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# ENGLISH EXAM

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Intercultural competence in language teaching



**VED UPLOAD AF SYNOPSIS PÅ FRONTER, BEKRÆFTER JEG/ GRUPPEN AT OPGAVER ER  
UDFÆRDIGET UDEN URETMÆSSIG HJÆLP, JFR. STUDIEORDNINGENS PKT. 29**

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### Name:

Louise Cecilie Katana, Lv15s030

### Age group:

4th-10th grade

### Subject area:

Intercultural competence in language teaching

### Motivation:

When teaching pupils English, it is also important for me to make them aware that different cultures exist. Culture can mean and be a lot of various things, but it is important that the pupils know there are different ways of living, and that English is not necessarily the same in every country. Culture is often used to describe how “the others” are, but I think it is important to show the pupils that “the others” are more likely like themselves, they just have a different way of living. It is important to let the pupils know that there is no right way of living, we are just all different people trying to make a living. So to be interculturally competent is an important skill to have as a human being.

### Problem statement:

How can we make our pupils interculturally competent?

### Theory:

When we enter a foreign culture, there are a lot of things we need to be aware of. And according to Annie Aarup Jensen and predominant social psychological theory, intercultural competence is basically being able to show appropriate behaviour when we are meeting another culture. We should also not offend the rules and traditions that the country might have. Regarding to appropriate behaviour, it is also important to have some kind of social skill, so the meeting with another culture can be successful. The social skills approach train the pupils non-verbal communication, mimics, gestures, eye contact etc. We know that language is one of the most important barriers in the cultural meeting, but training the pupils in politeness, conversational

structure, rules for social situations etc. constitute some of the cognitive background aspects of the intercultural competence.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the social skills approach, Michael Byram talks about four aspects of interaction across frontiers of different countries: knowledge, attitude, skills of interpreting and relating, and skills of discovery and interaction. These four aspects can be acquired through experience and reflection. Being able to establish relationships, manage dysfunctions and mediate is what distinguishes an “intercultural speaker” and makes the person different from a native speaker.<sup>2</sup>

When we teach the pupils about culture, it is also important to teach them about cultural understanding and the two different views of culture: the descriptive concept of culture and the complex concept of culture, which Iben Jensen writes about. The descriptive concept of culture was perceived as homogeneous, in which everyone was considered to share the same culture, and had different roles and rights according to their various functions in the society. This concept is still in use today, where culture is defined as ideas, values, rules and norms that the individual human takes over from the previous generation and attempts to transmit to their own next generation. The complex concept of culture developed as a more abstract term than the previous “subcultures”, “co-cultures” and “management cultures”. In this concept, culture is perceived as the knowledge, meanings and values that people share with others within different societies. You could also say that the choice one makes is always influenced by cultural, social and individual aspects - for example it is more ladylike and feminine to order a salad instead of a huge beef, this would be a social suggestion about what is most appropriate. Culture has been used to describe “the others”, but each time “we” state how others are, “we” assume that “they” are not like “us”. And we need to teach our pupils that there are no such thing as “them” and “us”, we are all human beings, just living in different cultures.<sup>3</sup>

Also when teaching our pupils about culture, it is also important to focus on the linguistic dimension of world knowledge, which is often ignored. Different words and sentences may have different meanings in the various countries, and the pupils need to be aware of this, because they might say some things that would not be appropriate in the target language. However, learning

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<sup>1</sup> Sercu, Lies; Aarup Jensen, Annie (1995) page 41-45

<sup>2</sup> Byram, Michael (1997) chapter 2, page 31-39

<sup>3</sup> Jensen, Iben (2007) chapter 1, page 17-24

about culture also needs to involve that the pupils can learn from one's experiences of and reflections on language and culture, in trying to create and interpret meanings in the target language.<sup>4</sup>

