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THE INTERCULTURAL APPROACH IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AT THE POST-SECONDARY LEVEL³

This paper will discuss the intercultural approach in English language teaching (ELT) at the post-secondary level, aiming to prepare students for the interaction with people from different cultures, enable them to understand people from other cultures, and help them see that such an interaction is an enriching experience. In addition, by showing authentic classroom examples, it will encourage teachers to implement this concept in English language teaching, showing what benefits the introduction of the intercultural approach will bring into their classroom, and present practical ideas and resources for English language teachers who wish to develop their students' intercultural competence.

Keywords: ELT, cultures, intercultural perspective, students, teacher

1 INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, teaching and learning a foreign language does not only mean teaching and learning linguistics of a language but it also involves teaching and learning about culture. In other words, communication that lacks appropriate cultural content often results in intercultural incidents or in serious miscommunication and misunderstanding. Therefore, the “intercultural approach” in language teaching aims to develop learners as intercultural speakers or mediators able to engage in intercultural communication with complexity, acknowledge multiple cultural identities, and avoid stereotyping and prejudice. Hence, implementing this approach in language teaching helps learners to not only acquire linguistic competence needed to communicate in speaking and writing, but it also develops their intercultural competence and/

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or their ability to understand people who come from different cultures and have different social identity, beliefs, values, and worldviews (Byram 2002: 4).

It goes without saying that culture plays an important role in language teaching. According to Kramsch (1998: 10) culture “is always in the background, right from day one, ready to unsettle the good language learners when they least expect it, making evident the limitations of their hard-won communicative competence, challenging their ability to make sense of the world around them”. Furthermore, Byram (2002: 101-30) suggests that apart from grammatical competence, a culturally competent learner must possess socio-linguistic competence, socio-cultural knowledge and intercultural awareness. Moreover, in his book “Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communication” Byram (1997: 5-6) argues that teaching ELT from an intercultural perspective is important because “it gives learners both intercultural and linguistic competence; prepares them for interactions with people from other cultures; enables them to understand and accept people from other cultures as individuals with distinctive perspectives, values and behaviors; and helps them see that such interaction is an enriching experience”.

Therefore, if students (future professionals) are to become successful intercultural communicators in today’s multicultural world, it is essential to provide them with substantial intercultural training. The primary goal is for them to develop the ability to compare their native culture to other cultures in which the English language is spoken, to critically evaluate and interpret the results of such comparisons, and to apply the knowledge successfully in both verbal and nonverbal communication for both transactional and interactional purposes (Martin & Nakayama 2018: 35). This is the reason why both Kramsch (1998: 11) and Calloway-Thomas (2010: 70) agree that “it is of paramount importance that cultures, and not randomly chosen cultural aspects, are dealt with during EFL lessons”.

In the authors’ opinion these are all solid reasons to introduce the intercultural approach into English classes at post-secondary level. Another good reason for this necessary step is that there is still much intolerance towards and prejudice against other nations and cultures in the world. Therefore, intensive intercultural training in post-secondary education during English lessons at institutions of higher education in Serbia seems to be a good way to promote tolerance, acceptance, diversity, understanding and respect.

A possible obstacle in the process might be the conviction that most teachers have - being exposed to different cultures and being a native speaker are the two most important requirements for teaching intercultural communication. This is a common misconception because the main aim of teaching English from the intercultural perspective is not merely to transfer information and knowledge about a language and country in which that language is spoken but also to help students to understand culture and the role communication plays in intercultural interactions.

Taking all of the abovementioned into consideration, this paper should serve as a stepping-stone in this direction and show why intercultural approach in teaching English language is imperative today.

2. THE INTERCULTURAL APPROACH IN ELT: THE FOUR PHASES OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Effectively planned, well-paced, relevant and interesting instruction is a key aspect of an effective “intercultural” classroom in which instructional methods and content meet students’ academic needs. The course that will be described here is divided into 4 phases⁴. They are arranged chronologically by order of importance. Phase 1, 2 and 4 are taught 7 lessons each (duration of each lesson is 45 minutes) while phase 3 is taught 9 lessons and it involves different intercultural activities, teamwork, discussions, challenging intercultural issues and debates. The whole course sums up to 30 lessons in total.

