

Name: Chris Mohrsen lv14s027

Age Group: 1st – 6th grade

Subject Area:

Intercultural competence in language teaching

Motivation:

Intercultural competence is a very important subject to teach our pupils. Why I think that, is because we live in a world with a lot of different cultures, values, religions etc. and we need to learn how to communicate with, and not to disrespect, other's cultures. In a world, as globalized as ours it's more important than ever to create awareness regarding culture, so our pupils will understand that not everybody shares the same culture as they do. We need to teach our pupils to know how to handle it, when they interact with a person that shares a different culture.

Therefore, it is our job as future teachers, to be able to explain and teach this to our pupils and educate our pupils to be intercultural competent. But how can we do this?

Problem statement:

How can you make your pupils interculturally competent?

Theory:

In this synopsis, I will focus on what defines the term Intercultural competence via Anne Aarup Jensen, and furthermore use Byram's ICC-model, which includes the factors, knowledge, attitude, skill of interpreting and relating, and last skill of discovery and interaction. At last I will describe Geert Hofstede's onion model.

Intercultural competence:

Anne Aarup Jensen describes intercultural competence as the ability to communicate and behave, when interacting with people from another culture. It is a goal to reduce ethnocentrism but instead show more understanding towards the foreign culture. A good way to do this is to compare different cultures, and find the similarities instead of the differences. When you learn about new cultures, similarities and differences, you have a greater knowledge and you have a better chance to know the right approach to communicate with the foreign culture¹. The way you communicate the right way to a foreign culture is, according to Byram, through your *attitudes*,

¹ Intercultural Competence – a new challenge for language teachers and trainers in Europe, Lies Sercu, Vol 1, P. 49-50

knowledge, skills and education. Byram works with a model called the ICC-model (intercultural communicative competence) that works with these factors.

ICC-Model:

Attitudes: Byram talks about how our attitude is towards people with a different culture, religion, behaviors etc. when we have not interacted with

	Skills interpret and relate (<i>savoir comprendre</i>)	
Knowledge of self and other; of interaction: individual and societal (<i>savoirs</i>)	Education political education critical cultural awareness (<i>savoir s'engager</i>)	Attitudes relativising self valuing other (<i>savoir être</i>)
	Skills discover and/or interact (<i>savoir apprendre/faire</i>)	

this culture before. Byram says we need to get rid of all the prejudice and stereotyping, because even the positive prejudice will hinder mutual understanding. We need to show openness and curiosity towards foreign cultures, and therefore also show respect for possible differences.

Another step is to be able to meet the foreign cultures, meanings and behaviors from the foreign cultures point of view. This is what he calls to decentre. To decentre you need to suspend your subjective belief, meanings and behavior, to fully understand the other culture. Byram says that this can lead to a "re-socialization", where you change your subjective belief, from another point of view and through new norms.²

Knowledge:

Here Byram talks about two different kinds of knowledge. First the knowledge about your own social groups and their culture in their own country, and knowledge about the interlocuter's country's social groups and their culture. Second, knowledge of the processes of interaction at individual and societal level.³ Byram says that the knowledge about interaction is something you don't learn automatically. The knowledge acquired in the primary and secondary socialization, is knowledge built upon one's own culture, values, beliefs etc. and therefore gain a national identity and feel part of this "group". But later, you learn about different religions, social classes, identities etc. But when learning and analyzing new information, their point of view will always be the one from their nations standpoint. When you are aware of this, and how you acquired your social

² Byram, Michael, 1997, Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, P. 34.

