

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE AS A NECESSARY SKILL FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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1. The definition of culture

In order to discuss intercultural communication, we must first define the concept of culture. The concept of culture in reality is very broad. Culture is communication, communication is culture. The fact who we are as individuals, families, communities, professions, industries, organizations and nations is determined by culture. Culture is the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behaviour that depends upon human capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations. There are many definitions of “culture”. “Culture” can be defined as membership in a discourse community that shares a common social space and history, and common imaginings. Generally “culture” is called a common system of standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating and acting”. (Kramsh,1998:10). “Culture is always in the background, ready to unsettle the good language learners when they expect it least, making evident the limitations of their hard-won communicative competence, challenging their ability to make sense of the world around them”. (Kramsch, 1993:1) .

2. The necessity of teaching second language and culture

An important stimulus for successful second language learning is the attitudinal orientation towards the second language. Second language learning is directed by individual’s motivation for language learning. The target language may be mastered at different levels. Much depends on the aim of learners. Quite often learning a second (foreign) language is motivated by the need of passive knowledge-the need of access to the literature of foreign people. Of course, much depends also on the learners: their intelligence, age, language aptitude.

Risager K. in his book states that foreign and second language teaching is a highly complex linguistic and cultural reality in the sense that there is always more than one language involved, and that it is always a question of a number of cultural perspectives that relate to differences in national, ethnic and social history, etc. (Risager K. 2006). Second language and culture do not take anything away from one’s native heritage but are additive and enriching. Learning foreign culture can widen understanding of their own and other cultures, it can create opportunities for personal expression. In a situation of increasing mobility, both in terms of tourism and the opportunities provided by higher education, teaching towards inter-cultural competence will make students more adaptable and will develop their ability to communicate successfully in different social contexts and increase their sense of dignity and self-respect. This will also encourage them to value their own historical, ethnic and religious heritage. If we take an overview of the hundreds of societies that exist or have existed in the world, the first thing that strikes our attention is that there is tremendous variation with regard to the cultural traits found in these societies. Many

societies have values and norms that are directly opposite to those that we might take for granted in this society.

When people begin to understand others' customs and to see how they make sense, they begin to internalize the concept of cultural relativity. According to Claire Kramsch (1998) language expresses cultural reality. She explains as follows:

"Members of a community or social group also create experience through language. They give meaning to it through the medium they choose to communicate with one another, for example, speaking in the telephone or face to face, writing a letter or sending an e-mail message, reading the newspaper or interpreting a graph or chart. The way in which people use spoken, written or visual medium itself creates meanings that are understandable to the group they belong to, for example, through a speaker's tone of voice, accent, conversational style, gestures and facial expressions. Through all its verbal and non-verbal aspects, language embodies cultural reality." (Kramsch 1998: 3).

3. Integrating culture in L2 teaching and learning

The teaching of culture is considered a very important part of foreign language teaching. The goal of teaching foreign language and culture is to enable students to develop their inter-cultural communicative competence which will provide them with the means to interpret cultures and communicate more successfully in an inter-cultural context.

As Petrova (2003) claims language and culture are two intertwined symbolic systems. They signify "that are either around us or in our minds, we are struck with the tone of profound resignation with the incapability of the human mind to get to the core of reality, or be the incapability of the human mind to get to the core of reality". (Petrova, 2003: page number)

There is no necessary link between language and culture. This is done by careful analysis of different levels in language and by the stage-by-stage argument that we need to look at language from several perspectives, and see the relationship between language, as revealed from each of these perspectives, and the cultural phenomena other than language that are part of our world of communication and interaction. (Risager K., 2006: page number).

The author introduces the metaphor of "flow" and argues that languages flow through our societies not only as a consequence of the high mobility, in which we live. In doing so, languages are sociologically separate from other cultural phenomena, even though they may be psychologically related to a particular culture and cultural experience for individuals in their own selves.

The relationship between language and culture has been a focus of attention from a variety of disciplinary perspectives for many years. Linguists have sought to understand whether and how cultural factors influence aspects of human behaviour such as perception, cognition, language and communication. Within language teaching, cultural factors have occasionally attracted the interest of both theoreticians and practitioners.

Second language and culture do not take anything away from one's native heritage but are additive and enriching. When people begin to understand others' customs and to see how they make sense, they begin to internalize the concept of cultural relativity. (from Cushner and Brislin, 1996: 57) Learning foreign culture can widen the understanding of their own and other cultures, it can create opportunities for personal expression. In a situ-

ation of increasing mobility, both in terms of tourism and the opportunities provided by higher education, teaching towards inter-cultural competence will make students more adaptable and will develop their ability to communicate successfully in different social contexts and increase their sense of dignity and self-respect.