The course is taught in English and students’ level of English should be A2, borderline B1. The course combines teaching cultural competence and intercultural communication. What is insisted on is the improvement of communication, listening and writing skills, vocabulary and knowledge about other cultures. Students work on further improving grammar during tutorials. As far as teaching methodology is concerned - it is mostly a communicative approach.

The proposed activities shown in this part of the paper are authentic classroom examples from English lessons at Departments of History and Education Studies at the University of Priština’s Faculty Philosophy in Kosovska Mitrovica.

Phase 1

Phase 1⁵ (a total of 7 lessons) serves as an introduction to relevant concepts such as culture, communication and intercultural communication. It is also the initial stage for students to get to know and understand their own culture. What should be borne in mind is that it should not be taken as the bedrock for the evaluation of other cultures (which can easily lead to ethnocentrism), but as a starting point in their study and understanding of cultures. This step is very important because in order to understand other cultures, students have to understand their culture first (both positive and negative traits).

To begin with, the teacher writes the word “culture” on the board and students think about what culture means to them. This is followed by a discussion of the different cultural dimensions by Hofstede⁶. Cultural dimensions⁴ will

4 The four phases and exercises have been adapted from Bakić-Mirić N. (2019). *Intercultural Communicative Competence and English Language Teaching at Post-Secondary Level: A Practical Approach*. Belgrade/Kosovska Mitrovica: The University of Priština’s Faculty of Philosophy in Kosovska Mitrovica, pp. 64-70.

5 It is up to the teacher how much time and how many lessons s/he will spend teaching each relevant concept and how much time will be spent on practice. This usually depends on the students and how quickly they grasp the concepts, as well as their motivation to actively participate in class.

6 The teacher should explain basic cultural dimensions to students while talking about cultures. If the teacher feels that they are too difficult for students to understand they should be avoided. Basically, Hofstede has singled out six cultural dimensions and he has grouped countries based on them. The five cultural dimensions are: Individualism/Collectivism, Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Masculinity/Femininity, Long/Short-Term Orientation and Indulgence/Restraint. For detailed explanation please visit: <https://www.>

help students to categorize both their own culture and other cultures in which English language is spoken. Next, students categorize the different aspects of their own culture. This is a good time to introduce the concepts of cultural relativism, prejudice, stereotypes, bigotry, ethnocentrism, cultural imperialism and popular culture which largely impede one's view of other cultures and its people.

After this, the teacher writes the word "communication" on the board and students give their definitions of communication. To explain the definition better, the teacher draws the following diagram:



The teacher gives a simple explanation of the diagram just to be sure that students understand the communication process: the idea or feeling comes from the source. This input into symbols (encoding) produces a message, which is transmitted through a channel. The channel is the medium used for communication (e.g. speaking, writing). The message is interpreted by the receiver, who decodes the message and responds with positive or negative feedback. Noise here means anything that distorts the message. (Ting-Toomey and Chung 2018: 10)

Next, the teacher relates this to intercultural communication where noise is shown as everything that can impede communication between people who come from different cultures such as language barriers, nonverbal communication, different worldviews etc.

Finally, the teacher writes the word "intercultural communication" on the board and asks students to define it. The teacher draws the picture of the Titanic with the passengers on it (representing people involved in intercultural communication) that is about to hit the iceberg (representing culture with the visible aspects of culture above the surface level of the water and the non-visible aspects under the surface level of the water)⁷ to better explain the complexity of culture (particularly non-visible aspects) and its large influence on intercultural communication. This is a perfect time to define and explain the core concept of the whole course to students "as a multidisciplinary academic field of research and study that seeks to understand how people from different cultures behave, communicate and perceive the world" (Bakić-Mirić 2012: 45).

