

## **The Proposed Activities to Cultivate the Intercultural Communicative Competences in English Language Classroom**

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### **Abstract**

Today, the understanding of intercultural communicative competence becomes very vital since its implications towards our various perspectives from one another such as the perspective of how we solve the problems of our miscommunications, misunderstandings, prejudices, and even discriminations amongst us who have multicultural backgrounds are not the same. In such situations, possessing the intercultural communicative competence in a foreign language classroom which we enable to gain the one's message accurately and appropriately needs a fruitful cooperation as well. Thus, preparing our students to face the real-life situation in a foreign language classroom is the teachers' obligations. Both of them need to conduct the intercultural communicative activities. In addition, they have to create the good atmosphere in their classroom activities in terms of applying many intercultural activities. However, acquiring the intercultural communicative competence is a complicated problem which needs new approaches through employing a number of activities related to the intercultural communicative competence. Therefore, this paper suggests the proposed activities that the teachers may undertake to cultivate the Intercultural Communicative Competences (ICC) in English language classrooms to his or her students. The suggested activities are drama, forum group discussion (FGD), games, and role-play which will be followed by examples with various aspects of Intercultural Communicative Competence.

*Keywords:* Intercultural Communicative Competences, Activities to Teach Culture, Teaching English as a Second Language, EFL classrooms.

### **Introduction**

Most of the researchers have the same thought that culture must be involved in foreign language education (Byram, 1989, 1997; Kramsch, 1993, 1998; Cullen, 2000; Brooks, 2001; Robinson, 1985). Further, Byram (1989) argues that there is a tendency to treat language independently of the culture. In the teaching culture, the four skills of English component are listening, speaking, reading, and writing should be included. Regard to this, Dunnet, et al (2001) says that the development of four language skills has been devoted to most of the teaching time and it is also hard to convince the language teachers that the teaching of culture does not become a secondary goal. According to Brooks (2001), teaching language without culture would be a problem for students to finally gain the wrong targeted meaning. Furthermore, Kramsch (1993) claims that many speakers have their own expectations in the forms of interpreting the experiences and situations based on their own cultures. So that it can lead to some aspects such as misunderstandings, miscommunications, etcetera.

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Therefore, the methods of language teaching should be creative input to the language classroom management so that the students can continue in the analysis of other cultures, certain knowledge must be acquired. It is important that the foreign language teachers give time to explore the national identity of the home culture and the targeted culture in relation to history, geography, and social institution (Byram, 1997). Additionally, when the learners once discover the similarities and differences between their cultures and that of the targeted cultures, the teachers must create new approaches namely the activities that will prepare students to build relationships with people of diverse backgrounds and languages (1997). The successful intercultural speakers try to find out opportunities to behold individuals from different cultures in order to share information through communication in a foreign language.

Hence, this article suggests some activities to introduce the ways of developing the ICC that will assist the teachers implementing those to their students in the English language classrooms. The following contents are based on the theory of culture and intercultural communication (Reid, 2014). It is important to include cultural activities right from the beginning of foreign language teaching for all age group. The ultimate aim is to increase the learners' awareness, attitudes, knowledge, and skills concerning not only the home culture but also the target cultures. And the activities that follow exemplify best practices in intercultural communicative competence that builds on the theories delineated in this paper. All these learning tasks of activities are again designed to help the teachers in building interculturality amongst language learners within the context of the foreign language classroom.

### Literature Review

#### **Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)**

Byram (Byram, 1997) judges someone who attains the skills in intercultural communicative competence as a successful individual in many aspects; creating a good relationship with other people who speak the foreign language, having an ability to negotiate properly so that both individuals' needs are addressed, mediating conversations between those who have different cultural backgrounds, and continuing to gain communicative skills in foreign languages not yet studied. Then, it is clearly seen that the need of owning the intercultural communicative competence will build a foundation of language and culture to be able to interact with other people from specific cultures in order to broaden its spectrum of intercultural encounters. Moreover, he argues that gaining the intercultural communicative competence is only about engaging and building relationships in communication even when the participants involved do not share the same thoughts (1997).

