

FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

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Abstract

We are living more and more each day in a global society, where speaking a global language, like English has become indispensable. When teaching a foreign language in a class, it is important to teach not only the language itself, but also the culture of the nation where this language comes from. According to Byram (1997), when persons from different languages and/or countries interact socially they bring to the situation their knowledge about their own country and that of the others'. Part of the success of such interaction will depend on the establishing and maintenance of human relationships, something which depends on attitudinal factors. At the same time, both aspects, knowledge and attitude, are influenced by the processes of intercultural communication, that is to say, the skills of interpretation and establishing relationships between aspects of the two cultures and the skills of discovery and interaction. Finally, all these factors should be integrated within a philosophy of political education and develop the learners' critical cultural awareness of all the cultures involved (1997: 32–33). This paper will identify and analyze these factors known as the five savors. It will also focus on what the intercultural speaker is and what do we understand by intercultural competence and the importance it has gained in the recent years. One of the main concerns of this paper will be the aim and goal of foreign language teaching, that is: to offer insights into the culture and civilisation of the countries where the language is spoken; to encourage positive attitudes to foreign language learning and to speakers of foreign languages and a sympathetic approach to other cultures and civilisations; and to develop pupils' understanding of themselves and their own culture. To conclude, we should not forget that foreign language teaching does not consist in the mere transmission of speaking skills but is part of the whole process of education of a person in the sense of the acquisition of values, attitudes and beliefs.

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