After this, students focus on practical intercultural exercises to grasp the meaning of major concepts dealt with in lessons, such as:

business-to-you.com/hofstede-cultural-dimensions/ or <https://hi.hofstede-insights.com/national-culture>

7 Culture has been compared to an iceberg. Just as the iceberg has a visible top part above the water surface and a larger, invisible part below the water surface, culture has some aspects that are observable and others that can only be suspected, imagined, or intuited. Also like an iceberg, the part of culture that is visible is only a small part of a much bigger whole that is not visible. So, visible aspects of culture are art music, attire, religious rituals, literature, food etc. Non-visible aspects of culture are values, beliefs, worldviews, concept of beauty, modesty, time, work ethic etc.

Exercise 1. Select an ethnicity other than your own and try to answer the following questions:

- What is the target of my stereotype?
- What is the content of my stereotype?
- Why do I believe the stereotype is accurate?
- What is the source of my stereotype?
- How much actual contact do I have with the target of the stereotype?

Exercise 2. In groups, students write down traits of their own culture and they compare them with the culture of their choice. They may come up with the ideas such as: in our culture people kiss three times when they greet each other and in the US they don't because it is considered rude. In Serbian culture people roast a pig or a lamb on a stick, but people in the US find this too cruel. In Serbia, the culture of drinking coffee any time of the day is very important while in England, the afternoon tea is the most quintessential of all English customs and they offer it to everyone. Conversely, people in Serbia only drink tea when they are sick and it is not something that you would offer to a guest.

Exercise 3. In groups, students discuss the following question: "Which aspects of my own culture may seem strange to a foreigner?" Next, students listen to descriptions of their own culture by people who come from the English speaking countries on YouTube. This exercise is very useful because it gives students a completely different outlook of their own culture. What has always been obvious and well known about native culture is perceived differently after this exercise. As a follow-up activity, students can design a webpage or a brochure for tourists traveling to their country.

In this phase students must take a proactive stance and develop sensitivity to the role culture plays in everyday life. It is essential, therefore, that students not only learn about other cultures but, what is even more important, understand their own culture, as well. This will help them realize how it affects their ability to look at, understand and appreciate other people for what they are, regardless of their cultural and ethnic background. This kind of self-knowledge will probably enhance their ability to communicate with people from other cultures and increase their intercultural competence. More importantly, students will realize that when intercultural misunderstandings occur during the communication process, they are the result of students' own interpretations of their interlocutor's behaviors not his or her behaviors *per se* (Jandt 2018: 13-15).

Additionally, in this phase students are acquainted with basic intercultural concepts, which help them to develop and enrich their vocabulary, communication and writing skills, respectively.

Phase 2

The aim of Phase 2 (7 lessons) is to widen students' perspectives by teaching them about basic traits of cultures in the English-speaking world and compare them to their own. Since it is assumed that students have obtained some basic knowledge of their culture, it should be easy for them to view another

culture without prejudice and stereotypes. As a point of note, it is virtually impossible to learn every single trait of a culture in which English is the first language, but some general guidelines are always useful. The proposed activities in Phase 2 could be the following:

Exercise 1. Students are asked to do an intercultural project. They have to choose a movie or TV series, and analyze it from the intercultural standpoint. They should single out similarities and differences between their own culture and the culture depicted in the movie or TV series. A good way to practise this in class is to watch clips from the movie “Lost in Translation” (Universal Pictures, 2003, starring Bill Murray and Scarlet Johansson, directed by Sophia Coppola) or “My Big Fat Greek Wedding” (IFC Films, 2002, starring Nia Vardalos and John Corbett, directed by Joel Zwick). They are asked to write down noticeable differences between American and Japanese culture and discuss them in class. Then, they apply this to Serbian culture and cultures in which English is the first language.

Exercise 2. Student(s) who have lived in an English speaking country (not mandatory) are invited to come forward and share their experience. If none have, students do simulations and role-plays, which will activate their background knowledge about English speaking countries and cultures: learners act the role of visitors to their own country and meet with other students acting both as themselves and as stereotypical representatives of their culture that the visitors are expecting. They should ask the “foreigner” what they find amusing, annoying, strange, different or shocking about that culture. This kind of experiential learning is powerful in developing self-awareness and perceptions of English speaking countries and cultures. During this exercise, the teacher can also encourage students to pay more attention to various nuances of cultural behavior. This will better prepare them to communicate, tolerate the differences and handle everyday situations they are likely to encounter in a foreign country.

