

INTERCULTURAL STATE OF MIND: INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE OF PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS^a

Nina Lazarević

University of Niš, Faculty of Philosophy, Niš, Serbia
nina.lazarevic@filfak.ni.ac.rs

Abstract

Teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) are among the instructors responsible for the development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in learners. Preparing students to interact in a global, multilingual and multicultural world is not an easy task, as ICC is a complex concept and teachers need both training and instruction to firstly develop it themselves and then apply it in their teaching. The paper explores whether pre-service EFL teachers show an awareness of ICC elements, and whether their ICC and intercultural sensitivity can be seen in their coursework. The qualitative research into final essays of 30 students who attended an elective course Intercultural Communicative Competence, at the University of Niš, from three cohorts (from 2014 to 2017) aims at answering the following questions: what topics the students chose for their final project, what attitudes they showed, whether they knew and used the ICC-related terminology after a semester-long course. Results have shown that the students tended to use topics they feel comfortable with, such as stereotypes; showed a good grasp on the terminology especially in relation to culture models; and showed positive attitudes towards ICC issues, however, mostly remaining in Bennett's Minimization stage.

Key words: pre-service English language teachers' education, Intercultural communicative competence, intercultural sensitivity.

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ИНТЕРКУЛТУРНИ ПОГЛЕД НА СВЕТ: ИНТЕРКУЛТУРНА КОМУНИКАТИВНА КОМПЕТЕНЦИЈА БУДУЋИХ НАСТАВНИКА ЕНГЛЕСКОГ ЈЕЗИКА

Апстракт

Наставници енглеског као страног језика једни су од одговорних наставника за развијање интеркултурне комуникативне компетенције код ученика. Задатак припремања ученика за интеракцију у глобалном, мултијезичком и мултикултурном свету није лак јер је интеркултурна комуникативна компетенција сложена и наставници морају да имају и знања и вештине како би прво код себе развили ову компетенцију и како би је касније применили у настави. У раду се истражује да ли студенти Англистике, будући наставници енглеског језика, имају свест о интеркултурним елементима и да ли се њихова интеркултурна сензитивност може видети у раду на курсу Интеркултурна комуникативна компетенција. Квалитативно истраживање урађено на завршним семинарским радовима 30 студената три генерације који су похађали изборни курс Интеркултурна комуникативна компетенција на Универзитету у Нишу од 2014. до 2017. академске године – одговара на следећа питања: које теме студенти бирају за завшне пројекте, које ставове показују, да ли знају и користе терминологију везану за интеркултурну компетенцију након завршеног једносеместралног курса. Резултати показују да студенти бирају теме које су им већ познате, као што су стереотипи, користе и знају терминологију која је првенствено везана за моделе културе и да имају позитивне ставове према интеркултурним питањима, иако се на основу одговора могу сместити у фазу минимизације, по Бенетовом моделу.

Кључне речи: иницијално образовање наставника, енглески као страни језик, интеркултурна комуникативна компетенција, интеркултурна сензитивност.

INTRODUCTION

It seems that “teachers of English [...] constitute the natural avant-garde among those developing intercultural competence in Europe” (Strugielska & Piątkowska, 2016). There has always been a recognition that there is a relationship between culture and language and that a language classroom is instrumental for culture learning. Culture has been one among key principles in many methods and approaches to language teaching. Still, the development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is a strenuous task, especially in a monolingual and monocultural environment, and it does not come easy for language teachers.

With a mismatch between the laws on education, standards of achievement for elementary and high-school students and outcomes of English language teacher education, ICC development for pre-service teachers requires more research and attention. While there has been research into how teachers include intercultural (IC) elements in their teaching (Deardorff, 2006; Feng, Byram, & Fleming, 2009), there is still

a lot of room to strengthen the IC curriculum, teaching practice and professional development.

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

Intercultural communicative competence has been defined and redefined over the last three decades, for different purposes and different fields (more in Spitzberg & Chagnon, 2009). The differences in interpretation and the scope stem from the primary interests of particular fields – for those where language and communication are primary (Byram, 1997; Martin & Nakayama, 1997) **communicative** competence is an important factor in ICC. On the other hand, where adaptation, development, cultural perceptions and orientations take precedent (Bennett, 2013; Gudykunst & Kim, 1992; Paige, 2003), intercultural competence is defined.

