



INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

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INTRODUCTION

The impact of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEF) on language teaching in Europe is already well established. Even though it was published commercially only in 2001, earlier versions had circulated for a number of years as part of the process of consultation, and it has had visible influence in a number of countries already. It is clearly an authoritative document with an influence reaching throughout education systems via textbooks, syllabi and curricula, teacher education, examinations and so on. The nature of that influence is both professional and, I shall suggest later, potentially political and moral. It is however in what still remains to be elaborated in the CEF that its political and moral significance may grow.

For although the CEF included a discussion of intercultural competence and intercultural awareness, the question of assessment and the defining of levels of intercultural competence, had to be left aside as the CEF went to press. Furthermore, rapid change in contemporary Europe means that the ways in which the CEF can be read and used are also changing. The concept of democratic citizenship in Europe has been promoted in recent years at the Council of Europe as a consequence of a meeting of Heads of States and Governments in 1997, and is fundamental to the ways in which people will increasingly interact with each other. The fluidity of national frontiers, the internationalisation of contemporary life and the challenges to social identities, in particular national identity, which this brings, affect the ways in which we conceptualise communication. The professional world of language teaching in which work on the CEF began three or more decades ago, has also changed and continues to do so. All education is now seen by politicians as crucial to economic development and social inclusion, and in a multilingual space such as Europe, language education policy is a crucial part of education policy.

One very obvious result of these changes is the need to take forward the unfinished discussion of intercultural competence in the CEF, for it is in the acquisition of intercultural understanding and the ability to act in linguistically and culturally complex situations that European citizens could benefit from a common framework of theory and practice not only for linguistic but also for cultural learning.

The articles in this collection are a contribution to the debate which is needed to ensure that such a framework is created, and that ultimately the CEF itself can be further developed to meet the changes in European society.

The first article by Neuner traces the historical development within language teaching of the representation of other cultures, and the ways in which the political context, in particular the bilateral relations between countries, can affect those representations. The role of textbooks has been crucial in this and Neuner shows how these have reflected international political relations at specific points in European history. He contrasts this with the perceptions learners have, with the influence of learners' existing schemata and representations of other countries and cultures, showing that it is in the mutual influence of their own perceptions and of external representations, in textbooks and other media, that the interim worlds of learners' experience of other countries and cultures are created. He illustrates how this can and should be taken into consideration in teaching, how exercises and other teaching materials can be invented which take the processes of interaction between different representations of other countries into account. In the final stage of his argument he reminds us that what has hitherto been the focus of the conceptualisation of otherness in language teaching, namely the concept of a national culture and national identity symbolised and expressed in the language being taught, is now being questioned. The 'culture of self' beyond national political and linguistic borders, is posited as a response to internationalisation and post-modern experience. In a 'concrete utopia' of a community of such individuals, postulated by Jürgen Habermas in the late 1960s, the qualities which are now included more than ever in the aims of intercultural language teaching would be the basis for social interactions where prejudice, representations of national stereotypes and the potential conflict these create, would be overcome. For Neuner, the realisation of such a utopia might be achieved through creating a sense of European identity and community, and through ensuring that language and intercultural learning is accessible to all. In this, he makes explicit the relationship of language teaching to its political and social context, and the contribution language teaching can and must make towards the education of European citizens.

In the second article, Starkey explores this relationship more closely, and in particular considers how language teaching can contribute to 'education for democratic citizenship' in the context of the work and policies of the Council of Europe. He shows that this has long been one of the educational aims of Council of Europe work on language teaching, and that Council of Europe declarations on human rights are crucial to the ways in which language

teaching can become more explicitly and actively an integral part of education for democratic citizenship, giving examples of what this means for methodology in the classroom and beyond. Some of this kind of work is already taking place in European classrooms, and in this respect, language teachers are engaging with the social and political realities which surround them and their learners. Like Neuner, Starkey demonstrates that language teaching must and does respond to contextual conditions. What both of them argue is that language teaching professionals of all kinds, whether teachers, curriculum developers or policy-makers, should become more aware of their contexts and bring them into their theory and practice in careful and systematic ways. In doing so they will be realising the educational purposes of an approach to language teaching where the development of intercultural competence is taken seriously, but they will also be engaging with some significant moral and political issues to which I shall return below.

Zarate brings us back to the question of how the CEF needs to be developed in the future. Her concerns like those of Neuner and Starkey, are with the changing social and political context. She begins and ends with the practical issue of mutual recognition of certification and diplomas, which has constantly been a pre-occupation of European authorities with a view to encouraging greater mobility. Zarate points out however that mobility takes different forms, that these are changing, that earlier forms influenced the production of Council of Europe documents such as Threshold Levels, and that the rapidly developing realisation of a common European political, social and economic space is creating new conditions for a common European identity and concept of citizenship which need to be taken into consideration as the CEF develops. Her argument is that the full realisation of such a common space needs to be preceded by a deconstruction of old conflicts and hostilities. We need to overcome the duality of most language teaching - which implicitly compares and contrasts 'own' and 'foreign/target' language and culture, as Neuner also showed - in order to develop the notion of mediation and the language learner as social actor interacting with other citizens in multilingual situations on equal terms. She then analyses the CEF as a product of its context, suggesting that it now needs further refinement in the conceptualisation of intercultural competence, to respond to change. She sees in the *European Language Portfolio* (ELP), which is closely related to the CEF but is a more recent development, the opportunity for the creation of a symbolic space of exchange of certification, but also of experience inside and beyond educational institutions, a space which symbolises the commonality which is the implicit political aim of European states. Her conclusions take the form of proposals for future work to strengthen the

contribution of the CEF and the ELP to the creation of a European endeavour.

The fourth article, by Parmenter, takes us beyond the European context and requires us to engage with the process of decentring, which is precisely one of the crucial dimensions of intercultural competence, in order to relativise the concepts which are taken for granted in our European context and debate. She begins for example with concepts of self and the individual, which in our European perspective is a firm if nonetheless developing identity, and contrasts this with the concepts of 'no-self' and 'fluid identities' in Buddhism, and in their realisation in the complex contexts of contemporary Japan. She points out that notions of identity and multiple identities are taken for granted in our debate, and though there is some challenge from post-modernism, even this is still within the pre-conceptions of European thinking.

Similarly, where the relationship of individual to group is concerned and the concept of national identity is raised, the Japanese and East Asian situation again suggests that we need to take a more deliberate look at our pre-conceptions. In particular the notion of European identity, which is clearly an innovative concept made possible by the particular political change in Europe, but which is also part of the phenomenon of internationalisation, has no direct equivalent in East Asia. Although there is recognition that education systems need to respond to internationalisation, there is resistance in Japan at least to abandoning a national perspective. Parmenter's international perspective is thus a necessary reminder of our Euro-centredness and the need to question the creation of a common European space and identity, which Zarate takes to be inevitable in European development, even though it is not without resistance from national viewpoints within Europe too. Parmenter then goes on to discuss the nature of interaction and communication when concepts of the social actor differ from those in European thinking. Here too there are challenges to our assumptions.

In the final part, Parmenter turns to the question of how the promotion of intercultural competence is not just part of a utilitarian aim for language teaching, but also an explicit contribution to the personal development of the individual, to their acquisition of desirable attitudes towards otherness, as discussed by Neuner and Starkey. Here she sees convergence of European and Asian approaches to teaching and learning. There is currently in East Asia a trend to reduction of acquisition of 'knowledge that' and an increase of 'knowledge how' which corresponds to European trends in general and to the conceptualisation of intercultural competence in particular. On the other

hand, she points out that in East Asia, the relationship of teacher and learner is more important than content. It is more than a question of authority and discipline; it is, rather, a consequence of the responsibility of the teacher for the moral, humanistic development of the pupil. In the European context, the moral dimension of education for democratic citizenship and intercultural competence is increasingly recognised, as Starkey shows, but the significance of this for the relationship between teacher and learner is often overlooked. The moral responsibility of the language teacher is thus made evident in Parmenter's article to a degree not often acknowledged in the European context, and it is to the issue of moral, and political, responsibility, that I now wish to turn.

* * *

To posit intercultural competence as one of the aims of language teaching is to be prescriptive. To be interculturally competent is to think and act in morally desirable ways, and to set intercultural competence as an aim of language teaching is to prescribe the ways in which people ought to act. Prescription can then be related to norms, for example normative standards of human rights, but this pre-supposes an agreement on norms which has to be created in each context where language teaching takes place.

In a sense prescription is not new to language teaching, since the traditional definition of aims in terms of linguistic proficiency comparable to that of native speakers is also prescriptive, and the implicit power relations between native speakers and non-natives or learners aspiring to be native speakers have been much discussed in the last decade and need not be repeated here. However, our proposal that another ideal, of the intercultural speaker or mediator, should be introduced into language and culture teaching, is in part an attempt to overcome this power hierarchy, and has implications not only for intercultural competence aims but also for linguistic competence. For as Zarate says, if a learner is seen not so much as a lowly apprentice but an equal partner in social interaction, the fact that they need not imitate or even attempt to imitate the norms of the native speaker can be a liberation and empowerment which could have significant positive effects on motivation and self-concept. The extreme interpretation of this would perhaps lead to linguistic anarchy and lack of mutual comprehension, as each pursues their own norms, and is an issue which teachers and learners of English as a lingua franca are currently facing in the contemporary world.

The promotion of intercultural competence has however even stronger moral complexities. It is, as Parmenter points out, a responsibility of the language teacher to contribute to the personal development and growth of learners, but we need to be aware that concepts such as empathy, decentring, or tolerance of ambiguity, to take some examples from Neuner, are not necessarily perceived as desirable in every context. As one teacher of English in Japan has said to me, she finds the expectation that learners should become open to otherness and willing and curious to explore other cultures not necessarily acceptable as a purpose of her teaching, when her students are happy and secure in their own environment. The issue is further complicated by the relationship of teacher to learner at different stages and ages of education. Where a teacher is responsible for pupils, young people being educated in compulsory schooling, there is perhaps a different level of responsibility to that of a teacher of university students or apprentices in vocational education who are legally adults and responsible for their own education.

Thus, there are in intercultural competence, ethical and moral debates which language teachers and language teacher educators seldom handle, but they can turn for help to philosophers of education such as John Dewey. Although Dewey pays little or no attention to language teaching and learning, his arguments are relevant. He argues for education as a progressive and political act, pointing out that education can be conservative i.e. it preserves a society as it is, or it can be progressive i.e. it promotes change for the better in a society:

a society which not only changes but which has the ideal of such change as will improve it, will have different standards and methods of education from one which aims simply at the perpetuation of its own customs

Democracy and Education 1916 (1985 ed. p. 87)

In the 21st century it is clear that perpetuation and preservation are no longer an option. All societies are changing. The question is whether they have an ideal towards which they want to change or whether they are just drifting without direction. Dewey's ideal direction was that societies should change towards a situation where all individuals and groups interact with each other in a full and free expression, sharing some common values even if they maintain some values and ideas which are specific to them. In this vision of a combination of common and specific values, Dewey anticipates the questions which Europeans are now facing: how they can be specifically French, Catalan, Scandinavian or whatever regional identities they cherish, and also

European or international. He also anticipates the resistances to change of closed groups. This will happen:

(wherever) one group has interests "of its own" which shut it out from full interaction with other groups, so that its prevailing purpose is the protection of what it has got, instead of reorganisation and progress through wider relationships.

Such closure is to be found in various guises:

It marks nations in their isolation from one another; families which seclude their domestic concerns as if they had no connection with a larger life; schools when separated from the interest of home and community; the divisions of rich and poor; learned and unlearned.

It is the first of these examples which is immediately relevant to language teachers since national isolation can be maintained by not allowing language learning and, vice versa, language learning is a necessary condition for interaction across national boundaries and in multilingual spaces. It is the sentiment expressed by Neuner in his argument that language teaching can have social and political purposes. But it is also relevant to note Dewey's other examples, and how the juxtaposition demonstrates that differences between nations are parallel to differences between rich and poor, learned and unlearned. To overcome closure is to remove divisions of learning, of wealth and, we would say more explicitly today, of power and hierarchy.

What the language teacher can take from Dewey is a reflection on their contribution to progressive education, to the political role which education, including language education, plays in changing societies for the better. Of course what we mean by 'better' is a major question which is not answered in the same way everywhere in the world, but Dewey's proposal is that democracy is the best means of developing towards societies in which every individual and every group interacts and plays a full role with shared values. Here, Dewey again anticipates the priorities of the new European realities rapidly developing around us and symbolised in the emphasis on policies of education for democratic citizenship and human rights, which as Starkey shows can be fundamental to language teaching.

If, then, the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* shall at some point in the future include a clearer statement of the aims of intercultural education, as Zarate wishes, it is evident that the moral and

political implications of such a statement need to be considered. The prescription of desirable attitudes and dispositions might go unnoticed because they are precisely the moral tenets which underlie much European thought. They are however in potential tension with the prescription of what is linguistically desirable competence and behaviour when the latter is founded on the native speaker as the ideal to be imitated. The precise position on the native speaker is unclear in the CEF and other Council of Europe documents. The CEF postulates at one point an ideal of a plurilingual speaker whereas descriptions of Thresholds are dependent on native speaker intuitions, and realisation of the levels stated in the CEF would presumably be judged by native speaker standards. Because this is contested ground, with much debate on 'linguistic imperialism' and 'cultural politics' in language teaching, the CEF is already enmeshed in the complexities of morality and politics¹.

The issues become even more evident when the question of assessment is considered. The CEF was published without resolution of the problem of establishing levels of attainment in intercultural competence as the authors would have liked. They declared this a question which would have to be resolved in later editions. Were this to happen, the assessment of desirable and prescribed behaviour and attitudes would introduce language teaching professionals to ethical issues which do not arise when they concentrate on the assessment of linguistic competence. Descriptors of what a person 'can do' as basis for placing them on one of the six levels of the CEF, are overtly descriptive and are intended to be objectively validated and morally neutral, putting aside for the moment the question of native speaker power. Descriptors of 'tolerance of ambiguity' or similar dimensions of intercultural competence on the other hand are likely to imply a moral judgement of what is acceptable or not, what is within the description or not.

In the meantime, the *European Language Portfolio* (ELP) is having a major impact in language teaching in Europe and continues to grow in significance. The ELP aims to assist learners in describing and reflecting upon their significant language learning and intercultural experiences, but the notion of an assessed level of intercultural competence is not included. There is, moreover, no article on assessment and levels in this collection either. The complexity of the issues is still to be fully explored; not only the technical

¹ The change of title and emphasis from the Modern Language Division to the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg is indicative of the increasing political significance of language education.

problems of validity, reliability, and impact, but more importantly the ethical issues involved. Intercultural competence requires a change of perspective on self and other, on the world of one's socialisation and the worlds one meets through language learning. It involves affective as well as cognitive change, and may be a challenge to one's identities as a speaker of one (or more) particular language(s) from childhood. These are issues which language teachers approach with care - and all the more so those who are responsible for assessment. Yet the language teaching profession - and other teachers too - cannot ignore the need to ensure that their learners are not just acquiring linguistic skills and knowledge. It is self-evident that relationships between people who a generation ago might have had very little contact, are now commonplace. In the reduced spatial and temporal dimensions of the contemporary world, they need to interact and understand each other on a basis of mutual respect, on a basis of intercultural competence.

The complexity of these developments cannot be easily resolved, and it is necessary to ask the fundamental questions mentioned above. The articles here are offered as a contribution to the elucidation of the complexity, and to the debate which needs to continue.

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SOCIO-CULTURAL INTERIM WORLDS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

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1. Introduction: The dichotomy of teaching and learning

Research on teaching and learning foreign languages in recent decades shows a remarkable shift of focus and has led to the development of new concepts in foreign language didactics and methodology. In the communicative approach and in its further development – the intercultural approach – we can see this change of perspectives

- from teaching to learning
i.e. from designing universal methods of teaching to integrating the features of specific groups of students (e.g. age; gender; profession; linguistic/socio-cultural background) or individuals (e.g. needs; previous knowledge of the world/target socio-culture/other languages; interest/motivation; capacity/aptitude)
- from declarative to procedural knowledge
i.e. from the definition of what students are expected to learn (linguistic/socio-cultural content) to the question how they learn (techniques and strategies of learning).

Our investigation deals with the two complementary – and sometimes contradictory and conflicting – aspects mentioned in the first point above.

1.1. Teaching socio-cultural content

On the one hand there is the perspective of teaching with its concentration on socio-cultural content, i.e. the presentation of information according to a preconceived view of the world of the target language in official documents like syllabuses and textbooks and its variation in the different methods of and approaches to foreign language teaching.

In foreign language teaching and learning we do not deal directly with the “real world” of the target language but with a world

- *filtered by media* (textbooks [various types of texts, ranging from fictional to expository texts]; audio-visual media [tapes / cassettes / CD; photographs / drawings]; internet; teacher’s reports; etc.)

and

- *filtered by the selection of information and its interpretation by the ‘authorities’* such as ministries which approve textbooks for the use in schools.

This leads then to our first question: What are the factors that influence the formation of this officially sanctioned picture of the foreign world and what brings about changes?

1.2. Learning about the foreign world

On the other hand we have the perception of the foreign world by the learners and its representation in the learners' imagination which may vary considerably from the officially sanctioned picture.

We know from experience that pupils quite often do not learn what they are supposed to learn, that they do not simply adopt the pre-formed and 'prescribed' view of the target world presented in their textbooks, but in their minds create (or already have created) their own images and fantasies about the foreign world which are unstable and which in the process of learning the target language (and gathering more knowledge or experience of the foreign world outside the classroom) may undergo remarkable changes.

Our second question is therefore: What influences the view of the foreign world in the learner's mind and what leads to changes of the images of the world of the target language in the process of learning?

We can thus state that there are changing and unstable concepts of the foreign world at both ends: in the presentation of socio-cultural content (teaching) and in the perception of the foreign world in the learner's mind (learning).

These are what I call *interim worlds*.

In order to broaden the scope of examples in the European context in this paper in addition to presenting examples from the teaching of English as a foreign language I will include examples from German textbooks and research done in the field of German as a foreign language.

2. Interim World I: The "official positions" of foreign language *teaching*: Pre-formed concepts of the world of the target language and their variations

In the historical development of methods of foreign language teaching the treatment of socio-culture has not resulted in a fixed and stable concept of

cultural studies (*Landeskunde*) but it has undergone remarkable changes (cf. Neuner, 1997).

2.1. Changes in the selection and treatment of socio-cultural topics in the various methods of foreign language teaching

2.1.1. The Grammar-Translation-Method

This was modelled after the teaching of ‘dead languages’ like Latin and Greek and in the 19th and early 20th centuries was the almost unrivalled method of foreign language teaching, concentrating on the presentation and analysis of correct linguistic form, appropriate translation and the reading of literature. Concerning socio-cultural aspects, it emphasised the selection and presentation of socio-cultural achievements (“Big C”: arts and literature) and their personification by great men (and, occasionally, women), and events in the history of the target country. In its more modern version, it also comprised ‘facts and figures’ (realia) and ‘life and institutions’ of the target country.

In one of the leading textbooks of the 1950s for the teaching of English in West Germany, *Learning English*, we find the following topics concerning the USA:

Vol. 2, chapter 12: The Pilgrim Fathers/A Sunday in Harlech
14: The Boston Tea Party/The Stars and Stripes
16: The Gold Rush/The American Indians
18: Death of a President (Lincoln)
etc.

Quite obviously, the lasting dominance of this method, among other reasons, was due to the fact that institutional foreign language teaching for a long time was limited to an elite group of pupils – in the Federal Republic of Germany until the 1960s it comprised no more than 5–10 % of an age-group in *Gymnasium* - and aimed at participation in intercultural exchange beyond trivial topics according to the ideal of the ‘educated and refined gentleman’.

Characteristic of this group was its relatively pronounced homogeneity, in respect to age, readiness and ability to achieve, and social background (middle class). There was a consensus among teachers that what the textbooks offered was in the interests of the pupil and that his/her view of the foreign world should be formed according to the established picture.

2.1.2. The Audio-Lingual/Audio-Visual Method

From the 1960s the rising demand for foreign languages led to offering foreign languages to groups beyond the *Gymnasium* ('foreign languages for all', including pupils of *Hauptschule* and learners in contexts outside and beyond the state school system (e.g. *Volkshochschule*; professional training) and resulted in defining a more pragmatic concept of foreign language teaching (foreign languages for international communication in private and professional contexts).

As a result, in the *Audio-Lingual and Audio-Visual Methods* that were developed in the 1940s in order to meet the pragmatic needs of specific groups (such as interrogators in the U.S. army) and further developed to meet the needs and the capacity of the 'ordinary learner', we notice a shift from topics concentrating on "Big C" to aspects of everyday life ("Little c") which are presented in typical situations and contexts and often deal with the encounters of tourists with the 'natives' of the target country.

Within this view of language teaching and learning, socio-culture as a topic of foreign language teaching almost entirely vanishes into the background as part of the – often visually presented - framework of situations and settings of the dialogues in the foreign country, and is subordinated to the memorisation of useful phrases and the reproduction of typical social roles (e.g. that of tourist/traveller, customer, patient etc.) in everyday (model) dialogues.

Example: From a table of contents of a textbook for German as a foreign language (*Deutsch 2000*, 1972)

- Vol. 1, chapter 1: Who is this?
 - 2: An interview
 - 3: What is your profession?
 - 4: Shopping in the supermarket
 - 5: In the restaurant
 - 6: Asking the way
 - 7 and 8: Making an appointment
 - 9: Travelling (hitchhiking) etc.

2.1.3. The Communicative Approach

The *Communicative Approach* from the late 1970s further developed these aspects by concentrating on speech acts characteristic of everyday

communication and emphasising the use of authentic texts (for the German scene cf. Byram, 1993).

Example: From a table of contents of a textbook for German as a foreign language (*Deutsch aktiv*, 1979):

- Vol. 1: chapter 1: greeting; asking name and address; inviting
- 2: offering and accepting/denying; choosing and buying
 - 3: locating pain; making an appointment; making proposals
 - 4: Emphasis on socio-cultural information: How the Germans live and what they eat
 - 5: offering help; asking the time; showing round an apartment
 - 6: discussing price and quality; describing things; uttering agreement/disagreement
 - 7: asking for information; warning; presenting past events
 - 8: Emphasis on socio-cultural information: professional and vocational training; job-application; curriculum vitae; etc.

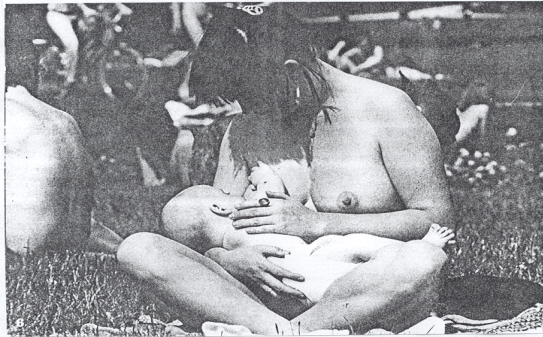
Hand in glove with the emphasis on speech acts and the use of authentic texts goes the selection of socio-cultural topics according to everyday life experiences of ordinary people:

- how they live with other people (family; friends/lovers; peer group; community; state; etc.)
- how they work
- how they spend their leisure time
- how they travel (mobility)
- how they communicate with each other
- how they relate to their environment
- how they relate to norms and values
- etc. (cf. Neuner, 1988b).

2.1.4. The Intercultural Approach

Since the 1980s in the *Intercultural Approach* we find topics concentrating on language awareness; the discussion of cross-cultural experiences; the discussion of stereotypes; the negotiation of meaning; etc.

"Normal ?"



Sichtwechsel, vol.1,50

Example: From a table of contents of a textbook for German as a foreign language for advanced learners

(*Sichtwechsel*, 1984):

- | | |
|------------|--|
| Chapter 1: | Perception and interpretation |
| 2: | Perception and specific cultural experience |
| 3: | Perception and specific group experience |
| 4: | Development of meaning |
| 5: | Development of meaning in the foreign language |
| 6: | Speech acts and their realisation in language |
| 7: | Language and social interaction |
| 8: | Manipulation by language |
| 9: | Cliché and ritual |
| 10: | Language and stereotype |
| 12: | Argumentation |

2.2. A framework of interdependent levels constituting teaching

The following framework tries to distinguish between a number of levels – the socio-political level; the institutional level; the level of the specific target socio-culture – that are interdependent and in various ways influence the way the didactic concepts of foreign language teaching are conceived, and the ways of teaching socio-culture in the foreign language classroom.



