
The intercultural in language teaching and learning

PRESENTER'S NOTES

Session objectives

In this session you will:

- consider ways of understanding language;
- consider ways of understanding culture;
- develop an understanding of the nature of interculturality.

Module 1: **The intercultural in language teaching and learning**

Overview

The aim of the module is to develop shared understandings of the concepts and ideas that underlie intercultural language teaching and learning.

The module consists of a series of activities relating to the ways in which teachers and learners understand language and culture, building on the concepts identified in the opening session. It also addresses the nature of 'interculturality' as a language-focused approach to teaching and learning languages in the context of linguistic and cultural diversity.

An important starting point for intercultural language learning is the way in which language is understood. Language is not a simple unified concept; it can be understood in many different ways. These ways of understanding language affect the ways in which language is taught, learnt, and assessed. Participants will explore their own understanding of language and how this affects their practice as language teachers. They will also consider how their practices may need to be modified to develop and present a fuller understanding of language as a basis for their overall stance on language teaching and a more coherent relationship between language and culture in their programming and assessment.

Similarly, how one understands culture is also an integral part of intercultural language learning. As with language, culture is also understood in many different ways and these too affect the ways in which culture is included in languages education, how it is taught and learnt, and how it is assessed. Participants will explore their own understanding of culture and how this affects their practice as language teachers. They will also consider how their practice may need to be modified to develop and present a fuller understanding of culture as a basis for their overall stance on language teaching and a more coherent relationship between language and culture in their programming and assessment.

Objectives

In this module you will:

- consider ways of understanding language;
- consider ways of understanding culture;
- develop an understanding of the nature of interculturality.

PRESENTER'S NOTES

Key Ideas/Learning

Exploring one's own linguistic and cultural identity

Exploring your own linguistic and cultural identity

- **Paired task**
 - Interview a partner and write down five ideas that describe his/her linguistic and cultural identity
 - What are the most important things about your understanding of yourself as a cultural being?
- **Small-group task**
 - In groups of four, discuss and group the responses
 - What do these show about how you understand language?
 - What do these show about how you understand culture?

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The aim here is to have people think briefly about their own cultural identity as a way of considering their own understanding of language and culture as concepts.

Some issues that may arise are:

Language

- sense of self as a bilingual (or not)
- sense of self as a first/second language speaker and as a teacher of a first/second language
- sense of self as proficient/learning/less proficient, etc. in one language
- often understood as a standard/national language, people who speak dialects/non-standard languages might not include these as an identity
- shows ways of valuing language repertoire
- relationship to a language/ways of constructing oneself as a person speaking more than one language
- feelings about self in relation to others as speakers of languages
- this shows something about attitudes to powerful, majority languages. It can also link identity with groups who speak a dominant language

Culture

- cultural identity as belonging to one or more national cultures
- cultural activities: arts, literature, festivals
- group memberships
- what people do 'normally'
- multiple cultural identities
- cultural identity is unproblematic/homogenous = belonging to a country
- cultural identity consists in culturally valued activities
- cultural identity is a form of category or belonging
- cultural identity is a performance
- may be a combination of the issues above

Key Ideas/Learning

Exploring one's own linguistic and cultural identity

| <i>Interaction/task/questions</i> | <i>Supporting Resources</i> |
|---|--|
| <p>Paired task</p> <p>Interview a partner and write down five ideas that describe his/her and your own linguistic and cultural identity.</p> <p>What are the most important things about your understanding of yourself as a cultural being?</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Anticipated time: 10 minutes</p> <p>Small-group task</p> <p>In groups of four, discuss and group the responses.</p> <p>What do these show about how you understand language and culture?</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Anticipated time: 10 minutes</p> <p>Large-group task</p> <p>Discuss the understandings of culture that emerge from the discussion.</p> <p>How are language and culture understood by the group?</p> <p>Write responses on whiteboard.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Anticipated time: 10 minutes</p> | <p>PowerPoint slide 1.3, Post-It Notes, paper</p> <p>PowerPoint slide 1.3, sheets to record responses</p> <p>Whiteboard</p> <p>(30 mins)</p> |

PRESENTER'S NOTES

Key Ideas/Learning

Analysing language and culture


For this task it is not important to be able to speak French. Rather the goal is to have people look at some very simple culturally embedded language use and to think about how they come to develop a view of what the cartoon means.


