

INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

Does it make a difference?

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Our context

Our students are not surrounded by the target culture.

Background

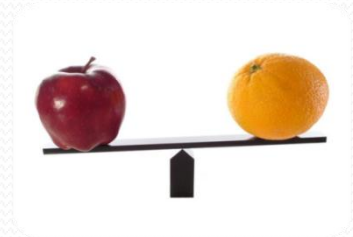
Research showed that our Erasmus students suffered from **culture shock**



Viviana Coston & Silvia Taylor

How can we help our students in a classroom environment?

- By observing the T. L culture in order to compare and contrast it with their own



- Creating materials with Byram's ICC Model as a framework .
- CercleS Conference poster.

To what extent can TEXT play a role in ICC awareness for tertiary students of foreign languages?

- How can we measure the change in knowledge/attitudes?



How can we measure ICC acquisition?

- New materials to try out.
- Before and after questionnaires to measure acquisition of *knowledge*.
 - Spanish 25 students.
 - Italian 9 students.



Italian questionnaire

This was based on videos, blogs and adapted target language text used in class.



Italian questionnaire students' feedback and results

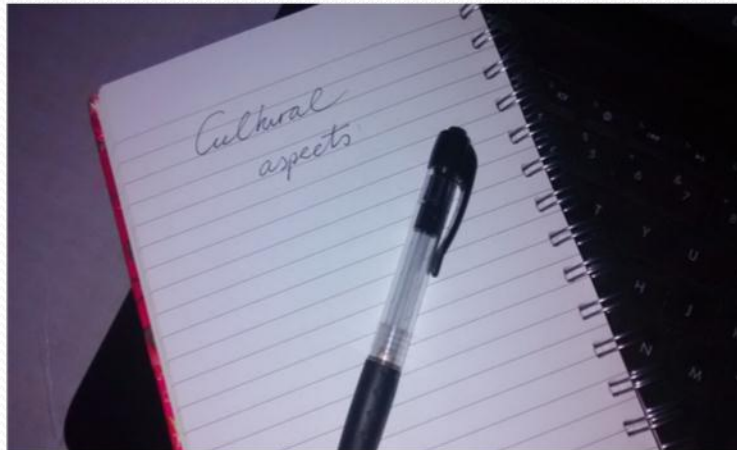
- Students' comments included:
 - Comparisons with their own culture
 - Thinking about how they would feel
- The result: a marked increase in the number of correct answers after using the materials in class.



Spanish questionnaire

Based on a listening exercise
two native speakers BUT...

...scripted to include the cultural aspects that we wanted
to address.



Prior to listening



Most students gave the **wrong answer** for most questions



However in questions A, D & F ...

Some students **got it right it was because they had experienced** that situation themselves.

Spanish questionnaire students' feedback

- Question A: (Regarding wearing slippers indoors) , one of the students already knew the answer, having been in the same situation previously.
- Question D : A few students commented that showing round the whole house on first acquaintance was a “strange custom”.
- Question F (complementing) the majority of students were previously unaware of the fact that Spanish people might offer you one of their belongings, if you commented on how lovely it is. Four of the students were previously aware of this, due to the fact that they had spent time in Spain, in a family environment. One student wondered if they would offer you their car in that situation. A Greek student wrote that it is the same in her country. Another student who stayed in Argentina, was actually given a jumper, having made a comment on how she liked it.

Post listening



Nearly all students
got the answers right

Our findings

- an **increased knowledge of behaviour** in the situations portrayed by the materials used.
- Specialized materials can **improve the skills of observation and comparison** of different cultures with the student's own.
- It is **much more difficult to measure the change in students' attitudes than their acquisition of knowledge.**



Our conclusion

Despite some criticisms of the ICC model

“These type of models ...[individual oriented list-type] are only useful for theorists “ (Matsuo 2012)

The Intercultural Competence Model (Byram 1997) can act as a **starting point** and as a **way forward** in the classroom in the quest for intercultural awareness

ICC has four goals

- To acquire knowledge of social groups and their products and practices.
- To acquire skills of interpreting a document or event.
- To foster and develop attitudes of curiosity and openness towards the target language culture and one's culture too.
- To develop an ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in the target culture and countries and in one's own.

Limitations



Further thoughts



To provide our students with tools so that they can reflect on events, anecdotes ...

To start them thinking about other societies without the distorting prism of their own assumptions and preconceptions.

To encourage students to consider context in both cultures

Further thoughts



Not to develop a touristic curriculum

Not to stereotype

Not to disconnect from the diversity
of cultural everyday life

THE WORLD AS WE KNOW





What's next for us?

- Writing more ICC focused materials
- More research to develop a way to measure **a change in attitudes in our students** when we include ICC in our curriculum.

Over to you...



Intercultural Competence

For richer language learning



Bibliography

Byram, M. (1997) *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence*, Clevedon, Multilingual Matters.

Matsuo, C. (2012) *A critique of Michael Byram's Intercultural Communicative Competence Model from the perspective of model type and conceptualization of culture*. Fukuoka University Review of Literature & Humanities, 44(2), 347-380.