

Education

Young people facing difference

Some proposals for teachers



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Young people facing difference

Some proposals for teachers

Language learning for European citizenship
and
European Youth Campaign against Racism,
Xenophobia, Anti-Semitism and Intolerance

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Preface

This brochure has been produced in the framework of the Modern Languages Project of the Council of Europe "Language Learning for European Citizenship" as a contribution to the European Youth Campaign against Racism, Xenophobia, Antisemitism and Intolerance.

The Council of Europe attaches great importance to helping young people in its member countries to understand and respect other peoples' ways of thinking and acting, based on other beliefs and traditions. Consequently, it seeks to protect and promote wider knowledge and use of its diverse languages and cultures as a source of mutual enrichment. Its activities in the field of modern languages are designed to make a distinctive contribution to the realisation of these principles. Their aim is to promote more effective communication, especially in direct interpersonal contact, among all sections of the population of its member countries, as a basis for closer international cooperation based on better mutual understanding.

The Council of Europe believes that teachers of languages (and also of other subjects such as history and education for citizenship) have a central role to play in preparing young people for full and active democratic citizenship in the new Europe. The Modern Languages Project has given high priority to teacher training and has organised over 60 workshops for teacher trainers and other key multipliers. A number of these have explored the theme of 'intercultural competence', a key concept to the further development of which this brochure is intended to contribute.

It is hoped that the issues and concepts explored here, together with the practical activities proposed for helping young people to reflect on their attitudes and practices with respect to the linguistic and cultural dimensions of 'Otherness', will provide teachers and the young people themselves with a rich resource and a stimulus for further work. In this way we hope to offer them practical support in their continuing efforts to promote and strengthen peace in our multilingual and multicultural Europe as we approach the new millennium.

YOUNG PEOPLE FACING DIFFERENCE

Some Proposals for Teachers

Introduction

This brochure is an invitation to teachers and youth workers, to consider how young people learn about, respond to and reflect upon Otherness. From this point on we shall use the term 'teacher' and 'she' as a short-hand designation for all those who work with young people, just as 'school' will serve to refer to all institutions in which those who work with young people have some educational purposes and functions, in youth clubs, exchange organisations and so on. The brochure is written from a perspective of accepting that an encounter with Otherness - whether racial, religious, ethnic or national - is experienced as a challenge to the taken-for-granted 'natural' beliefs, values and behaviours which sustain our everyday existence. The challenge can lead to a confrontational and conflictual relationship with the Other, in which two 'natural' orders - the other and one's own - are experienced as incompatible. It can also lead to a relationship of acceptance and mutual enrichment when each is willing to accept difference and the consequent relativisation of one's own principles, such that the 'natural' is recognised to be 'cultural'. This is why we believe that 'tolerance' cannot be the immediate antidote to 'intolerance'.

The brochure provides suggestions as to how teachers can help young people to understand better their own responses and feelings when confronted with Otherness. It has two main purposes: to provide teachers and others with an overview of the issues and concepts through which the complexity of the encounter with Otherness can be understood; secondly, to exemplify how they can introduce the issues into their work with young people. It is a brochure for all teachers and not just those who teach foreign languages.

The first part of the brochure is thus intended for the teacher. This first part may be used as the basis for discussion with other teachers, in an in-service education programme for example. It includes a discussion of the issues and of the role of the education system and the teacher in helping young people to establish appropriate relationships with Others. The second part of the brochure contains examples of materials, and suggestions of how they can be used. Where and when they might be used will depend on the context within which the teacher works, but any situation in which the teacher can spend half an hour or so in discussion with young people will suffice.

The brochure cannot be exhaustive, neither in the introduction to the issues and concepts, nor in the examples of materials and approaches. It is intended to stimulate interest, and to suggest how further materials and approaches might be developed.

1 General principles

A description of relationships between cultures introduces phenomena of great moral, political and ideological complexity. Any pedagogical approach which under-estimated this complexity would run contrary to the general objectives on which it is based. The methodological challenge with which the teacher is confronted is the following: all teaching based on the principle of simplification of the content to be taught, usually presented in terms of "The essential must be taught", is fundamentally at odds with the raising of awareness which is implied by the analysis of the relationship to otherness. How can the teacher best cope with these contradictions in her classroom practice?

Ordinary discourse about the Other, that is discourse which is produced in daily interactions, without being the object of direct or indirect evaluation in school, can be characterised in the following way:

- discourses about the other generally confuse different levels of analysis. From an **economic point of view**, the other is perceived positively if he is a potential purchaser for the selling country. On the other hand, the citizens of a foreign country who migrate into a country are perceived as competitors on a job market which is limited. From the **anthropological point of view**, it has been agreed since the beginning of this century that all cultures are equal in scientific terms. This does not necessarily mean that they are studied using the same concepts and the same methods. From the **political point of view**, different countries have different economic and political importance, which means they are not equally placed in international negotiations. These three viewpoints from different disciplines are based on different and contradictory rationales. The pedagogical problem consists in disentangling these ways of talking, which are often mixed up in daily life.

- such discourses function as binary categorisations (I / they ; clean / dirty) which has the effect of distancing the other whilst removing the marks of identity on which this principle of classification is based. In other words, when speaking of the Other, every community finds a consensus on the way of speaking which creates indirectly cultural, moral and ideological references to mark its identity. Its references to the other may be formed on the basis of a positive representation of difference (which therefore implies that the group has a rather negative perception of its own marks of identity) or vice versa.

- talk about the other is the product of the socialisation of an individual in a given community and is always for this reason potentially ethnocentric. **The ethnocentric relationship to the other** is realised in the denial of the diversity of cultures, by the "thrusting outside culture, into nature, everything which does not conform to the norm by which one lives"¹, by situating the foreign culture outside time (for example by calling it a "primitive culture"), by transforming observable facts into value judgements. The ethnocentric interpretation of difference is the result of values

¹Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Race et histoire*, in: *Anthropologie structurale 2*, Paris, Plon 1973, p. 383

which have been absorbed, that is they have been learnt without there being any explicit learning, in an unconscious fashion. The process of socialisation can be seen from two different standpoints. From the point of view of the members of the culture to which an individual belongs, it is seen as a social phenomenon which guarantees the membership of the individual in the group and therefore the coherence of the group. From the point of view of the person who has the educational aims of bringing openness to the other, socialisation is a handicap because it constitutes a filter which is an obstacle to seeing the values of the foreign community, as they function within that community.

The fact of residing in a community into which an individual has not been socialised does not suffice to guarantee knowledge of the community. **Residence in a foreign country does not of itself produce positive representations of that country**, geographic mobility is not sufficient to transform representations which are at first negative into positive representations. The knowledge acquired about a given culture is not systematically proportional to the length of residence. These principles suggest a relativisation of the importance of the methods, operated on a grand scale, which are meant to produce knowledge of others (the argument on which the tourist industry is based), and a better understanding of others (the basis of twinning arrangements, school visits and exchanges etc.).

Attitudes towards cultural difference are closely tied to the process of the assertion of one's own identity. They cannot therefore be treated from a pedagogical point of view as attitudes which have to be eradicated. If one accepts that the function of every education system is to socialise the individual into the culture in which he finds himself, then the teacher who introduces an approach to openness to otherness, is working in the midst of a contradiction. On the one hand, she is teaching pupils in what ways they are members of a given community and therefore describing the other by means of the representations which are current within this community. On the other hand, she is teaching pupils to distance themselves from the community to which they belong and to discover a system of values which is potentially different from, even contradictory to, the one into which they have been socialised.

2 Concerning the sensitive usage of some commonly used concepts for describing openness to otherness

The following concepts suggest that the relationship to the other should be thought of in systematically positive terms and tend to under-estimate the potentially conflictual relationship to otherness described above.

The concept of **mutual comprehension** presupposes a dual relationship between two cultures. The process is usually envisaged in the framework of a bi-national partnership, and puts the emphasis on reciprocity of views. Learning to understand the other means being willing to study the ethnocentric view that the other has of the culture to which one belongs oneself, suspending all value judgements about the members of the culture which produces this unsettling perception, on condition however that the other is ready

Therefore when the teacher facilitates an encounter with otherness for young people, she finds herself in a situation of paradox and tension. If she wishes that encounter to be more than a reinforcement of ethnocentric interpretations of other identities and cultural phenomena, she has to challenge young people's existing representations of others and induce them to distance themselves from and relativise their representations of themselves, as members of a particular society. All the other expectations on her are precisely the opposite: to strengthen young people's identity as members of their own society, with a focus on the values and beliefs which run through the activities and behaviours of that society. Now she has to invite young people to relativise and question what they have hitherto taken for granted.

