

Chapter 2

THE ROLE OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

Many academic studies focus on the link between culture and the teaching of foreign languages. According to ACTFL (2006), language learning goals are defined through five C's, communication, cultures, connections, comparisons and communities, which implies that proficiency does not serve as the only aim of learning or teaching a foreign language. This definition of goals by ACTFL (2006) makes the language learner not only a 'learner' in the traditional sense, but also a participator in cultural and linguistic varieties, also named as a '*sojourner*' by Byram (1997).

According to Byram (2002), foreign language teaching has as its objective developing intercultural speakers and meaning mediators who can successfully interact with different identities through the avoidance of stereotyping. Adding to this the '*lingua franca*' or '*international language*' status of English, Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), or the capacity to deal with cross-cultural communication effectively through acting appropriately in different cultural contexts, becomes essential for foreign language teaching, too.

Although various models explaining intercultural competence exist, one concept that is related to the learning and teaching of

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Even though acquiring the aforementioned skills appear to be somewhat arduous, descriptive and empirical studies indicate that increasing integrative motivation, engaging learners in intercultural tasks like researching a given culture or having them interact with the target culture, including online interaction have positive affects on the level of intercultural communicative competence among learners.

At the point of increasing intercultural communicative competence, it seems that the textbooks selected by governmental offices may serve as a hindering factor due to the lack of intercultural content included in those books. Even so, extracurricular materials or consistent take-home tasks might actually prove useful to develop intercultural competence. When the benefits of having this particular type of competence on behalf of the learner are considered, the extra work as a result of extracurricular activities and materials seems to be worth the effort.

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