TEACHING ENGLISH IN A MULTICULTURAL CLASSROOM

Natka Jankova Alagjozovska
FON University, Skopje, Macedonia, natka.jankova@fon.edu.mk

Abstract: This paper will be concerned with multiculturalism in English language teaching as an important component in education. Multicultural education as an idea has a major goal to reform the educational institutions in order to find a way for all the students no matter their gender, race, ethnicity, language or cultural group to have an equal opportunity to learn and study at school. A multicultural classroom consists of students from different cultures which are supposed to form a diverse learning environment. In order to accomplish a relaxing environment the teacher should possess skills, creativity and knowledge. Multicultural education as a whole process should be infused into the school programs in order to achieve equal rights for every student. In order to accomplish that, students should be educated in terms of intercultural communication i.e. they should learn how to respond to different cultures and ethnicities and intercultural communication will teach them how to respect and understand the diverse cultures. If teachers become aware that language skills and knowledge need to be connected to the intercultural competence, students will feel that energy also and will show much better results. That is the reason why the intercultural competence is essential in achieving goals on an international level and more precisely by implementing intercultural competence in education a bigger cultural awareness can be attained. Approaches to multicultural education will be discussed in details and finally some strategies for developing multicultural lessons will be proposed.
Keywords: multiculturalism, education, culture, language, intercultural communication.

1. INTRODUCTION
Foreign language teaching and learning has gone through major changes over the past years. Replacing the old grammar-translation approach with the communicative and audio-lingual method and the practices of real-life situations, most of the educators have moved from pedagogy to language acquisition and learning. According to the theory of Stephen Crashen (1958), the unconscious development of the target language system happens because of the usage of the language for real communication (p.1). From here, learning would be related to the conscious representation of grammatical knowledge and non-spontaneous processes. Thus, students who read literature books can acquire better communicative and linguistic competence. Speaking about English language teaching, students become aware of certain culture very often through literature texts. Using literature texts are not so useful if only taken as tools to improve students' knowledge in the language. As Corbett (2003) posits, the primary aim of the foreign language teacher is to help students understand texts in a foreign language and to cope with, mediate between or even enter into 'cultural texts' (if seen as social practices).

In *Multidimensional Model of Intercultural Competence* Byram (1997) puts an emphasis on the attitude and uses words such as openness and curiosity to explain his conviction that an individual must remain open to learning about new beliefs, values and worldviews in order to participate in relationships of equality (Moeller and Nugent, 2014). Because culture is who we are and how we live and this process is changeable, those changes bring new challenges in the society. Globalization, migration and the mingling of cultures in one place or community has made this world highly multicultural. Globalization brings the need to interact and have different kinds of relationships with people from different cultures. It creates a new challenge for people who are to cross the borders of the countries altogether with their cultural boundaries.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW
Multicultural education as an idea has a major goal to reform the educational institutions in order to find a way for all the students no matter their gender, race, ethnicity, language or cultural group to have an equal opportunity to learn and study at school. According to Bennett (2003), "Multicultural Education is an approach to teaching and learning that is based upon democratic values and beliefs and that affirms cultural pluralism within culturally diverse societies in an interdependent world" (p.14).Individuals are able to see and observe the conduct of others through their own perception and perception is very often shaped by culture. Gorski (2001) defines multicultural education as a transformative movement in education that produces critically thinking, socially active members of society. It is not simply a change of curriculum or the addition of an activity. It is a movement that calls for new attitudes, new

approaches, and a new dedication to laying the foundation for the transformation of society (p.1).Multiculturalism actually influences how individuals interpret things. If an individual accepts and values different cultures without having certain prejudice about them it does not mean that they are happy with that. Banks (1999) defines multicultural education as an idea and educational reform movement, and a process whose major goal is to change the structure of educational institutions so that male and female students, exceptional students, and students who are members of diverse, racial, ethnic and cultural groups will have an equal chance to achieve academically in school.

Along with the different definitions the conclusion will be that multicultural education is a whole process which should be infused into the school programs in order to achieve equal rights for every student. In order to accomplish that, students should be educated in terms of intercultural communication i.e. they should learn how to respond to different cultures and ethnicities and intercultural communication will teach them how to respect and understand the diverse cultures.

