

Introduction

The aim of teaching in general, and heritage language teaching in particular, is to integrate all children and adolescents with their own stories, characters, requirements and qualities into one common reality within the class and the school. Rules and social manners must be developed that lead to a fruitful collaboration with others. In doing so, classroom instruction and the teachers are also tasked to perceive, analyze and deal with emerging conflicts and to find possibilities for handling potential problems.

Conflicts inevitably occur in daily life and at school. This happens always when the interests of individuals or of groups are confronted by the interests of other individuals or groups. The reasons can be disagreements in working together, but also preconceptions and opinions that collide.

In contrast to the multicultural regular mainstream classes, HLT classes have the distinction of being linguistically homogeneous as well as in terms of culture and origin. However, HLT is also focused on presenting the multicultural community and society of the host country as a reality and a matter of course. Only in this way can emerging conflicts be resolved within the context of a reflected and rational approach. Though each student belongs to a certain ethnic group, s/he is most of all part of another, larger group. Accordingly, the solution of conflicts must not be oriented to the adherence to an ethnic group, but to the allegiance to the real multicultural community and society. In developing intercultural competence as discussed here, HLT can make an important contribution.

Among the instructors' responsibilities is to ensure that conflicts are heard as well as to promote the students' perceptual competence, reflection competence and their competence to act. The goal is to find strategies for working with conflict and find and evaluate resolutions which are useful for the cooperation and emotional health of all parties concerned. It goes without saying that such conflict resolutions must not create new stigmatizations, cement prejudices, and harden the fronts between the warring factions. It is not just a matter of a momentary harmony in class, these teaching sequences should rather be considered as a preparation for life in society. In light of the importance of this topic, a collaboration between HLT and regular classroom instructors would be especially welcome.

The following teaching suggestions show on various levels how students can work on their competencies in the partial areas of perception, reflection and capacity for action, as well as their social and conflict competencies. The overview at the end of this volume lists the focus of the pertinent partial competencies. The suggestions are broadly defined in terms of age and proficiency level and should be understood as recommendations, which can easily be modified. The role of the instructor as thoughtful and careful mediator, coach and guide of learning processes and behavioral processes is critically important in shaping and developing the students' aforementioned competencies, attitudes and behaviors.