

**Title:** Cultural and Inter-cultural Awareness and Their Role in Informing and Enriching Students' Communicative Competence

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When Hymes's communicative competence term was introduced in the 1970s to reflect a paradigmatic change of foreign language teaching from behaviourist to audio-lingual to more communicative approaches to teaching and learning, socio-cultural competence constituted one of its main parts, therein acknowledging the need to view language, and its learning, within a socio-cultural context (Fenner, 2008).

With the vast implications of new phenomena in the world, such as globalization and technological advancements that break down barriers and borders, the aims of foreign language teaching and learning have now expanded to include the promotion of international and cross-cultural tolerance and understanding. This has made it necessary for language classes to include culture learning as part of language learning. Such culture learning enables students to discover that there are multiple ways of viewing the world (Sellami, 2000).

The presentation will focus on the application of the above principles through the international partnership program called the "Connecting Classrooms" project which promotes students' cultural/intercultural awareness and their sense of pride in their cultural identity.

As a part of their Russian course, American students work closely with students from Russia (mainly via correspondence, e-mails and Skype conferences) on collaborative curriculum projects which enable learners to interact across geographical boundaries in order to enhance their understanding of each other's societies, languages, and cultures.

Fenner, A. "Cultural Awareness in the Foreign Language Classroom." *Encyclopedia of Language and Education*. 2nd ed. J. Cenoz and N. H. Hornberger, Eds. Springer-Verlag, 2008, vol. 6, pp. 273–285.

Sellami, A. "Teaching Towards Cultural Awareness and Intercultural Competence: How/Why Culture Means?" Annual Meeting of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages. Vancouver, BC, Canada, 14–18 March 2000.