For the language learning context, we believe the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, 2001), following Byram's 5-part model, provides a comprehensive definition: that ICC includes intercultural awareness, practical skills and know-how, intercultural skills and know-how, intercultural attitudes and beliefs, and the ability to learn (p. 103-106). More recent considerations of intercultural (and pluricultural) competence state that it is

the ability to experience otherness and cultural diversity, to analyse that experience and to derive benefit from it [...] to understand otherness, establish cognitive and affective links between past and new experiences of otherness, mediate between members of two (or more) social groups and their cultures, and question the assumptions of one's own cultural group and environment (Beacco et al., 2016, p. 10).

Many definitions (Byram, 1997; Chen & Starosta, 1996; Deardorff, 2006; Lustig & Koester, 2012; Seelye, 1997) point out that ICC is a combination of three domains: attitudes, behaviours and knowledge that jointly provide the basis for successful intercultural encounters. In addition to the three domains, researchers stress the appropriateness of communication for the context and participants – as “the appropriate and effective management of interaction between people who, to some degree or another, represent different or divergent affective, cognitive, and behavioural orientations to the world” (Spitzberg & Chagnon, 2009, p. 7) will be more successful.

Byram (1997) shows that the cognitive domain is necessary for the successful development of ICC, but not as the only element. Knowing about cultures helps learners position themselves in relation to their own and other cultures, as these three domains, cognitive, affective, and behavioural, reinforce each other in intercultural learning. Learners should be motivated to learn and interact, be open and confident enough to try to “decentre” (Byram,

Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002, p. 12) and see IC encounters from a different perspective – that of ‘the other’. Critical cultural awareness is the central skill for ICC (Byram, 2012) where learners can show their understanding and critical stance toward practices and products from both domestic and foreign cultures. ICC precludes motivation to communicate (Byram et al., 2002), to engage in demanding intercultural encounters, and, at the same time the awareness that one’s own operational framework need not be the ‘right’ one, nor the only one (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998; Hofstede, 1991). Therefore, IC education should provide learners with the raised critical awareness and developed critical thinking, so that they can challenge cultural stereotypes and prejudice and mediate in situations of cultural conflict (Grefersen-Hermans, 2017), providing “a foundation for being a global citizen” (Barrett et al., 2014, p. 21).

IC competent learners will empathise with people of different cultural affiliation, in addition to being curious about and open to other cultures. Their knowledge will help them understand the influence of their own language and will be the basis for communicative awareness of the fact that other peoples’ languages may express shared ideas in a unique way or express unique ideas difficult to access through one’s own language(s) (Barrett et al., 2014). Finally, skills should incorporate practices and behaviours that are based on previous two domains – learners will empathise, be flexible and have linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse skills appropriate to the setting (Barrett et al., 2014).

For language teachers in particular, who prepare learners for a global, interconnected world, these skills and IC sensitivity will be crucial as language teachers have been recognised as important socializing agents (Sercu, 2005). They are the ones who will, based on students’ interests, develop empathy and practice deep analysis as opposed to the tourist-like view of culture (Byram et al., 1994). Teachers are important in this process on two levels – as models and as sources of information, even though teachers sometimes refrain from including IC aspects to their language teaching, referring to the lack of personal experience with a particular culture. However, the very act of “passing from one language to another necessarily involves passing from one culture to another” (North & Piccardo, 2016, p. 13) and future language teachers should be therefore equipped with both knowledge and attitudes to help students navigate ICC situations (Byram et al., 1994).

Not even study-abroad programs, as the most immediate way of including the intercultural component into teacher education, without the direct training and instruction of IC factors, lead to the development of positive attitudes and an increased IC sensitivity (Cots et al., 2016). Still, positive results of study abroad programmes have been reported (Saricoban & Oz, 2014; Ward & Ward, 2003), in terms of personal growth, changed or broadened world view and increased professional competence.

Research has shown that mere knowledge about cultures does not add to one's intercultural competence (Bennett, 2004), as this usually includes only surface culture (Hall, 1976). Interculturally sensitive individuals are more person-centred and take different cultural perspectives in their communication; their increased sensitivity is a basis for increased intercultural competence and they understand the deeper level of culture – core values and beliefs (Hall, 1976). Teachers who are thus equipped will be more sensitive to differences in their own classrooms, but should also be able to guide their own students to ethnorelative worldviews.

