

The Didactics Of Multilingualism – Intercultural-

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Abstract

The didactics of multilingualism is a relatively new concept in the European and global language teaching. The didactics of multilingualism is based on completely new principles: Languages are not taught in isolation, but taught and learned interdependently. Rather, at every opportunity connections between the languages are produced. To help the children learn and at the same time to reflect on language and culture and to uncover relationships. This requires a close cooperation of the teachers themselves. The topics in the classroom should be familiar to the reality of children and meet their interests. The teaching of contents and materials must take into account the intercultural approach.

Key words: The didactics of multilingualism, multilingual, multilingualism, intercultural development

One of the highest purposes of foreign languages learning is the acquisition of multilingualism. Linguistic and cultural competences encourage not only mutual understanding and tolerance, but also increase personal and professional opportunities in a globalised world. Multilingual is that person who can communicate in more than one language. Multilingualism does not mean that every language must be acquired perfectly. In classes of different levels are included different competences.

Lately, didactics of multilingualism has a very important role. Competences of foreign languages in our society are indisputable. Foreign languages give you new opportunities in understanding other cultures. For these reasons, European Community and European Council demand three foreign languages for their citizens. Definitely, English is one of them. This brought us to the fact that in most of the European countries, English is the first language that is included in curricula and educational programs.¹

Different case studies demonstrate that the learning of a foreign language is a human ability. Didactics of multilingualism start from the point that languages cannot be learned isolated from one another, but depending from one another. It does not introduce a new method of learning but it is a further development of specific aspects of communication. Being faced with the globalization development, communication and dialogue have become key elements between countries and their cultures. Beside linguistic development, intercultural development has become a principal element in learning a foreign language because language and culture are strongly connected with one another.

List2 defines intercultural learning as a total different concept in relation to the "traditional learning" of a foreign language where perception schemes are those of national culture, so in this case students must understand that something foreign is not just a self-translation, is not something that they already know, but something that contains its own elements and features.

¹ Neuner, G. 2009, p. 2

² List, G. 1994, p. 193

Bredella and Delanoy¹ broaden this argument: "We are moulded with our culture and this makes our perception of foreign cultures to be influenced by our national culture. That's why the need to percept a foreign culture in a neutral way, is still an illusion."

Intercultural Learning

Educational processes of teaching and learning are strongly connected with culture.² Yearlong traditions of teaching, characterize and mould educational situations even in the learning of a foreign language. Intercultural learning based on a foreign language learning has as a principal goal "intercultural competences" and their acquisition. It is a very broad concept where linguistic abilities and competences, attitudes toward cultures and improvements of interactive abilities, are very important.

In the teaching and learning process, in every educational context, mutual understanding is very important. "The foreign" is an important category and its training must take an important place in learning of a foreign language. Educational content and format must be organized in collaboration with the students. As part of the cultural formation, it must be lined among other ones, the cultural identity of students, stereotyping trainings and cultural contents, didactics between the known and the unknown, to what is yours and the foreigner. The main objective of a teaching process, intercultural orientated is building of students' capacity in being involved in a successful conversation with people from other cultures.

The didactic character of the intercultural and multilingual educational contents

From the didactic point of view it must be determined what kind of characteristic an intercultural content should demonstrate, which are the groundings, abilities and experiences that must be transmitted through the educational process.

To a primer importance is the fact that educational contents of intercultural and multilingual teaching process give you the opportunity of comparison. Comparison is very important in a teaching and learning intercultural process. Educational contents must be selected and ranked in a way that can ensure the possibility to discuss over those.

If students are faced with a total new and strange phenomena, there is a risqué that students might draw back from the discussion and not dare give their opinions fearing the fact that they might be wrong or inappropriate. Comparison is possible only in those cultures which have some features in common and not in those which have nothing to do with one another. In this point, it must be stressed the fact that is the role and responsibility of the teacher to create a free teaching atmosphere, free of fear and tension.

Intercultural aspects must be integrated in every field of foreign language learning. Comparison is the principal method of connection in different aspects of a language, the aspects of phonetic, morphology, syntax, lexicology, pragmatic, sociolinguistic etc.

Contrasting perspective makes students be aware of their cultural standards and reflect upon them. Without this process, knowledge of a foreign culture would be incomplete and full of prejudice and stereotyping.

It also must be mentioned the fact that educational contents should include information about places, people, culture and their traditions. But, this information is never enough as to equip students with the final intended "intercultural competences", which are the result of an effective intercultural and linguistic teaching process.

