

THE ACQUISITION OF INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN LANGUAGE COURSES

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Abstract. *This thesis deals with teaching foreign language and the importance to develop intercultural skills and know-how which include the ability to bring one's own cultural origins and the foreign culture into relation with each other, together with the ability to understand and empathize with the values and conditions of others. The language learner needs to develop other skills than sociocultural knowledge and have to improve interpersonal relations and develop intercultural awareness.*

Keywords: *language teaching, foreign language, intercultural competence, intercultural skills.*

Introduction

When you learn a foreign language, you don't just learn grammar, sentences and words. We also learn a culture, the culture of the country where the language is spoken. To master a foreign language well, it is also necessary to understand its social and cultural environment. Today we live in a multicultural society, and young people need to be trained to meet the need to interact with people from other cultures in society, in the classroom, in the community, on the Internet and abroad. Learners, as well as teachers, when approaching the culture of another country, have predefined images of the culture and people of the country, often stereotypical images, which are explained by the process of socialization of each individual. In foreign language teaching (EL), it is no longer enough to develop linguistic performance and verbal communication, but also intercultural competence.

Nevertheless, intercultural competence touches on the notion of intercultural awareness – both notions are synonymous [1]. For an intercultural encounter to be successful on a pragmatic level, it is necessary to become aware of oneself and to question oneself about one's cultural identity in relation to that of the other. Education for intercultural understanding is one of the Council of Europe's core activities [2, p. 5] to promote better mutual understanding and acceptance of difference in our multicultural and multilingual societies.

Analysis

In a language, there are hidden cultural imprints of a society; traditions, gestures or social norms are shown through the language. When we learn a new language, we can encounter many difficulties of various kinds: linguistic,

cultural and semantic. L. Porcher that: "A language is therefore always a cultural product marked from one side of the culture to the other and to teach one without the other would make them disabled"[3, p. 55]. The term «culture» is a very broad concept and cannot be fixed with a single definition.

Language and culture are linked, but they often remain separate in education. The notion of language is clear, while that of culture is very complex. The term «culture» covers several dimensions, for example, the civilizing culture of nature, universal culture, national or group culture, and traditional or modern culture [4, p. 22–29]. The Mexico Declaration on Cultural Policies (World Conference on Cultural Policies, Mexico City, 26 July–6 August 1982) defines culture as follows: "Culture, in its broadest sense, is considered to be the set of distinctive spiritual and material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes, in addition to the arts and literature, lifestyles, fundamental human rights, value systems, traditions and beliefs"[5].

Purpose and objective

The purpose of this article is to examine how foreign language teachers perceive the notion of "intercultural competence" and how they interpret it according to the definitions described in the curriculum, and in the curriculum for modern languages. What are the teaching methods used to develop intercultural competence in learners? Can there be obstacles for teachers in intercultural education?

Hypothesis

The hypothesis is that intercultural competence is a concept little known by LE teachers and that they are wondering how to teach and

develop intercultural competence in learners. We believe that there is a lack of explanation or reference in the curriculum and syllabus for modern languages to describe the notion of intercultural competence.

Much research has been done on culture in foreign language teaching, but we have not found much more in-depth and scientific research on the subject of "intercultural competence".

Language teachers in Europe indicate four main reasons for teaching culture in LE courses, which are: to develop understanding, tolerance and recognition for other cultures; to develop communicative competence; to increase learners' interest and motivation to learn languages; to develop interaction and cooperation skills between pupils. But, at the same time, they think that cultural education is less important than the acquisition of language skills.

Ukrainian teachers find it difficult to produce a change in learners' attitudes during language classes in the classroom, and believe that openness and tolerance are best achieved through contact and interaction with people from other countries and cultures. Studies also show that teachers generally do not include, or only very little, intercultural competence in cultural education.

Teachers believe they need adequate textbooks and teaching materials, opportunities for intercultural exchanges, tools to achieve attitudinal change, and more time. On the other hand, teachers believe that personal intercultural experiences, authentic teaching materials and multicultural classes can promote openness and a cultural approach in teaching.

Culture in education

In foreign language teaching, Porcher distinguishes two components of culture in foreign language teaching: cultured culture and anthropological culture [6, p. 54].

Cultivated culture corresponds to knowledge about literature, art, history, politics, etc., and occupies a primordial place in a society, through which society particularizes/expresses its own identity. The educational institution must necessarily transmit this culture, because it reflects an entire national culture. For a long time it was the only one present in language methods.

Anthropological culture corresponds to how people in a culture "see the world, the way they behave in a given situation, what they believe, their representations of the foreigner, their image of the intercultural"[6, p. 54]. The anthropological dimension only penetrated into foreign language didactics in the mid-1980s; before that,

this dimension in teaching was almost non-existent.

It is in the context of increasing globalization that we have understood the importance of practicing several languages, and the need to: "possess several cultural skills, that is, be able to live according to the systems of practices and values of several societies"[7, p. 60].

However, everyone inherits his or her social-cultural capital, traditions and habits, which helps us to adapt to the social world. In order to set up an intercultural pedagogy, the teacher must be aware of his own cultural references, values and prejudices, but also be aware that you never know everything about another culture. This can be a challenge for teachers.

Understanding between individuals from different cultures is not self-evident; intercultural exchange depends on our capital, habits, and socialization (different norms and values). It is at the level of the individual that attitudes, stereotypes, prejudices, ethnocentrism etc. are found [8].

Communication between natives is an exchange of implicit, social codes in the daily practice of language between natives in a common community. Implicit (unspoken) are the most difficult to master when learning a foreign language, because they are invisible.

Each company has an image of itself and an image of the foreigner. This image is generally not objective. We see the world, as we believe it is. However, stereotypes are part of reality and there is often some truth or real foundation. Stereotypes are part of our social and cultural capital and should not be removed, but rather pedagogically used as a starting point for learning by trying to explain them. We identify with people who resemble us and we tend to think that our culture is the best or even "the only" one, and that other cultures are affected by a little exoticism and folklore [6, p.53]. Our ethnocentric vision is acquired during the socialization process; therefore, we are somehow "imprisoned" in our own culture. This alleged superiority is very harmful to language teaching, but being aware of it can facilitate intercultural interaction.

The Council of Europe has published the Common European Framework of Reference for languages, here called the Framework. The Framework serves as a kind of basis for European countries when it comes to developing language programs, manuals, etc. It describes what learners of a language must learn in order to use it to communicate, as well as the knowledge and skills they must acquire in order to have the abil-

ity to communicate effectively in the foreign language, for example French.

The objective of the Council of Europe is to recognize multicultural society and to develop a harmonious intercultural dialogue between individuals, thus proposing in 1986 a definition that can be applied in intercultural education.

The use of the word "intercultural" necessarily implies interaction, exchange, and elimination of barriers, reciprocity and true solidarity. If the term "culture" is fully recognized, this implies recognition of the values, lifestyles and symbolic representations to which human beings, both individuals and societies, refer in their relationships with others and in their worldview [7, p. 75].

The competent intercultural teacher is not only the one who teaches a foreign language, but rather a teacher who is able to make his learners understand: "the relationship between their own culture and other cultures, to arouse in them an interest and curiosity for the otherness", and to make them aware of how other peoples or individuals perceive them - themselves and their culture" [2, p. 10–11].

An intercultural approach must be based on openness and tolerance, which leads to seeing things from a new angle and to seeing one's own culture from the outside. It is necessary for a teacher to have this intercultural competence in order to reduce the "culture shock" in meeting students, parents or colleagues from other cultures.

Interculturality in the study of modern languages

In the study plan for modern languages, we first find the objectives to be achieved by the learners.

- understand and interpret the content of spoken language and different kinds of texts,
- express themselves and communicate in speech and writing,
- use language strategies to understand and make themselves understood,
- adapt language for different purposes, recipients and contexts, and reflect over living conditions, social and cultural phenomena in different contexts and parts of the world where the language is used.

The teacher must address the following areas subject areas that are familiar to the pupils; interests, everyday situations, people and places; views, feelings and experiences; daily life, ways of living and social relations in different contexts and areas where the language is used.

