

PLURILINGUALISM AND PLURICULTURALISM IN THE CONTEXT OF TEACHER TRAINING

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Abstract: *this article discusses the role of plurilingualism and pluriculturalism in the work of teachers. It also describes the diversity of scientists terms of plurilingualism and pluriculturalism.*

Keywords: *plurilingualism, pluriculturalism, plurality, culture, language, mobilising ,multicultural.*

As is generally known, plurilingual and pluricultural competence is not achieved by overlapping or juxtaposing different competences; rather it constitutes a global and complex competence of which the speaker can avail himself or herself in situations characterised by plurality [1]. And this complex it would seem to depend on four main dimensions: the socio-affective dimension, which includes a certain predisposition, motivation and readiness with regard to dialogue with the other and in which the individual is willing at any time to rebuild his or her identity; the dimension of linguistic and communicative registers, which includes the ability to exploit a whole range of experience and knowledge and in which different languages and cultures play different roles; the dimension of learning strategies, which is expressed in the ability to use different ways of processing spoken language in a procedure aimed at resolving communication problems (situations of access to meaning or spoken and/or written output, with or without collaboration); the dimension of interaction management, which takes place in situations of language contact in which speakers update different codes to manage the communication output they produce in a conversation created by situations characterised by linguistic and cultural plurality [2].

Such competence is by necessity diversified, composite, adaptable and imbalanced, and it is always open to new learning experiences in a continual movement designed to reconstruct the subject's experiences of language. It enables the speaker to move about the linguistic and cultural variety and diversity, in a process aimed at mobilising and managing multiple dimensions of his or her communicative profile [3]. In teaching and education contexts, work on plurilingual and pluricultural competence therefore plays a key role as a means of providing diversity training while focusing on the ability to go beyond obstacles and open up a certain predisposition toward languages, cultures and communication in general, as part of a willingness to establish a dialogue with the other. In this perspective, a plurilingual speaker is "someone who has an ability to interact with others, to accept other perspectives and perceptions of the world, to mediate between different perspectives, to be conscious of their evaluations of difference" [4].

"An awakening to languages is said to exist when part of the activities concerns languages that the school does not intend to teach (which may or may not be the mother tongues of certain pupils). This does not mean that only that part of the work that focuses on these languages deserves to be called an awakening to languages. This sort of differentiation would not make sense as normally it has to be a global enterprise, usually comparative in nature, that concerns both those languages, the language or languages of the school and any foreign (or other) language learnt" [5]. As Michel Candelier writes: "This is certainly what the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* calls 'the prospect of a sort of general language education', which can be seen as a preparation for language learning ... but also as a supporting measure for language learning courses already under way" [6]. This approach, which is not about learning language(s) but learning about languages, aims to stimulate not only the pupils' curiosity and interest in languages and cultures but also their observation skills and language analysis skills, such as they may be, in order to anchor in place among the learners the first few steps in their education towards plurilingualism. Such an awareness of language cannot be dissociated from the awareness of culture, which is intimately related to it: the language learner must be aware of three layers of culture, in relation to the three concepts referred to above: multicultural, pluricultural and intercultural. First, the language learner, as a social agent, must be aware of diversity in society and how social groups, including nations, create, use and manage cultures, which are intermingled in a complex matrix of social contact. We will refer to it as awareness of culture from a multicultural perspective.

Secondly, the language learner must be aware of how identity is the by-product of experiences in different cultures and, thus, each of us "may enact various cultural identities over the course of a lifetime as well as over the course of a day" [7]. Awareness of culture from a pluricultural perspective implies defining identity as a complex, flexible, dynamic composite which, in any situation, can adopt an apparently definite layout for a certain purpose with a particular interlocutor. Baumann [8] distinguishes between two views of culture: culture as product – which is static – and culture as process – which is dynamic. Thus, even though one can ascribe

oneself to a given culture at a certain moment (culture as product), that ascription changes as the communicative situation changes (culture as process).

Finally, when a language learner is involved in a communicative situation, awareness must be displayed in two directions. Firstly, the language learner must be aware of the pluricultural identity of his or her interlocutor as defined above and as explained by Barnlund [9]. Secondly, the language learner must be aware of the cultural conventions of the language(s) they use. Language is a culture-bound phenomenon and there are conventions ruling any communicative act, either written or spoken. Awareness of these cultural conventions can smooth communication. At the same time, a positive, co-operative attitude on the part of the listener/reader can help guard against ignoring, forgetting or flouting these conventions. Candelier et al. [10], in their presentation of the Janua Linguarum project, ascribe the “awakening to languages” and language awareness to the intercultural approach: “the awakening to languages emerges as a particular facet of the intercultural approach, of which it becomes an integral part, with its own characteristics”; the attempt to establish an agenda for language education in chapter one of Dupuis et al. [11] is entitled “The intercultural framework”; Huber-Kriegler, Lázár and Strange [12] try “to incorporate intercultural communication training into teacher education in Europe” and with that intention in mind they compiled a textbook “to assist trainers and teachers in achieving this aim by providing teaching materials that focus on intercultural learning”; under Ildikó Lázár’s co-ordination of the project Incorporating intercultural communicative competence in language teacher education, Aleksandrowicz-Pędich et al. [13] studied the views of teachers of English and French on intercultural communicative competence in language teaching; Skopinskaja [14] considered the role of culture in foreign language teaching materials from the perspective of intercultural competence; Faccioli and Kjartansson [15] developed a number of tests to assess intercultural competence; Camilleri Grima [16] tried to introduce intercultural competence in language learning as a way of solving communication problems through the use of stories and anecdotes; and, finally, Zarate et al. dealt with topics such as cultural sensitivity (*sensibilisation culturelle*), empathy (*empathie*), hospitality (*l’hospitalité*) and representation of otherness and the other (*représentations du concept d’altérité and des autres*) in their project about cultural mediation in language teaching.

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