Small-group Task 1

The aim here is for people to express a personal understanding of the cartoon, rather than trying to get a 'right' answer. There are many possible responses. The important element here is to attend to what information people use to develop and defend an interpretation.

Analysing language and culture

- What do you understand the message of this cartoon to be?
- What information do you use to understand the cartoon?
- Are there different ways of understanding the cartoon?
- How does the language contribute to your understanding of the cartoon?



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Language explanations:

- *Appelez-moi* means 'call me'.
- *Appelez* is a *vous* form.
- *Vous* is used with people who are distant socially, who do not know each other well, who have a formal relationship, etc. It contrasts with *tu*.
- *Maurice* and *Édouard* are both first names.
- *Monsieur* is the equivalent of mister.

Depending on how well groups work with the task, the following questions may help:

- What things are similar or different about how these people are interacting?
- Why do you think this cartoon shows...?
- What features of the language do you think are important here?
- What might they mean?


Some possible interpretations


- Friendship/familiarity: gesture, proximity
- Distance: *vous* forms
- Equality: reciprocal use of *vous*
- Power/inequality: dress, use of *Monsieur*
- Incongruity: who speaks first? Who should have the right to do this act?

Small-group Task 2

Analysing language and culture

- Would the cartoon work in English or another language? Why? Why not?
- How could you change the cartoon to work in another language?



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The aim here is to explore the idea that some messages are so embedded in their cultural context that they may not work in other languages. This cartoon would not work in English because of the *vous* form and because Title + First name are not typical in Australian English usage. It may work in some European and Asian languages. In some Asian languages, the situation may be so incongruous that even if the language works, the ideas may not.

The importance of changing the cartoon is to examine the idea that similar issues may be dealt with in very different ways.

Key Ideas/Learning
Analysing language and culture

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|---|---------------------------------|
| <p>Small-group Task 1</p> <p>What do you understand the message of this cartoon to be? What information do you use to understand the cartoon? Are there different ways of understanding the cartoon? How does the language contribute to your understanding of the cartoon? Anticipated time: 20 minutes</p> | <p>PowerPoint slide 1.4</p> |
| <p>Whole-group task</p> <p>Discuss various interpretations of this cartoon. Anticipated time: 10 minutes</p> | <p>Whiteboard</p> |
| <p>Small-group Task 2</p> <p>Would the cartoon work in English or another language? Why? Why not? How could you change the cartoon to work in another language? Anticipated time: 10 minutes</p> | <p>PowerPoint slide 1.5</p> |
| <p>Whole-group task</p> <p>Discuss various issues that emerged from the task. Anticipated time: 10 minutes</p> | <p>Whiteboard (50 mins)</p> |

PRESENTER'S NOTES

Key Ideas/Learning

Understanding language

Understanding language

- **How did the cartoon task treat language?**
 - What sort of view of language do you think the person who designed this task has?
 - What evidence do you see for the 'theory of language' that goes with this task?
- **How similar or different is this theory of language from the one you use in your teaching?**

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The aim of this task is to invite participants to think about ways of understanding language. In this task language is not seen as a set of rules for assembling vocabulary or as a body of knowledge about language.

The view of language taken here is one which emphasises that language:

- is interpersonal (it's used to communicate messages between people);
- is embedded in a cultural context (by themselves the words don't convey the message, it's the words, their social meaning, the people speaking, their roles and relationships, which are important), and that
- understanding a language is not the same as understanding the words; it is seeing the deeper meanings created by the words when and where they are used.

Key Ideas/Learning

Understanding culture

Understanding culture

- **How did the cartoon task treat culture?**
 - What sort of view of culture do you think the person who designed this task has?
 - What evidence do you see for the 'theory of culture' that goes with this task?
- **How similar or different is this theory of culture from the one you use in your teaching?**

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The aim of this task is to get teachers to think about ways of understanding culture.

