

# **METHODOLOGY FOR THE ACTIVE COMMUNICATION**



## **CHAPTER 1**

### **COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE**

#### **Language and culture**

Everybody coming into a close contact with foreigners, including also refugees and immigrants coming into Europe, knows very well that it is not sufficient for them to master at least the basics of the language of their new country, language of its population and grammar. Mainly the lector, but also an administration officer or social worker realizes (or should realize) that there are many circumstances which he/she should orientate in. The practice leads him/her to a fact that it is useful to concentrate on the highly important elements that can cause many difficulties and misunderstandings if they are not respected.

Let us summarize at least the most significant of them:

1. It is highly important to distinguish how various cultures perceive the spoken language. In some of the European countries it is obvious that people speak a lot, quickly and with temperament, and nobody feels hurt when more than one person speaks at one moment, or that someone's speech is interrupted. For an immigrant coming from a culture having a strict hierarchy system it may be shocking to see or experience such a situation.
2. A hierarchy is closely connected with the rules of speaking – who can speak and when. Other than European cultures show more respect towards the age, they distinguish between men and women, children can not disturb at all. Usual, open, everyday dialogue of the Europeans is surprising for these immigrants and it often takes a long time before they adapt to these facts.
3. Even if the modern European society abolishes one taboo after another in the dialogue, in the other parts of the world there are topics avoided strictly in any dialogue. Diseases are not spoken about, in different places “a woman” is not a suitable topic, a debate about sex must not even come to our minds (something we know also very well, let's compare reactions of the young population with those of their parents, or even grandparents!).
4. Non-committal chatting and gabbing do not surprise a European, he/she tolerates them. However, other cultures still can distinguish the value of speech on one hand, and silence on the other. In the Czech language, there still exists a proverb saying that “speech is silver, but

silence is gold”, which seems to have been forgotten a long time ago. What is more, gift of the gab is highly praised, even if the content is often empty. Mainly the Asian cultures behave in a different way, and a European should respect their attitude towards verbalism. He/she should think out his/her behaviour.

5. Other than European cultures also distinguish strictly who can speak, when and for how long. When meeting in a class where all the learners-immigrants are equal in the new environment, this principle would not be manifested, but in private very unpleasant misunderstandings may occur. A European should calculate for them and anticipate them.
6. This fact is directly connected with the truth that non-European cultures distinguish much more basically who can take part in the discussion. This is not so apparent during a usual everyday contact but when it comes to significant topics, only the older persons have a right to express themselves. Such a custom or more precisely a behaviour principle has been rooted so deeply that the lectors often strive for evocation of a debate quite in vain, and do not understand why the learners got silent at once. The explanation is easy and the lector should anticipate similar situations and calculate for them.
7. Such a hierarchy system is even more explicit in case when the discussion deals with topics that should lead to some decision. This belongs only to some people in the culture of the group which has come from a different part of the world to Europe. That is why it is useless to insist, urge on some opinion, or even a final solution.

An experienced lector or anybody else coming often into contact with immigrants is sure to come with his/her own experience and enrich the system which we suggest to be esteemed when it comes to respecting of different culture and customs of people who find themselves in the new environment of the contemporary Europe. And for sure he/she will also find a lot of examples that could be added to the individual points. We offer at least one explicit

EXAMPLE:

*Today Muhammad Rashid remembers the first weeks spent in the Czech Republic with a smile on his face. Being born on the Java Island, and a strictly educated Muslim, he had a lot of problems with food at the college. His university schoolmates looked forward having a pork cutlet for lunch, while he partly could not explain his reasons and partly was ashamed for not eating pork meat. He used to avoid such lunches, tried to find varied excuses. He felt relieved when he confided finally – nobody from his colleagues made laugh of him, they tolerated him kindly and even met him in many ways and looked for some alternate solution for him.*

*However, during his long stay he abandoned his original principles step by step, and in the European non-Muslim environment he came to like even a small amount of alcohol.*

### **To respect traditions**

We should tactfully perceive and respect that the newcomers, refugees and immigrants find themselves in a foreign country and come from quite a different environment. They have different values:

- E.g. the position of a man is higher than that of a woman in their society, he knows nothing about emancipation, and the term gender equality is quite strange for him!
- Even boys-teenagers are valued more than women in some communities. That is why they might not understand why they should sit at the same table with women and girls in the classroom, why they are requested to co-operate with them, the teacher calls them in the same way and their answers or opinions are of the same value!
- In many countries of the world, women must not comment on some problems at all, these are absolute taboos for them – and now they are asked about them in the same way as their men partners!
- The opinions of older men use to be final – and now they are asked questions, their answers are doubted. Mainly in the process of new language learning they might be even outrun, effaced, or maybe ridiculed by the younger learners!
- We have seen already that some conversation topics can be taboos – and now the same topics are open democratically, and all the learners are asked to express themselves, to tell their opinion, even to develop the topic and add their own experience!
- In their home country, only the distinguished person can speak in a group. Here the differences are diminished completely, and they have to cope with this situation!

These global areas of thinking and proceeding can be extended. We can add some other details stressed by non-European cultures:

- Not only certain topics are taboos, in some countries people distinguish topics which are more positive than the other topics – e.g. the Arabs appreciate experience in horse breeding.
- The relationship of men and women represents quite a sensitive topic in many countries. We suggest the lecturers rather to avoid this topic until the situation in their group is clear and their learners adapt to the European conditions and behaviour.

- In Japan the person of a high position does not speak during the business dealings – he/she employs other people to discuss problems for him/her. This fact should be taken into account in case of learners coming from eastern Asia. It must not be under-estimated. The lector must bring the immigrants on his/her side step by step.
- In many cultures the older man of a high position can speak earlier and for a longer time than the others. This fact should be also taken into account by the lector who should be orientated well in his/her group and is not supposed to require democracy we are used to from the very beginning.

EXAMPLE:

*In comparison with women coming from different world ends, Ferna was pleasantly surprised by a nice behaviour of the Czech society towards her from the beginning. Being an Indian woman, she was used to the cast system advantaging women (that is why there had been several women prime ministers in these Asian countries), but she was afraid of the discrimination in Europe. She praises high the equal system; on the other hand she has got an unpleasant experience from the time of meeting the other immigrants from abroad. As opposed to the Czechs, they let her know that she is a woman “only”. No matter that the situation got better gradually, Ferna took breath when she could leave the place with a high concentration of immigrants and live alone, surrounded by the modern European society.*

Of course, we could find other examples in which a bright lector takes care of not offending, not breaking the atmosphere in his/her group. Nevertheless, during the first phase of introducing it is one of his/her main tasks to unite learners coming from various parts of the world through the language of the country they find themselves in.

**Clash of languages**

Language is an important symbol of the society, nation. It has a social character in the form of speech; it is a tool for exchanging thoughts, feelings, and wishes. And at the same time, some languages do not include words for phenomena that do not exist in the national culture. This is also very important to realize. Mostly this problem is connected with religion and conception of the world. That is why in some languages we cannot find words like “heaven” or “evil”. The Red Indians do not know the one-way life pilgrimage with the birth, death and after-life. They understand life as a cyclical repetition in the time. Buddhism does not know these words as well because the life does not begin or end; it is only a succession of re-incarnations.

It is also necessary to know that in some languages there exists one word for various meanings. In such cases this word must be pronounced with a right accent. For example, in Vietnamese there is a word “ma” which can mean “mother”, “horse”, “cemetery” according to the accent, and has three more meanings. When we add the faith, customs, habits, it is obvious that there are many things necessary to be solved, deeply perceived and dealt with in detail by the society which accepted the immigrants.

EXAMPLE:

*Nam from Vietnam came to study in the Czechoslovakia shortly before the Soviet occupation in 1968. Their pro-Soviet community was not accepted well by the other university students. They became something like an island which communicated with the Czechs with many difficulties. Nam understood the problems concerning his mother tongue versus the new language, still he was slowly losing confidence in his abilities. Some of his colleagues copped out the new situation and rather returned home, but he heartily turned to studies of the Czech language, under unfriendly conditions graduated from the university and started working. His new colleagues were conciliatory and praised both his expert knowledge of a young engineer and his knowledge of the Czech language. The latter one was so good that he became translator and later, after the year 1989 he helped the other Vietnamese who came in masses to make business. Till now he says that common trips with his colleagues, having beer with them and all the informal contacts were most useful for him. Today he can be proud of not only a very good knowledge of the standard form of the language, but also for knowing the dialect of the Ostrava region where he has been living up today, which is quite different from the language used in the rest of the Czech Republic. If an immigrant has mastered also the dialect or slang, he/she really becomes a member of his/her new society.*

Herewith – cross your heart – generally no society welcomes foreigners with open arms, with the exception of tourists who bring and spend their money. In the Greek material we can read a summary of the main problems, which is comprehensible for everybody, and in case of Greece concerns about half a million immigrants and refugees:

- Their education (often a university one) is not recognized.
- These people have low-grade jobs refused by the natives.
- Mostly they earn money casually, often even illegally.
- They have lower salaries than Greeks.
- They have no social insurance.
- They do not know the local political, financial and social system.

- Even if they have learnt the Greek language, they exclude themselves by usage of the native language in their community.
- The children have language problems for a long time; the same is true about women who stay at home.
- Women have difficult access to the labour market.

In the Spanish materials we can read that in Spain there is also not enough comprehension towards the immigrants. According to these data, all the problems are mostly connected with the home country of the immigrants. Those coming from the Eastern Europe have language problems, but they learn quickly. With the exception of Moroccans, Africans have also language complications. They are often handicapped by insufficient education, and their women are absolutely illiberal. However, the Spanish have an interesting experience with immigrants coming from the Latin America. Though their native language is Spanish and they also have a similar culture, there exist small language differences which can cause conflicts. That is why the lectors are recommended to choose their words carefully.

Though we have given concrete examples of Greece and Spain, the rest of Europe should admit honestly that the relationship problems towards the immigrants can be found in all the countries.

EXAMPLE:

*Nevertheless, there exist some exceptions. We can give the following example: Camilla comes from Kirghizia; she is 49 years old and has been living in the Czech Republic for a long time. Some years ago she attended courses of the Czech language that were organized in a classical way and then she continued her studies. She stayed far from her home-town Pishpec because she had married a Czech who helped her to integrate. He was quite open and tried to explain her why people behave in a way different from that in Asia here, how they solve various situations and why. According to Camilla, it was just her husband's behaviour what was the most important for her to understand and accept the society whose habits seemed to be so different from her native country at the beginning.*

**Lector and the language**

Sooner or later, each of us meets the immigrants. It is easier and quicker in case of people working in the state administration, self-government, or in the social and culture spheres, but the first are the lectors, teachers of the language spoken in the country the immigrants have taken refuge in. Such a

man or woman represents the first contact; they start to introduce the new, mostly different in principle society to the immigrants, as the first people they enable them to communicate with it. Results of work of a language lector are brought by the immigrants on their ways and because a language is the main expression of a mental life, and it is closely connected with psychology and sociology, the lector should be a good psychologist, too. Then the effect of teaching will have a high quality and the immigrant can become a member of the new society more quickly.

