MENDIVE

REVISTA DE EDUCACIÓN

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Culture, interculturality and education: referents of the teaching-learning of foreign cultures

La relación entre cultura, interculturalidad y educación: fundamento de la enseñanza de culturas extranjeras

A relaçăo entre cultura, interculturalidade e educaçăo: fundamentos do ensino de culturas estrangeiras

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ABSTRACT

The teaching of cultures is a general practice within the framework of teaching-learning foreign languages. Although the understanding of diversity is a necessity for any specialist in the globalized world, it has greater relevance for the training of professionals in foreign languages, essentially focused on interaction with other cultures. The development of the intercultural competence of such students must be based on the knowledge of the theoretical and methodological assumptions of three basic concepts, on whose treatment and interaction the success of the process depends: culture, interculturality and education. The present inquiry made use of the dialectical-materialist paradigm and the historical-logical, systemic-structural, analysis-synthesis, induction-deduction, abstraction-generalization, empirical level and documentary analysis methods. In order to provide a conceptual basis for the intended intercultural training, this article integrates the approach of the three aforementioned categories, it assumes as an objective: to analyze theoretical and methodological references related to culture, interculturality and education within the framework of teaching learning of foreign cultures. The recognition of essential features of culture, such as its inescapable links with interculturality, the heterogeneity of the human groups that comprise it, the variability that it shows throughout its development and the discursive, textual and interpretive character it possesses, are essential for its treatment from an intercultural perspective that necessarily leads to the comprehensive training of the professionals in question.

Keywords: culture; interculturality; education.

RESUMEN

La enseñanza de culturas resulta una práctica generalizada en el marco de la enseñanza aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras. Si bien la comprensión de la diversidad constituye una necesidad de cualquier especialista en el mundo globalizado, posee mayor relevancia para la formación de profesionales en lenguas extranjeras, esencialmente abocados a la interacción con otras culturas. El desarrollo de la competencia

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intercultural de tales estudiantes debe estar sustentado en el conocimiento de los presupuestos teóricos y metodológicos de tres conceptos básicos, de cuyo tratamiento e interacción depende el éxito del proceso: cultura, interculturalidad y educación. La presente indagación se sirvió del paradigma dialéctico-materialista y los métodos histórico-lógico, sistémico-estructural, análisis-síntesis, inducción-deducción, abstracción-generalización, del nivel empírico y el análisis documental. Con el fin de facilitar una base conceptual a la pretendida formación intercultural, este artículo integra el abordaje de las tres categorías mencionadas, asume como objetivo: analizar referentes teóricos y metodológicos relacionados con la cultura, la interculturalidad y la educación en el marco de la enseñanza aprendizaje de culturas extranjeras. El reconocimiento de rasgos esenciales de la cultura, como sus vínculos ineludibles con la interculturalidad, la heterogeneidad de los grupos humanos que la integran, la variabilidad que evidencia a lo largo de su desarrollo y el carácter discursivo, textual e interpretativo que posee, son imprescindibles para su tratamiento desde una perspectiva intercultural que necesariamente conduzca a la formación integral de los profesionales en cuestión.

Palabras clave: cultura; interculturalidad; educación.

RESUMO
O ensino de culturas é uma prática geral no âmbito do ensino-aprendizagem de línguas estrangeiras. Embora a compreensão da diversidade constitua uma necessidade para qualquer especialista no mundo globalizado, ela tem maior relevância para a formação de profissionais em línguas estrangeiras, essencialmente voltada para a interação com outras culturas. O desenvolvimento da competência intercultural desses alunos deve basear-se no conhecimento

dos pressupostos teóricos e metodológicos de três conceitos básicos, de cujo tratamento e interação depende o sucesso do processo: cultura, interculturalidade e educação. A presente investigação fez uso do paradigma dialético-materialista e dos métodos histórico-lógicos, sistêmico-estrutural, análise-síntese, indução-dedução, abstração-generalização, nível empírico e análise documental. Com o intuito de fornecer uma base conceptual para a formação intercultural pretendida, este artigo integra a abordagem das três categorias acima referidas, assume como objetivo: analisar referenciais teóricos e metodológicos relacionados com a cultura, a interculturalidade e a educação no quadro do ensino - Aprendizagem de culturas estrangeiras. O reconhecimento de características essenciais da cultura, como os vínculos incontornáveis com a interculturalidade, a heterogeneidade dos grupos humanos que a compõem, a variabilidade que mostra ao longo de seu desenvolvimento e o caráter discursivo, textual e interpretativo que possui, são essenciais para o seu tratamento. numa perspectiva intercultural que conduz necessariamente à formação integral dos profissionais em questão.