In this phase, students focus on further improving communication skills and enriching vocabulary even further. In this phase of the course, apart from communication skills, the focus is also on improving writing skills.

Phase 3

Phase 3 (9 lessons in total) is a complex one because students learn what it means to be a good intercultural listener. Listening is generally defined as a communication technique that requires the listener to understand, interpret, and evaluate what he/she hears. Good listening skills depend on good comprehension and the response of the listener. In order to communicate effectively, people must learn to deal with different kinds of distractions during the communication process.

This is the phase in which students also learn about levels of listening, the HURIER (Hearing, Understanding, Remembering, Interpreting, Evaluating, Responding) model and barriers to effective listening. Some of the exercises in this phase are:

Exercise 1. The teacher postulates the following questions about cultural perspectives on listening:

- Describe the listening process in Serbian culture.
- Is listening important in Serbian culture?
- Are there any differences in listening between Serbian and American or British culture?

Exercise 2. This exercise aims to show students the importance of effective intercultural listening and how intercultural noise can impede intercultural communication. With a partner, in class (with a lot of noise and distractions made by the teacher such as playing loud music, tapping on the desk with a gavel, honking a horn) a student begins talking (on a topic of their choice), and practices active and effective listening techniques for about 15 minutes. After 15 minutes, they list all difficulties they have experienced and discuss them in class with the teacher. This is a great exercise that clearly shows what damages noise can cause not only in every day communication but also in intercultural encounters. Interestingly, in 99% of cases, the message sent is not the same as the message received.

During Phase 3, students also learn about the importance of nonverbal communication. The alliance between culture and nonverbal behavior helps students to improve the manner in which they engage in intercultural interactions. In this phase, students realize that by understanding cultural differences in nonverbal behavior, they will not only be able to understand some of the messages generated during the interaction, but they will also be able to gather clues about underlying attitudes, beliefs, values and worldviews. Students are also introduced to five important verbal cues: kinesics (body movement), chronemics (perception of time), proxemics (space distance), haptics (touch) and oculosics (eye contact) and their relevance in intercultural communication. The following exercise is a good start:

Exercise 1. The teacher shows pictures of various facial expressions and body language in different cultures (including the ones used in English speaking countries). Students work in groups and try to decide what the facial expressions or hand gestures mean in each culture including their own culture. This is an amusing exercise because what one gesture means in one culture means something completely opposite in another.

In this phase students practise both their listening, and verbal and non-verbal skills.

Phase 4

The last phase is phase 4 (7 lessons) in which the teacher shows students how to overcome intercultural communication barriers and what makes a good intercultural communicator. In this stage of the course students are acquainted with cultural dos and don'ts in the English speaking countries and they also reflect on the whole course. Some useful exercises in this phase are:

Exercise 1. In groups, students discuss what intercultural ethics (set of principles of conduct for those involved in intercultural communication) is and how it is utilized in intercultural encounters.

Exercise 2. This exercise is meant for the class discussion: "Given the fact that individual differences exist, can we ever truly empathize with a person coming from a different culture?" Students state their reasons for saying yes and/or no.

Exercise 3. Students are organized in groups to read and discuss intercultural incidents. This should take approximately 10 to 15 minutes after which students demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the basic features of intercultural communication with the whole class. The following two intercultural awareness practice activities taken from Hofstede et al. (2002: 237) can be a good start:

* Cultural incident 1. A meeting in the street

You are walking along the street in a new town. The street is quiet. Somebody crosses the street and walks towards you. What is your response?

1. This person means to rob you. (Answer: People from a masculine cultural dimension⁴ might feel this way. In the masculine cultural dimension, strangers do not trust each other. If the culture is also strongly one of avoiding uncertainty, this would add to the distrust)

2. This person means to ask for directions. (Answer: In feminine cultural dimension, people tend to trust strangers)

3. This person wants to have a chat. (Answer: This is an uncertainty tolerant cultural dimension and it might also be a characteristic of collectivist one where it takes time to socialize)

4. This person is going to tell you that you are not allowed to be here. (Answer: This is uncertainty avoidance cultural dimension particularly if the power distance is also large)

