USING GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS IN INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION

Liliana Ciascai

Abstract: Graphic organizers are instruments of representation, illustration and modeling of information. In the educational practice they are used for building, and systematization of knowledge. Graphic organizers are instruments that addressed mostly visual learning style, but their use is beneficial to all learners. In this paper we illustrate the use of graphic organizers in the intercultural education. We present a set of graphic organizers used in the scientific literature and then we describe teaching activities that are based on the use of graphic organizers.

Key words: graphic organizers, visual learning style, intercultural education

1. What are graphic organizers?

Graphic organizers are representations, pictures or models used for processing visual information. They facilitate understanding of knowledge when there is a large amount of information to work with, in a given limited time. In essence, the functions of graphic organizers in the learning process are:

- Clarifying knowledge and reasoning. The function of graphic organizers is to explain the relations between concepts. There are graphic organizers that organize information into categories, facilitating in this way the definition of different concepts. Also, the visual organization of knowledge represents an efficient support for the process of thinking.

- Strengthening the learning process. Filling in a graphic organizer is a complex process which requires taking the decision on which graphic organizer is the most suitable for the given type of knowledge and cognitive processes. This decision involves the selection of the necessary knowledge and also the evaluation of the approach and of the intermediary and final results. This type of work with knowledge contributes to the increase of learning comprehension and critical thinking in education.

- Integrationing the new knowledge in the prior knowledge system. This association of the new knowledge with the previous knowledge leads to a superior learning process.

- Identifying the conceptual errors (and missconceptions). Filling in a graphic organizer shows the teacher and the student the conceptual and perceptual errors. Therefore, both teacher and student can proceed with the required revisions.

Graphic organizers can have various forms, from representations of objects (mushroom, tree, sun etc.) to hierarchical and cyclical structures. Although their use in learning activities is preferred by people who have a visual style of learning, graphic organizers are extremely useful to different learners.

2. What is Intercultural education ?

Intercultural education is the education based on values like tolerance, empathy, respect, solidarity and mutual assistance. The aims of intercultural education if to form individuals with knowledge in psycho-social mechanisms and socio-political factors, individuals able to appreciate different cultures, to value a multicultural society and to integrate and evolve in contact with these cultures, individuals capable of sustained interactions in order for diversity to enrich the cultural, social and economic life (Kerzil & Vinsonneau, 2004, p. 109; *Comité sur l'école québécoise et les communautés culturelles,* 1985, Ouellet, 1991, p. 29-30).

Intercultural education involves four *fundamental dimensions*. The *personal* dimension *(the psycho-behavioral* profile) aims to overcome personal prejudices and stereotypes. The *cognitive* dimension aims to form the knowledge about the influence of historical, geographical, anthropological and sociological assumptions on the creation of intercultural phenomena. The *methodological* dimension concerns the development and implementation of the methods and processes of preservation and cultivation of differences. The *relational* dimension concerns the openness and sociability between fellow workers *(Clanet, 1990, p.13)*.

Rus (2003) considers that the aims of intercultural education can be organized at four levels:

(1)   The level of acquiring knowledge of culture in general and knowledge of the impact of culture (one's own culture and other cultures) on the behavior of individuals and groups;

(2)   The level of developing skills related to life in the intercultural/multicultural society (the awareness of one's cultural determinants, stereotypes and prejudices and identification of these in others);

(3)   The level of constructing attitudes such as respect for cultural diversity, for one's own cultural identity, for the culture of other people and the denial of discrimination and intolerance;

(4)   The level of stimulating the participation and action for promoting the principles of intercultural societies and for fighting against discrimination and intolerance.

Intercultural education *is beneficial* for all students, regardless of culture or group to which they belong. Teaching the students to value their own culture or ethnicity, we help them developing their self esteem and personal identity. But if we teach them how to properly value other cultures or ethnic groups we help them developing naturally in the society. As a result, the benefits of intercultural education, according to NCCA, are:

-   the promotion of curiosity about cultural and social differences;

-   the development of imagination through the normalization of differences;

-   the development of critical thinking by encouraging people to investigate their own intercultural practices and, in this way, to modify the perspective of their own culture and practices;

-   the development of sensitivity towards intercultural issues;

-   the prevention of rasism;

In addition, Ciolan (2000, p. 28) considers that the intercultural approach of the learning process:

-   makes learning more interesting and more relevant for the everyday lives of children;

-   gives students the opportunity to share information about their own identity;

-   offers students a mirror through which to view themselves and a window through which to view the others;

-   gives students lens through which to view the history and society;

-   encourages respect and cooperation, supports community and social cohesion.

