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## Fostering Intercultural Communicative Competence in the Foreign Language Classroom: Pedagogical Implications

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### ABSTRACT

The development of learners' communicative competence has been regarded as the major goal of foreign and second language teaching. Several authors have advanced various communicative models in order to better explain how language teaching and learning work (e.g. Canale & Swain, 1980; Canale, 1983; Bachman, 1990; Celce-Murcia *et al.* 1995; Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor 2006). One of the elements of the communicative model is that of intercultural competence (Byram, 1997; Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2008). This competence has been defined by Meyer (1991, p. 137) as "the ability of a person to behave adequately in a flexible manner when confronted with actions, attitudes and expectations of representatives of foreign cultures". Cultural dimensions play a paramount role in learners' learning process; however, there is not apparently a particular approach for its integration in the language classroom. Taken into account those aspects, in this paper, I attempt to provide an instructional approach for the integration of culture in the language classroom so as to foster learners' communicative competence. The present paper presents first a revision of different communicative models, then, a description of the notion intercultural competence is provided. Finally, an instructional approach for the teaching of this particular competence is proposed.

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## 1. Introduction

It is widely accepted that developing language learners' communicative competence is the major goal of foreign and second language (FL and SL) teaching practices. One of the competencies of the communicative model is the intercultural competence (Byram, 1997; Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2006), which can be defined as "the ability of a person to behave adequately in a flexible manner when confronted with actions, attitudes and expectations of representatives of foreign cultures" (Meyer, 1991, p. 137). Nonetheless, intercultural competence is not always fostered in the SL and FL classroom and when it is integrated, the approach taken is not necessarily appropriate. In Tseng's words (2002, p. 11), "culture is often neglected in the EFL and ESL teaching/learning, or introduces as no more than a supplementary diversion to language instruction". Omaggio (1993, p. 357) argues that although teaching culture seems to be considered as an important issue, it is still seen as "insubstantial and sporadic in most language classrooms". The author indicates that this could be related to time constraints, teachers' insufficient knowledge about which aspects should be covered when teaching culture and lack of practical techniques. In addition to this, another aspect which could affect the treatment of intercultural competence is that traditional syllabuses and traditional language materials such as English language textbooks rarely incorporate activities to increase intercultural competence in the language classroom. It seems then that intercultural competence, similarly to other competencies such as pragmatic competence, is to some extent ignored in traditional language teaching practices and, in some cases, it is even regarded as an aspect which is far from language instruction.

Most language teachers focus exclusively on the development of the linguistic competence, while other competencies such as pragmatic competence, intercultural competence, discourse competence and strategic competence (see Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2006 for a review of the competencies) are not explicitly tackled. This is, in fact, based on the erroneous idea that language instruction involves merely increasing learners' linguistic competence by means of specific tasks, usually from a non communicative perspective, thereby understanding language learning and language use simply as a source of linguistic features which are taught and used in isolation and in a decontextualised manner. Fortunately, this traditional perspective has been changing over the years. Several researchers have pointed out the importance of integrating different competencies in the language classroom so as to increase learners' communicative competence successfully (Canale & Swain, 1980; Canale, 1983; Bachman 1990; Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei & Thurell, 1995; Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor 2006). Considering those aspects, the present paper aims first to provide a review of different communicative models; it then discusses the notion of intercultural competence; and finally, an instructional approach for the teaching of this particular competence is proposed.

## 2. Theoretical Background

### 2.1 Intercultural competence within the communicative approach

As reported by Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (2006), the term communicative competence is coined by Hymes (1972) who, as a response to Chomsky's (1965) theory in which attention is mainly paid to the linguistic competence, distinguishes the following two competencies, *linguistic* and *sociolinguistic*.



The former includes the sound system, morphology, and sentence creation, while the latter has to do with the speaker's ability to use language appropriately depending on the context. Drawing on Hymes' (1972) ideas, several authors have advanced different communicative models in order to better explain how SL/FL learning and teaching work (Canale & Swain, 1980; Canale, 1983; Bachman, 1990; Celce-Murcia *et al.* 1995; Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor 2006).