5. This person means to sell you something.^[1] (Answer: This might occur in many countries, but it is more likely to happen in a collectivist cultural dimension where personal contact is more included than in an individual one)

* Cultural Incident 2. The Assessment of His Efforts⁸

Stefan was a Serbian graduate student of a business administration course at an American university. Having won a scholarship to attend the university he was confident of his ability to do well and he committed himself enthusiastically to his studies and felt he had few difficulties with the material presented. However, when he received the first assessment of his papers and contributions to tutorials, he was distraught to find they were not very favorable. He was told that although his ideas were "interesting" he did not keep to the topic, brought in too many irrelevancies and did not present his arguments in a logical manner. Stefan was puzzled by this as his work seemed logical and relevant to him, so he sought advice from Tony, one of his American classmates. Tony showed him some of his papers that had been given good grades, but this only increased Stefan's suspicion and confusion, because Tony's work seemed to Stefan as superficial and dull.

8 This example has been adapted from Cushner and Brislin (1996: 198). It has been slightly modified so as to explain the difference between Serbian and American perceptions of education.

Question: How would you explain to Stefan's professors the origins of his confusion as to what is expected of him?

- Serbian and American modes of thinking and communicating are very different.
- Stefan probably did not have the intellectual capacity to tackle the postgraduate course.
- Stefan's Serbian education did not prepare him for the more rigorous American educational system.
- Stefan was probably going through a confusing settling-in period and with time would produce more organized work.
- Final question: How did you arrive at your answer?

Exercise 1. Observation and Reflection

The purpose of this exercise is to observe and reflect. As we all know, in our daily lives we may make assumptions about people based on our "knowledge" of the groups that we associate them with. Identifying and rejecting these generalizations will enable students to be more open to discovering new possibilities and new ways of viewing the world.

Preparation - Collect a set of images, which rely on stereotypes. These may be from cartoons, magazines, videos, picture books, artworks, textbooks or online sources. Divide the class into small groups and distribute an image to each group. By now students are already familiar with the concept of stereotype, bigotry and cultural bias.

Instructions - One student is given the role of a leader and ensures that everyone has a chance to contribute. Students examine the images closely and describe what they see, sharing their observations in small groups. Students discuss the messages behind the images and their assumptions. The class comes back together to present their responses and discuss the role of assumptions and stereotypes. Together they explore how their assumptions exaggerate, distort or modify the way they interact with the world around them and the people they encounter.

In lively discussions, students should have opportunities to make a personal response to visuals, stories, case studies and other materials because language learning that promotes the intercultural dimension encourages sharing of knowledge and discussion of different values, beliefs and worldviews. This means that students learn from each other as much as from the teacher, textbook or any additional material. Moreover, students challenge each other and simultaneously examine their own cultural biases (if any) as they learn about other cultures.

In this final phase, students work on their communication and persuasive skills during class discussions and debates. As mentioned earlier, a portion of the last lesson is always dedicated for reflections on the course and knowledge that has been gained.

2.1 Individual Lesson Plan: Ready-Made Lessons for Educators

If the four phases seem too complicated to include in the curriculum for any reason, here is a proposed lesson plan for 3 consecutive periods (90 minutes each) that can be dedicated to intercultural communication. Following is an example of a lesson plan⁹ format for the topic of intercultural communication:

Time Limitation: 3 consecutive periods

Student Level: First year students

Class Size: 30+ students

Teaching Method(s): Communicative, whole language and task-based learning

The First Period: Classroom Activities

Introduce the topic of intercultural communication by reading a quote by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.: “People fail to get along because they fear each other; they fear each other because they don’t know each other; they don’t know each other because they have not communicated with each other.” Students state their opinions about the quote (Learning through discussion).

Define the main concepts: culture, communication and intercultural communication and how culture and intercultural communication reciprocate each other.

The Second Period: Classroom Activities

Define pop(ular) culture. Cultural industry: Disney, Marvel and Hollywood.

Students brainstorm on prime questions, e.g. How does pop(ular) culture influence intercultural communication? How do Disney and Marvel influence and shape people’s identities? The impact of Hollywood on pop(ular) culture.