The outcomes of intercultural education (NCCA, p. 16; Gobell & al., 2007) are various:

-   understanding at the intercultural and international level;

-   awareness, acceptance, recognition and respect of the cultural differences;

-   awareness of one's own culture;

-   interest in other cultures;

-   denial of racism and xenophobia;

-   human rights and equal citizenship;

-   equal opportunities for education;

- equal access to knowledge and training;

- interest in general issues of intercultural education etc.

The conditions for a successful achievement in intercultural education, as identified by Batelaarn (Ciolan, 2000, p. 28), are:

- creating balance between the various goals of education (on qualifications, cultural, social and personal development);

- providing opportunities for communication and cooperation in heterogeneous groups;

- providing equal opportunities to participate in classroom interactions: creating the necessary conditions for the participation of all students in the educational process and focusing attention on knowledge and skills of each child (through an individual approach);

- reflecting in the school curriculum the characteristics of the multicultural society (not a curriculum oriented towards ethnocentrism but a curriculum oriented towards globalization);

- presenting information from different perspectives in order to stimulate critical thinking and awareness of diversity.

The aims of intercultural education extends beyond the peaceful coexistence of cultures towards a sustainable way of living together with others in the multicultural society, towards understanding, respect and dialogue between different cultural groups and towards structuring the individual personality in pluralistic terms.

3. Meaningful graphic organizers in intercultural education

Graphic organizers are useful particularly for the communication of knowledge in the intercultural education. As a result, the literature of intercultural education is rich in graphic organizers. In this paper we present a set of graphic organizers that are often mentioned in the scientific literature.

In order to explain the concept of "culture", the psychologist Geert Hofstede has introduced in 1991 a model of culture which can be seen as an onion whose outer layers can be removed one by one to allow the access to the hidden "depth" (Figure 1). This model has been used and developed further by other researchers (Trompenaars 1993, p. 6; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997 - in Rakotomena, 2005, p. 672; Hofstede, 2003, p. 11, 2005, p. 7).

Another category of models used in the literature for illustrating the concept of "culture" is represented by the iceberg metaphor. This models aims to illustrate the components of culture and especially to emphasize the fact that the biggest part of the culture is invisible. Like the onion models, iceberg models allow a stratified representation. For example, Rocher (1969, *www.intercultures.gc.ca)* suggests a model of culture with three levels: the surface culture, the culture below the water line and the deep culture (Figure 2).
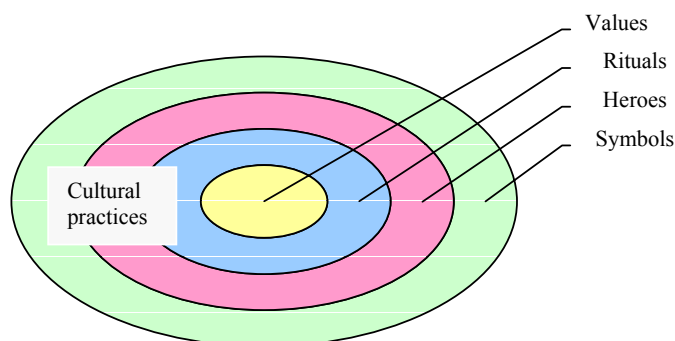

Figure 1. *The model of "onion" that illustrates how to show culture at different levels, Hofstede (1991)*
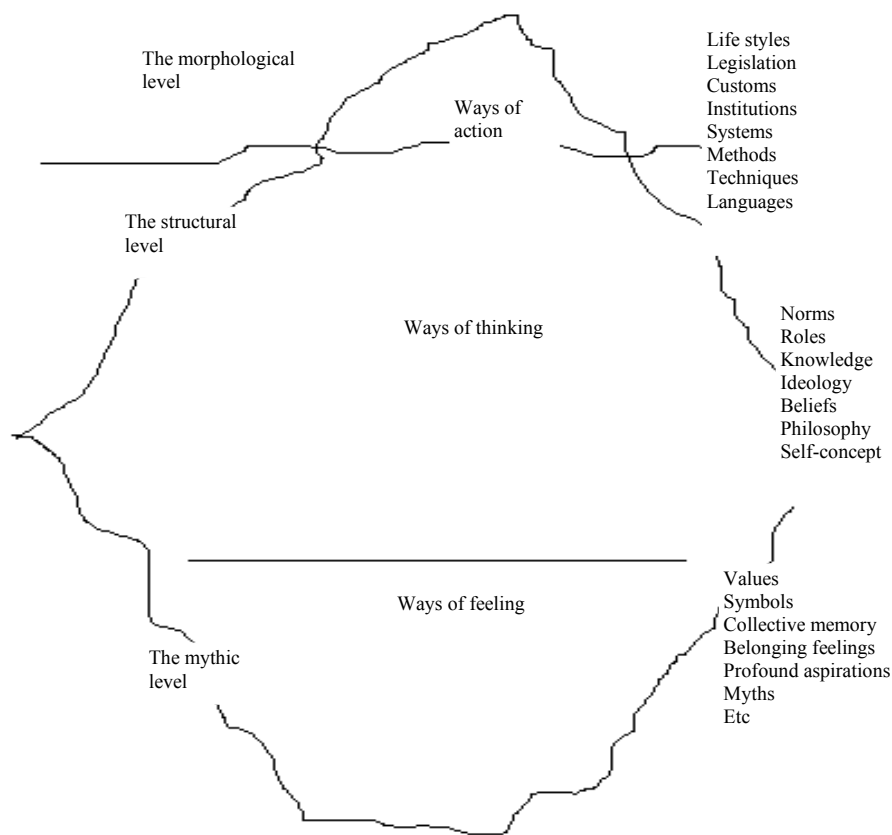
The morphological
level

