Intercultural Sensitivity of Teenagers: A Study of Educational Necessities in Catalonia

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Introduction

The increasing multicultural reality of Catalan society, and of course also in classrooms, has promoted a social debate about intercultural education. Diverse approaches and perspectives exist, but anyway, the multicultural reality makes us rethink topics like the perception of the cultural differences and intercultural relations that are established.

Schools represent a rich multicultural context to promote equal human relations and to develop intercultural competences in students, which facilitates intercultural communication. Diversity of multicultural society makes possible the contact between people who do not necessary share their beliefs, values, lifestyles, etc. Developing the conscious effort for understanding and establishing pacific coexistence is a new challenge in Catalan schools, especially in obligatory periods of our educational system and in countries like Spain, where immigration is a continuous but relatively recent phenomenon.

We are not proposing an ingenuous perspective considering the educational function unrelated to the political and social movements. We recognize the importance of education in achieving limited but irreplaceable social changes (Bartolomé, 1997).

Our proposal comes from the Chen and Starosta intercultural competence model (1996) inspired by Belay (1993) and Bennett (1986), as we represent in Figure 1. This model constitutes the framework reference for our analysis. The Chen and Starosta model tries to promote the aptitudes of recognition, respect, tolerance and integration of cultural differences to construct global citizenship. It represents a transformation process of symmetrical interdependence that can be explained in three dimensions: *intercultural sensitivity, cultural awareness and intercultural adroitness.* In our study we emphasized the importance of intercultural sensitivity that includes abilities to promote positive emotions before, during and after the intercultural contact. Diverse personal competences are involved: self-concept, open minded, nonjudgmental attitudes, empathy, self-regulation and interaction involvement.

If we consider the educational challenge to develop these competences, necessarily we need to know what sort of competences the students have to succeed in intercultural communication, as well as, what are the students needs. From our point of view, an effective educational proposal has to answer these questions.

Intercultural Sensitivity to Guarantee Intercultural Communication: A Diagnostic Research

The basic objective of the research we present here is to analyze some of the intercultural competences of secondary students. Concretely, we try to study the educational necessities as a fundamental element that should be present in citizenship education. This element can improve coexistence, intercultural dialogue, and even intercultural relationships, in benefit of the cultural plurality.

Figure. 1. Intercultural communication competence model.
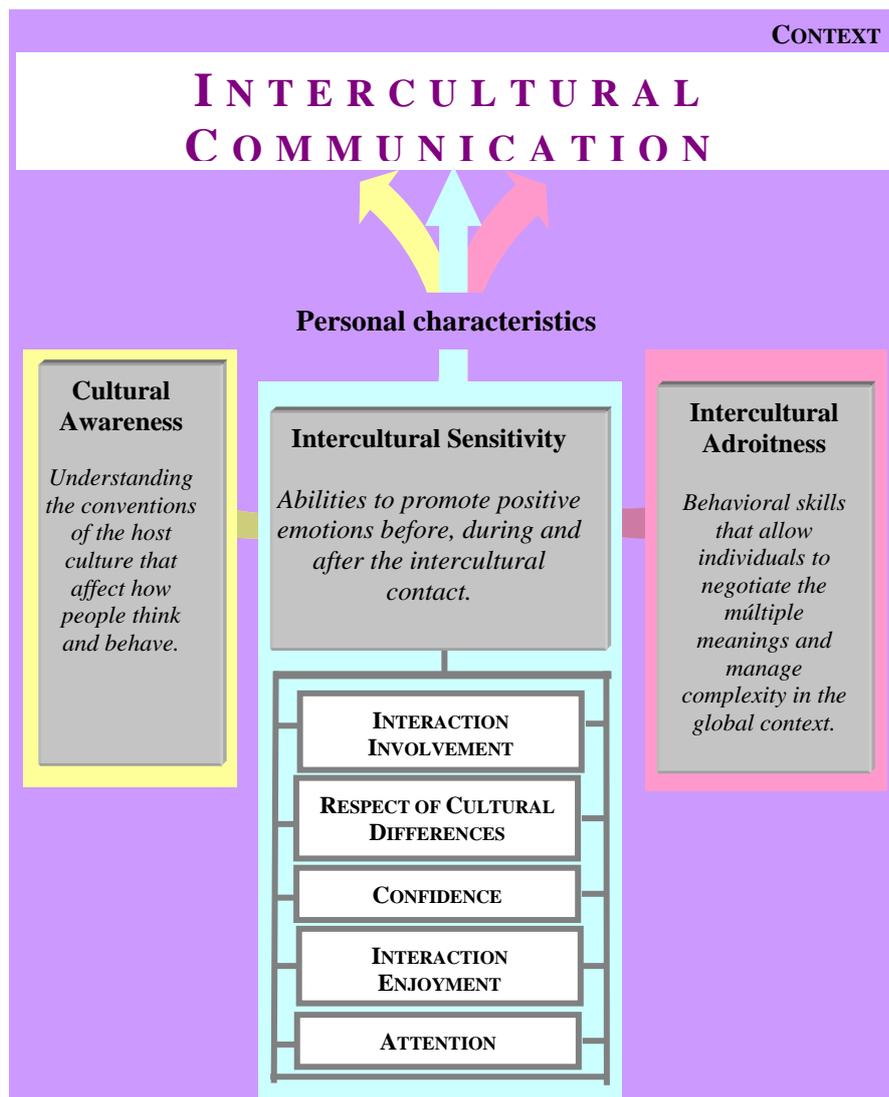
The results we present here are limited to affective competences (intercultural sensitivity) although we have measured cognitive and behavioral competences too (Vilà, 2003). In summary, the primary objective of these results is the diagnosis of some intercultural competences related to affective aspects that are under *intercultural sensitivity* (Chen & Starosta 1996, 1998). This analysis enables the detection of the necessities to organize an adjusted educational intervention.

