

MULTICULTURAL AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION: NEW LEARNING AND TEACHING MODELS

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Abstract

World is becoming more and more interrelated, and this means that we need more tolerance and empathy to understand and accept others, especially those who behave, think, and act differently. As well as we need to know how to keep our identity and at the same time constructively live and act in multicultural environment. Our culture has influence on our perception, behaviour, working and learning style and etc., so the need for multicultural literacy, which could be described as the ability to understand and appreciate the parallels and differences between customs, values, and beliefs of your culture and a different culture, is obvious. Multicultural literacy as one of the 21st-century competencies could be developed by the specialized curriculums or involving the main ideas, principles, attitudes, and skills of multiculturalism in the study programmes and other extra-curriculum activities. It also could be developed by the multicultural and intercultural communication among people of different cultures in formal and non-formal educational activities. The presentation will be based on the survey and experience of analysis of Šiaulių valstybinė kolegija in developing those competencies for our national and international students.

Keywords: *Multicultural communication, intercultural communication, communication in education, teaching and learning models, educational innovations.*

1. Introduction

World is becoming more and more interrelated, and this means that we need more tolerance and empathy to understand and accept others, especially those who behave, think, and act differently. As well as we need to know how to keep our identity and at the same time constructively live and act in multicultural environment.

Multicultural and intercultural literacy is important for all citizens in a democratic multicultural society (Banks, & Russell, 2003; Banks, 2009) at least because nowadays it is more and more difficult to find the monoculture society. And also because of this that our culture has influence on our perception, behaviour, working and learning style and etc., so the need for multicultural literacy, which could be described as the ability to understand and appreciate the parallels and differences between customs, values, and beliefs of your culture and a different culture, is obvious.

2. Research aim

Theoretically and practically to confirm the need of multicultural and intercultural communication and the possibilities to develop those competencies in formal and non-formal educational process.

3. Research methods

The survey and experience of analysis of Šiaulių valstybinė kolegija in developing those competencies for our national and international students there were done to achieve the aim.

4. Methodology of the research

The theoretical and practical analysis of the idea is based on the following methodological attitudes:

- Progressivism philosophy (W. Kilpatrick from L. Duoblienè, 2006), which emphasizes active person's participation in his/her own learning process and society's life too. They establish a free and creative personality development goal (Bitinas, 2000). The principles of progressivism didactics (freedom, individual experience, experimentation, academic consulting) are the basic approaches of author's researches. One of the most important features of progressivistic pedagogy is the free choice of the learner, when deciding what to learn, something to aspire to, every student takes responsibility for their own future, their own actions and behaviours, get used to make decisions related to personal risk. In addition to these features is not possible success of an individual's life in a democratic, individual initiative and free competition-based society. New requirements in this context there are for teacher. So, in this respect it is relevant the idea of progressivisms, which emphasize on the teacher's inner freedom, which allows the teacher to create free, sincere atmosphere of mutual trust and so on. On the other hand, these demands increase the teacher's responsibility to students and society.
- Social constructivism (Berger, & Luckmann, 1999) and reconstructivism (Duoblienè, 2006), which enable critical interpretation of "well-established" educational phenomenon and understanding them in the sociocultural context, i.e., as integral part of the general cultural, religious and social groups; understanding the importance of social interaction and sociocultural context, of active participation in political and social activities of the society for personality's education.

5. Theoretical and practical discourse analysis

Multicultural literacy as one of the 21st-century competencies could be developed by the specialized curriculums or involving the main ideas, principles, attitudes, and skills of multiculturalism in the study programmes and other extra-curriculum activities. It also could be developed by the multicultural and intercultural communication among people of different cultures in formal and non-formal educational activities.

Comparative analysis of theoretical discourse (Jandt, 2013; Pruskus, 2012; Baraldsnes, 2012; Starkey and others, 2010; Paulston, Kiesling, & Rangel, 2014; etc.) enabled to identify the main aims and objectives of development of multicultural and intercultural competencies. The most important aims in this aspect are the following:

- **Understand** your own and other cultures,
- **To avoid cultural prejudices** about your own and other cultures,
- **Evaluate cultural diversity**,
- **Become open** to cultural differences, otherness, change,
- **Learn to seek compromises** in a culturally diverse environment.
- **Understand that our culture has influence** on our understanding of another culture, and that the culture of other people has influence on their perception. It means to understand your own and other cultures; to understand yourself in the culture, to be aware of your own stereotypes and prejudices you have, to identify stereotypes and prejudices in everyday life.
- **Know and recognize** your own and other cultures
- **Develop provisions** that means to know the values of your own and other cultures, to accept and respect cultural differences yours and others, to evaluate cultural diversity, to encourage openness to otherness, to believing in possibility to solve cultural conflicts.
- **Develop skills, especially such as** communication and interaction with people from different cultures, work with people from other cultures, ability to see the everyday things and events from new corner, to adapt in changing environment, society, to make new decision.