That person who is to help the newcomers to master the language of their new home should realize that their mother tongue does not have to be any of the Indo-European languages spoken in most of Europe. Only the languages of Basques, Hungarian, Finnish, Estonian, Maltese and Laplanders are different, the others belong to the large Indo-European group having the following branches:

1. Indo-Iran
2. Armenian
3. Slavonic languages (West-Slavonic, East-Slavonic, South-Slavonic)
4. Baltic languages (Lithuanian branch)
5. Albanian
6. Greek
7. Romance languages
8. Germanic languages (North-Germanic and West-Germanic groups)
9. Celtic languages

If none of them is my mother tongue, then I probably speak a language belonging to the following groups:

- Afro-Asian (Semitic)
- Ural (Finno-Ugric)
- Altaic
- Tibetan-Chinese

The above mentioned Basque does not belong to any large group of languages in Europe; in Asia it is the same with Japanese and Korean.

### **Varied language thinking**

Everybody who has not been using any Germanic, Romance, Slavonic, or some other Indo-European language since the early childhood, has also a different way of thinking. He/she is not used to a strict sentence form in which the determining parts of sentence precede the determined ones. He/she does not start forming a sentence without having the whole of its structure in mind like

the Indo-Europeans do. People coming from the Ural language area which is closest to the Indo-European languages are used to the vowel harmony, but when they start a sentence, its end is still unclear. As for the word formation, prefixes are used much more frequently. If a lector meets people whose mother tongue belongs to the Semitic group (Africa, Asia), he/she must take into account also some other differences: Indo-Europeans also use so-called sound symbolism (ding-dong), but in case of the Semites this phenomenon is a part of their grammatical system. They live more at present; that is why their tense system is not developed to a high extent. Then they like characterisation but do not unfurl the ideas. Their sentences are simple, cases almost do not exist. And not to speak about South-Eastern Asian languages! For example Malayans almost do not have a tense system and are well aware of their resistance towards complex sentences. For Chinese languages the most important is the present tense, the past and future tenses are poor.

EXAMPLE:

*An Indonesian Diapari graduated from the Technical University in the former Czechoslovakia and is keen on mathematics. No matter he had passed a Czech language course together with the other foreign students, he did not believe in his Czech among the other students and usually he was silent, did not take part in the debates. On the other hand, when being called to the blackboard to solve some mathematical or descriptive geometry task, his hand holding the chalk just swished and he could express his solution in Czech well, too. His colleagues started to enjoy his company more and more, they wanted to listen to his advices. At first they solved mathematic tasks together in which international terms could be used and they understood each other quite easily and quickly. Out of these contacts there came also a deeper knowledge of the new language and Diapari could make himself understood when dealing with any topic. A recognised primus of the class made use of mathematics to a quick and deep knowledge of the language he had not known before.*

Out of this general outline it is apparent that varied misunderstandings are logical from the very beginning. Wise and successful lector cannot be satisfied by the fact that about two milliards of people speak one of the Indo-European languages. He should rather be aware of the fact that there are between 900-1500 languages in the world (sometimes it is difficult to state a boundary between languages and dialects), and his attitude towards the immigrants is variable.

An adult person is not a child who starts learning the mother tongue of its surroundings approximately at the age of six months. Being six years old, the child uses a vocabulary of 2000-2500 words and has mastered the basic grammatical rules necessary for everyday communication.

However, we devote to the child all the time, we can correct mistakes, modify the wrong or inaccurate pronunciation. What is more, we are a model and an aid for the child who trusts in us completely.

Situation of an immigrants' lector is different incomparably. Besides diversity of the original cultures of his/her learners, the main difference among them is their age. That is why a high level of tactfulness must belong to the basic characteristics of his/her profession. He/she should keep in mind that he/she is in the first and most important contact with the future inhabitant of his/her home country. He/she should not forget to take over the learners

- In order to make his work easier,
- For the language of his/her country, nation,
- For the society in which all of them will live together.

The lector should do everything within the human powers to get each other as close as possible!

### **Experience and advice**

There have been collected lots of experience in the countries having been experienced in problems with immigrants for years, as well as in the other ones where this situation is new. It is worth summarising them and recommending the best ones. Then the lector can decide in practice which methods are the most interesting for the immigrants, which are responded by them well, and which should be omitted out of his/her teaching repertory.

In Sweden there is a very good and proved experience with the lessons beginning in the same, unchangeable way every day. After the usual mutual greetings they ask the same questions:

- What is the day today?
- What did you do yesterday after lessons?
- What new have you learnt and what attracted you?

Then they continue by an information what this day will be like, that the whole course is in for this or that programme.

It has been proved in practice that it helps people living in a foreign environment when they find a stabile connecting point. Regularity gives them feeling of security.

The Greeks indicate that they were successful in using the getting-to-know activities during the language teaching. Participants of the course sit in a circle and the lector asks them to write down five words that come to their minds when telling one after another where they are from, from where they came to Europe. Once these five basic points can differ diametrically, the other day the

learners reach an agreement. This or that, all of them start speaking finally, and because their thoughts are based in their cultures obviously, the differences can be mapped easily.

In Greece it came right to ask a question “What do you like most?” and to let learners summarize 10-20 things. Those complicated ones, shared by more people and unsolvable by a single person, are stressed. As an example we could take a question: What is money good for? Then a group discussion follows which quickly discloses various behaviour models in different original cultures. This gives an open space for a debate taking even several hours with all the learners participating without being asked, with a will and interest.

### **The language is not a verbalism**

Out of this title, one of the most basic pieces of knowledge comes: it would be a mistake to teach vocabulary brainlessly, set it for homework and repeat its testing on and on.

It is much more important to stress the emotional aspect as this is the most important in speech. It is necessary to look for possibilities of connecting the course and the lector and knowing each other, and for method how to make people communicate and tell the others something more intimate about themselves.

In Spain an attitude called “dynamic meeting” is praised very high. According to the experience, it leads the course participants to get to know very quickly. They sit in a circle, the lector introduces him or herself in a few sentences, prepares a system for the others and then throws a wool ball to somebody else. This person continues, then the next one etc., and in the end something like a net made of information enabling them all to know each other appears. The aims of the lector’s entrance information are as follows:

- Formal and informal greetings expression,
- Gathering personal data,
- Mutual introduction,
- Description of the home country,
- Fixing the basic numerals and week days.

It should not be neglected that this methods also helps the participants to learn the following social skills informally and unconsciously:

- Introduction gestures identification,
- Pointing at the difference between formal and informal greeting,
- Instillation of the basic phrases,

- etc.

This informal method, attractive and amusing for all age categories, is also important from the point of view of practicing the following intercultural skills, too:

- all of the learners listen also to another languages, remember information, gain an impression that they can use their native language in a foreign country with the others listening to them,
- they compare greetings used at various world ends,
- they get to know other culture and can compare, feel much less isolated in a foreign environment,
- without inhibitions they introduce their home country, offer their experience to the others (and also to the lector!), and get enriched by it themselves,
- etc.

Experiences of all the European countries fall in the fact, that an active movement of the lector with the course participants in the open air is very important. For example they have not had an opportunity to walk a busy street, and now they can see a tram or traffic lights for the first time, have to cross a crossroads full of traffic. It is advisable to offer various situations to the course participants:

- to ask about an address and tell it right, communicate in the street without anybody at help and with maybe several unsuccessful tries,
- get informed about a phone number (work with numbers still belongs to the important practical knowledge),
- to ask behind the door “Who is there” and to tell “Come in”, to communicate behind the closed door also as a person coming from outside (to rely just on listening is much harder than looking at somebody speaking),
- to ask about services in the neighbourhood or explain their function respectively (banks, cinemas, libraries, supermarkets, emergency...)

EXAMPLE:

*Halina comes from a village in Galicia where a small group of Czechs had been living. They had been keeping their native language for many years. She married one of them but when they came to the Czech Republic, she knew just the basic vocabulary. Now she attends the library whenever she has an opportunity to do so. The language represents her biggest problem; the whole of her social life depends on mastering it in the best way. As an officer she had met*

*people easily and quickly and that is why she understands that to learn the new language is of a high importance for each immigrant. However, in the new environment she came to a conclusion that it is better to behave like a Czech, which means to learn also the rules of behaviour and habits besides the language as quickly as possible.*

Again, the participants gain very valuable social skills because during such a lesson there is an opportunity to explain and get to know various elements in the streets – traffic lights, symbol of the chemist's shop, bus stop, phone booth, bottle container etc. They start to manage phone calling which also belongs to more advanced language skills because of not seeing the other communicant; it is possible to make an appointment with a doctor, social worker, any office etc.

At the same time the intercultural skills are enlarged because in the street the immigrant can meet elements that are quite strange for him/her and which he/she had been refusing from his/her point of view. A certain part of the immigrants gets over their diffidence in the health institutions. In the streets also certain goods can be identified in a natural environment without any fears and barriers, e.g. pork meat and alcohol rejected by the Muslims until then. Besides that all of them greet their future neighbours in their own way and find out that in some situations hands are not shaken, or that there are differences according to the age or sex. However, the most important fact is that the learners perceive and start to be more and more able to express their own feelings: what stayed in their way, what they problems with, what they should concentrate on, what is necessary to overcome, how they managed the new situation.

At the same time – and this point should be stressed! – they discover and get to know the town (or a similar one) they are going to live in. The town with its history, everyday life, practical information.

EXAMPLE:

*Still it is logical that the closest relation between an immigrant and a native inhabitant represents still the most valuable way of incorporation. Nono is an Indonesian and got married in the Czech Republic. He oriented not only in his studies, but also in the everyday life much quicker than his Indonesian colleagues. Now he has been living with his Czech wife in Canada for many years and works as a geology expert. And also some extreme situations can happen. His wife explains some recipe and comes to difficulty because they have been living in an English speaking environment for a long time: "Then you add ginger, ginger...", she says and Nono helps her with the Czech word: "Zázvor!"*

EXAMPLE:

*Truong has chosen an interesting and quite logical method. He is a Vietnamese, a university graduate as well as his wife. Five years ago they came together with their two small children to the Czech Republic. Today their children attend the second and third class of primary school and the parents work in a successful restaurant. He is in charge of a team of cooks preparing Asian specialities, she serves the guests as a head waitress. He is not in contact with the Czech society very often; she meets the Czech people more frequently when they order meals. That is why they asked their children attending the Czech school to help them – with success and even a multicultural effect. The children came to like heroes of the “Old Czech Legends” and their mother tested this new knowledge when serving the restaurant guests. The effect was unbelievable, their restaurant became famous and one of the most visited in their town.*

Everywhere the usage of local sayings and proverbs succeeded among the learners. The mankind developed in a similar way everywhere, and it is just the folk wisdom that can open the door to mutual understanding wide. A saying of the new country can be applied to other cultures which also use something similar. There are only small differences that can be used to sharpen all the learners' thinking. At the same time all in the course realize that they had been living thousands of kilometres far from each other but the history and wisdom of their predecessors connects them.