Ways of
action

Life styles
Legislation
Customs
Institutions
Systems
Methods
Techniques
Languages

The structural
level

Ways of thinking

Norms
Roles
Knowledge
Ideology
Beliefs
Philosophy
Self-concept

Ways of feeling

Values
Symbols
Collective memory
Belonging feelings
Profound aspirations
Myths
Etc

The mythic
level

Figure 2. *The iceberg concept of culture, www.intercultures.gc.ca*

Another category of models is represented by the "series of events" type. The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), created by Milton Bennett (1986, 1993) as a framework to explain the reactions of people to cultural difference, falls into this category of graphic organizers (see Figure 3).

The Development of intercultural sensitivity

Experience of difference

Denial of
difference

Defence
against
difference

Minimization
of difference

Acceptance
of difference

Adaptation
of difference

Integration
of
difference

Ethnocentric Stages

Ethnorelative Stages
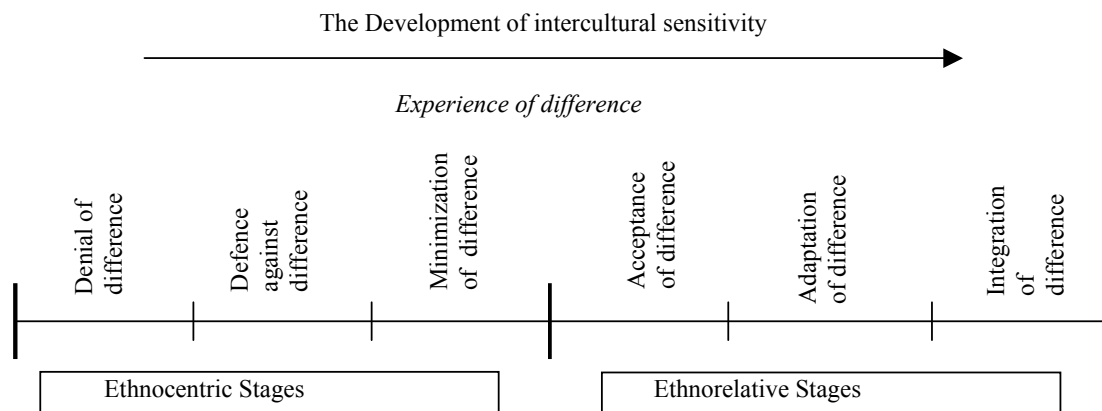
Figure 3. *The Development of Intercultural Sensitivity (Bennett, 1986, 1093)*

The models proposed by NCCA (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, Ireland) to present the context and themes of intercultural education are graphic organizers like "diagram Venn" (Figure 4) and "structured overview" (Figure 5).
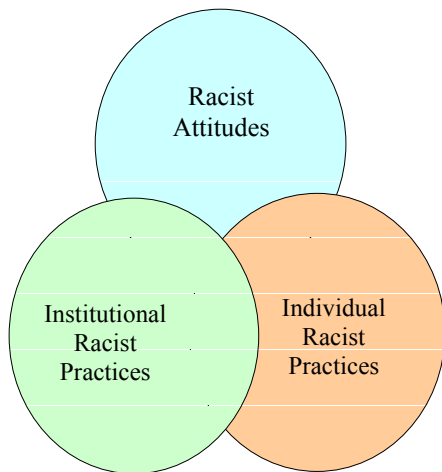
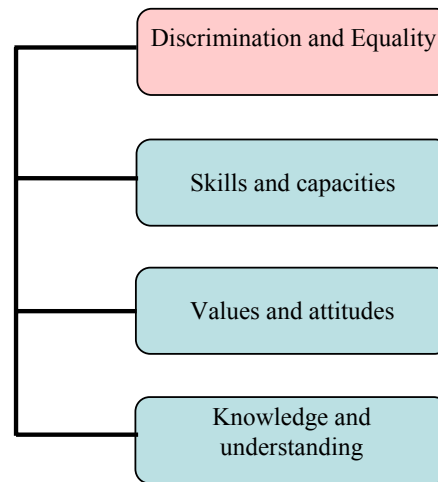**Figure 4.** *The context of Intercultural education. „What do we mean by Racism?"*(NCCA, p. 8)