Commenting on the concepts/ideas one agrees or disagrees with about intercultural communication, and stating reasons for their opinion. (Oral presentation)

The Third Period: Classroom Activities

Students are given a text to read with the reference of intercultural activities listed at the back of the text, there are five different tasks to be completed. Students can choose which task to work on either by joining a group or working independently. Upon completion, students present the task.

Task 1 (team building)

Look at the two drawings, concerning the customs of hand-shaking and social distance (nonverbal communication: haptics and proxemics). Discuss in a group and report the cultural similarities and differences that may exist or make a verbal debate against each other.

⁹ This lesson plan has been adapted from Bakić-Mirić. 2019. *Intercultural Communicative Competence and English Language Teaching at Post-Secondary Level: A Practical Approach*. Belgrade/Kosovska Mitrovica: The University of Priština’s Faculty of Philosophy in Kosovska Mitrovica, p. 72. This is a lesson plan created by the author.

Task 2 (team building or individual work)

Find a song that deals with cultural differences or a folk song from a particular culture

(either a Serbian or an English one) and enjoy listening and singing it with necessary explanation of its lyrics.

Task 3 (team building)

Write a sketch based on a culture shock anecdote and perform it.

Task 4 (team building)

Discuss, in a small group, a problem or an embarrassing situation one may confront due to cultural conflicts, and come up with a solution by drawing a flowchart to show its procedure.

Task 5 (team building or individual work)

Search for some unique words, or body language developed in a culture due to its particular natural environment, e.g., geographic location, climate, etc.

As a rule of thumb, the framework for the implementation of the intercultural approach in English language teaching as shown in this paper is by no means definitive but it should prove effective in any classroom.¹⁰

3. TEACHING MATERIALS – STANDARD OR ONLINE?

In most cases, teachers use the proposed course book(s) and/or material(s). They can use the topic and/or content in the classroom textbook to encourage students to ask further questions and make cultural comparisons. The key is to get the students to view the familiar topic from the intercultural standpoint¹¹. For instance, the topic of sports can be examined from many cultural perspectives including gender (is it played by men, women or both), age (is it for the young or the elderly), medicine (is it bound by beliefs), religion (are there religious objections to playing sport), racism (are there incidents of racist chants or insults), etc. (Byram 1997: 89). Topics such as wining and dining, clubbing, national costumes, music and leisure can all have a similar approach as they represent visible aspects of culture.

To do this the teacher should design a series of activities to enable students to discuss, draw conclusions and challenge stereotypical generalizations about cultures in which the English language is spoken based on what they have

¹⁰ For instance, by introducing this concept at medical schools, students will get acquainted with different cultural attitudes and beliefs toward illnesses, kinds of treatment and the role of a doctor, a pharmacist or nurse in building a successful rapport with the patient, which vary greatly across cultures. For example, what is considered an illness in one culture may not be seen as such in another; some cultures favor treatment of the whole person, while others focus on dealing with specific symptoms; in some cultures, for instance, healthcare providers will put more emphasis on the patient as a person, while in others the focus is on analysis of the illness (Bakić-Mirić 2018: 98). Acting out intercultural incidents at a doctor's office or OTC at a drugstore in class is a good way to practice and hone intercultural competence skills of the future healthcare providers.

¹¹ The usual textbook topics can be used only in case a teacher does not want to include relevant literature on intercultural communication in the curriculum.

heard or read (Byram 1997: 90). For instance, statements such as the American school system is a failure; British food is terrible; Canadians put maple syrup on everything; Australians are uncouth because their ancestors were British convicts are some of the ways for teachers to encourage learners to comment on such statements and challenge them.

Simultaneously, the teacher can, of course, provide some factual information related to life-style in a particular culture in the English speaking countries (particularly visible and non-visible aspects of a culture) and finally, as the most important thing, to encourage comparative analysis of students' own culture (Byram, 1997: 10-13) and cultures in which the English language is the first language.

Materials that can be used are authentic texts and video materials, i.e. newspaper and magazine articles as texts; photographs, diagrams, pictures and cartoons as visuals (Richards & Rogers 2014: 35).

