**The Intercultural Pedagogy**

By the 1990s, modern language education has shifted focus to intercultural pedagogy to prepare learners for a multicultural world. Such paramount importance that culture has gained in the field of language teaching/learning can be traced back to:

1) Pragmatic motive; placing culture in education as a tool for international communication,

2) Educational motive; movements towards acquiring non-native cultures to widen learners’ world-view, and

3) intercultural studies; mediating between language and culture to reach beneficial communication and interaction (Buttjes, 1991) .

Intercultural language learning encompasses: culture, language and learning, and is defined as:

The process of acquiring the culture-specific and culture-general knowledge, skills, attitudes required for effective communication and interaction with individuals from other cultures. It is a dynamic developmental, and ongoing process which engages the learner cognitively, behaviourally, and affectively.

(Paige, Jorstad, Siaya, Klein & Colby 2003 cited in Ho, 2009 p.65)

Intercultural pedagogy put focus on the dynamic nature of culture, so that learners are encouraged to engage themselves in the interpretation of cultural facts that vary from one situation to the other depending on time, space, generation, class or region. Furthermore, it views culture as a set of individual practices, hence, language-culture learning involves acquiring knowledge about culture, comparing cultures, exploring cultures; and finding one’s own ‘third place’ between cultures.

The intercultural pedagogy does not aim at imitating native speaker peers, but at developing the intercultural communicative competence together with international understanding (Byram,1991; Cakir, 2006). Success in this domain is measured within the individual learner, not in external settings where adaptation is required. I.P attempts to help learners understand “(1) the nature of culture, (2) how cultural difference affects communication and human relations, and (3) the influence of culture and cultural difference in specific domains such as business or language learning” (Shaules, 2007 p. 85) to prepare them for a world citizenship.

In other words, I.P. aims go beyond culture and language teaching. However, fostering positive attitudes towards other cultures is accompanied with understanding the linguistic and behavioural patterns of both the target and the native culture i.e. learners’ native cultures should not be marginalized in class; otherwise, learners would feel suspicious about their contributions to their communities. I.P helps learners adapt a wider perspective in the perception of reality through raising interest in foreign cultures and viewing one’s own culture in a broader context (Byram et. al. 1991). Finally, I.P aims at making teaching/learning more enjoyable inside and outside class allowing learners to interact with foreigners with confidence and interest (Byram et.al, 1991).

The aims of I.P reveal that they embody ‘tertiary socialization’ (Byram et.al, 1991), the latter “is prescriptive, suggesting purposes and objectives for education, rather than being descriptive as the concepts of primary and secondary socialization” (Byram, 2008 p. 113). In other words, educators can help the learners understand new different concepts which could help them develop social identities that are not constrained by a particular language. However, this cannot take place only through providing cultural knowledge, but “ it comes from considering [one’s] own mindset, comparing with [one’s] counterpart’s mindset [….] and then deciding how to proceed on the basis of what [has been] learned” (Tomalin,2009 p.116).

* **Approaches to Teaching Cross-cultural Communication**

**The Mono-cultural Approach ,** (the foreign cultural approach (Slauver, 2004).

Focus is on the target culture i.e. the culture of the language being learned with no reference to the learner’s culture in any way.

This approach provides learners with factual information and patterned ways of communication in the foreign language.

**The Comparative Approach**

It involves both the target language and the learner’s language.

Teachers may make good use of possible similarities between the two cultures to facilitate communication.

Noting the differences between the two cultures is itself a way of reinforcing learners’ cultural awareness in order to avoid cross-cultural communicative problems.

This approach encourages openness to the world and acceptance of others.

According to Byram and Planet ( 2000,p. 189) “does involve evaluation but not in terms of comparison with something which is better, but in terms of improving what is all too familiar.”

* **Techniques and materials for teaching**

**Cultural capsules**

a culture capsule consists of a paragraph or so of explanation of one minimal difference between leaner’s’ own and a target custom, along with several illustrative photos or relevant realia.

**Cultural clusters**

A culture cluster consists of about three culture capsules that develop related topics, plus one 30-minute classroom simulation that integrates the information contained in the capsules

**Cultural assimilators**

cultural assimilators are episodes of target cultural behavior which describe a “critical incident’ of cross-cultural interaction that could be found ‘puzzling’ or ‘conflictful’ but that can be interpreted in a fairly unequivocal manner, given sufficient knowledge about the other’s culture. Once the episode is presented, multiple choice testing is applied with four options that include only one correct answer.

**Critical incidents and problem solving**

Critical incidents are the descriptions of incidents or situations which demand that a participant makes some kind of decision. Students usually read the incident independently and make individual decisions then a group discussion follows to see the reasons behind the students’ decisions. At the end, students’ decisions are compared to ones taken by the natives .

**Cultural quiz**

Teachers use this technique for example to ask whether some behaviors are accepted or not in the target culture. Knowing the right answer is not as important as the eagerness to know more this technique develops in students. The answers can be given via listening or reading an addition to extra information by teachers.

**Drama**

The use of drama is a very good technique for clarifying possible cross-cultural differences and when taught properly is “ an ideal context for exploration of cultural values, both one’s own and other people’s.” (Byram and Flemming 1998, p. 134)

**Technology empowered techniques**

New trends in teaching culture rely on technology. These include:

* ***virtual learning environments*** which use audio and video conferencing like the Collaborative Cyber Community which allow audio, video and text chat.
* culture can be conveyed through ***receptive and productive means***. Simply accessing an L2 web site can expose learners to numerous aspects of the target culture, and much knowledge may be acquired through reading, listening, and observing. Here, authentic materials play an especially important role because they are designed by native speakers for native speakers and, therefore, provide real data for any exploration of the L2 culture.
* ***Tele-collaboration***, which features email, chat, discussion forums, wikis, video conferencing and web-based projects of various kinds. As well as enabling contact and interaction with native speakers, these learning environments for culture provide students with the opportunities to reflect on both their own culture and the target culture.
* ***web quests and cultural quests*** which enable learners to know about the target culture through doing guided tasks using internet resources suggested in the web quest.