Understanding intercultural communicative competence (ICC)

Training Unit for Language Teachers

Videos on youtube :
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-6GLcF5oiyU 23 minutes Rick Kern
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NXhfi16CGOA 57 minutes M. Byram

Quotations - Teacher's note:

Target groups: pre- service and in-service language teachers
Objectives: Make people reflect on the cultural dimension in language learning/teaching and more precisely on the Intercultural Communicative Competence : what it means and what it entails for practical activities.
Skills: Discussing, organising tasks in groups, speaking, writing (paper and/or digital).
Procedures: group work, whole class, individual work
Time: 1 hour (average) as it could be less or more

Instructions:
A/ Each group picks up a quotation in an envelope and have some time to discuss.
B/Among the group, one has to take a few notes, and someone else will report to class.
C/ After each group has presented comments on the given quotation with feedback from the teacher in charge of training, each trainee will write a short commentary with prompt sentences such as "In this session, I have learnt … I have liked, I would like to know more about … it gave me ideas for my teaching practice such as …) in 50-100 words.

Quotations

Byram (1997: 3): *FLT should not and does not need to claim sole responsibility for the teaching and assessment of ICC (….) FLT is therefore concerned with communication but this has to be understood as more than the exchange of information and sending of messages, which has dominated 'communicative language teaching' in recent years. (…)But successful 'communication' is not judged solely in terms of efficiency of information exchange. It is focused on establishing and maintaining relationships.*

Christensen (1993)cited by Byram (1997: 18): *the quest for culture as essence and object has to be abandoned in favour of method, i.e. a process of investigation where every single social encounter potentially involves different values, opinions and world-views.*

Kasper, Omori (in Hornberger, Lee Mackay 2010: 455): *in many ways, the relationship between language and culture plays a key role in education. Classrooms across the world are increasingly populated by students and teachers of diverse language and cultural backgrounds and can therefore be understood as contexts for intercultural communication par excellence.*

Kasper, Omori (in Hornberger, Lee Mackay 2010: 455-456): *Fundamentally, language and culture play two complementary roles in educational processes. As all human activities are linguistically and culturally mediated, language and culture enable and organize teaching and learning. 'Classroom cultures' are constructed by the students and teachers working together, 'school cultures' are the practices, big and small, more or less functional, through which school life in conducted. Both are shaped, among other factors, by educational policies, curricular priorities and the material conditions of the school. Both are sustained through language and discourse, talk and text, and through hybrid, multimedia forms of communication. But just as language and culture furnish the means for delivering education, they also serve as its object. The role of language and culture as educational goals is most apparent in language teaching, where language defines the subject matters. How culture figures in language teaching varies greatly in educational theory and practice, ranging from approaches that treat culture as inseparable from language to those for which culture is a nice but dispensable icing on the cake.*

Kern, Liddicoat (2011: 19): *The knowledge of multiple languages and multiple cultures has been seen as an **intra**personal phenomenon that resides within the mind of the speaker. By contrast, the collocation "speaker/actor" demands a new perspective that transforms multilingualism and multiculturalism into **inter**personal phenomena. The speaker is no longer someone who speaks, but someone who acts – that is, someone who acts through speaking and thus becomes a social actor. The juxtaposition speaker/actor highlights the various positions assumed by the speaker, who, as an actor, combines of learning, speaking and action. For example, while learning multiple languages at once within and outside a classroom, s/he is likely to experience both dominant and dominated, native and non-native interactive positions at different moments in his or her life. Multiple and multicultural communicative competence constitutes, and is constituted by, interpersonal exchanges in which individuals negotiate their identities and their linguistic and cultural practices in the context of social interaction.*

Kern, Liddicoat (2011: 21): *The notion of speaker/actor reframes the individual in such a way that it takes into account his/her capacities, voices, identities, affiliations and roles in social action. This individual is considered from the point of view of what s/he is (multilingual speaker/actor) rather than what s/he isn't (for example, a native speaker). The conception of multilingual speaker/actor nullifies the native speaker/non-native speaker dichotomy. The "native speaker" who has always been the model against which learners have been measured, is a monolingual and monocultural speaker/actor: s/he only communicates in his or her own social context, and his or her identity and affiliations are created, understood and communicated in this context alone. On the other hand, the multilingual and multicultural speaker/actor is an intercultural individual: s/he experiences his or her daily life in two or more languages, and each language might be used in different domains. Not only must s/he speak these different languages and live these different cultures, but s/he must articulate them through different personae and affiliations, and s/he must integrate them into his own identity. The knowledge and competencies of an intercultural speaker/actor are thus different than those of a native speaker.*

Kern, Liddicoat (2011: 21): *Language learning, far from being the simple acquisition of a linguistic code, thus becomes a search for new possibilities of expression to create a personal style in each language. The learner-turned-speaker/actor draws on his or her linguistic repertory to communicate meanings relevant to all situations in which s/he lives. The goal of multilingual and multicultural language instruction is thus to transform and widen the collection of linguistic and cultural practices that each individual possesses and that s/he can exploit as a social speaker/actor.*

Kern, Liddicoat (2011: 22): *Because a community can admit or exclude non-members, the act of joining a community throws into relief both the uncertain possibility of entry and an individual's*

ability to integrate into it. This entails not only speaking or interacting in the dominant language and culture, but also, capitalizing on the diversity of languages and cultures present in a society or accessible on the Internet, and sometimes creating a community outside of traditional social structures. Electronic connectivity, in particular, which facilitates not only one-to-one and one-to-many communication, but also many-to-many communication, enables the creation of virtual communities that transcend borders and offer new possibilities of multilingual and multicultural affiliations.