The opportunities of multicultural and intercultural literacy development in formal education are the following:

- ***Study subjects directly related or devoted to development of multicultural and intercultural competencies.*** For example, in majority of our study programmes from the business, international business, management, corporate communication and marketing, office management and etc. we have study subjects "Intercultural and International Communication", "Intercultural Communication and Negotiation" and etc. The curriculum of the subjects is created so that the theoretical knowledge would permanently implement into real life situations or simulations. Those strategies enable to develop not only knowing but also skills, abilities and competencies that could be used in study process and in daily life. For example, one of the mid-term exams is the comparative analysis of at least two different cultures according to few aspects from under the water part from the Culture as Iceberg Concept. And in this analysis

students can use their own or the other's people experience as well as the usual resources which they can find in the libraries or internet. The most important criteria are novelty and usefulness of information, and the ability to use your own knowledge and experience. The other assignment is case studies that also encourage students to use their knowledge and experience to do the holistic analysis of the case and to find the best solution or to look at the same situation from the side of different cultures.

- **Introduction with a new culture** studying the directed study subjects as it was mentioned in the first paragraph as well as studying foreign languages (at least one or two foreign languages are studying in one study programme). Also, in study subjects that are directly related with international and intercultural communication (for example, *International Marketing in Study Programme "Corporate Communication and Marketing"* or *International and Intercultural Communication in Study Programme "Office Administratio"*).
- **Study results in a study programme**, especially social or/and personal study results (for example, working effectively and communicating in writing and orally in Lithuanian and foreign languages in an unfamiliar, changing, interdisciplinary environment. *Study Programme "Information Management"*) is another opportunity to develop multicultural and intercultural competencies.
- **Topics in the study subjects, such as Diversity and Inclusion, International Business** and etc.
- **Visiting professors from foreign higher educational institutions** (according to Erasmus+ programme, programme of Ministry of Education, Science and Sports in Lithuania or the programmes of municipalities) are not only a good opportunity to discuss about the concrete study field and its knowledge but also about the culture and the countries where the visiting professor is from. This is very important because it is the best opportunity to learn about the culture from the present representative of this culture and to develop your own competencies on this basis.
- **Study subjects (compulsory or/and optional) where English is the language of instruction** (for example, *International and Intercultural Communication in Study Programme "Office Administration"*, *Changes Communication in Study Programme "Corporate Communication and Marketing"*, *Entrepreneurship and Leadership in Study Programme "Office Administration"*) is not directly devoted to develop multicultural and intercultural competencies, but this create to context, the suitable teaching/learning environment for developing multicultural and intercultural competencies.

Also, there are a lot of different activities and opportunities to develop multicultural and intercultural competencies in non-formal education:

- **Introduction with a new culture**, especially if the cultures are more different than similar. One of the best opportunities are International Weeks, meetings with visiting professors and other similar activities where it is possible not only to listen to the presenters but also ask or discuss, especially if the knowledge from different resources are different and it is more complicated to know the objective true.
- **Involving international students to the extra-curriculum activities in higher educational institution** (for example, Week of Adult Education, Students' Conferences, participating in seminars, round-table discussions, presentations of home culture, home university, city and etc.)
- **Meetings with other students** (with national students from the same study field or study programme, meetings with other foreign students studying in higher educational institution according all the programmes, meetings with students are going to go for their Erasmus+ studies abroad and etc.)
- **Joint activities of national and international students in the higher educational institution or outside and etc.**

All the activities – formal and non-formal – are organized keeping the main principles of teaching and learning. The most important principles for multicultural literacy are the following:

- Practical aspect and tasks,
- Experience based teaching/learning,
- Problem-based teaching/learning.

6. Conclusions and discussion

- Theoretical and empirical discourse analysis enables to distinguish some positive factors that could be the basis for more effective development of multicultural and intercultural competencies.
- The most important positive factors are the following: ability to overcome prejudices; more empathy and tolerance; productive, constructive participation in another culture and global world, better understanding your own and other cultures, openness for an unknown, different and untraditional, ability to communicate and act beyond your cultural boundaries and etc.
- Because development of multicultural and intercultural competencies is not harmonic process, it is necessary to make that educational process permanent involving all possible places, aspects and levels.
- Multicultural and intercultural competencies could be developed in formal and non-formal teaching/learning process where the most relevant is encouraging students use their knowledge and experience, friendly and constructive, engaging and inclusive as well as tolerant to any kind of diversity also cultural.

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