What is expected of the teacher in this situation is very demanding; it can be better understood with the help of the following:

- The singular concept of **socialisation** hides the complexity of every society and the power relations existing between different social groups within it. The individual child may encounter differing value systems and behavioural norms as s/he passes from family to school, or from school to work, each determined by different purposes, origins and self-definitions. The curriculum of the school may bear the label of 'national' but reflect in essence the values of a dominant social group determined by economic, racial or other factors. The beliefs and norms of the family may derive from quite different origins and reflect the value system of a different social group. The entry into a trade or profession will bring yet other norms and expectations. Each individual thus acquires a number of identities from each of the groups with which s/he identifies and the process continues throughout the life cycle. S/he may have racial, ethnic, national, professional, family, regional and other identities, each of which can dominate in particular circumstances.

- Socialisation into a **national identity** thus contrasts with other possible socialisation processes. For example, in a multi-ethnic society, minority **ethnic identities** are created. These are visible and different from the majority's ethnic identity. Indeed the majority may believe it does not have an ethnic identity, because it coincides with its national identity, defined by the dominant group and enacted through the political institutions of the **state or its constituent parts**. The school curriculum may acknowledge the presence of other identities by introducing elements of minority cultures, but these remain insignificant in the socialisation of the majority and are tolerated exoticisms within an essentially unitary culture.

- National identity is promoted throughout the curriculum but is particularly linked with **national/official language(s)**. Teachers of the national language(s) often find themselves at the centre of public debate because language is a symbol - as potent as the national flag or anthem - of identity, of nationhood and, in the service of political institutions, of state independence. The perceived threat to state independence by greater European integration has led to jealous defence of national languages in recent times. Socialisation is a process of interaction with existing members of a social group, and crucially consists of **learning the language** of the group through this interaction. Language learning is synonymous with acquisition of the concepts and values of the

group, and in the case of children is simultaneous with the acquisition of fundamental experience of the physical world, of self and of the relationship of self to others.

- The learning of **foreign languages** or of **minority languages**, particularly when the individual is hitherto monolingual, is a challenge to existing identities and conceptualisation of self and others. The teacher finds herself in implicit contradiction with the forces pervading the remainder of the curriculum as she facilitates an encounter with otherness in the classroom. By teaching a foreign language she introduces a symbol of otherness which is given a marginal status in the curriculum, unless it serves the economic needs of the state: for trade, for exchange in power relations and the defence of political interests. Minority languages often serve none of these ends and are consequently treated not only as foreign but also as minor foreign languages.

- A further dimension of many curricula is the organisation of international/interethnic encounters outside the classroom. Because this is frequently part of the informal curriculum, not binding on all, its potential significance is overlooked. It can be trivialised through a relationship of tourism, but it embodies the opportunity for experiential learning beyond the largely cognitive orientation of the classroom. It is a powerful source of **affective and unconscious learning**. Teachers who take responsibility for this kind of experience - sometimes related to a foreign language but often not - expose young people to culture shock and an experience which may be crucial for the development of a new relationship with otherness, a new understanding of the self and its relationship to the accustomed social environment, and a new perception of what was hitherto taken for granted. Yet a visit to a foreign environment does not of itself produce positive representations nor favourable attitudes.

These considerations have consequences for the school and for the teacher. The school needs an explicit policy on how it will take account of the complexity of socialisation and the changing identities of its young people as individuals meeting a variety of social groups within and beyond the limits of the state. It needs to consider how it will manage the contrasting identities of different individuals within it. It needs to review what it does to introduce young people to other conceptions of reality which are at odds with and relativise the vision of the world embodied in the culture of the dominant social group and represented in the school's curriculum.

The needs of the teacher are at the level of interaction with young people. She needs to understand the ways in which her work - her teaching of a specific subject, her routine management of young people's behaviour, her informal engagements with their beliefs and values - impinges on their understanding of self and others. She needs to consider how her subject may reinforce or question their different social identities, in particular their ethnic identity. She needs to develop methods of teaching and informal interactions which take into account the effect of confrontation with otherness. She needs a methodology which will allow her to profit from the moments of the curriculum - with various names in different countries, for example 'samfundsvidenskab' in Denmark, 'éducation civique' in France, 'personal and social education' in England - when she can introduce an encounter with otherness in a systematic and theoretically well-founded way. In particular, the teacher who accepts the responsibility of exposing

well-founded way. In particular, the teacher who accepts the responsibility of exposing young people to an experience of otherness outside the classroom and beyond the frontiers of the state - through a youth club holiday, a school exchange visit, a sports trip, a class journey - needs to develop a methodology which takes account of both cognitive and affective learning in immediate, personal experience.

5 Principle for an approach to raising awareness of otherness

We have emphasised here a **conflictual description** of the relationship between different cultures which takes into consideration their relative **incompatibility**: having been socialised into his/her country's national community, every individual meets questions and doubts when confronted by cultural difference. Our view is based on the following **anthropological assumptions**. No culture accepts the principle of diversity in the cultures with which it is in contact unless this diversity conforms to the concepts of their identity held by its own members. Their point of view on a culture must therefore not be confused with the viewpoint which is fundamental to the identity of those who are members of that culture. These reciprocal viewpoints are different, and sometimes opposed to each other.

The concept of "European citizenship" adds a **political dimension** to our assumptions which can be explained in the following way. A European citizen may be faced with value systems of a radically different otherness when s/he is in contact with religions and of life different from his/her own or quite simply when s/he is in contact with everyday situations where his/her normal points of reference (spatial, temporal, linguistic, moral, religious) are overturned and lead to a rejection of difference and a breakdown in communication. This kind of contact may take place beyond European frontiers, but may also happen in the country where one lives. These dysfunctions may eventually constitute a threat to the western definition of democracy, fundamental to the notion of European identity, if they contribute to the marginalisation of immigrant communities and the non-natives of a country who are participating in the economic development of Europe.

There is in different regions of the world a tendency to want to create political and economic harmony (the Organisation for African Unity, the European Union), which would at first sight imply a consensus-seeking pedagogy. We propose rather, **precisely in the name of those same political and economic interests which underpin this concept**, to approach the relationship between culture according to the following guidelines:

- an approach to the relationship between cultures which is **not idealist** but on the contrary **pragmatic**, and which takes account of the known resistance to practical, everyday experience of otherness. This approach which we suggest for scientific reasons, should coincide with the objective interests of political and economic sectors of society. Since they are confronted with the social and identity problems con-

consequent on geographic mobility, they are seeking educational solutions which reduce the dysfunctions which classic methods hardly begin to handle.

- the relationship between cultures is dealt with here from two dimensions: an **intellectual process** and a consideration of **personal experience**. The intellectual process is intended to provide tools for handling the relationship with otherness as a constructed, not a given object, i.e. it must be distinct from ordinary discourse and immediate experience. It is based nonetheless on actual experience of otherness inside and outside the school context.

- the educational dimension consists of providing a **space for reflection and discussion**, between experience of contacts with otherness and the unconscious processes of socialisation, the value judgements and the rejections they frequently engender. It should provide **tools** for naming and describing, in a generic way (i.e. independently of the relationship between one specific culture and another), the phenomena which are characteristic of the relationship to otherness. It should encourage a **reflective approach** which enables young people to become conscious of the modes of socialisation and the ways of classifying phenomena which influence the functioning of their representations of the other.

6 Processes of teaching and learning

The school and its teachers are accustomed to define their aims and purposes in both cognitive and affective terms. The affective dimension of the learning process is however frequently left to develop as a consequence of teaching planned on cognitive principles. In the challenge to existing identities and value systems which the confrontation with otherness necessarily creates, the affective, the unconscious, and the attitudinal effects are crucial. A teaching method, whether formally realised in a classroom or informal, in the organisation of an exchange for example, has to take account of young people's development as individuals and as members of a society. For example, in the suggestions and materials proposed later, the age factor will be taken into account.

The following principles and processes need to be considered in the planning of teaching which will structure the encounter with otherness:

- The **psychological development** of the individual is significant in his response to an encounter with otherness. Young people begin to acquire a sense of their own national or other ethnic identity and begin to recognise the significance of national symbols before adolescence. Their subsequent capacity to understand another perspective on and interpretation of reality grows at varying rates for different individuals; any group of young people will contain individuals with different capacities for going beyond an egocentric view of others' experience, and accepting others' value systems and judgements about appropriate behaviour. In groups of younger people, the teacher may be best advised to employ methods which rely less upon cognitive analysis and more upon affective response.

