ripe environment for CLT methods. For example, in the summer AFSP intensive, students participated in an interactional simulated negotiation of the highly charged Nagorno-Karabakh issue. This issue was situated in the concerns and experiences of the students, was relevant to the cultural diversity of Azerbaijan, involved multiple perspectives on a topic deeply significant to the students, and incorporated both their emotional and intellectual skills as they strove to listen with understanding, to see the other's point of view, to achieve the other's frame of reference. This exercise in conflict resolution may not have been possible except in the language classroom, where the use of a foreign language can allow learners to communicate in new ways formerly unimagined.

A transformative teacher, therefore, is compelled to question the commonsense assumptions in the cultural, social, and psychological realities of his or her students—for example, the assumption that the views of both Azerbaijan and Armenia could not be voiced. In this sense, the native English-speaking teacher may be able to more easily challenge assumptions that the local non-native teacher might not be able to confront because of his or her membership in the culture. Using CLT methods of cooperative learning, however, both native and non-native teachers can design lessons that free learners to “connect the norms of their own cultural practices with those of the target language community, and of the wider world, and thereby gain a deeper understanding of all” (Kumaravadivelu 2002, p. 275).

This deeper understanding will come about through shared knowledge, co-constructed in a *third space*. According to Kramsch (1996), a third space is a place where, “rather than seek to bridge differences and aim for the universal, ... the dialogue ensures a mutual base to explore the sometimes irreducible differences between people's values and attitudes” (Kramsch 1996, p. 7). In our negotiation over Nagorno-Karabakh, the differences between Azerbaijan and Armenia remained. However, a third space was created where a dialogue, previously inconceivable, did take place and differences in values and attitudes were explored. Language afforded the power to recognize disparity, acknowledge difference, and still strive to stand in the other's shoes.

A third culture favors neither the teacher's nor the students' preconditioned expectations for teaching and learning styles. Consequently, teachers are compelled to help learners discover their own identities in the new language and both represent “an institution that imposes its own educational values” while helping learners “not to be bound by either one” (Kumaravadivelu 2002, pp. 256-257). At the Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy, a unique third culture is created by teams of non-native and native English speaking teachers in an environment where English is the official language of instruction, but the cultural context is Azerbaijani. Students can take refuge in the shared cultural and language-learning perspectives of the non-native teacher while also having their expectations and assumptions challenged by foreign teachers with unfamiliar worldviews and notions of language learning.

As an English-speaking academic environment dedicated to developing critical thinkers for today's most urgent problems, ADA has made a commitment to communicative language teaching, in which learners can use language not only to *discover* their own identity in a new language, but also to *create* identity and

meaning, and find new understanding and new relationship with each other and the world. In what other way can language resonate with meaning deep enough to find mutual understanding across cultures to resolve the world's most urgent problems and conflicts?

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BUILDING BRIDGES THROUGH ENGLISH-LANGUAGE TEACHING

Rebecca Cheney
Instructor
Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy

I am often asked as a language teacher, why I chose to be a teacher. Quite often, the question actually comes from my own students. My usual simple and generic, yet sincere, response is to make a difference in the lives of others; specifically, to help the students be successful in their own lives, to in turn, make a difference in the lives of others. However, earlier this year, one of my students asked me the same question in the middle of a class and the response was expressed with much more detail. I must have needed to talk about my life story that day, because that is what emerged in a little impromptu speech that left my students with mouths open and questions about how many times I had delivered that personal speech. The speech

was unrehearsed and unshared previously with anyone other than close friends and family, but it was a download of my personal experiences and changes in career paths that eventually led me to the point of being a language teacher.

Being a teacher of some kind was always part of my plan and desire. The student population and the subject matter have both changed many times over the years, but I was still inspired to be a teacher to be with and to know people as individuals and friends, not just students. An indescribable sense of gratification occurs when I witness the progress and success of the individuals whom I have worked with and become friends with. Interestingly, I have only learned through teaching that part of that desire extends to a greater scope beyond individual success, which is to build the future human capital within societies throughout the world, to bring about change within those societies and eventual progression within the global sphere. By working with individuals to help them improve their foreign language abilities, I am able to be a small instrument in opening the door to a larger part of the world. Then, these students will walk through that door and enter into an area that will open up more doors, not only for them, but also for their country and future generations. In turn, this door will swing both ways allowing other nations to enter and gain awareness of the individuals and their nations.