Palavras-chave: cultura; interculturalidade; educação.

INTRODUCTION

The postulated unity between language and culture has received greater attention in the field of teaching-learning of foreign languages, mainly since the 1980s, given its importance in the globalized world. The international scene, marked by phenomena such as economic exchanges, growing transnational mobility and the incidence of information and communication technologies, requires approaches and methods that allow effective

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communication between cultures. Numerous authors support the turn towards the recognition of the cultural dimension in the studies of foreign languages; in a summarized way, Corti (2016) expresses: "There is no language without culture and, therefore, without culture, there is no communication in a second or foreign language (…)" (p. 247). In the words of Paricio (2004): "Language is not only part of culture, but also the fundamental vehicle through which the cultural practices and beliefs of social groups are expressed. Hence, every communicative exchange carries a cultural dimension"(p. 4).

Intercultural competence has been defined as "(…) a comprehensive set of cognitive, affective and behavioral factors that influence the understanding of diversity and the interaction with it in a broad sense and that can be developed through education and/or education experience" (Borghetti, 2017, p.3). The enhancement of this competence, from study plans of various specialties, responds to the challenges imposed by the time and the need to achieve the comprehensive development of students. It gains greater emphasis when it comes to the training of professionals in foreign languages, requiring the ability to interact efficiently with cultures different from their own, which makes the person a mediator between the cultures in contact, from the recognition of their differences and similarities, the understanding of the elements that can cause misunderstandings in the dialogue between them and respect for cultural diversity (Byram and Fleming, 1998), (Torres, 2003), (Valdés, 2010), (Guilherme, 2000) (Cervantes Virtual Center, 1997-2019).

The study of the referent cultures of a linguistic system not only enriches the communicative practice in cognitive terms, but is essential in that it enables a deep understanding of it as an act of intercultural communication, necessarily

based on respect for otherness. The teaching-learning of foreign cultures is called to contribute to the satisfactory encounter with the peoples who practice the target language. For this, it is essential to transcend the informative nature of the treatment of cultural aspects and that students appropriate the knowledge, skills and attitudes that allow them [R1] "(...) to interpret, discover and negotiate sociocultural meanings", which are They are in permanent change and negotiation between cultures (Valdés, 2010, p. 30, p. 48).

The teaching-learning of cultures within the framework of training in foreign languages needs to be oriented from an intercultural conception, in response to the requirements of future professionals engaged in dialogue with other cultures, whose modes of action are based on comprehensive training that emphasizes an understanding of diversity. The integration of culture, interculturality and education provide a basis for the necessary projection of responses to limitations that hinder the achievement of intercultural competence: deficiencies in the development of meta cognition on the study of foreign cultures and in the construction of knowledge in around them, in the orientation towards reflection on the cultures in contact, in the development in the students of sensitive and empathetic attitudes towards cultural diversity, focusing of the analyzes, mainly in the dominant regional cultures, to the exclusion of others corresponding to ethnic, social, religious, professional groups ... existing in the same national or regional community.

Studies related to the cultural dimension and interculturality in the context of teaching-learning foreign languages has gained increasing interest, both at the international and national levels. Among the results achieved in the national context, there are several corresponding to the field of linguodidactics, promoted

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by the Faculty of Foreign Languages of the University of Havana. In this case, there are the doctoral theses of Torres (2003) and Valdés (2010), focused on the development of intercultural communicative competence in undergraduate students, while Morales (2016) addresses interculturality in the framework of postgraduate improvement of languages for professional purposes.

Also from linguo-didactics and didactics, doctoral studies have been projected on the multicultural class of foreign language (Diviñó, 2016), to which are added results from master's thesis obtained from the Faculty of Spanish for Non-Spanish Speakers of the University of Havana (Xu Huan, 2018) (Zhou Kai, 2019).

