

*WE DO NOT FEAR THE
UNKNOWN. WE FEAR
WHAT WE THINK WE
KNOW ABOUT THE
UNKNOWN. - TEAL
SWAN*

A research on how to scaffold student's
intercultural competence.

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intercultural competence*

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INDHOLDSFORTEGNELSE

Introduction.....	2
How is it possible to scaffold students developing intercultural competence working cross curricular with history?	2
Relevance	2
Theory	3
Intercultural Competence (IC)	3
Identity	4
Method	4
Lesson planning	4
Analysis	5
Observations and Feedback.....	5
Reflections	7
Conclusions.....	7
References.....	8
Appendices.....	9
Lesson plan.....	9
Lesson planning:	Fejl! Bogmærke er ikke defineret.
Workplan	Fejl! Bogmærke er ikke defineret.
Task Sheets	Fejl! Bogmærke er ikke defineret.
Students results	Fejl! Bogmærke er ikke defineret.
Student A.....	Fejl! Bogmærke er ikke defineret.
Student B.....	Fejl! Bogmærke er ikke defineret.
.....	Fejl! Bogmærke er ikke defineret.

INTRODUCTION

Teal Swan is an American author and teacher. Her quote shows the essence of intercultural competence – knowledge and understanding. Intercultural competence is the ability to interact successfully and appropriately with individuals from other cultures. The Danish curriculum sets intercultural competence as an individual competence area to be taught in the language subjects. To be able to meet the requirements of the curriculum and because my second subject is history, I wanted to research following question:

HOW IS IT POSSIBLE TO SCAFFOLD STUDENTS
DEVELOPING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE
WORKING CROSS CURRICULAR WITH HISTORY?

” In the subject English, students must develop linguistic, textual and *intercultural competencies* so that they can use English nationally and globally in their current and future lives.”

– (Børne og Ungdomsministeriet, 2019)

I have been in internship in a 5th grade with many different cultural backgrounds, so I decided to prepare a lesson sequence, working with their own background to increase mutual understanding and knowledge on the different cultures.

RELEVANCE

The Danish curriculum includes a competence area called culture and society where it says: “Students must develop an understanding of and gain experience of what culture and society are and how cultural and societal practices can be recognized and understood” (Børne og Ungdomsministeriet, 2019). Therefore, research on how to plan lessons teaching intercultural competence is very relevant for a becoming English teacher. Explicitly I have worked with the common goals for grade 5. – 7.

THEORY

INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE (IC)

The Intercultural Dimension in language teaching is the interpersonal function of language in a broader sense since intercultural competence is based on the interaction of two individuals from different cultures. Social and national identities influence are unavoidably part of the interaction. The aims of teaching IC is to prepare the students for interaction with other cultures by enabling them to understand and accept their counterparts as individuals from other cultures without falling for stereotyping. For that they need knowledge, skills and attitudes and awareness of their own values and identities.

Intercultural attitudes are curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures. Knowledge refers to knowledge of the products and practices of the other and the own culture. To avoid misunderstanding some skills are central. The skills of interpreting and relating, the skills of discovery and interaction, which are about acquiring new knowledge and critical cultural awareness, the ability to evaluate one's own values and beliefs. (Greffrath, 2020)

“What language teachers need for the intercultural dimension is not more knowledge of other countries and cultures, but skills in promoting an atmosphere in the classroom which allows learners to take risks in their thinking and feeling.” (Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002)

IC is about knowledge and critical cultural awareness, society and the world. Knowledge refers to the students' knowledge about the world, the different countries and their identity development (Theory on Identity will follow in the next section). Critical cultural awareness is about being able to reflect critically over culture and society and argue for values out of explicit criteria. Another central concept is perspective awareness, which refers to the need of being aware of the role of the perspective. Knowledge is influenced by the perspective. Learners need to be aware of their perspective and be able to see the world from other perspectives, which is called decentering. This presupposes a general openness and curiosity towards the surroundings. To work with the student's intercultural awareness, I decided to count how many different nationalities there are in class, which were surprisingly many.

IDENTITY

Identity is a word trying to describe who am I and who do I want to be. Identity is about how people want to represent themselves, what might lie behind what they say about their culture and how they want other people to see them. When people are in a difficult or strange environment, they can exaggerate specific aspects of their cultural identity. Vice versa, people in strange environments tend to construct descriptions of local people as the opposite of what they consider themselves to be. There are different cultural resources, which can be drawn on at different times depending on the circumstances. Cultural resources mean aspects of culture that exist in every society like, ceremonies, politics, food, language, religion etc. If we as communicators are to take people from other backgrounds seriously, we should take every aspect of what they do and say seriously. In this sense, every instance of behavior becomes an artefact of who people are. Everyone tries to define themselves. We cannot choose our ethnicity, sex and so on, we can decide how to play the hand of cards that we have been dealt. By playing with the resources, individuals or groups can create new identities and, indeed, create culture change.