The above explanation is the ideal description of a foreign language teacher's desires. However, it does not account for the challenges that are inevitable in every language-teaching situation. Multiple factors in language classrooms contribute to these challenges. For example, the dynamics vary from one group of students to the next, taking into account that the teacher and the students are from a different cultural background or multiple cultural backgrounds. Additionally, adjustments are necessary based on these dynamics, which are often difficult as a teacher comes in with certain expectations for their classroom. For example, the delivery of instructions or the consideration of students' varied learning styles must be taken into account. These learning styles become clearer as the students' past learning experiences and environments are recognized and more familiar to the instructor, which will be discussed in more detail.

ESL vs. EFL Teaching

I have taught in both English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms (with language environments other than English) and English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms (with surrounding English-speaking environments). The multiple challenges with the adjustments come through the expectations that one will be like the previous classroom, although my knowledge and experience tell me otherwise.

Most recently, I transitioned from the ESL environment to the EFL environment, from Monterey, California at the Monterey Institute of International Studies (MIIS) to Baku, Azerbaijan at the Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy (ADA). The most recent ESL classes included students from many countries spanning nearly all regions of the world, including the following countries: Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Thailand, China, Taiwan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Hungary, Spain, Brazil, and Colombia. As these students come from varied learning backgrounds and language training, coupled with the fact that the language classroom within the English-speaking environment is generally conducted quite differently than what the students are accustomed to, the need exists for learner training to help with this transition.

At the beginning of each session at MIIS, a learner training session helps the students to get to know what the differences will be from their own past experiences both in language classrooms and in typical academic classrooms. The same training occurs in the EFL classroom, including at ADA. However, in spite of training, an adjustment period is still expected for the students in both situations. For example, one main difference from the past experience of most students is the interactive classroom where students work together during partner and group work to accomplish tasks and activities or even in the full group. Most students are accustomed to the opposite lecture-style classroom (even in the language classrooms in their individual countries) where they primarily sit and listen and take notes, perhaps with occasional full-group discussions or small-group work with case studies or other materials; or in the case of the language class, there may be the student repetition of the instructor's translations or pronunciation of the target language. Essentially, for most students, the majority of the past learning has taken place more on an individual level rather than through interaction.

As previously mentioned, a certain level of expectation arises when moving from one group of students to the next. Within the ESL classes I taught at MIIS, for example, there was a certain level of expectation that the previous students would be as interactive as the last or that they would need some time to become accustomed to interacting within the classroom (e.g. in the case of the Japanese students as described below). Other expectations may be that the students would work well with one another or that the students would be respectful of one another and the instructor, learning to work with and even become friends with each other in spite of cultural differences or language levels, etc. As a teacher, I anticipate being the facilitator of this expected and necessary transition.

Much of that same type of expectation came with me to ADA. I knew there would be differences both with the students and the EFL environment, but an adjustment period was needed for me as well. In the ESL classroom, more adjustment is made on the part of the student, yet I found that in the EFL environment, much of the adjustment is for the instructor. The main reason behind this difference is that in the ESL environment, the students have been taken out of their comfort zone into entirely new surroundings including the housing situation, the community, and the classroom. The students generally adapt to this all English-speaking and cultural environment, not without occasional culture shock; nevertheless, they usually acclimatize.

Conversely, within the EFL situation, the instructor, if native to an English speaking country, must learn to adjust to the new cultural community and classroom. At the same time, the instructor still conducts the class with the same interactive learning methods. The problem arises when the students do not adjust to the instructor's style because the teacher is, in a way, the intruder on the students' environment. The group of students who is native to the surrounding community and that has experienced the same type of educational culture, perhaps throughout their educational career, would not expect the minority (i.e. the instructor) to change the group's behavior or the classroom culture that they are accustomed to. Thus, a mismatch occurs between the students and the instructor and between the learning and teaching style as described in two smaller examples that follow.

First, in Azerbaijan, for example, the classroom culture is quite the opposite of the Japanese classroom. The typical Japanese students are used to sitting and listening silently while never volunteering to answer questions or to interact with their

classmates. I have learned how to help the Japanese students to adjust to an interactive and communicative atmosphere. The opposite is the case in the classroom in Azerbaijan. The students are accustomed to interacting at most times, including when instruction is being given for the activities or tasks or when groups or individuals are presenting what they have learned to the rest of the class. I have had to learn to keep the students focused and respectful of each other and of me as the instructor.

