



Why if you speak Polish you cannot get anything for love nor money? Teaching expressing and describing emotions in foreign languages

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There is a crucial difference between teaching foreigners the language which they could use in everyday-life communicative situations and that which involves usage of “language of emotion”. Asking for a newspaper in a local shop or buying tickets at the central station etc. are the situations which engage vocabulary and structures easily translated from one language into another. Once the foreign language is acquired, it becomes particularly difficult to learn and teach how to describe or express emotions.

In recent times the theory of basic emotions has again gained in popularity. According to Paul Ekman, there is a set of basic universal human emotions (e.g. anger, joy, disgust, surprise, sadness) and facial expressions related to them which are not culturally determined and which are recognized in every corner of the world. On the contrary, Anna Wierzbicka claims that emotions “are *socially constructed* and have a cultural dimension”. Every name of emotion depends on language and cultural differences and there is no universal concept of emotion lexicalized in every language in the world.

We will discuss the conclusions of these psychological and semantic theories of emotions for teaching a foreign language. We will also present ideas for exercises which could be used in foreign language classes to acquaint students with a cultural and semantic field of the chosen emotions (on the example of concepts “miłość” and “kochac”).

References:

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