- The learning process necessarily involves young people in **comparison**, since whenever we encounter the unknown we attempt to understand it in terms which are part of our familiar world and our understanding of it. In the first instance we try to assimilate the new to the old, and will even distort our perception of the new to ensure that it fits the familiar. Comparison therefore needs to be part of the teacher's explicit methods to reduce distortion and to question the naturalness of the familiar, relativising it and making visible its culture-specific character.

- Teachers' influence upon the formation and modification of **prejudiced attitudes** is crucial though difficult to identify or measure. Some individuals will maintain such attitudes against all influences, because they serve the interests of the individual and his perception of his own security. Many others are already flexible in their character, and others again are rooted in their immediate experience but nonetheless susceptible to change. Attitudes towards the overt content of a teaching and learning process are affected by factors in the environment, from the physical comfort of the classroom to the appearance of the teacher and the nature of her relationships with young people. Where the individual encounters ideas and opinions which are at odds with his own, the attempt to internalise conflicting views causes a sense of discomfort. S/he will expect those s/he likes and associates with - which may include the teacher - to share his/her views, and will seek to establish a sense of balance and well-being where this is not the case. One option is to distort or suppress that which is dissonant with established views. Of more interest to the teacher is the strategy of changing attitudes and accepting multiple viewpoints on 'the same' phenomena. The teacher who offers a range of viewpoints and establishes a relationship of respect with young people can justifiably hope to develop positive attitudes in those who encounter otherness through her.

- Wherever and whenever teachers begin, young people have already acquired particular views of themselves and others. The development of **stereotypes** is a consequence of the need of any social group to establish its own identity and coherence by contrast with those which are adjacent to it. National and other ethnic stereotypes are particularly strong manifestations of stereotyping, and have two aspects. On the one hand the group defines itself by contrast - sometimes with a negative heterostereotype of others, complemented by a positive autostereotype of itself, and sometimes vice versa, for example in the case of dominated minorities. On the other hand this corresponds to the individual's general need to simplify in order to manage and cope with the complexity of new experience. However, the desirable process of differentiation and dismantling of generalisations does not happen in the case of national and ethnic stereotypes, unless there is a positive personal experience involved.

- Learning which is formal and based in an institution such as a school is traditionally structured in terms of cognitive learning and the development of analytical skills. The teacher who provides young people with an opportunity to encounter otherness in the classroom must rely mainly upon their cognitive, analytical ability to decentre and to take an unaccustomed perspective on the world. She has nonetheless to be aware that the development of **empathy** with that perspective can be inhibited by

non-cognitive factors and needs to address systematically the issues of attitude formation and change.

- Representations of others, other societies and cultures, other political and economic partners, are proposed outside the institutions of formal education. The effect of the media on young people's perceptions of others cannot be ignored by teachers. The **analysis of representations** of otherness, of the informal learning outside the institution, is a responsibility of the teacher. It is in the privileged situation of the classroom that young people may be brought to recognise and criticise the persuasive influences to which they are exposed.

- Learning which takes place outside the institution and in direct experience of another country or community has the potential to immerse young people in an entirely different world, but also to create a feeling of insecurity and rejection of the unknown. Teachers often take responsibility for this, organising exchanges, school journeys, sports trips and so on. Describing this as **fieldwork** reminds the teacher that this kind of learning must be structured and guided just as much as that of the classroom. It must include a preparation and a follow-up which address issues of both cognitive and affective response to immersion in a new environment. It must equally involve reflection on the opportunities for learning and an investigative and analytical approach to the observation of another world. Under these conditions, there is an increased probability of positive experience and a differentiated understanding of the complexity of other groups and individuals, which stimulates reflection on the self and the nature of one's belonging to a society and its social groups.

- Where the encounter with otherness includes a **linguistic dimension** - in foreign language learning in the classroom or in the experience of an unknown language in a visit to another country, for example - the recognition that they are experiencing a different *language*, and not merely a different *code* for their own language, requires young people to re-structure the meanings they attach to 'the same' words, and the connotations that are part of their own native language and culture. This too has both cognitive and affective aspects. Though an individual might accept analytically the linguistic - and non-verbal - taboos of another community, s/he will frequently have a deeply felt aversion which negates that acceptance.

- The teacher who chooses methods which develop positive attitudes to otherness has nonetheless to accept the inherent difference and consequent conflictual nature of the experience. She has therefore to take a view on the **ethical** component of the pedagogical process. Not only is the encounter with otherness an opportunity to influence attitudes towards it, but also a privileged location from which to engender a relativising and critical view on young people's own cultures, identities and society. The ethical responsibility of the person who structures this learning situation is an issue which all teachers have to analyse in order to clarify their own position.

7 Proposals for teaching

The proposals for teaching given below are based on the following hypotheses:

- the learning of a foreign language, defined as the mastery of a linguistic system different to that of the mother tongue, is not sufficient on its own to combat the rejection of cultural difference; learning the language of the enemy or of the conqueror during or after an international conflict may be the vehicle for a racist ideology
- personal, direct experience of another country or community and its different cultural realities does not, of itself, lead to acceptance of difference; it may increase existing tendencies of rejection and withdrawal into a familiar identity and culture
- a rejection of otherness as a consequence of direct experience cannot be countered only in cognitive terms; direct experience of a different country or community brings into operation all the physical senses, non-verbal communication, individual relationships of gender, generation, ethnicity, all of which can stimulate conscious and unconscious taboos, and undermine even a stated readiness to engage with otherness
- an attitude of rejection should not be confused with negative representations of the foreign language being taught and learnt
- such an attitude is based on misunderstanding and ignorance of cultural diversity, on a mistaken conceptual approach to phenomena of social organisation, on social representations of the other which are experienced as a threat to one's identity.

8 Using these activities

It is in the spirit of this brochure that users should understand that what is proposed are proposals for adaptation to circumstances rather than models to be followed absolutely. It is for this reason that we suggest the following:

- approach these activities within the framework of multidisciplinary work, which might include, in addition to the foreign language, disciplines such as history, geography, social sciences etc., or other languages than those suggested here as examples (i.e. English and French). It is this true disciplinary partnership which would be the most desirable development from these suggestions, which in themselves can only illustrate some of the combinations of disciplines possible in each country and each educational institution.

- adapt the examples given in accordance with documents which are available locally. However, this does not mean ignoring those documents which do not relate immediately to the context known to students. On the contrary, it is our belief that a document which relates to a context familiar to students is potentially 'more difficult' than a document about an unknown country. Thus, it is the capacity for surprise and astonishment which is a principle for creating a degree of questioning uncertainty in

students' view of reality, rather than approaching it as if it were taken-for-granted and natural. We suggest that the guiding principle should be that an unusual document should then lead to the analysis of a document relating to a reality which is perceived as self-evident by students. In this way, there is no topic which is *a priori* 'irrelevant' in a given context.

9 Finding further documents

Finding further documents can be the responsibility of the teacher, but it is also possible for students to be document collectors, **once they have understood the objectives of an exercise**. In this case the collection of materials must be seen as a continuation of the exercise, not as a preparatory stage.

It will also be evident that the fact that a document is in a foreign language, is not sufficient justification for its use. Nor is it the quality of information about the foreign culture which is the basis of choice suggested here. In order to take further the suggestions made below, it is preferable to choose:

- documents which are intended to play a mediating role, creating relationships between two cultural communities, describing one to help understanding by the other (travel guides, journalist reports etc.)

- documents which borrow elements from one community for the benefit of the other (for example, fashion reports, cooking recipes, advertisements, etc.)

- documents which attempt to prescribe knowledge about another culture (guides on how to behave, advice from people who have travelled or lived in a particular country, school textbooks etc.)

- documents which describe situations of passing from one culture into another (critical incidents, facts which are seen as exceptional or astonishing)

- documents which emphasise the specific nature of a nation (holiday catalogues from travel agencies, national anthems, traditional postcards, humorous drawings etc.)

- documents describing a country (students' own or a foreign country) which are used for the socialisation of children (children's books, school books used in primary education, nursery rhymes etc.)

- documents about a given country which are out of date ('foreign policy' column in old newspapers, out-of-date children's books, geographical maps which are no longer valid etc.)

These suggestions are just as valid for documents about students' own country as seen from another country as they are for documents produced in students' own country. It will be evident that it is easier to be critical of the former than of the latter, and this is a relevant principle for defining progression.

