

From Communicative Competence to Intercultural Competence

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Abstract

The field of foreign language teaching and learning witnessed the spread of the concept of intercultural communicative competence (ICC). The latter helps them to interact with people from other cultures. In this article, We will discuss the different components that constitute the communicative competence, explain how culture influences communication and we will focus on the importance of the skills of (ICC) that will prepare learners to be intercultural speakers.

Keywords: culture, Communication, intercultural competence, language teaching and learning.

Résumé:

Le domaine de l'enseignement et de l'apprentissage des langues étrangères a assisté à la diffusion du concept de compétence en communication interculturelle (CCI). Cette dernière aide les apprenants à interagir avec les gens d'autres cultures. Dans cet article, nous allons discuter des différentes composantes qui constituent la compétence communicative, expliquer comment la culture influence sur la communication et nous allons nous concentrer sur les compétences de (CCI) qui peuvent préparer les apprenants à être locuteurs interculturels.

Mots-clés: compétence interculturelle, culture, communication, enseignement des langues et de l'apprentissage.

ملخص:

شهد مجال تعليم وتعلم اللغات الأجنبية إنتشار مفهوم الكفاءة التواصلية بين الثقافات (ICC). وهذا الأخير يساعدهم على التفاعل مع أشخاص من ثقافات أخرى. في هذه المقالة، سوف نناقش العناصر المختلفة التي تشكل الكفاءة التواصلية، ونشرح كيفية تأثير الثقافة على الإتصال وسوف نركز على أهمية مهارات (ICC) التي ستعد المتعلمين ليكونوا متحدثين و محاورين بين الثقافات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الاتصالات، تعليم وتعلم اللغات، الثقافة، الكفاءة بين الثقافات.

-1- Introduction

The first objective of learning a foreign language is the manipulation of the language under study, but mastering the linguistic competence is not sufficient for the learner of a foreign language, because it does not enable him to speak appropriately with people of other cultures. Learning a language, then it is to get in touch with a new culture. According to Byram and Morgan (1994), "cultural learning has to take place as an integral part of language learning and vice versa" (Hinkel, 1999, p. 7).

Cultural learning involves that the learner assimilates aspects of a different culture, language and

aspects influencing behavior. We cannot separate language from culture, The learning of culture must be integrated into the learning of the language, and go beyond the level of "civilization", "Landeskunde" to address the deeper and the very large part of the iceberg that is difficult to see and grasp (communication style, and elements such systems of values or beliefs, and worldview, If the language influences how we behave and perceive things, culture is also inherent in the language itself, its structure, its vocabulary, expressions, and can be

taught simultaneously with the language. For this reason, Kramersch observes that: "Culture in language learning is not an expendable fifth skill, tacked on, so to speak, to the teaching of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. It is always in the background, right from day one, ready to unsettle the good language learners when they expect it least, making evident the limitations of their hard-won communicative competence, challenging their ability to make sense of the world around them" (Kramersch, 1993, 1).

1. Communicative Competence

Hymes (1972), through defining communicative competence, he wanted to make significance for the social context as he wanted to point out the consideration for the "appropriateness" or the sociocultural worth of utterances in any given context. In (1980), Canale and Swain described the elements of communicative competence as consisting of linguistic competence, discourse competence, strategic competence and sociolinguistic competence. While Van Ek (1986) he constructed his new model by adding two more components to the above list which are the socio-cultural competence, or the ability to function in several cultures, and the social competence, which means familiarity with differences in social customs, in addition to building confidence, empathy, and motivation to communicate with others (Lázár, 2007).

Despite the simplicity of the model of Canale and Swain, this model has dominated the fields of second and foreign language acquisition and language testing for more than a decade. Also, researchers of communicative competence still use Canale and Swain's model and the main reason is the easiness application (hrcaak.srce.hr/file/42651.html). But, despite of that, we notice in the teaching of foreign languages the sociocultural component is always neglected.

We will see how all the following components of communicative competence have a cultural aspect as well as linguistics according to Byram (1997).

1.1 The linguistic competence

It is the ability to produce, interpret meaningful utterances and apply the rules of the language: (phonetic, phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic codes etc.). It is the conventional meaning which native speakers would normally attach to an utterance when used in isolation. The structure of a language often reflects the important themes of culture. Thus, many languages distinguish a formal form and an informal form of address (you and you in French, du and Sie in German Sie, you and Usted in Spanish etc), but the difference lies in the contextual configurations that encourage people to choose a form rather than another, and the transition from the formal to the informal form is of a great difference from a language to another.

1.2 The discourse competence

It is the ability to use appropriate strategies in the construction and interpretation of texts, or the ability to recognize different patterns of discourse, to connect sentences or utterances to an overall theme or topic and the ability to infer the meaning of large units of spoken written texts. In other words, it is the ability to understand and to produce certain types of speech.

