

APPROACHES TO TEACHING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

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This paper explores the concept of Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC) and analyses a variety of pedagogical approaches designed to foster the development of this essential skill set in students. By acquiring an understanding of these diverse approaches, teachers are able to construct a comprehensive curriculum that effectively cultivates ICC in their students.

In the contemporary era, which is characterized by the prevalence of global connections, the capacity to engage in cross-cultural interactions is becoming an increasingly crucial skill. The term "intercultural interaction" is defined by a respectful attitude towards representatives of other cultures, the demonstration of tolerance, including racial, national, and religious tolerance, and a willingness to work in a foreign language environment. These features form the basis of intercultural competence, which is characterized by government standards of higher education as one of the main competencies of future specialists. [1; 182]

The teaching of foreign languages employs a pragmatic approach to the facilitation of intercultural communication, extending beyond the mere acquisition of grammatical and lexical knowledge. Students are equipped with the ability to engage in effective oral and non-verbal communication, in addition to developing an understanding of the socio-cultural nuances of the target language. It often includes components such as cultural awareness, perspective-taking, and open-mindedness, enabling individuals to engage meaningfully with others from different backgrounds [2; 242].

The following outlines the various approaches to teaching intercultural competence, which are designed to facilitate the development of the skills required to interact effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds:

1. The Intercultural Approach:

The key to fostering strong intercultural communication competence (ICC) skills lies within the classroom itself. An intercultural approach goes beyond simply tolerating differences. It actively creates a welcoming and inclusive environment that celebrates the rich tapestry of cultures represented by the students. This is achieved

through carefully designed lessons, activities, and tasks that prompt students to both reflect on and actively engage with cultural distinctions. Teachers play a crucial role in modeling a culturally inclusive attitude, demonstrating respect and appreciation for all cultures present in the classroom. [3; 141]

2. The Comparative Approach:

The comparative approach bridges the gap between the target culture and the learners' own cultural background. In contrast to a one-sided presentation of cultural information, this approach encourages students to critically examine their own cultural values, beliefs, and assumptions. By drawing on their existing knowledge and understanding as a foundation, students can develop a deeper appreciation for the complexities of intercultural communication.

3. The Problem-Oriented Approach:

The problem-oriented approach builds upon the foundation of students' existing knowledge and cultural awareness by emphasizing collaborative learning through tasks. Students work together in pairs or small groups on specific aspects of the target culture, conducting research, analyzing information, and sharing their findings with the class. This collaborative process allows them to create a more complete picture of the target culture and develop a deeper understanding of the cultural context that shapes communication practices.

For example, a problem-oriented approach might involve student groups researching cultural norms surrounding greetings and introductions in different countries. By comparing and contrasting these practices, students develop a deeper understanding of the nonverbal and verbal cues that shape communication across cultures. Furthermore, students might be tasked with developing a training module for business professionals on effective communication etiquette when working with international colleagues. This problem-solving exercise not only reinforces their understanding of cultural differences but also equips them with practical skills for navigating the complexities of intercultural communication in professional settings.

4. The Skill-Centered Approach:

The skill-centered approach differs from the others by focusing on equipping students with the practical tools they need to navigate the challenges of intercultural communication in real-world situations. This approach prioritizes the development of specific communication skills that can help students manage misunderstandings and communication breakdowns that can arise when interacting with individuals from different cultures. For example, the skill-centered approach might focus on active listening, effective questioning techniques, nonverbal communication strategies, and

conflict resolution skills. While in-depth knowledge of the target culture can be beneficial, the skill-centered approach prioritizes the development of practical communication skills that can be readily applied in diverse situations.

Each approach to teaching ICC offers unique benefits, and the most effective approach will depend on the specific learning goals and needs of the students. By strategically incorporating elements from each of these approaches, educators can create a dynamic learning environment that fosters not only knowledge and skills but also the dispositions necessary for students to become successful and responsible global citizens. The ultimate goal is to empower students to not only navigate intercultural communication effectively but also to contribute to building a more inclusive and interconnected global community.

References:

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