METHOD

LESSON PLANNING

Good teaching requires good planning. The planning of teaching is about imagining a future lesson sequence and is the basis for the action. The teaching always has a goal, and planning can be compared to the course of the ship. The planning provides the course for where the teaching should lead to. Without being aware of what the teacher will achieve with the lesson or sequence, it becomes chaotic and unmanageable (Nørregaard Rasmussen, 2008). All considerations can be broken down into four main categories. The purpose, the substance, the methods and the evaluation. The purpose describes the lessons aims and objectives, the substance describes the needed understandings and skills, the methods show which learning techniques the teacher intends to use, and the evaluation describes how after the lesson has been taught the teacher wants to assess what the students have learned. (Butt, 2008)

My lesson sequence was planned with those aspects in mind. First, I chose the aims and objectives, relating to the common goals of the danish curriculum.

English:***Oral communication Grades 5 - 7.***

The student can participate in shorter conversations and give short, coherent presentations of common situations and topics in English.

Culture and society Grades 5 - 7.

The student can participate in simple cultural encounters using different media.

History:***History use after 4th grade***

The student can talk about how people are affected by and use history.

Specifically, in the sequence, the goal is for the students to prepare a short oral presentation, which contains English verbs in the past tense. Further, the students shall be introduced to the concept of culture and deal with their individual background, in order to gain an understanding of differences and similarities. For the subject history the students must work on how their family's history affects their own everyday life in relation to stereotyping or special traditions. Based on the common goals of the subjects, I have

formulated specific sub-goals for the sequence. The students shall be able to prepare and present a short oral presentation that deals with their culture and understanding of it. In addition, in relation to the subject of history, they must work with their own / their family's historical background and how it affects their everyday life. ¹

ANALYSIS

OBSERVATIONS AND FEEDBACK

I have been in internship in the class for several weeks. This was different to my other research when there was little time to get to know the students. This way I could observe them for a longer period before teaching the unit.

After a conflict during the break, I told the students about the planned sequence which was to start the following week. They were very interested and said they are looking forward to working on the topic. I started the sequence with my own presentation as a model. In addition to being able to see what is expected as the final product, they gained insight into who I am and where I come from. Giving students some personal information promotes the relationship and strengthens their motivation. After the presentation, we gathered on the board all nationalities in the class. In a class of 27 students, there were 17 different national backgrounds. A large part had a German background, which led us to

¹ [detailed lesson plan – Appendix 1](#)

talk about the minorities. They had to interview their parents or grandparents and many of them came directly in the morning before class to tell what they found out. Some of the students, who were completely convinced that they were 100% Danish, found out in their interviews that they still had a German grandmother. Many students said they thought this was incredibly exciting.

Throughout the sequence, the students were very engaged and interested. Here I would like to mention a boy who was very interested in the subject.

Coincidentally, I met his mother one day before starting the course. She told me that he had said at home that we should work on the subject and that he was looking forward to it. In addition, she said that she and he had different perceptions of who / what they are. She felt like a Dane because she was born and raised in Denmark, but her parents were Turkish immigrants. The boy, on the other hand, felt like a Turk because his father was a Turk, in his eyes his mother was a Turk, too and they spoke Turkish at home, even though he was also born and raised in Denmark. This shows, how identity is built individually. After conducting interviews at home, he said that he did not know before why his grandparents had come to Denmark, and that he had now found out that they had come as workers because there was lack of good workers in Denmark at the time. He also said he had borrowed a book on the history of guest workers at the library because he wanted to know more about the subject. This example shows how students through such a sequence develop their cultural awareness and historical interest. The presentations that the students handed in were very different, however, it should be mentioned that students who do not usually hand in anything had handed in something. The class teacher was very impressed with all of them because one could see how motivated they were. Even the academically weak students had delivered really fine products mentioning that they were happy for the scaffolding.

At the end of the sequence, I did a focus group interview, asking the students what they thought about the sequence and what they have learned. They said they didn't know there were so many different backgrounds in class, and that nearly every student found something "not – danish" in their family history. That showed them how multicultural our society is. They thought most interesting were the descriptions of other religious traditions, because they said even though they are different there are some things everybody has in common.

REFLECTIONS

The whole sequence worked really well. By giving the students an example and differentiated templates, every student could hand something in. I have been very impressed by how motivated and eager they were. I was happy to see and hear that the students started to understand how we all are the same kind of different. During the presentations the students asked each other questions and were very interested in the differences and similarities. If I had had more time, I would have liked to do an extra lesson, doing a cooperative learning strategy called visit the wiseman. In this structure some students are designated the wiseman and others go visit them and learn in this case more on the special culture. Afterwards they can tell what they have learned and what they think about this culture. Unfortunately, I could not do this lesson, because we needed more time for the presentations than expected.

