

USING INTERCULTURAL APPROACH IN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Every language is a reflection of a certain culture. Many teachers agree that the process of teaching and learning a foreign language becomes much more interesting when cultural elements are incorporated. Currently, to be an effective language user it is not enough to possess communicative competence but there is an urgent need for intercultural competence. When we speak about using intercultural approach we mean obtaining knowledge about cultures, contrasting cultures, culture exploration, finding one's own place between cultures. The interaction of language and culture is studied within the scope of such disciplines as sociolinguistics, ethnoinguistics, linguistic and cultural studies, cultural linguistics. Why is intercultural approach important? It is important because when we get to know more about other cultures, we begin to understand better our own culture.

The aim of the given research is to analyse the main characteristic features of intercultural approach in foreign language teaching and learning, to explain the concept of culture, to define the main aspects of the intercultural communicative competence and principles of intercultural teaching and learning.

The concept of culture is extensive. Zofia Chlopek differentiates between the so-called big-C culture and small-c culture. The big-C culture is rather easy to get acquainted with, as it covers knowledge about the fine arts such as literature, music, dance, painting, sculpture, theatre, and film. Small-c culture, on the other hand, comprises a wide variety of aspects, many of which are interconnected, including attitudes, assumptions, beliefs, perceptions, norms and values, social relationships, customs, celebrations, rituals, politeness conventions, patterns of interaction and discourse organization, the use of time

in communication, and the use of physical space and body language. Needless to say, language is also part of what we call culture, and it also reflects and interprets culture [1, p.11].

When talking about intercultural approach in the English classroom, the concept of intercultural citizenship in language education should be mentioned. In this connection all cultural diversities should be valued critically. In practice the intercultural citizenship can be fostered through communication via online platforms, critical examination of popular culture and media representations.

The intercultural communicative competence means:

1. to be interested in other cultures and be willing to explore them and engage with them;
2. knowledge about social practices and products from other cultures;
3. the ability to understand and interpret the texts and interactions;
4. the ability to respond and interact using this cultural knowledge;
5. critical cultural awareness that includes the ability to understand the reasons behind cultural similarities and differences.

The main levels of cultural awareness are: personal, community, global [2, p.4].

The main principles of intercultural language teaching and learning:

1. Active construction: the teacher helps the students to notice, explore and think about the cultural differences. It is important to know that cultures are relative and not absolute.
2. Making connections: a comparative approach is encouraged here. Students try to detect the new aspects and contrast them with what is already known.
3. Social interaction: social interaction deals with the concept that language is learnt with the purpose of communication.
4. Reflection: here we mean the opportunity to think about the differences of communicative experiences. Knowledge of cultural differences requires new choices in communicative behaviour.

5. Responsibility: students become aware of their responsibility regarding the effective using of all their languages and the impact of this on the process of communication [3, p.19].

When learning about culture aspects, it is important to pay attention to stereotypes. This can happen when we automatically apply information about the country to all people, who live in it. For example, “In country X all marriages are arranged by parents”. Stereotypical thinking can prevent us from exploring new culture and can be caused by limited information about a culture. The main solution here is to make a deep dive into a certain culture and get to know more about it.

To enhance students’ global cultural awareness teachers can organise different exercises. For instance, the teacher can show students the picture of an authentic item and ask them the following questions: What is its purpose? Who uses it? When do they use it? Etc. Also the teacher can show a complex photo from another culture and suggest students asking questions and thinking about possible answers. It is very useful for students to make ethnographic observations. It brings very interesting results and satisfaction when students do cultural research in the form of project work. It can be done in teams or individually and as final products students can make presentations, videos or draw posters.

Culture differs through ethnic and religious groups, generations, it can be shared as a result of migration, regional ties, via international and social media. The main task of teachers is to develop students’ cultural awareness and adaptive skills, help students to learn on their own and develop to become global citizens.

REFERENCES

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