**ACTIVITY N° 1 : ATTITUDES TO LANGUAGES AND DIALECTS
(Knowing how to identify one's own and others'
stereotype attitudes)**

Objectives

- to raise students' awareness of their own stereotyping attitudes
- to make them conscious of the role of the status of languages and dialects in the formation of stereotypes
- to make students reflect on their own language and language identity as seen by others

Relationship to the general text

Refer to the discussion of **prejudiced attitudes** and **stereotypes**. This exercise demonstrates how these are attached to languages and dialects, and how identities are carried by language, even though students are probably not aware of how these affect their views of others, and others' views of them.

Teachers' notes

Attitudes to people are influenced by stereotypes of languages and dialects. Italian is said to be a musical language and Italian people are therefore pleasant to listen to, and therefore are pleasant people. German is said to be a harsh language and Germans are therefore unpleasant to listen to, and therefore are unpleasant people. These attitudes to language are supported by stereotypes about national and other ethnic groups, and it is easy to see how prejudice is expressed in attitudes. Such stereotypes also exist within national boundaries, and are expressed in attitudes to particular accents and dialects. Rural dialects or the accents of people from particular geographical regions are said to be the language of unsophisticated and stupid people, therefore anyone who speaks with such an accent must be unsophisticated and stupid.

Exercise

An exercise which aims to challenge these prejudices might start with young people's own environment, the attitudes around them to accents and dialects within the country. It might begin with attitudes towards others' accents and then move to how others perceive the accent in the young people's own region. As a third stage, the exercise can be repeated with respect to other languages: how they perceive other languages and how other people perceive their language.

Stage 1

1. Listen to a recording of a short text read with a rural accent or any accent known to have strong associations. Ask some students to write down a list of words to describe the accent, and other students to write a list to describe the person who is speaking.
2. Take each list separately and discuss why particular words (whether positively or negatively charged) have been chosen.
3. Listen to a recording of the same text with a high prestige accent, preferably spoken by the same person as in the first recording, and repeat the exercise in stages 1 and 2.
4. Compare lists to identify those words which are common, and to consider whether there is a link, whether the speaker has been ascribed particular characteristics because of the accent s/he is using. When the same speaker has been heard in both recordings, the possibility that different characteristics have been ascribed to the same person because of attitudes to the accent is easy to suggest and discuss.

Stage 2

1. Ask students to suggest a list of words which would have been provided by others in another part of the country who might have done the same exercise listening to a recording from their region.
2. Compare lists and discuss the choice of words, what they reveal about others' views.

Stage 3

1. Listen to a recording in a language familiar to the students and repeat 1 and 2 in *Stage 1*
2. Listen to a recording in a language not known to the pupils, and preferably not often heard in the media, and repeat 1 and 2 in *Stage 1*.
3. Discuss with students the choice of words (negative or positive) and what this reveals about their perceptions of other languages and the speakers of them.

Stage 4 (optional)

1. Provide students with a list of words associated with their language by speakers of foreign languages and discuss their reactions to the list.

[Stage 4 depends on the teacher providing a list from her/his own experience or from an exchange of material with a teacher and student group in another country. This may not be possible for all teachers and Stage 4 is therefore optional]

Teaching materials

[to be supplied by the teacher for her/his own circumstances]

ACTIVITY N° 2 : **MOMENTS OF EMBARRASSMENT** (Knowing how to recognise a cultural misunderstanding)

Objectives

- to make students' aware of how they take for granted the customs of their own environment
- to raise awareness of the power of taboos
- to develop students' ability to distance themselves from their social norms

Relationship to the general text

Refer to the discussion of **comparison** and of the **linguistic dimension** where the question of taboos is raised. It is also relevant that the text used here is from a description of anthropological **fieldwork**, and we discuss our own interpretation of this concept in the general text. We also discuss **exoticism** and it will be one of the first responses by students to consider the situation described here as exotic.

Teachers' notes

Young people's socialisation leads them to take for granted that particular acts, verbal or non-verbal, can have only one meaning. Raising a glass of beer or wine and speaking the name of one of the persons present is in many situations taken to be a positive gesture, of wishing good health. That the same act can have quite the opposite meaning does not easily occur to people, and they interpret it only in the way they take for granted. This can cause misunderstandings which may be transitory or serious, colouring the way people perceive each other and their subsequent relationships, without either side knowing why.

Exercise

The starting point in this exercise may appear to some students exotic and not relevant to their own way of life. It has the advantage of being a (true) story which illustrates the point very clearly, whereas misunderstandings are often more difficult to recognise. The degree of exoticism also makes it a safe starting point from which to move to more sensitive issues in students' own lives and experience.

Stage 1

1. Read the following extract from the account of an anthropologist, Nigel Barley, of his first meeting with an African leader.²

² Nigel Barley, *A Plague of Caterpillars*, Harmondsworth: Penguin 1987, 59.

(Barley has been offered a drink)

"I held the cup up and proclaimed Zuuldibo's name in a toast. Immediately a deep and shocked silence descended upon the gathering. The boys stopped talking. Zuuldibo's smile froze upon his face. The very flies seemed to hush from their buzzing. I knew ... I had made a serious mistake."

Ask students to discuss in small groups what they think the mistake was, and how Barley could rectify it.

2. Read Barley's explanation of the mistake:

The problem lies in the fact that the Dowayos have no notion of our institution of 'toasting'. All they have is an institution of cursing. When wronged beyond human bearing a man may curse another by calling out his name, sipping beer and spitting the contents of his mouth on to the earth. It is then expected that the victim will weaken and die ...

Ask students how Barley can explain 'toasting' when it does not exist in the other culture. If they find strange the idea that cursing makes a man weaken and die, tell them Zuuldibo's response to the explanation that toasting wishes health and happiness:

"But how can your words make a man live long?"

"No. It's not quite like that. We just show it is our wish - that we are friends."

"But this means that the other men there - that you do not name - you wish them to die....."

Eventually, Barley has 'an inspiration' and when he says "it's like the opposite of cursing. It means good things", Zuuldibo understands this strange custom from an exotic country.

Stage 2

Ask students to tell from their own experience of embarrassing moments and the effect it had upon them and on others in the situation. How do they think it affected how each side perceived the other? These need not be from meetings with people from other countries. Similar experiences occur in meetings with people from different social groups, from ethnic groups or social class groups for example.

Stage 3

Give examples of behaviour which have opposite meanings in another culture and ask students to consider the difficulties of explanation.

Or give examples of behaviour which exists in students' culture but not in another and ask them to consider how to explain it.

[Examples can usually be found in rituals of greeting/leave taking, eating, giving gifts, making friendships, courtship]

Stage 4

1. Return to Zuuldibo and ask students how they think he would react in an English social gathering if he was asked to toast someone present. Would he be able to do it even though he knows it has the opposite meaning, or will his feelings and habits be too strong?
2. Consider the same question from students' own experience. Do they have examples of things they could not do in a different environment, even though they knew it was "the done thing"? Are there things which they do but which they might expect a foreigner would have difficulty in doing?
3. Finally, ask students to think why some things are "the done thing", and how they know in their own lives what is "done" and what is "not the done thing"

Teaching materials

Text:

(Barley has been offered a drink)

I held the cup up and proclaimed Zuuldibo's name in a toast. Immediately a deep and shocked silence descended upon the gathering. The boys stopped talking. Zuuldibo's smile froze upon his face. The very flies seemed to hush from their buzzing. I knew I had made a serious mistake.

.....

The problem lies in the fact that the Dowayos have no notion of our institution of 'toasting'. All they have is an institution of cursing. When wronged beyond human bearing a man may curse another by calling out his name, sipping beer and spitting the contents of his mouth on to the earth. It is then expected that the victim will weaken and die ...

.....

"But how can your words make a man live long?"

"No. It's not quite like that. We just show it is our wish - that we are friends."

"But this means that the other men there - that you do not name - you wish them to die....."

ACTIVITY N° 3 : PREPARING FOR A VISIT TO A FOREIGN COUNTRY (Knowing how to relate to otherness)

Objectives

- to make students' aware of the nature of response to a new environment, particularly in a foreign culture
- to offer students a means of reflecting on their experience and coming to terms with the affective demands of visits to other countries

Relationship to the general text

Refer to the discussion of **fieldwork**, which identifies the importance of recognising that a visit to another community or culture makes many-sided demands, and which suggests that the teacher has responsibilities in helping students to analyse and understand their experience at different points in time.

Teachers' notes

Those who work with young people often take the responsibility of organising for them a visit to another country, or sometimes to another part of their own country, to another community. Both can be equally valuable and both can be equally risky. (Foreign language teachers are frequently in this situation, but other teachers are often also involved in taking groups of young people away from home.) The sudden confrontation with a different reality, a physical reality and a social reality, can give young people their first reaction to ways of behaving, to tastes and smells, to locations for living, eating, sleeping, which all appear, in a metaphorical and a literal sense, 'unnatural'. The reactions can be extreme: from absolute rejection and a wish to return home as soon as possible, to absolute enthusiasm, embracing the novelty without a thought for what has been left behind. Often all this is compounded by the fact that in the new environment, a foreign language is spoken.

