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Cultural mediation in language learning and teaching

Geneviève Zarate, Aline Gohard-Radenkovic,
Denise Lussier, Hermine Penz



European Centre for Modern Languages
Centre européen pour les langues vivantes

Cultural mediation in language learning and teaching

In 1994, upon the initiative of Austria and the Netherlands, with special support from France, eight states founded the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) as an Enlarged Partial Agreement of the Council of Europe. It was to become "a forum to discuss and seek solutions to the specific tasks and challenges that face them in the coming years and which will play a decisive role in the process of European integration". At the time of writing, thirty-three states¹ subscribe to the Partial Agreement. Following a successful initial trial period (1995-98), the continuation of the activities of the Centre was confirmed by Resolution (98) 11 of the Committee of Ministers.

The aim of the ECML is to offer – generally through international workshops, colloquies and research and development networks and other expert meetings – a platform and a meeting place for officials responsible for language policy, specialists in didactics and methodology, teacher trainers, textbook authors and other multipliers in the area of modern languages.

Cultural mediation in language learning and teaching is published within the framework of the first medium-term programme of activities of the ECML (2000-2003).

The ECML's overall role is the implementation of language policies and the promotion of innovations in the field of teaching and learning modern languages. The publications are the results of research and development project teams established during workshops in Graz. The series highlights the dedication and active involvement of all those who participated in the projects and in particular of the group leaders and co-ordinators.

¹ The 33 member states of the Enlarged Partial Agreement of the ECML are: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", United Kingdom.

**Research project conducted within
the first medium-term programme of activities of the ECML
(2000-2003)**

Cultural mediation in language learning and teaching

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Foreword

While most of the innovations in language didactics focus on creating new teaching tools, the “Cultural mediation in language learning and teaching” project has opted for a different approach, namely an approach of research training through research. It has sought to take up several challenges:

- to see the multiplicity of teacher training cultures as a source of innovation rather than as an obstacle;
- to adopt a multidisciplinary framework by introducing benchmarks used in social sciences to promote consideration of the role languages play in maintaining social cohesion;
- to try and provide answers to a question hitherto rarely raised in the didactics of languages and cultures, namely the place of cultural mediation itself.

Readers may judge the extent of the project’s success for themselves by reading the findings and recommendations that came out of the project, in particular:

- Chapters 1 and 2, which serve as a general introduction;
- Chapters 3 to 7, which showcase the approaches and the results of five sub-projects conducted throughout by the participants;
- Chapters 8 and 9, which summarise the project’s findings and outline its recommendations.

The follow-up to the project is to be defined by a team of cultural mediation researchers from various European institutions.

NB: The authors of each chapter or sub-chapter are individually or collectively responsible for the contents of their paper, as signed.

Chapter 1:

Establishing a European research project

Aline Gohard-Radenkovic, Denise Lussier, Hermine Penz, Geneviève Zarate

1. Intercultural communication and language teaching/learning as a research field

1.1 Intercultural communication and representations of the foreigner

This project, in line with the overall efforts to construct representations of languages and cultures and promote identities in a plurilingual, pluricultural Europe, addresses the concept of cultural mediation in situations of incomprehension, intolerance or even xenophobia, and endeavours to remedy these problems in the language teaching context. The study of cultural mediation can relate to a variety of environments considered at different levels (individual interaction, school exchanges, relations between western/central/eastern Europe, etc.), and/or a variety of objects (for example, media or school textbooks), and/or the functions of the cultural mediator (for example, relations between school and non-school environments). The project aims at establishing a research approach capable of being implemented at all levels, embracing the researchers themselves, teacher trainers, teachers and pupils, prior to acquiring competences geared to investigating cultural evidence and introducing a reflexive approach.

1.2 Intercultural communication and identities

This project, which was prompted by various research projects into intercultural communication, is based on a definition of language as a component of identity and analyses the specific social practices arising from contact with foreigners. It aims at developing an expertise of the relationship with the Other which, far from being apprehended as a social stigma, enhances the social assets of “multiple belonging” and establishes a critical link with the evidence developed in the relationship with a society perceived as being unique.