Finally, ICC is also important within what is commonly considered to be a single national culture, as is the case with the Serbian culture. Intercultural communication need not exclusively mean communication between different nationalities or ethnicities which is important for the context of our pre-service teachers. They need to recognise different identities that learners bring into the classroom, as well as their cultural differences (Singer, 1998) – be they social, gender, learner style, etc. In a society where many of these identity markers are beginning to be recognised and where ethnocentrism might seem on the rise (Stupar, 2018), ICC is a crucial competence for successful interpersonal relationships.

ICC in Language Teacher Education in Serbia

With a steady shift in required competencies in language learners, the requirements of language teachers should also be reconsidered. As we can follow a move from linguistic competence to communicative and then intercultural communicative competence (Larsen-Freeman, 2000), we should expect the teacher education to mirror the trend and give at least some emphasis to ICC in the curriculum. However, the English language programmes at Serbian universities train students to become mainly traditional philologists, as all programs have courses that can be grouped into three fields: linguistics, cultural studies, and literature.

Courses with the ICC content have been included in the Bachelor level of studies, either as elective courses or as a module of applied linguistics courses, while only at the Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade, are there master level ICC courses. While the study programs state that students will be equipped with all the necessary knowledge and skills required by the profession of an English language teacher, developing ICC is never stated as one of the outcomes. If ICC is not part of the program it becomes difficult for teachers to include such a complex concept later on in their teaching (Byram, 1997). Consequently, if pressed to do so, teachers might tend to discuss only the topics they already know, which would mainly lead to the exploration of the cognitive domain (facts on different cultures, literature: mostly high culture elements), leaving skills and IC sensitivity under-represented and underdeveloped, which has been pointed out as insufficient for developing ICC (Bennett, 2004), as this usually includes only surface culture (Hall, 1976).

However, if learners are expected to understand other cultures and their own, and to show openness and understanding, providing them with cultural knowledge only might not help them become more interculturally sensitive. Teachers would need IC training to prepare them to “teach their learners to deal with the complexities of intercultural communication” (Willems, 2002, p. 7).

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

In difference to the curricula of the tertiary-level language teacher education, in the past three years a set of laws and standards has been passed for primary and secondary-level education that to some extent includes ICC as the objective for language learning. The Law on the System of Education (2017) states the importance of intercultural competence, and includes mainly general guidelines that require learners’ openness. The overall aims in the national curriculum for FL on the elementary level state that learners should develop a positive attitude both towards other languages and cultures and one’s own language and cultural heritage, appreciate differences, and be open in communication. The Standards of achievement for elementary education for foreign languages (2017) solely deal with knowledge about other cultures, placing a rather heavy focus on the cognitive domain of ICC. However, the Standards of achievement for secondary education for foreign languages (2015) do not include any standards related to ICC. Further, in the Standards of competencies for the teacher profession and professional development (2011), ICC is not stated, but teachers are expected to understand the social context of education, contribute to multicultural and inclusive education, respect universal values and urge learners to internalise them, and to understand social and cultural learner differences. Finally, in the Strategy for Education Development in Serbia 2020 (2012), ICC is not mentioned as such but can be recognised in the achievement standards as knowledge about other cultures. Although there are many recommendations about inclusive education and global human rights and values, these are not linked directly to ICC. In Ogay and Edelmann’s words (2016, p. 389), these documents seem to demonstrate “a lack of common understanding of what ‘taking culture seriously’ [...] means in the field of education”. ICC is never defined clearly in any of the laws but it is understood as a positive feeling and openness to others.

With ICC stated in the legal requirements for language learners (Law on the System of Education, Standards of achievement), there are inconsistencies with teacher requirements in this respect, and even more so with pre-service teacher education on ICC. The laws for all the levels of education, curricula for teacher education and programs for professional development do not incorporate the understanding of the importance of the ICC concept which has been accepted for over two decades in the

educational systems (Deardorff, 2009; Risager, 2006) with its insistence on the development of cognitive, affective and behavioural domains.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

When it comes to FL teaching, there is considerable research into education and beliefs and attitudes of in-service pre-service teachers (Beacco & Byram, 2003; Deardorff, 2006; Deardorff & Arasaranment, 2016; Fantini, 2000; Feng, Byram, & Fleming, 2009; Willems, 2002; Young & Sachdev, 2011), as it has been recognised that the IC component has not been sufficiently prominent in their teaching.