One description of this "culture shock" reminds us how complex our reactions are and how they depend on the little things:

Culture shock is precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social discourse. These signs or cues include the thousand and one ways in which we orient ourselves to the situations of daily life: when to shake hands, and what to say when we meet people, when and how to give tips, how to give orders to servants, how to make purchases, when to accept and when to refuse invitations, when to take statements seriously and when not. Now these cues which may be words, gestures, facial expressions, customs or norms are acquired by all of us in the course of growing up and are as much part of our culture as the language we speak or the beliefs we accept. All of us depend for our peace of mind and our efficiency on hundreds of these cues, most of which we are not consciously aware of ...

(K. Oberg, "Culture shock: adjustment to new cultural environments" *Practical Anthropology*, 7, 1960, 177-82)

Not all of these apply to every situation, but it is a good reminder of how important it is to anticipate the effects of visiting another culture, and the need to help young people to recognise and come to terms with what happens to them. This is particularly important when they are separated from their friends and live with a family in another country, as many do on exchange visits, for example.

Exercise

It is important not to give young people the impression that they can avoid some degree of culture shock, but rather that it is part of the enjoyment of visiting another country or community. The phrase 'culture shock' is itself unfortunate in that it has negative connotations, and should be avoided. The teacher herself can reinforce the effectiveness of this exercise by participating with her own experience.

Stage 1

Ask students to remember their first visit to a different environment: another country, another part of their own country, another community in their own region, even another town a few miles away. Ask them to portray the visit on a large piece of paper, in drawings, in words, to re-create the impressions they had. From time to time during this the teacher can ask them to think of 'the first thing I saw', 'the scents and smells', 'what I said to my friend/sister/ mother...'. The teacher can do her own description too.

Stage 2

Students put their posters on the wall. They form groups of three or four, and walk round the exhibition. When they come to a poster done by one of their group, that person explains and answers questions. The teacher joins a group or stands by her own poster and explains it to the groups as they pass.

Stage 3

Hold a group discussion in which students talk about what they expect their visit to be like, what they have heard about the place from their friends, parents and from the media, what stories they have heard about similar trips on previous occasions, and what they are looking forward to or anxious about. Write all of these points in words or short phrases on a large piece of paper.

Stage 4

From time to time during the visit, hold a meeting when students recount their impressions, either in a discussion or by the production of a poster. Try to draw their attention to the little things which may be causing them to feel disorientated - it may be the light switches, the way the bed is made, the way the windows open, and of

course the food. Making them aware of the effect of the little things helps them to come to terms with them. On the second or third occasion, review the poster of their anticipations from Stage 2. In this process ensure that a variety of experiences of the foreign environment are recorded, so that the tendency to generalise from one personal experience is countered by attention to variety.

Stage 5

On return to the home institution, ask students to produce posters as in Stage 1, but with three divisions: 'before', 'during' and 'after'. Viewing of the posters can be done as before, in small groups. A better alternative is to invite students from another group to visit the poster exhibition, so that the students are obliged to explain their experience to outsiders and thereby articulate it in new ways.

Teaching materials

[none required]

ACTIVITY N° 4 : HOW OTHERS SEE US
(Recognising the influence of textbook images)

Objectives

- to make students aware of the language of pictures
- to raise questions of representation and stereotyping
- to consider the effect of reflecting on one's own culture seen from the outside

Relationship to general text

Refer to the discussion of the discussion of the **analysis of the representations** of otherness, and of **stereotypes**. It is important that students recognise the impact of pictorial images and how they function in the representation of their cultures to others. Refer also to the discussion of the concepts of **mutual comprehension** and **dialogue of cultures**, for it is important to understand how others perceive us if there is to be any degree of success in these.

Teachers' notes

Images of other countries are purveyed through the teaching of foreign languages. Often the influence of the pictures in textbooks is overlooked. Yet the choice of pictures reflects the general emphasis of the information given in texts, whether stories or factual, and it is important to ensure students have a critical awareness of the influences to which they are exposed. Rather than asking students to consider representations of other countries, an approach which begins with textbook representations of themselves allows them to draw upon their own experience first. They can then be encouraged to turn their attention to the images they receive of other countries.

Exercise

Many textbooks isolate one representation of a country and fail to provide a balanced view. Pictures, whether photographs or drawings, work often at a sub-subliminal level, and are not always used in the course of language teaching. They are marginal but nonetheless significant illustrations. In this exercise, the example is for use with British students, and the image is taken from a textbook for teaching English as a foreign language in other countries. Students should be asked to bring copies of the books they use for learning a foreign language.

Stage 1

Ask students to consider the picture without title, authors or publisher, and to suggest what kind of book it has been used for as a book cover. Encourage them to identify the

the objects and people, and then to suggest what could be the contents of a book with this cover.

Stage 2

If the opportunity has not already arisen from Stage 1, give the title and ask students to suggest 5-10 objects or people which *they* think should be on the cover of *When in Britain*. As an alternative, some students may be asked to suggest items for a book entitled *When in*, where the gap is filled by the name of their own town or region. Compare the lists and discuss in how far they are representative, whether they might create or reinforce stereotypes about Britain.

Stage 3

Ask students to list from memory the objects and people they have seen in their own textbooks for learning a foreign language. Write a composite list on blackboard or equivalent. Then ask them to supplement the list by scanning their textbook. Ask students whether the images in their textbooks are sufficiently varied to represent a variety of regions, of families, of occupations, of other dimensions of the life of a country they wish to see.

Stage 4 (optional)

Invite a native of the country to discuss with students the images they have found and their critique of them. S/he might be encouraged to talk about the textbooks s/he used to learn foreign languages and in particular English.

Teaching materials

Example of pictorial representation from a textbook (Appendix A). The teacher needs to find similar documentation.

ACTIVITY N° 5 : A COMMERCIAL RELATIONSHIP
(Knowing how to analyse media presentations of others)

Objectives

- to raise students' awareness of the creation of particular kinds of relationship with otherness through media representations with their own purpose
- to encourage students to consider the effect of media representations on mutual understanding

Relationship to the general text

Refer to our discussion of the **analysis of representations** and the importance of providing a perspective from the classroom on the informal learning. Consider also the issues of **mutual comprehension** and **identity threat** which may be brought about by the introduction of a commercial relationship between people of different cultures

Teachers' notes

Representations of other countries can be 'read' at a number of levels. Students need to learn how to recognise the ways in which other countries and societies are presented for specific ends. The relationship to otherness implicit in these images is created outside the school curriculum, and is not perceived by students as 'learning' about other countries. Travel programmes on television provide one kind of image with which students are familiar, but which they have probably not ionize. Tourist brochures present another image and a particular implicit relationship, of 'buying' a right to participation in the society. The concept of 'buying into' a society is made explicit in the document in this workcard (Appendix B).

In classes where students do not understand English, teachers need to substitute a comparable advertisement of foreign goods in their own country. The important point is that the advertisement should refer to high prestige goods - such as perfumes, cars, particular food or drinks - where specific implicit values are being attached to the country and culture. The advertisement implicitly invites people to enter into a commercial relationship.

The example demonstrates how learners should be invited to analyse the presentation of the goods in question: the kind of customer the advertisement wishes to attract, the language and values used to play on people's desire for prestige, the cost involved and its relationship to comparable goods in learners' own country. The example also shows how to develop the discussion into a general analysis of commercial relationships between countries and their influence on people's representations of those countries, and the people who live there.

Exercise

Stage 1

Ask students to look briefly at the first part of the document and consider who might be the readers whom the advertisements wish to attract. They should be asked to choose one or two items of information in the advert to explain their answers.

Stage 2

Consider the description of 'Les Salines' and how its geographical position is presented: the emphasis on seclusion but also the indication that it is not far from certain towns, and an airport. Ask students to suggest why the agents might have included the reference to the airport.

Stage 3

If the notion has not yet appeared, ask students to consider whether the owners of these houses are likely to live there permanently, and if not what would be the purpose of buying such houses. What images of France do people have (particularly children) who spend their holidays in such houses. What, finally, are the owners *buying* when they buy a house in France?

Stage 4

Ask students to consider comparable situations in their own region or country, and the reactions of local inhabitants.