In order to contribute to the current debate highlighting intercultural input into the language teaching field, the project opted to link up identities and languages as its main centre of attention. This assigns an unprecedented role to the social sciences in the language teaching/learning field. The complex debates on identity prompted by the

disrepute and collapse of totalitarian ideologies, the increasing speed of exchanges between central, eastern and western Europe, and the recognition of multilingual and multicultural factors within European societies are currently spotlighting accomplishments in these disciplines.

Such social science concepts as representation, xenophobia, prejudice and stereotype are being studied in relation to cultural mediation with a view to raising their profile in language curricula, especially in connection with defining, advancing and assessing competences.

1.3 Intercultural communication and mediation – A contribution to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*

The cultural input prioritised by this project can help deepen competences identified and validated in the language teaching field. These competences are different from strict linguistic performance (which is defined as the whole range of lexical, grammatical, semantic and phonological competences) and linguistic communicative competence. The project strives to refine the definition of competences recognised in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* in the form of general competences generically referred to as “intercultural awareness”, “intercultural skills”, “existential competence” and “heuristic skills”.

In the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, the concept of mediation is addressed from the standpoint of translation and interpretation. This restricts it to a reformulating activity that obscures all the challenges to intercultural communication which conceal the dysfunctions of a type of communication between partners based on different value systems. The project is geared to clarifying the existing relations between this concept, intercultural skills and “existential competence”, and to mobilising a non-idealised conception of communication.

2. From political concerns to a research project

The central aim of this project is to demonstrate the didactical potential of the cultural mediation concept. Its conclusions should facilitate the day-to-day implementation of a type of citizenship compatible with the legal definition provided in the Maastricht Treaty (1992) and the Amsterdam Treaty (1997), extended to cover effective civic activity as outlined by the European Commission in its comments on “active citizenship” (1998) and embracing ideological, social and practical dimensions. The “Education for democratic citizenship” project was regarded as a “top priority in the Council of Europe’s work programme”, and was adopted by the Committee of

Ministers on 7 May 1999.¹ This now constitutes a central working theme in the Council of Europe's Modern Languages Division,² which since the beginning of the project has become the Language Policy Division. The project is aimed at implementing language curricula from a new operational angle focusing on identity issues.

2.1 Political concerns

The purpose of the "Cultural mediation in the teaching and learning of languages" project is to distinguish the political objective (peace) from its implementation in the field of language teaching and learning. Alongside the legal concepts in use in the political field – for example, "citizenship", "human rights" and "democracy" – the idea of cultural mediation is explored in order to facilitate implementation of this political project in the teaching/learning field. By drawing a distinction between these two levels of politics and teaching, we can introduce a research subject covering both negative concepts (conflict, xenophobia, racism) and positive notions (empathy, openness to Others, xenophilia), enabling them to be identified, analysed and criticised rationally. This distinction is also geared to investigating objects which traditionally belong to the teaching/learning field (general teaching aids, especially school textbooks) and which are not commonly analysed as areas of interaction between politics and education.

Reintroducing the study of the language of a "former enemy" country which has now become a partner is one of the measures used by politicians to remedy geopolitical upheavals (armed or ideological conflicts) and to initiate the renewal or reconstruction of inter-state relations. The aim of the Council of Europe, as an international organisation which has been responsible for promoting since 1949, is to create a united Europe based on freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. This has prompted the Council to place promotion of linguistic and cultural diversity at the heart of its operational machinery. The present project is intended to reinforce the Organisation's general endeavours by proposing the concept of cultural mediation as a means of bringing together different languages and cultures so that Europe can continue to construct its identity.

1 Address by Mr Maitland STOBART, Deputy Director of Education, Culture and Sport of the Council of Europe, in "Teaching languages for the New Europe", report of the Final Conference of the Project "Language learning and European citizenship", Strasbourg, 15 to 18 April 1997, p. 90.
Ibid., p. 89.