However, compared to nursing, business and social work, a relatively small number of studies focus on pre-service English language teachers. This research has shown that students need to receive focused instruction on ICC or they will only be aware of surface culture, without gaining a full understanding of ICC (Olaya & Gomez, 2013). Instruction helps students develop skills of interpreting and contextualizing cultural practices through an awareness raising approach (Holguín, 2013).

An ICC project in which high school students from different cultures (France and England) explored a similar topic and then exchanged the material with their counterparts, while reflecting on particular words and their usage (Morgan, 2001), showed several important findings. Firstly, students had freedom to choose the material and prepare it, making it truly authentic for the situation. Secondly, students had to decide on particular key words which were then used for analysis and showed how different contexts condition the usage of language. The important part of the research was the reflection on material creation, where “students can become aware of a deeper level of significance of things within in their own culture, and in this way prepare themselves for understanding another culture” (Morgan, 2001, p.18).

Another research was done with pre-service teachers, who were asked to do word associations and explore evaluative adjectives (Williams, 2001), with the aim of raising “awareness of relative perceptions and evaluations from the perspectives of different cultures” (p.118). The research explored the evaluative phrases (terminology and loaded expressions) used to describe behaviour in a culture or cultures, with the results showing that students were aware of the dynamic nature of cultural values and the influence of different practices on behaviour. The main focus of the study was on awareness-raising so that future teachers became explorers of both language and culture; therefore, Williams stressed the importance of reflection and reflective teacher education.

In the Serbian context, recently there have been several studies that looked into ICC in general education, without a specific focus on FL teachers (Domović et al., 2013; Petrović & Jokić, 2016). The present

study can be seen as a follow-up study to Paunović (2011) who explored cultural topics, culture components, and attitudes towards diversity in the written work of students. The results showed that overt attitudes in student work were positive toward intercultural communication, with a negative stand towards discrimination and stereotyping.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

The English language department at the University of Niš offers courses in linguistics, literature and cultural studies. Consequently, students should be familiar with the culture facts that would make up the cognitive domain of ICC. In the elective ICC course, the students get acquainted with the most important theoretical models (Bennett, 1993; Hall, 1966; Hofstede, 1991; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997) of ICC and with IC communication and different factors that influence it. As English language majors, the students explore how language devices carry socio-culturally loaded meanings. The outcome of the course should be the students' developed practical skills for studying how culture is expressed in language, understanding how culture influences communication in authentic situations, developed IC communication skills and a socio-linguistic perspective of culture. The students should develop empathy, ethnorelativism, and positive attitudes towards different cultures. As their final projects, the students write essays on topics that are linked to and based on the syllabus, but could go further than that. The students are encouraged to apply the culture models to current events, other cultures, films, TV series, book, or to explore other aspects of ICC: stereotypes, ethnocentrism vs. ethnorelativism, use of culture in language teaching, etc. By giving students a free choice on topics, it is hoped that they would be able to show their raised awareness of ICC issues and to independently analyse them.

In the discussed study, the researcher was at the same time the instructor of student work and the coder, which could be seen as a limitation to the study. However, this is the common circumstance in classroom-related qualitative research, which needs to be counter-balanced by well-defined methodological measures. In this study, the measures to prevent any possible bias included the preset codes extracted from the theory and the attitudes contained to loaded words.

RESEARCH METHODS

Aims. From the widely accepted understanding of the concept of ICC (Byram, 1997), it follows that future language teachers should show their understanding of ICC concepts, as well as promote and acknowledge positive attitudes towards other culture, and finally, be able to perform analysis of ICC topics so that they become more competent instructors, as “intercultural

competence may not be acquired spontaneously by individuals [...] however, intercultural competence can be enhanced through a range of intercultural experiences, for which teachers are responsible” (Barrett et al., 2014, p.25). Therefore, the study aimed at answering the following questions: what topics the students choose for their final project, whether they know and use the terminology, what language they use to show their attitudes, and finally, using Byram’s and CEFR understanding of ICC, if they show their ICC after a semester-long ICC course – awareness of their own bias, generalisations, and whether they were able to apply higher order cognitive skills in discussing the topics.

Participants. During four years 107 3rd-year students took the course. For the purposes of this study we will look into the work of 30 students who took the exam in the first available exam term. At the time of taking the course, the students were 19 to 20 years old, with 1/6 of them being male. However, for the analysis, gender differences were not further explored.