OR ask students to consider whether foreigners would be attracted to buy houses in the students' region or country, and what kind of relationship is implied in the response.

Teaching materials

Reproduction of advertisements for houses in France from a British magazine (Appendix B). The teacher may wish to seek similar material appropriate to her circumstances and the age group of students.

ACTIVITY N° 6 : SONGS OF UNITY AND AGGRESSION
(Analysing the symbols of national identity)

Objectives

- to make students aware of the function of national symbols
- to reflect on prejudices associated with national stereotypes

Relationship to the general text

Refer to our discussion of the **ethical** issues involved particularly where inherent or long-standing conflicts impact on perceptions and **stereotypes**. With respect to national symbols it is also necessary to be aware of the **psychological development** of students.

Teachers' notes

Stage 1

Ask students to recite their national anthem and list the occasions when they have heard it. In particular consider the reasons for the playing of the national anthem on sports occasions, e.g. the use of the national anthem at the Olympic Games to remind everyone that the individual athlete is there not only in her/his own right but also to represent his/her country. Ask students to talk about their own reactions to hearing the national anthem on these occasions, and also to remember when and how they learnt it.

Stage 2

Consider the wording of the students' national anthem(s) and identify the adjectives, listing first those which refer to the inhabitants of the country and, where applicable to its monarch, and secondly those which refer to other people, enemies etc. It is likely that where there is mention of others, there will be a sharp contrast, but this need not be emphasised at this point.

Stage 3

Read with students the first two stanzas of the Danish, Irish and Luxembourg anthems. Consider how the anthems can be classified in terms of being inward or outward looking, in terms of creating unity, in terms of being peaceful or warlike.

Stage 4

Ask students to consider where they would place the German national anthem in the same terms, and then read the first stanzas. Ask students to compare the tone of this anthem on the parameter of warlike-peaceful. It needs to be made clear that *über alles*

is an expression of devotion to Germany, rather than a claim that German should rule everything in the world.

Stage 5

Ask students to return to the list of adjectives from their own anthem and compare it with others, and particularly the German anthem.

Teaching materials

Texts of national anthems.

Denmark

King Christian stood by the tall mast
In smoke and mist
His sword struck so hard
That the Goths' helmets and heads broke open
And every enemy sail and mast sank
In smoke and mist

Fly, they screamed, every man for himself
Who can stand against Christian of Denmark
Who can stand against Christian of Denmark
In the fight?

Niels Juel watched for the break in the storm
Now is the time!
He ran up the red flag
And beat the enemy blow on blow
And then they screamed in the height of the storm

Fly, they screamed, every man for himself
Who can stand against Juel of Denmark
Who can stand against Juel of Denmark
In the fight?

Ireland

We'll sing a song, a soldier's song
With cheering, rousing chorus
As round our blazing fires
We throng, the starry heavens o'er us
Impatient for the coming fight
And as we wait the morning's light
Here in the silence of the night
We'll chant a soldier's song

Soldiers are we
Whose lives are pledged to Ireland
Some have come from a land beyond the wave
Sworn to be free
No more our ancient sireland
Shall shelter the despot or the slave
Tonight we man the 'bear-na baoil'
In Erin's cause come woe or weal
Mid cannon's roar and rifles' peal
We'll chant a soldier's song

Luxembourg

Where the Great Bear shines on fields and meadows
Where the sweet Mosel
Bathes the golden rocks
Where the wine sparkles
Is the country of loyal blood
My soul is full with it
It's my home, my native soil
It is my dear fatherland

In the crown of its forests
Where peace blossoms
It generously distributes
Joy and wealth
Free from the yoke of the foreigner
Its sons far from danger
Dream under the sweet protection
Of immortal peace

Germany

Germany, Germany, beyond everything
Beyond everything in the world
If only, for its own safety
It sticks together fraternally.

Unity and justice and freedom
For the German Fatherland
Let us all strive for that
Fraternally with heart and hand
Unity and justice and freedom
Are the guarantee of happiness
In the glow of this happiness
Let the German Fatherland bloom.

ACTIVITY N° 7 : HISTORICAL RELATIONSHIPS

Objective

- to develop students' ability to analyse the notion of perspective in a historical account

Relationship to the general text

The document which is the focus of this exercise is taken from a children's reading book. It was produced at a time of international conflict (in particular between France and Germany) and demonstrates the way in which the processes of **socialisation** construct the relationship with others as a function of the international context. The image of Germany is caricaturised by the French, but this is done in an indirect way because it is the Romans who defend the interests of the French. This **perspective** on history fails to point out that the Romans could also appear as invaders of France, after having conquered the Gauls, a people originally established on this territory. There are 'good invaders', presented here as builders, and 'bad invaders' presented as barbarians.

Teachers' notes

The work required of the pupils presupposes previous training in the techniques of analysis.

Text for the teacher:

"The victorious army of Julius Caesar advanced to the North of Alsace, where it built a fortified camp to spend the winter. It was thus that the town of Saverne was founded. Then, to defend the country against these eternal invasions, the Romans established a fortified line consisting of camps, lookout towers and other constructions, near enough to each other to be able to communicate by signals between them. As soon as any barbarian horde tried to cross the Rhine by surprise, the alarm was raised, Roman troops brought to the place exposed to danger, and the pillagers pushed back into the Rhine. Since they were out of all danger around the fortified camps, the farmers constructed their farms and houses there. It was in this way that many towns and villages of Alsace were founded. Strasbourg is one of these. Remember that! Later people will come and tell you that Strasbourg is a German city. You'll be able to smile and remember that originally this fortress was built in fact to resist the Germans."

Extract from : *L'histoire d'Alsace racontée aux petits enfants par l'Oncle Hansi*. Paris: H. Floury éditeur, 1916.

Exercise

Initial text:

"The victorious army of Julius Caesar advanced to the North of Alsace, where it built a fortified camp to spend the winter. It was thus that the town of Saverne was founded. Then, to defend the country against these eternal invasions, the Romans established a fortified line consisting of camps, lookout towers and other constructions, near enough to each other to be able to communicate by signals between them. As soon as any barbarian horde tried to cross the Rhine by surprise, the alarm was raised, Roman troops brought to the place exposed to danger, and the pillagers pushed back into the Rhine. Since they were out of all danger around the fortified camps, the farmers constructed their farms and houses there. It was in this way that many towns and villages of Alsace were founded. Strasbourg is one of these".

Stage 1

Students need access to a dictionary of proper names and a map of the Franco-German frontier.

- Ask students to identify the words and phrases in the text which carry negative or positive values:
 - Positive: victorious army, out of all danger, many towns and villages of Alsace were founded
 - Negative: eternal invasions, barbarian horde, pillagers

- Ask students to identify the countries to which the text refers:
 - France (Saverne, Alsace, Strasbourg)
 - Germany (barbarian horde crossing the Rhine)and which nations have positive and negative terms linked with them:
 - Romans: victorious army, out of all danger, many towns and villages of Alsace were founded
 - Germans: eternal invasions, barbarian horde, pillagers

Which nation does not appear in these associations?

Stage 2

In order to establish the context of the extract, provide students with the supplementary information:

"Remember that! Later people will come and tell you that Strasbourg is a German city. You'll be able to smile and remember that originally this fortress was built in fact to resist the Germans."

Extract from : *The history of Alsace for little children told by Uncle Hansi.*

- Ask students to note carefully the date of the extract and, taking into consideration the international context at that time, ask them to suggest in which country this children's book was published.

Stage 3

For development in a country where the Romans were present and where the history is taught at school:

- Ask students why the Romans are presented positively when they could be presented as invaders.

For development in other countries:

- Ask students which countries they remember as being presented negatively in their childhood; which titles of books or history books they remember; whether there are images from them which remain fixed in their memories.

Teaching material

Text and picture from the history book cited above.

ACTIVITY N° 8 : THE MEDIA AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Objective

- to develop students' ability to identify the everyday processes which give negative connotations to relationships with other countries

Relationship to the general text

Cartoons bring **conflictual relationships** with other countries into ordinary life. Here is an example. It is not a question of arguing for a utopian society where there would be no sign of aggressiveness. It is rather a question of learning to identify how procedures which are part of daily life implicitly refer to the enemy (Iraq is not even mentioned in the document) and suddenly transform a country or part of the world into a region with negative connotations, because of political and economic interests.

Teachers' notes

This document refers to a recent conflictual international political context, the Gulf War between Iraq and Kuwait, where the armies of several countries were involved. The geo-political dimension is an important factor, with allusions to the presence of the Americans (General Schwarzkopf at the head of the American troops and “desert storm”), to Germany's expansionist past (Hindenburg beside Luddendorf, head of the German army during the First World War; Rundstedt and Rommel commanding the Nazi armed forces in the Second World War; Chancellor Kohl telephoning the American general Schwarzkopf).