Several authors and instances of the international context provide theoretical approaches on culture and interculturality in a general sense, clarify its conceptualization, evolution and concretion in the social, educational field and its implementation from public policies (Unesco, 1999), (King , 2006), (Hidalgo, 2005), (Salazar, 2009), (Guanche, 2019), (González, 2017). Others such as Paricio (2004, 2014), Castro (2003), Corti (2016), Zehner (2014) and Forgas (2007) address edges of such concepts within language teaching-learning: the conception and selection of cultural content and its teaching methods and the demands imposed by the teaching-learning of interculturality. However, deepening the theoretical definition of culture and interculturality, in a systematization aimed at clarifying the intrinsic relationship between the two, would contribute to the understanding of their implications in the teaching-learning of foreign cultures and the training of professionals in this specialty. The present investigation aims to: analyze theoretical and methodological references related to culture, interculturality and education in the framework of teaching-learning of

foreign cultures, as a necessary basis for the development of intercultural competence.

The research started from the dialectical-materialist paradigm, which made it possible to approach the categories studied as processes in constant development and change, governed by dialectical relationships. The historical-logical method allowed to analyze the evolution of theoretical and methodological references related to such categories, while the systemic-structural one facilitated the establishment of the links between them and their conception in the teaching-learning process of foreign cultures. Analysis-synthesis, induction-deduction and abstraction-generalization were essential in the bibliographic review and the systematization carried out. From the empirical level, the documentary analysis made possible the critical exploration of the subject.

DEVELOPING

Notions around the concept of culture

There are many concepts of culture that have been formulated. Most of its authors coincide in including under this name the broadest set of features and expressions of a social group (Tylor, 1871), (Valdés, 1998), (Torres, 2003), (Salazar, 2009), (Hidalgo, 2005), (King, 2006). As it is an integral dimension, referring to all the ways of doing, thinking, feeling and being human, this research adopts the concept offered in the Universal Declaration of Unesco on Cultural Diversity (2001), famous for its comprehensive formulation: (...) culture should be considered as the set of distinctive spiritual and material, intellectual and affective features that characterize a society or a social group and that encompasses, in addition to the

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arts and letters, the ways of life, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs (p. 1).

This concept of culture is part of the ethnographic or anthropological approach, explained by Valdés (2019) in the following way: (…) culture, in an ethnographic sense, arose as an urgent need of the human being to survive in the natural environment in which it settled and it developed in the process of man's adaptation to the environment and in his attempt to extract from it the necessary goods to satisfy his needs (pp. 1 - 2).

This perspective refers to culture as "(…) a product of human society (…)", which includes the material sphere, the production of goods and instruments, and the spiritual, for example, the emergence of customs and traditions. It differs from the concept of culture with a sociocultural approach, "(…) related to the level of education, knowledge, acquired by a person" (Valdés, 2019, p. 2).

When Unesco conceives culture as "the ways of living together", it emphasizes the integrating values of groups, communities and societies distinguished not only by their unity, but also by their variations. To the recognition of the lack of homogeneity as an essential feature of culture, taking into account the internal cultural diversity of each community, according to different regions, social classes, ethnic, religious, professional groups, among others, is added the existence of a multicultural world society increasingly interconnected and, therefore, necessarily doomed to interculturality.

Given the mutability of the human groups that make it up and the relationships they establish with each other,

> Unesco considers culture and cultures as dynamic and interactive realities and avoids the so-called "culturist" vision that understands culture "as a homogeneous, integral and coherent unit". Cultures can no longer be examined "as if they were islands in an archipelago. The contemporary globalization of economic, political and social life has given rise to an even greater cultural penetration and overlap, to the coexistence in a certain social space of diverse cultural traditions…" (Unesco, 1999, p. 1).

In this reality of multiple cultural universes in interaction, culture and interculturality, are conceptually presupposed.

Hidalgo says (2005):

> (…) We can establish that the definition of culture will be linked to the way of determining the budget of interculturality, since the existence of different cultures is in fact taking place, as well as the presence of different social groups, that is, On one side there is culture as a specific character of the human race and common to all men and on the other side, there are cultures as their own and variable characteristics of each human group itself (p. 3).

