



INTERCULTURAL LESSONS: REALITY OR MYTH

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INTRODUCTION

- There are different approaches to intercultural learning. In some, language is represented as an essential part which is the reality and in others it is a myth i.e. it is neglected. The linguistic and intercultural competences do not exist in parallel and are not interchangeable.
- In some cases, there is a high level of foreign language communicative competence, but not very well-developed intercultural competence.
- In order to achieve successful intercultural communication and to use intercultural competence, it is very important that the linguistic competence exists.
- Knowledge in the foreign culture is not negligible, though it will hardly be enough without the necessary linguistic knowledge.
- It can be argued that the linguistic competence is good to overtake the intercultural competence in a way or acquire it in parallel with it.



LESSON OBSERVATION 1 (SEPTEMBER 2022) : LIGHTING THE SPARK OF LEARNING

A very interesting lesson that involved a text which was to be read by the students about an educational experiment in India and was the inspiration for the movie *Slumdog Millionaire*.

The aims of the lesson were to read and understand the structure of the text through a gapped text activity.

The pre-reading activity was a discussion of technology and how technology helps the students at school and out of school.

The while-reading activity was to find some basic information in the text in order to familiarize with the content of the text itself.

What followed was a word formation exercise with sentences taken from the text. For homework, students had to do some research about the education in India with a purpose to compare it with the education of Macedonia.

If real intercultural communicative competence is the main goal to be achieved in second language learning, it is essential to consider the inclusion of well-selected texts, if possible. Students at any age are exposed to read or listen to different literary pieces such as folk tales, fairy tales, legends, fables, and other selections from children's literature, reflecting the important heritage of every culture.

LESSON OBSERVATION 2 (SEPTEMBER, 2022) - ONE WOMAN'S CHOICE



The aim of this lesson is to watch a video, learn a new vocabulary and use the vocabulary in context. Before the teacher played the video, the students discussed family ties. Here they answered the questions with their partners and the teacher monitored their work. The lesson was mainly a communicative one.



In the next phase the students watched the video with an aim to fill in a task with true or false after they have seen the video. When the video stopped the teacher asked some questions about their behavior and expressions while watching the video. Students could see some details of the life of Flora Salonik who studied to become a teacher but that did not happen because she got married to a person who lived in a faraway village with difficult life conditions.

IMPORTANCE OF INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

The ending of the lesson consisted of a discussion about living in a village or a city. The teacher made a table on the board and students were writing their opinions in the table. Thus, stereotypes of village and city people came out with the second question about where it is better to live (the village or the city).

Here the teacher had the chance to give them some definitions of stereotypes and explained the students that stereotypes should be avoided and every family has to make their own choice whether to live in the city or in the village because as written on the board there are advantages in living both in the city or in the village.

But throughout this lesson, some negative comments could be heard, some students offended other students and the reason for that was the lack of knowledge in cultures and stereotypes.

FINAL COMMENTS

Differences in values, norms and perceptions of each ethnicity in the form of stereotypes and prejudices often lead to misunderstandings in communicating.

Factors associated with the emergence of prejudice are personality, the level of intelligence and environmental factors.

The higher the level of one's intelligence, the more critical and therefore more difficult to prejudice.

While the lower the level of one's intelligence, it has an easier tendency to prejudice.

CONCLUSION

Accomplishing multicultural understanding in the schools in Strumica is something which is achievable but still the systematic development of intercultural communicative competence teaching objectives, lesson plans, and assessment methods is limited to some extent or seen as a myth.

What teachers need is more training and curricula in which inclusion of intercultural communication aims are found.

If teachers want to be successful in fulfilling the intercultural aim, they should have developed their own cultural identity first before being able to facilitate the development of intercultural communicative competence in their learners (Bennett, 1998; Knutson, 2006) and intercultural lessons will become reality.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