Variables. As variables for the research, the keywords were chosen on the basis of several criteria. Firstly, those terms that are important for the application of a culture model were included, for example: ascribed status, power distance, collectivism, etc. Then, the topic analysed during the course (stereotypes, inequality, prejudice, subculture, social class, gender roles, socializing agents, ethnocentrism, etc.) were recognised as keywords. Also, *understanding*, *respect* and *tolerance* were also seen as important, as it has been noticed that the students tend to minimize the differences between cultures (Bennett, 2004), mistaking it for true IC sensitivity. Next, the usage of loaded words was seen as telling of the students’ IC sensitivity (the usage of the Gypsy instead of the Roma would be considered an instance of this). Finally, phrases where different adverbs were used as intensifiers (definitely, completely, totally) were seen as loaded and analysed in the context in which they were used and included in the study if the instances were related to ICC. All these are seen as a function of the awareness-raising process that is the main objective of the course. Consequently, emergent codes, in addition to the pre-set ones, were important and taken into consideration, as they could provide the insight into the thinking process and importance that the students place on the ICC elements, since “[a]pproaching fieldwork without being constrained by predetermined categories of analysis contributes to the depth, openness, and detail of qualitative inquiry” (Patton, 2002: 14).

Instruments. As the main research objective was to show the students’ understanding and the analysis of ICC topics, it was important to systematically find the common topics and opinions that show that understanding. In order to perform the content text analysis, the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software, *Atlas.ti*, was used.

Procedures. As the aim of the research was to establish whether students use the appropriate terminology and show empathy and raised awareness, the methodology used was qualitative. The content analysis (Patton, 2002) was performed on the final essays to identify core consistencies in topics, terminology, and attitudes. The methodology used included the text analysis with *Atlas.ti* program through which the key terms, or initial codes, were found. In addition to the pre-set codes used as sensitizing concepts (Patton, 2002) to orient the data, it was expected to have a certain number of the emergent codes in order to “stay open to the data” (Patton, 2002, p. 454), thus narrowing down the patterns that were the most frequent. In order to see the usage of key terms in the corpus the frequency analysis was performed on the codes, on the whole of the corpus, with the indication when the frequency was only within one individual essay. The frequency of the usage of key terms was important, but as the aim of the qualitative research was to explore the topics the students found relevant enough to be used, the frequency itself was not the sole key factor for the analysis. The frequency of the key terms across essays –as the usage might be conditioned by the topic itself or the writing style of the student, was seen as a possible signal of the relative importance the students gave to particular topics and terms.

Corpus. The corpus for the research consists of 30 student final essays, with the total of 67,854 words. The essays, as the product of usual coursework, were not an assigned task for students, and therefore used as a text for the content analysis. Topics of these essays were not limited in any way, students could freely decide on the topic, issues, and cultural models to analyse as long as these were based on the material covered in the course.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Topics

The qualitative content analysis of the essay corpus showed that the students chose topics where they showed their knowledge about cultures and culture models, mostly Hofstede’s model, showing positive, affirmative attitudes to the importance of intercultural understanding, while mostly staying away from controversial topics, with essays dealing with only two minority groupings, for example.

Out of the full number of students, seven stated ‘stereotypes’ or ‘prejudice’, while four students used ‘discrimination’ in their essay titles. The stereotypes analysed were national, ethnic, religious and social group stereotypes (gender and class), as well as different national stereotypes as represented in TV series (*‘Allo, ‘Allo, Mind Your Language*). The students explored the stereotypes that the Serbian people might hold towards the British and American, but also stereotypes that are present in Serbia. The

issues of discrimination were about Native Americans, Germans post WWI, the LGBTQ community, and the representation of different characters in Harry Potter.

Seven students decided to apply one of the culture models analysed in the course, Hofstede's model, to compare cultures – either in films or real life situation. For example, Greek and American culture through the film *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, or a variety of cultures in the film *Babel* and in the novel *The Kite Runner*. With Korean culture being quite present through pop culture: music, films, and manga, some students compared it with Serbian culture or analysed it through the model. One student compared Syrian and Serbian culture prompted by the migrant crisis that was escalating at the time. Finally, one student decided to use the model to explore Serbian culture on its own. Even though the model is more suited to the business setting, the dimensions that it offers are clearly defined, and the students can show their understanding of different values in different cultures rather easily.