Figure 5. *The content of Intercultural education. Subject: Discrimination and equality (NCCA, p. 59)*

Another type of model is the "cyclic organizer" used by Deardorff (2004, *apud* Deardorff, 2006) to specify the relationship between the degree of intercultural competence and the degree of achieved attitudes, knowledge and skills (Figure 6).

The models used in relation to intercultural education are very different. However, the list is longer and it may continue with the spatial representation of spiral etc.
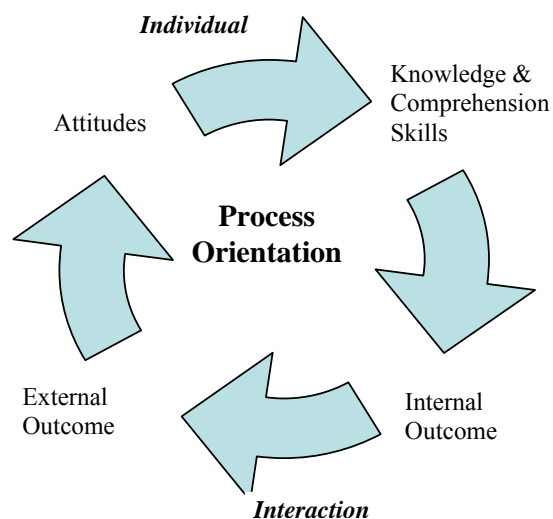
Figure 6. *The Process Model of Intercultural Competence* (Deardorff, 2004)

4. Intercultural education activities based on the use of graphic organizers

The following educational activities are focused on intercultural use of graphic organizers for the purpose of building knowledge (Activities 1 and 2) and for systematisation of knowledge (Activity 3).

Activity 1. "Cultural diversity in our school"

Subject: Filling in a graphic organizer that illustrate the practice of promoting cultural diversity in the classroom and combine text and photography.

Objectives / Skills
-   Identifying from a set of digital photos those that give the required message.
-   Emphasizing the cultural message through a text regarding each picture.

Working time: 120 minutes

Resources
-   Participants, individually.
-   Camera.
-   Flip chart, pencils.
-   Network of computers, video, CD, Internet.

Stages:
-   Ask the students to identify a set of potential actions to be undertaken in class, for the promotion of cultural diversity.
-   Ask the students to draw, to make photos or to download from the Internet a number of photos to illustrate their ideas.
-   Ask the students to draw on the flip chart the graphic organizer (Figure 7) and to fill in the graphic organizer with text and images.

Reflection and evaluation
-   Ask the students to present the criteria used for selecting the photos.
-   Ask each student to present his work.
-   Collect the products.

Anticipating difficulties

-   Be prepared to help students in selecting the photos.

Further suggestions

-   Ask the students to devise a graphic organizer on "My family and cultural diversity".

WHAT EFFECTS CAN YOU FIND?

Name:_____   Date:_____

Give two effects for each action.

Action 1:

Action 2:

Effect 1

Effect 1

Effect 2

Effect 2

Photos:

Figure 7. *The Graphic Organizer of "cause-effect" type*

Activity 2. Intercultural Themed Stories

Subject: Description of intercultural (in)competence using keywords of the levels of manifestation.

Objectives / Skills
- Selecting the keywords that can describe the characteristics of a person situated at each level of (in)competence in the intercultural model of Bennett.
- Writing a story about the experiences of a person who advanced in the intercultural domain.

Working time: 50 minute

Resources

- Paper with a graphic organizer (a pyramidal model – Figure 8) drawn on it.

Stages
- Explain to students that they will complete a graphic organizer and compose a story, working in groups of four.