CONCLUSIONS

DIGI - talk

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APPENDICES

LESSON PLAN

This lesson sequence is planned for a 5th grade and shall relate to the textbook A piece of cake 5 – Ch.1 Me, you, us (Watson, Livingstone, & Chamon, 2012) . The sequence is planned to last six lessons à 45 minutes.

Date: 21.09.2020 – 02.10.2020	Class: 5 th grade	Time: 6 lessons à 45 minutes	
Title of the lesson: Who am I? – Me and my culture			
Learning objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The students can participate in cultural encounters - The students can do a short coherent oral presentation - The students can recognize historic influenced intercultural differences - The students develop understanding for differences/ (trivsel og fællesskab – sociale relationer i klassen) 			
Subject content: Me, You, Us – Differences and similarities / culture / own historical background / preparing a presentation / oral presentation (3-5 min per student/group)	Cross curricular links: Culture and history		
Resources: Textbook + Learners Guide A piece of cake 5 Own presentation	Preparations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Own model presentation - Worksheet - Differentiation 		
Differentiation: Different requirements for the presentation (length and content) Template with different difficulties	Action Points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Playful Learning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Much communication / social relations o Cooperative Learning - Oral presentation (historical recount) - Past tense 		
Learning activities /tasks	Time	Content	Teaching strategies / actions
1 st Lesson: Introduction – What is culture?			
Introduction	10 min	I will start with my own presentation as a model Afterwards I will ask the class what they think this sequence will be about	Teacher presentation
Round table	10 min	What is culture?	groups
brainstorm	5 min		Whole class

Next lesson	5 min	What will be coming next	Teacher presentation
2 nd Lesson: What is "MY" culture?			
Starting lesson / What is my culture?	10 min	Write down 5 to 6 sentences about your background	individual
Check-up +Find a partner	10 min	On the board – which cultures are there in class, are there any similarities, Who wants to work together	Whole class partners
Start looking for information	20 min	Find information on your culture	Partner / individual
Next lesson / Homework	5 min	Ending the lesson – homework (gather information), talk about what to expect	Teacher
3 rd Lesson: Differences and similarities			
Starting lesson	5 min		Teacher
Starting lesson Sorting information	15 min	Have a look on the gathered information, try to sort it	Individual partner
Find differences and similarities	20 min	CL – Besøg en vismand	Cooperative Learning
Ending lesson	5 min	What´s next.	Teacher
4 th Lesson: Prepare the presentation			
Start	5 min		Teacher
Preparing oral presentation	35 min	Worksheet with keywords (red thread) Lückentext Prepare a PowerPoint, a template or any other visual supplement for your presentation Homework: Finish your presentation	Individual/ group
Ending	5 min		Teacher
5 th Lesson: Presentations			
Start	5 min		Teacher
Oral presentations	35 min		
Ending	5 min		Teacher
6 th Lesson: Evaluation			
Start	5 min		Teacher
Last presentations	15 min		
Evaluation	20 min	Dialogic evaluation of the sequence in the whole class	Whole class
Ending	5 min		Teacher

STUDENTS PRODUCTS

Student A

Me and my
culture



About me

I am 10 years old

I was Born in America.

I live in a house with My
parents and 2 Little
Brothers

I Moved to Denmark
when I was only 4
months old.

Me and My parentes,
came to Denmark,
because my dad went to
school and work here

In My freetime I like to
Watch movies, my
favorite activity is to
swim

My family's background

My parents came from Afghanistan.

My parents were refugees

My 2 brothers were born in Denmark

My father have been in Denmark for over 20 years.

My mom have been in Denmark for 10 years.

From my father's side I have 1 aunt and 2 uncles.

From my moms side i have 6 aunts.

My father's parents live in Denmark.

My mom's family live in America.



Traditions

- Afghanistan have a beautiful tradition.
- We have traditional clothes, it is called Afghani clothes
- There is delicious food
- Afghanistan celebrate Nawruz
- We have a traditional dance, it is called Attan
- Afghanistan's people love to have guests and they serve them the best food

I feel

50% American

25% Danish

25% Afghan



Student B

FAMILY

In 1970 my grand parents came to Denmark because at this time Denmark needed many people to work.

My grand mother came to Denmark when she was 13 years old, and my grand dad come when he was 19 years old. My mother has 2 other sisters and 1 brother.

TRADITIONS

My family don't hold real christmas, we get presents and really good food.



PARENTS

- DAD

All from my dads side live in Turkey i have so many cousins from my dads side.



- MOM

The most of all my moms family live in Denmark



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