³ Byram, Michael, 1997, Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, P. 35

identities and you are aware that you are looking at a foreign culture from a certain point of view, then you have a certain basis for successful interaction.⁴

Skill of interpreting and relating:

This skill is connected to the function *knowledge*, and the term preexisting knowledge. This skill tells us about how you can interpret and relate documents/events or you could say non-interaction. You can do it through your social identity, and through that you interpret it and explain a document. When you're conscious about your acquired knowledge it is easier for you to interpret it in a way, your social group can relate to the document from a foreign culture or the other way around. That is why it is important to have knowledge about your own identity and culture, and also the other culture you are interpreting a document to.⁵

Skill of discovery and interaction:

Byram talks about another skill. A skill of discovery and interaction. In contrast to the skill of interpreting and relating, this is a skill that has, to do, with interaction with other people. It comes to play when you have no preexisting knowledge or at least very little. This is a skill you need, when you need to "read" another culture's meaning and/or connotations. For not long ago it was difficult to relate to very distant nations, culture-wise. But now, with the internet, international media, and such, it is easier to relate to even "exotic" languages and cultures.⁶

Hofstede's Onion Model:

Geert Hofstede's onion model is a model used to describe different important things for different nations and cultures. His model is built up like an onion with 4 different layers, the more layers you peel, the deeper you dig into the nations culture. The 4 layers, are *symbols, heroes, rituals and values*.

Symbols:

Symbols are the outer layer of the onion. Symbols can be anything that has symbolic value for a

⁴ I Byram, Michael, 1997, Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, P. 35-36

⁵ Byram, Michael, 1997, Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, P. 37

⁶ Byram, Michael, 1997, Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, P. 37-38

country. It can be a flag, song, building etc. If we take Denmark for example, it could be the national anthem, the round tower, Dannebrog etc. This is something that has symbolic value for a lot of Danish people. ⁷

Heroes:

In this layer, we have the heroes. Heroes can be either dead or alive.

Heroes can be politicians that has done a lot of great things for the nation, it can also be musicians, athletes and even movie stars.

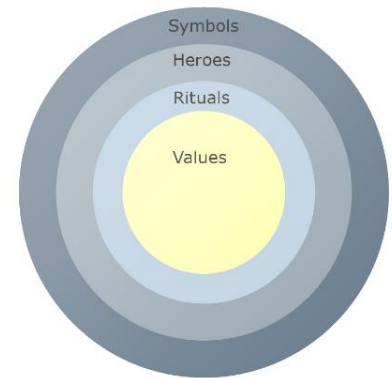
These heroes are very appreciated and are great role models for both young and adults. In Denmark, we have heroes like HC Andersen, Christian IV and Holger Danske. ⁸

Rituals:

In this layer we have the rituals. This is all the rituals and traditions we celebrate in our culture, and are socially essential to the members of our culture. Hofstede mentions greetings rituals, eating rituals, religion rituals as examples of this. In Denmark, we celebrate Christmas for instance, we celebrate fastelavn, when we graduate we have a “student driving”. Just to mention a few. ⁹

Values:

Now we are in the core of the onion, and this is a little deeper than the other layers. Values are a way of living for many different cultures. Different cultures have different opinions whether something is evil or good, normal or abnormal, ugly or beautiful. In Denmark, our welfare system, which provides the unfortunate ones, that can't take care of themselves and their families. We have the law of Jante, that means that you don't brag about you being better than anyone else. ¹⁰



Practice element:

This is how I had in mind of work with culture in a 4th grade.

I would start by discussing in plenum, what it means for the pupils to be “Danish”, and what is

⁷ Rasmussen, A. S., & Bank-Mikkelsen, G. (2001). *Focus on culture: Student book*. Århus: Systime. P 41

⁸ Rasmussen, A. S., & Bank-Mikkelsen, G. (2001). *Focus on culture: Student book*. Århus: Systime. P 41

⁹ Rasmussen, A. S., & Bank-Mikkelsen, G. (2001). *Focus on culture: Student book*. Århus: Systime. P 41

¹⁰ Rasmussen, A. S., & Bank-Mikkelsen, G. (2001). *Focus on culture: Student book*. Århus: Systime. P 41

important for them. Through this they will acquire some useful background knowledge, to do the task they will be handed later. Like Byram says, we need a standpoint, and if the pupils are conscious about this, it is easier for them to analyze other cultures, and not to show prejudice and stereotyping. If there is a pupil or more pupils with another cultural background, it just opens for further discussion which is good. This teaches the pupils a respecting attitude towards a different culture, they may interact with.