A piece of art, mainly reproduction of a painting or sculpture has a great effect, too. It opens a large space to express a feeling, for a polemic or even a pungent opinions exchange. But it is important that they all perceive the same thing together and at the same time. This clash of opinions can bring them together because the power of art lies in the fact that it has no boundaries.

Various new activities enrich the immigrants, they help the lector in his/her work, but the requirements on this work are not reduced. He/she still has to attract the learners and take care of not losing their confidence.

For example, when he/she praises someone's sweater and the person feels as a duty to give it to him/her, the lector must not refuse. He/she would hurt the learner.

A word could have an indecent meaning in a foreign language, and if the lector does not turn it into a joke, he/she complicates the situation for him/herself as well as for the others.

He/she should also take care of his/her clothes. The future fellow-citizens take him/her as an institution, something very important, and he/she should not fall short of this confidence.

The Czech experience is smaller and newer than that of the other partners, but we can also add modestly the following pieces of advice:

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- Try to take over mainly the better learners, indulge them without evident favouring. After you have gained their confidence and uncover their abilities to the benefit of the whole class, they will lead the others and help you in your work!
- Do not be afraid of confessing your weaknesses in front of the participants. Maybe it was just you who came to the town from a village, spoke a dialect, made mistakes, people made fun of you. You had to orientate in a new situation and specialize in something. It was not immediate, you were not successful at once, and here is a time and place for everything. In the eyes of the learners you are a person who can help them. When telling them about your complications, you can calm them down and give them a perspective, a hope. Maybe this is the most important for them!
- It is highly advisable to make use of TV and radio. Try to find an opportunity to take the learners to the theatre or cinema. It can speed up their perception of the language, they depend on listening; there is no time to rest. Nevertheless, such a difficult pressure on their abilities should be compensated afterwards. Make them strive to penetrate into the new environment as quickly as possible easier. After visiting the theatre they may feel hopeless because they did not understand almost anything, and lose their self-confidence. Tell them “No!” It is just a momentary feeling; everything will get better after you will have assorted your perceptions and after we will have discussed them in detail.
- Let the participants of your course make as many phone calls as possible as the impossibility to rely on mimics and lips reading is highly important. Today in the time of mobile phones you can also require message writing which can improve their grammar and writing skills in their new language as well.
- Do not be afraid of making the situation more difficult for your learners. For example do not switch on the light in the evening. Again, they will lose the possibility to rely on visual contact and will have to react to what they have listened to. The intimacy of darkness can also play its role.

When we summarize the topic LANGUAGE, the verbal communication is inevitable. The immigrants should know at least the basic, necessary words as soon as possible.

Nevertheless, the pedagogical approach based on intercultural education is much more important. It means that

- each person keeps all the aspects of his/her personality and identity with his/her community,

- but he/she learns to share the attributes and values with the others so that the total respect and tolerance towards the other cultures and societies could be reached.

## **CHAPTER 2**

## **INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION**

### **Introduction**

The emphasis on cultural education is not a recent phenomenon. As early as the 60's the first information surfaced from research in the areas of education, sociology, psychology and even affected national policies in USA. One of the difficulties then and now both in USA and Europe from educators and researchers was to define culture. The term "culture" has over 300 definitions. Communication and culture are connected and in a way they are both "inherited," "acquired," "learned," and interactive.

Culture is communication for many theories ( LeVine, 1986; Samovar and Porter, 2001; Van Der Linde, 1997).

Intercultural communication occurs when culturally diverse individuals or groups communicate and interact with one another in an organizational or organisational setting (Triandis & Albert, 1988). Defining intercultural communication has been a difficult chore. Many cultural analysts have used the terms cross-cultural and intercultural communication in the same way (Kim, Y.Y, 1984; Triandis, 1989)

### **What we define as culture?**

The term culture includes many abstract ideas like how people behave, their overall attitude towards life but it also refers to the way people dress or to what they eat. **Culture is not only ethnicity**

However culture in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is not just different race, nationality or ethnicity. For example, gender, religion, disability, sexual orientation, and age might not have been considered dimensions of culture 25 years ago. Today we study gender communication differences, the influence of religious views on decisions and behaviours, and the assumptions that can or cannot be made depending on a person's physical ability, sexual orientation, or age. Educators need to be mindful, they cannot assume they know the cultural background of their students; even a seemingly homogenous classroom might have elements of multiculturalism. That means that multiculturalism is something that needs to be addressed by all instructors whether they are working with immigrant populations or not.

When immigrating to another culture a person may change or adjust his/her everyday habits to the prevailing habits of the host culture but the fundamental values and ideas that are part of his/her

original cultural background that constitutes his/her identity will not change. Furthermore, the immigrant can enrich his/her own cultural identity with new elements and in his/her turn will contribute elements of his/her origin to the host culture. In order for something like that to occur the person needs to go through an adaptation process. In addition a big responsibility lies within the host culture which is responsible to assist immigrants during the adaptation process.

### **The adaptation process**

There are several stages in a specific time framework according to which the student goes through the process of adjustment. The enthusiasm that exists at the beginning gives its place to bad mood, frustration, depression and physical symptoms, such as fatigue. This state is called culture shock and appears after two or three months stay. That process can be generated at any time though. Often when faced with evaluation or the fear of failing the program, students re-experience similar emotions even if they are living for years in the host country. Adjusting is not the same for everyone. As instructors we must understand that we are parts of the students' adjustment process.

Also elements such as:

Economic problems, unemployment, absence of family members, personal traumatic experiences (refuges), incidents of prejudiced behaviour, are all pre-training issues that students might face and have an effect on their behaviour, and even on their performance in class.

The behaviours that the instructor could notice in a classroom may be:

- Staring off into space
- Feelings of helplessness and a desire for dependence on long-term residents of one's own nationality
- Excessive anger over delays and other minor frustrations
- Delay in learning or refusal to learn the language of the host country

**Example: Jori** is an Albanian woman (26-year-old) that moved to Greece 2 years ago. Her family lives in her country of origin and she lives together with her aunt and two young cousins that Jori is babysitting. She is part of your classroom where you teach basic computer skills. The whole class has to deliver an assignment and Jori is one of the students that ask for an extension. You give them 3 days extension, however you point out the importance to deliver the assignments on time. Jori's reaction is to be visibly upset and run out of the classroom.

*What might be the instructor's reaction?* In such cases the institution that provides the education must have in place counselling services for immigrant students. Often the reactions in class may be linked with emotions of frustration which students usually experience due to cultural shock and due to pressure from academic issues that they might be facing. The self-esteem of a student is easily affected under such circumstances, and the role of the instructor must be supportive not critical.

In that case the instructor can provide tutoring assistance, and ask Jori for the reasons of the delay and give her some emotional support for increasing her motivation. Also a schedule of flexible deadlines maybe examined especially if students are having language problems.

In the above case and in many other instances instructing immigrant population can be extremely stressful for the instructors since they might not be able to explain behaviours and attribute them to other elements (students' laziness) or even worst stereotyping against immigrant students.

The adjustment process continues by facing another stage, which is called:

- *Ethnocentric phase* (adequate faith-inadequate success)

This stage is characterized by attempts to learn about the new culture that are usually not successful since the person tends to think of his/her own culture as the only possible source of values and behaviours. Of course, this "comparison" cannot work or is not applicable to the conditions of the new culture and creates problems in adaptation.

This is the phase when someone is only a few months in a new culture and certainly in this case the student faces more difficulties in adapting to the curriculum and the way of teaching, not to mention the difficulties in language

In such cases special programs of receiving immigrants help in assisting people move to the next stages. Countries that do not have such programs for the newcomers make the adjusting period of immigrants more difficult and longer in duration.

**Example:** During a group classroom exercise, where each student has to mention some values of his country of origin, Farhi mentions that family in his country Syria is more traditional and its members experience a higher level of bonding than other countries. The class has an immediate negative reaction.

The instructor's reaction has to be one of conflict resolution. The fear of loosing identity and values when living in a country rather different in terms of culture from that of origin is existing for many immigrants, and we need to acknowledge that it might lead to unintentional comments. What the instructor needs to do is help students reframe their sentences in a non-critical way. Wording is

extremely important: “different” values instead of “better” values, “I do not agree with your statement ...” instead “I do not like you...”, “another family structure” instead of “the proper family structure ..”. In this way you can promote discussion in a way that promotes communication and shows respect for every individual.

- *Conformist* (inadequate faith – adequate success)

This is a stage where the person has learned the rules of the host country and can function rather well in everyday activities and starts creating relationships with people outside his/her culture.

At that stage learning is more likely to be facilitated within a classroom and the language problems are usually less. Also the person has a basic understanding for everyday conduct and customs of the culture either through work or relationships. The difficulty in that stage is that often immigrants in order to be accepted to a culture tend to avoid speaking about their own culture and try to show their level of conformity. The desire to be acceptable has even lead some of the immigrants to change their name (or their children name) to Greek names in order to assimilate better into the host culture.

**Example:** Natassa speaks Greek fluently, and her written work is also above average, however she does not seem to have verbal participation in class. As an instructor you notice that Natassa prefers to interact only with Greek students and she avoids students from her country of origin (Ukraine). Within class discussions she refers to herself as Greek although she is just four years in the country. Usually in this case we don't face any problems inside the classroom. However, the student needs the personal counselling from the instructor especially if he/she is responsible for teaching communication techniques. Natassa should accept all sides of her identity and not feel forced to adopt one over another but combine them otherwise her self-esteem will suffer and she may lose the necessary support from her own culture.

- *Adapted* (adequate faith – adequate success)

A person raised in one culture seldom sheds entirely his or her original culture, and there is no evidence to suggest that losing one's first cultural identity is desirable. The common U.S. metaphor of the "melting pot" in which ethnic differences vanish reflects often the stage of adaptation. However, it is not desirable by any immigrant and certainly it is desirable by any healthy society any more. Research suggests that productive citizens are the ones that add to their culture of origin the host culture instead of eliminate their roots and their customs in order to adopt.

The model that flexible societies are demanding during the last decade (Schlesinger,1991) is not the one of a simple Adaptation but of a **Pluralistic Adaptation** that happens when an individual or

group retains its home cultural identity while, at the same time, has productive relationships not only with the representatives of the main culture but also with other ethnic communities.