Kern, Liddicoat (2011: 22): *.. language learning is not necessarily an intercultural phenomenon; intercultural instruction must go beyond teaching the linguistic code itself and provide more than factual information that is designed to represent the culture as a monolithic entity.*
While in traditional SLA the learner is held responsible for the acquisition of linguistic competence, which can be evaluated according to a standardized, objective and impersonal process, the transformation of the learner into a speaker/actor makes the relationship between the individual and language more reflexive: the speaker/actor acts on language, and language acts on the speaker/actor.

Kramsch (2009: 14): *In language learning, desire is first of all escape – the urge to escape from a state of tedious conformity with one's present environment to a state of plenitude and enhanced power. Many adolescents find in a foreign language a new mode of expression that enables them to escape from the confines of their own grammar and culture.*

Kramsch (2009: 108-109): *Language teachers themselves are multilingual subjects, with memories, passions, interests, and ways of making sense of their own and their students' lives. We have our own reasons for having desired the language strongly enough to go on teaching it for many years.(…) What do we like/hate in the language we teach? What did we project into it, what were we trying to escape when we first learned it? Awareness of the subjective aspects of our trade can make us better able to help adolescents deal with the conflicts that come from learning to speak in a language that is different from that of their family, their friends, and their neighbours, and that often leads them to think differently from them. The student as a multilingual subject can be engaged only by a teacher who has recognized herself, too, as a subject (…) As teachers we transmit what we know in two ways: through direct teaching and indirect modelling. Much of what we teach can only be modelled: how we deal with being multilingual, how we ourselves have dealt with culture shock, identity crises, wondering where we belong and what it means to learn or use a language other than our own.*

Kramsch (2011: 25): *Learning a foreign language is not just acquiring an autonomous linguistic system but developing a mode of expression that is shared by members of a speech community. Speaking another language is speaking the language of an Other through words that have a social, historical and cultural existence and "shared cultural loads"(…) In its social sense "have a voice" is to have the discourse skills necessary to communicate, to be heard, and above all listened to.*

Krumm (2011: 104): *Drawing these language portraits, many children become aware, for the first time, of the diversity of their languages. (….)Thus, language portraits become part of language courses; they call attention to the sphere of language reflection and allow us to address other possibilities, degrees of relationship, word migrations, similarities and differences between languages.*

Kubota (in Hornberger, Lee Mackay, 2010: 281): (…) *the definition of culture is contentious. Should culture be conceptualized as a primordial, objective and unchanging category or is it discursively constructed through political and ideological processes (Kubota, 1999)? Another related question is this: Is it the language or culture itself that decides what counts as a rhetorical*

norm or is it the educational institution, which is influenced by the politics and ideology of the nation, state, that imposes the definition of what should be the norm (Kramsch, 2004)?

Kubota (in Hornberger, Lee Mackay, 2010: 283-284): *As a controversial field of inquiry, contrastive rhetoric offers many implications for cross-cultural teaching, especially questions with regard to how culture and language are conceptualized, how politics and ideologies are involved in writing instruction and what role research plays in relation to linguistic and cultural shifts. Inquiries into cultural and linguistic differences significantly influence our worldviews, which support or challenge the status quo of power relations among cultures and languages. It is important for teachers and administrators to engage in these inquiries through critical lenses and constant reflections.*

Lévy (2011: 68): *Less rigid and more dynamic than a "method" a biographical "approach" reveals an individual's and a society's interests in and attitudes toward the relationships among life, reality, and the representations that are made of them, as well as the role of language in society. We must accept that narratives are always in the process of evolving, as are the interpretations that we make of them. These interpretations can take different forms as different as, on the one hand, the autobiographies, narratives, memories or testimonies that we are examining … or , on the other hand, biographies, reconstructions, inquiries and questionnaires – the former emphasizing the role of the narrator, the latter emphasizing analysis and interpretation.*

Molloy (2003: 74): *One always write from an absence, the choice of a language automatically signifying the postponement of another. What at first would seem an imposition – why does one have to choose – quickly turns into an advantage. The absence of what is postponed continues to work obscurely, on the chosen language, suffusing, even better, contaminating it, with an* autrement dit *that brings it unexpected eloquence. That alterity, or alteration, also disturbs the reading habits of the bilingual subject … I wrote the word "alterity" which brings to my mind the French for satisfying one's thirst,* désaltérer*. The writing of a bilingual writer, I would venture, is of need always altered, never "*disaltered*"; always thirsty, always wanting, never satisfied. And it is also, in another sense,* alterada*, in the way I used to hear the Spanish term used by my mother, my aunts, when referring to somebody who was slightly off, who could not control her thoughts, her voice.*

Sercu (2011: 48): *The crucial step is to focus no only on the territory-bound Culture traditionally linked to the language one is teaching, but also on relationships between this Culture and other Cultures – including the learner's own – from an historical (political, technological, sociological) and present-day perspective – or between the small-c cultural aspects touched upon in the materials and those aspects in other cultures, as they are present in daily life (e.g., in commodities, housing, holiday destinations)…..Via intercultural (e.g., comparing and contrasting, or information assessment) tasks, both second and foreign language learners learn to engage in intercultural dialogue, which requires them to apply culture learning skills and intercultural skills, and to communicate about the topics addressed in interculturally respectful and socio- and pragmalinguistically appropriate ways.*

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