

**INTERCULTURAL APPROACH IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE
TEACHING**

In accordance with the assumptions of the intercultural approach in foreign language teaching, learning and teaching should be accompanied by an awareness of mutual relations between communication and culture (there is no communication without culture, no culture without communication), and thus, the impact of cultural differences on communication processes. Intercultural oriented foreign language classes only to a certain extent pursue cognitive goals and are a platform for the transfer of information about the culture of the target language, much more to shape specific attitudes (such as tolerance or empathy) and to develop intercultural strategies and skills (polycentrism, distance of roles, meta-communication, etc.). Thus, a language course develops not only linguistic competence, but also intercultural communication skills or even more broadly - intercultural competence.

Developing intercultural competence does not necessarily mean giving up language goals at a foreign language lesson. Introduction of the presented tasks will awaken students' awareness of the differences and similarities between their own and other culture and will contribute to the development of coping skills in difficult communication situations caused by cultural differences.

Intercultural competence (IC) is increasingly mentioned, along with linguistic and communicative competences, as one of the main goals of language education. It was understood that bringing knowledge of a foreign language only to formal structures is not a guarantee of successful communication at the meeting point of at least two cultures. Differences resulting from cultural separateness can, despite impeccable mastery of language (on the phonetic, semantic and grammatical level), be the cause of numerous intercultural misunderstandings. The reaction of the participants to the said misunderstandings may be extremely different - starting with a smile, surprise,

and indignation and irritation. Sometimes it may even be a cultural shock to encounter the norms of a different / foreign culture.

A person with a well-developed IC is more sensitive to other cultures and does not judge too quickly the (not only verbal) behaviour of his/her communication partner. He/she tries to find out the reason for the interlocutor's behaviour and intentions and understand the background. Intercultural competence is therefore perceived as a comprehensive skill or a set of internalized skills to function and deal with new, difficult communication situations in the context of multiculturalism. Although the most frequent mention of IC is made in a holistic way, one should remember about the three planes occurring within it, i.e. with a cognitive, affective and action-oriented level.

It is also worth emphasizing that IC is not an innate skill and it can not be fully developed, because acquiring it is a long-lasting and two-way process that begins during the first collision with a reality that is strange to us and lasts until the end of our life. IC is a dynamic quantity, changing as a result of acquiring new information, collecting new experiences, feelings and experiences. Thomas and Hößler also emphasize that this competence is the result of a long process of learning and personality development, which is achieved in a multi-stage.

There are some specialized techniques and tasks supporting IC development during foreign language classes. These techniques and tasks are seen mostly as part of the foreign language acquisition process, because in addition to a positive impact on the development of intercultural competence, they can also support the development of linguistic and communication skills of learners, their individual language skills (main and partial), autonomy and strengthen the motivation students to learn a foreign language.

Looking at the proposals of tasks and techniques conducive to developing IC proposed by many authors, one can notice a certain regularity. It consists in the fact that a distinction is made between tasks aimed at sensitizing students to foreign culture / foreign and own culture, developing the ability to compare

them skilfully, making them aware of differences between cultures, highlighting the problem of correct allocation of meanings and tasks focusing on the development of these skills and skills that are indispensable to be able to react and act adequately to given communication situations in intercultural contexts. In addition, we must remember what was emphasized by Sercu L. that the tasks and exercises designed to develop the IC should be selected so that they can combine new (inter) cultural content with those already known, and the learning process itself should be organized so that students can deal with new cultural content, intercultural tasks and problems in an autonomous, in-depth and productive manner.

The typology of tasks and techniques fostering the development of IC presented below is primarily based on the classification prepared by the team of authors - Bachmann, Gerhold and Wessling - which was supplemented with propositions / exercises by other authors Borgwardt and Walz 1993; Hiller 2011; Zawadzka 2004).

1. Tasks shaping the perception

The aim of the tasks included in this group is to make students aware that the perception of the reality around us is selective, because it depends both on personal interests and experiences, as well as those resulting from belonging to a given group and a given cultural area. This means that the response to individual stimuli within the same class may be extremely different.

- Description of the picture / photo / poster etc. only in terms of what you see
- Three-phase description of the image (suggesting cultural differences)
- Manipulated images - a description of the person
- Changing the perspective
- Reduction of perception

2. Tasks supporting the acquisition of strategies enabling proper allocation of meanings

The meaning of a word that appears in many languages is not the same in each of them. On the other hand, dictionaries, especially bilingual ones, help in the matter of the correct allocation of meaning, because apart from the denotative equivalent of a word, they do not provide information about its connotation and function in a given social context or its social meaning. The tasks included in this group are aimed at sensitizing students to the fact that the meaning of a word depends on the context of its occurrence, the function it performs in a given social context and its connections with neighbouring concepts.

- Speculation about "empty places"
- Creating meaning collages from pictures and various types of text
- Setting priorities
- Systematic questions

3. Tasks developing the ability to compare cultures

The aim of the tasks gathered in this group is to develop students' skills of searching and concentrating while comparing cultures on those components that have a decisive influence on the quality of this comparison.

Therefore, in order to avoid false conclusions resulting from mindless comparing phenomena and sequences of actions, it is necessary not only to identify similarities and differences, but also to be aware of threats that may result from issuing too hasty judgments and tendencies to generalize them. Through the proposed tasks, students will be encouraged to have a more diverse view of the surrounding reality and formulate opinions about others.

- Generalization and differentiation
- Stereotype and rating
- Awareness of prejudices
- Reception of foreign-language texts
- Reception of foreign language films

4. Tasks developing the ability of discourse in intercultural situations

Communication between members of the same cultural area will be different from communication between people belonging to different cultural groups and as a result, it is easy to misunderstand the nature of not only verbal but also non-verbal communication. Tasks included in this group are designed to draw students' attention to these factors which have a significant impact on the course of communication, and which are often downplayed by communication partners.

- Change of the register
- Communication translation
- Analysis of critical interaction situations (critical incident) and case studies

Thus, the techniques and tasks presented will arouse students' awareness of the differences and similarities between their own and other cultures and will contribute to the development of coping skills in difficult communication situations caused by cultural differences.

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