### **Ways in general for an instructor to assist the adjustment process**

- Avoid conformity pressure
- Be conscious about the level of humour you use
- Use an Instrumental style of Communication
- Tone of voice: **Example:** Greeks as most Mediterranean regions have a tendency to give emphasis by raising their tone of voice. That often means interest and enthusiasm about the topic. However, from other cultures that might be interpreted as anger. The instructor must understand that the way he/she presents himself is very important because the messages that he/she passes on to his/her students are not always interpreted by them as he/she meant them in the first place.
- Check out the response your words and behaviour have by asking for feedback of what you have said.
- Give your students the opportunity to participate, and have a voice in class

Althen G. (1994) Learning Across Cultures, Association of International Educators

Source: Improving education for immigrant students, 2001, US Department of Education

### **Variables under consideration for more effective cross-cultural communication**

**Communication Styles.** How we communicate is often as important as what we communicate. Depending partially on cultural variables such as nationality, ethnicity, gender, and race (among others), individuals may have a reference point on how to send and receive messages. Usually the style in which we have learned to communicate in the classroom is through lectures. When we teach groups of different cultural backgrounds than our own, we need to use more dialogues and discussions and less lectures. This is often very difficult for instructors that are used to any one way communication.

- ▶ Active listening of students
- ▶ Check your gestures (in some countries they may be insulting)
- ▶ Check the personal space (some cultures prefer greater distance than others, and they might feel threatened if you move too close)

► Maintain eye contact. It is always a good way to identify misunderstandings or identify those students that have questions although they don't actively participate in class.

**Power Imbalances.** In addition to the differences in values and communication styles that contribute to cultural diversity, cultures are usually characterised by inequalities as far as political and economic power is concerned. The position of a culture group within a given society unfortunately may create stereotypes that student and instructors might hold. **Example: A classroom incident.** During a course about P.C. skills for unemployed adults one mentions the problem of unemployment in general. A student says “it has become harder and harder to get a job these days, and foreigners make it more difficult, cheap labour is preferred” Reactions?

Actually this is a rather common stereotype in countries that received a large number of immigrant populations. The “blame” is easy and simple and the media play their role. However, such comments in class should be addressed and corrected immediately. The “scapegoating” of certain population is primarily based on power imbalances and it is popular technique and recurring when the local culture is unable to solve such problems.

**Individualism and Collectivism.** Individualistic cultures generally value the self-reliance, and autonomy of the individual, whereas collectivist cultures tend to value group cooperation and clear roles of individuals within the society. Individuals that have grown up and been educated in styles that emphasise individual and not group work may face difficulties in a classroom that gives emphasis on the opposite. So instructors when planning the classroom activities have to take under consideration that for some participants it may be difficult to cooperate in-group exercises just because they have never had such an educational experience before.

Source: Ziegahn, Linda (2001) ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult Career and Vocational Education Columbus OH.

### **Cultural components**

Obvious components of culture

■ Religion

■ Formal language, Informal language

■ Values and norms as they can be found in media , arts, folklore.

Covert dimensions of culture—unconscious and deeply ingrained behaviour may include:

■ Concept of time. For example, in some cultures, the concept of "being late" does not exist. Arriving late in class, deliver work after the deadlines, not showing up on time to work with another group of students, being late in an appointment with the instructor etc.

■ Non-verbal signals. For example, eye contact in one culture signifies respect and in another disrespect

Educators are often aware of overt cultural components yet do not recognise many of the covert dimensions of culture. It is easy to unintentionally discriminate or form prejudices against people. Teachers who continually learn of both covert and overt dimensions of culture will be able to provide a more relevant and satisfying environment for all students.

### **Cross-cultural communication**

Everything that occurs within a school, and especially in the classroom, involves communication, the act of sharing information.

Language, among others is an element of culture that could transfer the message and indicate the way that people see things. Language is the way we express emotions, beliefs and personal identity. Sometimes communication involves the use of oral or written verbal symbols. On other occasions, communication involves various types of **nonverbal** symbols, including body language.

Communication is the medium for instruction, assessment, interpersonal relationships, group interactions, parent and community relations and counselling. Most behaviour problems in schools, and their resolutions, involve some types of communication. In sum, communication is the road to learning.

Communication is also culture bound. The way an individual communicates comes from his or her culture. Of course, a person may know more than one culture or may be competent in a combination of cultures. Nonetheless, one basic truth prevails: communication is a product of culture.

Students with different cultural norms are at risk if teachers have little knowledge, sensitivity or appreciation of the diversity in communication styles. Such teachers may perceive differences as problems and respond to students' diversify with negative attitudes, low expectations and culturally inappropriate teaching and assessment procedures.

Culturally and communicatively diverse students, in turn, may respond with low self-concepts and low academic achievement to a school climate they perceive as hostile. The result is reflected on these students' excessive placements in special education, reduced placements in talented and gifted programs and high suspension rates.

### **Problems in communication**

Mitchell (1983) reports that five of the nine most frequently reported behaviours in the classroom involve cultural and communicative issues, e.g., verbal threats, classroom disruptions and disrespect.

- Conflict is inevitable among students when they have different perceptions of the rules for communication and what is appropriate and acceptable behaviour.

**Example:** Mochi a Pakistani student and Rica a student from India are in the same work group in order to present a literature piece in class (are being taught Greek language). They avoid meeting each other and when one expresses an opinion the other contradicts it. In the day of the presentation they have a verbal argument of who is going to speak first that seems to escalate. What is the instructor supposed to do? As we mentioned above conflict is inevitable. The stress of the presentation and of grading may bring on the surface historic or cultural differences among students or even personal differences. Instructors in this case must point out that the focus is learning and cooperation also emphasising on the benefit of learning what the other students may experience. After the project there is time for personal out of class counselling with those two students.

- Teachers and other school personnel are more likely to perceive students' behaviours, including their communicative behaviours, as being disruptive and when those behaviours differ from the norms of the school or the educational system.

Schools reflect culture, mainly the culture of the dominant society. Patton (1986) claims that schools are a microculture with a distinct system of preferred and required communicative behaviours.

Examples of behaviours:

- Challenging the teacher's authority;
- Using negative language (swearing) in class;
- Not listening quietly when the instructor is presenting
- Interrupting another student;

- Seeking assistance from another student on a test (which is the “norm” in Greek educational system)
- Ignoring the instructor’s directions
- Responding in a loud voice
- Socializing in class during instructors lecture
- Being late to class
- Provoking physical conflicts as a way of supporting your opinion

Each of the behaviours listed above may be in conflict with communication rules for a given cultural group. The instructor’s job is to determine through reading, discussion and observation, which perceived behaviours, may be influenced by culture.

**Ways of addressing similar problems of discipline:**

- Take some time to create a plan for teaching all students the acceptable communicative behaviours of the school and their justification.
- Initially clearly state what the rules of the classroom are and why they exist.
- Determine which school or classroom norms may be in conflict with cultural or communicative norms of specific cultural groups.
- Engage in discussions with colleagues on how you can have a common policy.

**Ways that educational organisations can assist with cross-cultural communication**

- Recruit people from within the immigrant community for the positions of instructors, classified personnel, and volunteers to give immigrant students positive role models and to broaden the cultural perspectives of native-born students.
- Conduct staff training that presents the legal requirements of immigrant education and allows existing staff to develop cultural competency.
- Develop a curriculum that allows immigrant students to develop both academic and social.
- Provide different types of programs that may include career advice and psychological counselling.

- Develop "newcomer programs" that help new immigrants become acquainted with the education system, and social expectations.
- Invite members of an immigrant community who are role models in order to speak to your students about their experience and adaptation process.
- Offer training opportunities for immigrant adults in language skills, work skills, and cultural adaptation that will help them in the larger community.
- Encourage community groups and organizations to become culturally competent regarding one or more local immigrant groups. Appreciation of other cultures enriches community life and helps newcomers adjust to their new lives.

### **Teaching methods for multicultural population**

Teachers may want to provide structured guidance through learning experiences, a strategy that may be particularly useful for learners from cultures where the instructors and the educational system emphasise and value the hierarchical differences. One way to assist intercultural students is **Mentorship** which can provide support, guidance and social skills more than the traditional approaches, especially if they include activities that take place outside of class (Carbaugh 1998; Liang and McQueen 2000; Pratt et al. 1998).

Students from other cultures may appreciate **computer-assisted learning media**, which allow them to share stories around personal and group cultural identities in an environment that is less threatening. The online medium, which serves a variety of different purposes and audiences, is also helpful for those that have difficulty with the language.

### **LEARNING STYLES.**

Learning styles also vary on the basis of cultural group and educational experience. In the case of immigrant students, learning styles are often difficult to understand:

- Emotional style. The informal and questioning style of instruction that Greek educators use, can be a problem for students used to more formal, quiet, and structured learning
- *Sociological style*. Learning alone as an individual is a social pattern native-born students may be more comfortable with, while learning within a group where students can help each other is often a more comfortable environment for many immigrant students In general, U.S. mainstream learning styles focus on inductive reasoning, problem-solving skills, literacy skills, and articulating one's

knowledge verbally. Other cultural learning styles may emphasize:

- Observation and listening
- Taking notes
- A form of Apprenticeship or performing a task with mentor's assistance in order to understand it.
- Knowledge of the social/relationship aspect of learning and not so much the Content aspect
  
- The use of art and crafts in order to learn
- Memorising instead of critically analyse
- Saving face rather than providing the "right" answer
- Storytelling at older ages as a means of learning moral and cultural lessons

The instructor must make clear his/her expectations to show to the students that s/he believes in them. That self-esteem boost helps students increase their effort and ask for assistance. Immigrant students need to experience acceptance in order to develop their abilities. They are asked to perform and are evaluated in a language that is not their native, people communicate around in different codes, and they might have faced occasional prejudice behaviour. Obviously they need a safe environment that will promote learning, not a restricting one. Some examples of a positive learning environment:

### **Examples**

- Free speech is a daily practise in classroom;
- Disagreements with instructors are a natural part of learning
- Information from teachers and texts is mirrored back by students;
- Classroom exchanges can be confusing but also built group dynamics
- Assistance is provided by both students and instructor
- There is an element of competition but not antagonism
- There are no negative comments on ethnicity, gender or race
- There is language lessons and support for project completion
- There is respect and knowledge for different ways of communication

- Provides information about the local customs and culture in order to assist the adaptation process.

### **What instructors must pay attention to, as a sign of cultural sensitivity**

1. Avoid using qualifiers that reinforce racial and ethnic stereotypes, or how a positive comment can sound negative

**Example:** "The articulate Rumanian student" implies that Rumanian students typically have low verbal skills.

2. Avoid racial identification except when it is essential to communication.

**Example:** "Lara, an outgoing student" is preferable to "Lara, an outgoing African female student."

3. Be sensitive to the negative implications of colour symbolism that may insult people.

**Example:** Terms such as "black magic" or "black market" can be offensive.

4. Try to control language that has questionable racial or ethnic connotations.

**Example:** Phrases such as "culturally deprived," "culturally disadvantaged" or "you people" have racist overtones.

5. Be aware of an attention code during conversation.

**Example:** Maintaining eye contact while listening or having a discussion may not be common for certain Asian cultures.