Three students applied Bennett's model of intercultural sensitivity: one to the Serbian people's experience of living abroad, in Ireland, one on Serbs' general outlook towards in- groups and out-groups, and one as a way of helping people raise awareness about others. Bennett's model is different from others, and especially from Hofstede's, in the fact that it does not explain cultures, but a potential growth of intercultural sensitivity in individuals through heightened awareness. It, therefore, asks for a more detailed analysis which might be the reason why students opted for it less.

The remaining seven essays could not be put into previous categories based on their titles alone, however, they explored the topics of prejudice and discrimination, as in the essays on the Roma community, Black Lives Matter movement, and homophobia in Serbia, all 'hot topics' in the media at the time. One student dealt with re-conceptualisation of culture, to include more subcultures, while one tried to explain the fascination with the American dream and its potential benefits in different settings. One student decided to interview Americans on their own culture, while one essay dealt with the Serbian culture exclusively, in terms of migration within Serbia and the south-north divide.

Although the mere absence of particular topics need not suggest the students were unaware of them, it still shows that they might still be at the level of the comparison of different cultures rather than the level of critical cultural competence. Given that they do not have an extensive experience with different cultures, the students might not have felt comfortable enough to 'grapple' with problematic issues of social inequality, subcultures, linguistic varieties and the like. There was an apparent lack of topics that explored the representation of minorities, social problems, gender roles and expectations, or other identity-related issues in our culture.

Keywords

The analysis of pre-set keywords showed that the students competently used the terminology that was needed to explain and analyse issues through the application of the particular culture models. The students showed their knowledge of particular dimensions and successfully compared them across cultures: they defined the dimensions correctly, and were able to use appropriate illustration to show how dimensions are differently manifested in different cultures. These keywords related directly to the culture models (for example, 'power distance' appeared 33 times in nine essays, 'uncertainty avoidance' was in eight essays 39 times) show high frequency in the sample as expected, and the deep analysis shows these were appropriately used. For example, the students explored what gave Korean culture a rather high power distance index, or how high uncertainty avoidance index of Greek culture was seen in its cinematic representation. Similarly, different phases that describe one's ethnocentrism were correctly recognised in the experience of the people the students interviewed, though the keyword was only used in three essays. We concluded that the students mastered the knowledge domain of ICC, especially for the application of culture models. On the other hand, the students did not use some of the key terminology for topics outside of the models. Therefore, while appropriately understanding and analysing culture models, the students did not use these concepts for the analysis of other topics.

The analysis of loaded adverbs showed that the students tended not to use them almost at all. Therefore, *totally* (used once) and *definitely* (used twice) were used for intensifying one's surprise and assurance of the fact and not in the context of IC sensitivity or competence. Additionally, other possible loaded words (*troublesome*, *disheartening*, *horrifying*, *hopefully*, *to fuel*) were used only on several occasion (once or twice), and to show the state of the affairs or as a part of a phrase (add fuel to the flame). In the whole sample these do not represent a significant element to be further analysed.

The students used *empathy* ten times in six essays, in two separate contexts. The first one was in relation to Bennett's model of IC sensitivity (Bennett, 2004) – where empathy is a sign of acceptance and integration, in the essays on an intercultural sensitivity development of a Serb in Ireland and ethnocentrism in Serbia. The second context was the instances where the students saw empathy as one of the ways in which to establish IC understanding, in the essays on the American dream, gender stereotyping in Hollywood, homophobia and culture as seen by Americans. While empathy is one of the key objectives for ICC (Byram, 1997), the students did not discuss problems of immigrants or other stereotyping situations in terms of empathising with those who are in out-groups (Giles & Giles, 2013).

Human rights was one of the keywords explored but it turned out that it did not appear in more than two essays, both on the LGBTQ

communities, one in Serbia and the other as a minority community of the US athletes, where the rights of the minority were seen and explained as the basic human right, a right to equality. While other topics might not have vouched for the usage of this particular phrase, it seems that the students did not link gender inequality, migrant abuse or even the race unrest to the universal human rights on which much of ICC relies.

When it comes to the terminology on the topic of stereotypes, the students did not use any of the possible explanations for their emergence. For example, only one student used *scape-goating* to explain why negative feelings were prevalent in Germany prior to World War II. In only one other essay did a student use the term *transfer of attitudes* from one generation to the next. Similarly, only in one instance did the essay contain a reference to positive stereotypes. The stereotypes were correctly recognized in different material that the students explored, but they did not deal with the sources, and mainly focused on their existence and consequences, while stressing the importance of fighting against them and refraining from using them as a measure of one's characters.

