

Intercultural Communicative Competence Training Programme_Module 1

Exercises to Improve Intercultural Communication Skills

EXERCISE 8 – How a teacher can foster cultural awareness in the classroom?



Educators that acknowledge the diversity of their students understand the importance of promoting cultural awareness. Educators who are interested in developing a welcoming and friendly classroom environment should actively demonstrate to their students that they care about their cultural, emotional, and intellectual needs. To this end, there are several strategies that you can use to build trusting relationships with diverse students:

- 1. Recognize the value of multiculturalism within a classroom by asking them to share their cultural background with their peers.**

Encourage your learners to share information about their ethnic background for fostering a trusting relationship with fellow classmates.

Some examples:

- Organize a mini session where the foreign learners will share some information on important traditional celebrations, food, specific behaviors and beliefs they have and facilitate a discussion.
- Take the time to learn the proper pronunciation of student names and express interest in the etymology of their interesting and diverse names.

- 2. Be an instructor and facilitator at the same time:**

The most valuable lessons are often learned through student's own experiences, so giving them some freedom in the course encourages more connection to the curriculum. Create a friendly and warm environment by acting more like a facilitator and not so much as an instructor. Make the learners to feel more comfortable with you by asking them what they find interesting to learn, encourage them to read and present their own materials that relate to the lesson so they can approach the topic from their own perspective. In this way you encourage conversation and healthy debate between diverse opinions. As a teacher, give the opportunity to your students to interact with each other and encourage both groups to share stories, thoughts, and ideas that are important to their cultural and social perspective.

Be aware that the foreign students are not native speakers of your national language and or English

Some students who are anxious about their English language levels and applicability of academic skills may be overwhelmed by content delivered in fast flowing language. Thus, tried to:

- be carefully by using simple words that are easy to understand
- incorporate visuals with clear instructions, concepts or details of a task. Having information represented visually on slides as part of your teaching is important to ensure that key messages/themes/concepts are made clear. (Remember to always allow enough time for students to read and digest the messages on the slides).

4. Engage students through discussion and open questions. Students are generally very happy to engage in discussion and share ideas, experiences and perspectives. This sharing of information occurs when a comfortable classroom culture is created by the instructor. Use open-ended questions, ask learners to present their views on the training content, share their ideas etc.

5. Be able to understand when your students feel uncomfortable

For instance, if a student looks uncomfortable answering a question you have posed about a culturally sensitive topic etc. wearing hijab in schools, give him time to consider it and acknowledge the fact that this is a complex question.

6. Avoid stereotypes. Don't assume that because a student comes from a particular ethnic background, that he/she embodies all the characteristics of the particular ethnic group. Research suggests that individuals are able to control their focus on making assumptions that in the end have negative effect.

7. Don't make cultural differences a focal point. The main point of the lesson needs to remain on the learning objectives of the lesson and not the cultural differences between learners (foreigners and locals).

8. Incorporate Diversity in the Lesson Plan. You can foster cultural awareness by ensuring that diversity is represented in your actual lesson plan. For example, you can broaden your lessons by using references to other cultures in your lessons and assignments to help students with diverse backgrounds to connect. Another great strategy is bringing in speakers with different ethnic background to add others' point of view and real-life examples to different subjects. Regardless of the subject, always try to present and connect lessons to real-life examples. It's easier to promote cultural awareness within your lessons when there's a real example for learners to relate to.

9. Give your students group assignments

Bring your students closer, by assigning to them group exercises. In this way you allow them to work together to explore and solve a problem. This will also help prepare them for their professional career since workplaces are diverse and the need to cooperate with a range of people from different countries.

