



ICOPROMO

Intercultural competence for professional mobility
*Compétence interculturelle pour le développement
de la mobilité professionnelle*



Not like you

Perspective taking

Decentring

Rationale

Our identity is moulded both by personal experience and by experiences, facts or events that are shared by members of a particular community. Human culture-bound upbringing determines the way in which we perceive and make sense of the world. Intercultural contact inevitably challenges this worldview asking for a flexible individual.

Learning Outcome

Learners are expected to reflect upon their attitudes towards otherness on the basis of two extracts from the Disney film 'Pocahontas'.

Competences:

Perspective-taking
Decentring

Time

Preparation:

10-15 minutes for watching the two extracts from the film (before the lesson).

In class:

35-55 minutes (+ 60 minutes for presentation of project results in subsequent sessions):

- 5 minutes for introducing the activity.
- 10-15 minutes for answering and discussing the first set of questions.
- 5-10 minutes for the second set of questions.
- 5-10 minutes for the whole group discussion.

Project:

- Participants conduct a mini-study on how otherness is represented in the mass media in the course of a week.

60 minutes for learners to report on their findings.

Participants

Up to 25



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Materials required

- Worksheet.
- Video or DVD player.
- Pocahontas film.
- 3. Blackboard or flipchart



Procedure

Preparation:

1. Distribute the handout and introduce the activity.
2. Learners watch the two extracts from the film Pocahontas twice. They could be invited to focus on the general understanding in the first viewing and on more concrete aspects such as vocabulary in the second.
3. Depending on learners' level of English the facilitator may want to provide them with a copy of the script reproduced below. Alternatively participants can check the script on the website: <http://ainaweth.net/pocahontas/script.htm>

In class:

4. In groups of four, learners answer and discuss the first set of questions.
5. In groups of four, learners read the second set of questions and relate the film to Wiegand's quote.
6. A discussion with the whole group on the issues dealt with in the activity should follow. Summarise the main issues on the blackboard or flipchart.
7. As a follow-up activity, ask participants to conduct a mini-research study in pairs with the aim to examine how otherness is presented and represented in the mass-media.
8. In a subsequent session, participants present the main findings of their research and discuss them with the whole group.

Note

This activity can be conducted both in a monocultural and in a multicultural context.

Facilitator's notes

This activity allows for reflection on how culture-bound human thought and human experience is. Intercultural contact may bring out ethnocentric attitudes, which have to be compensated by perspective taking and the development of flexible attitudes as a means to decentre.

The first extract from the film, when John Smith and Pocahontas meet for the first time, shows John Smith's ethnocentrism and Pocahontas' attempt to help him to take a different perspective. Keywords such as 'savages', 'uncivilized' or expressions like 'we'll show your people how to use this land properly' could be explored.

The second extract shows the preparations for the battle between the British and the native Americans. The interesting factor here is the arguments both use to call each other 'savages', blaming one another on basically the same grounds. Key expressions include: 'They're different from us, which means they can't be trusted' or 'Here's what you get when races are diverse'.

The quotation by Wiegand provides the film with a theoretical framework, since research has shown that it is possible that attitudes towards other people are formed even before actual contact with them happens. This has very important implications both for intercultural communication and for foreign language teaching.

Finally, the mini research study may yield interesting results concerning how individuals learn about others and how their attitudes towards them are shaped. Mass media may present a positive image of other people and places (for example, tourist resorts), and/or a negative view of otherness (for example, in Spain the English are frequently associated with football hooliganism). Observing and exploring the prevailing images of otherness offered in the mass media will certainly become a highly illustrative exercise on intercultural communication.

References

- Byram, M. 1990. "Intercultural education and foreign language teaching". *World Studies Journal*, 1, 7: 4-7.
- Doyé, P. 1992. "Fremdsprachenunterricht als Beitrag zu tertiärer Sozialisation" in Buttjes, D. et al. (eds.) *Neue Brennpunkte des Englischunterrichts*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.
- Wiegand, P. (1992). *Places in the Primary School: Knowledge and Understanding of Places at Key Stages 1 and 2*. London: Falmer.

Websites

<http://ainaweth.net/pocahontas/script.htm>



POCAHONTAS. SCRIPT

SCENE 1: BY THE RIVER

[Pocahontas is holding John Smith's helmet, examining her distorted reflection.]

John: It's called a helmet.

Pocahontas: Helmet.

John: So, uh...what river is this?

Pocahontas: Qui-yough-ca-hannok.

John: You have most unusual names here. Chickahominy... Qui-- Qui-yough-ca-hannok...Pocahontas.

Pocahontas: You have the most unusual name too...John Smith.