6. Be aware that cultures may vary in what they consider humorous or taboo.

**Example:** Ethnic humour is often perceived by many groups as evidence of racial prejudice. Discussion of in group cultural rules and behaviours with outsiders is considered taboo within many cultures.

7.- Different cultural rules exist for including instructor into a group conversation. **Example:** Often in Greek local culture students' conversations are not transferred to the instructor. The group "loyalty" dictates that if a student transfers the conversation without paraphrasing might be doing it in order to gain the favour of the instructor. These unwritten rules need to be addressed and be communicated especially if they refer to the local culture. While educational organisation have a responsibility to teach students the behavioural codes of the society at large and to expect students to adhere to them, they have a similar responsibility to reduce culturally induced discipline problems and to avoid misinterpreting cultural differences as behavioural problems.

### **Myths of the past**

The following statement is based on myths that support cultural misunderstanding. They could be given to students or instructors. Naturally they are all incorrect statements. If someone agrees with one or more of the statements this could be an excellent opportunity for discussion.

1. Cultural traits tend to have a genetic base.
2. In general, people who speak the same language are members of the same cultural group.
3. People from one culture know all the rules and customs of their culture.
4. The main way to express culture is religion.
5. The colour indicates someone's culture
6. The local language is the correct way to speak at all times.
7. There are universal norms for acceptable communicative behaviour
8. If a student violates the school's cultural or communicative norms, it is almost always the act of defiance.
9. Often immigrants' difficulty to speak the local language may suggest low cognitive development.
10. In general, students coming from underdeveloped countries cannot communicate as well as those from the developed countries.

### **An Essential Dimension of Effective Education**

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### **Questions that can explore cross-cultural communication in class**

In the form of oral discussion, group exercises or written essays the following are some questions that can increase classrooms cultural awareness and also give the message to the students that there is an interest and respect about his/her history and values.

#### ***Family Structure***

Who is considered to belong in the family?

What are the rights, roles and responsibilities of the members?

Roles

What roles is each member called to play?

Interpersonal Relationships

How do you greet each other in your culture?

How do you express disagreement?

What behaviours indicate anger or are insulting?

Communication

What languages and dialects are spoken in your country?

What codes do you use in aspects of the non-verbal behaviour?

How do people behave at home and in public?

What are the most common holidays?

Food

What are the most popular foods and what is the ritual you use with them?

What are the rules for table manners, including offering foods, handling foods and discarding foods?

How is food associated with culture?

Dress and Personal Appearance

What significance does dress have for social identity?

What is the concept and value of beauty and attractiveness?

History and Traditions

How are history and tradition passed on to the young?

What are the purposes of education? What kinds of learning are favoured?

What teaching and learning methods are used in the home?

Time and Space

What is your sense of time?

How important is it to be on time?

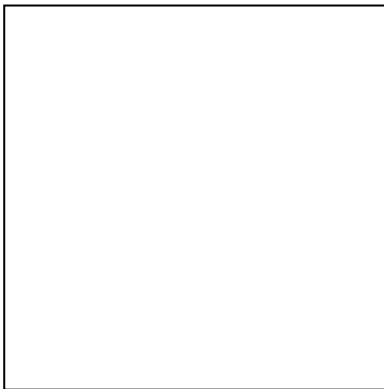
How important is speed of performance?

(From Saville Troike, M. A Guide to Culture in the Classroom. Rosslyn, VA: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, 1978.)

## **CHAPTER 3**

## SUPPORTIVE CONTEXT OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Successful communication with a representative of different cultural environment (hereinafter intercultural communication) supposes acceptance/recognizing and enforcement of many requirements of both participants of the communication: representative of the “local” cultural and language environment, as well as the foreigner. By authors of the publication this relationship is meant as that of the educator (in a wider sense a person working with immigrants), and the educated (representative of different cultural background – immigrant, asylum seeker, refugee etc.).



In Europe immigrants and refugees are in situation of people who have found themselves in a new, strange and perhaps enemy environment. They feel insecure and do not know what is to come. Maybe they had to spend a long time in a refugee camp, meeting other people having lots of problems and tragic life experience there. This is quite depressing. They feel lost in an enemy world, captured by their own impotence. Language barrier and possible discordance with new types of behaviour and different opinions make the problems even worse.

We must not forget that to certain extent each individual is used to his/her cultural background whose values, ideals and behaviour norms he/she shares with the other members, compatriots. Views of the world created by individual cultures are often varied as well as the views of various individuals inside the same culture (for more details, see the Interactive Course TEC Product 3, Module 1, Chapter 1, and Module 2, Chapter 1).

### **Practical exercise of the topic Differences among cultures.**

(The following text is suitable to bring about discussion in a multicultural class).

*Even those values we regard “universal” are understood by people having different cultural background in a different way. As an example we can take human life value which the Western civilization esteems fundamental. Not only we punish murderers, suppress suicide and restrain incurable patients from death by keeping their lives by modern medicines and instruments. We have also decided that execution is a cruel and useless punishment (most of the European countries do not have death penalty).*

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*For an Eskimo the value of human life is different. In the tundra area a man must be healthy to live a productive life. As long as he/she is ill or too old, his/her life loses its sense; he/she becomes a burden for his/her family. That is why not only he/she can commit suicide in an honest way but the old men and women can also ask to be killed by their children. These have to meet their wishes regardless it is a painful experience to kill someone's own parents. This is quite different from the Chinese who regarded patricide a felony punished by a "slow death" in old times.*

*Instead of life, e.g. New Guinea Papuans hold personal freedom and consistency most important. While we are shocked when Capauks (one of the former head-hunter tribes) are ready to kill a person, they take our prison institution as cruel and inhuman, a kind of torture which even lower animals would not use. (Pospíšil, L. Culture)*

The above text shows difference of behaviour means and norms, as well as value systems on the level of world cultures. As far as we know which means of behaviour are typical for representatives of some culture, we can anticipate their behaviour to certain extent and avoid many undesirable situations at the same time (e.g. if a Czech comes to visit you, he/she will try to take off his/her shoes at the door, while in England it would be regarded peculiar. If you want to welcome a Moslem or Japanese woman, do not shake her hand first (if you are a man): firstly – in European cultures it is also the (older) woman who offers her hand first, secondly – similar greetings are not usual in those cultures, thirdly – even an imperceptible touch of a woman is regarded scandalous and damnable in Moslem cultures).

No matter the behaviour norms, value systems and stereotypes constraint our behaviour, at the same time they are principles of stability and certain confidence of the whole society/culture (in our interpersonal relations we share approximately the same behaviour norms and create social structures enabling existence of the whole society), and of the individual (when somebody rings the bell and I open the door of my house, I do not suppose him to attack me because violence is not a norm of our behaviour and dealing with people).

**Differences** of behaviour exist not only on the level of representatives of various world cultures, but also **within one culture** (for more details, see the Interactive Course TEC Product 3, Module 2, Chapter 1).

### **Practical exercise of the topic Differences inside one culture.**

(The following text can be used to bring about discussion in a multicultural class).

*Probably all of us agree that the same football match is perceived in a different way by an English football fan and by an Englishman uninterested in this game. Their perception and evaluation will differ from that of e.g. a bushman who meets this game for the first time.*

Another moment which must not be forgotten: even in frames of our own culture we are not always able to accept behaviour of other people – our compatriots. Behaviour of each individual abides by certain norms acknowledged by the society (e.g. do not kill or steal, let an old person sit in a tram etc.), but these norms are varied and can be also contravened. Various people can behave in the same way in identical situations, and one person can behave differently in different situations.

### **Practical exercise of the topic**

(The following text is suitable to bring about discussion in a multicultural class).

*We can take a supermarket employee as an **example**. When standing behind the counter as an assistant, he tries to be considerate, respectful and professionally competent towards the customers. During the break when he has a rest and a cigarette with his friends, his behaviour changes – he is relaxed and friendly. After he has finished his work, during the way home by public transport, he becomes an anonymous inhabitant of the city, who – being educated well – vacates his seat to a pregnant woman. At home he reproaches his son for a bad school mark, is gentle to his wife and*

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*tries to be sincere to his mother-in-law according to his rights and duties (of a father, husband and son-in law). In the evening he leaves for his favourite “club”, to change from a loving husband and father of his children into a “practising” racist in a function of Ku-Klux-Klan grand master. (Linton, R. *The study of Man*. Free translation).*

Research and everyday life experience show that a marked change of lifestyle in a clash with the traditional, used means and norms of behaviour can complicate the life of an individual distinctly (e.g. unexpected loss of employment), and in extreme cases can cause mental disorders. Similar radical change can appear not only in a person’s life but also on the level of the whole culture.

*For example, in the 1940’s a group of anthropologists analyzed effect of cultural change connected with the rice growing irrigation system introduction on the Madagascar Island inhabitants. Economic changes led to a break-up of the family organization and traditional education model. If people are mentally unprepared for the new situation they can suffer from anxiety, increased aggressivity and a hysteric illnesses raise. (Soukup, *History*, p.127).*

Person who finds himself in an unknown cultural environment can occur on a dividing line of two worlds, and does not belong to any of them completely. His/her “old home” does not exist any more (or exists only in his/her memories); the “new home” does not exist yet. But the behaviour norms, value systems, stereotypes etc. which are usual for an individual represent ground of his/her behaviour in the new environment, too. People perceive the “new” in comparison with the already existing “old”, try to find common and different elements between them. That is why the **immigrant’s personality, his/her experience, can be a part of the educational process as well as the everyday communication.**

The fact that people coming from different cultural background (e.g. Vietnamese in the Czech Republic, Jews in Germany) live among us and with us proves the possibility of mutual co-existence as well as of certain problems.

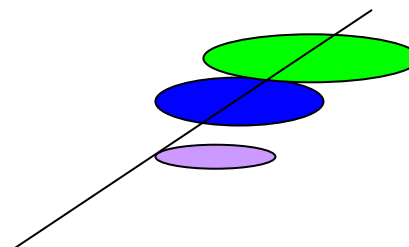
Out of the immigrants’ stories mentioned in our publication Guidebook... we can assume that in Europe a situation of a Russian woman Irina, born in Kazakhstan, who has married a French whose family comes from Congo is not unusual. They have been living in France, have children and want themselves and their children not to forget “their roots”. They consider themselves Europeans, and as active participants of ecological movement feel a responsibility for our planet’s fate.

In the personality of Irina, various cultural elements and layers are mixed. She identifies with them and considers them to be her “own”. For visual explanation, see the following diagram.

*Global level - Planet*

*Regional - Europe*

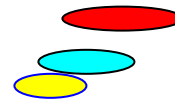
*National - France*



*Local community* – French, Russian, Congo,  
employees, friends, members of eco-group etc.

*Family* – wife, mother etc.