### Practice element:

To make our pupils interculturally competent, we have to actually work with other cultures. This could be done in so many different ways, but I think they would gain the most by having a "meeting" with a different culture.<sup>5</sup> As a teacher I would strive to find some "pen pals" for my students, so they could have this "meeting" and gain something from other pupils around the world. I also think it is difficult for some of them to take it seriously, but that is just where you as a teacher have to make it interesting for everyone. To make them see that they might have something in common with the "pen pal" would be a good start I think. But I also think that it is ever so relevant to make the pupils aware of the theory I wrote about in this synopsis. That this meeting has to be as successful as possible, and that the pupils should know how to act appropriate towards other cultures as Annie Aarup Jensen says.<sup>6</sup> Therefore I also think it is important, as Michael Byram also talks about that we go through knowledge of the country before we make contact with them. A good way to check up on a country could be done with Geert Hofstede's tool to compare countries around the world. With this tool we are able to know something about ourselves and the other country's: power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long term orientation and indulgence. These six dimensions are described when you compare the countries<sup>7</sup>, and this is a good thing to show the pupils, so they might know what they need to be aware of when taking contact with a different culture. However, it does not guide them to what they can and cannot ask to their "pen pals" that is still a matter of appropriate behaviour. I also wanted to start off the class with a warm up activity in which the pupils tell about their own experiences with culture meetings, and what they noticed in the country. We should be aware that some of the pupils might not have travelled to different countries, but they could talk about where they would like to go and why. I think it is important to start with small warm ups,

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<sup>4</sup>Liddicoat, Anthony; Scarino, Angela (2013) chapter 2, page 25-30

<sup>5</sup> See: Appendix 1

<sup>6</sup> Sercu, Lies; Aarup Jensen, Annie (1995) page 41-45

<sup>7</sup> Geert Hofstede - Compare Countries, last visited January 11 2017

just to let the pupils know that now they are supposed to speak as much English as possible. But also because I think it is important to keep training all of the 5 main skills: speaking, listening, writing, reading and the conversation skill. This could be a more “fun” way to do it.

### Interlanguage:

I have chosen a student product from an 8<sup>th</sup> grade, which is actually a “pen pal” letter from a Danish girl to an Australian girl, Maria.<sup>8</sup> Overall we understand what the pupil is trying to say, but there are a lot of errors in the text as well. The main errors are:

- Transfer errors: *“... that you soon come and visit me”* or *“It is so long time since I have heard from you”*
- Mix of tenses: *“It will be very fun when you came to Denmark”*
- Spelling errors: Tanks -> thanks  
Thinks -> things  
Thickets -> tickets  
Bye -> buy
- Mix of can and can't = can't is sometimes used where it should be can: *“... and if you wan, cant we go on a big market called “Fisketorvet”* or *“If you want, can't we drive around “Scharkenborg Slot”*

I would focus on these four main errors, because I think these are important to learn. I also believe that it is important not to overwrite the whole product with red marks on what is wrong. This could affect the pupil in a negative way, and they might lose their motivation in learning English. In a feedback to the pupil I would write these four main errors and underline what I mean with them, and I would suggest the pupil to look up words that she might have a hard time spelling, and let her know that some of them might sound the same, but means different things. If she continues to make the same mistakes in the next essays, and does not learn from the main errors I explain to her, I would make time to sit down and go through it with her, to make sure that she understands what I mean and to improve her writing skill. And if the main errors are the same in every pupil's text, I would go through the rules of grammar in plenum and do some exercises so they can improve it until next time around.

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<sup>8</sup> See: Appendix 2

### List of references:

Aarup Jensen, Annie (1995) Defining Intercultural Competence: A Discussion of its Essential Components and Prerequisites, In: Sercu, Lies *Intercultural Competence: A New Challenge for Language Teachers and Trainers in Europe*, Aalborg University Press

Byram, Michael (1997) *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence*, Multilingual Matters LTD

Jensen, Iben (2007) *Introduction to Cultural Understanding*, Roskilde Universitetsforlag

Liddicoat, Anthony; Scarino, Angela (2013) *Intercultural Language Teaching and Learning*, Blackwell Publishing l.td.

Geert Hofstede - Compare Countries, last visited January 11 2017 at: <https://geert-hofstede.com/countries.html>

## Appendix

### 1) Lesson plan:

Class: 8th	Date: 11/1	Time: 45 minutes	No. Of students: 19	
Recent topic work: Racism		Recent language work: Sentence structure		
Aims: "The student can attend short culture meetings with use of different medias"				
Objectives: The students are expected to do a warm up and then I present them their "pen pals"				
Assessment: We will evaluate at the end of the school year, when they are "done" with writing to a "pen pal"				
Materials: Computers for each student, "pen pals" for each student				
Anticipated problems: The students might not know what to write with a stranger about, but we have gone through knowledge about the country (which is England) and how they are supposed to act and show appropriate behavior. Some students might still need help to get started				
Timing	Teacher activity	Student activity	Success indicators	Aims of the stage
08:15	Presentation of warm up: Which country have you been to and what did you notice and like about it? -If they haven't travelled: where would you like to go? And why? Two and two	Students are quiet	The students talk to each other and practice a lot of their speaking skill, but they also listen to each other and understands	Everyone talks English and understands the activity
08:20	I start the computers, so we wont use too much time on it	Students work two and two	Everyone is talking English in class	Each student can tell about their experiences or wishes
08:35	I introduce the students to their "pen pals" And they are supposed to write a letter I will walk around in class and help	The students work on their own	Every students sends a letter to their "pen pal"	The students can work alone and practice their writing skills
09:00	End of class	End of class	End of class	End of class



Additional possibilities: It could be another warming up activity regarding culture, or maybe that they were supposed to have "pen pals" from a more parallel culture like India, so they could write with other students trying to improve their English.

