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Level :First Year

Module :ICC

Course: One / Intercultural Communicative Competence

**Introduction**

Students of foreign language worldwide often wish to develop a whole understanding of the people and culture of the language being studied. However, this is not often available as educational curriculum rarely include cultural content that may allow key ideas about how to develop intercultural competence. During the last decades, Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) was reintroduced as a result of its impact on foreign language teaching (Lopez-Rocha & Arevalo-Guerrero,2014). An important question for language tutors is: Do they really prepare their students for this challenge?

An answer to such question requires many efforts of course designers and linguists to enable students develop the skills they need to communicate more efficiently and understand cultural tendencies. Creating appropriate conditions for language students to face intercultural challenge will be our aim in this course. Practical ideas to promote ICC in an integral way would certainly enhance students’ eagerness to develop communicative skills for better functionality and effectiveness in future job careers and social roles.

**Why ICC?**

Some researchers claim that culture is the marginalized sister of language (Hernnebry, 2014.135). This same idea is shared by students, who need to be enough aware about the country and people of that other foreign language. It has to be a teacher’s concern to foster students’ intercultural awareness rather than teach the foreign language simply for communication. A focus has to be done on the contexts in which that communication in going to take place so as to pave the way for meaningful interactions.

A clear distinction is necessary between Intercultural Competence and Intercultural Communicative Competence. Byram (1997) argues that the first refers to ‘‘ individuals’ ability to interact in their own language in their language with people from another country and culture,’’ while ICC means ‘‘ interacting with people from other country and culture using a foreign language’’. In fact, speaking in a foreign language open new horisons and facilitates interactions with people of different backgrounds.

**Language Classes and Cultural Incorporation**

Globalization and migration rose a need to integrate interculturality in educational curriculum. The Council of Europe (2001) set a document that highlights the importance of promoting intercultural communication and the understanding of cultural differences through authentic rather than superficial elements. The US Standards for Foreign Language Learning( ACTFL) define language goals in terms of communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities to obtain students with linguistic and intercultural competence.

Course designers, therefore, should develop curriculums with a process model of Intercultural Competence ( Deardorff, 2006)that emphasises in learners self-awareness, openness, and transformation (Furstenberg, 2010), and contributes for various models and approaches to the development of ICC. Besides, instructors have to take Byram’s model(1997; 2008) of ICC summerised in five points: knowledge, attitudes, education, skills to understand and learn.

The role of instructors in developing intercultural competence can be not only by exploring ready-made activities, but designing new ones that support the development of ICC skills’ objectives. Learner-centered approach encourages interactivity, active participation, and cooperation among peers in classroom context. Byram, Gribkova, and Starkey(2002) argue that foreign language teachers need to promote curiosity and independent exploration and inquiry in students to be active participants in activities which develops intercultural competence.

Intercultural competence cannot be acquired in a short period of time or in one module. It is a lifelong process that develops in learning. Adequate resources or materials are required to create conditions that help students develop critical communicative skills so as to learn about themselves and others. They will need to consider ‘‘other’s’’ culture, values, and behaviours to first, understand, and then explain, the sources of intercultural conflict that may rise. Finally, these interculturally competent students will know how to effectively deal with any misunderstanding.

**Challenges**

A set of challenges have to be faced among which the right balance between language and culture, the kind of useful activities, students’ own motivation and teachers’ preparedness for the promotion of ICC skills. In addition, assessment remains a major challenge as it is not easy to evaluate each student’s intercultural competence, because of their different perceptions. Each experience is an ultimate goal for every student. Additionally, some researchers suggest open assessment by using portfolios to record the process(Scarino) which later makes it easier to interprete meaning, critical reflection, self-evaluation, feedback, and awreness of regional differences and cultures.

**Conclusion**

The need for cultural awareness increases among learners and this must be the role of instructors to promote their intercultural and linguistic competence. Real conditions are to be created for students to promote ICC for easy intercultural interactions in diverse movements. Accurate skills and strategies for skills and strategies incorporation need awareness leading to ICC for global citizenship. Culture teaching approaches should shift from descriptive to interactionists, to enhance interactions and discussion guiding students to self-awareness, openness, and transformation. Developing ICC skills require students to be more aware about challenges of the process. In the end, developing intercultural awareness has to be combined with language learning to encourage students’ exploration of their own culture and of the target language.