John: [sees Meeko rummaging in his bag for biscuits.] Hey! [He pulls Meeko out by the tail.] Is this bottomless pit a friend of yours?

Pocahontas: [chiding] Meeko.

John: Well, how do you do, Meeko? [He holds out his hand for Meeko to shake, but Meeko thinks he's offering him more biscuits.] It's all right, it's just a handshake. Here, let me show you. [holds out his hand to Pocahontas]

Pocahontas: [waits] Nothing's happening.

John: No, no, I need your hand first. [She gives him her hand and he shakes it] It's how we say hello.

[Meeko grabs Flit's beak and shakes it.]

Pocahontas: This is how we say hello: wingapo. [She makes a circle in the air with her hand.]

John: Wing-gapo. [He repeats the gesture.]

Pocahontas: And how we say goodbye: ah-nah.

[She starts to make a circle in the air again, but John stops her, moving her hand in the other direction.]

John: I like hello better.

[Flit squawks and pushes their hands apart. He flies at John, chirping angrily.]

John: Yeah, I remember you.

[Flit flies back to Pocahontas and sits protectively on her finger.]

Pocahontas: Flit just doesn't like strangers.

John: Well, I'm not a stranger anymore. [He reaches out to Flit, but Flit pokes him.] Hmm. Stubborn little fellow, isn't he?

Pocahontas: *Very* stubborn.

John: Hey! [Meeko has just taken his compass.]

Pocahontas: Meeko!

John: Don't worry, he can't hurt it. [Meeko bangs the compass on a rock.] Hey! What are you doing, give-- [He tries to catch Meeko, but he runs up a tree]

Pocahontas: Meeko, bring that back!

John: No, it's all right, he can keep it. Call it a gift!

Pocahontas: What was that?

John: My compass.

Pocahontas: Compass?

John: It tells you how to find your way when you get lost. But it's all right, I'll get another one in London.

Pocahontas: London? Is that your village?

John: Yes. It's a very big village.

Pocahontas: What's it like?

John: Well, it's got streets filled with carriages, bridges over the rivers...and buildings as tall as trees.

Pocahontas: I'd like to see those things.

John: You will.

Pocahontas: How?

John: We're going to build them here. We'll show your people how to use this land properly; how to make the most of it.

Pocahontas: Make the most of it?

John: Yes! We'll build roads and decent houses--

Pocahontas: Our houses are fine!

John: You think that, only because you don't know any better.

[Offended, Pocahontas gets up and walks to her canoe.]

John: Wait a minute. Don't take it that--[Flit flies at him angrily] Hey, hey!

Wait! W- wait. [He blocks her canoe.] There's so much we can teach you. We've improved the lives of savages all over the world--

Pocahontas: *Savages?!*

John: Uh, not that *you're* a savage.

Pocahontas: Just my people?

John: No. Listen, that's--not what I meant, let me explain--

Pocahontas: [trying to paddle away] Let go!

John: No! I'm not letting you leave.

[Pocahontas leaps from the boat onto a branch above her and starts climbing the tree.]

John: Look, don't do this. Savage--is just a word, uh... [He starts to climb up after her] You know, a term, for--people who are uncivilized.

Pocahontas: [swinging from a branch] Like me?

John: Well, when I say uncivilized, what I mean is...is-- [He grabs a dead branch which breaks and sends him tumbling out of the tree. His helmet lands on his head a second later.

Pocahontas jumps down and walks toward him.]

Pocahontas: What you mean is, not like you.

You think I'm an ignorant savage

And you've been so many places

I guess it must be so

But still I cannot see

If the savage one is me

How can there be so much that you don't know?

You don't know....

[She begins to take him on a tour of her world.]

You think you own whatever land you land on

The earth is just a dead thing you can claim

But I know every rock and tree and creature

Has a life, has a spirit, has a name

You think the only people who are people

Are the people who look and think like you

**But if you walk the footsteps of a stranger
You'll learn things you never knew you never knew.
Have you ever heard the wolf cry to the blue corn moon
Or ask the grinning bobcat why he grinned?
Can you sing with all the voices of the mountain?
Can you paint with all the colors of the wind?
Can you paint with all the colors of the wind?
Come run the hidden pine trails of the forest
Come taste the sun-sweet berries of the earth
Come roll in all the riches all around you
And for once, never wonder what they're worth
The rainstorm and the river are my brothers
The heron and the otter are my friends
And we are all connected to each other
In a circle, in a hoop that never ends
How high does the sycamore grow?
If you cut it down, then you'll never know
And you'll never hear the wolf cry to the blue corn moon
For whether we are white or copperskinned
We need to sing with all the voices of the mountain
We need to paint with all the colors of the wind
You can own the earth and still
All you'll own is earth until
You can paint with all the colors of the wind.**

SCENE 2a: JAMESTOWN

Ben: Thomas is right! We've got to do something.