After this, the pupils are handed Hofstede's onion model. The task is now, that the pupils must, in groups, describe the Danish culture, through Hofstede's four layers, and after that compare it to an English-speaking culture, e.g. England, USA and Australia. If there was a pupil with a different background culture, it would be interesting to compare this to the Danish culture. Computers might be necessary to do this task, and the timeframe should be clear for all the pupils.

After this I would like them share their task with the rest of the class, and see if the other groups agree, disagree or have some other answers.

This is a great way to teach your pupils to be interculturally competent.

Literature:

Books:

Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Rasmussen, A. S., & Bank-Mikkelsen, G. (2001). *Focus on culture: Student book*. Århus: Systime.

Sercu, L. (1995). *Intercultural competence a new challenge for language teachers and trainers in Europe*. Aalborg (Denemark): Aalborg University Press.

Websites:

EMU Danmarks læringsportal. (n.d.). Retrieved January 10, 2017, from <http://www.emu.dk/omraade/gsk-lærer/ffm/engelsk/1-4-klasse/kultur-og-samfund>

Lesson plan (appendix)

Number of lessons	2 x 45 minutes
Competence goal	Culture and society 1st – 4th The pupil can compare their own every day to children in English speaking countries every day.
Proficiencies – and knowledge goals	Intercultural contact (fase 4) Proficiency goal: The pupil can tell about their own traditions and own every day. Knowledge goal: The pupil has knowledge about cultures importance of understanding him/her self and others.
Learning goal	The pupil can observe other cultures through their own culture.
Activity	The pupils will be handed Geert Hofstede's onion model, and they need to find <i>symbols, heroes, rituals and values</i> of the Danish culture and after that, an English-speaking culture.
Evaluation	They must do a group presentation in the end of the lessons.

Interlanguage analysis (appendix)

Many years ago there was a girl with the name Zoella. Zoella was a **feary**, she was **a** queen **for flower-valley**. **There was pretty** and they **was** happy, but there was **a** evil queen from **blackness-forrest** **shes** name was Ellenal. Ellenal was jealous because **shes** forest **not was** as pretty as Flower-**valley**. So she chose to kill Zoella and conquer **flower-vally**. But **so** did not make it that far. Because Zoella built a wall of thorns so Ellenal could not come in and Ellenal **come never** again. **every bodys** from **flower-vally** live happy to **theres** days end.

Red = Mis-spelling, grammar, Danicism,

Yellow = Wrong use of word

Blue = Proper noun

Corrections:

- 1) Misspelling. = fairy
- 2) Wrong use of article = the queen. One country, one queen
- 3) Wrong use of the word "for" = queen of
- 4) Proper nouns starts with capital letter
- 5) Danicism = It was pretty
- 6) Concord-error = "They" is plural, and therefore "was" should be "were"
- 7) Indefinite article error = "evil" begins with a vowel and/or vowel sound, therefore "a" should be "an"
- 8) Proper nouns begin with capital letter
- 9) Misspelling = "Forest"
- 10) Wrong use of word = "She = hun" "her = hendes"
- 11) Wrong use of word = "She = hun" "her = hendes"
- 12) Danicism = "was not". Auxiliary verb before negative
- 13) Proper nouns begin with capital letter
- 14) Proper nouns begin with capital letter
- 15) Misspelling and proper noun, capital letter = "Valley"
- 16) Wrong use of the word "so" = "she"
- 17) Danicism and wrong tense (present) and adverb before the verb = "never came"
never is first because you can't say "neverly"
- 18) Misspelling = Everybody. No plural -s needed, it is already plural.
- 19) Proper nouns begin with capital letter and misspelling = "Valley"
- 20) Danicism = They lived happily ever after (De levede lykkeligt til deres dages ende)
- 21) Wrong use of word = There (Der er), Their (deres)