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Notions around the concept of interculturality

The definitions of interculturality formulated are also varied, elaborated in relation to the area to which they respond and with emphasis on some of the edges that the concept encompasses, which places attention on the intense interaction between cultures (King, 2006), (Agüero and Urquiza, 2016).

Giménez (2000) expresses the comprehensive nature of such interaction, which places the participating subjects on an equal footing, in a context always marked by multilingual, multiethnic, multicultural diversity, among many other possible ones: "interculturality is a relationship of harmony between cultures; in other words, a relationship of positive exchange and social coexistence between culturally differentiated actors" (in Salazar, 2009, p. 18). This author also highlights the importance of shared cultural aspects as enhancers of unity in the difference: It takes into account not only the differences between people and groups, but also the convergences between them, the links that unite the acceptance of human rights, shared values, already legitimized and accepted norms of coexistence, common interests in local development, national identity in some cases and other points in common (Giménez, 2000 -en Salazar, 2009, p. 18).

On the other hand, Brown (1980) highlights interculturality, the reaffirmation of one's own identity in the encounter with the different other. Describes the term as a "set of situations or circumstances linked to intercultural communication, in which the individual, as a result of his experiences, becomes aware of his own development, learning and comes to understand his own identity in significant terms for him. "(In Morales, 2016, p. 24). In this sense, it is worth noting that identities in contact are not only strengthened by self-

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recognition, they also enrich each other in the exchange between them. This is what Hidalgo (2005) refers to, when analyzing the etymology of the words multiculturalism and interculturality: "However, the prefix "inter" goes further, referring to the relationship and exchange and, therefore, to the mutual enrichment between the different cultures"(p. 6).

In its definition, Guanche (2019) summarizes the aforementioned aspects, while assuming the adoption of a comprehensive concept of culture, which is not limited to the notion of nation and ethnicity, essential for the understanding and application of interculturality:

An operative definition of the term denotes a type of intentional relationship that is established between subjects of different cultures, advocates dialogue and encounter based on mutual respect and recognition of their respective differences, values and ways of life. It is not intended to merge the identities of related cultures, but to reinforce and enrich them creatively and in solidarity. The concept also encompasses the relationships between people belonging to different ethnic, social, professional, gender groups, among others, within the same national or regional community (p. 78).

Based on this criterion, interculturality can occur naturally, between people who share the same linguistic system. However, the current social context requires an educational training, promoted from the pedagogical intention that prepares man to satisfactorily solve the various situations of interaction with diversity that characterize everyday reality.

Conception of education for the teaching-learning of culture and interculturality

The constant cultural interaction that the daily practices of various kinds entail requires an intercultural formation that many people's lack, which constitutes a need to attend to and a challenge for educational systems at a global level. Torres (2003) draws attention to this problem, taken to the level of internationalization: The challenge of globalization gives new validity and meaning to interculturality due to the great disparity that is occurring between the accelerated development of regional and global interconnections in the economy, information and technology, given the lack of preparation of many peoples to assume the changes that such integration entails at the cultural level (p. 20).

The essential role of education in this sense is recognized in documents of great importance and international scope. The educational imperative of training the human being to integrate into the construction of social well-being has implied the recognition of interculturality by the International Commission on education for the 21st century of UNESCO, among the four basic pillars of education (Delors, nineteen ninety six). In addition to learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, it includes learning to live together, whose conceptualization includes the development of understanding of the other, preparation to deal with conflicts and respect for the values of pluralism, mutual understanding and the peace.

Similarly, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in its article 26 states: Education will have as its objective the full development of the human personality and the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; It will promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and all ethnic or religious groups and will promote the development of United Nations activities for the maintenance of peace (UN, 1948, p. 28).

The training of professionals in foreign languages plays a fundamental role in the face of such challenges. They are called to build bridges of communication that extend beyond the instrumental use of leagues, bridges between cultures. As part of this training process, the teaching-learning of interculturality implies the integration of the cognitive-instrumental aspect to the affective-evaluative aspect. The intercultural dimension in the context of language teaching-learning conditioned the transformation of approaches and the function of the components of this process, marked by the displacement of the focus of attention from knowledge, without forgetting their role, to training of skills, attitudes, and awareness of the interaction process and clarification of values. Such perspective is inextricably linked to the notion of education that configures the integral formation of students.