A few comments on the different levels:

2.2.1. Level 1: general socio-political factors

The 'official' view of the target-language world is quite often influenced by traditional ties or the currently prevailing political relationship between one's own country and that of the target language. As a result, the official interpretations of how we are to see the foreign world and how we as teachers of the foreign language or textbook authors are to treat socio-cultural aspects can be extremely different:

a) In a co-operative partnership, a friendly/positive view of the target-language prevails.

This was for example the way Britain and America were – and are - treated in textbooks for English as a foreign language in the Federal Republic of Germany.

b) In contrast, if the political (or ideological) relationship is antagonistic, then there is a tendency to focus on critical or negative aspects of the foreign socio-culture.

For example, in the late 1920s in a textbook for English for the *Gymnasium* in Germany - in an act of almost desperate re-assertion of Germany's glory after the lost war - we find the following passage, in which an Englishman talks to a German about the question: "Will the Empire live?"

We in Great Britain are now intensely jealous about Germany... not only because the Germans outnumber us and have a much larger and more diversified country than ours, and lie in the very heart and body of Europe, but because in the last hundred years, while we have fed on platitudes and vanity, they have had the energy and humility to develop a splendid system of national education, to toil on science, art and literature, to develop a social organisation, to master and better our methods of business, and industry, to clamber above us in the scale of civilisation (Linke/Schad: *Lehrbuch der englischen Sprache*, 1927).

Great Britain and the USA were treated in the same way in textbooks for English as a foreign language published in the German Democratic Republic or Russia during the times of 'Cold War' in the 1950s and 1960s (and Russia in textbooks published in West Germany!).

As might be expected, in a GDR syllabus for the teaching of English (1978) we find the following passage:

Instruction in English and French must serve, above all, to make pupils aware that imperialism represents a system hostile to humanity,

that the working class – under the guidance of the Marxist-Leninist party – is leading the struggle for a happy future for all of mankind, that the active solidarity is an expression of the worldwide battle of the people against the common enemy...

Comparison between the life of workers in our Republic, with those of certain other countries, will strengthen the pupils' conviction of the superiority of socialism (*Lehrplan für Englisch*, 1978,12).

It is interesting to note that in the Socialist Countries during that period we find a rather contrasting image of Germany in textbooks that deal with German as a foreign language, which corresponds with the political constellation: while the socialist 'brother nation' GDR is presented in friendly terms, the FRG as representative of the 'capitalist opponent' is treated rather unfavourably.

Selection of and emphasis on negative/critical aspects of life in the Federal Republic of Germany.

An example from a Russian textbook for German of the 1980s:



3. Nicht jeder Fachmann darf in der BRD in seinem Beruf arbeiten. Es gibt dort Berufsverbote. Das macht viele Menschen unglücklich, und sie protestieren dagegen. Lesen Sie darüber in der Notiz und beantworten Sie die nachfolgenden Fragen.

Gegen Berufsverbote in der BRD

Seit 1972 wurden in der BRD 10000 Bürger mit Berufsverbot belegt. Zu diesen Unglücklichen gehört zum Beispiel Helmut Blaschke: er darf nicht als Zugführer tätig sein, weil er Mitglied der Deutschen Kommunistischen Partei ist. Die Kunstzeigerin Uta Borge darf nicht unterrichten, weil sie gegen einen faschistischen Film protestierte. Damit will man sie zum Schweigen bringen.

Aus ganz Europa kommen Proteste gegen diese Verletzung der Menschenrechte nach Bonn. Alle unterstützen den Kampf gegen Berufsverbote in der Bundesrepublik.

наложить запрет на профессию

= lehren
заставить замолчать

нарушение прав человека
поддерживать

- 1) Wer wird in der BRD mit Berufsverbot belegt?
2) Wie verhalten sich (относятся) die Arbeiter ganz Europas zum Berufsverbot?



4. Wie wird Geschichte in den Schulen der BRD unterrichtet? Lesen Sie darüber und beantworten Sie die Frage.

Lügen über den Hitlerfaschismus

Bonn. Den Schülern in der BRD wird Geschichte unterrichtet, wo Hitler und sein Faschistenregime verherrlicht werden. In den Schulbüchern stehen Lügen über die Zeit des Faschismus. Die Folge ist Unkenntnis und Dummheit bei den Schülern, die die Gefahr nicht erkennen können, die von den Neofaschisten ausgeht.

= beschönigen
(schöner machen)
= Resultat
опасность

57

(Bim/Passow, 1985, *Deutsch 10*, 57)

This may lead to a motivational dilemma for the learners of such a target language: How can they be persuaded to learn a language when at the same time they are presented with a negative image of the people and their country?!

One way out of this dilemma is to use a ‘didactic trick’, i.e. almost entirely omitting the treatment of socio-cultural aspects of the target country and, instead, inviting people of the world of the target language to one’s own world and introducing them to the benefits of one’s own socio-culture in their language (cf. Neuner, 1979c; Ammer, 1987; Abendroth-Timmer, 1998).

For example, in *English for you*, the official textbook of the G.D.R. in the 1970s and 1980s, we find chapters like “Visiting the G.D.R.” (vol. 4) and “About Life in the G.D.R.” (vol. 7). The following passage is taken from vol. 4 (1977), lesson 5 (54 ff.):

VISITING THE G.D.R.

Bob Driver, a young teacher from Oxford, got out of the train at Berlin Ostbahnhof...

Bob Driver stayed two days in Berlin before he went to Erfurt. What he saw and learnt during those two days made a good impression on him. So, he thought, the “Morning Star” had not overestimated what had been done in the G.D.R. But he had not expected to see so many new buildings, modern shops, well-dressed people, show windows full of TV-sets, refrigerators, washing machines, textiles and food. He was also surprised at the low rents and fares...

c) In relationships in which one’s own country is dependent on the target-language country, the socio-cultural achievements of this country and its representatives serve as a model for the presentation of socio-cultural content.

For example, in the formulation of objectives for the teaching of English in a syllabus in post-war Germany:

Through literature, the pupil should be introduced to the intellectual and cultural life of the British and American people and should learn about the driving forces behind the development of Britain and America in history and today. In particular, the pupils should be introduced to those works, that, as an important and influential element of Western tradition, have had an influence on our own intellectual life in Germany, as well as the cultural contributions that

the Anglo-American worlds brought to the attention of humanity (ADNV-Lehrplanentwurf (syllabus), 1951,3).

In the chapter of *Learning English*, vol. 3, which deals with Henry Ford, we find the following passage:

Ford's principle has been one of the most powerful forces in the making of twentieth-century America: that a nation safe from exploitation and extreme poverty is a nation of delightful buyers of goods, to everybody's profit... and that therefore one can make money by lowering the class barriers. Thus is Marxism defeated. (quoted from Funk, 1978,77)

And in the same textbook we learn about J.F. Kennedy that he was '... a legendary figure, the symbol of a modern knight who died before his task was done' (vol 2, 35).

2.2.2. Level 2 – The institutional level: Educational guidelines influencing foreign language teaching

Educational guidelines may be formulated as the convictions of a dominant social group (e.g. the leading political party) or as a consensus of negotiations of more than one influential social group. They serve as a framework for introducing and preparing the upcoming generation to life in their own society.

In syllabuses quite often they are formulated explicitly:

Anglo-American culture offers many examples of noble human values. For example, in Anglo-American literature we find clear standards and values. The teaching of English is one of the finest means for the young German generation to develop these values, which include a love of truth, a sense of law and order, tolerance, a love of liberty, a respect for the rights of the individual and for the cultural traditions of other nations, thus educating the pupil not only to self-reflect, but also to contribute to the reconciliation of nations. Furthermore since English-American literature also abounds in works which touch upon the ultimate questions of human existence, the teaching of English leads towards a purified "Weltanschauung" (ADNV-Lehrplanentwurf, 1951, 3).

More often, we find implicit references to such educational guidelines, for example in textbooks it can be traced in the 'message' that is conveyed in the selection (or omission) of certain topics, in the way a perspective is opened on a topic, or in the background information that is conveyed in the situational context (e.g. photographs) of texts and exercises, and in the references which exercises make to socio-cultural aspects.

Exercises in a textbook for English after World War I:

Explain the present perfect and the preterite:

India has been a bright jewel. India was a bright jewel.

Germany has been a republic since 1918. Germany was an empire.

The Dominions have been almost independent for some time. They were more dependent in the 19th century.

Germany has been without colonies since 1919. Germany was powerful before the war.

(Bernhard: *Englisches Lehrbuch*, vol. 1, 1919)

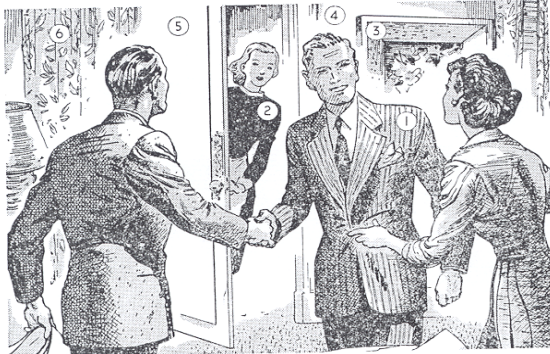
Or:

Great Britain obtains raw materials from her Dominions. Britain has obtained raw materials from her Dominions. Germany obtained raw materials from her colonies.

The British fleet protects the Dominions. It has always protected the Dominions. The German fleet protected our colonies. Did not the German fleet protect our colonies? (vol. 4, 1922)

Here are a few examples from textbooks for German. First from the early 1950s, where the emphasis is on appropriate appearance and behaviour:

LEKTION NEUN (9)



1: Herr Lehmann
2: Das Mädchen; das
Dienstmädchen

3: Das Gemälde; das
Bild
4: Die Wand

5: Die Tür
6: Der Vorhang

Lektion neun (9)
Neunte (9.) Lektion

BESUCH

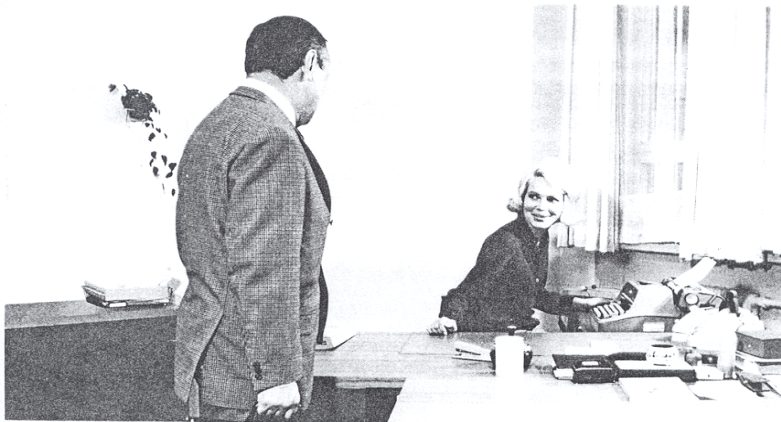


a: Das Mädchen

Es ist Sonnabend nachmittag. Es klopft. Unser Nachbar, Herr Lehmann¹, ist eben gekommen. Das Mädchen^{2, a} öffnet die Eingangstür und läßt ihn ein. Das Mädchen schließt die Eingangstür und führt ihn ins Wohnzimmer. Wir begrüßen unseren Gast, geben ihm die Hand; und fordern ihn auf, Platz zu nehmen.

(Linguaphone, 1951: 40)

Then from the 1970s where there are clear-cut social roles for boss and secretary:
“In the office”



6 Im Büro

Herr Hartmann: Guten Morgen, Fräulein Klein!

Fräulein Klein: Guten Morgen, Herr Hartmann! Wie war die Reise?

Herr Hartmann: Danke gut. Ich bringe viel Arbeit mit.

Hier nehmen Sie bitte den Zettel, er ist wichtig.

Und noch etwas: Ich brauche um 10 Uhr den Wagen.

Bestellen Sie ihn bitte gleich!

Fräulein Klein: Aber um 11 Uhr kommt Ingenieur Weber. Sind Sie dann wieder zurück?

Herr Hartmann: Sicher noch nicht. Rufen Sie doch sein Büro an, und sagen Sie, ich erwarte ihn um fünf.

Fräulein Klein: Ja, ich rufe sofort an – hier ist die Post.

Herr Hartmann: Danke! Haben Sie auch meinen Paß und das Visum?

Fräulein Klein: Ja, Ihre Papiere sind hier.

Herr Hartmann: Dann schreiben Sie bitte die Briefe fertig!

Ich nehme sie mit und lese sie zu Haus.

(Deutsch als Fremdsprache, 1972, vol. 1: 34)

Finally in the mid-1990s, with an affluent German society, it is indicated what young people (should) have in their rooms:

Wenckes Zimmer. Wer findet die meisten Wörter auf deutsch?



(Sowieso (1994), vol. 1,75)

2.2.3. Level 3: Specific features of the target socio-culture as part of foreign language instruction

At this level the specific objectives for the teaching of the target languages are defined.

Traditionally, we distinguish between 3 dimensions of objectives

- a) the cognitive dimension (knowledge)
- b) the pragmatic dimension (language skills)
- c) the emotional dimension (attitudes)

2.2.3.1. Cognitive Aspects

In a number of methodologies of foreign language teaching the socio-cultural dimension is treated as an independent and explicit objective (e.g. “Big C” studies emphasised in the Grammar-Translation Method; the presentation of

realia in its further development). In this case there are a number of disciplines from which socio-cultural knowledge is derived, among them most prominently geography and history, but also social sciences, anthropology, arts; etc.

The following criteria quite often determine the selection of socio-cultural content in such approaches:

- representativeness (concentration on exemplary or generalised aspects)
- completeness (concentration on survey)
- systematicity (analysis of structures of a socio-cultural phenomenon, e.g. in the study of institutions)
- usefulness (e.g. in the preparation of background information)

As we have noticed (cf. 2.1.), the selection of information varies considerably in the various approaches to foreign language teaching. Obviously, the mere compilation of data from the various fields mentioned does not necessarily lead to a valid and stable concept of socio-cultural teaching.

The methodology of the socio-cultural component in foreign language teaching comprises mainly two aspects

- the selection of information according to overruling socio-political considerations (cf. 2.2.1.) and
- the interrelation of the three dimensions, especially
 - the relationship of the cognitive and the emotional dimensions (cf. 2.2.2.) that contributes to the formation of attitudes
 - the relationship of the cognitive and the pragmatic dimensions

2.2.3.2. The Interdependence Of The Cognitive And The Pragmatic Dimensions

Since the establishment of the Audio-Lingual and, in its further development, the Audio-Visual Method in the 1960s, there has been a consensus that foreign language instruction should not so much concentrate on theoretical knowledge about the foreign language and its socio-culture, but stimulate the development of primary skills (listening/speaking), integrate socio-culture into language learning and thereby prepare the pupils for the active use of the foreign language as a means of everyday communication.

However, in a methodology that subordinates the socio-cultural dimension to the pragmatic dimension and thus presents socio-cultural aspects implicitly the lasting predominance of linguistic aspects (e.g. progression in grammar)

may considerably influence the way the foreign world is presented in textbooks (cf.. Neuner, 1979c, 254 f.) and result in a random selection of aspects of a specific socio-cultural topic and in a fragmentary and distorted picture of the target world.

An example:

The treatment of “New York” in textbooks for English as a foreign language in its combination with different aspects of grammatical features.

a) “New York” and the passive voice

This combination results in a description of the origin, the appearance and the construction of the skyscrapers of New York:

Because the island is so small, the houses had to be built upwards. Today Manhattan is crowded with the highest buildings on the world... the Flat Iron Building... was given its strange name, because it has the shape of a tailor’s iron. When it was built in 1902, it was the wonder of the western world...the United Nations building .. is made of steel and glass

(*How Do you Do*, C 4/5, chapter 10)

b) “New York” and the past perfect tense

Emphasis is laid on the report of the events of a sightseeing tour through New York

We had started from London at 1. p.m., but, of course, New York time is six hours behind London... Before the helicopter came down I had already seen some of New York’s famous skyscrapers... I had heard of Fifth Avenue...’, but I hadn’t expected to see so many people there... After we had looked at the shops, Aunt Sally asked if we would like to see Harlem, the Negro Quarter of New York. But we had suddenly become very tired...

(*Learning English – Modern Course* , Gym 3, chapter 3)

c) “New York” and infinitives

The focus lies on a report on the action of sightseeing and the impressions and reactions:

There are so many things to see that I don’t know where to start. The boat-trip was most exciting. David didn’t want to sit down. He preferred to stand at the railing and watch the sights glide past.

After the trip David wanted to see something of the life in the streets... David watched the policemen control the flow of cars with their whistles. He was surprised to see... David was amused to see... They watched the fountains and heard the band play the latest pop tunes... Arthur had visited London many times and found it interesting to compare it to New York. Arthur thought that London and New York were much alike in appearing to be one gigantic mass of streets and houses...

(The Good Companion/A New Guide, vol. 3, chapter 1)

d) “New York” and reported speech

In this combination the report concentrates on the behaviour of people and their opinion about a certain event.

For example, in *Learning English – Modern Course, Gym 3, chapter 7* a reporter writes about an interview with two famous singers which is interrupted by the ‘great blackout’ (September 11th, 1965).

e) “New York” and the definite article

Sights are arranged under formal linguistic aspects (with definite article/without article):

Most people imagine New York to be... a city of huge skyscrapers. Perhaps, too, they think of such things as:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| - the World Trade Center | - Rockefeller Center |
| - the Statue of Liberty | - Fifth Avenue |
| - the Empire State Building | - Times Square |
| - the United Nations | - Central Park |

(English, G 4A, chapter 1)

f) “New York” and conditional clauses

Have you ever dropped anything from a tower or the roof of a house? If you have, you’ll know that it takes several seconds to hit the ground. If you dropped a stone from 1350 feet it would take 9 seconds! If you’re wondering about speed, you’ll be interested to know the answer: 200 mph. But don’t think you can drop things from the World Trade Center! It just isn’t possible – even though tourists are allowed to go to the top.

If you visited New York and went to the World Trade Center, you could take fantastic photos.

From the top you could see the whole of New York and probably a lot more. You'd be a quarter of a mile high – higher than some birds fly. (*English*, G 4A, chapter 1)

2.2.3.3. The Affective Dimension

The emotional-affective dimension with its emphasis on the development of attitudes toward the target language and socio-culture is especially closely tied in with the all-encompassing socio-political and educational objectives. It relates to experience more than to information and is developed by the imitation of models ('great men/women'), the imaginary participation in exciting or important events and the appeal to feelings, to soul and heart.

2.2.4. A summary of socio-cultural didactics from the perspective of foreign language teaching

There is no foreign language teaching without socio-cultural contents. Even if socio-cultural learning is not explicitly identified as a cognitive objective, the target-world is implicitly present in many components that constitute foreign language learning (e.g. in words, texts, pictures, situations, people and their roles and actions, exercises etc).

In general, it is apparent that the "official view" of the foreign world that is pre-formed in syllabuses and presented in textbooks is never objective, but inevitably tends to be influenced by overruling political considerations (or, at best, by what authors of textbooks consider feasible in their own subjective terms – which are mostly created by middle-class standards), educational guidelines or the predominance of grammatical features. We also realise that the criteria for shaping the image of the foreign world may vary considerably and sometimes even lead to fragmentary or even contrasting and contradictory representations of the same socio-cultural topics.

In foreign language teaching the socio-cultural component is inseparably melded with the linguistic component. This distinguishes the presentation of socio-culture in foreign language instruction from the teaching of, for example, geography or history classes that relate to the same target country.

The traditional dominance of the linguistic component, e.g. the dominance of grammatical progression in textbooks, will inevitably lead to a certain distortion – or sometimes trivialization – of the socio-cultural aspects. In this connection, it is worth remembering the 'bloodless' characters, which

populate the foreign language textbooks and as ‘puppets of the grammatical progression’ are only allowed to use phrases that the grammar syllabus of the current lesson ‘puts in their mouths’ (cf. 2.2.3.2.)

Socio-cultural aspects in foreign language instruction are always characterised and inevitably influenced by the fact that they are presented by media (texts; pictures; videos; etc.).

In any case, in foreign language instruction the learners meet not the target-world ‘as it is’, but rather a ‘pre-filtered construct’ of the target world. They are presented with an interim world which has been prepared on premises firmly rooted *in our own world*.

This must be born in mind when we turn to the ‘foreign world in the heads of the learners’ in the following section.

3. Interim world II: Conditions and perspectives of foreign language *learning*

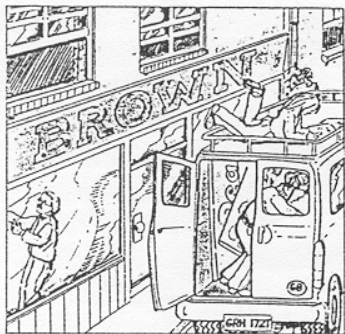
3.1. The perception of the target world in the learners’ minds

The following reflections on the perspective of learning start from our experience as teachers that pupils quite often do not learn what they are supposed to learn, but learn “something else” instead. As we have noted, we can describe teaching objectives very precisely (even to the level of specific goals for a single lesson). But we never can be sure about *what really* catches the learners’ attention and interest - and *how* they learn.

A few years ago, I interviewed an eleven-year-old German pupil who had been learning English for just a few months (cf. Neuner, 1988a, 18 ff.), and asked him about his impressions of his English book (*Learning English, Orange line*, Volume 1, 1984). We talked about the following passage (chapter 6):

5 Selby Road

- a) Ronny: Where is your new house?
 Kevin: It's a flat, not a house.
 It's in Selby Road.
 Ronny: We're in Selby Road, too.
 Kevin: Good.



- b) Kevin: Look, that is our new flat.
 And that is our new shop.
 Ronny: Is that your father in the shop?
 Kevin: Yes, and that is my mother
 in the van.
 Ronny: And the girl on the van?
 Kevin: That is my sister Kate.
 She's terrible.

And you're
 terrible, too, brother!

1 Ask your friends

- Where is Kevin from?
- Where is Kevin's new flat?
- Where is Ronny's house?
- Where is Kevin's father?
- Where is his mother?
- Where is his sister?

2 Find the right word - 'my' or 'our'?

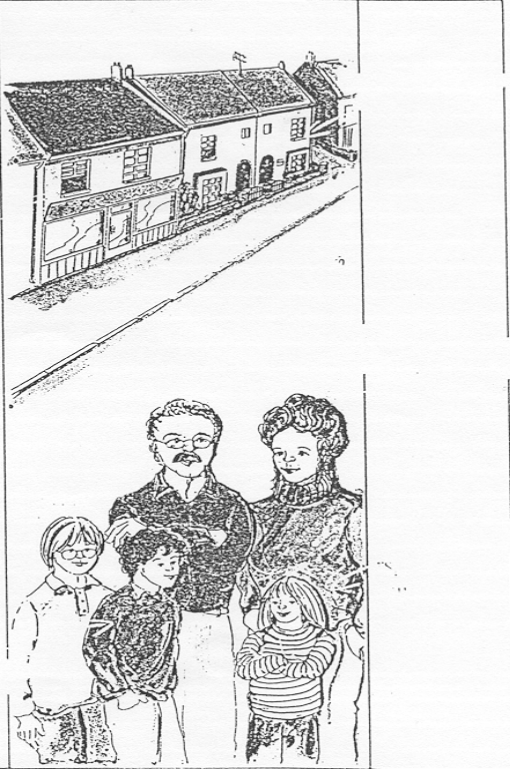
- Kevin: "That is ... sister."
- Kevin and Kate: "That is ... flat."
- Kevin: "That is ... friend Ronny."
- Ronny and Kevin: "That is ... teacher."
- Kate: "That is ... mother."
- Mr and Mrs Pearson: "That is ... shop."
- Ronny and Kevin: "That is ... road."
- Kevin: "That is ... father."

3 Look, listen and say

[eɪ] David
 name
 say
 late

Hello, is your name Kate?
 No, my name is Jane.