3. APPROACHES TO MULTICULTURAL CURRICULUM

A famous scholar in this field is James A. Banks. He is regarded as one of the founders of the discipline of multicultural education. Banks states that, "a major goal of multicultural education is to change teaching and learning approaches so that students of both genders and from diverse cultural, ethnic, and language groups will have equal opportunities to learn in educational institutions" (2013, p. 10). He points out that citizens need multicultural education in order to enter into the dialogue with fellow citizens and future citizens.
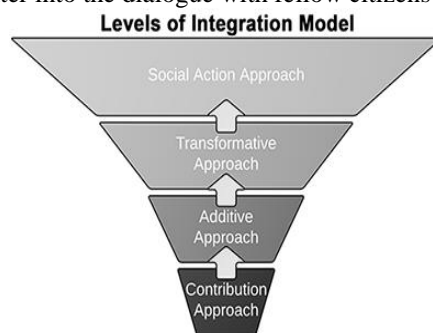

Figure 1 – Banks' model of multicultural education

As shown in Figure 1, he has established four approaches to the integration of ethnic content in order to break the barriers of stereotypes and any kind of discrimination of the students and teachers. The approaches are: the contributions approach, the ethnic additive approach, the transformative approach and decision-making approach(Banks, 1988):

- the contributions approach

This is one of the most popular way to implement multiculturalism in education. This approach marks the addition of ethnic heroes in the study program whereas the curriculum is unchanged in terms of objectives and goals. It is usually connected to famous ethnic days, weeks or events and are usually celebrated in schools. As Banks (2010) points out "an important characteristic of the contributions approach is that the mainstream curriculum remains unchanged in its basic structure, goals and salient characteristics" (p. 246).During these events students are usually involved in the lessons, sharing their experiences and stories. Unfortunately, from these lessons the class students usually learn little or nothing about the ethnic groups before or after the special event or occasion.

- the ethnic additive approach

This is an approach with integration of ethnic content to the curriculum and is characterized by the addition of a book, a unit, or a course to the curriculum without making any serious change. This method gives freedom to the teacher to insert ethnic content into the curriculum without restructuring it, which takes substantial time, effort, training, and rethinking of the curriculum. According to Banks (2010), the disadvantage of this approach is that it usually results in the viewing of ethnic content from the perspective of some mainstream historians, writers, artists, and does not involve a restructuring of the curriculum but the teacher chooses the materials they consider appropriate.

- the transformative approach

This approach is a lot different than the previous ones. Here the basic goal of the curriculum is changed and students are able to view concepts, issues, themes, and problems from different points of views. In this approach the various perspectives, frames of reference, and content from various groups are infused in the curriculum and in that way students will understand the nature, development, and complexity of other cultures' societies. This means that for example "when studying U.S. history language, music, arts, science, and mathematics, the emphasis should not be on the ways in which various ethnic and cultural groups have contributed to mainstream U.S. society and culture but it should be focused on how the common U.S. culture and society emerged from a complex synthesis and interaction of the diverse cultural elements that originated within the various cultural, racial, religious groups that make up the U.S. society" (Banks, 2010:252).

- decision-making and social action approach

If the traditional goal of schooling had been to socialize students so they would accept unquestioningly the existing ideologies, institutions, and practices within society (Banks, 2004; Arthur, Davies, & Hahn, 2008), today's new approaches such as the social action approach has an aim to educate students for social criticism and social change in order to teach them how to make decisions. This approach combines all the elements of previous approach and adds components that ask students to make decisions and take actions related to issue they have previously learned in the lecture. Students in this approach can address some social problems such as racial discrimination and they can thing about the question "What actions should we take to reduce prejudice and discrimination in our school?" The most important aims of this approach is to teach students to think, analyze, collect materials and help them get a sense of decision making and political efficiency.

Other scholars who are leaders in this field besides Banks are Sleeter, Grant and Gay. Sleeter and Grant (1988) came up with the following ways of introducing multiculturalism:
- teaching students from different cultures to fit into the society;
- human relations that focus on diverse people living together in harmony;
- studies for single groups that will focus on showing respect, awareness and acceptance of that particular group;
- finding ways to reduce prejudice, equality for all groups in the society;
- multicultural way of teaching whereas students will be analyzers, critical thinkers and also some kind of reformers who will redistribute all resources among every group.

In spite of combining already set up approaches Gay(1988) generalized three main approaches: teaching content about cultural pluralism, teaching culturally different students, and using cultural pluralism to teach other academic subjects and intellectual skills. Teaching content about cultural pluralism is content-centered, with an emphasis on developing units of instruction (lessons, modules, courses) about the history, heritage, contributions, and social issues of ethnic groups (Gay, 1988).

4. STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING MULTICULTURAL LESSONS

A multicultural classroom consists of students from different cultures which are supposed to form a diverse learning environment. In order to accomplish a relaxing environment the teacher should possess skills, creativity and knowledge. However, teachers should not be blamed if they lack knowledge in this field because it is not known whether they have access to training programs of intercultural communication and multiculturalism. Recently, in our country multi-ethnic integration was introduced as optional and there are teachers who have just started implementing these lessons and some of them find it very difficult because they do not have the knowledge, the needed resources and clear directives of how to implement multicultural content.

The above mentioned approaches to multicultural education are proved to be effective and should be studied and implemented. Below, I will provide some tips for implementing multicultural content during the English language lessons:

● Role-play of interesting situations

This can be an interesting activity where students can express their own opinion about a real-life situation. For example if they are told to make up a role-play that shows how they perceive English people this will allow students to invent their own scenario and show their feelings and perceptions about British people. Thus, by organizing a role play activity in the class the teacher can raise some questions related to British and American culture, ask them to

compare it to their own culture or explain some history topics that are probably difficult to explain them in regular lessons.

● Access to literatures of different cultures

Because the main aim of multicultural education is to help students recognize the differences and similarities among themselves this means that if students are exposed to literatures from French authors for example, they can make a research about the author's life and his culture. When students learn about different customs, languages and traditions they also share some common traits. Learning about cultures makes them realize that people can be different and unique, yet still share a lot of common things and will help students to develop cultural awareness i.e. acceptance of differences. These realizations assist students to accept and respect people from all cultures and backgrounds.

● Sharing knowledge about the students' cultures and origins

For a successful multicultural classroom setting the most fundamental thing is gathering information of various cultures. The educators should use the lessons as an opportunity to learn about the origin of the students. Information of the conventions, convictions, values, traditions, food habits, financial status and so forth helps in understanding the students more profoundly. This information should then be shared with the classmates during the learning process. Students ought to be urged to make inquiries that will help them learn more about other people who have an origin different from their own. The teachers may find out about different societies and afterward deliberately consolidate them in the learning experience. Finally, students from different ethnicities might be offered chances to talk about and share the experience they have from their culture.

● Learning in groups with cooperation

Subsequent to making the kids acknowledge contrasts and similarities among classmates the following stage for the educator ought to be to support helpful learning of different cultures. The atmosphere of the classroom should help students from other ethnicities in creating collaboration and social attitudes. The general thought behind the agreeable learning atmosphere is that making little heterogeneous groups of students have the goal to learn the different patterns of social communication. By doing this, the students become more motivated to study and produce stronger connections than they would do by working alone. Group work helps students concentrate on different styles and strategies of learning. It is known that cooperative groups have solid beneficial outcomes especially when speaking about the classmates' relationships between students from different backgrounds.

● Positive and negative team debate on different topics

Group discussions stimulate thinking. It is an excellent strategy for enhancing student motivation, fostering intellectual ability and encouraging democratic habits. By creating the positive and negative teams, students still work in groups and look for positive or negative arguments from books or the internet and thus provide opportunities for students to practice numerous skills including the ability to search, organize and defend positions and consider different point of views. In such debate students deal with different ideas and should find a way to consolidate and choose the best ideas and come up with original conclusions and this becomes a challenging task in the end. Hence, the teachers are supposed to make use of discussions on even sensitive cultural topics which can initiate a discussion and help develop students questioning power, in depth analysis of situation and provoke them to express their opinions and thoughts of the topic.

5. CONCLUSION

When students enter an intercultural classroom, the teachers must guide their students and describe the environment and when this happens than the learning is learner-centered, engaging, interactive, participatory and cooperative. It is very important to point out that nowadays teachers are not expected to do the drilling and transmit information to students but they have to turn the learners into researchers, analyzers learn them to think critically and express their opinions through authentic texts, multimedia materials and in this way the environment is going to be a learning environment where knowledge, opinions and new values are to be shared. If teachers become aware that language skills and knowledge need to be connected to the intercultural competence, students will feel that energy also and will show much better results. That is the reason why the intercultural competence is essential in achieving goals on an international level and more precisely by implementing intercultural competence in education a bigger cultural awareness can be attained.

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