This is a diagnostic research based on a survey study through a measurement instrument composed by a scale[1] and a contextual questionnaire. The sample is intentional, drawn from the population in the secondary state schools in a region of Barcelona. The sampling has been carried out considering the multicultural presence: we gave priority to

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[1] Scale adapted from *Intercultural Sensitivity Scale* (Chen & Starosta, 2000)

those with a greater multicultural reality. Concretely, 638 teenagers from seven different schools participated in the research.

Intercultural Sensitivity Scale

The scale is based on Chen and Starosta *Intercultural Sensitivity Scale* (2000). This scale has been used to measure the sensitivity of the students in intercultural communication. Concretely, because sensitivity is an important part of affective competences for intercultural communication. We summarize in Table 1 the dimensions measured.

The final scale was translated to Spanish and Catalan[2] and adapted to teenagers. The final version validated only 22 items, considering that in the original American scale there were 24 items. The translation has been cultural and linguistic (from American English to Spanish and Catalan). At the same time, the adaptation has been according to the age (from adults to teenagers). Next to the scale we have proposed a short questionnaire with the following contextual data: age, course, sex, cultural identity/ies, number of years of residence in Catalonia, self-perception on knowledge and on linguistic use of several languages (including Catalan, Spanish, English, French, Arabic, and others), and self-perception about the number of friends from other countries or with different culture reference.

Table 1. Specification table of Intercultural Sensitivity Scale based on Chen & Starosta (2000)

DIMENSIONS	ITEMS	Nº OF ITEMS
Interaction involvement	1, 2, 3, 15, 16, 17	6
Respect of cultural differences	4, 5, 6, 7, 18	5
Confidence	8, 9, 10, 19, 20	5
Interaction enjoyment	11, 12, 21	3
Attention	13, 14, 22	3
	TOTAL OF ITEMS	22

There were two pilot applications in Catalonia that demonstrated the validity and reliability of the instrument, as it is showed in Table 2.

Table 2. Pilot validation applications of Intercultural Sensitivity Scale in Catalan context

Pilot appl.	Nº Students		Results
I	25	Nº of items	24
		Item analysis	Exception of 2 items, the rest are homogeneous and discriminates
		Reliability	$\alpha = 0.9014$
		Factor analysis	6 factors
II	29	Nº of items	22
		Item analysis	All are homogeneous and discriminates
		Reliability	$\alpha = 0.7930$
		Factor analysis	6 factors
		Nº of items	22

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[2] In Catalonia, Catalan and Spanish are official languages.

		Item analysis	All are homogeneous and discriminates
		Reliability	$\alpha = 0.8490$
		Factor analysis	5 factors

According to the results found in each pilot application, we modified the number of items and its structure, till the final version of the adapted scale. The final one was applied to the empiric sample (638 students).