Second, cell phones in my past ESL classrooms are understood as not acceptable. Students are generally embarrassed if they have forgotten to turn off their phones and they ring during class. In each case, with the exception of one, when this has occurred in my ESL classroom, the students quickly turn it off and apologize for the interruption. Contrastingly, answering phones and texting are commonplace in Azerbaijani classrooms as well as during business or other meetings, which is an adjustment I have not been willing to concede to in the classroom, especially as I prepare students to work amongst the diplomatic community where the practice will not be accepted and the students will need to change prior to entering into it.

These two examples are primarily classroom management issues and are minor as far as the adjustments that need to take place. Yet, as small as they may seem, they too have a great effect on the classroom environment and the learning or lack thereof that might take place. Another problem that is more specific to the learning culture is the expectations of the students to take charge of their own learning. The students at ADA have joined a more stringent, demanding, and participatory style of learning than seems to be previously expected of them. Typically, students in much of the world experience a bit of an awakening when they begin their graduate level studies; however, the gap may not have been as broad as it is for the local Azerbaijani students joining ADA after their Bachelor's studies in Azerbaijan. In the language classroom, this gap is apparent when the role of the teacher tends to be more of a classroom manager than a facilitator for language learning and development. As a facilitator of learning, the language teacher strives for a communicative classroom that is focused and organized, where the students respectfully work together to gain from one another's strengths. To minimize the gap and to identify and eliminate the mismatches, it is necessary to conduct ongoing needs assessments, learner training, and check-ins between the instructor and the students as a group and as individuals. In most cases, it is necessary for both the EFL instructor and the EFL students to make adjustments in the classroom and in teaching and learning strategies.

ESL vs. EFL Learning

The main difference between the ESL environment and the EFL environment is that in the ESL environment, students adapt to the US language classroom culture at the same time that they are adapting to homestays and the surrounding community; in other words, the culture as a whole. The ESL student recognizes the immediate need to adjust to the environment; however, students adjust at different rates. Many of the Japanese students I have taught are in the U.S. for a one month intensive English program; thus, the initial learner training and ground rules for the classroom and even in the homestay are set forth from the very beginning and incorporated. The students generally take a few days in class before they begin to participate more verbally and to interact. These students' adaptability as well as that of other ESL students is quick and effective for the rest of the learning period. However, in the EFL environment, the students do not expect to adjust to a new

environment and the typical classroom behavior carried on from previous classrooms continues in spite of the introduction of classroom rules or initial learner training geared toward familiarizing the students with the different learning atmosphere. Also, as the students are in a familiar surrounding community setting, the students from the local culture are the majority; thus, the students continue in their familiar behaviors together.

In the case of the Azerbaijani students in the EFL environment, another significant difference is that the majority of the students have neither studied outside the country nor with students from other countries. As the local Azerbaijani students are not accustomed to studying with people from other countries, they need to learn some of the cross-cultural differences and learn to work with people from different cultures. A helpful suggestion, offered by a non-Azerbaijani student studying amongst the locals, would be to begin new programs with a joint cross-cultural training course for both the local students and the international students, rather than just including a brief cross-cultural training as part of the orientation. In the case of the ADA students, they will go out amongst other countries as diplomats following their studies; thus, they need extensive training in this area. In the case of the international students, they may or may not have learned amongst different cultures prior to coming to ADA, but they need to learn about the local learning environment and how to work with the locals in the classroom and outside the classroom. The Azerbaijani students need to become familiar with and know how to communicate with people of different cultures both in the classroom and in their future professional diplomatic careers.

