

Improving Students' Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) Through Email Activities

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Abstract

Much has been discussed and written about the Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC). The general frame, Intercultural Competence (Byram and Zarate 1997) or (Byram 1997) is no longer a new concept in education or language teaching. Its definition encompasses five elements (Byram 2000): attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical awareness. Intercultural Education, therefore, is the context in which we are working. It is an educational context in which several cultures could be present, not necessarily just two of them, (the source culture which can be multiple, and the target culture- that of the second language). Hence, the target culture is a unifying factor, since the pupils (regardless of their origin and source culture) start out from a situation of equality in second language learning, which we believe is extremely beneficial for cultural integration. In this plural setting, the task of language teachers is not only to convey knowledge about the target culture; their primordial function is to be able to integrate the target culture with the students' different source cultures. In this integration (in the praxis of Intercultural Education), we find the values of heterogeneity, diversity, equality, interaction, solidarity, respects and empathy.

The concept of ICC will be discussed and a new dimension in this frame (the linguistic symmetry) will be proposed as a fundamental part of it.

Once the frame has been established (ICC), we will explore the possibilities of improving students' ICC through the use of ICT (especially email activities) in the classroom. We will also deal with the evaluation of the ICC which, due to its less tangible nature, has been a controversial topic for many years.