

The Main Stages and the Method of Developing Communicative Competence

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Abstract

The project is organized around three main stages: explanation, collection, implementation, which are described in turn. The students are given the opportunity to experiment, to see how far they can communicate in situations where all the choices of language used are made by the people speaking; to practice the fluent use of language they know. In general these activities both increase the students' motivation, since the students talk for themselves, and help bridge the gap between rather artificial world of the classroom, with its controlled language practice, and the real world outside..

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INTRODUCTION

In the first stage, i.e. Explanation, the teacher explains to learners the concept of intercultural competence in order to make them aware of the importance of paying attention to the culture of the target language. Once the concept has been introduced, learners are told they are to explore the culture of the target language and they are presented with a list of key areas that offer the possibility for developing intercultural competence, including Family, education, Law and Order or Power and Politics among others.

In the second step, i.e. Collection, learners are given the task to gather material outside the classroom in relation with the cultural topics they have agreed to work with in the first stage. Learners are recommended to collect material from a variety of sources including photocopied information from different printed materials, photo documentaries, pictures, video or DVD scenes, recorded material like interviews to native speakers, excerpts from the internet and the like. The good thing of this activity is that learners cultural awareness is further increased through having to question themselves what is representative of the given topic.

In the third stage, i.e. Implementation, learners work with a variety of activities that require their use of the four skills in order to develop their overall communicative competence and promote their cross cultural awareness and understanding. We suggest the following sample activities of developing listening skill.

Activities such as video taped cultural dialogues, audio or video taped cultural misunderstandings and taped recorded interviews with native speakers, among many others, could promote listening skills with a special emphasis on the intercultural competence. In trying to develop learners overall communicative competence in the target language through the listening skill, we have decided to focus particularly on the intercultural competence as being the approach less taken in the language class.

In video-taped cultural dialogues, the learners view a video sketch where two people of different cultures are discussing an area of a cultural topic that the project focuses on. One of them is from the learners' own culture whereas the other is from the target culture. The teacher plans pre, while and post listening questions to raise learners' cross cultural awareness while practicing listening. For example, a pre listening question could request learners to predict the opinion of the two persons with regard to the given topic.

While listening question could require them to confirm or reject their predictions made on the pre-listening phase. Finally, the post-listening question could ask them to critically discuss the opinion of the person from the target culture.

Once discussion on content is over, learners could also be requested to identify differences (if any) among the two persons interacting in the scene with regards to pause, changes of information, voice quality or periods of silence in the one hand, and with regard to non-verbal means of communication on the other hand.

Listening to audio – or video-taped intercultural misunderstanding is another useful activity to further sharpen learners awareness of cultural differences. Learners can be required to listen to a situation that reports a real-life intercultural misunderstanding that causes people to become confused or offended and can then be asked to get into pairs or groups in order to come up with an explanation of such misunderstanding which will inevitably increase their intercultural awareness.

Tape-recorded interviews with native speakers is another useful activity type particularly suitable for practicing the intercultural competences. Here learners get into groups and are assigned the responsibility of tape-recording an informal interview with a native speaker they know. learners should choose a cultural topic the project is based on and prepare questions on that topic for the interview. In class, the interviews are played and learners compare the opinion. These spontaneous recorded conversations offer two benefits. First, they give learners the chance to be exposed to natural language by listening to the native speaker's responses, something which is difficult to find in scripted material. Second, they encourage learners to become aware of their common problems with grammar, pronunciation, intonation, vocabulary and the like by listening to themselves. Songs, jokes or anecdotes from typical films from the target culture could be an excellent source of listening material to transport learners to the target culture and prepare them to communicate naturally.

We can point the following three main reasons for such neglects:

- Teachers usually have an overcrowded curriculum to cover and lack the time to spend on teaching culture, which requires a lot of work.
- Many teachers have a limited knowledge of the target culture and, therefore, are afraid to teach it.
- Teachers are often confused about what cultural aspects to cover. In an attempt to help language teachers tackle cultural aspects in the language classroom, the purpose of this paper is that of proposing a cultural project for building learners communicative competence has long been among the major goals of L2 instructional programs.

It is our position that crucial to that developments an understanding of discourse as the key competence with the rest of the competences shaping it.

Accordingly, listening skill plays a key role in fostering learners communicative competence since it is the manifestations of interpreting and producing a spoken or written piece of discourse, as well a way of manifesting the rest of the components of the communicative competence construct.

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