The reliability is considerable. Correlation study demonstrated the significant relation of mutual dependency between all the topics and the whole scale. This shows that all the topics measure the same scientific construct. On the other hand, from item analysis we have found out the homogeneity and discrimination of the whole 22 items proposed. And the factor analysis has discovered a structure of 5 factors that responds to 52% of the variance, following the model of the original scale.

In the next part of the article we discuss the results found in this empirical application, answering our initial pedagogical question.

Do Teenagers Need to Develop Intercultural Sensitivity?

The number of teenagers participant in this study are 638 students from different schools of a Barcelona region called Baix Llobregat. More specifically, there were 7 schools of secondary education from 5 cities: Castelldefels, Viladecans, Sant Boi, Cornellà and Sant Andreu de la Barca. Although there were more girls than boys in the sample, this difference is not statistical important ($\alpha = 0.05$), as we represent in Table 3.

Table 3. Gender of students

SCHOOLS	BOYS		GIRLS	
A	32	10.9%	31	9.1%
B	17	5.8%	15	4.4%
C	51	17.3%	69	20.3%
D	31	10.5%	29	8.5%
E	75	25.5%	83	24.4%
F	49	16.7%	64	18.8%
G	39	13.3%	49	14.4%
TOTAL	294		340	

These students came from first and second grade in secondary education, according to Spanish educational system. In these grades students should be between 12-14 years old. By the way, 3.2% of students were older.

On the other hand, 26.2% of students were outside Catalonia, as we show in Table 4. They came from Morocco, Argentina, Peru, Colombia, Ecuador and Uruguay. Most of the students born in Catalonia had their father or mother from other countries or Spanish places.

Table 4. Years of residence in Catalonia of students

Born in Catalonia	471	73.8%
Living in Catalonia more than 7 years	57	8.9%
Living in Catalonia between 3 and 7 years	41	6.4%
Living in Catalonia less than 3 years	69	10.8%

Most students identified themselves with one (40.4%) or two cultures (43.1%) at the same time. Only 11.8% of the students identified themselves with three cultures, and just one person identified himself with five cultures. Students that identified themselves with Catalan or Spanish culture chose one or two cultures. And students that identified themselves with Catalan and Spanish culture at the same time chose three cultures. People with more identifications chose foreigners identities.

Students perceived their own linguistic competence especially in Spanish and Catalan. On the other hand, they did not perceive themselves as competent in other languages such as French or English. Maybe teenagers are overly critical in evaluation of their own linguistic competence, as was demonstrated in other research (Broeder & Mijares, 2003:75).

Spanish is the most used language: 75% of students said that they use always Spanish at home (81.5%) and with friends (87.1%). Although Catalan is the second language with more competence perceived by the students, the 53.9% of them said that they never use Catalan with friends. Several researchers have demonstrated this unequal situation of the two official languages in our context (Vila & Vial, 2003:213-215). Catalan and English are used only in school. The 75% of the students said that they never use English.

Finally, almost the 50% of students perceived a lot of friends from the same cultural referent group. Students that identified different cultural references between their friends have said: Morocco, Gypsy, Colombian, Ecuadorian, Peruvian, French and Chilean.

These are profiles of student that have participated in our study. Next lines present the results obtained with the evaluation of intercultural sensitivity in secondary education.

The data analysis seems to indicate certain necessities of adolescents related to some affective aspects of intercultural competence. In Table 5 we present the possible theoretical scores[3] of each dimension of *intercultural sensitivity scale.* Theoretical scores make possible to understand the punctuations obtained by the students.

Table 5. Theoretical scores of intercultural sensitivity scale

DIMENSIONS	MINIMAL THEORETICAL PUNCTUATION	MEDIUM THEORETICAL PUNCTUATION	MAXIMAL THEORETICAL PUNCTUATION
Interaction involvement	6	18	30
Respect of cultural differences	5	15	25
Confidence	5	15	25
Interaction enjoyment	3	9	15
Attention	3	9	15
TOTAL SCALE	22	66	110

In Figure 2 we represent the score profile of the students. Clearly, it reflects in all cases, that the score averages surpass the theoretical medium scores, represented in the graph.

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[3] Theoretical scores have been calculated from the number of items of each dimension, as a reference of the minimum, maximum and medium scores (theoretical), scoring 1, 5 or 3 in all items, respectively.