The document alludes to the feeling of national pride of both countries in their skills which depend on their capacity for military aggression.

Exercise

Stage 1

Ask students to note the date of this document, and to consider the following questions:

- Which countries are involved in this document?
- In which country did they appear?
- What kind of document is it?

Stage 2

Ask students to think about the media in their own country and the following questions:

- Which countries have negative connotations?
- What processes are used to express the superiority of your country in this context?

As a second step:

- How do you perceive the representatives of these countries who live in your region?
- What milieu (media, family, school, friends, workplace) has contributed to the development of your opinion?
- Can you think of a situation in your daily life, where you had to express an opinion on this topic?

Teaching material

Copies of the cartoon referred to above (Appendix C).

ACTIVITY N° 9 : THE SYMBOLISM OF THE FRONTIER

Objective

- to develop students' ability to identify the symbolic markers of frontiers in daily life

Relationship to the general text

The **frontier** is defined here as the line which manifests and creates a radical difference between two areas; the other is designated as existing beyond the frontier. The purpose of this activity is to raise students' awareness of the frontier, not as a 'natural' object whose existence is obvious, but on the contrary as a **cultural construct** which is in part arbitrary, and whose arbitrariness tends to be hidden by different kinds of **socialisation**.

Teachers' notes

We start with students' own observations about the notion of frontier as it is experienced in their daily life. Then we gradually extend their thinking towards the frontiers which mark areas which are geographically and culturally more distant.

The space in the town we inhabit, in the sense that we perceive it in our daily life, is organised in terms of our favourite places, which are criss-crossed by familiar pathways and full of memories. However, this familiarity means that there are also spaces which, despite being immediately accessible, we do not know and have no significance for us. Geographical proximity is not synonymous with knowledge. At best it means that we can use markers and boundaries to construct the extent of the territory.

When we travel abroad, we discover an unfamiliar space and this discovery produces anxiety; there are visible frontiers to cross which incorporate the difference. Other, invisible frontiers have to be crossed too. The tourist industry survives partly on this feeling of anxiety in the relationship to otherness, and offers a homogenised relationship to the exotic. We suggest that this relationship tends to reinforce an immature relationship to otherness, and our purpose here is to call into question the normal practices of tourism, in particular those of the travel guide.

Exercise

Stage 1

Start with students' observations of their own daily environment. In order to provide a common basis for discussion, choose something which is familiar to everyone, e.g. school, town centre, leisure centre. The purpose of the exercise is to define the limits of the chosen place. One suggestion is to ask students to produce a plan (which should not attempt to be geographically accurate).

The purpose of this activity is to stimulate a debate which should focus on the negotiation of the criteria which define the boundaries of the specific space; for example, what are the areas of the town or the streets beyond which define the limits of the space in question.

In the course of the discussion, point out the different kinds of boundaries of the same space: boundaries imposed by the town (streets which are wide or narrow, bridges, hills which are a result of the terrain), boundaries imposed by the post office, the school system, the municipality, the transport system etc.; boundaries which are a result of personal habits and practices (they are therefore not recognised by the others in the group): for example, routes which have become familiar because of friendships or past-times, or for commercial reasons (shopping trips), because of family relationships, etc.

Ask students to identify the spaces where they never go but which are nonetheless on the edge of the space which is familiar. Why are they not visited? Attempt to establish a typology of boundaries on the basis of these everyday experiences, but which is independent of a specific place and which is accepted by the whole group.

Stage 2

Ask students to tell about their experience of the administrative process of crossing national frontiers on a journey abroad, about the details and the minutiae of the process. These can be collected from students in class or from people they know who have been abroad. Ask them to suggest a classification of these accounts with reference to the notion of frontier.

Using an atlas, ask students to identify examples of national frontiers:

- where crossing the frontier does not involve customs control for them
- where crossing the frontier involves customs control for other nationalities than them, or for some of them
- where crossing the frontier involves more formalities and checks for people from one side of the frontier than those from the other
- where the frontiers have been created recently, or have existed for centuries, or have been moved etc.

Stage 3

- Take several travel brochures for different groups (young people, families, package holidays etc.) focused on neighbouring countries and countries which are culturally distant. If possible, find several brochures describing the same country but produced for tourists of different nationalities, and ask students to compare the advice given before departure about what precautions to take and what administrative formalities have to be dealt with.

Ask students to suggest different types of frontiers according to the countries to visit, the kinds of travel involved, the nationality of the tourists.

Compare and contrast the suggestions of the brochures in terms of the cultural distance involved.

Teaching materials

To be supplied by the teacher according to local circumstances.

ACTIVITY N° 10 : EXPLAINING CULTURAL DIFFERENCE

Objective

- to develop in students the ability to assess the value of an explanation of the practices of a national group

Relationship to the general text

Ordinary discourse about others mixes different levels of analysis, and this makes them of doubtful value. Nonetheless they are presented as assertions which are difficult to deny because the counter-arguments have to be better than the quality of the assertions they seek to refute. What methods can we acquire to speak of **cultural difference** in a way which is more than an expression of good will?

Teachers' notes

The text provided here is a copy of a leaflet entitled "112 gripes about the French" which was given to American soldiers before the invasion of France in 1944. It was reproduced for the Fiftieth Anniversary of the allied invasion. It is related therefore to a specific historical situation (the period of the Second World War), to the relationships between allies (Americans, British, French) and attempts to mediate between them; it anticipates the meeting between Americans invading France and the French who have to welcome the liberators after years of German occupation.

Because of the purpose for which this booklet was written, it provides an excellent example for our topic as it anticipates predictable misunderstandings, explains cultural differences and is an explicit attempt to teach about these. This document, which was a technical innovation in its time, is an example of how international conflicts can lead to the spread of innovations, in particular and paradoxically with respect to intercultural communication.

At first sight it may seem of little interest for European students because it focuses on the relations between a European and a non-European country. What is important however is that it should be understood as a case study which is all the easier to handle because students' own sense of identity is not immediately in question, if they are not American, French or British.

Exercise

Stage 1

Ask students to decide on the situation in which the document was produced:

- the place (United States)
- the readership envisaged (American public opinion)

- the historical context (1944)
- the relationships which are made explicit (the Allies)
- the teaching method involved (question and answer)

Teaching materials

Copy of information for American soldiers mentioned above (Appendix D).

**ACTIVITY N° 11 : EXPERIENCING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE
(Reflecting on the power of language to create and
overcome distance and difference)**

Objectives

- to raise students' awareness of the importance of learning a foreign language
- to give students a means of reflecting on their immediate reactions to a foreign linguistic environment
- to help students to become more sensitive to the feelings of speakers of foreign languages who are visiting their country
- to encourage students to maximise their use of a foreign language

Relationship to the general text

Refer to the discussion of international/interethnic encounters and the power of **affective** learning. It is also relevant to consider the discussion of the **linguistic dimension** of the encounter with otherness, although the emphasis in this activity is more on the power of an affective relationship to a foreign environment, and the way in which communication has a role to play in coping with **exoticism** and **culture shock**.

Teachers' notes

This activity is particularly useful for foreign language teachers, but can be used by any teacher who takes young people into a foreign linguistic environment, or who organises a visit by young people from another country. It is based on extracts from interviews with English students between the ages of 10 and 14, talking about their experience of visits to a foreign country, and in particular what it felt like to be surrounded by a foreign language, not just to learn it as a school subject. For those who are going to visit a foreign country themselves, this activity could perhaps be best used *during or soon after* a visit. For those who are to receive a visit from another country, it might be adapted for use before the visit. For the first group, the purpose is to give students the opportunity to respond affectively or emotionally to the experience; they can then be encouraged to use what knowledge they have - or even start from no knowledge - in order to overcome the feeling of "being a foreigner". In the case of the second group, the purpose is to sensitise them before the visit and help them to consider ways in which they can help their visitors.

Exercise

Students who have had no contact with foreign people or, if they live in a multiethnic society, are part of the majority group, have never experienced being 'an outsider'. The first stage is to evoke this feeling and reflect upon it.

Stage 1

1. Ask students as individuals to write on a piece of paper, without their name, some words or phrases to describe what it feels like to be surrounded by a language they don't know or know very little. Tell them that these will remain anonymous. Place all the papers in a pile and mix them up, and then ask students to read them out or write them on a blackboard.