*Personal* – 35-year old woman



Practical exercise of the topic **The common and different within ourselves**

*Apples and pears.*

*Aim: the exercise can be used as an introduction to the topic of difference, stereotypes and equal opportunities.*

*Equipment needed: sufficient amount of apples and two pears for the whole group, bag for carrying the fruit*

*Number of participants: varied*

*Duration: 30 minutes*

*Activity description:*

- 1. Each group member has got one piece of fruit. He/she has to look over his/her apple or pear and find features distinguishing it from the others; he/she can give the fruit a name (5-8 min.).*
- 2. Collect the fruit to a bag, mix up and pour out on the floor in front of the group. Everybody tries to find his/her fruit piece.*
- 3. If an argue about “possession” of some piece (usually an apple) arises, teacher has to set it aside and at the end of the “possession” thinking there have to be at least two pieces that make a new fruit group.*

*Reflection and evaluation: Discuss the following questions within the group: Could each of the participants be sure he/she has got the right piece of fruit (according to which features)? What is the relationship to apples, pears, “forgotten, unidentified” apples (majority – minority relation)? Are all the apples the same (shape, colour, taste etc. – a proof of experience and stereotypes)? Carry out analogies among fruit and people.*

*We make use of the reflection to name the stereotypes existing among people of different cultures, genders etc. We determine mainly features and individuals’ qualities stereotypes (groups of individuals), minority – majority relation, equal opportunities etc.*

**STEPS OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION  
WITH IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES**

**Step-by-step**

*Step one: Start from yourself. The educator's self-reflection.*

Official institutions and educational centres are the first institutions the immigrant/refugee meets in the new environment. They should become potential grounds of his/her future social integration.

Open and friendly atmosphere of the educational centre represents an important condition of effective communication. It is highly important to realize that the educational process is influenced not only by the offered courses curricula, but also by the internal “soul” of the centre, people working there and each teacher’s personality, his/her so-called “hidden pedagogy” (the same subjects can be taught by different teachers who influence the teaching content and effect by their personalities). Feelings, thoughts, words and deeds of an educator competent in the multicultural sphere should be in harmony. In order that the individual was sensitive towards the cultural differences, able to perceive and evaluate words and deeds of the others (culturally different),

- he/she should be aware of his/her own values and cultural relations that indicate, rectify and co-ordinate his/her words and deeds;
- he/she should be able to distinguish stereotypes, prejudices and illegitimate practice on the individual and institutional levels (e.g. in Finnish newspapers a headline appeared: *Would you consign your child to a Somali nurse?*).

Developing of the educator’s own identity as a multicultural one is a necessary presumption of understanding different cultures and their otherness (see TEC Product 3, Module 2, Chapter 1).

European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) reports highlight awareness-raising of professional groups from a multicultural perspective. Awareness can be seen as a starting point, but also as a continuous process in developing intercultural competence.

[http://www.coe.int/t/E/human\\_rights/ecri/1-ECRI/](http://www.coe.int/t/E/human_rights/ecri/1-ECRI/)

Practical exercise of the topic **Questions to think over:**

About myself:

- *Who am I? What do I go back to in my memories, what do I identify with, what do I disavow – people, feelings, deeds?*
- *What is the aim of my efforts?*

About work:

- *What is my profession?*
- *Is it in accordance with my values?*

About work motivation:

- *Is integration of foreigners into the society and creating conditions for their participation in its life one of my aims?*

About work roles:

- *Are my motivation and deeds in accordance with my employer's plans and the immigrants/refugees' needs?*

**Step two: work in and with the educational institution**

For successful communication with an immigrant within the educational institution, it is necessary not only to overcome the language barrier, but also to install certain atmosphere of confidence and openness. The educational institution (hereinafter EI) must become (1) a beginning of successful immigrants/refugees' integration, and (2) a tool for change of social co-existence forms based on mutual respect, confidence and solidarity.

Autonomy (independence, self-sufficiency) is an assumption of the immigrant's successful integration. He/she becomes so familiarized with the new socio-cultural environment that he/she does not need any support or mediation of the educational institution.

The atmosphere of confidence and openness comes into existence as a result of mutual efforts of both the educator and the educated. The immigrant's personality must become a start point of such an atmosphere.

***Step three: personalities of the educator and the educated***

The educator should know the life story of his ward, to have an idea about reasons of his/her immigration/asylum (at least those declared by the immigrant), his/her expectations and needs. If

the educated immigrant is in a situation when he/she does not know what he/she wants and can wish under the new social and cultural conditions, the educator must help him/her to find the way (through various activities offered by the educational centre).

Narration as well as a written C.V. can become a way to learn the immigrant's life story.

### Practical exercise of the topic **Write your own story.**

*On the base of our autobiography we can understand better who we are, appraise our contemporary life situation, our possibilities (family background, profession, education, specialist experience etc.), and can plan our future (short-term future within the educational institution, and a longer-term future – who we want to become, what do we want to reach?).*

In some cases it is necessary to develop or renew the immigrant's social skills: the previous tragic life experience can have led to self-containment, reluctance to communicate and establish social contacts, co-operate with the others.

### Practical exercises of the topic

#### Exercise 1 **Outsider** (from *T-Kit on Social Inclusion*, p. 69. [WWW.TRAINING-YOUTH.NET](http://WWW.TRAINING-YOUTH.NET))

*Aim: Study of personal experience. Experience of being excluded from a group, how to react to the exclusion. Experience of being a group member. The exercise can also concentrate on discussion about prejudices.*

*Equipment needed: none*

*Number of participants: min 12 people*

*Duration: 10 minutes*

*Activity description:*

- 1. Ask a volunteer to leave the room. Ask the group to divide into two parts according to an agreed criterion: e.g. hairstyle, clothes, weight, accent etc. (3 min.).*
- 2. The outsider is called back and joins one of the groups. He/she must justify his/her choice. If the justification is not correct, the group refuses the outsider, even if the choice was correct (4 min.).*
- 3. Continue with another volunteer and offer this opportunity to as many learners as possible.*

*Reflection and evaluation: How do we behave when belonging to a group? Is it easy to refuse the outsider? Is it pleasant? Do we sympathize with the outsider, or enjoy our power?*

### Step four: the learner's self-confidence support

The atmosphere of confidence and openness as a successful communication condition cannot be created without the internal value, self-confidence and self-respect of both the communication act partners (the educator and the educated – trainer and immigrant). Feeling of confidence is an important moment of our psychological stability; it is closely connected with a security feeling. We are used to trust our close friends, family etc. A person who disappointed or cheated us does not deserve our confidence. A person who let himself down can be absorbed by a feeling of being guilty, inferior etc.

We share the opinion of R. W. Emerson (1803 – 1882) who wrote: **Trust men and they will be true to you; treat them greatly, and they will show themselves great.**

If a person suffers from a lack of self-confidence (which can be the situation of the immigrant/refugee who has got into troubles), this lack is reflected in his/her relation to the surrounding environment. Support of self-confidence, self-respect of a person in troubles is an important and difficult task of the educator. He/she should be patient and realize that a person who has lost his/her confidence, who was cheated and hurt, is very sensitive and afraid of being cheated and hurt again.

Self-confidence is connected with positive experience of one's own value, ability, power. This experience results from interpersonal relations above all. It is supported by confidence, praise and respect by the others. These people and their feedback of one's behaviour are the best ways how to prove whether our self-reflection is realistic.

<b>The role of educator and social or contact person, his/her skills</b>
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⇒ Support of the immigrant's self-confidence and dignity must be based on several principles: We do not accept discrepancy between words and deeds (e.g. (1) information obtained by the educator as confidential must remain confidential; (2) a promise must be kept etc.).

- ⇒ We show understanding, try to comprehend their problems, look at the situation from their viewpoint (even if it is impossible – we do not share their life experience – the moment of a try is important itself).
- ⇒ Support of individual experience can be a starting point of life in the new society. Each of us has a certain “social capital” (our knowledge, skills, cultural background etc.) which should become the ground of integration. The immigrant’s cultural difference should be used as an offer of something “new”, beneficial for the society (e.g. the Czechs came to liking the Chinese restaurants, many of which have appeared during the last ten years).
- ⇒ To be open, welcoming, sensitive and flexible according to the actual situation, and self-confident at the same time. To create a space of safety and security by one’s own self-confidence and self-respect.
- ⇒ To develop an equal relation – to recommend, not to command. To show that each of us got into troubles at least once in our life. To overcome the feeling of helplessness, resignation and apathy is highly important. To show by means of sequential steps that each of us is responsible for his/her life or the others’ lives (from responsibility of the educator to responsibility of the educated).

**Methods and recommendations how to raise the immigrant’s security, self-confidence, respect**

*For trainers of immigrants and refugees it is important to realize that the group consists of people with different background, languages, culture and habits. Some of them might have survived abuse and torture; the others could be separated from their families without any information whether their relatives are still alive...*

*That is why it is very important for the educator to be able to create a calm and positive atmosphere where they all feel secure and safe. The educator must learn methods which are suitable and useful for everybody.*

*The first task is to be able to start the day and to do it always in the same way. The educator takes a pen or chalk to signal the learners to be quiet and to start the day. He asks what the date is, which week it is (e.g. in Sweden and in the Czech Republic, we number weeks from 1 to 52 during a year), which month and year it is – and writes the data on the blackboard. Everybody writes them on a new page, and this is an established starting ritual of each day. Then the teacher tells something interesting about the day. He/she mentions how many days will pass till Christmas, Ramadan etc.*

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Then he/she asks the learners what they did yesterday after the lessons, on Monday, during the week. This persuades everybody to speak, show off and have a possibility to be unique. All of them are equal in this situation, everybody has to listen to the others and practise the language.

Together with each participant of the course, the educator prepares a daily programme for the individual and the whole group.

**Every day repetition of the ritual brings a feeling of security and belonging to something new. It creates a good learning atmosphere.**

### *Practical exercises of the topic*

**Exercise 1. Dignity, self-esteem – the importance of feeling valued.** (From T-Kit on Social Inclusion, p. 86. [WWW.TRAINING-YOUTH.NET](http://WWW.TRAINING-YOUTH.NET))

#### Aim:

Feeling of being recognized. For each person's self-confidence it is highly important to feel being recognized by people he/she holds in esteem. Lack of self-confidence and recognition can lead to frustration (feelings of disappointment, impassion) and aggressive behaviour. This workshop is an introduction to the topic of self-confidence development.

Equipment: Work card copies – sufficient amount for the group (see below). Pencils.

Number of participants: Varied

Duration: minimum 1 hour

#### Activity description

1. Start from thoughts about self-confidence. Distribute work cards and pencils. If the learners have reading and writing problems, the teacher reads their answers and writes them down.
2. If the learners do not want to disclose their experience, ask them to remember somebody who experienced feelings of happiness and love. Support their remembrances and fantasy by prompt questions.

