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CULTURE AND LANGUAGE RELATIONSHIPS IN TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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Abstract. The given article is about why language teachers. who should know how to assess curriculum materials from an intercultural perspective to best encourage development in their students. Students should also know that proficiency and language skills are very important, but must be associated with the ability to empathize, genuinely interact and hold a conversation with someone outside of their cultural context.

Keywords: intercultural, competence, interaction, awareness, reflection, integration, integral, components, classroom, students, culture, language, practice.

The language instructor for several reasons should recognize these three concepts, but, above all, the students' learning process should also include their personal cultural experiences, values and perspectives while promoting intercultural competence. Students should also know that proficiency and language +skills are very important, but must be associated with the ability to empathize, genuinely interact and hold a conversation with someone outside of their cultural context. Consequently, the language classroom should facilitate language skills, communication skills and intercultural interaction, and only then will intercultural competence be possible in and outside the classroom.

Overall, intercultural competence is a broad topic that encompasses a variety of definitions, purposes and pedagogies. Its development in the classroom should be focused on the realistic growth and skills in the students, and therefore necessitates using a definition and model that is applicable throughout the curriculum. As mentioned earlier, for purposes of this paper, Bennett's model will be used to define and analyze the data. Therefore, summarizing this definition, intercultural competence is the ability to move past one's own ethnocentric views of culture and be able to acknowledge cultural difference and interact appropriately in a variety of cultures.

Through this compacted research on intercultural competence the themes of interaction, awareness, reflection and integration have emerged as four integral components of intercultural competence. Classroom practice and assessment should include these components and encourage a person to progress toward a higher level of intercultural competence, no matter their current level of development. Application of this concept should be one of the most important parts of the curriculum because use and proficiency of the target language are parallel to intercultural competence if applied effectively in the classroom. Specific methods of assessment are not mentioned within this section, but provide room for future research regarding the evaluation of intercultural competence

in the classroom. According to majority of the research, the foreign language teacher should engage in appropriate professional development that encourages personal growth and interactive pedagogy in the classroom in all areas.

The FL teacher should seek to be at that integration stage, in order to further represent himself/herself as a model for their students. In Sercu's Foreign Language Teachers and Intercultural Competence, she first states that FL instructors need to be proficient and constantly developing all of the knowledge, skills and attitudes that which Byram propones. She also states that instructors should know how to assess curriculum materials from an intercultural perspective to best encourage development in their students). In our article we poin out Sercu, who did a study on the instructor's willingness to include intercultural competence into the curriculum, in a European context. She included a variety of cultures and countries, and found surprising data, despite the positive attitude that was met with this topic. Overall, the first factor of this attitude was recognition that culture activities were equally as important as language activities in the classroom. Secondly there was a correlation that by providing more cultural information, students are likely to be more open to cultural difference. And lastly, that all students should develop intercultural competence at all levels in the curriculum. But, ultimately, instructors need to first develop an attitude that intercultural competence is something that can to be developed in all learners, and then education for intercultural competence can succeed. At which age levels and language levels can intercultural competence be promoted and taught? Within the research and survey implemented, developmental levels are an important factor when considering the range of competencies in students. Intercultural competence should and can be promoted at all language levels, and there is research that supports this. As intercultural competence encompasses a variety of knowledge and skills, certain components can be taught and used at different levels. Byram does not necessarily offer research in relation to age and development, but Bennett offers suggestions and research within his methodology specifically related to the various developmental levels of learners. Bennett proposes that his model is not simply an acquisition of content or knowledge, but supports the ability to shift cultural perspectives, which can be integrated into the present curriculum with an intentional framework.

First, the model can be used at the most basic levels because it supports the realization of the "inter-relatedness" between the native language and target language through cultural self awareness, in which Bennett advocates that we do not know our first language until we study a second language. This is a concept that can be supported at the beginning levels and age groups as students are making language progress in L2, which furthermore is inclusive to building connections with both cultures. Next, Bennett notes that as language is a communication endeavor, language competence is associated with the ability to use the language as an "insider," which is parallel to building cultural competence and being able to act culturally as an "insider," and only when these are both supported in the classroom there is full communicative competence within the

target culture and target language. When teaching any level, Bennett maintains that first the instructor must build a system of challenge and support. This will encourage a continuous process within the language classroom. This means challenging students with content, and making activities and applications easier, or vice versa. In general, topics about cultural difference will be difficult at younger ages and language levels. But, as their growth increases, a parallel correlation between intercultural competence and use of target language seems to be prevalent. Therefore, in creating a balance of challenge and support and focusing on activities appropriate for intercultural stages of the learners, instructors should be able to find activities that foster development and meet the current needs of the students.

At the denial and defense stages, the language learner is typically at novice and early intermediate levels with their language skills, and therefore intercultural competence activities must be low-risk, engaging, and allow for simple vocabulary to be used if the instructor wants maximum language use as well. For the denial stage basic activities that language instructors already use, such as shopping simulations, celebrating holidays, and talking about important people, are used at this stage. At this point, there must also be opportunities for subjective culture to encourage movement into the next stage, this should include room for the comparison of culture and recognizing what specific cultures value or appreciate. The important recommendation for instructors teaching at this language level is not to aim too high. In the stage that follows, defense, students are also at a novice level of language competency. For this stage, instructors should focus on similarities only for this stage, as the learners need much support to realize that transition and difference is good, but also that they may share commonalities with the target culture. Again, one of the most important things is not to be too ambitious with this level of intercultural competence, but still find small ways to allow students to develop to the next stage, minimization. At the minimization stage, the last stage that will be presented that poses relevance to the paper because of its novice-level focus, students should be early-intermediate language learners.

