

## TEACHING METHODS OF INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

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**Annotation:** In current society, promoting intercultural principles becomes the task of the school that, as one of the main educational agencies, is called upon to respond to the new needs of a multicultural society. Therefore, the reflection about teaching methodology is central to concretely promote and realize a new intercultural model of education. For this reason the aim of this work is to describe methods that can be considered more suitable for teaching and learning through an intercultural perspective. In particular it will be focused on specific didactic strategies such as cooperative learning, problem solving and role playing.

**Keywords:** Intercultural education, teaching methodology, intercultural didactics, role play, multimedia.

Some strategies and tools that can be used for teaching intercultural communication include film, cooperative learning, improvisation, inquiry-based instruction, task-based instruction, production, interaction, negotiation, mediation and role play. In today's mobile world, intercultural and interpersonal communication skills are of utmost importance, not only in the educational setting, but above all outside of this institutional setting and in particular, in interpersonal and professional life settings. Students who are encouraged to develop their intercultural awareness benefit from deeper learning. They are equipped with the knowledge, skills and methods they will need in their professional and civic life. The most intensive study and research of intercultural communication began in the mid- 1980s of the twentieth century. This is due to the strengthening of economic and political ties between the countries of the European Union, the mobility of the labor market, the processes of integration and secondary socialization, and so on, and the transformation of these countries' societies into multinational and multicultural ones. The processes of integration of Western European cultures cover these countries so much that some researchers come to the conclusion that the borders between cultures and subcultures no longer coincide with the borders between states.

In order to suggest teaching methods appropriate for fulfilment of the intercultural educational model above mentioned, some methods should be considered. These methods can really renew didactics in Italy, overcoming frontal lesson. The adequate methods to support intercultural dialogue are those that prefer interaction. Participation in discussion lesson actively involves students, as group work activities do, particularly if oriented to collaborative writing or to the achievement of a common result. To encourage a complex, problematic and flexible thought it is better to promote problem solving strategy, which is indeed characterized by its explorative and investigative nature. It is as much useful to develop brainstorming method, which stimulates creativity using the group as an ideas and solutions multiplier, and comparative method (Nanni & Curci, 2005, pp. 67-68), which consists on confronting different thoughts and points of view. This last educational method is suitable to allow students learning how to manage reality complexity. If comparison is added to multimedia research, it becomes certainly one of the more effective teaching methods for students who will learn how to develop independently knowledge connections in the global net – also making them able to properly use the web –. Another didactic method that is vital to promote a new intercultural forma mentis is the role playing. It is an 'immersive didactic method' (Rivoltella, 2012, p. 163), an active method that

stimulates students' cognitive and emotional participation through simulation and different roles to play. Encouraging the skill of 'wearing one's shoes', this didactic strategy activates the deconstructive mechanism and the decentralization from one's point of view. In case of cognitive disorientation, it activates also the conflict management skill. In addition, simulation involves emotional level and requires to students the ability of having an empathic relation with the character they are interpreting, like real actors. All these aspects are necessary for the former intercultural thought. In recent years in Italy a method is developing in order to ease knowledge and communication between cultures: the narrative method. It is worth to notice that the narrative way can be 'a preferential way to interculturalism' because it allows each person to tell spontaneously his own life story and to share it with the listener. The listener knows and understands the narrator, living a direct and empathic experience of the other. A further method that needs to be mentioned is the action method (or gesture pedagogy), which, according to many Italian scholars, represents the 'pragmatic way' to interculturalism. At the base of this method's usage there is the idea that intercultural education must value knowledge and attitude, but also gestures, actions and behaviors of different cultures. Therefore, all the actions or behaviors that promote with 'gesture language' the same targets as interculturalism fall within this method (Nanni & Curci, 2005, p. 106). Another practical method based on 'know how' is the workshop.

A workshop is a knowledge constructive path: it is a process in which knowledge is not merely transmitted by the teacher and acquired by the student, but it is built up by teacher and student together. Actually the student is the real main character, because workshops are planned starting from his reality and his needs. Workshops have to be well defined from the beginning, depending on the purpose, the methods, the material and the time. Nevertheless, once the didactic route has started, the possibility to modify it in relation to student's reaction and interaction must be offered. The workshop aim is to encourage students to acquire knowledge and a new mental and behavioral habitus (Andreassi, 2005). The value of this method for an intercultural educational action is clear. In addition, these workshops are used in combination with other more specific methods, such as narrative workshop, creative workshop (writing or manual) play and educational workshop and so on. The last one allows connecting to didactic gaming. Game is gaining acknowledgement and respect as a didactic feature, since it is suitable not only for children but in every educational context. It is an innovative method because it represents a 'breach in the usual didactic activities', for it offers unusual material (such as cards, dice, pawns and game board), it modifies the disposal of people and objects in the classroom, it allows to carry out competitive and/or collaborative activities, it allows to be in a group, it offers the same opportunities to each student (for everyone can take part and win, as long as they are able to enter the game dynamics, not only if they have studied it), it creates a direct involvement and the motivation needed to foster attention and acquisition of concepts and information, it permits to have fun and to use imagination. Therefore this didactic method is also useful to convey intercultural education (Salvarezza, 2007, p. 69).

Before concluding this brief examination on intercultural didactic methods, it must highlight one last method, one of the most congenial to promote solidarity and civil and social responsibility. It is the cooperative learning, which consists in a democratic management of the class. Based on miscellaneous and productive workgroups, on the actual positive interdependence of roles and on equal success opportunities for all, cooperative learning creates a 'noncompetitive, highly responsible and cooperative educational context' (Chiari, 2011, p. 15). So, the strong points of this method are well linked with intercultural education tasks, postulating people inclined at communication, at dialectic confrontation, at mutual ascendancy and at mutual changing in points of view (Agosti, 2003, p. 302).

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