1.3 The strategic competence

It is the ability to compensate for imperfect knowledge of linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse rules or limiting factors in their application such as fatigue, distraction, or inattention. In other words, it is to find out some strategies or finding ways of getting our meaning across. It concerns the ability to use verbal and non-verbal strategies to achieve and maintain contact with the interlocutor and manage the act of communication in agreement with the speaker's intention to communicate. An important aspect is neglected is the strategy of the verbal turn-taking and interruption are not taken into consideration. In some cultures, the interlocutor has to show his interest by intervening before the other has completed his

sentence (Latin cultures A and B). In other cultures, the interruption is seen as rude and unacceptable: it is expected that the person has completed his sentence before beginning to speak.

1.4 The sociolinguistic competence

It is the awareness of ways or the ability to use the appropriate language to a given context, taking into account the roles of the participants, the setting, and the purpose of the interaction includes knowledge of socio-cultural rules of use. It is concerned with the learner's ability to handle, for example, settings, topics and communicative functions in different sociolinguistic contexts. It is the ability to interpret and use different types of discourse according to the variables of the communication situation and rules that emerge. Sociolinguistic competence covers the relation between linguistic signals and their contextual or situational meaning.

1.5 The socio-cultural competence

It is the knowledge and "the appropriation" of social rules and norms of interaction between individuals and institutions, knowledge of cultural history and the relationship between social objects, in other words, it is about the knowledge of the interlocutor's culture for example, his perception of time, his value's scale. Moreover, differences result in serious communication problems. The values that we accept as being beautiful, good and right, and what does not. These values strongly influence the behavior because each culture finds solutions, and may be often different, the fundamental questions concerning the man, his relationship with others, with nature, with the supernatural. And automatically answers may vary in different cultures, but also according to the ethnicity, religious or social, because every language is situated in a socio-cultural context and implies the use of a particular reference frame which is partly different from that of the foreign language learner.

1.6 The social competence

It involves both the will and the skill to interact with others, involving motivation, attitudes, self-confidence, empathy and the ability to handle social situations. If the teaching of foreign languages favors the linguistic component, it often neglects the other elements including socio-cultural. However, these components are the pillars that can build up the learners' intercultural dimension towards a successful intercultural competence, in a multicultural world that demands an awareness of differences that may exist in most of the cases at the level of culture that becomes essential nowadays in a globalized world. (Byram, 1997).

2. The influence of culture on communication

Intercultural competence is a communicative competence using language as a tool for communicating. Indeed, the languages used in communication can be verbal or nonverbal. If the language is essential in our daily communication, it is claimed that the non-verbal predominates our communication. . Ting-Toomey (1999) confirms that : "To be intercultural communicators we need the knowledge of both verbal and nonverbal communication in order to communicate sensitively across cultural and ethnic boundaries" (Toomey, p. 113).

According to the American researcher Mehrabian (1971), the behavioral equation for verbal and nonverbal shows the results and effects of paralanguage on communication to a greater extent : Mehrabian evaluated our communication and gave the following results: 7% for words, 38% for paralanguage and 55% for non-verbal communication. This means that the way we behave in using gestures and facial expressions are all carriers of messages as language, if it does not more. Since there are differences in the languages, there are as much in non-verbal communication in different cultures: there also can change the code from one group to the other and give rise to misunderstandings and even conflicts (Sonnenborn, 2012).

By observing communication and interaction between people belonging to different cultural systems, in which implicit communication codes play a crucial role in human interaction, Hall (1959) was one of the first researchers to point out the difficulties encountered. He distinguishes three main components which are the key to understand and to decipher the behavior of an encounter or a foreigner. Hall considered "culture is communication and communication is culture" (Hal, 1959, p. 186). He described non-verbal communication as "the silent language" which is subconscious and controls everyone. He had placed great emphasis on time, space and context elements in intercultural communication. Hall argues that every culture is affected by the manner in which, time, space and context are handled.

2.1 Time

Time is a form of communication. It is perceived and organized differently from one culture to another. Hall said: "Time talks. It speaks more plainly than words. The message it conveys comes through loud and clear. Because it is manipulated less consciously, it is subject to less distortion than the spoken language. It can shout the truth where words lie" (Hall, 1959, p. 1).

According to hall, time is one important constituent of culture, and it is not a measure, but it is a significant means of communication. According to hall, the study of time is valuable in culture because it reveals what is hidden beneath the "lies" of spoken words. "Culture hides much more than it reveals, and strangely enough, what it hides, it hides most effectively from its own participants" (Hall, 1959, p. 53). In western societies, time is perceived valuable and the person who is late is considered disrespectful or lightly, while other cultures do not give it the same importance (e.g. Africa). An extremely interesting aspect highlighted by Hall is the distinction between monochronic cultures and polychronic cultures. The monochronic time is linear, while the polychronic time is characterized by the simultaneity of different activities. We can say that the northern countries of Europe are rather monochronic and southern countries are more polychronic. However, we are on a continuous line, on which we are located (Hall, 1959).

2.2 Space

According to Hall (space speaks). The notion of space refers to the attachment to the land, strongly influenced by culture. Space leads us to ask "to what extent this territory is considered personal or not personal?", and "To what extent do you agree that foreigners occupy these territories without permission?". This is the study of social distances or Proxemics, it was particularly studied by Hall. Hall showed that there was a surface around us, a "bubble", an emotionally strong area or of a single security. In fact, our way of occupying space in the presence of others is one of the identity markers. The territoriality of space or personal bubble in which we live is an important cultural element. The access in this personal bubble is prohibited unless for more intimate or so restricted in time. The distance or proximity to which one can comfortably talk with another person varies considerably from one culture to the other. For example, our spatial proximity is different in our culture. The size of this personal space varies across cultures. It is broader in Western countries than in Mediterranean countries and virtually nonexistent in Arab countries (Hall, 1959).

2.3 Context

Edward T. Hall distinguishes two major categories of culture, those of high-context and low-context. The communication context refers to the difference between high context cultures and low context cultures. This notion corresponds to the importance of context for understanding a word and to be able to translate it into another language because the meaning may vary according to context. Similarly, the significance of the call can vary depending on the context, at least in the high context cultures. This implies that in these cultures there is no

need to say anything because the context is meaningful. We can say nothing or use non-verbal code very refined or say something but, may mean something else. We then say that the message is implicit and very little of information in the message itself is explicitly stated. In countries with low-context communication can be more direct and pragmatic: clarity of message is a goal in itself. It is acceptable to say "no" even to a highly placed person if it is the appropriate response to a question or request (Hall, 1976).

3. Intercultural competence

In language education, Hofstede (1994, 5) rightly defines culture as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another”

(Lázár, 2007, p. 8).

Intercultural communication competence involves more than knowledge of the language as a linguistic code including grammar and vocabulary. It contains a number of "knowledge" or (savoirs), but especially the skills and (know-how) or (savoir-faire) that enable learners to enter into relations with others, to communicate and interact with them. Learners do not need a very high level of language to learn the (know-how) and knowledge, but the required is just the most basic. We do not learn intercultural, but we live it, because as soon as we speak another language, we enter another cultural model, and due to the confrontation that we live in this area, a third place will be created as Kramsch points out: "At the intersection of multiple native and target cultures, the major task of language learners is to define for themselves what this 'third place' that they have engaged in seeking will look like, whether they are conscious of it or not" (Kramsch, 1993, p. 257).

Kramsch (1993, 2000) and Byram (1997) have defended the idea that students must find their own voice as incipient bilinguals. In other words Kramsch preferred to call the process a ‘third place’, that is to say, the combination of L1 and L2 experiences and knowledge (Blake, 2013), but it is not identical. The idea that students must find their own voice as incipient bilinguals, becomes to link the linguistic competence with all the other components of a real communication competence.

Learners in this situation should understand how to accept and tolerate differences, they must first discern, and be able to do it without judgment. In order to communicate effectively with dissimilar others, every individual needs to learn the fundamental concepts and skills of the understanding of intercultural communication. But this can be realized when learners grasp sufficiently the understanding of the term culture which represents a product of our imagination.

In order to be an intercultural speaker, Byram (1997) teaches and suggests us a well-developed model of intercultural communicative competence that requires certain attitudes, knowledge and skills in addition to values that one holds because of one's belonging to a number of social groups, values which are part of one's belonging to a given society. The components of intercultural competence are as the following:

•Attitudes (savoir être)

They reside in curiosity and openness and the ability to get rid of negative stereotypes about other cultures and positive prejudices about their own culture.

•Knowledge (savoirs)

They represent the knowledge of social groups and their products and practices in his own country and the country of the interlocutor's country, and the general processes of societal and individual interactions.

•Skills of interpreting and relating (savoir comprendre)

They are the ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain and put it in relation with documents from its own culture.

•Skills of discovery and interaction (savoir apprendre/faire)

It is the ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate the knowledge, attitudes and skills under the real time constraints interaction and communication.

•Critical cultural awareness (savoir s'engager)

It is the ability to evaluate critically the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products of its own culture / country and those of other cultures / countries (Byram, 1997).

"Intercultural communicative competence' is " the complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself" (Fantini, 2007 as cited in Jackson, 2014, p. 308).

Byram (1997) planned to build-up the intercultural communicative competence which is based on the concept of the 'intercultural speaker'. Someone who has ability to interact with others, to accept the perspectives and perceptions of the world. Making in mind that for a long time, in FLT that the native speaker is always considered as an ideal, believing that when language learners use the standard language, they reach the mastery of grammar and idiom of the native speaker. Even though majority of learners fail in trying to perform that.

Conclusion

As we have described the communicative competence with its various components, one could say that a real intercultural communicative competence requires not only learning the language code, but also the knowledge and practice of other components including sociolinguistic and socio-cultural. Moreover, learning language and culture should go together at all levels and one does not happen without the other. Intercultural competence cannot be learned without intercultural understanding which is based on the knowledge of culture above all, from linguistic competence to the communicative competence till achieving the intercultural communicative competence if the goal is really intercultural competence.

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