

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Name: Mikołaj Buczak, MA

Title: “Kompetencja interkulturowa w nauczaniu i uczeniu się języka niderlandzkiego w polskiej praktyce akademickiej”

Translation: “Intercultural competence in the teaching and learning of Dutch in the Polish academic practice”

Abstract:

In today's globalized, multicultural and multilingual world, foreign language learners, in addition to linguistic competence, should also develop intercultural competence in order to be able to communicate with culturally different partners without obstacles and in a spirit of openness and respect (Council of Europe 2022). 96% of Polish graduates of Dutch Studies take up a job with the Dutch language (Van der Horst 2019: 19). They find employment in multinational corporations, the cultural sector or tourism, i.e. in environments that are culturally and linguistically diverse. Given the role that developing intercultural competence plays for students and graduates of Dutch Studies, intercultural teaching should be part of higher education programs.

In previous research, the degree and manner of developing intercultural competence in classes of Dutch not only in the framework of Polish Dutch Studies, but in the teaching of Dutch as such has largely been neglected. Previous work on the implementation of the principles of the intercultural approach in the Polish teaching practice has concerned other foreign languages (Aleksandrowicz-Pędich 2005a; Białek 2009; Chłopek 2009; Sobkowiak 2015). Therefore, this exploratory study sets out to investigate to what extent and how Polish students of Dutch Studies develop intercultural competence in courses of Dutch as a foreign language. For this purpose, a mixed methods convergent parallel design was used. The project was conducted at universities that offer Dutch Studies at both bachelor and master levels – the University of Wrocław, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań and John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin. The participants of the study were teachers of Dutch and students of Dutch Studies at the BA-level. First, qualitative data were collected by conducting an analysis of curriculum documentation related to the three Dutch Studies programs and an analysis of teaching materials for Dutch as a foreign language in terms of intercultural content. Next, quantitative data were collected by conducting the Polish adaptation of the Cultural Intelligence Scale (Barzykowski et al. 2021), which was completed by students in the BA-program at the three universities. The

next step was to collect qualitative data through observations of Dutch as a foreign language classes and interviews with teachers. The final part of the research data collection was a questionnaire on developing intercultural competence filled out by students, which provided both quantitative (closed-ended and semi-open questions) and qualitative (open-ended questions) data. The various research methods used provided a more complete picture on the development of intercultural competence in the context of Dutch Studies conducted at Polish universities.

The study showed that intercultural competence is represented in both the curriculum documentation and the teaching materials for Dutch as a foreign language to a moderate extent. Although the teachers' and the students' opinions about the relevance of intercultural teaching are definitely positive, its principles are implemented to a moderate degree in Dutch classes in the Polish academic practice. One reason for this is the teachers' inadequate training to develop students' intercultural competence. Their favorite techniques are additional in-class comments, which often lead to an exchange of thoughts and opinions, and asking explicit questions aimed at comparing their own culture with foreign ones. However, Polish students of Dutch Studies do not develop their intercultural competence proportionally to the development of their linguistic competence. The research data obtained have led to the formulation of didactic implications regarding the organization of training for university teachers, the issuance of a publication containing exercises to develop intercultural competence, and the need to complement the teaching with more engaging exercises.