Declaration and programme on education for democratic citizenship based on the rights and responsibilities of citizens, Council for Cultural Co-operation, Strasbourg: Council of Europe, DECS/EDU/CIT (99), 1999, p. 3.

2 See preparatory report by H. STARKEY, *Democratic citizenship, language diversity and human rights*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe (forthcoming publication).

2.2 A preliminary revised project

The following version was used at the time of publication of the call for proposals.

First version of the project

Learning of foreign languages and cultural mediation
in crisis and post-conflict situations

Setting up a network of researchers in eastern and South-eastern Europe

In the context of the identity-oriented tension affecting eastern and South-eastern Europe, what role can modern foreign language teaching play in improving cultural understanding among these various communities? For the purposes of this project, the expression “foreign languages” means languages not spoken by the cultural communities in question.

The planned partnership should be organised as follows:

- firstly, it should be co-ordinated by the research group *Frontières culturelles et diffusion des langues* (Ecole Normale Supérieure de Fontenay/St Cloud, France). This group has developed a methodology for analysing crisis situations which it is hoping to adapt to the special features of the European context, investigating how to apply it specifically to this context. This study is aimed at setting up a network of researchers in the regions covered by the project;
- secondly, an as yet unspecified number of academics will be selected on the basis of their local involvement, mandated to co-ordinate each local network “outpost” and trained in joint adaptation of the methodology originally proposed, data collection and joint dissemination of results.

Objectives

The project has two main objectives:

- firstly, restoring dialogue among cultural communities whose relations have suffered from identity-oriented conflict. The learning of foreign languages and cultures is envisaged as a space for mediation between cultural communities in situations of tension or conflict. The project should answer the following questions: what impact do the tensions or conflicts have on students’ representations of foreign languages and cultures? Which educational instruments can be used to teach these languages in such a way as to help restore intercultural communication between these communities? The main target group is the generation currently at school, which is affected by such antagonistic relations;

- secondly, promoting the setting up of a network of researchers responsible for working in the field of representations of the foreigner (didactical approaches to otherness, ethnocentricity and xenophobia; modes of openness to the Other, etc.). This network would link up individual competences and local structures, and provide a level of reference halfway between political debate and the immediate teaching needs. Horizontal relations between local groups and researchers will take pride of place in configuring this network, which is intended to continue operating after completion of the project.

The Governing Board of the ECML, examining the proposals submitted in response to this call, suggested some changes in order to adapt this proposal to the specific functioning of the ECML; those changes were made to the initial draft, thus producing a rather different final version of the project. The explicit mention of conflict was deleted, as were the geographical aspects. This reconfiguration broadens the geographical scope and also targets the concept of mediation. The multidisciplinary dimension has been retained.

2.3 A research project responding to these political concerns

This intercultural communication project pursues the aim of defining the role and place of cultural mediation in language teaching/learning. Setting up working groups, setting joint research aims for participants and co-ordinating the dissemination of results are the means that have been chosen to guarantee the European dimension of this project, as defined by the ECML.

On completion of this three-year project the results should:

- provide data on and analyses of cultural representations, including how they are conveyed and corroborated in school textbooks, in the media and in interactive relations with foreigners;
- describe cultural mediation as a set of attitudes, strategies and practical skills geared to countering prejudices, stereotypes and xenophobic representations;
- provide recommendations and conclusions on language learning and teaching for educational decision makers.

The support team offers a framework of multidisciplinary research approaches in the field of cultural mediation, guides participants in their research efforts and validates the consistency of the results. The ECML provides an institutional framework for organising meetings, circulating information between meetings and disseminating results. On completion of the project, a new network of researchers working in the area of cultural mediation should have been produced. The expected results are intended for the language teaching/learning researcher community and more broadly for the educational players concerned by their implementation (for example, teachers, teacher trainers, assessment specialists, curriculum designers and textbook writers). The results take the form of recommendations to educational decision makers.

