

INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

The definition of the theory on the intercultural competence is found few times in the writings. One notion can be like that intercultural competence or awareness is gained almost automatically together with linguistic competence and it will be much better if the language is taught at first.

Culture can be defined as “the sum of a way of life, including expected behaviour, beliefs, values, language and living practices shared by members of a society. It consists of both explicit and implicit rules through which experience is interpreted” [Herbig, P. (1998)].

“Intercultural competence is the ability to develop targeted knowledge, skills and attitudes that lead to visible behavior and communication that are both effective and appropriate in intercultural interactions” [Deardorff, D. K. (2006)].

Constituent elements of intercultural competence adapted from Deardorff:

- Knowledge: cultural self-awareness; culture specific knowledge; socio-linguistic awareness; grasp of global issues and trends;
- Skills :listening, observing, evaluating using patience and perseverance; viewing the world from others' perspectives;
- Attitudes: respect (valuing other cultures); openness (withholding judgment); curiosity (viewing difference as a learning opportunity); discovery (tolerance for ambiguity) [Sabine McKinnon, Global Perspectives Project, GCU LEAD]

It is more important to be referred to the English Teaching – Learning Process, not only because English is one of the most spoken languages all over the world, but also because it can help to have access to technology, to other cultures and to professional success, because thanks to making use of the foreign language and new technologies, learners can discover about lots of cultures for themselves.

Furthermore it is very important to possess knowledge about intercultural competence so as to understand and analyze the meaning and aim of the topics since q words also can change meaning according to the culture in which they are expressed and learners should be aware of this. In each language, expressions or words change their meaning according to the area in which they are being said or written. While learning a foreign language, the meaning or the appropriateness of the words or expressions varies from the ones in the language context. Accordingly, when working with oral proficiency, social cultural rules and norms become of prime importance because they enhance the communicative competence when speaking the target language. They include formal and informal ways to address others.

The aim of becoming aware of intercultural competence is not only learning about culture, but also learning about countries where English has been traditionally established as the official means of communication.

The materials used in the process while learning a foreign language in the different grades gives students chances to learn about English culture and make connections between and across subject areas. While teaching a foreign language it should be mentioned teaching all of the learners not only the culture of countries whose native languages are learned, but respecting for their own culture as well. This way, the institutions can bring up individuals who value their own identity, while keeping a global vision.

In the case of English, one of the most significant aims of developing intercultural communicative competence should be, exactly, to help and encourage communication with wider society and groups of people in all the world, to get rid of the thought that there are owners of the language and outsiders, or that it might take place encounters with certain people who are superior to others. Some researches seem to suggest that high levels of competence are necessary if interaction is likely to occur with native speakers.

The theory about their command of English can be described that some learners are worried about their abilities to speak to and listen to people, so they

want to be on an advanced level of communication. Because they think that they would probably be in touch with native speakers and high abilities can definitely help them during the communication.

The teachers who teach a foreign language should feel a few responsibilities for teaching tasks about the cultures of this language people, trying to assist students to understand of their own culture; helping understand and appreciate different world views express through the foreign language and the cultural practices associated with groups that speak the foreign language; contributing to compare these cultures and their own culture; establishing relationships between the cultural practices and products of peoples around the world.

Depending on the state of the art in a specific place, one could argue that one or several of the following measures should be undertaken:

- Exploration of the concept of culture and intercultural competence. Though undoubtedly a step in the right direction if included in English language programs, it is necessary to move beyond the teaching of cultural products. Interdisciplinary work with disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, economics, and the arts could give special impetus to the cultural component in language programs or in language teacher education programs.
- Re-examination of the images of the foreign cultures. Research into how certain foreign cultures are idealized and even worshipped (while others are discarded) by language teachers is urgently needed. It is particularly important to have young people reflect on the economic strings attached to the export of cultural products and icons, especially concerning the multi-billion dollar entertainment business and to explore other less advertised but equally important aspects of the cultural life of other communities.
- Learning to communicate in a second language must include dealing with the unexpected, coping with uncertainties, acting in flexible manners, and de-centralizing one's own perspective.

- It is essential to renew efforts towards teacher education with a strong component of reflection on culture, cultural encounters, the relation between language and culture and focus on the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are part of intercultural competence.
- More research about culture teaching, learning and evaluation. We need to abandon the consumerist approach, carry out our own research and socialize it within the academic community. Teachers should be encouraged to venture into the unexplored land of teaching and evaluate the cultural component of a class. Considering the current state of confrontation and vulnerability as well as fragility of citizens in the country, we may profit from research leading to suggesting better ways of communicating. The study of ways in which intercultural communication can alienate or include, empower or disempower some individuals or groups of people should result in raised awareness among learners of the importance of responsible use of the language [Hutchinson & Waters, 1987].

REFERENCE

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3. Sabine McKinnon,(2008),What is intercultural competence ? Global Perspectives Project, GCU LEAD