Reflection and evaluation: Analyse and evaluate mainly the last parts of work cards. Find common elements justifying necessity of self-confidence as a basis of success.

Last	time	I	felt	underestimated,
inferior	_____			

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Feeling of underestimation was accompanied by another feelings \_\_\_\_\_

People whose company I prefer are the following \_\_\_\_\_,  
because \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.  
I show them my happiness by \_\_\_\_\_.

My happiness is connected with: 1. \_\_\_\_\_  
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
What I can do for it: 1. \_\_\_\_\_  
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
3. \_\_\_\_\_

*Exercise 2. **Everybody has skills.** (Exercise came from a free modification of Everybody has skills – measuring personalities. From T-Kit on Social Inclusion, p. 88. [WWW.TRAINING-YOUTH.NET](http://WWW.TRAINING-YOUTH.NET)).*

*Aim: The exercise should be done twice – at the beginning and at the end of the course. Its task is to realize our abilities and skills, what each of us can and cannot do (yet).*

*Equipment: long strip of paper (5-10 m) with points marked 1 to 10.*

*Number of participants: 6-30 people*

*Duration: 2 x 20 min. plus evaluation time (mainly in case of the second round).*

*Activity description:*

- 1. Explain the participants that the scale 1 to 10 reflects the abilities levels. Suppose each participant evaluates his/her abilities honestly (whether he/she is at the beginning – 1, or on the skilled level – 10). Explain also the exercise repetition at the end of*

*the course. The aim is to find out if there is any change, if the participant has gained new skills or found his/her new abilities unknown before. It is important to tell them that the exercise is not done because of the teacher's evaluation of the participants but because of their self-evaluation.*

2. *Offer the group a list of statements (see examples below) and ask participants to give their point of view (1 to 10).*
3. *Ask several learners to explain their attitudes, but do not insist.*
4. *Repeat the exercise by offering other statements. To what extent does our attitude differ when being influenced by arguments of the other learners?*
5. *Think over possibilities of certain abilities and skills usage.*

*Examples of statements:*

- *I can co-operate with the others (I am good for teamwork).*
- *I am a born leader.*
- *I am good at receiving feedback. I evaluate the others adequately.*
- *I am good at giving feedback. I react to the others' critics adequately.*
- *I can help other people.*
- *I am creative. I always come with new ideas.*
- *I am very patient.*
- *I am a good speaker.*
- *I can plan well.*
- *I have a sense of humour.*
- *I can enter into contact with strangers quickly.*

*Reflection and evaluation:*

*The learner and the educator assess whether there are changes in their evaluation after the exercise was repeated. In which cases did it mean overestimation or underestimation? Was it difficult to "step down" in the evaluation (in case it happened)? Did I learn something new about myself and about the others?*

*Step five: social empathy development – support of social competences and skills*

Feeling of self-confidence and confidence in the others is closely connected with the level of our openness and empathy towards other people. Social empathy is a basis of ethic behaviour and presupposition of positive social relations. Empathy is connected with our ability to empathise with someone's situation, to look at the world from his/her point of view, to share his/her feelings. It supposes comprehension and evaluation of his/her situation and behaviour (learning and evaluation moment), as well as co-experience (emotional moment). For example, our pain relieves quicker when shared by somebody else with us, supposing we are open to compassion and consolation.

<b>The role of educator and social or contact worker, his/her skills</b>
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- ⇒ To train empathy, to stimulate emotional openness
- ⇒ To establish friendly and positive atmosphere for communication
- ⇒ To stimulate self-confidence of the learner by public appraisal of his/her success, even small
- ⇒ To be sensitive to reactions to his/her (educator's) behaviour
- ⇒ To be able to listen to someone else (de facto to offer somebody to cry over his/her shoulder). It is a well known paradox – somebody who can listen to is regarded as the best speaker – and he/she does not have to speak at all!
- ⇒ To be able to express positive personal sympathy and unity which expresses attitudes of psychological confidence, consideration, discretion, empathy, and develops atmosphere of mental well-being, reciprocity and peace and which supports unity of the group/class.
- ⇒ To be able to appraise other people, improve their personal image by positive interpretation, praise and express sympathy in private and in public.

## **Methods and recommendation for social empathy development**

### [Practical exercise of the topic](#)

#### Exercise 1. Card game

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*This is a game with many objectives. A box is full of cards with a word written on each of them, e.g. lamp, book, tree... Everybody takes a card and one player starts to express the meaning of the word on his card just by gestures and mimics. If a second learner guesses the meaning correctly, he/she can continue in the game.*

*This game forces everybody to look at all the others and try to really perceive what the person expresses. In some cultures men do not look at women, they can even ignore them, which is unacceptable in Europe.*

*Those who speak the new language with difficulties have a possibility to join the game under the same conditions as the others.*

*And what is more, the game gives a good possibility to learn new words.*

### **Exercise 2. Magic wand is an ordinary thing**

*The following method is used frequently by many educators.*

*One of the educated persons is given a symbol of certain type (a piece of wood, special book, wand etc. but it must always be the same thing). Then the person starts speaking (he/she should be asked to answer or narrate a story ...), and as long as he/she holds the thing, everybody must be quiet and listen. It is a training of active listening, which shows that everybody regardless the gender, education, domicile or nationality must respect the speaking person.*

### *Step six: intercultural competences development*

The immigrant must contact many various people and institutions in the new country. The educator should mediate his/her first experience with the new public reality including basic information about various types of institutions and possibilities to contact them. In European countries there is a lot of literature – recommendations, brochures etc. – containing the basic information about legal stay possibilities and social politics (sphere of health service, schools) towards immigrants and refugees. In countries with long-standing tradition of immigration there exist institutions concentrating on employment mediation for immigrants.

**Intercultural education is an important instrument for co-existence of representatives (individuals and communities) of different cultures, religions, ways of life etc.**

### What is intercultural education?

No matter that the real content of intercultural education is varied in different European countries, each specialist agrees that the basic aim of multicultural education is as follows:

- To educate people emphatic from the intercultural point of view who are able to understand cultural differences, to accept cultural diversity, and to be tolerant (see TEC Product 3, Module 4).

- To contribute to intercultural understanding in the society, to prevent conflicts and variance among various cultures in the society, to eliminate prejudices and discrimination based on cultural, religious or race differences.
- To establish conditions necessary for equal opportunities for all members of European societies (including those newly accepted) – see the topic of Cultural citizenship, TEC Product 3, Module 1.

Each immigrant should have basic intercultural competence, i.e. a certain set of knowledge and skills:

\*Knowledge of culture, social and politic institutions of the new country

\*Ability to deal, accept “difference” and evaluate the new cultural reality

#### **The role of educator and social or contact worker, his/her skills**

⇒ To teach learners to be able to use intercultural communication elements. Diversity of learners increases their cultural perceptibility. This kind of perceptibility must be a basic component of the educator’s personal competences.

#### **Example:** *Equal facts can have various cultural meaning*

(The following text can be used to stimulate discussion in a multicultural class).

*Did you see the comedy Gods must be mad? A white man flies in a helicopter and throws an empty bottle out of the window. A bushman walks through savannah and finds this bottle. For the white man the bottle (level of facts) symbolizes garbage (cultural meaning) which he got rid of. For the bushman the bottle (level of facts) becomes an important object (almost magic – cultural meaning) upon which his fate and even the fate of his family “hinges”.*

⇒ To support a positive attitude towards a multilanguage quality of the contemporary world as its norm. Each national language should be protected but at the same time the participants have to share a common language as a necessary presupposition of the verbal communication.

**Methods and recommendations for intercultural competences development**

Practical exercises of the topic

**Exercise 1 Getting to know each other**

*Meeting all the participants of education and their mutual introduction is an activity which can help to break the ice and make the cultural differences clear.*

*Ask the participants, educators and the staff to stay in a circle. Then ask somebody to go round the circle and greet somebody else. He/she must tell his/her name, the place he/she comes from, and show the others in what way people greet each other in his/her country when meeting for the first time. Then these two participants can have a small talk about greetings of people of different age and gender in their countries.*

*After this activity a short discussion follows. Encourage the participants to give their opinions of this activity, e.g. how they feel when asked to introduce themselves and greet someone from a different country while being aware of the fact that they do not know the habits and customs of the other person and could hurt him/her. Encourage them to solve this problem.*

**Exercise 2 Window**

*Aim: reflect whether the other people can see the same as you, and the other way round.*

*Equipment needed: Paper and pencil for each group member.*

*Number of participants: varied*

*Duration: 25 minutes*

*Activity description:*

- 1. Each participant looks out of the window and chooses one object (a tree, building etc.). He/she draws it on the paper without showing to the others.*
- 2. Group members try to find partners having the same choice without saying a word.*
- 3. Group members with the same choice try to persuade the others about their preference.*

*Reflection and evaluation: In a common discussion we try to answer the following questions: How did everyone like the choice of an object he/she regarded the most interesting? How did each of them help someone else to see exactly the same he/she likes? How did they try to estimate the choice of the others?*

**Exercise 3 From the easier to the more difficult.**

**Intercultural skills**

*To overcome mistrust that health care service of the host country may show at first.*

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*To list products that may be home made.*

*To identify products and by-products, which may imply a determining cultural factor for some collectives: such as alcohol and pigs for the Moslem community.*

*To talk about the tradition of buying or making clothes in different countries.*

### Intercultural activity (1):

*Aim: Discovering the city (history, everyday life, practical information etc.)*

*Interacting with locals*

*Preparation: Choose a street or an area of interest of the city you are in.*

*Prepare a short questionnaire, with simple questions about the site chosen (for example: what is the name of this street or area, and what does it mean? / Give the name of a traditional product sold in that street or area and ask what it is. /*

*Find out how your name and the name of your country are written in the new language. / What was the old name of the city? Etc.).*

*Description:*

- *Divide the participants in small groups and give them some information about the area they are to move in (each group may be accompanied by someone who knows the area, but this person is not allowed to participate or answer the questions).*
- *Participants walk around the area and look for the answers by observing and by talking to the people passing by.*

*Discussion: The activity may be followed by a short presentation of the history and culture of the area and comparison with the countries of participants (similarities, differences). The impressions of trainers about their interaction with locals, etc. may also be discussed.*

### Intercultural activity (2):

*Aim: Discovering the city (history, everyday life, practical information etc.)*

*Interacting with locals*

*Preparation: Choose a street or an area of interest of the city you are in.*

*Prepare a short questionnaire, with simple questions about the site chosen (for example: what is the name of this street or area, and what does it mean? / Give the name of a traditional product sold in that street or area and ask what it is / Find out how your name and the name of your country is written in Roman characters. What was the original name of the city? Etc.).*

*Note: The questions must be simple and their answers must be easily found when walking the street or area and asking the local people.*

*Description:*

- Divide the participants in small groups and give them some information about the area they are to move in (each group may be accompanied by someone who knows the area, but this person is not allowed to participate or answer the questions).
- Participants walk around the area and look for the answers by observing and by talking to the people passing by.