In this task culture is not seen as static knowledge, but rather as a way of creating meaning. It is not a set of rules for behaviour, nor is it a body of knowledge to be mastered, but rather a framework in which things come to be seen as having meaning. Culture is shaped by, and in turn shapes, language.

Key Ideas/Learning

Synthesising

The ideas here will come from what individuals have drawn from the workshop so far and their own experiences of language and culture. Some ideas which may arise from this discussion and which underlie the ideas of the workshop as a whole include:

- Language and culture are variable, and the ways people use and draw upon them is not fixed.
- Culture is something that is constructed by people, not something fixed.
- In context, there are close links between language and culture.
- Language choices reflect underlying cultural assumptions and ideas.
- We use a lot of cultural and contextual knowledge to understand language.
- You can engage with aspects of culture with simple language.
- Teaching culture as a socially constructed phenomenon means looking much more at language.
- Individuals need opportunities to explore culture for themselves.
- We draw on our own cultural knowledge to develop our ideas of a new culture.
- The same texts can be treated as both language and culture and can be used to see the relationships between them.

Key Ideas/Learning
Understanding language

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|---|--|
| <p>Small-group task</p> <p>How did the cartoon task treat language?</p> <p>How similar or different is this treatment from the one you use in your teaching?</p> <p>Anticipated time: 15 minutes</p> | <p>PowerPoint slide 1.6</p> <p>(15 mins)</p> |
|---|--|

Key Ideas/Learning
Understanding culture

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|--|--|
| <p>Small-group task</p> <p>How did the cartoon task treat culture?</p> <p>How similar or different is this treatment from the one you use in your teaching?</p> <p>Anticipated time: 15 minutes</p> | <p>PowerPoint slide 1.7</p> <p>(15 mins)</p> |
|--|--|

Key Ideas/Learning
Synthesising

| | |
|---|------------------|
| <p>Facilitator-led, whole-group discussion</p> <p>What key ideas emerged about language and culture?</p> <p>Anticipated time: 10 minutes</p> | <p>(10 mins)</p> |
|---|------------------|

PRESENTER'S NOTES

The aim of this presentation is to consider the sort of personal characteristics we are working to develop through intercultural language teaching and learning.

The intercultural person

- **The intercultural person:**
 - views language as a culturally embedded and culturally constructed way of expressing personal meanings and also of expressing collective, institutional, cultural meanings.
 - is aware of what is being said and how in the speaking and writing he/she encounters and is aware of how this may vary across cultures.
 - understands how his/her own language and culture and those of his/her interlocutor shape meanings, communication, and relationships.

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The intercultural person actively uses and analyses language and culture as they are used in communication. He/she knows how to read meanings in texts and is aware that any incidence of speech or writing carries with it embedded assumptions and implications that contribute to the actual meaning of language in use. He/she also acknowledges that meanings are problematic, that any use of language may be interpreted in multiple ways, and that linguistic and cultural background are important things that shape how messages are produced and understood.

While this does not mean that the intercultural person analyses everything he/she reads, writes, hears, or says, it does mean that he/she has the capacity to do so at points of need and is open to doing so as a part of interacting with others.

The intercultural person

- **The intercultural person:**
 - is open to seeing things from outside his/her own perspective and to communicating his/her own perspective to others who don't share it.
 - actively searches for multiple meanings and realises that each interaction is potentially new as context is always changing.
 - is mindful that values, beliefs, and behaviours are shaped by language and culture, as are the perceptions one has of these.

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An intercultural person is one who is able to see things from more than one perspective. He/she is able to see that his/her own assumptions are not universal and that similar messages or behaviours may mean different things to other people. He/she is able not only to see others from his/her own perspective, but is also able to reflect on his/her own culture from the perspective of others, seeing that the familiar may be strange.

He/she is mindful, in the sense of bearing in mind the influences that come to bear in interaction to communicate and negotiate meanings, and actively brings this awareness into play in dealing with others.

Key Ideas/Learning

Exploring one's own interculturality

Exploring one's own interculturality

- **Paired task**
 - Interview a partner and write down five ideas that describe him/her as an intercultural person.
 - What are the qualities, activities, values, behaviours, attitudes that you think reflect your experiences of being intercultural?
- **Small-group task**
 - In groups of four, discuss and group each person's responses.
 - What things do you have in common, what things are different?

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The aim here is for people to explore what they think interculturality means, by reflecting on themselves as intercultural people.

Some themes that may emerge are:

- Tolerance
- Respect for others
- Communicators across cultures
- People with interpersonal relationships with people from other cultures
- Travellers/tourists
- Speakers of more than one language
- Having different identities
- Involvement in cultural activities
- Teachers of other cultures
- Enjoyment of diversity for its own sake.

Key Ideas /Learning
The intercultural person

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| <p>Facilitator presentation</p> <p>The presentation gives an overview of the intercultural person as an illustration of the sort of person intercultural language teaching and learning seeks to develop.</p> <p>Anticipated time: 20 minutes</p> | <p>PowerPoint slides 1.8 & 1.9 (20 mins)</p> |
|--|--|

Key Ideas/Learning
Exploring one's own interculturality

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Paired task</p> <p>Interview a partner and write down five ideas that describe him/her as an intercultural person. What are the qualities, activities, values, behaviours, attitudes that you think reflect your experiences of being intercultural?</p> <p>Anticipated time: 10 minutes</p> | <p>PowerPoint slide 1.10, Post-It Notes</p> |
| <p>Small-group task</p> <p>In groups of four, discuss and group the responses. What things do you have in common, what things are different?</p> <p>Anticipated time: 10 minutes</p> | <p>PowerPoint slide 1.10, sheets to record responses</p> |
| <p>Whole-group task</p> <p>Collect examples from each group and write on board to establish collective views.</p> <p>Anticipated time: 10 minutes</p> | <p>Whiteboard (30 mins)</p> |

Key Ideas/Learning
Synthesising

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|--|---|
| <p>Individual reflection</p> <p>What have you learnt from this module? How do you see language and culture, and their relationship?</p> <p>Use the reflection sheet/notes page to record your observations.</p> <p>Anticipated time: 10 minutes</p> | <p>Reflection/ Notes page (10 mins)</p> |
|--|---|

References/Readings

Kramsch, C. (1998). *Language and culture* (Oxford Introductions to Language Study Series) (chapter 1). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Liddicoat, A.J. (2005). Teaching languages for intercultural communication. In D. Cunningham & A. Hatoss (Eds.), *An international perspective on language policies, practices and proficiencies* (pp. 201–214). Belgrave: Editura Funda_iei Academice AXIS & Fédération Internationale des Professeurs de Langues Vivantes.

Further reading

Kramsch, C. (1998). *Language and culture* (Oxford Introductions to Language Study Series) (especially chapters 3 and 6). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lantolf, J.P., & Thorne, S.L. (2006). *Sociocultural theory and the genesis of second language development*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Liddicoat, A.J., Papademetre, L., Scarino, A., & Kohler, M. (2003). *Report on intercultural language learning* (sections 3.2 and 3.3). Canberra: Department of Education, Science and Training. (Available at www.curriculum.edu.au/nalsas/pdf/intercultural.pdf.)


Suggestions for school-based investigations

- How is the intercultural understood in your school?
- How is the intercultural understood in your classroom?
- How are language and culture represented in your teaching materials?
- How well do you know how your students experience language(s) and culture(s)? Inside the classroom? Outside the classroom?

(See Module 5, Attachment 3)

Module 1

The intercultural in language teaching and learning

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1.1 _____

Session objectives

In this session you will:

- consider ways of understanding language;
- consider ways of understanding culture;
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1.2 _____

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Analysing language and culture

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PowerPoint slides (cont'd)

Analysing language and culture

- Would the cartoon work in English or another language? Why? Why not?
- How could you change the cartoon to work in another language?




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PowerPoint slides (cont'd)

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1.9 _____

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