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4. The skills that teachers of languages need to have in order to teach language and culture

As M. Byram states in her book foreign language teachers need to have skills of discovery and interaction, skills of interpreting and relating. Teachers have to implement "Discovery interaction" to emphasize learning initiative and stress the learning ability of students. This skill is an "ability to acquire new knowledge of culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction". (Byram 1997:61). Students from everyday life, from interpersonal exchanges already have some knowledge of many things and ability to use language. Interpreting and relating skill is an ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate to documents or events from one's own". (Byram 1997:61). Foreign language teachers need to pay much attention to the interpreting and relating skill. "This skill can be distinguished from the skills of discovery and interaction in that it need not involve interaction with an interlocutor, but may be confined to work on documents. The skill of discovery may also be operated in the individual's own time, but equally it may be part of social interaction. It is the skill of building up specific knowledge as well as an understanding of the beliefs, meanings and behaviours which are inherent in particular phenomena, whether documents or interactions." (Byram 1997:37). Interaction skills are of most importance as they involve using skills such as active listening and tone of voice, they include leadership. Also they help people further their careers.

5. Intercultural communicative competence as a necessary skill for learners

Intercultural Communicative Competence relates to foreign language teaching. "The concept "communicative competence" was developed in the anglophone world by Hymes. Hymes argued that linguists wishing to understand first language acquisition, need to pay attention to the way in which not only grammatical competence but also the ability to use language appropriately is acquired". (Byram 1997:7)

Intercultural communication is a form of global communication. It is used to describe the wide range of communication problems that naturally appear within an organization made up of individuals from different religious, social, ethnic, and educational backgrounds. "The assessment of an individual's ability to communicate and interact across cultural boundaries is facilitated by a detailed description of the process involved and definition of what is expected of the individual. It is an advantage to the assessor but also both teacher and learner. All three can benefit from clarity and transparency and agree upon the aims and purposes of the teaching, learning and assessment processes in which they are involved." (Byram 1997:7)

Intercultural communicative competence is a necessary skill for learners as they must “acquire a basic communicative competence in order to be able to use English appropriately in real life situations, appreciate the value of learning English as a means of communication with English speaking people, and gain access to their knowledge in various fields and to the technology which has international currency, expand one’s own cultural awareness by learning about the cultural heritage of English speaking peoples and by so doing to arrive at a livelier appreciation of both cultures.”(Byram 1997:27) By learning about others, they will also become aware of the cultural diversity.

Aside from language, intercultural communication focuses on social attributes, thought patterns, and the cultures of different groups of people. It also involves understanding the different cultures, languages and customs of people from other countries.

The ability to communicate with other countries is through the study of English as a foreign language and I deem very important to develop intercultural communicative skill.

Thus, when teaching how to communicate with each other clearly, it is impossible to prepare individuals for every conceivable challenge they may encounter, even in a long training program. People’s thinking can’t remain static in this fast-moving world. When people begin to understand others’ customs and to see how they make sense, they begin to internalize the concept of cultural relativity.

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ՄԻՋՄՇԱԿՈՒԹԱՅԻՆ ՀԱՂՈՐԴԱԳՈՒԹՅԱՆ ԿԱՐՈՂՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՆԵՐԸ ՈՐՊԵՍ ԱՆՀՐԱԺԵՇՏ ՀՄՏՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ ՕՏԱՐ ԼԵԶՈՒ ՍՈՎՈՐՈՂՆԵՐԻ ՀԱՄԱՐ

Հ. Մ. ՏՈՆՈՅԱՆ

Այս հոդվածում քննարկվում են այն հմտությունները, որոնց օտար լեզվի մասնագետները պետք է տիրապետեն, որպեսզի զարգացնեն միջմշակութային հաղորդակցության կարողությունները աշակերտների մոտ: Այս հոդվածի նպատակն է փորձել գտնել պատասխաններ այն հարցերին, որոնք առնչվում են լեզվի և մշակույթի ուսուցմանը: Հոդվածում խոսվում է աշակերտների մոտ միջմշակութային հաղորդակցության կարողությունների զարգացման անհրաժեշտության մասին:

МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНЫЕ КОММУНИКАТИВНЫЕ КОМПЕТЕНЦИИ КАК НЕОБХОДИМЫЙ НАВЫК ПРИ ИЗУЧЕНИИ ИНОСТРАННОГО ЯЗЫКА

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В статье рассматриваются те умения, которые должны иметь учителя иностранного языка, при развитии межкультурных коммуникативных компетенций у учеников. Обосновывается важность формирования межкультурной коммуникативной компетенции при обучении иностранному языку среди учеников.