In the 80s, Canale and Swain (1980) proposed a model which includes *grammatical competence*, *sociolinguistic competence* and *strategic competence*. This approach, however, is further extended by Canale (1983) who added a new element, namely that of *discourse competence*. The grammatical competence refers to the linguistic codes of the language and it involves lexicon, pronunciation, spelling, word formation and sentence structure. The sociolinguistic competence deals with the socio-cultural conditions in which language is employed. The strategic competence has to do with the verbal and non-verbal strategies which might be used to compensate breakdowns in the communication. Finally, the discourse competence is understood as the coherence and cohesive features which characterised either spoken or written texts. During the 90s, Bachman (1990) provided a communicative competence model which consists of three main competencies: *language competence*, *strategic competence*, and *psychological mechanisms*. The first competence, language competence, is divided into two main components, more specifically *organisational* and *pragmatic competence*. The organisational competence refers to the *grammatical competence* and *textual competence*, whereas the pragmatic competence involves *illocutionary competence* (i.e. speech acts and language

functions) and the *sociolinguistic competence* (i.e. ability to use language appropriately in a particular context). The strategic competence encapsulates three more components, namely those of *assessment*, *planning* and *execution*, and it refers to the ability to use the *language competence* appropriately considering the pragmatic and sociolinguistic parameters. Finally, psychological mechanisms deal with both psychological and neurological aspects that need to be met when communicating. A further developed communicative competence model was proposed by Celce-Murcia *et al.* (1995), including the following competencies, namely those of *linguistic competence*, *socio-cultural competence*, *strategic competence*, *actional competence* and *discourse competence*. The main component of this model is the *discourse competence* which refers to the selection and organisation of words which are needed to create a message. The linguistic competence involves the *phonological*, *lexical*, *morphological*, and *syntactic* elements which are required in the communication. The socio-cultural competence is related to the speaker's ability to use the language appropriately in a given context. The actional competence entails the speaker's capacity for performing and understanding speech act sets. Finally, the last component is that of strategic competence which is related to the knowledge of communication strategies and how to use them.

Finally, Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (2006) provided a framework for communicative competence which focuses mainly on the integration of the four skills. This particular approach is based on previous research which indicate that the development of the four language skills is fundamental to reach communicative competence (Scarcella & Oxford, 1992; Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000) as well as on



previous communicative models such as those advanced by Bachman (1990) and Celce-Murcia *et al.* (1995). Specifically, this communicative model consists of five components, namely, *discourse competence*, *linguistic competence*, *strategic competence*, *pragmatic competence* and *intercultural competence*. The discourse competence involves the choice and the sequencing of the sentences in order to provide a cohesive and coherent message. The linguistic competence refers to both grammatical competence, which included in Canale and Swain (1980) and Bachman (1990), and the linguistic system components which are also considered by Celce-Murcia *et al.* (1995), and Celce-Murcia (2007). The strategic competence deals with the communicative strategies which are needed to interact successfully and avoid breakdowns. The pragmatic competence entails illocutionary and sociolinguistic features as in Bachman (1990) and in the actional competence and the socio-cultural competence suggested by Celce-Murcia *et al.* (1995). Finally, the intercultural competence is seen as the knowledge that is needed to interpret and produce written and spoken discourse in a given sociocultural context. Moreover, it has to do with the verbal and non-verbal communication, knowledge of the behaviour of the target community, cultural awareness and cross-cultural. This model shows the relationship between each different competence and places both the pragmatic competence and the intercultural competences on their own. Moreover, Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (2006) emphasise the necessity of developing the four language skills to create discourse, which is located at the centre of their model. Therefore, implying that by integrating the different competencies, language learners can build on discourse.