Fig. 2. Students score profile in intercultural sensitivity scale

Involvement	3	18	30
Respect	5	15	25
Confidence	5	15	25
Enjoyment	3	9	15
Attention	3	9	15
TOTAL SCALE	22	66	110
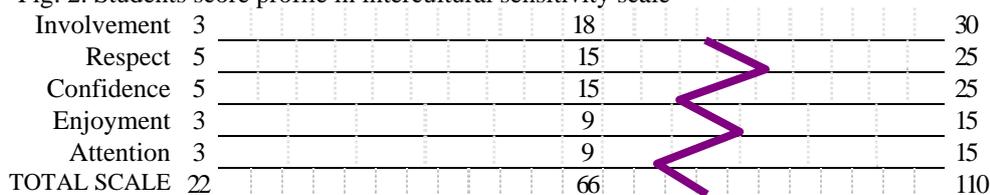
Concretely, if we order the dimensions from greater scores to minor we obtain the next results: respect to cultural differences, interaction enjoyment, interaction involvement, confidence and attention during intercultural communication. In this sense, the main necessities of the Catalan adolescents are in attention, confidence and interaction involvement in intercultural communication.

As it is reflected in Table 6, all the average scores of the group are elevated, in the total scores as in the subtotals related to each dimension. *Attention during the interaction* is the dimension where students have obtained lower scores, in general. However, this dimension displays a greater dispersion.[4] Although this results, all of the dimensions reflect diversity of attitudes because students obtain minimum and maximum scores (as the theoretical scores suggest).

Table 6. Descriptive statistics of punctuations in intercultural sensitivity scale

						Percentile		
	N	Mean	S. D.	Min	Max	25	50	75
Interaction involvement	638	21.21	4.16	6	30	18	21	24
Respect of cultural differences	638	18.65	3.87	5	25	16	19	21
Confidence	637	17.44	3.57	5	25	15	17	20
Interaction enjoyment	638	10.88	2.43	3	15	9	11	13
Attention	638	9.88	2.40	3	15	9	10	11
Total scale	620	76.49	11.53	31	106	69	77	84

In general, we consider that the rest of the aspects (including the total) locate the group in a quite favorable position, close to intercultural sensitivity. There are statistical differences with an indecision position ($\alpha = 0.05$). In other words, in all cases the score averages obtained by the sample in general are significantly superior to the theoretical medium scores of indecision with a 95% of confidence level. These results justify the necessity to develop these attitudes with students of this age.

In next lines we are going to detail this analysis a little more. We study these results in concrete groups of students. As Dinges and Lieberman (1989) suggest, the contextual factors often affect intercultural communication competence.

In this sense, it seems to be that neither the age nor the course shows significant differences about intercultural sensitivity of the students. By the way, sex seems to be an important variable because girls have significant greater intercultural sensitivity than boys ($\alpha = 0.01$).

At the same time, the number of cultural identifications correlates positively with the scale scores ($\alpha=0.05$). In other words, students who have identified themselves with a large

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[4] Variation coefficient: involvement (19.61%), cultural differences (20.75%), confidence (20.47%), enjoyment (22.34%), attention (24.29%), total scale (15.07%)

number of cultural references present higher punctuations in the scale, whereas students that had just one culture identification present lower scores.

We have also found significant differences between the students who always have lived in Catalonia and others that do not: it seems to be that the students who have not immigrated show less intercultural sensitivity.

Another relevant aspect of analysis is the perception of the students about their own linguistic competence. The correlation study spotlights that the student perception of their competence correlates in a significant and positive way with the total scale score. It seems to be that students with a positive perception of linguistic competence in diverse languages (Catalan, Spanish, French, English, and Arabic) have higher scores in intercultural sensitivity scale.

On the other hand, the use of these languages also indicates significant positive correlations. For example, students that spoke Catalan, French or English, have obtained high scores. Whereas the use of Spanish maintains a negative correlation with the total scores ($\alpha =$ 0,05). In other words, students who speak only Spanish have obtained the lower scores in intercultural sensitivity.

Finally, the recognition of friends belonging to diversity of cultures is an aspect that often correlates with a higher degree of intercultural sensitivity. Students that identify different cultures among their friends have higher scores in intercultural communication scale, than students who identify their friends with the same cultural reference.

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