This conception of education, recognized as a general category or in a broad sense, has developed since the 19th century, in the different stages of Cuban pedagogical thought. It integrates the meaning of education in a narrow sense, referring exclusively to the affective sphere: associated with feelings, the moral development of man, the formation of values, convictions, ideals, interests and human attitudes and instruction, identified with the transmission and assimilation of scientific knowledge, information, customs, experiences, habits, skills, procedures, capacities, actions, among other aspects inherent to the cognitive activity that take place within the framework of the educational institution (Calzado, 2007), (Sanz and González, 2016), (Varona, 1992), (Collective of authors of the ICCP, 1984), (Martínez,

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2021). Many authors have developed the concept of education in a broad sense (Labarrere and Valdivia, 1988), (Álvarez, 1998, 1999), (López et al., 2002), (Chávez, Suárez and Permuy, 2003), (Calzado, 2007). Education as a general phenomenon, around which great consensus has been achieved, has an integral character and influences all aspects of the human formation process. It consists of the transmission of the culture accumulated by humanity and its assimilation and harmonious integration to behavior as a way for individual and social transformation.

This is how Calzado (2007) defines it:

> Education as a *general and eternal category* reflects a phenomenon made up of two sides, one the act of transmission of the culture accumulated by humanity and the other, as the domain of said culture and its practical and creative use in terms of social-individual progress. .

> (…) Education is a general phenomenon, whose purpose is to train man in the process of instruction and education so that he can live and transform the world for his own benefit (p. 26).

Thus, education as a general category and the teaching-learning process as a formative process "(…) whose only purpose is the integral development of the personality of the students" (González, Recarey and Addine, 2007, p. 41) are concatenated necessarily. The teaching-learning process in general constitutes in itself a process of formation of the student's personality, from which the relationship between the cognitive (system of knowledge, habits and skills, that is, the instructive) and the affective (the educational) (González, 2009, p. 13) is formed.

Within the framework of the training of professionals in foreign languages, culture, interculturality and education, they are called to interconnect. The teaching-learning of foreign cultures must be oriented to the intercultural and comprehensive training of such specialists. It is therefore essential to elucidate the characterizing features of culture based on the design of such a process.

Features of culture to take into account, from an intercultural perspective of teaching-learning of foreign cultures

In relation to its aforementioned lack of homogeneity, in the study of the foreign culture or target culture, the mutability that distinguishes it in relation to the human groups that make it up must be taken into account. As previously expressed, in each community there are different cultures according to social classes, regions, ethnic groups, religions, among other group distinctions. As Benítez (2019) expressed:

> "To begin with, there is no pure cultural form, not even religious ones. Culture is a discourse, a language, and as such it has no beginning or end and is always in transformation as it constantly seeks a way to mean what it does not manage to mean. It is true that, when compared with other important discourses, the political, the economic, the social, the cultural discourse is the one that most resists change. Its intrinsic desire, it can be said, is for

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conservation, since it is linked to the ancestral desire of human groups to differentiate them as much as possible from each other. Hence, we can speak in more or less regional, national, sub continental, and even continental ways. But this in no way denies the heterogeneity of such forms. A syncretism artifact is not a synthesis, but a signifier made of differences (pp. 55-56)".

In order to understand a regional culture, it is necessary to recognize both the dominant culture and the so-called "subcultures" or "minorities" that converge in a society, whose relationships may be marked by harmonious or conflictual coexistence. When analyzing the causes of this phenomenon, Salazar (2009) points out the homogeneity pursued by most modern nation-states:

> With the idea of a mono-ethnic, culturally homogeneous nation, it seeks to sustain the vision of "nationality" that, with the implementation, the dominant cultural ethnic group manages to impose its vision of the world, the model of society, and the rules of the game in social, political and cultural relations. This set of conditions turns the other peoples and cultures existing in the country into "minorities", a situation that creates tensions and, sometimes, social conflicts (p. 16).

Due to the diffusion and prevalence of its expressions and the level of influence it exerts on others, the study of the

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dominant culture is important and central, but sticking exclusively to it would lead to a distorted image of foreign culture. Familiarization with the cultural groups displaced by the ongoing hegemony, the relationships between them and with the dominant culture should not be underestimated. Valuing the coexistence of various cultural universes that are interconnected and continually penetrate conditions the perception of an inhomogeneous cultural map, which must be thought from its own internal diversity. In Torres's (2003) criterion: "The dominant culture will serve as a frame of reference, around which the remaining cultures that also deserve study are inserted" (p. 29).

