

HELPFUL APPROACHES AND ACTIVITIES TO DEVELOP INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

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Awareness of one's own culture and the cultural differences between societies is a part of intercultural competence. At the center of the present paper is the essay 'Developing Intercultural Competence in the Language Classroom'. The development of intercultural competence is a mixture of culture-specific and culture general approaches and activities that help to develop intercultural competence. Naturally, with such new work forms and new approaches to the learning process, teachers' and learners' roles have also changed. When pedagogical approaches, methods and techniques that encourage learners to become actively involved in experience, discovery, challenge, analysis, comparison, reflection and co-operation are implemented, learning activities tend to be very effective as they engage learners as whole persons and address their intellectual, emotional and physical potential.

Approaches and activities that help to develop intercultural competence must be clearly set for them to feel appropriately challenged and to work together efficiently. Activities emphasizing multiple perspectives Activities to raise awareness of different perspectives will develop learners' skills of observation, interpretation and decentering as well as their openness and non-judgmental thinking [1]. These activities may take the form of a verbal description or visual recording of an event, action or phenomenon that can be supplemented by or juxtaposed to descriptions or visuals of the same event, behavior or phenomenon provided by others who see these from different perspectives. For example, it is interesting to read, compare, analyze, discuss and perhaps even act out three different accounts of the same day's events in a school or summer camp written in a diary form by three children coming from very different backgrounds with different values, norms, skills and knowledge and perhaps with different languages. Such activities that analyze multiple perspectives can be used in non-formal or formal educational settings to develop intercultural competence. The same is true for descriptions of natural phenomena that are often presented in natural science classes. While variations on this activity develop participants' observation and communication skills, they also promote analysis from multiple perspectives, enhance empathy and non-judgmental attitudes, and highlight the misleading nature of first impressions and stereotypes [2]. Comparing perspectives can also be used in the treatment of real conflicts among the members of any group or class, or even within a family, to develop the same skills and attitudes while solving the involved persons' own conflicts or problems.

Approaches and activities that help to develop intercultural competence how it is related to the broader social context or the kinds of socio-historical influences that brought it about. The benefits of role plays, simulations and drama for the development of inter-cultural competence are numerous. Learners experience what it is like to be different, to be looked on strangely, to be criticized or even excluded. They can also discover that, although people may show differences in every aspect from eye contact through language use to basic norms, beliefs and values, these differences do not make them less valuable as human beings [3]. The debriefing discussion with the class or group is very important after each role play or simulation to raise awareness of what happened during the game. As a result, such activities can help to develop attitudes of openness, curiosity and respect, as well as a willingness to empathize and suspend judgment. Students are also encouraged to develop skills of observation and interpretation, skills for learning about one's own culture and discovering others, as well as skills of adapting and empathy. Care has to be taken that such activities do not lead to over-generalizations about other groups of people, and that they do not reinforce stereotypes instead of challenging them. When stereotypes surface in the discussions, either about the self or about the other, the teacher or facilitator can seize such opportunities to discuss these and support learners in reflecting about how stereotypes are created, why they are sustained, how they can be as harmful as helpful and how they need to be challenged. When appropriately implemented, such role plays, simulations and drama also raise awareness of and build knowledge.

Finally, the current growth of online communities of practice (gathering professionals and activists in collaborative knowledge construction) will potentially increase the exchange of ideas and creativity around the question of how education can contribute to the development of intercultural awareness and intercultural competence.

References

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2. *Barrett M.*, 2007. Children's Knowledge, Beliefs and Feelings about Nations and National Groups.

3. *Berardo K. & Deardorff D.*, 2012. *Building Cultural Competence: Innovative Activities and Models*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.