> **Line 1** - a keyword that describes the level and one that specifies the character to which the story refers to.
>
> **Line 2** - two words that describe the level and two words that describe the main theme.
>
> **Line 3** - three words that describe the level and three words that describe the context.
>
> **Line 4** - four words that describe the level and four words that describe the conflict / problem.
>
> **Line 5** - five words that describe the level and five words that describe an event.
>
> **Line 6 -** six words that describe the level and six words that describe a second event.

- Explain to students how to fill the graphic organizer, line by line.
- Ask the students to write a story using the ideas formulated on each line.
- Let the students know that the activity will end when the story is finished.
- After students have written the story, ask each group to read it to their colleagues.

Reflection / Evaluation:
- Ask the students, while they are listening stories, to write down ideas that show cultural affiliation or group affiliation of the main character of the story.
- Ask for arguments and discussion of ideas formulated by the students.
- Ask the students to compare the stories and to formulate conclusions regarding the evolution of a person in the intercultural domain.
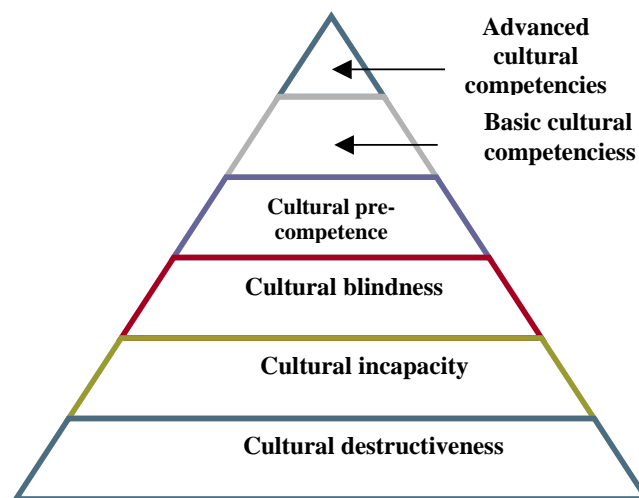

Figure 8. *Pyramidal graphic organizer*

Activity 3. The delimitation of the concept of Intercultural Education.

Topic: What ISN'T Intercultural Education.

Objectives /skills:
- Discriminating the key concepts that define Intercultural Education.
- Explaining the Intercultural Education concept using a table graphic organizer.

Working time: 30 minutes

Resources:
- Paper, pencils and markers.
- Material on the issues that are not a concern of Intercultural Education:

> **What Intercultural education is NOT**
>
> **Intercultural education:**
>
> - is not considered a cultural obstacle for development, but wealth;
> - is not a way for compensating the inequalities, but a way "of learn about equality" under circumstances of reciprocity
>
> - it doesn't address only minorities or a major/minor group, but addresses everybody;
>
> - is not only a window opened towards other cultures but also a window open towards one's own culture;
>
> -supports differentiation but not discrimination;
> - recognizes cultural diversity but not ethnocentrism etc.
>
> **INTER Project Team (2002), states that intercultural education represents:**
> - occasional celebrations such as "Intercultural Week, Day gastronomy", "Peace Day" etc.
> - the study and the acquisition of knowledge about other groups in order "to know them better!"
> - the recipe for resolving conflicts or approaching a "labeled" group;
> - the educational programs that address to specific groups;
>
> - the promotion of positive relations between students;
>
> - the elimination of conflicts! Conflicts are inherent of everyday life; we need to manage conflicts, to learn positive and active ways of combating discrimination and prejudice;
> - Language courses.

Stages:
- Ask the students to update their knowledge on the characteristics of Intercultural Education.
- Ask students to study the material with the opinions of specialists regarding issues that aren't covered by the Intercultural Education.
- Ask the students to individually find more issues that are not the concern of the Intercultural Education, with respect to the goals and objectives, methods and types of activities, expected results etc.
- Ask the students to form groups of four, to complete the table in Figure 9 (each student completes individually every part of the table); and to identify common views of the individuals from the group (write these in the middle rectangle).
- Ask the students to display the charts.

Reflection and evaluation
- Compare the reviewed charts.
- Ask the students to analyze the differences and similarities between the charts.

Anticipating difficulties
- Be prepared to help students to identify important concepts and relationships.

Further suggestions
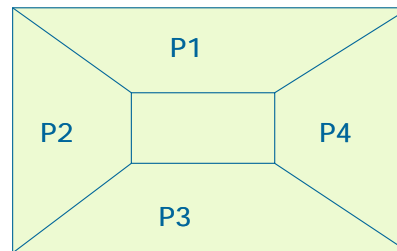- Ask the students to adapt the work to be done in the classroom.

Figure 9. *Table mate*

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Author

Liliana Ciascai, Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, e-mail: liliciascai@gmail.com