14 fourteen



fifteen 15

I: Interviewer
P: pupil
(my translation)

- I: What are you learning about at the moment in your English class?
- P: Well, we are learning something about a family that moved from York to Leeds.
The family's name is Pearsons: there is a man, a woman, Kevin and Kate. Kate is Kevin's sister. And then there's Ronny; he's Kevin's friend.. They all live in Selby Road, where they opened a shop. They also have a delivery truck which they need for the shop.

- I: Do you see any difference between the Pearson family and a German family?
- P: No, except that the Pearson family speaks English.
- I: How are York and Leeds different from German cities?
- P: The houses are different. They're built different. Otherwise, there aren't any differences – except for the language, of course.
- I: What do you like about the textbook?
- P: It's easy to imagine what it's like when they talk to each other. It's easy to put myself in their position.
- I: What has happened to these people so far (i.e. in the five previous chapters)?
- P: Kevin and Kate moved to a new school. A new teacher arrives there one day. She introduces herself. Her name is Mrs. Griffin. I think she's stupid because she keeps asking "Where is the pen?" or something like that. She's just stupid.
- I: And the children?
- P: Well, Kevin's really smart. He answers all of the questions at school. The other pupils are only called "boys and girls".
- I: And Kate?
- P: Kate's average. The only one who's really stupid up to now is the teacher (turning to the second picture). Kate is reading; she's on top of the delivery truck.
- I: What do you think of the family in general?
- P: The family? They're OK, I guess. They're about 50-50. For instance, I think it's stupid the way they talk to each other: 'Look this is our new flat. And that is our new shop'. That's really stupid.
- I: Why?
- P: Because they usually wouldn't talk like that to each other. I think it would be good if we got a text where something happens instead of one where they just say a bunch of stupid things. For instance, I can learn much more when we use texts in which the people are doing something. I get tired of learning when I read these two dialogues (i.e. the two dialogues entitled "Selby Road").
- I: What is the best thing that you like about the textbook?
- P: I like reading the real texts. (looking at the pictures) The pictures aren't interesting. Other textbooks have better pictures.

Socio-cultural contents are presented implicitly in the first volume of this textbook – mainly in the pictures accompanying the introductory texts and in the everyday activities and experiences of a typical English 'foreign language textbook family' (husband, wife, elder brother, younger sister). Although this

pupil judges the textbook fairly critically, he is interested in the peer group (the family's children and their friends) and he obviously identifies with the "main character", Kevin. If we observe the textbook through the eyes of the eleven-year-old, it becomes evident that the pupil "decodes" the teaching material differently than the textbook authors would like. His primary concern is neither with grammar nor vocabulary (the primary concerns of the authors and, in consequence, the teachers!), but with the people, their actions, and the circumstances they find themselves in.

It is apparent that the pupil relates the world he finds in the English book to his own world. At least initially, he is convinced that he can understand the 'foreign world of the English', despite its different nature, from the background of his own experience: to him it appears to be 'in principle like us'. He seems to integrate the elements and units of the foreign world (people, setting, actions, language, etc.) into the categories of experience with his own world and thereby gains a stable base for his perception of and his judgements about it.

It is also interesting that he is annoyed by the artificiality of the adults' language – what they say and how they say it. For him, they are neither 'normal German' nor 'normal English' adults. He notices somehow that it has to do with the 'language puppets' mentioned above. It is also revealing that he is looking for longer texts with more action that would allow him to more easily 'venture into the foreign world and stay in it'. Evidently, learning the foreign language provides him with the 'key' for this imaginary participation in the life of his peers in the foreign world presented in the textbook.

What is of special interest to us is the fact that while reading the dialogues and observing the illustrations, in his fantasy he creates some kind of 'world in between' his own world and the world of the English and by referring back to his own world he ensures that he can interpret this kind of interim world as 'normal' (i.e. corresponding with the basic norms and experiences of his own world).

3.2. A framework of interdependent levels influencing learning

When a German pupil begins to learn English at the age of 10 or 11, he is surely no longer a 'blank page' in respect to his knowledge of and views about the English-speaking world.

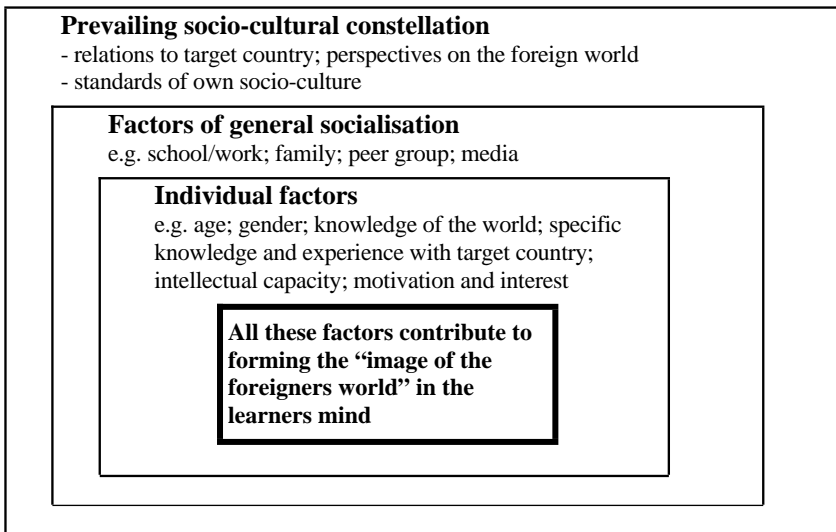
There are

- areas of general socialisation: such as family, social milieu, peer group, work, media (in particular television and, in recent years, internet),
- individual factors: such as age, gender, general knowledge of the world and special knowledge of (and maybe experience with) the target-language country; intellectual capacities, interest and motivation, etc. (cf. Ellis, 1994),

which have influenced his view of the foreign world outside school and before he starts learning the foreign language (cf. Byram and Esarte-Sarries, 1991; Hufeisen and Lindemann, 1998, 47-48). They probably have a much stronger effect on creating the image of the foreign world than foreign language teaching might ever have.

The teaching of socio-cultural aspects in the foreign language class, therefore, does not begin ‘from zero’, but rather must take into account and deal with the ‘bits and pieces’ and pre-formed views (fantasies; stereotypes) about the target-language country and its inhabitants in the minds of the learners.

The following diagram attempts to show the conditional structure of these factors (cf. Neuner, 1994):



3.2.1. Some Conclusions Concerning Our Perception Of The Foreign World.

3.2.1.1. Experiencing New Dimensions Of Socio-Culture

As long as we stay in our own world our own experiences and the underlying norms and values seem 'normal' to us. But learning a foreign language inevitably brings us into contact with a new world in which, although their world 'in principle' is similar to our own world (in its elementary dimensions of living) and they do rather the same things as we do, people have arranged their environment differently and arrange their social behaviour according to different conventions. Therefore, we may experience different patterns of behaviour and a different arrangement of social structures and institutions.

Foreign language learning on the one hand extends our socio-cultural experience to new dimensions, but on the other hand it also makes us aware of the specific features of our own world.

Some time ago, I carried out an experiment in a seminar on vocabulary in which students from many different countries took part (Neuner, 1990: 5). I asked them to draw associograms about concepts from everyday life that seemed to be easily comprehensible to everyone, like 'forest' (Wald). When we compared the results we found that all associograms contained certain characteristic features (denotations like: a forest consists of trees; a forest is green), on the other hand there were remarkable differences in areas where culture-specific experiences prevailed (e.g. experiences with tropical rain forest with different plants, animals and 'affective charge'). We may expect to find the same differences when we analyse more complex and abstract concepts in the same way.

Foreign language learning, therefore, gives us a chance to venture into a new world and by opening new horizons may contribute to broadening our experience with the world around us on a larger scale.

3.2.1.2. Looking At The Foreign World Through Our Own 'Socio-Cultural Glasses'

When dealing with the foreign world we use the same modes of perception which have been developed in and refer to our own world. This means that at first glance we cannot perceive the foreign world other than 'through our own

socio-cultural glasses'. The following frontispiece of a book of the Baroque period illustrates this metaphor:



Source: Zimmermann, J.G., 1758; quoted in: Stanzel, (1997: 34)

Two centuries ago Humboldt noted:

Das Erlernen einer fremden Sprache sollte (...) die Gewinnung eines neuen Standpunkts in der bisherigen Weltansicht seyn und ist es in der That bis auf einen gewissen Grad, da jede Sprache das ganze Gewebe der Begriffe und die Vorstellungsweise eines Theils der Menschheit enthält. Nun weil in eine fremde Sprache immer, mehr oder weniger, seine eigene Welt -, ja seine eigene Sprachansicht hinüberträgt, so wird dieser Erfolg nicht rein und vollständig empfunden (quoted from: Meyer, 1995, 48)

[Learning a foreign language should (...) result in gaining a new viewpoint in the previous world view and, indeed will, to a certain degree, because every language contains the entire fabric of concepts and the ways of thinking of one part of mankind. But because one always more or less carries over one's own world and one's own view of language into the foreign language, this result will not be reached purely and completely.]

3.2.1.3. Abstractions And Categorisations

Such categories help us to come to terms with the overwhelming influx of information – also concerning our own world -, when we are to integrate new and unfamiliar phenomena and thereby expand knowledge and evaluate new experiences. There is no doubt that the ‘world in our mind’ is not identical with the world around us. We cannot but select, focus, structure and categorise and generalise what ‘comes in’ through our senses. And in doing so we develop means to come to terms with the outside world and by abstracting our experiences, ‘construct’ elements, units and structures and create more complex images of it. Such generalisations are the prerequisite for our dealing with the outside world.

Cognitive psychology (cf. Kintsch and van Dijk, 1978) makes us aware of the fact that what we perceive we transform into concepts (cognitive units which underlie words) or propositions (clusters of concepts combined to form more complex structures) and that we store knowledge in so-called schemas, which can be organised in different ways:

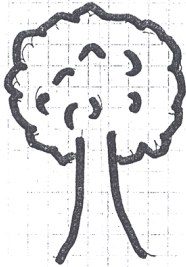
- in the form of frames (abstract organisation of knowledge);
- in the form of schemas (network of propositions in a highly systematised way);
- in the form of scripts (modelling of concrete sequences of actions and episodes);
- or in the form of prototypical representations (cf. Aitchison, 1994; Kleiber, 1993).

It is obvious that these concepts, propositions, frames, schemas, scripts, prototypes and more complex ‘images of the outside world’ even within a given socio-culture may vary considerably according to individual knowledge and experience. When I asked a group of German students to spontaneously ‘draw a tree’ they presented prototype forms, but the result was not uniform.

Aufgabe: Zeichnen Sie spontan einen Baum

Deutsche : 35

29x



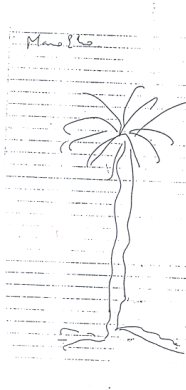
6x:



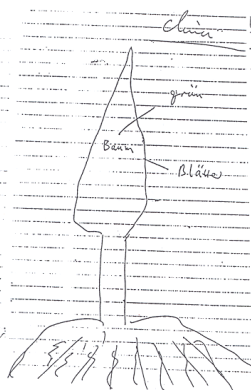
When I gave my international students the same task it was not surprising that their concept of a tree was influenced by their experiences of their own environment:

Regionalspezifische Varianten:

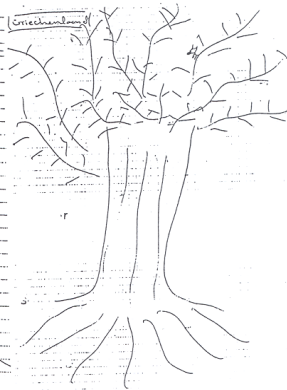
Marokko
(Palme)



China
(Pappel?)



Griechenland
(Ölbaum?)



Again, we may assume that this procedure also refers to more complex units and structures beyond the perception and representation of physical objects. And although some of them had already spent years as students in Germany most of them – especially the ones that came from outside Europe – said that their ‘images of the world’ remained tightly knit to their own previous socio-cultural experience.

The same procedure, then, applies when we try to come to terms with the foreign world. It is inevitable that we develop and use generalisations and stereotypes when we deal with it (cf. Müller, 1981; Kramersch, 1993; Tomalin and Stempleski, 1993). People approach the world not as naïve, blank-slate receptacles who take in stimuli as they exist in some independent and objective way, but rather as experienced and sophisticated veterans of perception who have stored their prior experiences as ‘an organised mass’, and who see events and objects in the world in relation to each other and in relation to their prior experience. This prior experience then takes the form of expectations about the world, and in the vast majority of cases, the world, being a systematic place, confirms these expectations (Tannen, 1979:144, quoted in Kramersch, 1993:42).

3.2.1.4. The Creation Of Different Concepts Of Interim Worlds In Our Imagination

As we have noted, our contact with the target world (within the foreign language class or outside) is hardly ever a direct one but filtered via the media and the foreign language itself. As a consequence, our immediate experience with the foreign world is substituted by ‘inner events of participation’ in our imagination which in essence are fictional and in which cognitive-mental and emotional-affective aspects are interwoven. The learner, therefore, establishes a ‘fictional scenario’ of the foreign world in which he individually arranges this ‘inner stage’ with projections and properties from his own world (knowledge, experience) and from bits and pieces of information about the foreign world that he has gathered. The whole process of ‘setting the scene’ in one’s imagination very much resembles the way we deal with fictional texts. When designing didactic concepts of foreign language teaching we tend to overlook the fact that these fantasies about participation with the foreign world (people, events, etc.) play an essential role in stimulating motivation for foreign language learning.

If our categories are not sufficient to help us arrange and interpret ‘new things’, we

- either rearrange and reinterpret them until they ‘fit’ or
- ignore and forget them (they find no ‘anchoring place’ in our memory) or
- we isolate them as “foreign elements” which we find disturbing or threatening, if substantial aspects of our own norms are at stake (e.g. taboos).

(cf. Byram and Esarte-Sarries, 1991; Farr and Moscovici, 1984; Castellotti and Moore, in press)

3.2.1.5. The Re-Interpretation Of The Foreign World With The Categories Of One’s Own World

It happens quite often that when we travel in a foreign country we come across things that spontaneously remind us of something ‘very similar at home’. In such a case in our mind elements of the foreign world are incorporated in our own socio-cultural context. Looking at the foreign world through our own ‘socio-cultural glasses’ quite often leads to a very restricted perception of such aspects of the foreign world that are familiar to us, which we then re-interpret until they fit into our own system of socio-cultural coordinates.

In such a case the interim foreign world that is created is very close to our own world interspersed with highlighted similar elements of the foreign world and has little to do with the reality of the foreign world.

3.2.1.6. The Distorted Perception Of The Foreign World

It may also happen that we perceive the foreign world as an ‘object’, but rearrange and re-interpret what we perceive according to the elements, units and structures of our own world thus distorting proportions and structures. As a result, an interim foreign world is created in our imagination which contains clearly marked elements of the foreign world but in its basic structures is created by our own world.

For example, German learners of American English immersed in a German cultural environment carry in their heads an image of the United States that corresponds to the German dream of America, nourished in part by the German literary imagination of the nineteenth century, the novels of Karl May, the role of the American army in Germany since the Second World

War, and the new German Cinema. This German image of America, of which Americans are unaware, has deep roots in the way Germans perceive themselves, their hopes and fears, their dreams and aspirations (Kramersch 1993:208).

3.2.1.7. Misconception Of The Foreign World And Its Rejection

It may also happen that our own socio-cultural categories fail to help us to come to terms with the foreign world. In such a case the foreign world appears to us to be ominous, alarming or even threatening, above all, if sensitive areas of 'normality' (e.g. taboo areas) are touched upon. The images of the foreign interim world in such a situation remain shadowy, nebulous and blurred. We may fail to 'make sense' of what we experience and feel threatened by such an alien world. Our 'natural reaction' will be confusion and sometimes an aversive reaction that may lead to rejection and prejudices.

3.2.1.8. Assimilation To The Foreign World

As we have noted (cf. 2.2.1.c) in certain socio-political constellations (dependency of own country on dominant target country) pedagogic concepts may aim at assimilating the learners to the values of the target world which set the standards. In such a methodology the interim world in the learners' imagination is composed mainly of positive elements of the foreign world to which he/she is attracted. As a consequence they are expected to do away with their own world, try to become part of the foreign world and 'be and act like them'.

3.3. The intercultural approach to the foreign world: integrating the two worlds

We have a good chance of dealing successfully with the foreign world if we manage to activate such socio-cultural categories of our own world that give us a firm foundation for, metaphorically speaking, 'building bridges' between our own world and the foreign world which enable us to venture into the foreign world in our imagination (cf. Neuner, 1994). Thus we can expand our own experiences, realise similarities and negotiate possible differences. This may also help learners to come to terms with a possible discrepancy and tension between their own view of the foreign world (interim world II) and the pre-conceived picture that is presented in the 'official interpretation' of the foreign world (interim world I).

The interim world in this intercultural approach is constituted by the ‘two sides of the coin’ – the awareness and acceptance of one’s own world and the perception and acceptance of the foreign world. It is the basis for developing tolerance towards others, gaining interest in their world and a deeper insight into our own world and can substantially contribute to living together in peace as ‘neighbours in the same house’.

In order to deal successfully with the two worlds a few qualifications - which are also essential for developing one’s own socio-cultural and personal identity (cf. Mead, 1934) - ought to be developed:

- empathy
- role distance
- tolerance of ambiguity
- awareness and representation of own identity (cf. Krappmann, 1969).

Empathy

This implies venturing into the foreign world and trying to understand it ‘from within’, i.e. try to understand ‘the others’ in their own socio-cultural contexts and realising that what may look ‘strange’ to oneself may be ‘normal’ for them. Empathy helps us to understand the ‘otherness’ of the people of the world of the target language in their own world.

Role distance

Role distance means another change of perspectives, the ‘view from outside’ upon our own world which helps us to realise that not all people share our view of our own world and, as a consequence, may have opinions about us which to us appear as prejudices. Role distance helps us to gain a different perspective upon ourselves.

Tolerance of ambiguity

It is sometimes hard to bear the fact that the ‘others are different from us’. One of the major tasks of the intercultural approach, therefore, is the development of strategies of negotiating ambiguity, e.g. signalling non-comprehension and, maybe, embarrassment; inviting interpretation and help; referring to ‘safe clues’ in a critical situation or context; tracing roots back to ‘safe ground’; explaining one’s own position; asking for and giving reasons.

It is essential that the learners realise from the beginning that in learning a foreign language such breakdowns in comprehension and communication are quite natural and will occur again and again at all stages of foreign language learning and use. Such awareness will help the learners to sustain interest, gain calmness and overcome ‘dumbfoundedness’ in critical situations.

Awareness and representation of identity

This implies a heightened awareness in learners of the socio-cultural foundations of their own world that influence their view of the world, regulate their day-to-day life (routines, rituals, life style, etc.), shape their mentality (value systems, traditions, attitudes, judgements) and their capability of relating this self-awareness to others in the foreign language (explaining one’s own world to others).

3.4. A summary of didactic dimensions of socio-cultural aspects from the point of view of foreign language learning

- The learners’ own world and socio-cultural experience, which form their own outlook in life, play an essential part in their perception and evaluation of socio-cultural phenomena of the foreign world. Therefore, their own world must not be excluded from foreign language teaching but can be used a reference point for the selection of topics and the design of tasks.
- Socio-cultural learning in the foreign language classroom is more than a compilation of ‘facts and figures’ of the target world (declarative knowledge). One of its essential features is the emphasis on *developing procedural knowledge*, e.g. strategies of negotiation of meaning; of dealing with conflicting situations of comprehension and communication; of changing roles and adopting different points of view; of self-access to information and learning aids. It also comprises a metacognitive aspect (knowing when to apply which strategy).
- This implies that in addition to teaching the learners to using the new language successfully in everyday situations in the foreign country (in face-to-face interaction with native speakers), emphasis should also be placed on the development of *discursive* communication strategies such as comparing, inferring, interpreting, discussing, reasoning, etc.

- In an intercultural concept of sociocultural learning the criteria for the selection of topics do not aim exclusively at ‘completeness of information’ and ‘representativity’ but also take into account learner-oriented aspects like
 - the learner’s interests (and needs)
 - easy access of information for the learner
 - comprehensibility of information
 - the positive affective appeal of phenomena to the learner.

As a result, for most groups of learners at the elementary stage of foreign language acquisition, their interests in the target world and their socio-cultural learning will centre around

- ‘people and their daily life’ (aspects of universal socio-cultural experience of the self and the peer group),
- imagined encounters with foreign language use and participation in ‘everyday situations’ in the foreign world and
- one’s own point of view when looking at the foreign world ‘from outside’ and negotiating the meaning of what one experiences when delving into the foreign world.

The involvement of the learner in such socio-cultural encounters may provide for identification, emotional engagement and human interest and contribute to developing the ‘inner experience in the virtual world’ of the learners’ imagination which is essential for their interest in the new language and their involvement with the foreign world. It may substantially contribute also to their motivation (affective aspects) and complements their cognitive learning (gathering information about the foreign language and the world that comes with it).

Both the cognitive and affective aspects will be essential for their successful use of the foreign language in pragmatic situations.

4. Tasks and exercises of intercultural learning in the foreign language classroom

Tasks and exercises that explicitly refer to intercultural learning are gradually finding their way into foreign language textbooks. I would like to draw the attention of my readers to two publications that approach the question of how to develop tasks and exercises for intercultural learning in a more systematic way. The one is written in English and French and mainly refers to source

material in English (Byram and Zarate, 1995), the other is written in German and is derived from *Sichtwechsel*, one of the very early example of textbooks for the teaching of German as a foreign language that are devoted to the intercultural approach (Bachmann, Gerhold and Wessling, 1996).

4.1. Tasks and activities

Byram and Zarate in their brochure *Young People Facing Difference* (1995) describe a series of graded activities (4 stages) relating to intercultural learning as described in sections 3.3. and 3.4. For each activity objectives are defined and the relationship to the general context of the intercultural approach is described. Teacher's notes, a 'warm-up' exercise and hints for teaching materials complete each activity.

Although not designed immediately for foreign language teaching these activities can very well be integrated at an advanced stage.

- No. 1: ATTITUDES TO LANGUAGES AND DIALECTS
(Knowing how to identify one's own and others' stereotype attitudes)
- No.2: MOMENTS OF EMBARRASSMENT
(Knowing how to recognise a cultural misunderstanding)
- No.3: PREPARING FOR A VISIT IN THE FOREIGN COUNTRY
(Knowing how to relate to otherness)
- No.4: HOW OTHERS SEE US
(Recognising the influence of textbook images)
- No.5: A COMMERCIAL RELATIONSHIP
(Knowing how to analyse media presentations of others)
- No.6: SONGS OF UNITY AND AGGRESSION
(Analysing the symbols of national identity)
- No.7: HISTORICAL RELATIONSHIPS
- No.8: THE MEDIA AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
- No.9: THE SYMBOLISM OF THE FRONTIER
- No.10: EXPLAINING CULTURAL DIFFERENCE
- No.11: EXPERIENCING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE
(Reflecting on the power of language to create and overcome distance and difference)

4.2. A typology of exercises and tasks for intercultural foreign language learning

The typology of exercises of Bachmann, Gerhold and Wessling (1996) is more closely related to foreign language learning. They offer a progression from the training of awareness and perception to more complex tasks referring to communicative competence in intercultural situations

Stage 1: tasks developing intercultural awareness and perception

1. describing and commenting on visual and auditive impressions
2. pictures (what one sees)
3. telling stories (in picture-stories)
4. evaluating situations and people
5. describing people (clippings)
6. telling stories about pictures
7. personal impression and interpretation of pictures
8. change of perspective
9. describing pictures/situations from memory

Stage 2: Concept and meaning

1. speculating about 'blank space' e.g. in a story
2. writing associograms
3. making collages from pictures and texts
4. connotation – denotation; excluding words that do not fit
5. filling in antonyms and scales
6. talking about prototypes
7. finding criteria for concepts
8. defining one's own priorities
9. defining differences (e.g. Café – bar – Kneipe)
10. formulating questions to define a concept
11. project research concerning a concept (e.g. living room)

Stage 3 Comparing cultures

1. Comparing and contrasting
2. Finding generic terms
3. Classifying
4. Discussing opinions
5. Socio-cultural units in comparison
6. Ways of expressing indirectness (The German "man")
7. Comparing stereotypes
8. Culture-specific logical relations

Stage 4 Developing communicative competence in intercultural situations

1. Analysing the effect of speech acts and their linguistic realisations
2. Analysing strategies of communication
3. Analysing socio-cultural features of certain text types
4. Analysing and comparing styles of expression
5. Translation and interpretation
6. Giving feedback (active listening)
7. Cultural interplay
8. Adopting roles in a discussion
9. Paraphrasing
10. Meta-communication (talking about communication)

A great variety of tasks and exercises referring to the socio-cultural/inter-cultural aspect in foreign language teaching also can be found in Abendroth-Timmer (1998), 391 – 407.

