

## RAISING PLURICULTURAL AWARENESS

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### Target audience

- Pre-service teachers/
  - Secondary teachers
- In-service teachers
  - Secondary teachers

### Itineraries

- Exploring attitudes towards languages and cultures/ Travail sur les attitudes envers les langues et les cultures

### Abstract:

The following activities are aimed at raising pluricultural awareness of pre-service or in-service language educators.

Starting from identifying cultural symbols that best represent one's identity, the activities will further help language teachers explore their readiness to accept members of other cultures and identify the elements of one's culture that might affect the pluricultural competence of an individual.

The activities will also help clarify key concepts to overcoming prejudice and stereotypes and illustrate certain types of behaviour towards members of other cultures. There will also be an opportunity to consider possible steps or action to be taken for raising the level of pluricultural awareness in the environment where language educators live or work.

### Rationale:

Living in a multicultural society may entail everyday encounters with people of different cultural background, beliefs and religion. Language teachers most probably will have to deal with diversity in their classrooms.

Very often misunderstandings arise out of ignorance because not many people are willing to admit that they do not understand some abstract concepts and terms. As a language teacher/ prospective language teacher, one will undoubtedly be put in a situation to define key terms and concepts. The activities will simulate a situation where one should think about the concepts which are crucial to overcoming prejudice and stereotypes that students may have about other cultures.

Many people can boast of knowing many facts about other cultures, history, traditions. Still, on the bases of their daily lives they may refuse to change their behaviour towards members of other cultures. There are different types of behaviour that some people are even unaware of. The teacher may be put in a situation to recognize certain type of behaviour and know how to deal with it, as well as suggest possible ways of attitude change.

Finally, multicultural education requires from educators much more than teaching students how to tolerate members of other cultures. Therefore, language educators should try to consider

possible steps or action to be taken for raising the level of pluricultural awareness in the environment they live or work.

### **Personal and social dimensions**

- Observing the linguistic and cultural diversity of contexts and individuals;
- Recognizing linguistic and cultural diversity as a positive characteristic of groups and societies;
- Combating exclusion and linguistic and cultural discrimination while embracing the opportunities of a life together in society;
- Being capable of setting up self-training projects that take account of linguistic and cultural diversity;

### **Professional dimensions**

- Observing, analyzing and making use of -in didactic terms- the diversity that exists in one's teaching environment (individual and collective repertoires);
- Awareness of diversity and reflection about diversity as the main feature of society;
- Overcoming obstacles in incorporating changes aiming at developing pluricultural competence;

## **Worksheet 1**

**Getting to know members of the group through symbols that represent their identity and culture.**

Timing: **30'**

Material required:

Pieces of paper to be displayed on the board

Grouping :  (individual)



(individual)

- On a piece of paper draw three symbols that represent yourself and your culture. Use simple drawings of objects or concepts that you think best represent your identity and cultural background you belong to.

- The drawings should be displayed on the board and trainees should try to guess who the person is that had drawn each separate drawing.
- The trainees whose identity has not been discovered should tell more about the symbols and explain why for her/or him these are the symbols that represent her/his culture.



- Work in groups of 4-5 and compare symbols which people have used to represent their culture. Are there similarities? How are they different?
- Discuss similarities or differences with other members of your group.

## Worksheet 2

### How ready are we to accept members of other cultures?

Timing: ...30'

Material required : worksheet

Grouping:

 (individual) /  (group work)



The following questions will make you reflect upon you own reactions and behaviour towards members of other cultures. Some of the questions may reflect the situation in your teaching environment.

Read the questions and respond by putting a score from 1 to 6 in the column for points.