As aforementioned, since Hymes (1972) identified some of the major components of the communicative competence model, several models have been developed in order to contribute to this particular field of research (Canale & Swain, 1980; Canale, 1983; Bachman, 1990; Celce-Murcia *et al.*, 1995; Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2006). Among the different communicative competence models described above, certain differences can be identified. The models proposed by Canale and Swain (1980), Canale (1983) and Bachman (1990) seem to not indicate how the components are interrelated within the communicative model. On the contrary, Celce-Murcia *et al.* (1995) and Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (2006) identify the relationship of the different components. In addition, further differences are also found regarding the treatment of certain competencies, especially those of pragmatic and intercultural competence. Some models include pragmatic competence within other competencies such as the sociolinguistic competence (Canale & Swain, 1980; Canale, 1983; Celce-Murcia *et al.* 1995) and the language competence (Bachman, 1990). Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (2006), however, place pragmatic competence as an independent component within their proposed communicative model. Concerning intercultural competence, with the exception of Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (2006), little attention is paid to this particular competence. In fact, the authors locate this competence as an independent element within the communicative model.

## 2.2 Intercultural Communicative Competence

Defining culture seems to be a complicated task due to its complexity. In this paper, I will provide two main definitions. On the one hand, Liddicoat,



Papademetre, Scarino and Kohler (2003, p. 45) note that "culture is a complex system of concepts, attitudes, values, beliefs, conventions, behaviours, practices, rituals, and lifestyles of the people who make up a cultural group, as well as the artefacts they produce and the institutions they create". The authors also indicate that knowledge of culture is needed in order to communicate successfully in social interactions. Particularly, by pointing out that the cultural system might help speakers to understand and conceptualise the world and its speakers. On the other hand, another definition of culture is proposed by Moran (2001, p. 24) who argues that "culture is the evolving way of life of a group of persons, consisting of a shared set of practices associated with a shared set of products, based upon a shared set of perspectives on the world, and set within specific social contexts". Then, culture, from this perspective, can be seen as all the different factors that shape people within a particular community. Both definitions provide a rigorous approach to the notion of culture. However, one might wonder how teachers can integrate this culture in the language classroom. There is no doubt that culture plays a significant role in FL learning and that it is crucial for language learners as it could somehow facilitate communication and mutual understanding across cultures. By integrating accurately culture in the SL/FL classroom, teachers can better assist learners' language learning process and aid them to develop their communicative competence successfully. Moreover, teachers can prepare learners for future social interactions in which speakers of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds might meet.

The notion of intercultural competence in language learning is attributed to Byram (1997). The author provides a communicative model in which its point of

reference is the intercultural speaker rather than the native speaker. The intercultural speaker is seen as a person who is not only a language user but also a person who has the ability to employ language culturally (Byram, 1997). In line with this, House (2007, p. 19) suggests that the intercultural speaker can be defined as "a person who has managed to settle for the in-between, who knows and can perform in both his and her native culture and in another once acquired at some later date". A person who is intercultural competent seems to be able to understand and interpret different cultures as well as to act as a mediator between cultures (Byram, 2008). Therefore, the intercultural speaker is a person who is competent in a SL/FL and has the ability to understand the social diversity and reality of other cultures and employ the language appropriately.

Byram (1997) provides a differentiation between intercultural competence and intercultural communicative competence, indicating that the latter involves the following five different *savoirs*, "attitudes (*savoir être*) dispositions or orientations to act (*savoir s'engager*), knowledge (*savoirs*) and skills (*savoir comprendre, apprendre, faire*) (Byram, 1997 p. 89). Those components refer the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are needed in order to communicate and mediate across cultures. The components are thus "knowledge, skills and attitudes, complemented by the values one holds because of one's belonging to a number of social groups, values which are part of one's belonging to a given society" (Byram, Nichols & Stevens, 2001 p. 5). Following Byram (2008 p. 69) attitudes are "curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own", i.e. *savoir être*; knowledge refers to the knowledge "of social groups and their productions and practices in one's own and



in one's interlocutor's country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction", i.e. *savoir*; skills of interpreting and relating are the "ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents or events from one's own", i.e. *savoir comprendre*; skills of discovery and interaction involves the "ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction", i.e. *savoir apprendre, faire*; and critical cultural awareness/political education which involves the "ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in ones' own and other cultures and countries", i.e. *savoir s'engager*.