A very important element in reaching it, is the creation of a certain attitude toward the members of the other culture. Being opened and predisposed to communicate and interact, having the ability to exchange critics and be part of a conflict, offering of tolerance and empathy toward the foreigner, are part of inner attitudes which indirectly are connected with the knowledge for the people of the other cultures.

There are also cases when someone has sufficient knowledge of a certain culture, but is completely closed towards communication and interaction for different reasons, which might be personal, social, familiar or even the worst one, which is directly connected with the teacher, as the result of failed foreign language teaching process, as a consequence of a continuous influence of stereotyping over the members of the other culture or negative aspects have been overstressed by the teacher.

¹ Bredella, L and Delano, W. 1999 p.13

² Neuner, G. 2009, p.3

Educational contents must bring the change to existing attitudes and create new ones. It must be said that educational contents of intercultural learning should have a high level of authenticity. Demand for authenticity in this context must be understood as a real and trustful reflection over the foreign culture. Authenticity should not be bounded just by the usage of real linguistic and cultural material because they can become part of a learning process and in this case they can automatically lose their authenticity.

There is also the possibility for authentic material to be used successfully in an intercultural learning process. In this case it must be ensured the authenticity of interaction in the teaching process, which can be reached with a careful planning of the lesson, where balanced contents, aims and used social forms, should be kept in mind.

Authentic linguistic and cultural material and its appropriate usage should resemble as much as possible to a real and natural situation of using language, but it should be kept present and not create the illusion of being out of the teaching process and that the situation is created for educational purposes and not for the simulation of another form of communication.¹ Finally, it is important that cultural contents include the foreign aspect, the one that is different from ours and give the possibility to confront with it. During the teaching process it must be emphasized the foreign aspect, the unknown, the mysterious and the incomprehensible aspect. Treating such contents should make students reflect on what is theirs, what they know, what is close to them, what is the most familiar to them and to argument and reflect over it critically.

Creation of an appropriate frame in implementing teaching contents of interculturalism and multilingualism

Above, there are mentioned some important characteristics which fulfill intercultural contents. In order to have a successful implementation of these contents, some important elements which are connected with the teaching process, must be taken into consideration.

The most important one is student centered teaching and creation of connections between previous knowledge. Students must have the opportunity to articulate previous knowledge, attitude and experience.² Reflection over previous knowledge and experience is very important because in this way previous concepts can activate and there is a potential possibility to change them. Students' cultural background is considered as a very important starting point for didactic, and application of appropriate educational materials.

In a teaching process, culturally orientated, it is very important for students to demonstrate and be interested for the educational contents. Selection of educational materials must be appropriate for their age, level, group composition, their origin, previous contacts with that culture, etc. Educational contents besides being interesting, they must be stimulating and demanding to students.

The role of the teachers in their teaching also is very important because it is the teacher the one who encourages discussions and reflections over changes and common features between their culture and other ones. In most cases, learning of a foreign language is the only bridge between national culture and foreign ones, that's why special attention is required in the way it is transmitted to students.

Conclusions

The theories described above can be summarized in this short thesis connected to the intercultural content, as one of the principal bearer of intercultural competence achievements. Regarding these contents there we emphasized some aspects, where the most important are the ones distinguished: focus over the foreign aspect, authenticity, knowledge about people and country, opportunity to comparison etc. Then it is designed an suitable frame in applying these contents and success of intercultural education. In summary, it must be said that the focus of educational contents in intercultural education, has three parts:

Knowledge and linguistic competences

Relativism of cultural attitudes

Improvements of ability to interact

¹ Volkman, L. 2002, p. 123.

² Bredella/Delanoy, 1999, p.21.

Linguistic knowledge and competences, their transmission and enforcement have the principal place in the educational process. By emphasizing the intercultural elements, it is clarified that in a foreign language or culture there might be some elements that are totally different from ours.

Foreign language can be organized in logical construction through phonological development, and syntax constructions which in our national language do not exist.

In cultural attitudes we deal with support of tolerance development, empathy, critical abilities and earning of new attitude. Acceptance of linguistic and cultural diversity of the other language consist on some aspects: overcrossing of challenges, acceptance of the fact that a foreign language and culture can function differently from ours; acceptance of different interpretation of reality in the values' system.

Improvement of acting abilities can be reached through some different comparative techniques between cultures, intermediation and interpretation.

So, regarding the teaching of the intercultural contents, it can be utilized such a model with the three components mentioned above.

Principal preservation in such an educational process is that mother culture and the foreign one should be treated as equal.

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