

# Intercultural Communicative Competence



## Exploring IC critical incidents in the classroom



... some observations

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# The 'dream' class



- **Advanced level class - CEF C1**
- **9 students (5 female, 4 male)**
- **5 nationalities**
- **Dutch - 1(M)**
- **Syrian -1(F)**
- **Japanese - 2(F)**
- **Spanish -1 (F)**
- **Saudi Arabian – 4 (3M, 1F)**
  
- **? cultures**

# The class cultures



- **culture students individually bring to the classroom**
- **culture students learn about outside of the classroom**
- **culture students learn about ‘overtly’ inside the classroom from**
  - **course books**
  - **teaching materials**
  - **teacher input -(planned/spontaneous)**
- **culture students learn about inside classroom from fellow students (different and same cultures).**

# Inter/Intracultural Communicative Critical Incidents



*Language teaching should include the development of positive attitudes towards others and a better understanding of **other cultures and one's own** (Byram, 2002)*

*If intercultural competence is primarily a description relevant to individuals from different countries, the term then excludes intercultural problems that may exist within national boundaries. It is these **internal differentiations** that are often more significant than the cultural cohesion within those national boundaries (Rathje, 2007).*

## 1. Teaching Materials

teachers resource book from course book - freedom of speech

## 2. Teacher Input

- addressing teachers by name
- shaking hands with women

# What is our role when these incidents occur in the classroom ?



- **challenge learners' own sense of what is 'normal'**
- **encourage risk and reflection** (Byram, Gribkova & Starkey, 2002)
  
- **Coursebooks/published materials**
  - **prepare and predict**
  - **set out clear guidelines before an activity**
  - **be ready to intervene if necessary**
  
- **But ...**
  - **how far should we 'push' them?**
  - **at what point *do* we intervene?**
  
- **education should not become indoctrination** (Byram, 2002)

# What is our role when these incidents occur in the classroom ?



## Teacher input – spontaneous

*Teachers cannot be neutral on cultural issues since they respond to other cultures as human beings and not just as language teachers. They need therefore to consider how their own stereotypes and prejudices may influence their teaching unconsciously, and what the effects of this may be on learners. They also need to reflect upon how they respond to and challenge their learners' prejudices not only as teachers but also as human beings subconsciously influenced by their experience of otherness*

(Byram, Gribkova & Starkey, 2002: 36)

# Bibliography



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- Rathje, S. (2007). Intercultural Competence: The Status and Future of a Controversial Concept. *Journal for Language and Intercultural Communication*, 7(4), 254–266