Intercultural communicative competence plays a paramount role in language learning and it is necessary to integrate such competence in the instructed setting. Introducing intercultural competence in the language classroom might not necessarily imply a change in teaching methodology since it could be integrated in many of the activities implemented (Byram, 1997; Byram & Moran, 2001; Byram, Gribkova & Starkey, 2002; Tseng, 2002; Corbett, 2003; Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2008; O'Dowd, 2010, 2011; Lee, 2011; Godwin-Jones, 2013). According to Liddicoat *et al.* (2003), in order to foster intercultural language learning, learners should first understand their own language and culture. Therefore, developing intercultural competence does not simply involve learning basic aspects of the target language but also implies learners' introspection so as to better understand their own language and culture as well as learners' exploration of the target language and culture. Hence, teachers wanting to both integrate cultural aspects and

foster intercultural competence should firstly pay attention to linguistic and cultural diversity faced in the language classroom, secondly understand what the concept of culture involves, and finally explore how intercultural language learning can be developed in the language classroom. However, this might does not imply that other components of the communicative models, such as pragmatic competence or discourse competence should not be fostered in the language classroom. Indeed, all the different components of the communicative model, such as the one presented by Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (2006) can be integrated in the language classroom in order to better assist the learning process. In fact, focusing exclusively on one competence would not promote language learning successfully since developing the different competencies of the communicative models appropriately is in fact what would positively influence learners' achievement of communicative competence.

To sum up, developing learners' communicative competence involves engaging learners in different activities which help them to use language appropriately in different social and cultural contexts. To do so, language teachers should not only exclusively focus on the linguistic aspects of the target language, but also on other components of the communicative approach such as intercultural competence. With that in mind, the following section provides an instructional approach for the integration of intercultural competence in the language classroom, in the FL context.

### 3. Pedagogical Implications

In an attempt to develop learners' intercultural competence, I present here an instructional approach whose aim is to integrate intercultural competence in the FL



classroom. Particularly, it includes the following five phases, namely (1) *getting started*; (2) *exploring and reflecting*; (3) *observing*; (4) *interacting*; and (5) *receiving feedback*. The first phase begins with a focus on cultural awareness and with a revision of basic concepts related to intercultural competence. The second phase focuses on learners' critical exploration of their own culture (C1) and the target culture (C2). After that, in the third phase, learners are provided with input which shows features of the C2. The fourth phase offers learners with opportunities for production focusing on specific cultural aspects, and finally, the last phase centres on feedback.

During this instructional approach, a multidirectional assessment is followed in order to facilitate teachers' access to learners' process of learning. Hence, learners' information is collected by means of two written worksheets, a recorded verbal questionnaire, and a diary. Before starting with the first phase, teachers explain learners the objectives of the instructional approach, how they will be assessed, as well as the different tools which will be employed to gather data (i.e. worksheets, a verbal questionnaire and a diary). Regarding the diary, teachers need to explain learners that it will be used in order to capture their impressions, beliefs, curiosities and opinions concerning not only the activities performed, but also their process of learning. The information obtained in those data collection instruments can be employed to elaborate further specific instructional approach and improve the quality of teaching practices.

### 3.1 Getting started

In the first phase, learners are provided with opportunities for discussing the issue of culture, intercultural competence and the role that an intercultural speaker plays in our society. To do so, teachers

prepare a worksheet containing specific questions about the given topic (Figure 1).

**Figure: 1 Worksheet-1 (Topic-based questionnaire)**

Can you define culture?  
.....

Which are its main components?  
.....

Is there any relationship between culture and language?  
.....

Can you define the notion of intercultural speaker?  
.....

Which is the role of an intercultural speaker?  
.....

Are you interested in other cultures?  
.....

Are you interested in communicating with members of other cultures?  
.....

Do we need mutual understanding across cultures?  
If so, what do we need to do?  
.....

The activity is first completed individually and after that learners are divided into small groups in order to compare their responses and discuss them orally. Once learners have dealt with those aspects in groups, teachers provide an explicit explanation of the notion of culture, intercultural competence and intercultural speaker. Furthermore, teachers have to encourage learners to further discuss these topics. In so doing, a whole class discussion can take place, thereby giving learners with more opportunities to further discuss and comment on the aspects presented in the session. The objective of this phase is to make learners think about the role of culture, intercultural competence and intercultural speaker in order to explore their attitudes and knowledge about the given topic. This phase is extremely important because teachers can obtain significant information regarding learners' belief, attitudes and knowledge relate to the topic. Furthermore, misconceptions and myths concerning



culture, intercultural competence and intercultural speakers can be discussed.

### 3.2 Exploring and Reflecting

The purpose of the second phase is to engage learners in a process of introspection in which they explore and reflect on their C1 as well as on the C2. To do so, I have selected different areas based on Byram and Morgan (1994), namely those of social identity and social groups, belief and behaviour, socialisation and the life-cycle and stereotypes and national identity (see Byram & Morgan, 1994, pp. 51-2 for a full description of the areas). To complete this phase successfully, I propose following the *five-word technique* developed by Cain (1990) in which learners are asked to provide a short list of the first five words related to the areas above presented which come to their mind. In this particular case, this activity should be done two times, first considering the C1, and then the C2. Figure 2 shows a suggested worksheet.

**Figure: 2 Worksheet-2 (Exploration)**

Areas	C1	C2
Social identity and social groups		
Belief and behaviour		
Socialisation and the life-cycle		
Stereotypes and National identity		

In completing this worksheet, learners have information about the two cultures. Once they have written down words linked to those areas, they are divided into small groups to discuss their outcomes and compare the two cultures and establish differences and similarities between them. After that, a whole class discussion about the areas explored has to be done so that learners can provide an account of what has been tackled during this phase. This phase can also serve to diminish negative attitudes

towards the C2 and value different cultural views.

### 3.3 Observing

Once learners have become familiar with the aspects covered in the previous sessions, teachers can bring into the classroom some audiovisual and/or internet sources in order to provide learners with an authentic real description of the areas explored in the second phase. The materials employed should be carefully selected as the aim is to provide an authentic-like description of the C2, thereby avoiding stereotypes which might misrepresent it. In this case, I propose the use of written texts from online sources such as newspapers or magazines (Lee, 1998; Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2008; Brett & González-Lloret, 2009; Beltrán-Palanques, 2012) and audiovisual material taken from video-sharing websites, sitcoms and films (Heron, Dubreik, Corrie, & Cole, 2002; Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2008; Xue & Pan, 2012; Beltrán-Palanques, 2012, 2014) due to its pedagogical potential. To perform this activity successfully, firstly, learners need to be provided with the written texts which have to be read and discussed in class. After that, teachers visualise short audiovisual scenes which contain information linked to the chosen areas. In so doing, learners are exposed to rich and contextualised input containing cultural value. Apart from this, learners are asked to complete a short questionnaire (Figure 3) about the aspects observed, and after that, they have to be engaged in a whole class discussion related the topics covered during the session.

**Figure: 3 Worksheet-3 (Observation questionnaire)**

Can you provide a short description of the reading passages and the audiovisual scenes? .....
Which cultural traits are shown? .....
Can you report some similarities and differences



between C1 and C2?

.....  
Have you ever experienced a similar situation? If so,  
can you explain it?

.....  
How did you feel? Which was your reaction?  
.....

### 3.4 Interacting

The fourth phase involves learners' interaction with learners of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Specifically, the purpose of this phase is to engage learners in a phase that consists of activities which integrate online interaction following both synchronous modes (e.g. social networking), asynchronous modes (e.g. e-mail) as well as face-to-face interaction. The value of new technologies in language learning resides partly in the opportunities that learners have to be exposed to rich input and use language purposefully. As a matter of fact, several researchers have pointed out its potential for promoting SL/FL learning (Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor, 2008; Brett & González-Lloret, 2009; González-Lloret, 2011, 2013; Beltrán-Palanques, 2012, 2014) and intercultural development (Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor, 2008; O'Dowd, 2010, 2011; Lee, 2011; Godwin-Jones, 2013).

To start with, learners are given opportunities for interacting with learners who have different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, for example, Erasmus students. Teachers first divide learners in pairs, so that each pair is formed by a learner of the C1 and a participant from the C2, if possible. In cases in which a reduced number of participants of the C2 are available for this teaching experience, students can be group to work with the same member of the C2. In so doing, they can work from a collaborative perspective which can be also very fruitful for language learners.

After arranging all the participants of this phase, learners should start discussing

openly the areas mentioned in the second phase with learners of C2 by means of both synchronous and asynchronous modes. First, they begin interacting asynchronously, and once they start to know each other, they can interact synchronously. Finally, in the last step of this activity, learners are engaged in a face-to-face interaction session with their interlocutors to further discuss the given topics. The face-to-face interaction is a great opportunity for language learners to interact with member of the C2 and reflect on several issues regarding communication. Moreover, during the face-to-face interaction aspects concerning non verbal communication might be also explored.

The other activity proposed here involves inviting a speaker whose culture is the C2 in order to talk and discuss issues related to the areas selected. Therefore, learners are asked to prepare, in small groups, a short interview to be carried out after the presentation of the invited speaker. After completing these two activities, learners undertake a short verbal questionnaire in order to report their experience, which ideally should be performed individually and, if possible, it should be audio/video recorded. Figure 4 illustrates the suggested verbal questionnaire.

**Figure: 4 Worksheet-4 (Verbal questionnaire)**

Can you provide a short description of your experience?

.....  
Did you reflect on your own culture when the invited speaker presented the topics?

.....  
Did you feel at any point that the opinions and comments provided by the invited speaker were not appropriate for you?

.....  
Did you find it difficult to reach a common agreement on the areas discussed?  
.....

### 3.5 Receiving feedback



The last phase involves learners' provision of feedback from both teachers and peers in which special attention is paid to the following learning outcomes, namely attitudes, knowledge, and skills. First, teachers organise a whole class discussion in order to revise the notions culture, intercultural competence and the role that an intercultural speaker plays in our society. Moreover, learners' data collected throughout the whole instructional approach (i.e. worksheets, short verbal questionnaire and diary) should be assessed in order to provide feedback appropriately. Specifically, teachers can introduce some of the most salient issues appearing in such data. The data kept is very beneficial for learners and teachers as they can review that information in order to further explore it, reflect on it. Furthermore, teachers, drawing on data, can elaborate further feedback activities as well as new instructional approaches based on data. Finally, learners also need to receive individual feedback. To do so, teachers need to organise short meetings in which learners comment on the information elicited in the worksheets, in the verbal questionnaire as well as on their diaries.

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#### 4. Conclusion

In this article I have focused on the role that intercultural competence plays in learners' development of communicative competence and how this competence can be fostered in the FL classroom. I have first provided a review of different communicative models by paying special attention to the notion of intercultural competence. As reported, not all the communicative models presented in this article account for intercultural competence with the exception of Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (2006) who argue that learners should be given with opportunities for intercultural language

learning as it might be fruitful for their communicative competence development. As reported, Byram (1997) focuses on the development of intercultural communicative competence. Accordingly, learners should develop specific skills, knowledge and attitudes which enable them to use language appropriately in intercultural encounters. Moreover, the author emphasises the figure of the intercultural speaker by suggesting that it involves a person who is able to use language in various social contexts. With that in mind, I have presented an instructional approach which might serve to exemplify how intercultural competence can be integrated in the FL classroom. The above described instructional approach for the integration of intercultural competence in the FL classroom consists of five different phases which focus on cultural awareness, learners' exploration and observation of particular cultural traits as well as on the interaction with members of the C2. It is also worth mentioning that although the main focus of the instructional approach is to increase learners' intercultural competence, other aspects such as the development of the four language skills and specific competencies such as those of pragmatic competence and discourse competence are also integrated. On that account, I consider that intercultural competence should not necessarily be tackled as an independent principle but as an element which is part of the whole communicative model, thereby incorporating it in other communicative activities.

Further research should explore whether intercultural competence is appropriately developed in the language classroom by examining the type of activities that are implemented and the materials employed. Specifically, regarding materials, researchers may examine whether language textbooks incorporate intercultural features



and see how audiovisual and/or internet resources can be exploited in the language classroom to promote intercultural competence. It would be also interesting to investigate which internal and external aspects can influence the development of intercultural competence. Finally, research might centre on examining teachers and learners' attitudes towards the role of intercultural competence.

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