1 point = almost never    2 points = rarely    4 points= usually    6 points= almost always

	Points
1. How often am I aware of the biases which influence my understanding of other cultures in the society in which I live?	
2. How often do I try to get to know members of other cultures from my surrounding/ or students in my classroom as individuals?	
3. How often am I aware of the impact of my comments about other cultures or members of other cultures before I speak?	
4. How often do I object to and react when I hear friends or students in my classroom telling jokes which humiliate members of other cultures?	
5. How often do I try to avoid behaving in a way which might be offensive to members of other cultures from my surrounding?	
6. How often do I try to avoid using language that reinforces negative stereotypes about other cultures which are present in the society I live in?	
7. How often do I create opportunities for people/students in my class from other cultural background to promote values of their own culture?	
8. How often do I participate in /or try to organise events that promote and celebrate minority cultures in the community I live in/ or the school I work in?	
9. How often do I try to use my communicative strategies to ease tensions which have been created among individuals or students in my classroom who are members of different cultures?	
10. How often do I try to learn about the history of the minority culture in the society I live in?	

Total score

\_\_\_\_\_

- Add together the scores and read the characteristics of the group you belong to. Do you think they are realistic?  
The answers try to indicate on you ability to accept people of other cultures in your surrounding or deal with diversity in your classroom.

48-60 points

You are an exceptional person who values diversity, always ready to accept and appreciate members of cultures different than your own, without any reservation. You should serve as a model to other people in your community or to your students.

30-47 points

You have been thinking about other cultures and their values! Still, there are some things that you can learn. Try to be more open to new experiences.

29 and below

Don't be discouraged! Learning how to value diversity is a challenge for many. Overcoming prejudice and stereotypes takes time, but now is the right moment to start.

- You may want to discuss with other trainees how you have scored. On the other hand you may not want to reveal your score. It is up to you! But think seriously about how you perceive other people and their right to be different than yourself.



- Work in a group and give examples of positive behaviour towards members of other cultures or good practice in your classroom.

### Worksheet 3

#### How is your pluricultural competence affected by elements of your culture?

Timing: ...45'

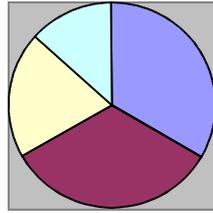
Material required : Poster paper, coloured pencils

Grouping:

 (individual) /  (pair work) /  (group work) /  (whole class)



- Draw a pie chart to reflect on elements of your culture that you think are most important to you as an individual; For example you may think of religion, moral values, language, food, tradition etc... The pie chart below is just an example of how they may be distributed.



- Find a person who belongs to the same cultural background as you and compare your charts. Try to find if there are some common elements.

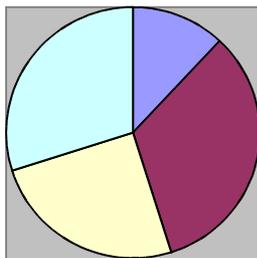


Work in a group with other trainees who belong to the same cultural background as you. Discuss what the common elements on your charts are, and together create a pie chart which represents the commonalities of the group with the same cultural background.

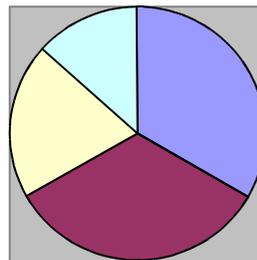


- Now, the pie charts representing elements of different cultures are presented and displayed on the board. There should be one pie chart for each culture represented in the group of trainees.

Culture 1



Culture 2



- Look at the charts on the board and note the similarities and differences in the charts. Try to come to a conclusion whether the importance that different cultures assign to different values may be a cause for misunderstanding or intolerance of members of other cultures.





- Think for yourself how might your competence for understanding and accepting values of different cultures be affected by the influence of different perception of cultural elements, values or traditions?

### Worksheet 4

#### Overcoming prejudice and stereotypes by understanding the key terms in pluricultural education.

Timing: ...60'

Material required: Worksheet

Grouping:

 (individual) /  (group work)



- The trainer will organise you in five expert groups and each member of the group will be given a piece of paper on which he/she will write his own definition of the concept for your expert group.