*Discussion: The activity may be followed by a short presentation of the culture and history of the site (street, city) and comparison with the countries of participants (similarities, differences). The participants' impressions of their experience with interactions should be discussed.*

### ***Step seven: equal possibilities atmosphere support - civic competences development***

Experience with the educational institution activities is usually the first one on a way to adoption and integration in the new environment. The educational institution should offer conditions that would help each newcomer to better integration in a social, economic, political and cultural reality of the new country. The EI internal atmosphere must be open, friendly and democratic on the level of educators and their colleagues, as well as between the educators and their learners.

Open atmosphere of the EI must offer such conditions so that anybody suspicious of discrimination could speak about it openly. Everybody has a right to require anti-discrimination principles without any fear of negative effects: all the adverse reactions such as placing an employee on a lower position because of his/her appeal for these principles are regarded discriminating.

Human rights can be compared to a puzzle. If one part is missing, the puzzle is not complete. We must not forget that when we take one of them away, the others are endangered.

#### **What is the discrimination?**

In all our life spheres we can meet people whose appearance, behaviour, opinions, life philosophy and other qualities are different from ours or those we are used to. Discrimination arises when some personal quality – connected with the appearance, other qualities (gender, age, origin, language, religion, health, handicap) or someone's conviction – causes that a person is treated in a different (less positive) way than someone else in a comparable situation.

Constitutions of all EU countries include a principle of legal equality of everybody. Apparent discrimination is persecuted by law. Discrimination might have various forms. Direct discrimination is more addressing an individual and easily distinguishable (a waiter does not serve a guest because of his skin colour). In case of direct discrimination we can prove that an individual or a group of people were placed at disadvantage. In its clearest form, discrimination

is openly hostile and biased, but such an open discrimination is quite rare (skinhead expressions towards Romanies).

Discrimination is seldom direct and intentional. Contemporary anti-discrimination international norms highlight necessity of indirect discrimination prevention. As an example of indirect discrimination, we can give sexual harassment at work. According to investigations, the harassment concerns mainly women and weakens their position in the work community. Indirect discrimination can be even disguised by protection of the discriminated person and can be unconscious: “You wouldn’t like it here anyway as we often use stupid jokes about foreigners.”

Patience is necessary. Nevertheless, a commentary like “it was just a joke” could be really felt as irritating if it is an answer you have heard for years. At the same time it is important to realize that the person who discriminates you may have never met a foreigner, a gay, a deaf person or anybody different from people he/she usually meets. This is the reason why a friendly behaviour, even if following stupid commentaries, can change a person’s behaviour or force him/her to think this problem over.

#### **The role of educator and social or contact worker, his/her skills**

- ⇒ To support equality in someone’s own community/class and prevent any discrimination based on gender, age, ethnic or national origin, conviction, sexual orientation, handicap or anything similar.
- ⇒ To introduce practice of equal opportunities in all activities. Practice in the equal opportunities area is a basis of the newcomer’s integration. Each employee of the educational institution and each learner are responsible for not discriminating the others or creating an enemy environment by his/her words and deeds.
- ⇒ Each member of the educational institution (employee as well as learner) must support plurality and equality.
- ⇒ To know and exert the right of freedom of conviction: each member of the EI is free in his conviction and can take part in religious events. All the EI members are supposed to be tolerant and to respect opinions of the other people. However, religion practising or insisting on one’s opinions should not influence fulfilment of work duties in a negative way.

There are questions which can stimulate a discussion about equal opportunities and about discrimination faced by minorities. Think about the questions and your answers. How would you behave in the situations described? Which emotions would the situation cause in your case? How would you like the others to behave?

- Teacher, probably a Rome, gives you instruction and criticizes you. What are your opinion and your feelings?
- A veiled woman attends cooking classes. Do you hesitate to talk about the pork meat with her? Why yes/no?
- A colleague offers everybody a coffee and biscuits on the occasion of moving to his boyfriend. How would you react? How do you think would react the others?
- An openly racist skinhead complains that your colleague treats him with disrespect. How would you react?

A civil service man starts working in your collective. However, director utters during a break: "Civil service is for hippies and gays and these will not be invited to have coffee with us as far as I am here." How would you react?

<b>Methods and advice for civic competences development</b>
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Practical exercises of the topic

*Exercise 1 Celebrities. BÁN, S. et al (ed.) 2003. From vandal to voter? Active citizenship in Europe – analysis and methods. Catholic Youth and Adult Education association, p. 118*

*Aim: To build awareness of gender role in society. Analysis of reasons and personal attitudes (including prejudices). Initiation of attitudes change possibility. Development of participation skills.*

*Equipment needed: paper cards of various colours, pencils, pins, board (can be turned round).*

*Number of participants: small groups of 3-6 members*

*Duration: 30 minutes*

*Activity description:*

*Each participant takes 3 cards of the same colour. According to the colour he/she belongs to one of the groups.*

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- ⇒ *Individual work stage. Each participant writes down one name of a famous person in each of the following categories: arts, literature, politics, and natural science. Then he/she pins the names onboard to be seen by all.*
- ⇒ *Small groups work stage. Group participants (according to the card colours) answer the following questions: Which famous persons did I put down on the card? What do these people have in common? What do they differ in?*
- ⇒ *The whole class common work stage. Speaker of each small group presents results of their work. Teacher turns the board and files the names according to two new categories – women and men. Then he/she turns the board again and presents it to the learners. Usually there is an evident disproportion between the two categories.*
- ⇒ *Final discussion can deal with the following questions: Have you ever thought about disproportion between important men and women? What is the reason? Could the number of distinguished men and women be the same? Why? What way?*

### **Exercise 2 Human rights**

*Aim: Learning the contents of human rights given in the Universal Declaration of Human Right (e. g. the right of one's life, freedom and personal security, protection from torture and slavery, freedom of speech, conscience and religious affiliation, right of participation in political life or respecting the personal and family life, abode and correspondence etc.).*

*Equipment needed: sticky paper card of various colours, a board*

*Number of participants: varied*

*Duration: 30 minutes*

*Activity description:*

1. *Offer a list of human rights written on a board and ask each participant to choose 2 of them as the most fundamental.*
2. *Everybody indicates his/her choice by a sticky card (a point) on the board.*
3. *According to the learners' choices, groups are formed.*
4. *The groups justify their choices.*

*Reflection and evaluation: Each learner justifies his/her choice (and the choices of the group – groups are formed mainly according to one right choice but each learner should have chosen 2 items of the list). During discussion and the choice justification the learners de facto explain the contents of individual human rights and come to a conclusion that these can be realized only as a complex. The learners answer a question: What is the relation between human rights and human dignity?*

### **Step seven: tolerance atmosphere support - civic competences development**

Human behaviour is abounding and unfailing in its manifestations. We can think over its possible definitions: (1) group of adjectives describing positive qualities of human behaviour – good, calm, kind, patient etc. and (2) group of adjectives describing negative qualities of human

behaviour – bad, aggressive, arrogant, tricky etc. Behaviour of an individual is usually conditioned by behaviour norms appropriate in his/her culture as well as his/her individual qualities and actual life situation. Frequent causes of conflict situations are the following: mutual misunderstanding (caused e.g. by cultural differences), intolerance, unwillingness to communicate and reach mutual agreement. Important means of prevention of such phenomena are dialogue (ability to communicate on equality and mutual respect principles) and tolerance (civic attitude and form of social co-existence based on seeking agreement, ability to solve possible conflicts by non-violent means).

The respect means natural recognition of freedom and privacy of the others. No matter we are different; we should be equal in mutual relations. It means that our acting and behaviour should respect human dignity of the others and also that of ours. How to manage it? As we act, speak with the others, think about the others' feelings, treat their things in a way we want them to deal and talk with us etc., we respect them. As we act towards ourselves, our feelings and things attentively, can tell the people who try to hurt our feelings, body, things or work “No, you can't do this”, we respect ourselves.

Tolerance is not indolence (“I am tolerant to otherness as I simply ignore it”) in any case. It is not humbleness (“I accept and sustain anything towards myself”, which would lead to loss of my own dignity). Tolerance should be based on recognition of the **otherness** (e.g. opinion difference) and effort to look for **common** solution. The can be done by mutual understanding based of empathy, common experience and mutual respect.

Tolerance is a complicated phenomenon. A decisive aspect of tolerance is the ethics. Democracy is an inevitable but external side of tolerance to certain extent. Tolerant attitude towards the “others” is a result of education and self-education of tolerance.

<b>The role of educator and social or contact worker, his/her skills</b>
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- ⇒ To encourage learners to express their opinion.
- ⇒ Plurality of opinions is necessary for seeking of common dialogue basis. Even if the cultural differences are very important, we should realize personal qualities of each dialogue participant, his/her age, gender, social position, personal priorities etc.
- ⇒ To lead to plurality of opinions and dialogue. To develop dialogical skills of the learners.
- ⇒ Dialogue is regarded as a means of intercultural understanding in the society, an instrument to prevent conflicts and clashes, to eliminate prejudices and discrimination based on cultural, religious or racial differences.

- ⇒ To support skills of non-violent solution of conflicts.
- ⇒ To develop teamwork and co-operation habits.

Practical exercise of the topic

**Exercise 1 Themes to be thought over (free adaptation)** In: Kapitoly z multikulturní tolerance. Praha UK, HBPrint 2002, p.17.

1. Think about when we usually act with respect and why (at home, at work, at the doctor's).
2. On the contrary, when do not people usually act with a necessary respect? Why?
3. Try to give concrete examples of acting with a lack of respect, which limits freedom, dignity and privacy of the other person.
4. How can lack of self-respect influence result of our work? Try to tell how such a behaviour can be manifested in our position e.g. at work etc.

**Exercise 2 Theme to be thought over (free adaptation)** In: Kapitoly z multikulturní tolerance. Praha UK, HBPrint 2002, p. 29.

1. Give examples of the right of freedom of speech fulfilment including responsibility to respect the others' opinion.
2. Describe a situation at school where the right of freedom of speech fulfilment of one person (e.g. a learner during the lesson) gets into conflict with the responsibility of the other (teacher). Could we solve the situation without breaking the rights of any of them?
3. Try to formulate conditions when a conflict does not have to come about. What limits our right to express ourselves freely?

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### Conclusion

*Europe of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a multicultural and multiracial continent where a great commixture of cultures comes about. Integration of humankind, close life of various groups, cultures, and life*

*styles makes the question of non-violent forms of their co-existence, looking for consensus, sovereignty securing and each side interests protection actual.*

*According to the words of M. Gandhi, the only hope for the world is “narrow and direct way of non-violence”. On this way each individual and culture has to overcome the own limitations. Self-criticism, openness towards the world, unity of words and deeds are the instruments to overcome the limitations.*

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