Chapter 16
Fostering Intercultural Competence and Neighbourliness in Multicultural Online Classrooms:
Tools, Strategies, and Implications for 21st Century Education

Muhammet Demirbilek

Faculty of Education, Suleyman Demirel University, Turkey

ABSTRACT

This chapter is to introduce online tools that enable the advancement of intercultural competence and neighbourness in multicultural classrooms. The tools presented are specifically designed for online environments, such as remote lectures and online workshops. A neighbourness learning tool refers to a method or approach to promote and develop the learner's neighbourness competences. The intended target group for the tools are primarily students. The intended users of the toolkit are teachers and administrators. The motivation of this chapter was to raise awareness about the importance of intercultural and neighbourness skills in a global world and to promote neighbourliness in diverse educational institutions. Living and learning together with people from all around the world represents an urgent need.

INTRODUCTION

The globalization of education, linked to the increased freedom of students' and teachers' movement, plays here an important role. Indeed, it co-causes the increase of students' national and cultural diversity, consequently raising the need to face challenges linked to these differences (e.g., with respect to dialogue, trust, effective collaboration) (Rattan & Ambady, 2013). Educational institutions are therefore called to design and adopt tools that help academics and administrative staff to promote the development of digital

neighbourness competences, for instance through innovative intercultural pedagogy practices and tools accompanied by adequate institution's internationalization strategies and practices.

Neighbourness refers indeed to the ability of living and learning together, and represents today an urgent need, due to the increase of human mobility on one hand, and of the technological hyper connectivity on the other hand (Lögdlund & de Kaminski, 2011). Neighbourness is an important set of competences in present disruptive, fluid and complex times, where citizens (and particularly younger generations) increasingly look at global horizons, while being at risk of losing interest for local roots and sense of belonging.

Neighbourness is rarely either understood by students or educators as a means of developing a conducive learning environment. International students often face problems when encountering a new learning environment abroad (e.g., slow pace of adaptation to the pedagogical approach; cultural shock and inability to effectively adapt to cultural differences, teaching and learning styles differences). Sometimes, cultural barriers inhibit the interaction with local students, causing monocultural exclusive interactions. In most cases, local educators are not equipped on how to handle these challenges, and thus are not able to help students to overcome cultural barriers. Therefore, neighbourness—— being empathetic, respecting others, offering help if needed, showing curiosity and learning from others and cooperating——not necessarily occurs or becomes visible in most of university contexts, if not appropriately guided as a learning process (Lögdlund & de Kaminski, 2011). This is an important gap to notice and to solve, because university graduates are then becoming leaders in societies, industries and nations; yet, many of them might be deprived of neighbourness and dialogue competences, having a negative impact on their personal, business and community experiences (Lögdlund & de Kaminski, 2011).

Neighbourness generally seems to not be understood by higher education students or educators as a means of developing a conducive learning environment (Demirbilek, et al., 2021). Often international students have problems in novel learning environments abroad. These problems include such as slower paces of adaptation to the pedagogical approaches, cultural shocks, and inabilities to effectively adapt to cultural, and teaching/learning style differences. Cultural barriers often inhibit interaction with local students, causing mono-cultural exclusive interactions (Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004; Searle & Ward, 1990). Too often local academics seem to not be equipped to handle such problems, and thus students don't receive the support they need.

Educators in higher education institutions increasingly use online solutions. This is largely due to advancements in information technology. Global circumstances, including the Covid-19 pandemic that emerged in the spring of 2020, have enforced the use of remote learning solutions. While online solutions have evolved to a stage in which they offer a wide variety of options for online teaching and learning, the online environment still differs from the traditional setting where teachers and students would physically meet. Nevertheless, it seems likely that the future of higher education institutions teaching lies in the increasing use of online possibilities. Therefore, the objective of advancing intercultural competence and neighbourness in multicultural classrooms should consider this likely evolution (Barrett, 2018; Borghetti, 2017).

In classrooms, there generally are two main types of interactions: teacher-student interactions and student-student interactions. In multicultural classrooms, these interactions will include the mixing of individuals with different cultural backgrounds. The concept of cultural background may be seen to incorporate a myriad of aspects, such as language, beliefs, stereotypes, rules and more, characterizing the members of a society and differentiating it from other societies (Kafka, 2021). For instance, there

19 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/fostering-intercultural-competence-and-neighbourliness-in-multicultural-online-classrooms/334326

Related Content

The Critical Success Factors in Higher Education: Ranking Systems and Industrial Context
Tuncer Asunakutluand Kemal Yuce Kutucuoglu (2021). *University-Industry Collaboration Strategies in the Digital Era (pp. 84-108).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/the-critical-success-factors-in-higher-education/271526

Who Is in Charge Here?: Putting Systems in Place to Enhance the Performance of Paraprofessionals
Harriet Fayne (2023). *Cases on Leadership Dilemmas in Special Education (pp. 180-189).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/who-is-in-charge-here/331561

Core Thinkers of Intellectual Emancipation: Integrity Before Education
 (2024). *History and Educational Philosophy for Social Justice and Human Rights (pp. 69-88).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/core-thinkers-of-intellectual-emancipation/342629

An Untapped Resource: Embedded School Personnel in University-Based Teacher Preparation Programs as a High-Impact Practice
Traci Almeidaand Maureen P. Hall (2021). *Empowering Formal and Informal Leadership While Maintaining Teacher Identity (pp. 206-226).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/an-untapped-resource/276580

Picturing the Future by Framing the Past: Approaches to Contemporary CPD
Catherine Hayes (2024). *Revitalizing the Learning Ecosystem for Modern Students (pp. 1-22).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/picturing-the-future-by-framing-the-past/342051