

Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)

in the light of cultural pluralism in
Europe

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Tartu 2017

(Inter)cultural dilemma in Europe

- 28 Member States
- over 510 million people (2016)
- around 150 native languages
- so called 'third culture kids' (second and third generation immigrants)

Diversity – an asset or a barrier?

European initiatives

- The European Language Intercultural dialogue
- The common European framework of reference for language (CEF)
- Portfolio
- Focus on ICC development alongside linguistic skills – a priority

Problems with teaching ICC

- Shortage of suitable resources
- Lack of more specific guidance for teachers
- Training has been inadequate
- Focus on knowledge rather than behaviour
- ICC gets little consideration in national curricula

Culture

"Culture is the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from other.

" Culture is like an 'onion' that consists of invisible layers – the values that lie in the very core, and visible layers – the identities that manifest in rituals, heroes and symbols.

(Hofstede, 2001)

The Bennett scale

1. Denial
2. Defence
3. Minimization
4. Acceptance
5. Adaptation
6. Integration

(Bennett & Bennett, 2004)

The Model of ICC

- Knowledge
- Skills of interpreting and relating
- Skills of discovery and interaction
- Attitudes
- Critical cultural awareness and political education

(Byram, 1997)

Foreign language barrier

- between people of different languages in different countries, where one is a native speaker of the language used
- between people of different languages but in the same country, where one is a native speaker of the language used
- between people of different languages in different countries, where the language used is a *lingua franca*

(Byram, 1997)

Power struggle

- Those who master grammar and idiom have a potential advantage over foreign speakers and non-standard native speakers.
- When they take advantage of that potential , they exercise power over the interlocutors.
- The learner should not imitate a native speaker but engage as a social actor with other social actors in a particular kind of communication.

(Byram, 1997)

How to teach a language?

In practice, teachers teach 'language and culture', or 'culture in language', but not 'language as culture'.

- Language is taught as a fixed system of formal structures and universal speech functions.
- Culture is incorporated only superficially.

(Kramsch, 2008)

Three concerns

Fear of stereotypes

- related to linguistic categories and cognitive models
- related to categorization/ evaluation
- related to various sayings

Lack of cultural knowledge

Communicative imperatives

(Kramsch & Byram , 2008)

Teacher trainees look for experience abroad

Advantages

- Direct knowledge of the host culture
- Confidence in subject knowledge
- Critical reflection on different school cultures

Disadvantages

- Stereotypes remain and diversity still problematic
- ICC restricted in foreign language teaching only
- Avoidance strategies often used

Spending some time abroad does not necessarily guarantee growth in intercultural competence.

(Dooly, 2010)

Problems with cultural competence

- Even people who share a common culture do not necessarily share the same attitudes, beliefs, behaviours.
- Cultural competence doesn't mean that one has to become a member of another culture.
- The reality of cultural diversity in school classrooms today presents tremendous and demanding challenges to teachers.

(LeRoux, 2002)

Language teacher education for intercultural understanding

Lack of cohesion

- between course objectives and how they are related to syllabus
- between syllabus and course materials
- between classroom practice and the assessment of intercultural skills

Teachers as a group have no common framework for teaching ICC

- awareness-raising or behavioural change?
- a generic educational issue or specific to the language teaching domain?

(Garrido, Alvarez, 2006)

The foreign language and intercultural competence teacher: the acquisition of a new professional identity

- ICC is not learned via exposure or osmosis; it needs to be taught explicitly.
- Language tends to be a crucial marker of group identity, ingroup solidarity and outgroup differentiation.
- Potential problematic areas: misunderstandings from different cultural approaches to knowledge and its transmission to 'teachers' and 'learners' roles.

Important questions

1. What kind of intercultural training would lead to enhanced student interest in intercultural matters?
2. How to change student behaviour?
3. How to make student “think interculturally”?
4. How to provide students “meaningful holistic experience to improve their ICC?”

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Thank you!