Using the target language in the classroom has always been a significant topic of debate to language instructors. Some instructors feel that a balance between first language and second language is reasonable; some maintain that the target language should be used no matter what.

There are several pedagogies and theories that support the spectrum of positions on this topic, but generally they do not focus on specific framework for maintaining the target language when talking about cultural and intercultural content, especially as these topics can be more complex for students.

However, the polemic question that revolves around the methodology is "Does the first language impede or foster the success of the target language in the classroom?" In this discussion, various theories of target language use will be shared, along with real issues that arise for instructors and finally, the connection to teaching culture and intercultural competence.

The dual focus of how teachers are using language as well as how they are focusing (or not) on intercultural development is an important relationship to consider.However, the analysis of how much and how the instructors use the target language, and the challenges the target language can in further understanding of instructor practices and perspectives.!In the language classroom, there can be a multitude of factors that determine the reasoning for using English (or the first language) in the second language classroom, regardless of the instructor's view of target language use. In a 2005-2006 study entitled "Instructors' Use of English in the Modern Language Classroom" by Wilkerson, five university Spanish professors were observed in their first-semester elementary language courses.

They were all of similar profiles, and had advanced or superior ratings, five years of experience with elementary level language courses, had extensive experience abroad, and completed graduate level course workin Spanish.In this study, the participants were first asked to write adescription of their teaching style and their perspectives of English use in the classroom.

Throughout the study, there were several themes that became apparent within the use of the first language in the classroom. Generally, it was found that English was used to "save time, avoid ambiguity and establish authority". The study further examines actual use of target language and first language, versus the actual ratio language use in the classroom, because often times this proves to be a challenging realization as well. In the first interview, the participant Steven did not recognize that he was even continuously switching in and out of Spanish. He stated that he translated into English for comprehension, grammar explanation and to give directions. Most of the time his English use was only 30 seconds or less when speaking in passages. He frequently code switched, and in the examples it was apparent switched for understanding, and to save time. A point of interest is that when a student asked "Es agua?" in Spanish, he responded in English, which later pointed to a sense of confusion for students' language choice and response in the class.

Another participant had similar results, and often continued to speak in English throughout the class period once she explained something once in English.This participant also recognized her challenges and its affect on the students, "if students haven't studied, they are confused because they don't know the answer, but then I give them an answer in English, so why should they study?"

However, there was one instructor that used a significant amount of negotiated discourse, and thought that the first language is an effective strategy if used appropriately. On the first day of class, this instructor explained to the class how important using Spanish would be for classroom interaction, and told students that they would be able to understand her through non-verbal and verbal cues. Upon observation, this proved to be completely true, and English was only spoken at the beginning and end of class to introduce objectives and summarize; the total English time was only about 5-10 minutes (p.314).The other participants were more extreme in their styles, with one

using English almost exclusively and extensive repetition and the other using Spanish exclusively.

With the variety of instructional practices in the study, there was still the commonality of using English for comprehension, to save time and avoid ambiguity. Using English helped control the pace and direction of the class period, and regulated speaking time for students. Also, switching into the first language established authority for the instructor, as she/he was allowed to change the language used at any point. Recasting phrases and words in English was another significant pattern that may have encouraged comprehension, but reduced the effort or clarity of what language to use for the students. Conclusively, it seems that instructors do not fully realize how much of each language they are using and to what effect it has on students' comprehension and comfort in the classroom. Despite these realities of use and challenges, there are still myths and extreme positions on code choice in the classroom that further affect student understanding and use of the language.

The application and methodology that are aimed for use in the language classroom are often associated with some very common myths about first language use in the classroom. In many cases, first language use in the second language classroom has a negative stigma, regardless of the actual amount of target language production by the teacher and students, as seen in the study presented previously. Levine wrote a book specifically about the challenges of target language use, and dispels these myths in Code Choice in the Language Classroom (2011). These myths are as followed with brief explanations:

1.Monolingual second language use is the most intuitive mode of communication in the language classroom Students are naturally going to make comparisons and connections, and this can be an effective scaffold for future language learning and analysis.

2.Monolingual native speaker norms represent an appropriate target for the language learner. This view discredits language learning from diverse backgrounds and experiences. "Native speaker" would need to be strictly defined, and further the parameters of dialects and "standard" language.

3.A monolingual approach reflects the reality of language classroom communication Naturally, the L1 will have a presence in the classroom, despite the pedagogy and instructor's desires. The reality is that by completely forbidding use of the L1, the affective state and willingness for further learning is at stake.

4.Use of the first language could bring about fossilized errors or pidginization When in correspondence with a monolingual speaker of the L2, the learner of the L2 often knows what is appropriate and what is not in certain situations. Learners should be seen as emerging intercultural communicators, and using appropriate strategies at various competencies does not necessitate the long-term acquisition of a "pidgin" version of the L2. 5. Use of the first language minimizes time spent using the second language Though this may be true of class time, a multilingual approach can "extend and enrich" the use of the target language. Perhaps all language educators do not believe these myths, but

within the wide array of pedagogical beliefs regarding target language use and first language use, it is helpful to know the general influence of this research and consider it when making instructional decisions.

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