More can be deduced from the absence of particular terminology than from the one the students used. Firstly, even though they never explicitly stated national cultures, these were the frameworks within which the students analysed elements of culture. Therefore, while they understand the terminology, their context and the scope in which they use it is somewhat limited. The students managed not to go into the effects of globalization on particular minorities, subcultures or national cultures even, with this term being mentioned only four times.

Discrimination, another keyword, appeared in 11 essays 56 times. Interestingly, even when discussing the topics such as the position of women in the Hollywood industry, or the Roma people in our society, the students rarely used the terms *discrimination* – five times in the former and only once in the latter example. Essays on racial discrimination and LGBTQ community had a bit higher usage of *discrimination*, as well as the ones on racial problems and pre-war Germany. Still, the qualitative analysis showed that students did think in terms of potential negative feelings and attitudes when they discussed different cultures, culture dimension and stereotypes, as they insisted on 'understand[ing] different cultures and social classes', as well as believing that 'by being exposed to a different culture [...] we become truly aware and stop believing in stereotypes.'

The results show that the students continued choosing the topics that were seen as the most frequent by Paunović (2011) – stereotypes, discrimination, and culture models. There has been a decline in the topics that deal with regional dialects, culture shock, and globalisation. Similarly, the analysis of the current local (or global) social issues was not included in the final essays of the students.

Finally, it seemed that it was still difficult for the students to use a wider range of ICC terminology and to analyse one problem from several perspectives. This was especially noticeable when there was not a particular culture model which could determine particular terminology for students to use.

Attitudes and Critical Competence

While awareness-raising has been one of the main aims for the ICC course, it was surprising to see that many essays that explored or compared cultures and analysed stereotypes did not comment on raised awareness – not even of the characters in the films. ‘To raise awareness’ was used throughout the essay on the position of the Roma people in Serbia and two more times, in concluding paragraphs where the students stated that in general, people should raise their awareness about stereotypes and other cultures, giving it 20 occurrences in the sample.

The analysis of how the students approached their topics was done by close reading for keywords and for what might be recognised as a description offered by Byram (1997) – openness towards novelty, willingness to explore, ability to decentre from one’s usual perspective (Byram et al., 2002) and show overall critical stance. The analysis showed that all students had a strong positive stance towards the importance of ICC for better understanding among different cultures.

Nine students explicitly and as many implicitly expressed attitudes that Bennett (1993) categorised as characterising the stage of “minimization” in intercultural sensitivity development. This is a stage of ethnocentrism where the emphasis is on the similarity and the commonality of basic values, with the tendency to explain them in ethnocentric terms. Individuals expect others to be like them since essentially everyone is the same. The students expressed this attitude in several instances, where they claimed “physical universalism”: ‘we are all equal no matter the race’, ‘we are all human and we all face problems in our lives, no matter the color or how rich or poor we are’, or ‘One should treat others as he or she wants to be treated’. There were also instances where the students claimed “transcendent universalism”, or the assumed applicability of certain religious, economic or political concepts, seen, for example, in these statements: ‘Serbia and Syria have enough common cultural ground when it comes to respecting tradition, family, loyalty and honor, thus making it quite easy to respect the same values of other people’. The implicit minimization views could be seen in the comments that it is only important to respect others, and to be open to overcome misunderstandings and potential conflicts. While these statements do represent an ethnocentric standpoint (Bennett, 1993), they at the same time show that with more additional work, the students can move to more ethnorelative stages.

The students recognised that changes in perception of others were needed, and here they stated that ‘you need to think for yourself’, ‘do not rely on generalisations’ over the call for the raised awareness and more tolerance, to pointing out that socializing agents such as the media, family, friends, and school are responsible for the perception of different groups. These results are in keeping with Holguín (2013), Paunović (2011), Morgan (2001), and Williams (2001) as they showed that the structured instruction equipped students with the terminology with which to interpret cultural practices. This is an important outcome, since as future teachers the students would potentially be more sensitive to the topics they themselves explored and to which they showed overwhelmingly positive attitudes, which can be seen in the comments such as: ‘[t]he main point is that cultural differences should be a positive thing’, ‘it is important to perceive cultural differences, and then to understand them if we want to become culturally competent’, ‘[h]opefully younger generations will be more ethnorelative and will have less prejudices than we do now’.