Ratcliffe: And so we shall! I told you those savages couldn't be trusted. Smith tried to befriend them, and look what they've done to him! But now I say it's time to rescue our courageous comrade. At daybreak, we attack!

[Men cheer.]

Ratcliffe: **What can you expect from filthy little heathens?**

Here's what you get when races are diverse.

Their skin's a hellish red

They're only good when dead

They're vermin, as I said, and worse!

Settlers: **They're savages! Savages!**

Ratcliffe: **Barely even human**

Settlers: **Savages! Savages!**

Ratcliffe: **Drive them from our shore!**

They're not like you and me

Which means they must be evil

We must sound the drums of war!

Settlers: **They're savages! Savages!**

Dirty shrieking devils

Now we sound the drums of war!

SCENE 2b: INDIAN VILLAGE

Powhatan: **This is what we feared**

The paleface is a demon

The only thing they feel at all is greed.

Kekata: **Beneath that milky hide**

There's emptiness inside.

Warrior: **I wonder if they even bleed!**

Indians: **They're savages! Savages!**

Powhatan: **Barely even human**

Indians: **Savages! Savages!**

Powhatan: **Killers at the core!**

Kekata: **They're different from us**

Which means they can't be trusted

Powhatan: **We must sound the drums of war!**

Indians: **They're savages! Savages!**

First we deal with this one

Then we sound the drums of war!

Settlers: **Savages! Savages!**

Ben: **Let's go get a few, men!**

Indians: **Savages!**

Settlers: **Savages!**

Ratcliffe: **Now it's up to you, men!**

Indians: **Savages!**

Settlers: **Savages!**

All: **Barely even human**

Now we sound the drums...of...war!

(Extracts from <http://ainaweth.net/pocahontas/script.htm>)



WORKSHEET

NOT LIKE YOU

Our identities and personalities seem to be shaped by the environment in which we are brought up and in which we grow up. Our values, beliefs, behaviours and norms derive, to a large extent, from the social groups to which we belong. These culture-bound values, beliefs, behaviours and norms, unless questioned, are usually taken for granted and, therefore, tend to be thought of as ‘universal’. When people from different communities meet, their assumed viewpoints are suddenly challenged and either ethnocentric attitudes emerge, the person acknowledging that his/her worldviews and culture are the best, or a much more flexible attitude appears.

Human beings need to develop the intercultural competences of sense-making and of perspective-taking in order to be able to deal with new information, uncertainty and ambiguity, and in order to do so from a flexible and decentred perspective, a perspective which allows expanding horizons and real personal growth.

Byram (1990) and Doyé (1992) propose the term ‘*tertiary socialisation*’ to refer to the international and/or intercultural encounter and link it to the foreign language class, as this is for some people the first opportunity to reflect upon otherness.

1. You are going to watch two extracts from the *Disney film ‘Pocahontas’*. Pay attention to the images, sounds and, particularly, the words used by the characters. Answer the following questions and discuss them in groups:

- a) What are the words or expressions used to refer to ‘the other’? What connotations are associated with them?
- b) Make a list of the words or expressions that show ethnocentric views.
- c) What are the views in the film concerning what happens when two different social groups meet?
- d) Can feelings such as ‘love’ or ‘friendship’ change one’s perception of otherness? To what degree do you think this is ‘selfish’, ‘an exception that confirms the rule’, etc.?

2. Now, compare the film with the following piece of data:

Research conducted on how individuals learn about distant places show that knowledge about distant places is closely related to attitudes towards them (Wiegand 1992: 53-58). Individuals can develop their attitudes towards distant people and places on the basis of the knowledge they already have about them or, previous attitudes can condition the information they receive about other people and places. Wiegand supports the second option: “attitudes to distant people and places are formed at least at the same time and probably before knowledge is gained about those places” (ibid, 65).

- How do you relate this statement with the extracts from Pocahontas?
- What conclusions can you draw for intercultural contacts and communication?

3. In pairs, conduct a mini-research project during one week. Then, present the main findings to your peers:

Observe very carefully the way in which the newspapers and television in you country present other countries and social groups.

- a) Which are the main communities portrayed?
- b) When does the information appear?
- c) How is the information presented (written or oral text, pictures, images, sounds, etc.)?
- d) What cultural practices, facts or events are related to the different communities portrayed?
- e) In what way is the information presented? What features or connotations are associated with the other social groups?
- f) What is the image of otherness the public gets after reading the newspaper or watching television?
- g) How does this relate to foreign language learning and teaching?