Homework/Further work: The students will have to keep up being in touch with their "pen pal" throughout the year, so I have planned that they write each other once a week with the teacher from England

2) Student product:

Denmark  
29 November 2003

Dear Maria.

- 1 Tanks for your last letter, I'm glad to hear that you soon come and visit me.
- 2 It is so long time since I have heard from you, is there something wrong?
- 3 I am glad to your com, it will be very comfortable. It will be very fun when you came
- 4 to Denmark.
- 5 We shall see so many thinks, wee shall in Tivoli and drive in the big switchback, it
- 6 will be very fun, and we shall eat some big ice cream. They taste very good in Tivoli.
- 7 We can also go to festivals, you came right in the middle of at big and beautiful
- 8 festival called "Skanderborg Festival".
- 9 I can bye thickest now if you want, it is very cheap.
- 10 We can take on canal circular in Copenhagen; we can se "The little mermaid",
- 11 and if you wan, cant we go on a big market called "Fisketorvet", there you can bye
- 12 almost anything. It will be so great; it's easy to spend much money there.
- 13 If you want, can't we drive around "Schackenborg Slot" and see the Queen, and
- 14 maybe if we are very lucky, we can see the Crown Prince - and Princess Frederik and
- 15 Mary. Mary comes from Australia, you know that, right?
- 16 She is a very beautiful woman, and I think that she will be a good Queen, just like our
- 17 Queen Magrethe is now.
- 18 Do you talk a lot of her down in Australia? Is it not strange to have an absolute
- 19 normal girl, and suddenly she shall be the Queen of Denmark?
- 20 She is always in our scandal newspaper; it must be very strange for her!
- 21 You can just write on my address or call me if you have some questions.
- 22 Do you know that time you came to the airport? I will come and pick you up, and
- 23 then we can go to a restaurant in Copenhagen. Do you want to do that?
- 24 You don't have to answer it now!
- 25 I pleasure me to see you, and I hope it will be to something that time, it was very
- 26 irritated that you don't could came the last time.
- 27 Maybe I can come to Australia to visit you; I will love to see your country. It is so
- 28 different than small Denmark. In Denmark have we no mountain or enormous desert,
- 29 the animal in Australia live not in Denmark beside of them in the Zoo.
- 30 I will love to se a kangaroo, a koala or a very big snake.

3) Correction key used for student product:

## CORRECTION KEY

MARK	EXAMPLE	MISTAKE
	That ugly, old <u>whitch</u> is here again.	wrong spelling
	It <u>stands</u> here in the newspaper.	wrong word
	He <u>work</u> all day.	right word but wrong tense or form
	What do you see <u>on</u> the picture?	wrong preposition
	Jonas speaks english well.	capital letter
	My little <sup>1</sup> sister has red hair.	two words
	I'd rather do it my <sup>3</sup> self.	one word
	Victoria <sup>✓</sup> swimming now.	Something is missing here.
	Tobias isn't <del>not</del> here.	omit – word
	Maria tel <sup>s</sup> me <del>s</del> she is unhappy.	omit – punctuation
	When he is tired <del>hides</del> he <del>under</del> the table.	reverse order
	an <sup>old</sup> , Danish <sup>(important)</sup> tradition	wrong word order
	⑩ Help! They don't <sup>ht</sup> see me."	wrong position – punctuation
	He's the <u>murder</u> <sup>*</sup> who killed ...	see note marked *
	a girl who have <sup>3</sup> been ...	see note no. ①
	...with her. <u>Seven</u> years later she ...	new paragraph – move down a line and in a bit
	The <sup>others</sup> (people) will help.	alternative suggestion(s)
	How are you doing? <sup>Better/Well</sup> (Good!) I hope.	acceptable possibilities
	Anyone who thinks otherwise is <u>full of shit</u> .	Inappropriate language! Find a more acceptable word or phrase, please.