Stage 2

Explain that the following extracts are from interviews with young English people, and ask them to say what is common to them all, hoping they will focus on the question of the language:

- What did it feel like when you went to France?
- I just felt I was a visitor to that country; people seemed to be watching you when you talked English. So you just felt that you didn't live there. It felt funny when I first got there but it was all right after a bit.

When I have been abroad I have been amongst English people. It's just when you go out by yourself in the streets and they all talk in a foreign language and you feel as though you are left out.

Stage 3

Ask students about their own experience of learning a foreign language, e.g. what they remember from their first language lesson, when they first met a speaker of a foreign language in their own country, whether they feel a difference speaking the foreign language in the classroom and in the outside world etc. Use the following extracts if necessary, to stimulate discussion:

- "What's it feel like when you hear people speaking a foreign language?"
- "I don't know what they're talking about. You feel left out because you don't know what they're saying. You can catch some of it but most of it you don't know what they are talking about. ... It just feels as if they're not talking to you at all, when they try and talk to you in a foreign language. You don't think they're talking to you because you don't know what they're talking about. It's hard to explain".

"What did it feel like when you heard them speak French?"

"I laughed. I like the way they speak because they use expression. I laughed because it was the first time I heard them and I didn't know French people spoke like that and they use their hands and everything."

Stage 4

The next step is to tempt any students who are afraid to use their foreign language to 'have a go', i.e. not worry about the reactions of others, whether their own friends or

people they don't know. Consider the following extracts and contrast the fear of offending and making mistakes in the first two, where the students are talking about a language they have learnt at school, with the third where the student talks about a language he has never heard before, and the fourth where the student expresses real satisfaction in making an effort despite the nervous laughter of her friends:

When we were in France when I wanted to go and get some ice-cream because it was too hot, my dad always had to go and get it because I was too frightened in case I said the wrong words and offended them or something. ... Sometimes it felt nice when they were saying the words I knew but when they didn't say the words I knew, I didn't like that.

What did it feel like the first time you spoke French in France?
It felt a bit silly because I didn't know them. It felt as if they knew I couldn't speak French properly but after a while I got used to it and it was all right.

Sometimes I felt like a foreigner when I was in Italy. When I first went into the hotel they were trying to communicate with us, but I didn't know what to say to them and I felt I was being unfriendly really, because I couldn't communicate back to them ... I was a bit curious to see what the people are like, how the people talk and you're just trying to pick up words they are saying and communicate a little back ... it's nice if you can talk to people and in the last week we were there, we started communicating with them and it felt good being able to talk to someone apart from your own family.

In a foreign country, you feel stupid in a way. You're just a bit nervous, but once you get your self-confidence, you can do it. If you can speak French you shouldn't be afraid to speak it because it's something you can do. Other people laugh at you speaking it, but you can feel happy because you spoke it and they didn't. ... then at least you've tried and they didn't.

Stage 5

Go back to the words and phrases from *Stage 1* and ask students to comment on them, to suggest how people should respond to the feeling of being lost or helpless or left out, and how they can help foreigners to feel more relaxed in their environment.

Teaching material

Quotations to copy and use in the exercise:

- 1 I just felt I was a visitor to that country; people seemed to be watching you when you talked English. So you just felt that you didn't live there. It felt funny when I first got there but it was all right after a bit.

- 2 When I have been abroad I have been amongst English people. It's just when you go out by yourself in the streets and they all talk in a foreign language and you feel as though you are left out.
- 3 - What's it feel like when you hear people speaking a foreign language?
- I don't know what they're talking about. You feel left out because you don't know what they're saying. You can catch some of it but most of it you don't know what they are talking about. ... It just feels as if they're not talking to you at all, when they try and talk to you in a foreign language. You don't think they're talking to you because you don't know what they're talking about. It's hard to explain.
- 4 What did it feel like when you heard them speak French?
I laughed. I like the way they speak because they use expression, I laughed because it was the first time I heard them and I didn't know French people spoke like that and they use their hands and everything.
- 5 When we were in France when I wanted to go and get some ice-cream because it was too hot, my dad always had to go and get it because I was too frightened in case I said the wrong words and offended them or something. ... Sometimes it felt nice when they were saying the words I knew but when they didn't say the words I knew, I didn't like that.
- 6 What did it feel like the first time you spoke French in France?
It felt a bit silly because I didn't know them. It felt as if they knew I couldn't speak French properly but after a while I got used to it and it was all right.
- 7 Sometimes I felt like a foreigner when I was in Italy. When I first went into the hotel they were trying to communicate with us, but I didn't know what to say to them and I felt I was being unfriendly really, because I couldn't communicate back to them ... I was a bit curious to see what the people are like, how the people talk and you're just trying to pick up words they are saying and communicate a little back ... it's nice if you can talk to people and in the last week we were there, we started communicating with them and it felt good being able to talk to someone apart from your own family.
- 8 In a foreign country, you feel stupid in a way. You're just a bit nervous, but once you get your self-confidence, you can do it. If you can speak French you shouldn't be afraid to speak it because it's something you can do. Other people laugh at you speaking it, but you can feel happy because you spoke it and they didn't. ... then at least you've tried and they didn't.

When in Britain

INTERMEDIATE



Rob Nolasco & Péter Medgyes

OXFORD

R. Nolasco and P. Medgyes, *When in Britain: Intermediate*, Oxford University Press, 1990. By permission of Oxford University Press.

APPENDIX B (Appendix to Activity N° 5)



Les Salines, Le Minihic-Sur-Rance, Brittany, France

ST MALO 6 MILES, DINAN 8 MILES, DINARD AIRPORT 4 MILES.

Delightful family residence in a unique position surrounded by unspoilt and protected countryside. The property is completely secluded and idyllically situated on the banks of the River Rance allowing magnificent views. The house comprises of 5 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms (3 en suite), 5 reception rooms, fully fitted kitchen with all appliances. Totally renovated in 1991 with all services renewed. Private and manageable garden with direct access to the river. Fully double glazed and centrally heated throughout. State of the art security system including electrically operated gates. Must be seen.

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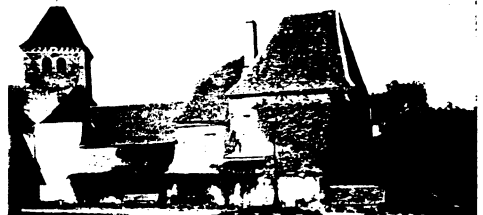
PERIGORD – WEEK-END

G. BOYER

FREE Catalogue on request



Very near Limoges (40 000 h.), industrial city with airport, motorway, railway station, this 18th century Chateau, fully restored, is suitable for hotels and conferences. It offers a 9-hole golf course, an equestrian centre, French style Gardens, terraces, landscaped grounds on about 50 acres, and various outbuildings. Price on request.



In the Perigord Vert, this former manor has been fully restored and decorated, and offers all amenities. 10 main rooms, several bathrooms, caretaker's house and 1 acre of very private park, in the centre of a small typical village. Price: 1.7 MF.



Medieval chateau, situated in a beautiful stronghold, composed of 11 main rooms with period features, oak floors, stone beamed windows and monumental fireplaces. Vaulted cellar, terrace, swimming pool. South-west courtyard with several outbuildings. This very exclusive 190 acre estate overlooks a valley, crossed by a river. Small town nearby, with full shopping facilities. Price: 3.5 MF.



In the Perigord Noir, this superb 17th century old Chateau, comprises 14 bedrooms, 6 bathrooms and 4 fireplaces, cellars with stone pavements, and 500 sq. ft. The outbuildings include several 2-3 bed houses, barns and garage. The estate comprises 180 acres of woods, fields and meadows, with an important pond and lake. It is located in a lovely and secluded area, at some distance from the town of the Dordogne. Price: 4.8 MF.

14 Rue Jean-Jaures 24800 THIVIERS
Tel: UK: (01033) 53.55.06.32 Fax: UK: (01033) 53.55.20.95

6 Rue Gambetta 24000 PERIGUEUX
Tel: UK: (01033) 53.55.06.32

This brochure is addressed to teachers and others who are interested in helping young people to reflect on how they learn about and respond to otherness. The Council of Europe attaches particular importance to the protection and promotion of linguistic and cultural diversity as a source of mutual enrichment so that we may understand and respect other ways of thinking and acting, other beliefs and traditions.

In this context, the concept of intercultural understanding is examined and practical activities are suggested as a way of helping young people reflect on their attitudes and practices in relation to difference.

This brochure has been produced in the framework of the Modern Languages Project of the Council of Europe "Language Learning for European Citizenship" and the European Youth Campaign against Racism, Xenophobia, Anti-Semitism and Intolerance.