Therefore, adjustment is inevitable on the part of both the locals and the foreigners. The students need to gain a common understanding and need to learn to adapt and work together. Much of this adjustment is on a personal level, based on experience and personality; however, the adjustment must extend to a global level to function in and then beyond the classroom. As suggested, there exists a given level of adjustment by the international students, because they have moved out of their own environment and they know that they have to become accustomed to the local environment. This process may often include varying levels of culture shock over a period at the earlier stages after arrival. These students are similar to those who are in the ESL environment except that they are not just like all the other students; they are in the minority. The foreigners need to be careful that they are not waiting or expecting locals to change or to have had the same professional or international experience as they do. The international students generally have more of both and have experienced different classrooms with international groups of students. The locals have primarily only been in classrooms with other Azerbaijanis. Another issue arises from this situation: In many cases, the foreign students feel as if they are not accepted because the locals are protective of their culture, their nation, and each other. The foreign students feel that they are regarded as "Westerners" who bring their western ways and want to impose them on the locals. The foreigners also feel as if they are looked down upon as if they are a lower race, especially if they have ever committed an "error" in their eyes, the opinion is lost forever, as if they are a disgraceful person. Thus, some of the foreigners do not feel that they are allowed into the circle. This issue seems to be the case especially among the local females toward the foreign females. Somewhat to the contrary, the local men are quite protective of the females, mostly of the locals, but even the foreigners. Thus, if there were ever situations that were to occur that the men don't agree with, they would basically die to protect them.

The above examples of differences can become strengths amongst the group as the awareness is raised and as they are communicated across the cultures amongst themselves. Finally, when the students recognize these differences for their strengths rather than weaknesses, they will learn to build their own bridges within the classroom, which will extend beyond into their future diplomatic careers.

Conclusion

Teaching and learning English in different environments requires adjustments and open-mindedness on the part of both the instructor and the learners. As a teacher, it is important to me to become friends with the students, to build a mutual relationship of trust, and to become a facilitator of their learning. The greatest challenge occurs during the necessary adaptation period, especially if the students view the instructor's role differently. This mismatch may create a barrier, which will inhibit the ability of the teacher to reach individuals both on a personal and a needs-based level.

The students also require an adaptation period, although it differs from within the ESL environment or the EFL environment, and also from within the EFL environment as a local student or as an international student. In the case of the ADA EFL environment or a similar learning environment, ongoing learner training and an initial cross-cultural training course involving both the local and the foreign students are suggested to facilitate the necessary adjustments and to ensure an optimal learning environment.

If both the teacher and the learners recognize that adjustments are necessary and are willing to work collectively and simultaneously, the optimal learning environment may be realized.

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A CHRONOLOGY OF AZERBAIJAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

I. Key Government Statements on Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

Deputy Foreign Minister Vagif Sadykhov says that Azerbaijan will open ten additional diplomatic missions in 2010. It will establish embassies in Serbia, Oman, Argentina, Thailand, Croatia, Lebanon, Libya, and Estonia, and a consulate general in Batumi. At the present time, he adds, Azerbaijan has 65 diplomatic missions abroad (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/189066.html>).

The Foreign Ministry releases a report on its activities in 2009, detailing Baku's efforts to resolve the Karabakh conflict and to promote Azerbaijani interests around the world (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/189695.html>).

II. Key Statements by Others about Azerbaijan

Participants in the Batumi Energy Conference reaffirm their commitment to the territorial integrity of the participating countries, including Azerbaijan (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/189783.html>).

Vahit Erdem, head of the Turkish delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of NATO, says that “until the resolution of the Karabakh conflict, we will not ratify the protocols and will not open the border with Armenia” (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/189367.html>).

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan asks his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin to play “a big role” in the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/189589.html>).

III. A Chronology of Azerbaijan’s Foreign Policy

15 January

President Ilham Aliyev receives Richard Morningstar, US special representative for energy issues (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/189952.html>).

Robert Ilatov, head of the Israel-Azerbaijan inter-parliamentary association, says in the Knesset that the upcoming visit to Baku by Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman will highlight that “there are many spheres in which Israel can help Azerbaijan” (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/189895.html>).

Zahid Orudzh, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that Turkey and Azerbaijan should sign “a road map” to guide their future relations (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/189883.html>).

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan says that once the occupation of Karabakh is ended, “then will be resolved the Turkish-Armenian question. If Armenia has good intentions, let it show this by beginning the liberation of the districts around Nagorno-Karabakh. If it leaves these regions, positive processes will begin” (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/189868.html>).

Rafael Guseynov, a member of the Azerbaijani delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, says that Baku will give PACE a document on the desecration of graves at an Azerbaijani cemetery by Armenian forces (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/189864.html>).

Hidayat Orujov, the head of the Azerbaijani State Committee for Work with Religious Structures, says that the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church must display greater care in its discussion of churches in Armenian-occupied regions of Azerbaijan (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/189865.html>).

