

DEVELOPING THE INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE STUDENTS

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Abstract: *This article outlines to improve the awareness of intercultural communicative competence in the students of English of intermediate level in institute or university, through TV series and movies based activities. It is also informed how to design an instructional unit based on a selection of activities as a learning tool in improving EFL young students' intercultural communicative competence, to analyze the effectiveness of using this didactic unit to improve different abilities students need in order to develop their intercultural communicative competence.*

Keywords: *Communicative competence, linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, strategic competence, discourse competence, intercultural aspect, Intercultural communicative competence*

РАЗВИТИЕ МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНОЙ КОММУНИКАТИВНОЙ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТИ У ИЗУЧАЮЩИХСЯ АНГЛИЙСКИМ ЯЗЫКОМ

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Аннотация: *В этой статье рассказывается о том, как улучшить понимание межкультурной коммуникативной компетенции у студентов, изучающих английский язык среднего уровня в институте или университете, с помощью телесериалов и фильмов. Также рассказывается, как разработать учебную единицу на основе выбора видов деятельности в качестве*

инструмента обучения в улучшении межкультурной коммуникативной компетенции молодых студентов английского языка как иностранного, чтобы проанализировать эффективность использования этой дидактической единицы для улучшения различных способностей, необходимых учащимся для развития их навыков. межкультурная коммуникативная компетентность.

Ключевые слова: коммуникативная компетенция, языковая компетенция, социолингвистическая компетенция, стратегическая компетенция, дискурсивная компетенция, межкультурный аспект, межкультурная коммуникативная компетенция

The author of this research has worked as an English Teacher at institutes and universities for many years teaching students. Therefore, he has seen the difficulties some learners have at developing their communicative skills effectively.

One of the reasons of these difficulties students usually have is that many teachers keep focusing mostly on grammar aspects in their lesson plans. Moreover, when teachers try to develop students' listening and reading skills, teachers use non-authentic materials most of the time. To support this, according to Brown reading and listening materials about culture are limited. Stryker and Leaver claim graded language textbooks contain "artificial language" which does not provide students with models of how people really communicate in the foreign language.[1]

Therefore, students are not exposed to real conversational situations that they are going to face when going to a foreign country or communicating with people from other cultures. Therefore, it was considered important in this article to do the research about including foreign TV programs and movies in activities in EFL classes as a source of authentic materials. In addition, it was intended to develop the awareness of the intercultural communicative competence in students using activities based on foreign TV programs and movies.

Communicative competence: The concept of communicative competence was developed by Hymes, who criticized the idea that many linguists had about how first language acquisition depends only on the grammatical competence. Hymes, argued

that in the process of first language acquisition, we should not only pay attention to the way we acquire grammatical competence but also to the way we acquire the ability to use the language appropriately in a given context. He also claims that the sociolinguistic competence is one of the most important aspects in the way people acquire language. This assertion was vital in order to develop the idea of the communicative language teaching. His concept of communicative competence was further developed by Canale and Swain. They proposed the following model of four competences:

- Linguistic competence: this is the knowledge of the language code; it is the way utterances are produced and interpreted according to grammar rules. It also includes sentence patterns, morphological inflections, phonological and lexical resources.
- Sociolinguistic competence: the pragmatic competence plays a vital role in this competence. It is the relation between the linguistic signals and the situational meaning. Social norms, status of the participants, rules or social conventions are included in this competence. For instance, knowing how to request information and accept or refuse assistance.
- Strategic competence: these are the strategies used when there are problems in the communication process. It is the way people manipulate verbal and nonverbal language in order to achieve their communication goals. Strategies to clarify meaning or enhance communication such as rephrasing, asking for clarification, using body language or changing tone of voice are used.
- Discourse competence: it is the knowledge of using strategies in the structure and interpretation of spoken or written texts. It is also the ability to combine and connect phrases and sentences in conversations. This competence requires alternating adequately the roles of sender and receiver. [3]

In addition, Celce–Murcia complemented these competences by changing the name of the sociolinguistic competence to socio-cultural competence. They claimed, “The socio-cultural competence refers to the speaker’s knowledge of how to express

appropriate messages within the social and cultural context of communication in which they are produced”. [4]

Finally, they added a new competence called the actional competence which is the knowledge the speakers have when performing and interpreting speech acts. Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor complemented the communicative competence by highlighting the importance of the intercultural aspect.

