



INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN TEACHING LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

role of intercultural competence and the common linguistic-cultural issues are highlighted.

Intercultural competence plays a great role in our interconnected world. Every day we can come across with it. In teaching language, it is essential that teachers should work on students with the help of intercultural competence. The aim of the research is to define intercultural competence and to study its characteristics.

Intercultural competence is a substantially difficult term to define. However, more than 120 definitions were given for this term. It determines intercultural competence as "an ethical orientation in which certain morally ways of being, thinking and acting are emphasized". Cultural competency is vitally important to effectiveness in a variety of areas including health-care, education, public services, libraries, customer services and other business functions. In fact, being sensitive to cultural influences on others may even improve your relationships at home and in the community. Intercultural competence is defined as a number of

ways. Generally, it is the ability to communicate and behave in appropriate ways with people who are culturally different. The phrase "intercultural competence" typically describes someone's effective and appropriate engagement with cultural differences. Definitions of intercultural competence are as varied. Intercultural competence is defined by A. Spitzberg and E. Chagnon as "the appropriate and effective management of interaction between people who, to some degree or another, represent different or divergent effective, cognitive and behavioral orientations to the world".

In the discipline of communication, intercultural competence has been a subject of study for more than 50 years. In the western countries the term competence means the ability to understand and interact with people of different cultures in positive ways.

Generally speaking, research findings support the view that intercultural competence is a combination of one's



personal abilities (such as flexibility, empathy, open-mindedness, self-awareness, adaptability, language skills cultural knowledge) as well as relevant contextual variables (such as shared goals, intensives, perceptions of agency, etc.) Many researchers suggest that the of intercultural competence developmental. It means that more as process "has". reflected People in what who one are "does" cross — than culturally a static competent set of skills are and continually abilities that one and evaluating new cultural information and then using that acquiring intonation to revise thus beliefs as necessary. The U.S.A. Department of Education has issued a framework for developing global and cultural competencies that starts with early learning and cultural continues through elementary and secondary education. The aims for this include developing empathy, cultural understanding and other skills. A variety of organizations offer training to teachers and students in global and intercultural competencies. Teaching tolerance, a Southern Poverty Law colleges also emphasize that global competencies can help student to understand the theme easily

There are a number of issues that are highlighted regarding culture teaching. Firstly, B. Sercu (2014) raises the issue of presenting culture as a concept tied to one's nationality, which according to him fosters a stereotypical mind set, since it implies that individuals are passive reproducers of their nation's cultures. Hence, he argues that it does not take into consideration the complexity of the term culture. He argues that teachers should present and discuss the many cultures that an individual could belong to, for instance, gender and class, and not only the culture

that depends on the individual's national background.

The issue of teachers not being able to evaluate teaching material, such as textbooks, has been addressed in a study carried out by B. Sercu (2006). This study focuses on teachers' beliefs about their teaching of IC, and then evaluates what the teachers' reports of their IC practices can say about IC practice in FL classrooms. Since an international perspective on teachers' beliefs was wanted, the study has 424 participating FL teachers from countries spread over the world. 79% of the participants were teachers of English and a minority of the Participants was teachers of French, Spanish and German. Since being a study internationally spread, the chosen method was a questionnaire that consisted of both open and closed questions regarding teachers' perceptions of the cultural aspect of their teaching. What B. Sercu mainly wants to answer in this study is Whether teachers could be called competent in teaching intercultural competence Or if they mainly teach from, and have the competence to teach from, the traditional culture approach. B. Sercu concludes that teachers do not have a problem with reflecting upon what they include in their teaching, which she reports as an essential skill for successfully teaching IC.

It is quite a static model with all the limitations which that involves, but nonetheless it is useful in demonstrating that what is visual and on the surface of any culture is just a fraction of the whole story that culture. If we were sailing in any icy seas and suddenly saw an iceberg ahead, we would know that what we saw was only 10% of the iceberg above the water. 90% of the iceberg would lie below



the surface. So the case is true for any culture. While some aspects of our culture are out in the open and easy to recognize most of what culture is about is beyond of below our conscious awareness. What is above the surface and we are aware of, we can attempt to monitor or direct, but what is below the surface and we are unaware of, may more often control us. Our lack of awareness causes us to do and say things that may seem very normal within our own culture, but may be strange, amazing or amusing to those of other cultures. A person from the culture knows what they are but they are simply taken for granted as the norm. As one goes deeper into a culture the rules are unconscious and

members are often totally unaware of the values and norms which are guiding their daily behavior.

To sum up, we admit that intercultural competence has a multicultural membership. It can be taught by language, race, by social classes to the children. It was noticed that teachers rather evaluate material from a traditional culture teaching perspective than focusing on how it could be used for IC teaching. Some research, that looks at teachers' choice of material, rather focus on the fact that teachers do not include "IC topics" whilst other studies instead focus on how teachers use teaching materials appropriately for an IC purpose.

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