14 January

Prime Minister Arthur Rasizade says that “projects for the transit of energy source via the Southern Corridor must be made commercially attractive” (<http://www.day.az/news/economy/189744.html>).

Deputy Foreign Minister Mahmud Mammadguliyev says that Azerbaijan is unlikely to become a member of the World Trade Organization in the near future despite intensive negotiations toward that end (<http://www.day.az/news/economy/189621.html>).

Deputy Foreign Minister Mahmud Mammadguliyev says that *Euronest*, the European Union's Eastern Partnership, will be "useful" for Azerbaijan (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/189614.html>).

The Foreign Ministry releases a report on its activities in 2009, detailing Baku's efforts to resolve the Karabakh dispute and to promote Azerbaijani interests around the world (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/189695.html>).

Vahit Erdem, head of the Turkish delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of NATO, says that "until the resolution of the Karabakh conflict, we will not ratify the protocols and will not open the border with Armenia" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/189367.html>).

Valery Chechelashvili, the secretary general of GUAM, says that the resolution of longstanding conflicts will remain a "priority" of the organization in 2010 (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/189544.html>).

Participants in the Batumi Energy Conference reaffirm their commitment to the territorial integrity of the participating countries, including Azerbaijan (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/189783.html>).

The Azerbaijani embassy in Moscow releases a statement in reaction to the criticism by the Organization of the Collective Security Treaty concerning the statements of Ambassador Polad Bulbuloglu concerning the necessity of restoring the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/189793.html>).

Three Milli Majlis deputies visit their counterparts in Romania (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/189787.html>).

Kazakhstan Foreign Minister Kanat Saudabayev says that his country "has opportunities for resolving 'frozen' conflicts in the Caucasus" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/189768.html>).

Sergey Markov, a Russian Duma deputy, says that "there already are positive aspects to the process of the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/189682.html>).

Yury Merzlyakov, the Russian co-chair of the OSCE Minsk group, says that the co-chairs are planning to visit the region in the near future (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/189655.html>).

Aydin Mirzazade, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "the opening of the Turkish-Armenian border and the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict are interconnected" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/189631.html>).

Mammadbaqir Bahrami, Iran's ambassador to Azerbaijan, visits Nakhchivan (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/189646.html>).

Asim Mollazade, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "Turkey must convince Moscow of the need to put pressure on Armenia" to resolve the Karabakh conflict (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/189556.html>).

13 January

Azerbaijan and Iran sign a contract for the sale of Azerbaijani gas to Iran (<http://www.day.az/news/economy/189465.html>).

Deputy Foreign Minister Mahmud Mammadguliyev says that Azerbaijan is seeking to receive membership in the World Trade Organization with the status of a developing country (<http://www.day.az/news/economy/189469.html>).

Justice Minister Fikrat Mammadov receives a delegation of the International Legal Foundation of Germany (<http://www.day.az/news/society/189543.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says it has no information that any of those who suffered in the Haitian earthquake were Azerbaijanis (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/189551.html>).

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan asks his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin to play "a big role" in the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/189589.html>).

Elnur Aslanov, the head of the political analysis and information supply department of the Presidential Administration, says that the Freedom House report which declared Azerbaijan to be "unfree" was not only inaccurate but part of a campaign by Freedom House to try to attract attention to itself and thus "survive the financial crisis" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/189490.html>).

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan calls on Moscow to press for the liberation of the occupied territories of Azerbaijan (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/189491.html>).

Zahid Orudzh, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that expanding cooperation between Russia and Turkey will allow for "the neutralization of the anti-Azerbaijani position of Armenia" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/189355.html>).

Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, the Emir of Qatar, says that his country is "interested in the development of joint energy projects with Azerbaijan" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/189480.html>).

12 January

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov says that "Azerbaijan plans to expand its gas operations in Europe" (<http://www.day.az/news/economy/189253.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov meets with the Emir of Qatar and other Qatar officials, during which he and his counterpart sign an accord on the elimination of the visa requirement for diplomats of the two countries (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/189225.html>).

Three scholars – an Azerbaijani, an Armenian and a Georgian – release a volume of essays in Russian and English on the history of the Caucasus from ancient times until 1921. In addition to the 2,000 copies in the original print run, Azerbaijani

historians say they will place the entire text on the Internet (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/189291.html>).