Culture is a topic known and heard by everybody but most people have the wrong concept and misunderstand its real meaning. When people think of the word culture, they tend to associate it with typical music of a country, reading books, behaving in a good and respectful way, etc. However, the meaning of culture is really different and complex from the meaning people usually have. Culture is a complex topic that has to do with the way the human being has evolved during decades and centuries. In addition, culture has to do with the way human beings communicate in a deep way. To support this, Fowler cited by Claire Kramersch in his book “Context and Culture in Language Teaching” points out that “the context of culture is the community’s store of established knowledge that consists of structures of expectations that allow people to make sense of the world around them”. [5]

According to Tannen cited by Claire Kramersch, people do not approach the world in a naïve, independent and objective way with no experience and background about the world. Instead, people approach the world with a vast prior experience and relating events and objects to each other according to this prior experience they have. [6] Then, according to Lakoff and Johnson, native speakers are not just individual voices; they speak using the established knowledge of their native community and society. This is the reason why native speakers find it easy to communicate to each other, because they can predict the way of speaking among them. However, this is also the reason why nonnative speakers find it difficult to understand native speakers when they are communicating because they do not share the native speaking community’s memory and knowledge. [7]

Intercultural competence: Bennett explains the stages people go through when developing the intercultural competence. First, Bennett starts describing the

monocultural phase where people show a strong adherence to a single culture bound view of reality. People just believe and act according to the culture where they belong to and they have a refusal toward any other culture in an unconscious way. Then, Bennett's explains that there are three stages in the monoculturalism: no experience, confronting differences and seeing commonalities. In the first stage of no experience, people have no experience with cultural differences. When they find people with cultural differences, they just categorize them as strange people that act in wrong ways; they build up defenses and judgments against these people that act differently according to other culture behaviors. As said by Bennett, in the second stage of confronting differences, people confront cultural differences and assume a defensive position toward it. People in this stage sort the other people as "them" and they use negative labels to dismiss other people that belong to other cultures. In the third stage of seeing commonalities people start learning to accept and care groups that they used to judge and stereotype before. People at this stage are concerned about stereotyping or do unfair actions toward people that belong to other cultures. After these first three stages, Bennett describes the Intercultural phase. Some of the stages that Bennett describes in this phase are the following:

- ❖ Intercultural understanding: People in this stage start seeing and recognizing that there are different points of view of reality. People also recognize that there are different cultures with different behaviors, beliefs, values and points of view and they start accepting them and learning about them.
- ❖ Intercultural Competence: in this stage, people develop competence in communicating across cultures. To develop this competence people have to learn to shift into different cultural contexts and behave according to the way people behave in that other culture. [8]

Intercultural communicative competence Bachman and Savignon defined the intercultural communicative competence "as the speaker's ability to interact effectively with people from other cultures that he/she recognizes as being different from his/her own. It is understood as the ability to cope with one's own cultural background in interaction with others". To complement this Byram, Gribkova, &

Starkey, claim that intercultural competence is defined as the “ability to ensure a shared understanding by people of different social identities, and ability to interact with people as complex human beings with multiple identities and their own individuality”. [9]

In order to communicate effectively using the target language in a foreign country, it is not only necessary to know the language, but also to know and develop abilities that help us to deal with other cultures. Some people study a foreign language for five years or more. However, when they go to a foreign country, they have communication problems in simple situations such as buying bread in a bakery, giving a present, etc. This is the reason why intercultural communicative skill has become an important aspect in communication.

However, some negative aspects and situations have played a negative role toward the teaching of intercultural competence. Omaggio gives the following three reasons:

- ✚ Teachers do not have enough time to teach intercultural competence because of the overcrowded curriculum they have in schools or universities.
- ✚ Many teachers feel they do not know enough about the foreign culture and they do not feel confident enough to teach this subject.
- ✚ Finally, teachers are confused about what topics or aspects they should cover due to the lack of knowledge. [10]

To conclude, developing intercultural competence in students has many advantages on their process of learning a foreign language. Students will develop the four skills while learning how to use the language in different cultures. They will develop abilities in order to think critically and to solve cultural problems where they can be involved. Moreover, students will enrich their points of view about other cultures and they will be able to see their own culture from a different perspective. Consequently, they will be open to change their minds about different stereotypes.

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