What was still missing from the essays was more confidence on the students’ part to use terminology and have a multidimensional analysis of culture encounters, incidents, and issues. This would have shown that the students had both cognitive and affective competencies to grapple deeper culture. Still, as this was an introductory elective course, the results the students showed were satisfactory.

CONCLUSION

The students proved quite capable of recognising the suitable topics for exploration and were able to analyse them using appropriate terminology, as all the culture models were appropriately used, and culture elements were correctly termed. Looking at their projects in the light of their future profession, we can conclude that they have gained enough knowledge.

Therefore, we can report that the application of theoretical models to describe different cultures was appropriate. However, when it comes to further exploration of underlying attitudes and deep culture elements (for example, moving from just recognizing hospitality in one culture to discussing ethical bearings, attitudes of belonging and accepting), the present study showed that at times the students could not bring their analysis to a complete resolution, and would resort to general attitudes of understanding. Bearing in mind the current socio-economic context in Southern Serbia and the students’ personal accounts, it would be safe to assume that most our students possess little first-hand experience with other cultures, apart from the second-hand knowledge obtained through the media, and the social issues they encounter in their immediate social context. Finally, intercultural topics can be taxing – both in terms of emotional engagement and the overall critical awareness of a number of factors that play out in a culture.

Therefore, it might be expected that the students will shy away from those topics and more happily explore the already familiar ones (Paunović, 2011).

Being a one-time analysis of a particular group of students and the sample of their coursework, the study has its limitations. It was done in one location, therefore, the results cannot be generalised for the whole population of pre-service English language teachers: in different social contexts across Serbia the results might show certain differences.

Finally, as it has been pointed out by different authors (Paunović, 2011; Sercu, 2005), as well as by policy makers through laws and standards, and, as advised by CEFR, future language teachers will have to be interculturally competent and will also have to be trained to teach ICC. It is only through focus and structured instruction that ICC will be fully appreciated and competently incorporated into the teaching practice. Through this and similar courses students should experience culture teaching and be better prepared to include not only cognition, but also feelings and attitudes in language teaching.

There are various implications for further research on pre-service teacher ICC development. Different methodology might provide more data on how students conceptualise of ICC elements, in think-aloud protocols or interviews about their coursework, for example. The analysis of different assignments during the course might show the development of *saviors* (Byram, 1997) while working on material design with students could show what elements they see important enough to be included in language teaching and how they would work on affective and behaviour domain development.

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**ИНТЕРКУЛТУРНИ ПОГЛЕД НА СВЕТ:
ИНТЕРКУЛТУРНА КОМУНИКАТИВНА
КОМПЕТЕНЦИЈА БУДУЋИХ НАСТАВНИКА
ЕНГЛЕСКОГ ЈЕЗИКА**

Нина Лазаревић

Универзитет у Нишу, Филозофски факултет, Ниш, Србија

Резиме

Универзитети све више препознају важност образовања интеркултурно компетентних студента и стога су предмети са интеркултурним садржајем уведени у студијске програме без обзира на образовне профиле. Што се тиче будућих наставника страних језика, од њих се очекује да имају и комуникативну, али и културну и интеркултурну, компетенцију јер су истраживања показала да је само лингвистичка компетенција недовољна за развијање интеркултурне компетенције и сензитивности. Потребно је образовати и обучити будуће наставнике да развијају сопствену интеркултурну компетенцију како би је применили у настави. Уз то, нови циљеви за усвајање језика претпостављају и интеркултурно компетентне ученике, као што се наводи у старом и прерађеном „Европском оквиру за учење језика”, али и у „Закону о основама образовања и васпитања”, као и у стандардима постигнућа за основне и средње школе за стране језике. Стога, и образовање наставника мора да прати ове захтеве и да се развија у корак са њима, те је важно испитати да ли су будући наставници спремни за испуњавање интеркултурних циљева наставе страних језика. У овом раду испитује се које су теме за завршне радове бирали студенти енглеског језика на курсу Интеркултурна комуникативна компетенција, да ли су показали да владају терминологијом, да ли показују вештине критичког размишљања и да ли имају интеркултурну сензитивност. Студија случаја рађена је у периоду од 2014. до 2017. академске године са 30 студената. Анализа унапред задатих кодова дала је увид у ставове студената и показала да они бирају теме које су им познате, добро владају терминологијом када користе одређене моделе културе, али и да и даље имају више етноцентричне него етнорелативне ставове, иако јасно показују да је интеркултурна компетенција битна за наставу језика.