5. Conclusion: ‘National’ culture or ‘inter-culture of self’?

Our position concerning socio-culture in this paper is based on the experience that

- the concept of ‘socio-cultural identity’ does exist; it may be defined in different ways such as on the basis of the area covered by a language, national borders or political structures, which are the external framework within which personal identity develops
- as human beings we are inevitably tied into social groups and structures which not only form the conventions, routines and rituals of our daily life, but also mark our system of norms and values which we use in order to make judgements about what we perceive and observe in the world around us; in other words, as human beings in the course of socialisation we attain social identity as members of a specific group; this is shown when we do empirical research in intercultural social studies
- when dealing with the foreign world we deal with a *vis-à-vis* which in its substance and appearance may be *different* from our own world, but the way we deal with such a ‘*vis-à-vis* beyond our socio-cultural borders’ is similar to the way we deal with things unfamiliar within our own socio-culture; we refer our perceptions and observations of the foreign world to our own individual/socio-cultural background and use

its elements, units and structures for the negotiation of the meaning of what we experience.

The traditional position of sociology (cf. Parsons, 1968) developed a rather static view of society with a hierarchical structure of cultural, social and personal systems. In the predominant cultural system, norms and values are defined, which then are transferred to the social system in the form of institutions and integrated into the personal system (internalisation) which secures action and behaviour according the rules and regulations and determines the social status and role of the individual.

In contrast to this position, the social theory of symbolic interactionism (cf. Mead, 1934) makes a clear distinction between social identity which we acquire as members of a specific social group and personal identity which characterises us as individuals. Apparently, there may be tensions – and sometimes conflicts – between the expectations of the community I belong to and my individual wishes, so that the development of my ‘personality’ can be interpreted as a never-ending process of negotiating my individual aspirations (self image, “I”) against the expectations my group (collective identity; “Me”). A ‘balanced personality’ is achieved in this process when I manage to balance my personal claims and aspirations with the responsibilities I have in respect of the expectations and demands of the community I am part of.

It is interesting to note that in recent years this ‘modern’ view has been challenged by a ‘post-modern’ position which questions the impact and rejects the influence of the social environment on the formation of a person’s identity and postulates an explicitly individualistic ‘culture of self’ beyond national, political or linguistic barriers and limitations (Singh, 2002). This seems to be the radical opposite to the postulate of ‘collective identity’ of totalitarian states.

The concept of ‘culture of self’ seems to be a reaction to two conflicting tendencies in our times: on the one hand the rapid development of globalization with its political, economic and social mega-structures which in the individual creates a feeling of dependency and helplessness, and on the other hand the retreat and withdrawal into smaller communities and groups that provide for identity and shelter, but may also lead to a revival of nationalism and even chauvinism and xenophobia.

It also indicates that the vast movement of global migration which has set in not only may lead to a clash of cultures, but also may lead to the formation of

a plurilingual and pluricultural personality, a personality who ‘feels at home’ in more than one world.

The discussion about the ‘culture of self’ reminds me of the heated discussions among sociologists and philosophers in the late 1960s, summoned up by Habermas in his *Vorbereitende Bemerkungen zu einer Theorie der Kommunikativen Kompetenz* (1971) (Prolegomena of a theory of communicative competence), which had a strong impact on the formulation of a critical-emancipatory approach to foreign language teaching in Germany in the 1970s (cf. Piepho’s influential concept of “Kommunikative Kompetenz”, 1974).

Communicative competence in Habermas’ concept is regarded as the central aspect of the development of personal identity which evolves within the social environment and is founded in the three interdependent areas of universal pragmatics:

- cognitive competence,
- linguistic competence and
- interactive competence.

Communicative competence implies four preconditions for discourse:

- truth of assertions,
- adequacy of shared norms, of interpersonal relations (equal status) and of context
- veracity of self representation
- comprehensibility of semantic content of utterance.

In such a discourse ‘on equal terms among equal partners’ we may enter the path to what Habermas paradoxically calls “konkrete Utopie” – an utopian vision which under certain conditions and circumstances may become reality.

Apparently, this position is the philosophical background of the postulation of the ‘culture of self’, too: a world in which liberty, equality and fraternity are practised on ‘equal terms among equal partners’. It is a vision of a ‘better world’ in which stereotypes, prejudices, aversions and aggressions are overcome. Its prerequisite is a community in which its members share experiences in ‘more than one world and language’ and strive at practising discourse and refining the qualifications we discussed when sketching the intercultural approach: empathy; role distance; tolerance of ambiguity and awareness and representation of identity (cf. 3.3.) In this perspective the

concept of 'culture of self' may be interpreted as the fulfilment of the 'modern' intercultural approach.

However, given the rather desolate past and present state of many societies, such a vision can only be achieved and practised in comparatively small communities that are committed to following the rules of discourse in the sense of Habermas. These have been - and are - elitarian communities – not necessarily elitarian by birth or social status, but mainly by spiritual consent. In past centuries one can discover such 'intercultural' and 'transnational' communities in religious groups or circles of scholars or in the field of arts and literature – such as in mediaeval society to a certain degree in monastic communities, in orders of knighthood or among the poets of Minnesang or the writers of Arthurian epics. In the European context most of these groups referred back to what Wandruszka (1991) calls the 'European identity' (Greek-Roman and Christian heritage). And in this respect it is certainly worth taking seriously, because it give us hopes for a 'better future' and provides us with pedagogical guidelines and perspectives of a world free of power, suppression and violence where mutual understanding and living together in friendliness and peace can be realised.

Neusprachlicher Unterricht muß Unterricht für alle sein... Die Solidarität der Nationen dieser Erde wäre Schall und Rauch, wenn es nicht eine Verständigung gäbe, die trotz Differenzen in Weltanschauung, Kultur und politischem System realisiert werden könnte. Wo sonst, wenn nicht im Fremdsprachenunterricht, kann die nachwachsende Generation lernen, andere Menschen als Mitmenschen anzuerkennen, obwohl sie sich von uns unterscheiden? Wo sonst kann man lernen, Aggressivität gegenüber Fremden und Angst vor Fremdem abzubauen? Kulturelle Vielfalt, Empathie für das Fremde und Liebe zur fremden wie zur eigenen Sprache und Kultur sind keine Gegensätze. Anerkennung der anderen Menschen in ihrer Andersartigkeit und internationale Solidarität sind deshalb das Ziel des fremdsprachlichen Bildungsprozesses. (Meyer,1995,49)

[Learning modern languages must be accessible to all... The solidarity of the nations of this earth would be mere sound and fury without communication which can be practised despite differences in weltanschauung, culture and political system. Where else, if not in modern language teaching can the coming generation learn to accept other people as fellows although they are different? Where else could one learn to reduce aggression and fear of others? Cultural plurality,

empathy for others and love of one's own and the other's language and culture are not opposites. Acceptance of other people in their otherness and international solidarity are, therefore, the objective of the process of education in foreign languages.]

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INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE AND EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP: IMPLICATIONS FOR LANGUAGE TEACHING METHODOLOGY

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1. Introduction

The work of the Council of Europe demonstrates clearly that language learning has a pre-eminent role in the educational opportunities of citizens. Such an assertion challenges practices, reinforced by many currently formulated programmes of study, textbooks and examinations, that limit language learning to an instrumental process for consumers rather than citizens.

By acknowledging language learning as part of education for democratic citizenship, we assert ambitious aims for our work as language teachers. That is not to say that such aims are unrealistic for schools. I shall argue that certain conceptions of language teaching, far from opening horizons and stretching pupils, constrain them in all too familiar places (particularly classrooms and homes) where their ascribed role is to be subordinate to teachers and parents. Just at the time when, as adolescents, they are striving towards independence, adulthood and citizenship, the experience of language learning in secondary schools constantly reminds them of their status as pupils and children. It is hardly surprising that this often creates resistances. Those who, in the early 1980s, created what they perceived as relevant and realistic programmes of study for languages, may have misjudged. A more challenging programme, in tune with the rest of the curriculum, may provide the motivation that is so essential for successful learning of languages.

For the Council of Europe, language learning is a key component of education for democratic citizenship which is:

a participative process developed in various contexts which, *inter alia*:

- equips men and women to play an active part in public life and to shape in a responsible way their own destiny and that of their society;
- aims to instil a culture of human rights;
- prepares people to live in a multicultural society and to deal with difference knowledgeably, sensibly, tolerantly and morally;
- strengthens social cohesion, mutual understanding and solidarity (Council of Europe, 1999).

If we think of language learning as contributing substantially to this 'participative process', we need to ask questions about the content, the

teaching strategies and the overall context in which we teach. It follows that we should be concerned to ensure meaningful integration with the curriculum as a whole, for example in England with what is known as Citizenship and Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE), in other countries languages with education for citizenship, civic education, social studies or political education.

To take the aims of Citizenship in the National Curriculum for England as an example, we can note that these broadly correspond to those in the quotation above:

Citizenship gives pupils the knowledge, skills and understanding to play an effective role in society at local, national and international levels. It helps them to become informed, thoughtful and responsible citizens who are aware of their duties and rights. It promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, making them more self-confident and responsible both in and beyond the classroom. It encourages pupils to play a helpful part in the life of their schools, neighbourhoods, communities and the wider world. It also teaches them about our economy and democratic institutions and values; encourages respect for different national, religious and ethnic identities; and develops pupils' ability to reflect on issues and take part in discussions (QCA, 2000: 4).

The aims have in common a particular emphasis on values: active engagement in public life; a culture of human rights; intercultural skills for living in a multicultural society; a commitment to social cohesion and solidarity. Central to education for citizenship is a knowledge and understanding of human rights.

A culture of human rights means living and working in a climate where respect for human dignity and equality of rights are basic minimum standards. Human rights are accepted by all the governments and major religions in the world as universal standards, even if some governments fail to live up to their own rhetoric. Human rights are therefore the basis of a system of values that is independent of any particular culture, be it ideological, religious or national. A knowledge and understanding of these internationally validated, non-ideological, secular standards is therefore a particularly important asset for language teachers, whose professional role requires them to mediate between languages and cultures (Buttjes and Byram, 1990).

2. What are Human Rights?

Human rights are set out in internationally recognised texts and provide a legal, ethical and moral framework for the regulation of relationships between states, between people and between states and people. Although human rights have antecedents in the 18th Century, notably the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen of 1789, international, as opposed to national statements of human rights are a mid 20th Century, post-1945 phenomenon.

The United Nations was established in 1945 to support international efforts to achieve justice, peace and freedom in the world through the promotion and protection of human rights. This new international standard was set up in opposition to the values promoted by the explicitly racist nationalist regimes of the 1930s and early 1940s, whose leaders had used discrimination, repression, war and genocide as instruments of policy. The basis for the new post-war world order is the fundamental belief in human beings as being equally endowed with inherent dignity.

Human rights were adopted as the underlying principle of international law with the drafting of the *Charter of the United Nations* in 1945. They were first comprehensively defined in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948 (Johnson and Symonides, 1998). René Cassin, who helped draft the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, categorised the rights as:

- personal rights such as: equality before the law and equal entitlement to rights; right to life, liberty and security of person; freedom from slavery, torture, arbitrary arrest; right of fair public trial and presumption of innocence.
- rights in relationships between people, such as: right to privacy; freedom of movement; right to nationality; right to marry, have children, own property.
- public freedoms and political rights including: freedom of thought, conscience and religion; right to freedom of opinion and expression; right of peaceful assembly; right to elect a government.
- economic, social and cultural rights including: right to work, rest and leisure; adequate standard of living for health; education; participation in cultural life.

He also noted that the final three articles of the Universal Declaration emphasise the rights to a social order, at all levels up to global, where human rights can flourish. In particular, the final article outlaws actions and activities intended to destroy rights and freedoms (Osler and Starkey, 1996).

In 1953 member states of the Council of Europe signed the *European Convention of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms* which gives legal force to those rights and freedoms contained in it and provides a court to which individuals may take their cases. All individuals living in Europe are protected in this way, not just citizens of member states. Both the Council of Europe and the European Union are intergovernmental organisations founded explicitly on human rights principles.

The *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989), which has been adopted by virtually every country in the world, is a further indication of the universal acceptance of legal obligations to respect human rights. The rights in this convention are the entitlement of all young people under the age of eighteen. They guarantee a right to the provision of shelter and essential services, including education; protection from harm and exploitation; and participation appropriate to age and maturity in decisions that concern them (Verhellen, 1997 and 2000).

Universal acceptance that human rights standards apply to all children and adults throughout the world, was confirmed in the Vienna Declaration of June 1993. Representatives of states accounting for 99% of the world's people, reaffirmed their commitment to the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* as the means to freedom, justice and peace in the world (UNHCR, 1994). Thus, human rights attach to all human beings equally, irrespective of origin, status, culture or language.

Democracy and citizenship depend on an acceptance by governments and individuals of human rights. Democracy depends on individuals having freedom of conscience, freedom of movement, the right to peaceful assembly and media constrained only by the need to protect the rights and freedoms of others. Non-democratic regimes are characterised by the use of censorship, restrictions on freedom of movement and assembly and for discriminatory legislation. Citizenship describes the relationship of individuals to communities and to governments where human rights are agreed standards.

3. Human rights and language teaching: aims and values

International human rights instruments include commitments to education and definitions of goals. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that: 'Education shall be directed to (...) the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding and tolerance amongst all nations, racial or religious groups'. The Convention on the Rights of the Child includes a commitment to provide education directed to 'the development of respect for human rights'. Language teaching is a vehicle for transmitting such knowledge and understanding of human rights and a policy instrument for promoting intercultural understanding in a spirit of human rights (Osler and Starkey, 2000a; Starkey, 1996, 1997, 1999, 2000).

Language learning, by definition, is an intercultural experience. Comparisons will inevitably be made, by teachers, learners and in course materials, between behaviours, practices and institutions in the cultures of the learners and the target culture. In a multi-ethnic community of communities, there will be, within any given language learning group, learners with experience of and feelings of identity with a wide variety of cultures.

Through foreign language education, learners have the opportunity to engage with people with other values, meanings and behaviours, potentially but not necessarily in a pluralist mode...for a multicultural society. (Byram and Guilherme, 2000: 71).

Without a frame of reference, comparisons between cultures, both within the learning group and between the learners and the target culture may be the occasion for stereotypes, racist or sexist comments or jokes and derogatory remarks. These contradict the spirit of human rights, which is to be respectful of others. Stereotyping also negates the aims of education in general and of language learning in particular. A knowledge and understanding of human rights, equips teachers and learners to engage with other cultures on the basis of equality of dignity.

The fulfilment of policies of the Council of Europe, depends on citizens, including young people, having an understanding of their own human rights, and a commitment to the equal entitlement of all other human beings to enjoy these rights. Such a commitment entails responsibilities, a sense of reciprocity and solidarity (Osler and Starkey, 2001).

Recommendation R (85)7 on *teaching and learning about human rights in schools* explicitly endorses human rights as core values underpinning the curriculum. The concept of human rights is also included in a list of key concepts, identified for Citizenship within the National Curriculum for England on (QCA, 1998). These are:

- democracy and autocracy;
- co-operation and conflict;
- equality and diversity;
- fairness, justice, the rule of law;
- rules, the law and human rights;
- freedom and order;
- individual and community;
- power and authority;
- rights and responsibilities (QCA, 2000: 20).

These concepts, to be acquired by all those studying the curriculum, are of particular value to those studying and teaching languages and cultures, in Britain and elsewhere. We can observe the importance attached to democracy, equality, and freedom, and to human rights, which is emphasised by the repetition of ‘rights and responsibilities’.

4. Citizenship and language teaching in the secondary school

How is the synergy of Citizenship and Modern Languages to be achieved within prescribed programmes of study in secondary schools? At first sight there should be limitless scope since in some cases there is no defined content for the languages taught. If teachers can choose any content, then why not subjects associated with Citizenship and issues of freedom, equality, inclusion and human rights?

In practice, the content is largely determined by the commercially produced text-books and course materials available within schools. These may be based on earlier versions of programmes of study, which themselves were heavily influenced by earlier curriculum development initiatives. In the 1970s, the work of the Council of Europe on defining a content for languages (van Ek, 1975) inspired a number of attempts to make the study of a language in school a relevant experience for learners. Those involved therefore tried to imagine concrete situations in which young people might wish to

communicate in a second language. The rationale is described by one pioneer of this movement:

Young school learners would probably make a first visit (abroad) with a school party where their most pressing needs would be taken care of. They would want to buy postcards, a present to take home, an ice cream and a coke and use some polite expressions to people they met. Later they might go on an exchange where they would need to converse with the family, exchange some personal information, express likes/dislikes and preferences and possibly use services such as a bank and a telephone. Later again they might go independently with their parents and act as interpreters for the rest of the family (Page, 1996:100).

Although the chosen scenarios give the learner a role as actor in an intercultural setting, the prominent purpose imagined for the visit is tourism, with the learner largely in the role of consumer rather than citizen. Moreover, in spite of hypothesising different contexts for communication, including the role of interpreter, there is no suggestion that students will take with them any curiosity or any social, historical, economic or political awareness.

The list of topics to be studied for language examinations for 16 year-olds in England, first introduced in 1988, is revealing of this confined communicative universe: personal identification; house and home; geographical surroundings; school; free time and entertainment; travel; holidays; meeting people; shopping; food and drink; weather and seasons; accommodation (Jones, 1994:25).

In fact, although the programmes of study for 11–16 year-olds have been freed of specific content, the influence of textbooks and examinations results in learners remaining stuck in the role of tourist / consumer for the five years of their secondary schooling:

Perhaps the biggest problem (and the main cause of boredom) is that those topics are visited and revisited year after year adding on a little more vocabulary each time (Callaghan, 1998: 6).

This vision of the language learner as child within the family, pupil within the school and consumer within society has persisted, so that in the year 2000 the speaking test in French for 16 year old speakers of English was based on:

- home life
- school life
- self, family and friends
- free time
- your local area
- careers, work, work experience
- holidays
(OCR 2000a).

This list is restrictive and, indeed, conservative in that it provides no encouragement to learners to look outside their own personal sphere. Even interest in the target culture can only be evoked in the context of holidays. It is perhaps not surprising that language teachers have recently tended to see themselves as developing skills rather than cultural knowledge (Byram and Risager, 1999).

There are, as we shall see, ways of teaching Citizenship through such topics. However, reference to the public sphere has to be consciously introduced in spite of rather than because of the topics.

One consequence is that the learning of languages may lack broad appeal. Callaghan (1998) points out that the majority of sub-topics in the syllabus appeal to girls rather than boys, though several are equally disliked by both sexes. For example she found that House and Home was enjoyed by girls, who liked to describe room furnishings in detail. The boys tended merely to list items of electrical equipment. Family and Daily Routine includes descriptions of household tasks. However, girls are much more likely to have experience of these tasks than boys. She concludes:

Children are taught to speak a language as if they lived in a moral vacuum and that the only interactions they are likely to have are with shopkeepers...This sanitised version of life makes French particularly unpalatable to boys who, on the whole, prefer realism and facts.

She suggests that if the teaching was re-structured to include a debate on the gendering of household tasks, this could include both groups more equally and promote some awareness of equality issues.

5. Language Teaching and Citizenship: taking opportunities

It is possible to teach a Personal, Social and Health Education programme in the target language and still cover the restricted list of topics, as some course books have demonstrated (e.g. Miller et al. 1990). Questions of healthy eating, of lifestyle, future plans, and life projects can be taught in the language studied and include a comparative cultural dimension.

Whereas in other curriculum areas learners are expected to exercise critical judgement and explore issues, this is rarely the case for the domestic, consumer and tourist agenda that constitutes so much of language learning. However, the same topics addressed critically and problematised can contribute to Citizenship:

Conversations are likely to be very different, if, under the heading of travel, the role-play is...immigration officer and black tourist. (This)...might offer some insights into immigration policy and an opportunity for raising some very open-ended questions. Food and drink are potentially interesting and controversial issues. Questions of health, of power, of advertising, of hunger and starvation in the world, hence of justice, are all areas of enquiry in this topic. Finding one's way around town may lead to all sorts of discoveries that tourist boards and even governments would not wish to be revealed. Why are there people... sleeping under bridges or in cramped hostels? Daily routine invites questions about life-style and its impact on the environment (Starkey, 1990).

The example of the role-play given above was intended to shift perceptions rather than be an example to be followed in a teaching situation. Role-play is a very useful technique in language teaching, as in education for citizenship. It is a technique that requires attention to warm-up, ensuring participants feel comfortable with the task and taking care when going into role and when coming out of role. Moreover, particular care is required if learners are to take on roles which involve them in racist or sexist discourse, as the feelings of both players and audience risk running out of control. The introduction of role-play is a good opportunity for language teachers to collaborate with their colleagues teaching drama (Byram and Fleming, 1998; Ur, 1982; Wessels, 1987).

A move away from closed and true / false questions in reading and listening comprehension, to open-ended questions where opinions are genuinely sought and discussed can invigorate language classes. The communication gap can also be the opinion gap. Some examinations do recognise the possibilities for languages to address Citizenship. For instance guidance for preparing examinations in England suggests:

This specification provides opportunities to contribute to the teaching of the Citizenship programme of study in the following areas:

- the importance of a free press, and the media's role in society, including the internet, in providing information and affecting opinion
- the United Kingdom's relations in Europe, including the European Union,
- the wider issues and challenges of global interdependence and responsibility, including sustainable development and Local Agenda 21,
- research a topical political, spiritual, moral, social or cultural issue problem, or event by analysing information from different sources, including ICT-based sources, showing an awareness of the use and abuse of statistics,
- express, justify and defend orally and in writing a personal opinion about such issues, problems or events,
- contribute to group and exploratory class discussion, and take part in formal debates,
- use imagination to consider other people's experiences and be able to think about, express and critically evaluate views that are not their own.

There does, however, seem to be an ambivalence about these suggestions. Some teachers suggest that such a programme is too ambitious, but it could well be that language teaching has got itself into a vicious circle of low expectation and low achievement. By adjusting the interest level, whilst retaining a careful grading of the language, a more stimulating learning environment may be created.

6. Citizenship and languages in the upper secondary school

The study of social and political issues is common at this stage and it provides opportunities for developing two of the three main aspects of Citizenship as defined by Crick (1998), namely 'social and moral responsibility' and 'political literacy'. However, the study of texts about political issues does not, of itself, lead to political literacy. Other skills need to be developed simultaneously. A Council of Europe Recommendation on teaching and learning about human rights in schools suggests that these are:

skills associated with written and oral expression, including the ability to listen and discuss and to defend one's opinions; skills involving judgement such as ... the identification of bias, prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination; social skills, in particular recognising and accepting differences (Council of Europe, 1985 cited in Osler and Starkey, 1996: 181-3).

Adopting a human rights approach to language teaching provides a sound framework within which controversial issues can be examined. Debate is conducted showing respect for persons, particularly other interlocutors, as the essential dignity of human beings is acknowledged. Disparaging remarks about individuals or groups who are not present is also inappropriate behaviour and therefore unacceptable. On the other hand, if respect for human rights is regarded as a standard, judgements can be made about the words or actions of individuals, governments or cultural groups. In this way uncritical cultural relativism can be avoided.

This perspective needs to be made explicit to the learners from the start and one way of addressing this is to study human rights instruments in the target language. Such a study enables students to link the various topics they study to wider issues of human rights and is likely to prove interesting and popular (Starkey, 1996:108).

Simultaneously procedural ground rules need to be established and adopted for discussion and debate in class. Whether the context is pair work, group work or whole class discussions, agreements such as the following apply:

- Participants are expected to listen to each other and take turns.

- Where a discussion is chaired, the authority of the chair is respected.
- Even heated debates must be conducted in polite language.
- Discriminatory remarks, particularly racist, sexist and homophobic discourse and expressions are totally unacceptable at any time.
- Participants show respect when commenting on and describing people portrayed in visuals or texts.
- All involved have the responsibility to challenge stereotypes.
- A respectful tone is required at all times.

It goes without saying that teachers are party to these agreements and will not use sarcasm, irony and disparaging judgements.

Some syllabuses include the study of far-right political parties and terrorist organisations. In a democratic society it must be assumed that this has been chosen in order to demonstrate the unacceptability of the discourses and actions of such movements. An understanding of human rights as the basis for democracy is essential background for such study. This is particularly important when preparing an essay topic such as one proposed by an examination board in England in its specimen material, namely: 'Explain the success of the National Front amongst some sections of the French population' (OCR, 2000b). Without reference to human rights, such a topic invites the rehearsal and indeed the justification of racist policies.

7. Developing intercultural skills through language learning

How are teachers to help their students to study authentic texts critically? Material in text books may contain stereotypes of ethnic minorities, for example. One answer lies in the development of skills of critical discourse analysis and critical cultural awareness.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA)

is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context' (van Dijk, 1997).

CDA can provide a set of guidelines for interrogating an authentic text, so that students engage with the content critically at the same time as they attempt to understand other more superficial aspects of the text. For instance, learners may confront texts of a possibly xenophobic nature to explore the discourse mechanisms of racism.

As an example, students of Spanish studied newspaper articles on the theme of immigration. They were asked to closely examine the texts looking for certain discourse features such as the following:

- Sources, perspectives, arguments.
Are they institutional? From the majority group? Do minority perspectives find expression? Are the sources of evidence made explicit?
- Vocabulary, connotations, names
Different words for 'immigrants'. Different descriptors.
- Implications and presuppositions
e.g. 'the best antidote against immigration is...' implies that immigration is a social illness against which society has to fight.
- Extrapolation of statistics
e.g. 'by 2010 there will be...'
- Active and passive constructions
e.g. '32 immigrants deported to Africa' - no mention of who was responsible.
- Rhetorical expressions
Metaphors and similes: 'Fortress Europe'; 'an avalanche of immigrants'.
- Us versus them
our democracy, our jobs, their religion, their culture.

Having made this critical analysis of the linguistic and stylistic features of the press coverage of immigration, students felt confident to discuss the issue and to make comparisons with coverage in their own national and local press. They then wrote an account of their findings and their feelings about them (Prieto Ramos, 1999).

Another useful approach is provided by Cultural Studies, which is an academic discipline with its roots in Britain in the 1950s and 1960s but acknowledging the intellectual contribution of French academics such as Barthes, Bourdieu and Foucault (Storey, 1996). It can be focused on cultural

forms found within particular national communities, such as French Cultural Studies (Forbes and Kelly, 1995). In essence culture is conceptualised as 'neither aesthetic nor humanist in emphasis, but political' (Fiske, 1987).

The introduction to a textbook on British Cultural Studies produced in Romania describes the expectations of the authors for the learner:

This book is less concerned about making you learn information by heart than with encouraging you to *process* the information contained here. For example, in the class on Scotland you are asked to *compare* what a Scottish person says about Scotland and what a compilation from reference books says about Scotland. You do not have to learn one or the other, but you do have to learn the process of comparison. The same process of comparison of different kinds of information takes place in many classes. In others, you are asked to *apply* concepts such as 'gender' or 'nation as imagined community' in your analyses of society. In short, what we want is to provide you with the skills to *argue* ...not learn by heart (Chichirdan *et al.*, 1998:10).

Sources of information used in this approach are authentic texts, including audio recordings and a variety of written documents and visuals such as maps, photographs, diagrams and cartoons. The activities involve understanding, discussing and writing in the target language. The approach to the materials is always critical. There is every reason for applying such principles to all topics studied in the target language. It is a question of challenging the reader by bringing together texts and visuals which present contrasting views. It is also a question of applying key concepts, such as those in the Citizenship curriculum above, to the reading and discussion of the texts.

Both the CDA and the Cultural Studies approaches help to develop what Byram (1997: 63-4) characterises as 'critical cultural awareness'. This is an ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, such as human rights, perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries. This involves the ability to:

- Identify and interpret explicit or implicit values in documents and events in one's own and other cultures, using a range of analytical approaches to place a document or event in context and be aware of the ideological dimension.

- Make an evaluative analysis of the documents and events by reference to an explicit perspective and criteria such as human rights, liberal democracy, religion, political ideology.
- Interact and mediate in intercultural exchanges, being aware of potential conflict between one's own and other ideological positions and attempting to find common criteria. Where this is not possible, to negotiate agreement on places of conflict and acceptance of difference.

I am arguing that the development of such awareness should start at the outset of language learning and be continually reinforced throughout the stages of learning. This has wider implications for schools (Osler and Starkey, 2000b, c).

8. Conclusion

Motivation is all important in language learning and, indeed in language teaching. Learner motivation can be increased by engaging curiosity, confronting alternative perspectives and broadening horizons. Teacher motivation is increased when the learners achieve results and are themselves motivated. It is also increased when teachers feel that they are contributing something significant to the learners' experience. This is more likely to occur when there is a learning partnership which critically examines evidence, facts and sources, asks real and significant questions and collectively attempts to draw conclusions.

There is a further significant task for language teachers, namely promoting commitment to democracy and sustainable development based on an understanding of human rights. Motivation and progress are likely to follow when teachers and learners have a common commitment to developing language skills and simultaneously developing the skills of citizenship.

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IDENTITIES AND PLURILINGUALISM: PRECONDITIONS FOR THE RECOGNITION OF INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCES

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Introduction: The aim of this study¹

Reflections triggered by the *European Year of Languages 2001* have prompted me to set out the ensuing future-oriented proposals. They are aimed not only at adapting the existing proposals on teaching approaches but also at initiating a debate which, without wishing to break with the positions developed by the Council of Europe for over 30 years, will keep step with the structural changes in a Europe which already exists in legal terms but which is still evolving.

Drawing on existing teaching models, these proposals endeavour to adapt these realities to a European model promoting a common European identity and “active citizenship”. Against a background of change, the intercultural dimension is currently taking on a meaning different from that ascribed to it when the Council of Europe began working on the subject thirty years ago. If we are to take account of intercultural competences on the European language certification market we must engage in prior reflection in order to define them more accurately and to clarify the conditions for their institutional recognition, in the light of current developments. This text merely initiates this reflection, and outlines the necessary political and educational conditions for cross-border circulation of these competences, as a prerequisite for establishing an environment in which intercultural competences can cross borders unobstructed, and for their mutual recognition and transfer, within a system of plurilingual competences.

This text emphasises the identity dimension which is implicit in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* and the *European Language Portfolio*, endeavours to define communicative AND intercultural competences, and concentrates on enhancing the prospective symbolic benefits of promoting cultural plurality, stressing:

¹ Originally entitled “*Language certification in the European context and transfer of intercultural competences: conditions for the emergence of a teaching framework*”, this text, presented in December 2000 to the Council of Europe’s Modern Languages Division at its request, was carefully re-read by Professor Byram, project leader. I would like to thank him here for his remarks. The latter, as well as the publication of the 2001 edition of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, have led to considerable redrafting of the text. The title has also been altered in line with this redrafting.

- the conceptual contribution of the social sciences in general, and of anthropology in particular, to re-mediating national or ethnic identity clashes;
- the potential increase in credibility for the teaching debate of concentrating on the symbolic interrelations between languages and cultures;
- competences linked to the activity of linguistic and cultural mediation;
- the possible role of the *Portfolio* in transfrontier recognition of these competences.

1. European construction and connecting languages and cultures

1.1. From an area of competing interests to a common democratic area

During the colonial and post-colonial period the environment for disseminating European languages beyond their national borders was structured by relations of ideological competition among the major powers (based on universalism, capitalism/Marxism, etc), exposing it to conflicts of influence aimed at promoting politically oriented systems of values. The construction of a European identity, a declared political objective for all European countries, is based on one founding principle, namely that of shared values, with a common foundation of democratic values. The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe uses the following phraseology to recognise this common area: “through its enlargement to include new member states which have rejoined the family of pluralist democracies, founded on the rule of law and respect for human rights, the Council of Europe has resolutely committed itself to a pan-European dimension”¹. How does the educational tradition reconfigure itself once a principle of ideological solidarity has established itself among previously competing countries? How can this common political will be reflected in the values promoted in language teaching and learning?

The concept of transfer, which is broached first of all in the general context of language teaching and subsequently in the narrower framework of

¹ *Resolution (95) 38 on the Council of Europe’s cultural strategy*, adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 7 December 1995 at the 551st meeting of the Ministers' Deputies.

intercultural issues, is here taken as an instrument for recognising a commonality of interests, a common area in which competences constructed in different mutually complementary cultural contexts are exchanged and validated. Action to co-ordinate and connect them helps construct a common “democratic identity”. Following on from the economic and political construction of Europe, under the sign of a common “European identity”, the questions underlying the term “democratic identity” can be interpreted as the need to deepen a debate which is now centred on the sharing of common cultural values.

1.2. European political area and shared fundamental values

Where the founding principles of the European Union are concerned, the will to construct an area of shared values is one of the principles underpinning the Maastricht Treaty (1992) and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the Union (2000). The latter text states, for instance, that “the peoples of Europe, in creating an ever closer union among them, are resolved to share a peaceful future based on common values”.

According to the action programme (1997-2000) of the Council of Europe’s Education Committee, establishing a bedrock of common European values involves individual development, centring on the themes of “democratic security”, “social cohesion”, increased “personal mobility” and intensified “exchanges”¹. In the framework of the Modern Language Project, these new themes link up with the *Common European Framework of Reference and Languages* and the *European Language Portfolio*. The endeavour to secure a joint definition of competences and the tools for ensuring their transfrontier recognition are central to the design of these two reference tools. However, neither document places any particular emphasis on competences related to the intercultural dimension.

The concern to achieve transfrontier recognition of competences is providing a new area for reflection and action in language teaching that highlights the concepts of “citizenship”, “heritage”, “geographical mobility” and “cultural and linguistic diversity”, concepts shared by both the Council of Europe and the European Union.

¹ *A Strategy for Action: the CDCC’s Priorities 1997-1999*, 1997 Strasbourg, Council for Cultural Co-operation, January, CDCC (97) 2, p. 11.

1.3. Discrepancy between affirmations of principle and actual realities

We would posit that in order to achieve these objectives the European political area must first of all identify its divisions in order to remove them: the historic division between the Europe lining up to join the European Union and the Europe that is already constituted in economic and legal terms; the economic and social division between those who can actually or potentially experience periods of transfrontier mobility and those for whom the idea of leaving their national territory is quite simply out of the question; and political and identity divisions giving rise to territorial conflicts and frozen identities, using ethnic and religious categories to constitute peoples and states.

One example of this profusion of identities is provided by Bosnia-Herzegovina, which, in accordance with the Dayton Agreements, has concurrent strategies for identifying with a Bosniac, Serb or Bosnian community and which no longer makes any reference to Serbo-Croat, replacing it with a new Croat, Serb or Bosnian language codification. The use of the word “Muslim” is a good illustration of the complexity of the situation with regard to identity: before the Dayton Agreements this term referred to Islamised Serbo-Croat-speaking populations who, in the old Yugoslav Federation, were officially considered as a national group. However, this definition excluded ethnic Albanian and Turkish Muslims.

We might draw on the approach adopted in Franco-German relations during the 1960s, aimed at averting a recurrence of three common wars (1870, 1914-1918 and 1939-1945), which led to the foundation of the Franco-German Youth Office; the premise being that we have more chance of getting over a past conflict which has been named and is therefore recognised, than one that has been repressed and consigned to execrated memory. Identifying the discrepancy between affirmations and principles and actual social realities is therefore a precondition for the ensuing proposals.

2. The cultural intermediary model

2.1. Equality of cultures, encounter between a political principle and an anthropological principle

The European Union has its own specific cultural policy. Title IX, Article 128 of the Maastricht Treaty provides a definition of culture, codifying two different levels: a common European culture, and national cultures, preserved by the concept of national sovereignty. “Improving the knowledge and dissemination of the cultures of Member States” is one of the objectives aimed at establishing a bedrock of common values.

This political principle has been supplanted by an anthropological principle which was acquired in the middle of last century to counter the political utilisation of racism and social exclusion, and which bestows equal scientific dignity on all cultures. However, anthropology does not content itself with affirming a theoretical equality: it examines the relationship between equality and diversity: “But a simple proclamation of the natural equality of all men, and of the brotherhood which must unite them without distinction of race or culture, is somewhat disappointing for the mind because it overlooks a real diversity which can be readily observed. And it is not enough to say that this diversity does not affect the root of the problem to make it possible to pretend, both theoretically and practically, that the problem does not exist”¹.

The current educational uses of these political and anthropological principles are ambiguous. The concept of the universality of values is often tendentiously used as a reference level for a bedrock of cultural practices shared by the whole of humanity. There have been two different such uses of universality. The first involved the production by colonising states and religious dogma of submissive ideologies aimed at preparing the ground for imposing the conqueror’s models. The second is based on the invariants describing human activity throughout all the diverse eras and cultural practices, and protecting it from the risks of a unilateral definition of Progress. Religion, marriage, the prohibition of incest and the burial of the dead were the first cultural universals ever registered. Unlike the former use of universality, this latter one derives from anthropological observation and description, irrespective of any regional or national territorial ambitions.

¹ Lévi-Strauss, C., 1977, *Structural Anthropology*, Volume II, Chapter 18, Race and History, Allen Lane, London, p. 330.

So we shall avoid universal use of universality, which imposes ideologically constructed models. In order to obviate the risks inherent in a “universal effect” lending the fallacious credit of “a universal expression to the expression of individual interests”¹, we shall envisage universality as an epistemological category identifying laws that systematise the observable diversity of languages and cultures.

2.2. From antagonistic native/foreign duality to connecting languages and cultures

The further work conducted in the 1970s by the Council of Europe in the field of teaching innovation was a major factor in assigning a specific functional status to the “foreign(er)” concept. We shall be detailing the basic principles of the *Threshold Level*, inaugurated in 1974, as forerunners of a mode of social thought and matrices that have provided descriptions of more than 21 European languages and three different levels (*Waystage, Threshold, Vantage*). All in all, the role attributed to this concept fits into a dual native/foreign relationship, although the definition given by van Ek in 1986 of socio-cultural competence takes account of the specific status of the learner, who must also “extend his communication horizons beyond his own linguistic community”². The native speaker’s standard competences serve as a reference for determining the learner’s level, and the categories used to organise social relations are defined in generic terms (family, professional, gregarious, commercial and civil, and media relations, in the *Threshold Level*), as is the learner’s identity (tourist or migrant), providing access only to a description of the realities of the target culture.

In 1986, the model proposed by van Ek is explicitly based on Gumperz’s definition of communication, namely “Communication is a social activity requiring the co-ordinated efforts of two or more individual (Gumperz, 1982), and therefore differentiates socio-cultural competence from social competence. The latter is, however, presented as “a separate component of FLL objectives”, “less linguistically oriented than the other components”³. But in order to define an advanced social competence, the native speaker is the chosen paragon for the learner: “Level 4.5 can interact in a foreign

¹ Bourdieu, P., 1994, *Raisons pratiques. Sur la théorie de l’action*, Paris: Seuil, p. 130. See also *Language and Symbolic Power*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1991.

² van Ek, J. A., 1986, *Objectives for Foreign Language Learning*, Strasbourg, Council of Europe, Volume 1: Scope, p. 51.

³ van Ek, op. cit., p. 57.

environment in social groups of his choice with the ease of a native speaker”¹. The competences relevant to a transfer of competence linked to one language and culture to another have no place in this binary model.

If we no longer centre the description on a simplified, unequal communication model in which the foreigner has everything to learn from the native speaker, operating as a unilateral relation to cultural difference, we can secure a less radical model referring to a competent learner who does not equate foreignness with a handicap and distinguishes linguistic performance from social status. Faced with a dramatised vision of the relationship with the Other, in which foreigners are primarily defined by their status outside the society whose language they are learning, the reference to an area free of national references can promote situations of mutual understanding, interfaces, experiences resulting from the transition from one cultural system to another, in short situations associating the competences acquired in the mother tongue(s) with the partial competences acquired in other second or foreign languages, which may derive from a non-validated experience of otherness.

The social categorisation used in the 1970s-1980s *Threshold Level*, differentiating between tourists/travellers and migrant workers and their families, draws on a tacit opposition between chosen mobility involving “pleasure trips”, and mobility necessitated by economic conditions. While this opposition is still quite topical, it can no longer cover all the current changes in the area of mobility. Whereas the 1970s-1980s *Threshold Level* has a separate category for “specialists or professionals not leaving the country of origin”, an updated version of European society centred on mobility must adapt the reference to this situation by highlighting the action of such professionals from the angle of their competences in interfacing between several different systems of values. There is now a new category, that of students, exemplifying a European society that is mobile and open to things foreign. Alongside the student category, with its high cultural capital, the reference to “migrants” as an “imposed”, socially stigmatised type of mobility, underrates the wealth of experience of otherness developed by persons who have worked hard to set up in a given country, even if they are driven by economic or political reasons. The survival of this latter category in the intercultural field runs counter to the anthropologically validated equality principle

¹ van Ek, op. cit., p. 66

The use of a generic category, namely mobility, facilitates a more objective description of such experiences, even if they involve different motivations, objectives and durations of residence abroad. These descriptors tend to neutralise any outsider status and promote the characteristic qualities of familiarity with a new environment.

2.3. The work of mediation

The notion of mediation is central to the conceptualisation required for describing a plural environment. In the 1996 version of the *Common European Framework of Reference* the mediation concept is very much present, under the heading “Language activities”, linked to the concepts of reception, production and interaction. The concept is further described as follows: “in both the receptive and productive modes, the written and/or oral activities of mediation make it possible, through translation or interpretation, a summary or a record, to produce for a third party a (re)formulation of a source text to which this third party does not have direct access. Mediation language activities, (re)processing an existing text, occupy an important place in the normal linguistic functioning of our societies”¹. If there is also a reference to a third area, the mediating activity there is presented in a restrictive form. Since mediation has little to do with activities linked to situations of mobility, it is illustrated by language skills in line with the formal school model. It is standardised, remote from any context of tension and restricted to reformulation activities facilitating access to an otherwise elusive piece of information. The mediating activity is not included in the 2001 version of the *Framework*.

When the concept of “mediation” appears in the *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the Union*², it clearly designates a social function. The Ombudsman (*médiateur* in French) is an official to whom a plaintiff can appeal if he/she has been unable to obtain satisfaction from the national judicial system: “Any citizen (...) and any natural or legal person (...) has the right to refer to the Ombudsman of the Union cases of maladministration (...)” (Article 43). The mediation concept helps bring States, languages and cultures back together

¹ *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, 1996, Strasbourg: Council of Europe, (Draft 1), p. 15.

² The draft of this text was approved at the Biarritz Summit (October 2000), and the Charter was proclaimed at the Nice Summit (December 2000). This instrument is the reference frame for the common values on which European Union members draw to develop their integration, and which must be accepted by future new members.

by providing a third area for dialogue to overcome a conflict-inducing dualism.

Drawing on the principle of recognising such a third area, where transfrontier competences come into their own, three complementary conceptions of mediation are presented below:

- mediation as an area for bringing together new partners. Mediators make intelligible to newcomers the cultural and linguistic contexts which the latter inaugurate;
- mediation in situations of conflict or tension, where languages and cultural references lead to exclusion and social violence. Different situations of re-mediation will be presented within a process which begins by specifying the object of the conflict, to go on to establishing a procedure for possible conflict settlement;
- mediation instilling specific dynamics into third areas as alternatives to linguistic and cultural confrontation. In this plural area difference is pinpointed, negotiated and adapted.

These proposals continue on from and broaden the *Common European Framework of Reference* (1996). The *Framework* (1996 and 2001 versions¹) mainly uses the word “learner”, which refers to a formal educational or guided learning context, but it also uses the expression “social actor”: a social actor’s individual competences are all his/her knowledge, skills and aptitudes enabling him/her to act². The use of the term “social actor” places the transfer of competences within a general system of social relations transcending the school context, emphasising social dynamics and efficiency and mobilising the individual’s identity. I have offered an even more specific definition of the “social actor”: “*Il occupe une position particulière dans le tissu social: il a été socialisé dans une communauté, il est confronté à des valeurs qui sont partagées par un autre groupe*” (Social actors occupy a special status within the social fabric: they have been socialised in a given community and are confronted with values which are shared by another group)³. This definition

¹ We refer here to the final Council of Europe/Cambridge University Press English version, 2001, *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*.

² Op. cit., p. 10.

opens the way for further defining the competences peculiar to what has been called an “intercultural mediator”, who is a frontline operator in a plural area.

Social actors who take on the role of mediator occupy a specific position, which requires them to renounce the categories of thought within which they were socialised and the immediate identity-related solidarities linking them to their community of origin. In order to occupy this third position they must also distance themselves from all the affiliations which are generally involved in communication in the other community with which they are interacting. The potential benefits of this position, simultaneously sidelining the effects of familiarity and distance, have been extensively explored and highlighted, particularly as regards drawing stark contrasts between the culture of belonging and a foreign culture. In both the process of interpreting speech: “*Dans le domaine de la culture, l'exotopie est le moteur le plus puissant de la compréhension (...). A une culture étrangère, nous posons des questions nouvelles telles qu'elle-même ne se les posait pas*” (In the cultural field exotopia is the most powerful driving force for understanding. We put novel questions to a foreign culture, questions which it has never even asked itself)¹; and the effort to shake off classifications bluntly contrasting the outsider with the insider: “The relation of externality (...), which I call objectivist, is more common in ethnology, probably because it corresponds to the vision of the *outsider*, but some ethnologists have also played the game - the double game - of participation in native representations: the bewitched or mystical ethnologist”². How can this paradoxical position characterising the anthropological attitude be recognised and systematised within a transfrontier organisation of competences?

³ Byram, M., Zarate, G., 1997 ‘Definitions, objectives and assessment of sociocultural competence’. In: M. Byram, G. Zarate and G. Neuner, *Sociocultural competence in language learning and teaching*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe. Also published in *Language Teaching*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, October 1996, under the title “Defining and Assessing Intercultural Competence: Some Principles and Proposals for the European Context”, pp. 239-243.

¹ Bakhtin, M., 1894 *Esthétique de la création verbale* (The aesthetics of verbal creation), Paris, Gallimard (Collection Bibliothèque des idées), p. 340.

² Bourdieu, P., 1993, “A Science that makes Trouble”, in: *Sociology in Question*, London: SAGE Publications, p. 16. Transcription of the interview with Pierre Thuillier, *La Recherche*, 112, June 1980, 738-43.

3. Recognising intercultural competences: current ambiguities of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*

3.1. The ambiguities of the conceptual fields used

The *Common European Framework of Reference* (2001 version) comprises several concurrent levels of terminology: it refers to “operations” in connection with learning and teaching, to “competences” in connection with the learner, and to “language activities” facilitating the processing of text reception or production and encouraging strategies. The Framework mentions language competence, broken down into general competences and language communication competences, which further sub-divide into linguistic, socio-linguistic and pragmatic competences. The general word list does not include intercultural competence(s).

This omission may be seen as the result of changes in disciplinary fields which had long been subject to mutual interference in the name of language-culture links, but what had previously been a useful cross-fertilisation has gradually become a source of ambiguity, indeed of conceptual opacity. We might recall how the term “communication competence” gained in favour because of developments beyond the control of their author, Dell Hymes¹. While the term “competence” is generally attributed to Chomsky, who

¹ Initially claiming to write from the angles of both linguistics and anthropology, Hymes responds to the desocialised vision of Chomsky’s language with a contrasting definition of acquisition modelled by culture, taking account of “the study of intercultural difference in speech functions” (Hymes, D. H., “On Typology of Cognitive Style in Languages”, in *Anthropological Linguistics*, 1961, 3(1), pp. 22-54), as an advocate of an anthropological approach to language. At the time, these positions fitted in with the disciplinary rationale of anthropology, which, in the United States, was sub-divided into cultural anthropology, physical anthropology, archaeology and linguistics (Hymes, D. H., Postface (1982), in *Vers la compétence de communication* (Towards communication competence), Paris, Hatier/CREDIF, 1984). The controversy between Chomsky and Hymes reflects a frank epistemological opposition between what was known as generative grammar and communication ethnography, the latter disciplinary banner also being adopted by others such as Ervin-Tripp and Gumperz at Berkeley between 1960 and 1965. The reason why Dell H. Hymes uses the word “competence” is because Chomsky imposed it as a term of reference and because it focuses the debate. However, the article attributed to Hymes in 1973, entitled *On Communicative Competence*, was not published. Only in 1983 was a revised version published under the amended title *On linguistic competence* (op. cit., 1984). However, the original concept had already evolved in the field of language teaching: Hymes, at the very time when teaching science was “taking over” communication competence, changed the term (if not its content) and moved on to linguistic competence (Coste, D., Preface to op. cit., 1984).

adheres rigidly to the “competence/performance” duo, it progressed more quickly in didactics (“poetic competence”, “literary competence”, etc) and in language teaching, as witness the variety of uses made of the term in the Council of Europe’s work from 1986 onwards (cf. van Ek: linguistic, socio-linguistic, speech, strategic, socio-cultural and social competences) and in both versions of the *Common European Framework of Reference*.

This original duality of disciplines (linguistics and anthropology) gradually disintegrated. It has left a noticeable trace in van Ek (1986), when he quotes Gumperz’s work *Discourse strategies*, adopting his aforementioned definition of communication. The current *Common European Framework of Reference* subtly develops three categories of competence (“linguistic, socio-linguistic and pragmatic competences”), which are now in the plural but which stop where those competences begin which are, according to van Ek, “less linguistically oriented and directly linked to the learner’s personality”¹. The dimension initially covered by the anthropological approach to language disappears behind the comprehensive reference to “general competences”, even if it crept back in under the heading of Chapter 2, “An action-oriented approach”².

Although the considerable shift in these topoi is a salutary sign of an evolving reflection, it does lead to conceptual tremors which blur perception of the conceptual fields and, in the end, of the disciplinary legitimacy of their conceptual bases. For instance, an obvious terminological leap has propelled the social dimension of language from the “competence” level (van Ek, 1986) towards such notions as “knowledge” and “know-how”, presented as “abilities”, “life skills” (‘savoir-être’) and “learning skills” (‘savoir-apprendre’). Furthermore, “abilities” are placed at a terminological level equivalent to that of “realisation”, even though this change of paradigm has not been explicitly instated...³.

As an outline approach to ethnography, the relation to the Other is specifically referred to in the 1996 version of the *Framework*⁴ with the

¹ van Ek, op. cit., 1986, p. 65.

² *Common European Framework*, op. cit., 2001, p. 9.

³ Hymes noted the presence, in the terminology developing alongside the competence concept, of “capacities”, “know-how”, “proficiency”, etc; Hymes, op. cit., 1982, p. 125.

⁴ In Chapter 3 as a sub-category of “An action-oriented approach” under the heading “The general competences of an individual”, p. 11.

expression “approaching others”. This expression is annotated in the definition of “learning skills” as follows: “knowing how, or being disposed, to discover 'otherness' - whether the other is another language, another culture, other people or new areas of knowledge”¹. However, this definition is evasive, and is so general as to leave a number of uncertainties which make it difficult to operationalise. The reference to the “relation to the other” has been removed from the definitive (2001) version of the *Framework* and from the definition it gives of “learning skills”.

Further deletion can also be noted between the 1996 and 2001 versions of the *Framework*. The 1996 version of the *Framework*, which centres on competence to communicate through (a) language(s), describes various types of language activities². In this list of competences, the cultural component is only partly involved in the socio-linguistic and pragmatic components. While the text specifies that the socio-linguistic component is there to stress the importance of the cultural dimensions in constituting the ability to communicate, this competence is broached from the angle of the usual social standards. Where the pragmatic component specifies the knowledge, know-how and life skills relating to a language system, it refers solely to the non-verbal dimension of communication (gestures, mimicry and proxemics). Where socio-linguistic competences are concerned, the cultural reference is highlighted, although it concentrates on the native speaker as the model to be imitated and is therefore prescriptive. The pragmatic competences, on the other hand, have a functional and procedural aim.

Detailed analysis of competences (4.7 *The user/learner's competences*), and more specifically of the general competences, shows that the ambiguity is still there. Even though the definition of “intercultural skills and know-how” (4.7.1.2.2) is centred on linkage, explicitly mentioning the concept of cultural intermediary, this latter concept is separate from “intercultural awareness”, which is included as an item of knowledge. Would it not be better to include it among “life skills”, which are not listed in detail? The fact is that the process of developing intercultural awareness tends to create a stark contrast between “the world we come from” and “the world of the target community”, which is, in objective terms, scarcely conducive to recognition of a linguistic and cultural “in-between”. “Discovery abilities”, which were later called “heuristic (discovery) abilities”, establish the learner’s ability to make the best of a new experience, but this open definition is included in a list which

¹ Op. cit., p. 12.

² Chapter 3, Approach Adopted, p. 9.

restricts its scope in an intercultural situation (phonetic skills and language awareness).

All these nuances were omitted from the 2001 version.

The proposals which we put forward¹ use terminology equivalent to that of the *Framework* (1996 version). However, this terminology functions differently, which proves that no terminological consensus has yet been achieved. In our proposals the concept of life skills may appear as being specific to capacities to overcome ethnocentric prejudices. G. Neuner² also lumps together “realisation of identity”, “distancing”, “empathy” and “tolerance of ambiguity”. In both analyses intercultural awareness is separate from knowledge, or indeed counterbalances it. Such awareness is a specific competence centred on developing attitudes of openness to things foreign, as attested by interpretation strategies the assessment of which cannot be associated solely with a command of knowledge. Life skills denote a category of competences based on individual experience which cannot be reduced to school or institutionalised experience, however elaborate.

3.2. Tightening up the reference terminology

The exchange of competences presupposes mutual recognition of the values exchanged. The field of cultural values comprises little evaluative culture and the sociological instruments problematising the descriptive units have made few, if any, inroads into language teaching. The following are a few of the ambiguities present at this level in the field of language teaching/learning:

- the *Threshold Level* initially dealt with social relations, sub-divided into family/professional/gregarious/commercial and civic relations;
- the *Framework* uses fluctuating terminology to describe cultural units, eg social groups, generations, gender, public/personal/education/private fields (vestiges of the *Threshold Level*), but also general culture, society, community, worlds, etc. The generic

¹ Byram, M., Zarate, G., op. cit., 1996/1998.

² Neuner, G. 1997, The Role of sociocultural competence in foreign language teaching and learning. In: M. Byram, G. Zarate and G. Neuner, *Sociocultural competence in language learning and teaching*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe. Also published in *Le Français dans le Monde*. Paris : Hachette, 1998 July, pp. 116-120.

reference to “culture” covers all these categories, but it also masks the ill-defined contours of these concepts;

- for different languages the institutional categories refer to different criteria for dividing up the cultural area: *area studies* rub shoulders with *civilisation* and *Landeskunde*. *Kultur* is not the same as *Culture*¹. Each of these terms has an historico-geographical background referring to a specific national history.

On the other hand, the sociology of things foreign and the relation to the Other uses a terminology rather more independent from national histories. The commonest terms for classifying cultural diversity and the elementary forms of the relation to the other include ethnic group, social classes and minorities. The sociological approach problematises the differentiation between national and ethnic communities, between collective identity and national belonging, between linguistic community and identity strategies. It brings up the common uses of the concepts of “people”, “race”, “nation”, “language” and “citizenship”, when they lead to ambiguities or confusion between “migrant”, “foreigner” and “illegal immigrant”. The “sociology of the foreign” clarifies the criteria for categorising social units, particularly when the latter are used to stigmatise, differentiate or integrate and amalgamate. While the last *Threshold Levels* do not disregard such aspects², they only deal with them indirectly.

It should, however, be noted that this terminology is sometimes subject to a specific social setting. The word “ethnicity”, for instance, is much more acceptable in English than its French counterpart, “ethnicité” and its derivatives, which still have very unfortunate racist connotations.

¹ See Neuner, G., op. cit.; Elias, N., 1969, *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation* French translation: *La civilisation des mœurs*. Paris: Calman-Lévy, 1973; Braudel, F., 1986, *L'identité de la France. Espace et histoire* Paris: Editions Arthaud; and Duby G., Mandrou, R., 1968, *Histoire de la civilisation française*. Paris: A. Colin.

² “These works can also constitute, *per se*, valuable reference points for interpreting the linguistic aspects of legislation on citizenship and employment”. Trim, J.L.M., 1997, *Preface to Eesti keele suhtluslävi, Threshold level for Estonian*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

3.3. Establishing actual equality in descriptions of cultures

A distinction should be drawn between theoretical equality, which is generally recognised by all non-totalitarian education systems, and actual equality. The success of any policy of transferring cultural competences depends on first acknowledging and then eliminating this discrepancy.

A theoretical declaration of equality between the cultures coexisting in a school system may be accompanied by an actual situation of inequality as regards relations between these cultures. We might mention a number of processes leading to inequality, as noted both in schools and in the ordinary, spontaneous modes of comparing different cultures:

- order of entry into a course, a school period or school textbook: in the first case, the first foreign culture discovered in a learning pathway is the one which reaches the largest audience; the culture encountered towards the end of the course enjoys the prestige of the highest academic qualifications but reaches a narrower audience. Cultures which come in at the end of a school period (school term or year) are more prone to be glossed over owing to lack of time, and are therefore liable to be seen as relatively unimportant;
- the confusion between geographical proximity/distance and cultural proximity/distance when they are established on the basis of the learner's social reference points. Distance may have overtones of exoticism or else indifference; proximity may create the illusion of cultural continuity or, on the contrary, cause a feeling of a threat to the learner's identity, if the two neighbouring countries have been in conflict in the past;
- a negative attitude to technological progress: confusion between "minor languages" (with fewest speakers) and "smaller cultures"; association of "smaller cultures" with technological backwardness; association of declining international influence with decreased anthropological interest;
- lumping a given culture together with the social status of the representatives of this culture present in the learner's country;
- the passions and resentments left over from a period of colonisation or foreign occupation, which may trigger a nationalistic counterbalance in relations between countries that are now independent and former colonial or occupying powers and lead to historic denial of this foreign culture.

In all these examples, confusions fuel an implicit hierarchy of cultures, which is incompatible with the official principle of equality. They prevent us from broaching the cultures as equivalent units, which is a vital precondition for mutual recognition of what might be mutually recognised in a transfer. Unless this precondition is met, a competence which enjoys prestige in one context is likely to be dismissed as worthless in another. In implementing actual equality between cultures in a teaching context, a competence which originates in a given culture must not be affected by the fluctuations in international representations of this culture, whether positive or negative. If a principle of systematic equivalence is to be unanimously accepted by all the partners concerned they must share the same symbolic area of reference.

4. Organising an area for symbolic exchanges

The principle of reciprocal recognition of diplomas has already been ratified in the European Union's educational policy¹, but only applies at higher education level. Where the institutions are concerned, it promotes openness in terms of course options, facilitates decision-making as regards academic recognition of diplomas, provides a catalyst for structural reflection, and preserves the autonomy and responsibility of assessors. Where the students themselves are concerned, it guarantees academic recognition and encourages recognition of competences between different countries. A common reference area requires all these properties.

In this already existing environment, such a mode of certification concerns diplomas rather than competences. Furthermore, "attitude competences" are not academically certified, a situation which can only change with increased volume and variety of such competences. As we have seen, these competences have only just begun to take shape, scattered through a variety of rather obscure categories. We shall be putting forward a few proposals below aimed at initiating debate.

¹ The ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) for transferring academic credits earned in European countries involves institutions of higher education in the Community and the EFTA countries. It initially covers the following 5 disciplines: management, chemistry, history, mechanical engineering and medicine. It facilitates student mobility under the Community's Erasmus, Comett, Lingua and Tempus programmes.

4.1. A symbolic area of exchange

The symbolic area in question here is a multilingual and multicultural one which derives its symbolic importance from the states and educational institutions actively involved in mutual recognition and joint certification of intercultural competences.

From the angle of assessment and certification, we note that because intercultural competences are so closely linked to transfrontier movement of identity-oriented values, they cannot be considered as a mere extension of specifically linguistic competences. We might in fact posit that situations of identity crisis exacerbate the latent tensions underlying more run-of-the mill situations, and act as a magnifying glass for analysing the functioning of ordinary tensions. In situations of acute identity clashes one side might possibly recognise advanced linguistic competence in the enemy's language, but only if they deny the identity-linked factors which the enemy associates with this language. More generally, the movement of identity values from one language to another or from one country to another is done at the cost of symbolic transformations, which are necessary for their reception in a cultural context different from the one from which they originated. In less critical situations, or where transfrontier movement of such values is an everyday occurrence, the concomitant phenomena can be identified here and there (school textbooks and school exchanges, for instance) and in the form of mediating activities. Of all such activities translation is certainly the one most clearly identified in language teaching and language use. However, the competences linked to translation never coincide completely with those required for overall mediating activities.

Institutionalising a symbolic area of exchange of intercultural competences serves to regulate the disparity of the values exchanged, and more specifically the different modes of perception coming into contact in a multilingual and multicultural area. Without regulation the various modes of perception may be mutually contradictory: a language and/or culture which have "major" status in one place may be a "minor" culture and/or language elsewhere, which prevents mutual recognition based on the equity principle. If a competence originating from a given culture is not to suffer from the variability of representations of this culture in a plurilingual and pluricultural area or be degraded from a positive value to a negative one, such areas have to be governed by the market rule that competences which are rarer (because of their high quality or simply because they are less common) are held in esteem because of their very rarity and that the commoner competences are

merely taken at face value. Competences linked to connecting up two cultures unequally recognised at international level can thus be recognised regardless of the direction of the exchange: the transfer of the values of the more recognised national or community culture towards the less recognised one is generally accepted as being “normal” or desirable. In an area where the movement of values is regulated symbolically, any exchange which would be unequal in a liberal economy of representations is just as beneficial to the “dominated” culture as to the “dominant” culture. A social actor who connects up two cultures with disparate international profiles and symbolic credits can reap the symbolic benefits linked to both abundance and rarity, whatever his/her original linguistic and cultural context (“dominant” or “dominated”).

The *European Language Portfolio* prefigures a potential space regulating mutual recognition of competences which, without such a common exchange environment, would be subject to fluctuations detrimental to a mobile social actor whose experience is cultural and predominantly transnational. However, the current versions of the *Portfolio* show some degree of naivety. Observation of social realities in an unregulated symbolic space shows that it is not necessarily in people’s best interests to divulge the origin of all their intercultural competences. This dimension is underestimated in the current formulation of the *Portfolio*: people can be socially marginalized by a language even if they have a command of it, or by cultural origins which they feel they had better not overemphasise in a country where such origins are stigmatised, and so they will avoid mentioning them in their *Portfolio*. A complete review of all individual linguistic competences as recommended in the *Portfolio* has more to do with a school-oriented view of learning, whereby it is assumed always to be in the learner’s interest to list as many competences as possible, than with an identity-oriented approach, which is based on elaborate strategies using the multiple facets of an identity to ward off any simplistic categorisation.

An approach to intercultural competences that incorporates the highly complex identity-oriented strategies is geared to producing an individual description centred on a positive approach to identity, reversing the traditional relation to things foreign, which is associated with risk and handicap. It seeks instead to develop a success-oriented model capable of producing diversity.

4.2. Transverse competences and competences dependent on a language

Two concepts might be of particular help in bringing out structures concealed by the “language barrier”, namely a transverse function based on the cultural proximity of different languages. First of all, the concept of awareness¹, which was used to introduce the concept of transverse competences into both the linguistic and cultural domains, has been widely commented and documented. Yet this concept is absent from both versions of the *Framework*.

Secondly, the concept of “cultural area”² can also help create transverse skills vis-à-vis the cultural proximity of different languages. This concept is often used to compare different languages in situations where neighbourly relations are to be promoted for political or administrative reasons. For instance, a given language may be taught in a department dealing with “Romance languages”, “European languages” or “Mediterranean languages”, depending on the local interests of the university offering the language course. Cultural diversity can be a unifying argument for countries sharing the same language for the defence of their respective national languages against rampant globalisation: the Cotonou Declaration of the International Organisation of the French-Speaking World advocates linguistic and cultural solidarity based on “*la variété exceptionnelle de ses cultures, disposant, à côté des langues nationales, d’une langue commune, le français*” (the exceptional variety of its cultures, with the common language of French being used alongside the various national languages)³. These reference points, which fluctuate in accordance with institutional and political interests, show the fluidity of the cultural boundaries defining a common heritage vis-à-vis the current

¹ This concept has been developed along a variety of lines, especially where early learning is concerned. Cf. Candelier, M. *et al.* Evlang - Éveil aux langues (Projet SOCRATES / LINGUA 42137-CP-1-97-1 - FR - Lingua - LD ; Doyé P. 1999, *The Intercultural Dimension. Foreign language Education in the Primary School*, Berlin : Cornelsen Verlag.

² There has been less emphasis in language teaching on the work of historians of attitudes and everyday life, who inform us about shared histories on either side of state borders. These shared experiences include eating habits, exile, literature, regional rebellions, marine traffic routes, pilgrimages, etc, which forge lasting links in the universe of current day-to-day practices, which become obvious to visitors abroad when they probe beneath the immediate surface. This work should be better integrated in the teaching field to facilitate interpretation of the concept of “cultural area”.

³ Cotonou Declaration, 2001 Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie/Agence intergouvernementale de la Francophonie, Paris, June, <http://www.francophonie.org>.

classifications used in language teaching. Other notions such as context, representations and mediation facilitate a description involving connections capable of dealing with plurality by highlighting the link-ups between languages and cultures, exploitable potential and the results of personal experience of the relation to otherness. However, such an ambitious project should give these concepts a much higher profile.

Disciplinary reflection from the socio-historic angle might clarify the debate. One example of the work emphasising the socio-historic aspect is the project on proximity arising from a shared linguistic area, centred on the Romance languages, viz Italian, French for the Italians, French for the Spanish and Spanish for the French¹. However, we should bear in mind that such socio-historic proximity is not synonymous with ease of teaching: “it is precisely in the field of closely related languages/cultures that misunderstandings are liable to take root, when differences confuse and similarities irritate (...) and when ideologies, in the broad sense, are unevenly shared by the genuine transmitter and receiver of the learning process”². Cultural proximity requires interpreting skills just as advanced as those needed in the more obvious cases of cultural and linguistic remoteness.

How are transversality and cultural proximity to be reflected in modes of certification? Given that the *Framework* is mainly based on the description of linguistic systems taken in isolation, intercultural competences are currently the optimum means of introducing the dynamics of plurality. With reference to the concept of otherness and the Latin etymology of the French equivalent, *altérité*, we might draw on the fact that the relation to *alter* is not only dual (one or the other) but also means others, generically. Otherness is not reducible to duality, as in the various bilingual approaches. Nor is otherness a complex phenomenon based on a dual formula with one or more extra parts added on. It is rather a proliferation whose organisation is discovered as it grows. Otherness is a combinatory phenomenon in which 1,

¹ Galatea Project; results published in Dabène, L., Degache, C., (Ed.), 1996 *Comprendre les Langues Voisines*, in *Etudes de linguistique appliquée* Paris: Didier Erudition, October-December, No. 104. Or also: Benveniste C.B., Valli A. 1997 *L’intercompréhension : le cas des langues romanes* in: *Le Français dans le Monde*. Paris: Hachette, janvier.

² Lévy-Mongelli, D., ‘Logiques situationnelles, extratextualité et attitudes culturelles de l’apprenant dans la compréhension de textes dits “ouverts”’, in: Dabène, L., Degache, C., (Ed.) 1996 *Comprendre les Langues Voisines*. Also published in *Etudes de Linguistique Appliquée* Paris: Didier Erudition, October-December, No. 104.

2 and 3 can change places and roles, regardless of mathematical rules: sometimes we have to go through 3 to reach 2 starting from 1.

But the truth of the matter is that in the *Framework* the reversal of perspective potentially triggered by the reference to plurality is toned down in that it calls “general” competences which might be better apprehended from the transverse angle, thus facilitating transition from one language or culture to another without having to go back to square one to discover a novel language or culture. How can the whole complexity of pluricultural experiences in a plurilingual context be taken into account in the various modes of certification?

Transferring competences introduces a principle of economy: a student beginning a second foreign language can use competences deriving from this learning in another language or culture. The modalities of transfer must be based on a positive representation of learning and encourage practical experience of the foreign territory or personal experience of otherness at home. The procedure must draw on diversified criteria for evaluation, depending on the extent of institutionalisation of the learning process, individual pathways and personal life options and evaluation procedures. The modalities must elicit a dynamic approach to duality: a language or culture with which the social actor has become familiar is an additional asset for discovering another language or culture. By overlooking this perspective the institutions underestimate the reality of the experiences of those who manage to pass over from one linguistic and cultural system to another, only to be confronted with institutional nomenclatures intensifying the fragmentation which they have just overcome.

The study by Byram and Zarate (1993) defined four competences that can develop the intercultural dimension of language teaching; some were defined as being independent from any specific language (life skills (‘savoir-être’), learning skills (‘savoir-apprendre’), while others were language-dependent (knowledge (‘savoirs’), know-how (‘savoir-faire’)). Life skills are defined as being independent from the content of any given foreign language but as being developable only in the context of learning a specific foreign language. Learning skills are independent from the learning of a given foreign language but are the result of learning several foreign languages. Knowledge is dependent on learning a given language and a given context for its use and has no transverse dimension. Know-how depends on learning a given language and cannot be directly reinvested in learning another language.

The *Framework* does not draw this distinction between transverse competences and competences dependent on a given language, and although it does mention the four competences it only uses them in a very restrictive manner: “The problem lies in the fact that knowledge and factual recall are only one dimension of the competence which the *Common European Framework* calls ‘socio-cultural’ but which others would define differently and call ‘intercultural competence’”¹. Byram also incorporates five components defining intercultural competence: “attitudes (curiosity and openness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one’s own); knowledge of social groups and their products and practices in one’s own and in one’s interlocutor country, and of the general process of societal and individual interaction; skills of interpreting and relating (ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents from one’s own); skills of discovery and interaction (ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction); critical cultural awareness / political education (ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one’s own and other cultures and countries)”². These components are also clearly in line with the recognition of general competences independent of any specific language.

In 1995 the American Association of Teachers of French³ also opted for a definition of cultural competence which differentiates between a general dimension, *Understanding Culture*, and a dimension explicitly centred on the French language, *Knowledge of French-Speaking Societies*. The former breaks down into *empathy towards other cultures*, *ability to observe and analyse a culture* and *communication in cultural context (verbal and non-verbal)*. These proposals converge on the fact that cultural competence comprises a dimension common to several languages, and lead to a more specific debate on defining sub-components and levels of competence. This is why we feel it is relevant to speak of intercultural competences.

¹ Byram, M., 1997 *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

² Byram, M., op. cit. pp 49-53.

³ “AATF Framework for Cultural Competence. 1995 The Cultural Component of Foreign Language Learning: a Common Core applied to the French-Speaking World”, in: *AATF National Bulletin*, January. See also Nostrand H. L., Grundstrom, A. W., (Co-Chairs), Singerman A. J. (Ed.) 1996, *Acquiring Cross-Cultural Competence. Four Stages for Students of French*. Lincolnwood: National Textbook Company.

These proposals might help create an organised, fluid and open space for certifying intercultural competences. This space is organised because it facilitates definition of levels of competence; it is fluid because it enables people to move from one language to another, from one culture to another, and from a specific culture to another language using the resources already acquired in another language or culture; and it is open because validating an intercultural competence does not necessarily involve validating a linguistic-type competence of an equivalent level. This flexibility should set sufficient transfers in motion to fuel a common area for exchanging intercultural competences.

4.3. Enhancing multiple identities: the potential benefits of the European Language Portfolio

The 2001 version of the *Common European Framework* is evasive on the matter of plurality. Whereas linguistic and cultural competences are traditionally linked, the latter are considered secondary to the former. This teaching tradition, with all the aforementioned ambiguities, has been partly incorporated into the *Framework*, Section 6.1.3. of which mentions “plurilingual and pluricultural competence”. However, this notional duo is dealt with in a completely unbalanced manner. While plurilingualism is carefully defined in section 1.3, the same cannot be said of pluriculturalism. Yet there is no lack of scientific literature on this latter term, which has been granted a national legal status in the definition of Canadian, American, Australian and other societies¹. For all these reasons, a specifically European definition is urgently needed.

Some of the formal clarifications provided on plurilingualism can, of course, be transposed to pluriculturalism, like those distinguishing between “plurilingualism” and “multilingualism”. However, this only holds up the substantive debate. While one welcomes the clear statement to the effect that the “ideal native speaker”, the latest reincarnation of the Chomskyan reference, “is no longer the ultimate model”², section 6.1.3.1 merely provides

¹ Taylor, C., 1994, *Multiculturalisme. Différence et démocratie*, Paris: Aubier.
Multiculturalism: The First Decade, *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 1982, Vol. 17, No. 1.

Lo Bianco, J., 1993, *Unlocking Australia's Language Potential. Profiles of 9 Key Languages in Australia.*, the National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia.
See also the work of the *National Foreign Language Centre at the Johns Hopkins University*, Washington D.C.

a brief definition of what is, in fact, an unbalanced competence, scratching the surface of the complex link between plurilingual and pluricultural competences: “multicultural profile configured differently from the multilingual profile (eg good knowledge of the culture of a community whose language one does not know well, or sketchy knowledge of the culture of a community with whose dominant language one is nonetheless well acquainted”. Other options still require practical treatment: a link-up with the *European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages*¹, whose dominant objective is of a cultural nature, that is to say to promote regional or minority languages as a threatened aspect of the European cultural heritage, notably by easing the problem of minorities whose main distinctive feature is their language².

The *Framework* touches on the concept of social actor, but the learner remains the principal reference point. While this latter term does indeed refer to an actual reality, namely an ongoing learning process, it shuts the individual into one specific role. This designation sidelines the examination of identity issues, which involves recognising interests shared by all the various cultural communities behind European diversity. Irrespective of any kind of national belonging, the concept of social actor places the person in a plural social environment and promotes a dynamic vision of his/her competences. None of the experimental versions of the *European Language Portfolio* invite the individual to record intercultural experiences, with the apparent exception of *My first Portfolio*³ which comprises a section on “My tastes” and “My friends”. In fact, this version adopts an extended view of social relations in self-assessment of competences, and incorporates all kinds of experience, whether they occur inside or outside schools or institutions.

In addition to its innovative dimensions, namely self-assessment, training assessment and systematic mapping out of the competences highlighted, the *Portfolio* discreetly introduces a new mode of competence validation which might, for three reasons, promote the high profile which intercultural competences need if they are to be certified:

² *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, 2001, p. 11.

¹ *European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages*, 1993 Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publications, (Treaties and reports).

² Op. cit., 1993, pp. 5 - 6.

³ *Mon premier Portfolio*, 2000, Ministry of Education / CIEP, Sèvres, France.

- First of all, the *Portfolio* introduces a new concept into teaching: personal experience. By identifying and gradually recording their linguistic and cultural achievements, social actors shift the emphasis on to an experience which cannot be reduced to mere school experience. If they accept the rules, they set out not only their own language biography but also their personal experience of Otherness. Discussions have already begun on linking up this newly identified component of the learning process with the more traditional ones¹. These discussions should be continued and lead to practical action.

- Recognition of intercultural competences, which is based on a principle of individual differentiation, can develop the utmost diversity in the expression of identity. Therefore, the main aim of transferring individual competences should be to promote diversity of individual identities by providing a specific range of recognition criteria. Facilities should be on hand for enhancing the variety of identity strategies which each social actor would like to follow in presenting him/herself. This approach has the advantage of providing reliable information based on the voluntary decision by the *Portfolio* owner and a non-prescriptive definition of identity.

- Lastly, the *Portfolio* could encourage co-ordinated perception of experiences, a “fund of experiences”, to prevent them from being perceived as fragmentary and unconnected. For example, once the various types of visits abroad are duly recorded and characterised, they can become “mobility resources” organised on a lifelong basis, demonstrating the progressive establishment of autonomy and a gradually incorporated relation to things foreign.

Social actors do not follow institutionally predetermined pathways; on the contrary, they construct their pathways in accordance with their own personal experience, discoveries engendered by transfrontier mobility and any continuities or breaks which they experience among different cultural communities. If the institutionalised pathways produce homogeneity in the competences acquired, the *Portfolio* can help recognise the diversity and the individual and specific nature of personal experience.

¹ Byram M. 1990, « Teaching Culture and Language : Towards an Integrated Model » in : Buttjes D., Byram M. *Mediating Languages and Cultures: Towards an Intercultural Theory of Foreign Language Education*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, pp. 19-21.

Approaching intercultural competences and their evaluation presupposes renouncing certain persistent and deeply-rooted irrational preconceptions. Specific language levels do not necessarily have their corresponding cultural levels. Proximity and distance between languages and cultures should be gauged with reference not to the learner's national culture but to criteria independent of any specific national context, while incorporating personal experience. In this spirit, proximity is defined in accordance with the socio-historic footing of the languages and cultures in question, creating a common linguistic or cultural heritage. It also depends on the social actor's individual experience. Measured by the yardstick of this socio-historic footing, proximity does not mean easiness, since proximity too can be a source of imposture.

Conclusion: Prospects for future work

While European Year of Languages (2001) was aimed at the general public, this campaign did not explicitly embrace enhancement of cultural diversity, even though this is the level at which teaching reform might be expected, as the challenges relating to identity underlying the foundation of a citizens' Europe are taken up. So by way of conclusion we would like to posit that the field of intercultural competences must first be clearly identified before it can be properly described, and would therefore like to mention both communicative AND intercultural competences.

We would suggest a number of avenues for future work, the diversity of which illustrates the extent of the workload that lies ahead, involving a critical relation to both the *Common European Framework* and the *Portfolio*:

- establishing conceptual tools independent of national categories, which are currently used indirectly in linguistic description. This measure would remedy the distortions which, although pointed out in the *Framework*, result from inadequately integrated representation of things foreign, coming together to form a cacophonous European symphony;
- orienting cultural description by accentuating the description of cultural continuities, which helps correct the side-effects of the "language barrier": taking the heat out of the approach to cultural breaks by refuting any perception of the Other as a threat, and establishing a graduated typology of conflicts, mediation activities and cultural re-mediating procedures;

- introducing the symbolic dimension into didactic description so as to take account of the complexity of identity-based functions: identities sometimes passed over in silence, sometimes unveiled; use of an open range of identity positions (local, regional, national, ethnic, linguistic, European, international and other identities) which take account of the successive readjustments prompted by individual experience of transnational mobility; approaches to the Other that are reversible in cases of transition from a situation of non-contact to one of actual proximity;
- creating teaching tools that can flesh out the objectivation (intercultural awareness): teaching resources functioning on the basis of linking up at least three languages and three cultures; taking account of intercultural expertise even without any corresponding linguistic competence; self-evaluation of competences. The *Portfolio* is the existing tool most conducive to this approach;
- encouraging validation of attainments deriving from non-school experience of otherness prior to recognition of a set of “mobility resources”. Such validation should be linked up with school or institutionalised reflection aimed at objectivation. Taking account of this experience, both personal and remote, should help develop the evaluation procedures already outlined in the *Portfolio*.

These suggestions for future work should help promote the movement and recognition of intercultural competences, firstly by defining the object of a transfer, secondly by augmenting transfer flows, and finally by guaranteeing the reliability and openness of the objects of such exchange.

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DESCRIBING AND DEFINING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE – INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to relativise accounts of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) developed in a Euro-American context. The need for this analysis arises from a discussion of the educational purposes of teaching for ICC. It can be argued that ICC is an aim of language teaching firstly for instrumental reasons – the increased efficiency of communication as a consequence of ICC rather than ‘communicative competence’ or other descriptions of purposes, and secondly as part of the educational development of the individual, often referred to as ‘personal development’. The rationale for the second of these includes the belief that understanding of otherness and, through comparison, an increased understanding of self are significant in the moral development of the individual and in enabling the individual to be a rational member of society. It might, however, also be argued that this emphasis on development of the individual, despite the notion of thereby becoming a ‘better’ member of society, is a ‘western’ way of thinking about ICC, and that this too would benefit from comparison and reflection.

Furthermore, the elaboration of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* and other Council of Europe instruments is naturally focused on the European situation but needs constant comparison, in accord with the principles of ICC itself, to check a tendency to euro-centredness. For these reasons, a re-conceptualisation of ICC from a non-European perspective will be offered in this paper, in particular with respect to the interrelationships between the acquisition of ICC and ‘personal development’. This will be done by taking East Asia (particularly Japan) as a case study and examining alternative understandings of some of the concepts (and alternative concepts, where appropriate) which affect ICC. The focus will be on the following three groups of concepts:

1. Concepts of self in society
2. Concepts of language and communication
3. Concepts of education and development

The aim of this paper is therefore to present alternative concepts and analyse their implications for ICC in a non-European context. The danger in doing this is that it is easy to succumb to simplistic stereotyping and over-generalisation. To avoid this danger, I would like to make explicit the assumptions which underlie the writing of this paper:

1. Most concepts are inherently present in the dominant philosophies and practices of most cultures and societies.
2. Over history, many concepts have been adopted and adapted across cultures and societies.
3. In the current age of globalisation and mass media, there is a constant interplay of concepts and images among societies and cultures.

What this means is that the generalisations which have to be made in order to write the paper should be approached with caution. To illustrate the above points through just one example, Western individualism and Eastern collectivism are often set up as dichotomous concepts upon which to base all kinds of theories. As has been pointed out recently, however, Confucianism (the main stronghold of collectivism) can be read as advocating individualism (Inoue 1999), while a more collective perspective can be attributed to western philosophy (Rosemont 1997). To identify one concept with one philosophy and to ignore all the other concepts inherent in that philosophy is oversimplistic (point (1) above). Furthermore, in both Europe and Asia, there has been a significant 'voyaging' of concepts. Concepts of individualism are not only inherent in Eastern philosophies and cultures, but have also been imported to Asia over the past 400+ years by Western explorers, missionaries, traders, teachers and so on. Similarly, 'Eastern' philosophies and their associated concepts are themselves widely travelled. The concept of collectivism attributed to Confucius' teachings has travelled not only across 2500 years of history, but also across thousands of kilometres of land and sea. Collectivism in Emperor Wudi's China (140-87BC, when Confucianism was a state doctrine) differs as a concept from collectivism in 10th century Wang dynasty Korea, and again from collectivism in Tokyo in the year 2000 (point (2) above). Finally, the third point is a distinctive feature of contemporary society. The development of commercial printing, followed by radio and television, and now the Internet, means that people now have direct access to concepts and to a multitude of interpretations of those concepts. As Barker (1999: 59) argues, the globalisation of television has brought about a dislocation of 'culture' (and concepts) from place, and has led to the juxtapositioning of a variety of global discourses. The same process of 'deterritorialization' (Tomlinson 1999) of concepts and discourses applies to other information and communications technology, particularly the Internet. As a result, it is no longer possible to confine 'collectivism' to the East and 'individualism' to the West. On the contrary, both collectivism and individualism are available as global discourses, to be negotiated and renegotiated by individuals, organisations and societies in all areas of the world (point (3) above).

Although it has to be accepted that all concepts exist (at least potentially) in all cultures and societies, then, concepts may not be accorded the same value in all cultures and societies. The meaning and degree of value or importance attached to a particular concept may vary:

- across regions. To stay with the collectivism/individualism example, collectivism tends to be more highly valued in general in Asian societies, while individualism is more highly valued in most European societies.
- across societies/cultures within regions. While Europe is territorially small and relatively culturally unified (from an Asian perspective), Asia embraces over 60% of the world's population and all the world's major religions and philosophies. Needless to say, this results in variance across cultures within the region. While collectivism is valued highly in Korea, for example, individualism is more highly valued in Thailand (Mulder 1996).
- within societies/cultures. Not all groups within a society or culture value the same concepts in the same way. For example, younger people in China and Japan value individualism more highly than older people, while Japanese businessmen tend to value collectivism more highly than Japanese teachers.
- within organisations. Even within groups or organisations, the meaning and value of concepts can be contested. For example, Japanese Ministry of Education policy documents simultaneously promote the development of individualism and collectivism.
- among individuals. Both collectivist-oriented societies and individualist-oriented societies are made up of a variety of individuals who, due to life experience, personality and other factors, have a variety of values, concepts and world-views.

In this paper, the focus is on the first of these five variances, the meaning and value accorded to concepts across regions (in this case, East Asia and Europe). In order to do this, generalisations have to be made which unfortunately ignore the subsequent four points. This fact should be borne in mind throughout the rest of the paper.

2. Concepts of self in society

At the most basic level, the way in which a person sees himself/herself in the society in which s/he lives affects the notion of intercultural communicative competence. All communication is premised on assumptions of how people see themselves and others, and the relationships between self and others. Although these assumptions are to some extent shared in East Asia and Europe, the following East Asian concepts may not be immediately familiar to Europeans:

2.1. No-self and fluid identities

Two of the three characteristics of being according to Buddhism are *anicca* (impermanence) and *anatta* (no-self). The essence of these concepts is summarised by Cush (1990: 5):

Like everything else, we ourselves are continually changing, both from life to life and day to day. There is no 'inner self', 'soul' or 'real me' that stays the same.

This is a concept which, although it accords to some extent with recent western theories of identities, clearly contradicts most established western theories of self. For example, Erikson's theory of identity as 'a subjective sense of an invigorating sameness and continuity' (Erikson 1968), based as it is on the prerequisite concept of a fixed, consistent self, would not accord with Buddhist philosophy.

Cooper (1996: 40) asserts the centrality of the doctrine of 'no-self' to Buddhist thinking by claiming that Buddhism without no-self is like Christianity without the Trinity, and the concept is explained in greater detail by Metz (1982: 232):

...the unity of the human personality is an illusion. The reality is a constantly changing arrangement of the different elements which make up the world. Belief in the self is rejected; 'I' and 'my' are concepts bearing no relation to truth. The man who perceives this truth will, therefore, no longer cling to the imaginary 'I'. Indeed, it is precisely this false attitude to life which is the main cause of suffering.

There is, therefore, no constant self. Neither can a consistent self-identity be constructed. If this view is adopted, the concept of self becomes situational

and fluid. This idea actually converges with Western postmodern theories of multiple, shifting selves (Giroux 1997). Such theories of multiple identities seem to be accepted implicitly in Council of Europe projects, where the development of a European identity alongside existing national and other identities is advocated, as in the following aim, taken from the project, 'Language Policies for a Multilingual and Multicultural Europe' (1997-2000):

To help national authorities to promote plurilingualism and pluriculturalism and increase public awareness of the part played by languages in forging a European identity.

However, the convergence of post-modern and Buddhist theories on the concept of fluid, situational identities is probably only partial and may be superficial. The post-modern notion is based on the underlying notion that there are multiple selves. The Buddhist idea is based on the concept of no-self.

The situation becomes further complicated when the question of the relationship between theory and practice is considered. To take Japan as an example, the extent to which the Buddhist concept of no-self has permeated Japanese world-views and the extent to which it has been tempered by other beliefs and ways of thinking is a moot point. In Japan, Buddhist philosophies such as the belief in no-self can still be found in everyday society, although they are usually not explicitly promulgated as Buddhist. For example, a text that a teacher had prepared for a class of 13-14 year olds to think about and comment on contained the following passage:

When I thought as hard as I could about what it meant to be myself, I found that the more I thought, the less I understood... but there are times when I forget time and place, and even who and where I am. Perhaps it is at those moments that I am really living as me.

At the same time, the influence of 'Western' theories of self is also strong. For example, university courses in educational philosophy and psychology, as well as teacher employment examinations, usually focus predominantly on the research and theories of Western philosophers and psychologists (e.g. Kyouin shiken jouhou kenkyuukai 2000). An attempt to resolve this apparent conflict of 'selves' is made by Lebra (1992), who proposes three types of Japanese self: interactional, inner and boundless. The interactional self refers to the dimension of self which is in direct contact with others in a social

context. The inner self (or *kokoro*, lit. trans. heart/mind) is more stable, defined by Lebra as a basis of autonomy from the social world and as the residence or shrine of the soul. The boundless self:

... is tapped from time to time particularly when one faces a need of fundamental self-reorientation. The boundless self entails disengagements from the shackling world of dichotomies, dichotomies between subject and object, self and other, inner and outer realms, existence and non-existence, life and death, sacred and profane, good and bad, and so on. The self as the subject or imposer of such dichotomies through thinking, willing, feeling, or evaluating, then, must be overcome.

As far as defining and describing ICC is concerned, Japanese (and other Asian) concepts of fluid, situational selves are likely to present little problem because (a) intercultural communication is likely to take place at the 'interactional' level, which is common to Western and Eastern concepts of self and (b) references to other aspects of self in the Asian context are similar enough (at least superficially) to theories of multiple identities in the European context to provide a common reference point for concepts of self. Having said that, an awareness that the underlying foundations of concepts of self may vary is also important.

2.2. Relational identities

How does a fluid, shifting self manifest itself in interaction? Recent research on Japanese ideas of self and identity emphasise the importance of situational co-ordinates in defining the self or selves (Bachnik & Quinn 1994, Kondo 1990, Rosenberger 1992). The identification of situational co-ordinates has varied over history. For example, in Tokugawa Japan, these co-ordinates were prescribed, and people were categorised as a member of a family, community and class. In the Meiji, pre-war and war period, the co-ordinates were prescribed and people were seen as a member of the nation. In the post-war years, the establishment of these co-ordinates has become the responsibility of the individual. In a fragmented market of identity contexts, some people seek these co-ordinates in the family or workplace, others in traditional patterns, social groups or religions (Mathews 1996).

If it is accepted that selves are fluid and situationally co-ordinated, it follows that human relations cannot be seen, as they traditionally are in the West, as a relationship between the fixed entity 'I' and the fixed entity 'you'. Instead,

the 'I', the 'you' and the link between the two are merged into a single process of 'human relationship'. As Bachnik (1986: 51) perceives:

Relationship as a connective 'and' between self and other cannot be extracted from the context in which it exists (between self and other). Relationship is not substantive, but dynamic. It has to do with the creation of self and other.

The influence of Confucian teachings on this interpretation of human relationships is also significant. In the Confucian tradition, identities are recognised in terms of relationships. Furthermore, as four of the five Confucian basic human relationships are hierarchical, participants within relationships usually have a duty towards the other as superior or inferior. These relationships are not confined to the human's lifetime but, as is also the case in Buddhism and Shintoism, continue after death, manifested in practices of ancestor worship (Sano et al 1996). This means that not only the interpretation of human relationships, but also their spatial and temporal boundaries, need to be redefined. In short, the self is formed by and within human relationships within and beyond life.

In terms of implications for describing and defining ICC, this point has greater significance. Current descriptions of ICC are based on the premise that an independent self can be developed which is then capable of intercultural communication with others. In the scenario of a 'pure' East Asian relational self, this is an impossibility, because the 'other' is an essential prerequisite to forming the self. Without the relationship, the intercultural self cannot be developed. In terms of assessment, too, the idea of assessing an individual's intercultural competence in isolation from an intercultural relation would present difficulties.

2.3. Group identities

In any society, people belong to a variety of groups, and membership and non-membership in these groups has an influence on an individual's sense of self (Tajfel 1981). These groups and group identities are rigidly formalised and accorded great importance in many East Asian societies, giving rise to the claims of East Asian collectivism cited earlier. In Japan, for example, *uchi* and *soto* are a pair of words which literally mean 'inside' and 'outside'. *Uchi* can also be used to mean 'house' or 'home', and is also frequently used as a referent for 'my family', 'my company', or any other group the individual belongs to, or indeed in some regions as a referent for the self,

meaning 'I' or 'me'. Parallel sets of words in Japanese include *tatema* (face) and *honne* (real feelings) and *omote* (front, face) and *ura* (behind). All the sets of words are used to express a differentiation between 'inside' or 'in-group' and 'outside' or 'out-group' behaviour. Relating these concepts to Lebra's (1992) dimensions of self, outlined above, the *soto*, *tatema* and *omote* are equivalent to the 'interactional self'. This is the dimension of self and space which is activated in situations where a certain level of formality, or self-boundedness, is required. On the other hand, Lebra's 'inner self' relates to the *uchi*, *honne* and *ura*. This is the dimension which allows for spontaneity and relaxation of self-restraint. Lebra's 'boundless self' overrides any distinction between the pairs of terms, entailing as it does disengagement from such dichotomies. It should be noted, though, that the interactional self, or *soto*, is considered just as real as the inner self, or *uchi*. Different dimensions of self are appropriate to different situations and relations, but all dimensions are equally 'true' and equally real.

Recent research on *uchi* and *soto* supports the idea that they are useful concepts for understanding Japanese society, but stresses that the concepts should be perceived as variable points on a continuum rather than opposing dichotomies (Bachnik & Quinn (eds.) 1994). As Rosenberger (1994: 97) points out:

Making a still life of *soto* and *uchi* contexts has its problems because these are always fluid according to the perspective one takes. Like a series of Chinese boxes, what is *soto* in relation to one *uchi* soon becomes *uchi* in relation to a more public, detached level of *soto*.

What this means in practice is a constant modification of appropriate language and behaviour depending on the context. In a school staffroom, for example, a teacher will modify his/her behaviour and language according to the relationship, asking a junior colleague to do something in plain language, talking with another colleague in polite language and using honorific language with the principal. In interaction with an outsider, though, all these people become part of the *uchi*, and should be referred to using humble language. Likewise, the presence of an 'outsider' changes the rules of behaviour among 'insiders'. The presence of the outsider transforms the individual into a member of the group, and there is a strong expectation that group identity will predominate over personal identity when the group is interacting with outsiders.

An awareness of such distinctions is important for the purposes of describing and defining ICC. The same basic principles of group identity and *uchi* and *soto* govern concepts of self in East Asia and Europe. However, the implications of group identity in governing behaviour and language within and between groups is perhaps different. A recognition of these distinctions of behaviour and language in the definition and description of ICC would make it more applicable to contexts, such as in East Asia, where group membership determines forms and content of interaction to a significant degree.

2.4. National and cultural identity

For ICC, which is premised on use of another language and communication with people from another (national) language community, probably the most significant ‘in-group’ or *uchi* is the nation. Although the history of national identity is relatively short (Wallerstein 1991), its pervasiveness is such that ‘it is a rhetoric that has become enormously widespread and powerful in the modern world’ (Calhoun 1995: 233). However, the nature of national identity is still under debate. Two theories of national identity relevant to the present paper are those developed by Smith (1991) and Kellas (1991). Smith suggests two models of national identity; a civic-territorial (or Western) model and an ethnic-genealogical (or non-western) model. The Western model emphasises territory, a legal-political community, a common culture and a common civic ideology. This is contrasted to the non-western model, in which priority is given to common descent, ethnicity and blood ties. Smith points out that the two models are not complete contrasts, but have many similarities. Nevertheless, his distinction between Western and non-western has been refuted on the grounds that a geographical distinction is untenable (Arnason 1990). Kellas (1991) replaces geographical boundaries by the three categories of ethnic, social and official nationalism. Ethnic nationalism is very similar to Smith’s ethnic-genealogical category, while official nationalism is contained within Smith’s civic-territorial model. Social nationalism is defined by Kellas (1991: 15) as self-definition by social ties and culture. In this case, the key element of national identity is cultural identity, and national and cultural identity are often synonymous. In the theories of both Smith and Kellas, national identity includes both a political element and a cultural element.