Regard to this, Guilherme (2000) adds that communication may not be sufficient unless it accompanied by much diverse cultural awareness supposed to lead to a relationship of acceptance where self and other are negotiating a cultural platform satisfactory to all parties involved. Such ideas engendered the notion of intercultural communicative competence such as the knowledge, motivation, and skills to communicate effectively and appropriately with members of different cultures (Wiseman, 2002). In many cases, the foreign language teachers are asked to guide learners via acquiring competences in attitudes, knowledge, and skills related to intercultural competence while using a foreign language. The teachers must lead the students through employing some activities in which attitudes are considered, and ideally transform the learners.

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Yang and Fleming (2013) relate that the goal of English language teaching has changed gradually from linguistic competence to communicative competence to intercultural communicative competence. Then, the intercultural communicative competence is the broadening of language communicative competence that takes the intercultural aspect of foreign language use such as organizational behavior, educational systems, civic studies, anthropology influenced the success of a business, military, and diplomatic personnel on placements in foreign countries (Coperias, 2009). Lastly, Byram's (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence categorizes the skills and knowledge similar to the acquisition of intercultural competence: knowledge (*savoir*), attitudes (*savoir etre*), skills of interaction (*savoir feire*), skills of interpreting (*savoir comprendre*) and critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*) cited in Yang and Fleming (Wiseman, 2002).

### **Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) in English Language Classroom**

Having ability in intercultural communication means that to gain communicative objectives in such a way that to the effective and appropriate setting in which the communication takes place (Lustig and Koester, 2014). This leads to the importance of to the role of English as a tool of communication. According to Pulverness (1996) regarding the situation of English language teaching as the following:

“English was seen as a means of communication which should not be bound to culturally-specific conditions of use but should be easily transferable to any cultural setting. Authenticity was a key quality, but only insofar as it provided reliable models of language in use. The content was important as a source of motivation, but it was seen as equally important to avoid material which might be regarded as ‘culture-bound’. Throughout the 1970s and much of the 1980s, syllabus design and materials writing were driven by needs analysis, and culture was subordinated to performance objective.”

Fortunately, however, there have been found many more attempts to integrate culture into the communicative language curriculum. The ways of implementing these, for example, the means of which language is used by speakers and even writers in order to negotiate their place in social groups and hierarchies that are proponents of an intercultural approach are different from one community to another community. Therefore, any language course that correlate to the culture, needs to spread out its scope, shifting from a focus on increasing the four skills of speaking, reading, listening, and writing to wider issues, in order to assist learners, achieve the cultural skills, such as strategies for the systematic observation and understanding of behavioral patterns and so forth.

The very vital aim of an intercultural approach to language education should not be so much native speaker, but rather an intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1997). Intercultural communicative competence includes the ability to understand the language and behavior of the target community and explains it to participants of the home community – and vice versa. To put it differently, an intercultural approach dictates learners how to be ‘diplomats’, capable of beholding diverse cultures from a perspective of informed understanding. Thus, the intercultural learners will finally function as a mediator between different social groups which use different language and the variety of language.

### Discussion

#### The Proposed Activities in Foreign Language Classrooms

In this section, the writer tries to explain some various techniques of activity in foreign language classroom related to intercultural communicative competence. Byram (1997) claims that having the ICC is a complex matter which involves more than traditional lessons. Moreover, Brooks (2001) says that ICC is the best way to gain its functions practically such as the acquiring phonological accuracy, syntax and / morphology via actual practices.

#### Drama

Drama encourages learners' motivation since it is fun and because it may engage the feelings and provides a lot of experiences of language for the participants. It as a process is inevitably learner-centered because it can be employed through active cooperation. Transferring the skills from formal settings to the real-life situations has always been a challenging task in education. Thus, the value of drama becomes very important as it is often attributed to the fact that it allows the creation of a context for different language uses, and to improve students' language awareness (Zafeiriadou, 2009). Drama as a structural aspect of the learning experience, Roger (1969) in the second language context divided it into several things namely dramatic play and improvisations, story enactment, imagination journey, theatre games, music, and dance. The point of this is that the learners should pretend as it is the norm in drama class. It is again because the emphasis in a creative drama is a kind of process rather than product; teachers have the liberty to take as much time as needed for their classes (Brooks, 2001).

