WORKSHOP:
Developing Intercultural Communicative Competence

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One of the most recent concerns of foreign language (FL) education is the intercultural communicative competence (henceforth ICC) which has been recognised as its major objective. Drawing on the research form (inter)cultural studies (e.g. Weaver 1993) and applied linguistics (e.g. van Ek 1986) formal documents motivating foreign language teaching assign paramount importance to developing ICC (e.g. CEFR 2001). Different approaches to developing ICC are recommended and studied empirically. For example, Bennett (1993) concentrates on developing intercultural sensitivity and has designed a six-stage-scale in the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) which identifies the underlying individual cognitive orientations used to cope with cultural differences. DMIS has attracted attention of personnel working in diplomacy or on missions (e.g. Sheffield 2007). Byram (1997) views ICC as a complex system which evolves as a result of various experiences of the non-native speaker, such as formal instruction, fieldwork which optionally may be assisted by teaching, or from independent learning. Byram's model is popular among FL teachers and its components are recognised as necessary general competences which should accompany communicative competence (see e.g. CEFR 2001: 101ff).

Researchers in FL education have identified some problems that need to be solved before foreign language learners can be expected to have their ICC developed to the extent that would minimise a possibility of cross-cultural misunderstanding. The problems relate to all the components of the FL education system, i.e. teachers' competence (e.g. Sercu et al. 2005), representation of cultural components in teaching materials (e.g. Krawiec 2010), tools for assessing ICC (Owczarek 2010), attitudes of learners and of educational institutions (e.g. Chłopek 2009).

In the presentation I will focus on the growing awareness of the importance of social factors in language competence drawing on van Ek's concept of communicative ability which motivated CLT. The limitations of the approach will be pointed out leading to the arguments for developing ICC. The developmental nature of ICC will be discussed following Binnet's model, and its complex nature will be depicted on Byram's educational model. Finally, an education pack stimulating ICC development designed by a team of international experts will be introduced and an example of an activity will be given.

Prospective participants are welcome to get engaged in the activity targeting ICC development.

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