

## The Intercultural Teaching of a Foreign/Second Language

It has been clear for quite some time – both in linguistic theory and practical communication – that language contact brings about cultural contact, which is why understanding the latter is sometimes very important for maintaining efficient communication between members of different cultures. The simultaneous study of language and culture is, of course, not typical only of contemporary linguistics; the belief that cultural content is relevant for the study and acquisition of foreign languages has been present since Classical Antiquity. More recently, regarding foreign language didactics, researchers were emphasising the need to consider the cultural background of a language as early as the 1950s and 1960s. We can also easily observe that the simultaneous study of language and culture is an approach which continues to develop today, as if the intense contact between culture and language were increasing.

Therefore, the emphasis of this paper is the proposition that there are different levels of intercultural competence, which are the consequence not only of the varying intensity with which individuals acquire the cultural reality of a language, but primarily of the different approaches to the study and mastery of intercultural competence in the acquisition of a foreign/second language. Intercultural competence can therefore encompass a mere acquaintance with the cultural traditions and customs or habits of a linguistic community (the language and civilisation approach), it can go deeper towards a critical examination of the source and target cultures, which is also taken into consideration in the manner of communication with members of the target culture (the intercultural education approach), while the deepest level of intercultural awareness is evidenced by a familiarity with the differences in the linguistic devices of the source and foreign language which derive from cultural differences, i.e. the understanding of interculturally sensitive elements (the intercultural pragmatics approach).

**Key words:** language and civilisation, intercultural education, intercultural competence, intercultural pragmatics, foreign/second language didactics