#### Forum Group Discussion (FGD)

A Focus Group Discussion is a kind of fast assessment to gather data and is data collection technique in which a purposively selected set of members discussing a topic given and issue that concerns based on some lists of key themes provided by researchers or a professional moderator (Kumar, 1987). This method is actually developed based upon the assumption which the group processes activated during the FGD activity help to identify and clarify share knowledge amongst groups and other communities, that would be gained via a number of different individual interviews. In English language classroom, the teacher needs to undertake this FGD to stimulate and develop the ICC done by the learners. This FGD can be applied to into four different phases; Khan & Manderson (1992); Barbour (2005, 2014): the exploration (this is an ability to distil vital to preliminary issues regarding one's study theme), monitoring (it is to control the corresponding processes and dynamics since it is performed in the middle of on-going research activities), evaluation (at the end of research program), the FDG with a specific targeted group can be performed to verify, disprove, and modify the findings of the provisional studies, gathering and assessing outcomes (after accomplishing the intervention), the FGD may find new findings about some changes within the targeted group and about the effects on the field of the given themes previously. In terms of ICC context, this FGD becomes very important due to its techniques that make the members able to tell the stories and further it is suitable in such communities with a low level of literacy (Broomley et al, 1969).

#### Games

The word game is unique to define. A game is a fun activity which involves tasks that are accomplished by certain rules. Hadfield (1999) demonstrates two kinds of games in languages classroom. The first is linguistic games that focus on accuracy. For

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instance, using the correct similar words and vice versa. While the communicative games more focus on successful communication with one to another. Hence, for the latter one becomes very essential because the ICC in these games appear to a variety of diverse perspectives so that sometimes the participants can express their opinion based on the formed topic given by the teachers. Furthermore, the examples of this can be in the forms of working in pairs and so on. In addition, there are a number of reasons why using games are important in language classroom; they are fun, able to help participants in building relationships, applicable in using the language into real life situation, needed to be exposed to the language in diverse of situations that games can fulfill it, are good for shy students and students with low confidence and that applies them to have a chance to perform in front of their peers. It is sometimes easier to open up and forget the shyness when doing the games and the atmosphere is not so serious which mean that it more focus on the fluency rather than grammatical correctness (Langran and Purcell, 1994).

### **Role-Play**

In this activity, the learners are encouraged to take a part in some actions which they can practice such situations, for examples, in a restaurant, inn, shop, bus station, and etcetera. According to Reid (2014) says that role-play is an essential technique to practice sociolinguistic and pragmatic phrases, socio-cultural knowledge, but non-verbal communication as well. Moreover, the role-plays are the closest possible chances for the learners to practice the real-life situations that are necessary to intercultural communication. They are suitable for all level of language proficiency and age groups. Besides, there are three personal dimensions (self-development, self-esteem, and self-actualization) that enable the learners to understand and to acquire the fundamental skills to cope with the reality (Brooks, 2001).

### **Conclusion**

To sum up, if the teachers would like to prepare their students to compete with the globally interconnected world, the intercultural communicative competence must be involved in the language learning process. The researchers have identified some cases which the obstacles for the students might be to practice their knowledge, their diverse cultures with others so that the misunderstandings, miscommunications, prejudice, and even discrimination may occur. However, they also have prepared many activities which can overcome these problems through identifying the given themes first such as identity transformation, the process of learning, that characterize the intercultural communicative competence classroom which the teachers can assist the learners to practice the tasks from their teachers that related to the intercultural competence. When the IC becomes the part of the language classroom, the learners try to have such experiences how to appropriately utilize language to create the relationships and understanding with participants of other cultures.

This paper suggests some proposed activities which can be as the approaches to teaching and assess the ICC based on some theoretical frameworks on interculturality. Then, by involving the proposed activities namely drama, forum group discussion, games, and role-play in the foreign language classes, the students start to recognize how their attitudes, knowledge, and language skills can influence their intercultural experiences. As a result, the students will attain an understanding of how to come to the intercultural community with an open mind and have the very important point to build relationships with the target language speakers.

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