

Introduction

When we communicate, we do not just exchange information. We are constantly transmitting signals about the kind of relationship we have to our counterpart. Moreover, our communication style – be it on the content or relationship level - is always culturally shaped as well. For instance, this pertains, to the loudness, gestures, proximity or distance to one's counterpart, physical contact with the conversation partner, the «ritual» elements at the beginning and end of the communication (question about one's well-being, etc.), the directness with which a concern can be raised, etc. These are all culturally-specific aspects. These will not be noticed within one's own culture, but in the context of intercultural communication, i. e. with members of another culture, they can lead to misinterpretations, insecurities and misunderstandings. Additionally, in a migration context, the communication may be affected by symmetries of power and stereotyped images. A conscious, difference-sensitive interaction with intercultural communication is therefore all the more important, which leads to sovereign capacity for action in multicultural and multilingual contexts.

The schools can and must make a significant contribution in developing intercultural communication competences. This applies to regular mainstream education with culturally heterogeneous classes, as well as to heritage language education with linguistically and culturally homogeneous groups. The present unit provides suggestions and examples for developing sensibility and competences in terms of intercultural communication processes in HLT. By means of different exercises, simulation and role plays, the students recognize communication processes and reflect on their own communication behavior, they get to know the pitfalls of intercultural communication and develop strategies for improving their own communicative behavior. Naturally, the resources and experiences of the students themselves play an important role, since they must navigate daily in and between two cultures in order to orient themselves and communicate.