Another of the characteristics to attend to is the dynamic character of the culture, in reference to its permanent construction. Fernando Ortiz (1940) already said it: "All culture is dynamic" and emphasized the inevitability of understanding it "(…) as a vital concept of constant fluency, not as a synthetic reality already formed and known (…)" (p. 47). Human groups adapt to new circumstances, evolve over time, and modify their values and ways of life during the development of their existence, as they interact with other groups. No culture is a hermetically sealed entity. All cultures are influenced by and in turn influence other cultures. They are not immutable or static either, but are in a state of continuous flux, simultaneously driven by internal and external forces (Salazar, 2009, p. 15).

Then, culture must be conceived from its internal heterogeneity and the variable character of its development over time. Ignoring these traits would inevitably lead to the mistaken homogenization and adoption of stereotypes, by granting a single and static identity to the other, which disables the speaker in an intercultural situation to understand otherness and

solve problems that interfere with communication.

Another feature of culture, essential from the perspective of the intercultural training of professionals in foreign languages, is its discursive, textual and interpretive character already enunciated in the words of Benítez (2019). This is how Corti (2016) points out: "(…) culture is a discursive product, the result of interpretation" (p. 251) and refers to some contributing elements in this sense: culture does not constitute an empirical reality; it appears in processes of communication in various textual forms.

The knowledge and understanding of the reference culture of a language is accessed through an interpretive process, which is carried out in the reality of the classroom. This has been described as third place or third culture, according to authors such as Homi Bhabha and Kramsch (Corti, 2016, p. 249) -, as it constitutes the area in which the mediation between own or base culture and culture is built goal. Unlike positions held by bodies such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, (…) it is not […] a process with two clear and closed perspectives, the base culture and the target culture, but rather the culture The goal appears in a communication that is certainly determined, more by the interpretation conditions that govern the classroom than by what is characterized as a target culture (Corti, 2016, p. 250).

The image of foreign culture is built, then, on the criteria from which teachers and educational institutions establish this cultural context (the selection of cultural contents and texts through which the ways of approaching them are worked on, the relationship and hierarchy established between various reference cultures of the same language). Culture does not pre-exist, its image is shaped by a discursive and textual construction in which a certain perspective

underlies. In the context of training professionals in foreign languages, it is essential to gain awareness about the false and, many times alleged, neutrality of access to a culture, as well as the need to relatives the form that culture takes at a discursive level, the which could be to some extent generalized, but it is not absolute (Corti, 2016).

CONCLUSIONS

In the current international context, marked by globalization, in which nations require dialogue with other cultures, due to needs such as increased tourism, commercial expansion and, above all, better coexistence and understanding in the world, it becomes relevant the training of professionals in foreign languages, capable of successfully assuming such challenges. In this area, studies related to the development of the intercultural competence of such specialists are significant, in order to counteract aspects that cause interference in intercultural communication and promote recognition and respect for cultural diversity.

Analyzing theoretical and methodological references related to culture, interculturality and education constitute the necessary basis of a teaching-learning process of foreign cultures that fosters intercultural competence. The treatment that is given to the interaction between the categories culture, interculturality and education largely depends on the success of the process.

The teaching-learning of foreign cultures, from an intercultural perspective that leads to the comprehensive training of professionals in foreign languages, implies attention to the inescapable links between culture and interculturality, to the heterogeneity of the human groups that make up a given culture, to the variability that this evidence throughout

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its development and its discursive, textual and interpretive character, within an educational conception in a broad sense that integrates the cognitive and affective aspect.

It is a necessary subject for many teaching centers that are dedicated to the training of specialists in this area. In addition, its purposes are extended to vast horizons. Education in general and, within it, higher education, is called to address the problem of diversity, given the conflicts and debates that it generates in today's societies. They have the essential and inescapable mission of, as expressed by Salazar (2009), teaching the diversity of the human species, teaching how to interact with it and contribute to coexistence from the projection of the similarities and interdependencies between all human beings, it is a challenge and a path that still has a long way to go.

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