11 January

Deputy Foreign Minister Hafiz Pashayev says that the decision of the US Congress to provide 8 million US dollars in assistance to Karabakh directly and bypassing Baku can "negatively affect relations between the US and Azerbaijan but [that] we hope this will not happen" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/189068.html>).

Deputy Foreign Minister Vagif Sadykhov says that Azerbaijan is "considering the question of the elimination of the visa regime with Iran and Turkey" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/189108.html>).

Deputy Foreign Minister Vagif Sadykhov says that the Azerbaijani embassy in Tehran is dealing with the case of Baku State University professor Rashid Aliyev who is under arrest there (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/189070.html>).

The Foreign Ministry has named Abbasali Hasanov, who had been Baku's ambassador in Tehran, to be ambassador for special assignments (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/189142.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that the book entitled "Path to Nowhere: In the Trap of Illusions" published by *Day.az* represents "a major contribution" to shedding the light of truth on the Karabakh conflict. It is to be distributed through Azerbaijani embassies abroad (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/189130.html>).

Aydin Mirzazade, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that Russian politician Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's declaration that "if Nagorno-Karabakh proclaims its independence, then Russia should recognize it" is not serious and does not correspond to the Russian government's position (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/189179.html>).

Joseph Debono Grech, co-rapporteur for Azerbaijan of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, says that "the situation in the area of human rights in Azerbaijan is improving but that this is not enough for a member state of the Council of Europe" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/189087.html>).

Mahir Mahammadoglu, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Lebanon and Syria, says that Baku is interested in the development of relations in all spheres with these two countries (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/189157.html>).

8 January

Azerbaijan's Permanent Mission to the UN in New York has sent a report to the UN secretary general about the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh pointing out that Armenia has not fulfilled its obligations concerning the resolution of that conflict (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/188720.html>).

Annamammad Mammadov, Turkmenistan's ambassador in Baku, says that "the question of the delimitation of borders in the Caspian has not affected the goodneighborly relations between Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/188755.html>).

Mahir Hamzayev, the president of the Community of Azerbaijanis of Lithuania, says that his organization has broken "the monopoly of Armenian propaganda" in that country (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/188785.html>).

7 January

Azerbaijan and Swaziland establish diplomatic relations. A communiqué to that effect is signed in New York by Agshin Mehdiyev, Azerbaijan's permanent representative to the United Nations, and Swaziland Ambassador Joel Musa Nhleko (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/188710.html>).

Azerbaijan's ambassador in Spain, Mammad Aliyev, is awarded *La Gran Cruz de la Orden del Merito Civil* by the Spanish government (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/188562.html>).

6 January

President Ilham Aliyev names Murad Najafbayli ambassador to Switzerland and Elchin Amirbayov ambassador to France (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/188545.html>).

Aydin Mirzazade, a member of the Milli Majlis, says that "the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict will be resolved in the near future" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/188313.html>).

5 January

Joseph Debono Grech and Christopher Strasser, co-rapporteurs on Azerbaijan for the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, welcome the decision of President Ilham Aliyev to pardon 99 prisoners (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/188365.html>).

The US Azerbaijani Network says that its members sent more than 100,000 email and fax messages to American officials during 2009 (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/188267.html>).

3 January

Defense Industry Minister Yaver Jamalov says his agency is conducting negotiations about the export of 27 kinds of its products (<http://www.day.az/news/economy/188052.html>).

Iranian officials say they are seeking to conclude annual agreements on the importation of gas from Azerbaijan (<http://www.day.az/news/economy/188095.html>).

2 January

The Iranian embassy in Baku announces that Tehran will unilaterally introduce a visa-free regime with Azerbaijan as of February 1 (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/188047.html>).

1 January

Azerbaijan begins exporting gas to Russia
(<http://www.day.az/news/economy/187982.html>).

Mammadbaqir Bahrami, Iranian ambassador to Azerbaijan, says that Ganja has great potential in terms of developing bilateral relations with Iran's provinces
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/187990.html>).

Note to Readers

The editors of "Azerbaijan in the World" hope that you find it useful and encourage you to submit your comments and articles via email (adabiweekly@ada.edu.az). The materials it contains reflect the personal views of their authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan.