

SOME ASPECTS OF INTERCULTURAL TRAINING OF BULGARIAN LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

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In our short paper Intercultural learning is seen as a process in which students become more aware of their own culture and learn how to appreciate other cultures around the world. The aim is to increase international and cross-cultural understanding and tolerance. Intercultural learning is an integral part of English teaching because it involves knowledge of the target language and the culture that has shaped it. Competence in the foreign culture guarantees successful and correct communication.

I. Why is it necessary to teach culture?

"... the state of the world...as such that societies and individuals have no alternative but proximity, interaction and relationship."

Byram, M. (1997) Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence, Multilingual Matters Ltd

II. What is Intercultural Awareness?

"...the ability to understand cultural relativity following reading, writing, listening and speaking."

Kramsch, C. (1993) Context and Culture in Language Teaching, Oxford: OUP

III. How can we define Intercultural Competence?

IC comprises a set of practices requiring knowledge, skills and attitudes. Chris Rose lists them as the following:

- observing, identifying and recognizing
- comparing and contrasting
- negotiating meaning
- dealing with or tolerating ambiguity
- effectively interpreting messages
- limiting the possibility of misinterpretation
- defending one`s own point of view while acknowledging the legitimacy of the others
- accepting difference.

Rose, C. (2005) Intercultural Awareness -1 and 2, British Council, Italy

IV. Perspectives of Intercultural training.

Students need to:

1. Have a good understanding of their own culture.
2. Know how their own culture is seen from outside.
3. Understand the target culture from its own perspective.
4. Be aware of how the target culture is seen.

Rose, C. (2005) Intercultural Awareness -1 and 2, British Council, Italy

V. Comprehensibility ranking of texts:

“Top-down” factors:

- topic familiarity, including background knowledge
- context familiarity
- cognitive complexity, e.g. density of information
- visual support, e.g., pictures, maps, diagrams
- length
- layout and signposting
- organisation of the text
- internal cohesion, e.g., linking of sentences.

“Bottom-up” factors:

- sentence length and complexity
- grammatical familiarity
- lexical familiarity and idiomaticity
- lexical density.

Thornbury, S. (2005) Beyond the Sentence-Introducing Discourse Analysis,
London: Macmillan.

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