The concepts are the following:

Racism \_\_\_\_\_  
Discrimination \_\_\_\_\_  
Prejudice \_\_\_\_\_  
Stereotyping \_\_\_\_\_  
Separatism \_\_\_\_\_



- After you have finished writing individual definitions, decide within the expert group which is the best definition and write one common definition of the concept you have been assigned to.



- Now re-group and form groups with experts for each concept, where you will teach other trainees the definition that your group has created.



- Discuss within the group whether these processes can be traced in the social environment you belong to or in your language classroom.

What might be the consequences of existence of any of these processes in the society and community where you live and indirectly in the classroom where you teach ?

## Worksheet 5

### How can you improve your pluricultural awareness?

Timing: ...4'

Material required: Worksheet, poster paper

Grouping:

 (individual) /  (group work) /



- Look at the boxes below which describe different types of attitude of people who belong to each of the groups. Work in a group with other trainees and think of an example of words or an act that a typical representative of that type of behaviour might use or do.

An individual is not only prejudiced, but is not even aware of it.
An individual is aware that there are things he/she does not completely understand about people from different cultures.
An individual attempts to learn what he/she does not understand about different cultures.
The individual is comfortable with differences and accepts and respects others in a natural way.

- Compare your group's work with other groups and list on four different posters the examples suggested by all groups.



- Look at the four different types of behaviour and think of your own attitude towards people of other cultures. Think about your results from the questionnaire in worksheet 2. Where do you belong? Do you need to change anything? If yes, how can you achieve that?



- Discuss with the whole group and agree on possible ways of attitude change.  
What can an individual do to improve his attitude towards members of other cultures?

### Worksheet 6

**How can you promote raising pluricultural awareness in the environment you live or work?**

Timing: ...30'

Material required: Worksheet

Grouping:

 (individual) /  (group work) /



- Work in a group with other trainees and try to come up with solutions what you as teachers or future teachers can do to promote raising pluricultural awareness in you school and to your students.
- What can I do as a teacher?

- What can the school do?

- What can the society/community do?

## Assessment

The questionnaire in worksheet 2 should serve as an instrument for assessment of attitude change.

The trainees answer the questionnaire at the beginning of the training session but, also at the end of the training session to see if there is any difference in attitude change.

### Notes for teacher educators:

#### Worksheet 1:

This activity is aimed at getting to know members of the group.

The trainees are expected to introduce themselves to the other participants by way of identifying with three symbols that they relate to within their culture. Here it might be interesting to see whether certain stereotypes about some cultures will arise in the perceptions of identity among the trainees.

#### Worksheet 2:

This activity should be used for assessment and evaluation of the whole training session. It should be done at the beginning of the training as well as at the end of the training. If there is an increase in the number of points scored, that should be a signal that the trainees have started thinking seriously about their attitude towards people/ students who are members of other cultures.

Some trainees may be reluctant to share the results of the questionnaire. The trainer should not insist on each of them reporting their score. It should rather be used as a point of reflection upon one's own attitude and as a starting point for improvement.

#### Worksheet 3:

This activity is designed to identify cultural differences and similarities which might affect the relations among members of different cultures who live in the same multicultural community.

The trainers should be aware of the fact that in order for this activity to be successful the group of trainees should be composed of members with different cultural background.

#### Worksheet 4:

This activity requires group work and re-grouping of trainees. If the group of trainees is large, the trainer can introduce more key terms or concepts to be defined. After the work in expert groups is finished and the group had decided on a common expert definition of the concept, then they form other groups composed of members from each expert group and they present their definition to the other members.

#### Worksheet 5:

This might be a rather challenging activity and the trainer may find that some of the groups may not be able to come up with an example for all the types of behaviour.

The trainer should encourage the groups to do what they can and later in the activity when the examples from all the groups are listed on the posters, discuss the examples with the whole group of trainees.

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