Based on the first author's substantial teaching experience abroad, textbooks can be useful because they are written in comprehensible English and they provide factual information about the most common topics. Nevertheless, their major drawback is a lack of focus on cultural traits that are the most important in intercultural encounters. Therefore, they should only play a supporting role in the intercultural approach in ELT while a wide range of exercises and activities (as shown in this paper) can be taken from elsewhere.

Additional authentic sources for practice include, but are not limited to Moodle forums, video podcasts and apps (Byram 1997: 103):

1. *Moodle Forums* are an online message board where teachers and students can post messages to each other while easily keeping track of individual conversations. They allow teachers and students to communicate with each other at any time from anywhere provided there is an Internet or wireless Internet connection. For example, both teacher and students can add new intercultural topics for discussion every week, e.g. Why is being a competent intercultural communicator important today? Why is intercultural communication important in every sphere of life and in every profession? List the core competencies in intercultural communication, etc.

2. *Video Podcasts* are short clips of video, usually part of a longer recording that can bring teaching to the next level. For example, when traveling abroad the student can make video podcasts, which they can send to the teacher, who then plays them in class. Students then comment and/or share their own experience of the country. Also, they can make interesting video podcasts about different intercultural topics even if they do not travel abroad.

3. *Apps* have an endless potential for students, with downloadable books, interesting clips and life stories that are related to intercultural communication.

Finally, each of the approaches to the study materials should always be thought provoking and mind stimulating so as to provoke interesting questions, discussions and opposing views.

4. ASSESSMENT

Basically, by the end of the English language course at post-secondary level, the students should be able to understand the following (Ting-Toomey and Chung 2018: 65):

- a) The concept of communication, culture and intercultural communication
- b) How culture shapes values, beliefs and worldviews
- c) The concept of intercultural communication and its importance in every segment of life and every profession
- d) Barriers to intercultural communication
- e) Effective listening across cultures
- f) Intercultural nonverbal communication
- g) The ten commandments of effective intercultural communication

Having this in mind, the assessment of students' intercultural competence is not an easy task because a) it is not easy to assess whether students have changed their attitude(s) and have become more tolerant of cultural differences, b) if they have managed to step outside the box, and c) if they have started to act on the basis of this newly acquired intercultural knowledge (Byram 1997:105). Nevertheless, Byram (1997: 107-109) suggests the following three-part assessment, which should only be applied if assessment is not in the form of standardized tests and examinations:

1. The Passport section provides an overview of the student's proficiency in the English language through intercultural content. - Not recommended by the authors' as ^{SEP}it is too traditional and does not show students' understanding of intercultural communication because they mostly focus on the language and not the intercultural content.
2. The Language Biography facilitates involvement in planning, reflecting upon and assessing students' learning progress as it encourages the student to include information on cultural experiences gained in and outside formal educational contexts. -Recommended by the authors because students focus on the intercultural content.
3. Blog and blog reflections – A blog (short for weblog) is by far the most powerful classroom tool for teaching competence in intercultural communication and one of the most interesting for students. Every week one student (blogger) is assigned to create his/her own blog. The rest of the students write their blog reflections commenting on the blogger's experience in an English speaking country (real or virtual experience) and assessing his/her intercultural behavior. For instance, it could be a blog entitled: "A record of my intercultural experience in ... (English speaking country)" particularly paying attention to the following:
* Feelings – Ways in which curiosity and interest were aroused (examples from ordinary daily life, especially when they made me reconsider my own culture);
Periods when I felt uncomfortable/homesick (what made me feel like this with particular examples if possible);
Periods when I felt at home and comfortable (again, what made me feel like this and particular examples if possible).

* Knowledge – The most important things I learnt about family life and/or life at college; The most important things I have learnt about the country, the nation, the state where I stayed - about the present and its past; What I have learnt about the customs and conventions of talking with people (topics which interest them, topics to avoid, how to greet people, say goodbye and leave).

* Actions – Incidents or problems which I resolved by explaining my culture to people, helping them see the points of view of my culture and how misunderstandings can happen, examples of times when I had to ask questions and work out my own answers (from ‘asking the way’ to understanding cultural customs, beliefs, values and worldviews). – This third type of assessment is recommended by the authors because it shows students creativity and intercultural knowledge.