This knowledge allows learners to reflect on similarities and differences in their own culture, and without prejudice of one or the other. It is about being able to see and understand cultural references while avoiding collective stereotypes. To do this, students may need support to help them become aware of their own way of communicating in different situations of daily life.

The aim of the Council of Europe in the Framework is not to know more about a foreign country or countries, but rather to focus on the organization of courses and school methods. It is important for students to adopt new perspectives, develop new skills and develop a critical sense. This includes empowering the students to express themselves personally - not just to acquire skills and access information. In some countries this educational process is already in practice, while in some countries, on the other hand, this type of pedagogy has never been practiced, which also includes new types of material, particularly the Internet.

According to the Framework, the intercultural dimension means, "mastering the fundamental pedagogical principles related to situations involving emotions and students' personal involvement"[9].

There is certainly a problem of explanation in the curriculum when it comes to applying an intercultural approach in teaching. Is it enough to read the curriculum and the Comments on the Study Plan to become an intercultural teacher? According to the teachers, there is a lack of time and a need for training and didactic/pedagogical support.

In schools today, there is no shortage of teaching materials; most universities have access to textbooks, media and the Internet as well. The question is how to develop the intercultural dimension in education?

It is only when we meet a person from another culture in real life that we know if we have acquired intercultural competence.

Conclusion

Finally, teachers probably have different pedagogical conceptions – behaviorist, constructivist or socio-constructivist – and this fact may possibly influence their approach to teaching. We believe that teachers need training and pedagogical support in order to be able to develop intercultural competence in learners. First, teachers must be trained; they themselves must have a certain knowledge, skills and approaches to achieve this goal.

A large majority of teachers also believe that a multicultural class can contribute to the development of intercultural competence. New types of material such as the Internet, interactive boards and computers are ways of motivating and stimulating pupils to express themselves, giving them the opportunity to have an intercultural approach by participating in distance exchange projects with other schools in Europe (e.g. eTwinning).

Finally, we conclude that consideration should be given to reviewing the definition in the content of the study plans for LE teachers who are already active, to giving them the tools to become competent intercultural teachers, but also to reviewing the training of teacher studies so that they are well trained in intercultural studies by highlighting the didactic questions When? What? and especially how?

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Формування міжкультурної компетенції на заняттях з іноземної мови

Анотація. У цьому дослідженні розглядається питання про викладання іноземної мови та важливості розвитку міжкультурних навичок і спеціальних знань, які дають можливість зближення власних культурних коренів і іноземної культури, а також можливість розуміти цінності і умови життя інших і виявляти співпереживання відносно них. Учень, що вивчає іноземну мову, повинен не тільки набувати соціокультурні знання, а й розвивати інші навички, а також покращувати міжособистісні стосунки та формувати міжкультурну компетентність. Метою статті є вивчення того, як викладачі іноземних мов сприймають поняття «міжкультурна компетентність», як вони інтерпретують його відповідно до визначень, що містяться в навчальній програмі і в навчальних робочих планах дисциплін з вивчення сучасних іноземних мов. Розглянуто методи навчання, що використовуються для розвитку міжкультурної компетентності учнів та перешкоди для вчителів в міжкультурній освіті. Гіпотеза полягає в тому, що міжкультурна компетентність є маловідомою концепцією для викладачів іноземних мов, отже, в статті розглядається питання розвитку міжкультурної компетентності учнів. Ми вважаємо, що в навчальних планах і програмах з дисциплін з викладання сучасних мов недостатньо роз'яснень і посилань для опису поняття міжкультурної компетентності. У дослідженні розглянуто, як викладачі інтерпретують поняття «міжкультурна компетентність» відповідно до визначень, викладених в навчальній програмі, та цілей в галузі вивчення мов. Вони вказують на чотири основні причини викладання культури під час навчання іноземним мовам, а саме: розвиток розуміння, толерантності та визнання інших культур; розвиток комунікативної компетенції; підвищення інтересу і мотивації учнів до вивчення мов; розвиток навичок взаємодії та співпраці між учнями. Але в той же час вони вважають, що культурна освіта менш важлива, ніж оволодіння мовними навичками. Це дослідження також

