



Authenticity in Learning: Fostering Intercultural Literacy in the Language Curriculum

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Abstract

What does it mean to be interculturally literate? What are the competencies required to read sensitively a second culture, to interpret its symbols and negotiate its meanings? This session invites participants to reflect critically on what constitutes a culture and the role of language in defining identity. The audience will also engage in the examination and development of authentic materials to promote intercultural literacy among language learners.

Twenty-first century educators should strive to develop language learning resources that support learners in i) valuing diversity; ii) becoming culturally aware; iii) understanding the dynamics of difference; iv) developing knowledge of foreign cultures and, v) adapting to diversity. We, as learning facilitators, are responsible for creating opportunities that foster students' understanding of intercultural matters, while at the same time providing meaningful guidance to participate responsibly, creatively and passionately in society.

Session participants will apply cultural mapping and storytelling to devise materials that reinforce personalized and authentic language learning. Cultural mapping allows learners to understand how identity is constructed across cultures; what cultural variables influence behavior and shape relationships; what role community plays in defining culture; how language impacts the construction of the self. Maps tell stories. Cultural mapping encourages language learners to become cartographers, to visualize their life trajectory within the communities to which they belong.

Storytelling represents a fundamental means of communication across space and time, a tool to share personal and community narratives, and a pedagogical strategy that supports authentic learning. Storytelling honors cultural identities, and has the potential to enhance language learners' oral and writing proficiency by building individual competency and confidence in the student's abilities as a storyteller and creative writer.

Living in a multicultural society allows language educators to develop learning materials that connect students with diverse cultures reflected in their local communities, and to foster a sense of human interaction and continuity beyond traditional learning settings, both fundamental principles in the constitution of experience.

Keywords: Training interpreting and translation skills, language and cultural mediation, integrated learning, specific setting.

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