Apart from the assessment tasks proposed by Byram (1997), the authors will introduce another one in this paper, which has also proven efficient for assessment:

* Other-Culture Interaction Essay¹². This assignment requires students to have an intercultural interaction with someone from an English speaking country, read about that culture in depth, reflect upon it and write about it.

Once they have identified the “friend” (real or imaginary if students do not know anyone and/or haven’t had contact with anyone from a different culture) they will be interacting with for the purpose of this assignment, they should formulate some questions they want to ask him or her about their culture. Students should spend 3-4 “contact hours” with the person from this culture, talk to them and interview them about their culture and observe their interactions. The purpose of this assignment is to help students learn about a culture that is different from theirs through interactions with the members of that cultural group.

Students should then write a 2-3 page reflective essay about the intercultural experience in which they have participated. The essay should include:

- A detailed description of the experience.
- A discussion of the history of the cultural group student interacted with, as well as the values and assumptions operating in the other cultural system.
- A discussion of how the other culture differs from their own and implications for future interactions, attention to the context in which the interactions occurred and how that affected the communication, as well as the power positions of their own race/ethnicity/group compared with that of the culture they interacted with.
- Application of concepts and skills learned thus far in the course to their understanding of the experience.

All of the proposed assessments are a good way to encourage students’ awareness of their own abilities in intercultural competence, and to help them

¹² This assessment has been adapted from <https://collepals.com/2020/02/11/other-culture-i-nteraction-paper/>

realize that these abilities are acquired in many different circumstances and interactions inside and outside the classroom.

5. CONCLUSION

Today, foreign language teaching, perhaps more than any other discipline, is under constant pressure to expand the curriculum, to change the teaching methodology and to produce new teaching materials in keeping with the constantly changing emphasis on what students are expected to learn. Long gone are the days of focusing on the linguistic skills alone, and simply teaching reading, writing, listening and speaking skills.

The purpose of introducing the intercultural approach in English language teaching is to help students to understand the differences that can occur in communication between people who come from different cultures (in our case English speaking ones), develop skills, attitudes and awareness of different values, beliefs and worldviews just as much as it is to expand the knowledge of a particular culture or country and improve the language skills.

Nonetheless, one has to bear in mind that the acquisition of intercultural competence is never complete and perfect. A successful intercultural communicator does not require the perfect knowledge of the English language and/or cultural competence. There is no perfect model to imitate and there is no precise definition of a perfect intercultural interlocutor. Simply put, to be a good intercultural interlocutor means that one should not take one's own values, beliefs, worldviews and behaviors for granted, and assume that they are the only possible and naturally correct ones. It also means being able to see how they might look from the perspective of someone who is coming from a different cultural space by showing the ability to set aside unconscious bias and embrace cultural diversity.

In conclusion, with the ever-increasing diversity of the population around the globe and strong evidence of racial, national and ethnic disparities in all spheres of life, it is critically important that students be specifically educated to address culture-related issues. After all, training students (future professionals) in intercultural communication is both an important agenda and a challenge in the 21st century not only for English language teachers, but for other educators, as well.

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ПРИМЕНА ИНТЕРКУЛТУРАЛНЕ МЕТОДЕ У УЧЕЊУ ЕНГЛЕСКОГ ЈЕЗИКА НА ТЕРЦИЈАЛНОМ НИВОУ

Резиме

Овај рад се бави интеркултуралним приступом учењу енглеског језика на терцијалном нивоу који има за циљ да припреми студенте за интеракцију са људима другачијих култура, омогући им да разумеју људе који долазе из другачијих култура и помогне им да увиде да је таква интеракција едукативно искуство. Такође, аутентичним примерима из учионице, рад би требало да охрабри професоре да имплементирају овај концепт у наставу енглеског језика, покаже бенефите коју интеркултурална метода има у настави енглеског језика као и поуздане ресурсе за професоре енглеског језика који желе да развију интеркултуралну компетенцију код својих студената.

Кључне речи: ЕЛТ, културе, интеркултурална перспектива, студенти, наставник

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