Although Smith’s distinction of ‘western’ and ‘non-western’ models of national identity is over-simplistic, it is true that ethnic and cultural factors play a crucial role in the development and maintenance of national identity in many East Asian societies. In Japan, a huge body of academic and popular

literature (known as the *nihonjinron*, lit. trans. discussions of the Japanese people) is concerned with proving and describing Japanese uniqueness, in terms of ethnicity and culture. *Nihonjinron* writers lean heavily on the ethnic-genealogical model of national identity, particularly through the assertion of homogeneity theories. These theories of ethnic homogeneity are gradually losing factual and ideological credibility in Japan (Oguma 1995, 1998), but they are still supported by the government through such measures as immigration policy (e.g. the rationale for the 1990 change in immigration law which facilitated the immigration of third-generation Japanese from South America) and education policy (the assumption in education policy documents that all children in Japanese schools are Japanese born and bred). Similar theories seem to play an important part in national identity development in other East Asian countries. For example, Korean elementary school children learn from the government textbook for social studies 'the fact that' their country was founded by Tangun Wangom, who was the grandchild of the gods (Korean Education Department 1997: 10). Interestingly, an almost identical myth exists in Japanese Shinto beliefs, but is not taught as part of the school curriculum.

Although ethnic homogeneity may be losing credibility as a basis for national identity in some parts of Asia (and never existed in others), the idea of cultural identity as a basis for national identity (closely related to Kellas' social nationalism) is still strong in many areas. Cultural and civic identities are often inextricably intertwined, with the result that cultural identity is represented as being synonymous with civic national identity. In China, for example, children are not taught myths of divine ancestry, and full recognition is given to ethnic heterogeneity, but elementary school social studies textbooks are replete with references to 'our motherland' and 'our ancestors'. An extract from the 3rd year elementary school government social studies textbook concerning China's minority groups epitomises the approach:

Fifty-six stars,
Fifty-six flowers,
Fifty-six brothers and sisters are one family.
(People's Education Press 1996)

In textbooks in China, Korea and Japan, the use of 'we' and 'our' as a narrative style is striking in social studies and moral education textbooks, especially at the elementary school level. Such narrative style plays its part in effecting the explicit government policies of these nations to develop a

national, cultural identity through education (Monbusho 1998, OECD 1998). This is the 'in-group' writ large.

In terms of implications for ICC, there needs to be a recognition that national identity in East Asia is inextricably and strongly bound up with cultural and, in many cases, ethnic identity, and that this is explicitly supported through education. The self as a member of a particular nation, then, is also the self as a member of a cultural (and ethnic and/or linguistic) family. In terms of *savoir être*, it may be particularly difficult for students to relativise their selves (Byram 1997: 34), as this could require a complete restructuring not only of identity, but also of the values associated with that identity instilled through education. On a broader scale, the link between ICC and citizenship education may need to be redefined in societies where citizenship of a nation is based above all on cultural and ethnic (rather than legal and territorial) definitions of the nation and national identity.

2.5. Beyond national identity

In East Asia, there is a deep and widespread awareness of the world beyond the nation. Globalisation and internationalisation are keywords of Asian politicians, economists, policy-makers and ordinary people. Although commodities (e.g. McDonalds hamburgers and Nike trainers), information (e.g. world news and international sporting events) and principles (e.g. human rights and democracy) have, to some extent, become common currency, shared by people in Asia and America, Africa, Australasia and Europe, their interpretation and use are often culture- and society-specific. Although nation-states can no longer 'opt out' of the globalisation process – any attempt to do so would probably result in political isolation and economic starvation – they are not obliged to accept without question the dominant discourses of internationalisation and globalisation. This leads to what Featherstone (1995: 113) phrases “a plurality of national responses to the process of globalisation”.

In economic and political terms, as education systems are increasingly perceived and structured as part of the economic and political capital of the society (Brown & Lauder 1997), it naturally follows that internationalisation and globalisation have become issues of great concern in education policy making. This is true throughout East Asia, but the significance of such concerns may not be straightforward, as Robertson (1992: 186) cautions:

On the one hand, the increasing concern with ‘other cultures’ and with global trends is to be greatly welcomed. The ‘internationalisation’ of the curriculum appears, on the face of it, to be a strong step in the direction of a concern with the global circumstance. On the other hand, we must realise that in considerable part that step is predicated on the proposition that countries which do not promote ‘international education’ will suffer in economic and political terms in an increasingly interdependent world. In other words, much of the drive to ‘internationalise’ the curriculum is based on, or at least legitimised in terms of, national or regional politico-economic self-interest.

This ‘globalisation or internationalisation for national interests’ is certainly the dominant national response in many parts of Asia, explicitly so in many nations. For example, in all its discussions of internationalisation (which is an official education policy in Japan), the Japanese Ministry of Education emphasises that students should be self-aware as ‘a Japanese person living in international society’ (*kokusai shakai ni ikiru nihonjin*) or as a ‘Japanese person in the world’ (*sekai no naka no nihonjin*). In moral education, therefore, whereas students are encouraged to develop individual ways of seeing and thinking in the immediate context (Monbusho 1989), the terms of reference change when it comes to the international sphere. Then, says Monbusho, the aim is:

to cultivate the basics of self-awareness, the ways of seeing and the ways of thinking of a Japanese person... (Monbusho 1989: 7)

This emphasis continues through to the reforms which began to be introduced in Japanese schools in 2002, where guidelines such as the following (Monbusho 1998: 25) appear at the junior high school level (age 12-15):

The teaching of world history should be limited to the context necessary for understanding matters directly related to our country’s history.

Nowhere in Japanese policy documents does the notion of ‘world citizen’ appear, although it does feature in some social studies textbooks. In this respect, the representation of the nation as the ultimate ‘in-group’ is bolstered by the representation of the rest of the world (and its associated processes of internationalisation and globalisation) as the ultimate ‘out-group’.

If ICC is to be responsive to a variety of contexts, it needs to take account of such national responses to the process of globalisation. ICC demands knowledge of the world from various perspectives, and willingness to question one's own assumptions and values. In a situation where national education policy and curriculum responds to globalisation by filtering knowledge of the world through a national lens, and endorsing it with national attitudes, it will probably be difficult for teachers and students to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for developing ICC fully.

3. Concepts of language and communication

3.1. Relationships, roles and face

In any society, the relationship between interlocutors determines the form of language communication and vice versa. In many East Asian societies, this is a very obvious phenomenon. In Korea and Japan, for example, the relationship between two people (in terms of hierarchy and intimacy) can generally be deduced within the first 10-20 seconds of listening to their conversation. The same applies to other Asian languages, such as Javanese (Geertz 1960) and Thai. All these languages demand that the interlocutors select vocabulary, grammar and style (polite/plain, honorific/humble etc.) according to the age, sex and status of and the relationship with the other person, as well as according to the context and content of the interaction. Of course, this is not unfamiliar to European languages either, but to cite an example which shows the extent of the demands, and which is also relevant to the previous section, even the word used for 'I' in a Japanese conversation has to be chosen from 10 or so available alternatives, depending on the speaker, the interlocutor and the relationship between the two. Similarly, the relationship between interlocutors determines the content and style of communication.

The issue of how roles affect communication was touched upon in section 2.2 on group identities, where it was noted that group identity is often expected to dominate over personal identity in interaction with outsiders. In this case, the individual's role as a member and representative of the group is more salient than the individual's personal characteristics and opinions. At this point, the issue of roles becomes closely tied up with the issue of face, defined as the assumptions made and maintained by interlocutors about each other and about their relationship. Scollon & Scollon (1995: 36) point out that the concept of face is more familiar to Asians than Westerners and that:

There is reason to believe that the “self” projected by Asians is ... more strongly under the influence of assumed or unmarked cultural assumptions about face.

In other words, it is quite legitimate and ‘real’ in many situations in many Asian societies to interact at the level of role and face. In public and formal situations in particular, interaction which focuses on roles and faces assures smooth and predictable human relations – if both interlocutors are engaged in a collaborative effort to maintain each other’s face in a particular role, then ‘unpredictable’ elements such as personal opinion, which are probably irrelevant to the matter in hand, can be minimised. Of course, there are many occasions when people interact as individuals and are not concerned about face. What is important in East Asian cultures is to know when and where each type of interaction is appropriate.

For definitions and descriptions of ICC to be applicable in many non-European cultures, there would need to be full recognition of and allowance for the importance of relationships, roles and face in interaction with and among people of cultures where these aspects are significant. In terms of the *savoirs*, it may be necessary to place more emphasis on developing understanding of the influence of hierarchy and group identity on communication, and in terms of *savoir-faire*, it may be necessary to encourage the ability to identify and interact appropriately according to relationship, role and face.

3.2. Verbal and non-verbal aspects

The literature on verbal and non-verbal aspects of communication is well-known and will not be reviewed here. Here, it is sufficient to note that non-verbal as well as verbal aspects of communication have different forms and significance in Asia than they do in Europe. Silence, in particular, has an important function in East Asian communication. According to Giles, Coupland and Wiemann (quoted in Smith & Bond 1999: 141), Chinese people are more tolerant of silence than Americans, and see silence as a way of controlling what goes on. Silence is also important in communication with and among Japanese people. Among other things, it can signify that the person is giving thought to what the interlocutor has said, or that s/he disagrees. In the case of disagreement, the silence is usually accompanied by the tilting of the head, averted eyes and maybe the hand rubbing the back of the neck. Such non-verbal combinations negate the necessity of having to

disagree with or deny something verbally, and even 9/10-year old children are adept at the usage of such communication styles.

As far as definitions and descriptions of ICC are concerned, it is important to include awareness and knowledge of the appropriate use of non-verbal communication together with verbal communication. In cases such as the above example of disagreeing in Japanese, for example, verbal competence in the language could actually reduce intercultural competence. The foreigner who is ignorant of the language will be excused almost anything – the foreigner who disagrees vehemently and verbally is likely to be an embarrassment.

3.3. English as the dominator language

Another factor which affects ICC within the framework of foreign language education is the history and nature of foreign language education in Asia. In most countries of Asia, English is either a second/official language or is the first and/or only foreign language taught in schools. Most Asian countries are multilingual and multicultural but, rather than sanction this situation through education policy, as is happening in Europe, most countries opt for education of and/or in English. English is also the accepted lingua franca of communication within Asia. As Phillipson (1992: 47) stresses, however, English is not neutral and “the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages”. The extent of such social and cultural inequalities varies widely between Asian countries. In the Philippines, for example, English is a basis for deciding access to economic wealth and political power, whereas this is less marked in Japan (Tollefson 2000: 13). Nevertheless, there is throughout Asia an ambivalence regarding English. On the one hand, English is the key to economic and educational success. On the other hand, it is the language of the coloniser. While this coloniser no longer has a physical or political presence in most regions, it lives on in historical memory, and is succeeded by cultural and economic colonisation by the USA. In this respect, English in Asia can be viewed now as in earlier times as ‘the eye of the colonial panopticon’ (Pennycook 1994: 103). It is for this reason that calls for ‘culture-free’ English language education receive widespread support in many parts of Asia – the idea of the language as a tool for economic success without the cultural baggage of dominance has appeal.

In terms of ICC, this ambivalence regarding the status of the foreign/second language has significant repercussions. Firstly, the whole concept of needing to include intercultural competence in foreign/second language education is likely to be resisted by some people, who would prefer English to be, as far as possible, a 'pure' tool of communication. Secondly, the definition and description of ICC would need to take account of the deep ambivalence felt towards English (and towards the second most popular foreign language in Asia, Japanese, which shares the same associations of economic success and colonial history in most of East Asia). Thirdly, the definition and description of ICC needs to take into account the issue of the relative power of certain languages (and people speaking those languages) vis à vis others. To assume that all languages are politically and economically of equal status is of course ideologically correct and may work in Europe, but it is a long way from reflecting reality in most of Asia.

4. Concepts of education and development

4.1. The significance of education

The combined influence of Buddhist and Confucian traditions in East Asia has assured the paramount status of education through to the present day. According to the teaching of Buddhism, the way in which purity of mind, insight and calm can be achieved is through following the 'Eightfold Path'. The Eightfold Path, also known as 'the Middle Way' is grouped into three aspects; wisdom (right understanding, right intention), ethical conduct (right speech, right action, right livelihood) and mental discipline (right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration) (Erricker 1995: 54). All these aspects are attainable through education and, for centuries, Buddhist monks (much like the Catholic church in Europe) held the main responsibility for education in Asia, particularly education for the common people.

Add to this Confucianism, and the status of education is virtually assured. The *Analects* of Confucius begin with the phrase: "Isn't it a pleasure to study and practice what you have learned?" and the theme of learning and studying is strong throughout Confucian texts and practices. Furthermore, this emphasis on the value of studying is reinforced through the implicit and explicit inclusion of Confucian teachings in the school curriculum. For example, extracts from the *Analects* are included in the textbook for 14-15 year olds in Japan (Mitsumura Toshio 1996: 211-214), and mainland Chinese elementary students are once again studying the life and teachings of their ancestor (People's Education Press 1996: 95-98). If any gross generalisation

can be made about the influence of ancient philosophies on contemporary individuals, it is probably that the Confucian emphasis on the value of studying and learning continues to be subscribed to by the majority of individuals in East Asia today. In fact, due to the present revival of Confucian values, where Western-educated East Asian scholars are reconstructing Confucianism in modern and post-modern contexts (Yao 2000: 260), this aspect has become even more significant, being used as an explanation of East Asian educational achievement and commitment.

The commitment to self-improvement, self-cultivation and education which has prevailed throughout the centuries in East Asia clearly has favourable implications for any education theory or policy which is accepted as worthwhile and implemented in the society. Once accepted, education policy is generally assured the unified commitment of teachers, students and parents.

4.2. Content of school education

In terms of the content of learning, the emphasis in East Asia has traditionally been on 'knowledge that' rather than 'knowledge how' (Ryle 1949). This emphasis on 'knowledge that' has led to the domination of factual information, memorisation and multiple choice entrance exams as the content of education. In terms of political control, too, 'knowledge that' is easier to control centrally than 'knowledge how', and most East Asian governments publish very detailed education policies and curricula, and also operate textbook-publication or textbook-authorisation systems, ensuring that the knowledge acquired by students is the knowledge that the government wants them to have.

This kind of 'knowledge that' learning has been labelled as Confucian learning, and certainly the study of previous learning is an important facet of Confucianism. However, it is also possible to argue that 'knowledge that' learning has been promoted above all by national governments concerned to promote political stability (through 'safe' knowledge) and, more recently, economic development. Indeed, the success of such government measures can be seen in international comparisons of education achievement, as well as in the increasing economic prominence of East Asian nations. However, with the explicit aim of continued economic and political prosperity in the 21st century, many East Asian governments are now turning away from 'knowledge that' to other forms of knowledge. In Singapore, for example, curriculum content has been reduced by 10-30% in order to make way for the

new emphasis on creativity and thinking skills (Singapore Ministry of Education 1998). In this process, East Asian governments are adopting and adapting education theories and practices from the West, but are also turning back to a re-analysis of Confucianism. As Yao (2000: 282) summarises:

Confucian education is to cultivate the ‘scientific spirit’ in the educated by teaching them how to explore their inner world, and by encouraging them to learn what they have not yet learnt. The first enables them to be deep, and the second leads them to be open-minded. Searching for depth and being open to new things are central to the spirit by which modern sciences develop, and both are essential for a progression and continuity of human knowledge. Furthermore, the emphasis of modern education is shifting from purely accumulating knowledge to cultivating the ability to handle knowledge, and education is no longer meant for transmission only. ... In this respect, Confucian education also has something to contribute, because it places great emphasis on the balance between the old and the new, between class learning and social performance, and between book knowledge and the capacity to act and think independently.

Indeed, returning to the original Confucian classics (or, at least, translation thereof), this analysis seems quite soundly based. To give just two quotes from many available in the *Analects* to refute the accusation of Confucianism as purely rote-memorisation:

Confucius said: “To study and not think is a waste. To think and not study is dangerous.” (2:15)

Confucius said: “Is anyone incapable of following words of correct instruction? But it is self-transformation according to it that is important. Is anyone incapable of enjoying words of gentle advice? But it is inquiring deeply into their meaning that is important. If I enjoy without inquiring deeply, and follow without changing myself, how can I say that I have understood?” (9:23).

Studying and accepting received wisdom and knowledge is thus important, but is not enough. For Confucius, and for present-day East Asian education policy-makers, it is the ability to use and transform that knowledge which is important.

Current movements in East Asian policy-making are thus converging with current definitions and descriptions of ICC into a process of Confucian ‘self-

transformation'. However, it may be worth remembering that current practice in East Asian schools is still heavily biased towards the 'knowledge that'. In the present East Asian context, far more emphasis would be placed on 'knowledge' (*savoirs*) than the *savoir-apprendre* or *savoir-faire* aspects of ICC, and that knowledge would probably need to be (or would be) much more explicitly defined before being acceptable as an element of the school curriculum.

4.3. Ways and roles of teaching/learning

Any discussion of ways of teaching and learning in East Asia has to take into account not only educational philosophy but also the notions of relational identities and roles (discussed in sections 2.2 and 3.1 above). Teacher roles and student roles are clearly defined and are similar in classrooms throughout East Asia. The teacher is clearly higher and the student lower hierarchically, and this determines the language, behaviour and attitudes expected of each party. Jin and Cortazzi (1998) summarise the roles of the teacher and student in the East Asian classroom. In terms of learning, the teacher gives knowledge, gives help and guides students. Students are attentive, take in knowledge, and actively engage in learning mentally (but usually not verbally). In terms of communication in the classroom, the teacher directs communication, and students defer to and co-operate with the teacher's directions. As has been reported by many observers of East Asian classrooms, then, the teacher is in charge of learning and students submit to the teacher's control.

Delving to a slightly deeper level, though, the issue is not just one of control and authority. The role of the teacher in East Asia is to develop a deep human relationship with each individual student, and to contribute to the lifelong education of that individual. This 'human relationship' role derives from Buddhist and Confucian teachings (Reagan 2000), and is prominent in contemporary education theory. For example, in a report of their study of Japanese probationary teachers, Shimahara & Sakai (1992: 157) remark on the importance of:

... the feelings by teachers that shape children's lives – the emotional commitment by teachers to children, which leads to the fostering of the bond between teachers and children. The attachment that evolves from this bond is marked by the shared feelings of inclusiveness and trust. Interns come to learn that effective teaching is governed by the

ligature, and that developing it takes precedence over technical competence in teaching.

In other words, the relationship between teacher and student comes before methods and content of teaching. The student is also expected to contribute to this relationship, and one of the aims of moral education in Japanese junior high school, for example, is to “deepen a feeling of love and respect for teachers” (Monbusho 1999: 55). It is only once this relationship is established that teacher and students can embark upon the collaborative project of learning. In fact, the relationship between teacher and student in East Asia often outlasts classroom interaction by decades. In Hong Kong, for example, students go to visit their former teachers to pay their respects at New Year. In Japan, teachers are required to give speeches at the wedding ceremonies of students they taught a decade or more earlier. At a more informal level, students readily go to their former teachers for advice on life decisions, even when they are already in their 20s or 30s.

The implications of this point for defining and describing ICC lie in the fact that ICC is learner-based. The role of the teacher in European descriptions of ICC is minimised, and this would make it less accessible in many non-European contexts. Similarly, little attention is paid to the relationship between teacher and students in the European context, whereas this is central to the East Asian (as well as many other non-European) concept of ways of teaching and learning.

4.4. The aim of learning – the development of a good person

In most East Asian societies, the role of education in the moral development of the individual is seen as an integral and central function of the school. For example, the Singapore Ministry of Education begins its ‘Desired Outcomes of Education’ with the following statement:

Education is about nurturing the whole child. Indeed, this is the traditional Asian understanding of the term. Education means developing the child morally, intellectually, physically, socially and aesthetically. The foundation of a person is his values. From these spring his outlook on life and his goals in life. Together with the home, our schools have to work carefully and painstakingly to shape the morals of our children. Our children also have to learn to relate to other people - their elders and their peers, people who are like us and people who are different.

Similar explicit ‘values’ statements can be found in the policy statements of most East Asian nations and, indeed, are at the core of education policy in these countries, as Yao (2000: 283) points out:

The purpose of Confucian education is not only to transmit and develop knowledge, but also to deliver and apply values. [...] Confucian education is fundamentally humanistic. Its chief aim is to educate the learner to be fully human and to become a qualified member of the community of trust, and its primary approach is to enhance self-cultivation and develop students’ capabilities of fulfilling responsibilities for themselves, for their families and for society at large.

Within such a tradition, there is no need to carefully segregate so-called ‘objective’ (academic knowledge) and ‘subjective’ (moral, religious, personal development-related) learning into separate areas of the curriculum, as often happens in Europe in the attempt to limit the influence of the school over the student’s moral and spiritual development. In fact, such a separation seems to be alien to most non-western education contexts. As Reagan (2000: 208) points out in his study of various non-western educational traditions, the development of a ‘good person’ is the pre-eminent aim of most education systems and educators around the world, and issues of values, morality and spirituality are fundamental to this aim. To attempt to isolate values and moral education from the rest of the curriculum seems to be, to many non-western observers, a somewhat futile and uneducational exercise.

As far as definition and description of ICC are concerned, this is probably the area in which ICC would fit even more easily into an Asian context than into a European context. The concern with values and attitudes would be unlikely to raise ethical concerns in many Asian contexts, but would be seen as adding depth and meaning to the ICC project. The nature and content of specific values and attitudes would differ, naturally, but the existence per se of a moral and values dimension would probably be considered positively.

5. Summary

Throughout this paper, I have attempted to relativise accounts of Intercultural Communicative Competence through examining alternative interpretations of concepts relating to the self, to language and communication, and to

education. Obviously, such concepts span a wide range of academic disciplines and discourses, and I would like to use this summary to regroup alternative interpretations by discipline rather than by theme, in order to gain another perspective on the issue.

5.1. Alternative philosophical concepts and values

An understanding of alternative philosophical concepts and values is quintessential in relativising Euro-American accounts of ICC. Euro-American accounts are almost entirely based on the single Greek-Roman-Christian philosophy. In Asia, by contrast, every world philosophy competes for attention, and this leads to a plurality of concepts of the self, other people, personal development and the world. It also means that many Asian societies and individuals are quite used to living with differing (and sometimes contradictory) philosophical ideas, and are generally tolerant of other ways of thinking and seeing. In this environment, ICC at a philosophical level could probably be accepted without problem, so long as the definitions and descriptions of ICC do not assume the Euro-American basis to be the only basis of concepts for intercultural competence. In definitions and descriptions of ICC, an awareness that there are alternative concepts of self, communication and education, together with a basic understanding of some of these alternative concepts, would go a long way to making Euro-American ICC more truly 'intercultural'.

5.2. Alternative cultural-social-psychological concepts and values

This is an area which has been more thoroughly researched. In particular, an awareness of the cultural significance of group identities in some non-European contexts, together with an understanding of alternative forms and meanings of communication, would enhance the European definition and description of ICC.

5.3. Alternative political-economic-historical concepts and values

Intercultural communication is not neutral, but operates within a framework of political-economic-historical concepts and concerns. In Asia (and perhaps some other non-European regions), this is probably even more significant than in Europe. Asia lives with the history and memories of external (European and American) and internal (Japanese) colonisation. Asia lives

with some of the richest and poorest nations in the world. Asia lives with some of the most dangerous (because they have nuclear capability) politically volatile nations of the world. Asia lives with dictators and military regimes, monarchies, democracies and socialist states. Learning English in Asia is a key to economic success, political power, cultural status. Learning Thai holds no such promise. In Asia, there is no political, economic or historical equality, and this reality is bound to have an effect on intercultural communication at all levels. In this respect, the Euro-American accounts of ICC, based as they are on principles of equality and plurilingualism/pluriculturalism, bear little relation to Asian reality.

5.4. Alternative education concepts

Perhaps the area where there is widest divergence between Euro-American and Asian concepts of ICC is the area of education. Many of the concepts which are fundamental to education in Asia – for example, the valuing of education, the central role of self-cultivation in education, the importance attached to moral and values education – are actually in harmony with Euro-American concepts, even if they are not the same. In other areas, such as the importance of ‘knowledge that’ and the role of the nation and the teacher in controlling education, there would be considerable difficulty in convergence on the definition and description of ICC within an education context.

5.5. Alternative alternatives

I would like to finish this paper by turning full circle and reiterating the point I made at the beginning of the paper. The generalisations I have made are just that – generalisations. Although they are commonly recognised as being significant generalisations, they should not be taken as absolute. Across cultures, within cultures and among individuals, there are wide variations. As Confucius said:

People are similar by nature, but through habituation become quite different from each other.

All generalisations can do is provide a few pointers in the grey area of culture between people’s essential sameness (as human beings) and essential differentness (as individuals), and that is all I have tried to do.

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