3. A complex geopolitical environment and the creation of a multidisciplinary environment¹

3.1 The participants: geopolitical background

On completion of the project the participants are expected to have developed a bilingual (French/English) approach to communication, the attitude of listening and decentring required for the smooth operation of a multinational research group that carefully avoids promoting identity interests specific to their community of belonging.

The fact of working as part of a multinational group is thus an integral part of the research effort itself. “Sociological distortions” can blur the perception of the differences at work. These distortions include the spatiotemporal relationship in the individual culture, implicit hierarchies (for example, the perception of occupations and professions, the relationship with authority and the status of different languages), expected types of behaviour and ritualised speech (for example, avoidance strategies), social and moral values (for example, the status of women), educational values and relation to knowledge (for example, the status of students and knowledge transmission), and university/academic cultures and practices (internal hierarchies and co-opting and recruitment methods). Risks of misunderstandings can arise from positive or negative stereotyped representations or antagonistic relations inherited from a history that promotes a vision of the Other as a threat or as a role model, encouraging or discouraging complicity within groups, so that they look like attempts at exclusion. We might also note that some frustration is due to difficulties in understanding a foreign language in a bilingual communication environment, resistances arising from differing working methods (for example, resistance to the dynamics of a collective project) and reproduction of unconscious modes of behaviour. In short, any multinational research group needs to decide on communication rules, as there is nothing automatic about interpersonal communication in a multinational and multilingual context. The functioning and success of such communication is not solely a matter of motivation and goodwill on the part of those involved. There is an objective loss of familiar reference points, and so it is vital to clarify the rules of a common language of reference.

Where such individual expectations are concerned, the group set up at this first workshop comprises a highly specific geopolitical environment. Of the countries making up this group, 2 are islands (Iceland and Malta), and 3 have a population of under 100 000 (Andorra, Iceland and Malta). Some seven countries (Croatia, Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Russian Federation, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”) belong to central and eastern Europe and four are situated in the Balkans. Western Europe is represented by nine countries (Andorra, Finland, France, Greece, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland), whilst four

¹ Drafted in co-operation with A. Gohard-Radenkovic and D. Lussier.

(Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) belong to northern Europe. Three (Andorra, France, Spain) belong to “Latin Europe”. In the absence of Germany, Austria and Switzerland represent “Germanic Europe”.

The composition of the group reflects the ideological changes in an emerging Europe: Latvia was one of the former Soviet Republics, and six other countries (Slovenia, Czech Republic, Croatia, Slovakia, Poland, Romania) used to be under Soviet influence. The European Union is represented by six countries (Greece, Spain, France, Netherlands, Austria, Sweden). Two countries (Greece and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”) are still involved in the fall-out from the Kosovo conflict. This overview includes some countries that have not yet signed the ECML Partial Agreement. It also highlights the divisions which the group must try to overcome in order to implement active internal cultural mediation. The composition of the groups faithfully reflects the wide variety of language teaching research traditions in the different countries.

3.2 The team: geopolitical background

The members of the team co-ordinating this project were co-opted on the basis of various specialities in order to ensure complementarity in terms of scientific disciplines. However, this option had several curious results in terms of national representation: one country, Canada, a Council of Europe Observer state, is not a European country; Austria, which was undergoing domestic political changes when the project was in its implementation phase, is also the host country of the ECML, and its representation within the team could be seen as a sign of energetic action against xenophobic ideology and for openness to the Other. Switzerland and Canada both have specific language policies, namely a bilingual policy in the case of Canada and a plurilingual one for Switzerland, even though some Swiss nationals oppose European plurality (“Neinsager”). Canada is officially a pluricultural society, whereas France has yet to adapt to the principles of the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages, and is weighed down by its heritage as a monolingual, centralising nation-state.

3.3 Defining a range of disciplines

Breaking with the conventional language-teaching approaches in which disciplinary diversity was always based on language area diversity, the disciplinary spectrum for this project is based on a type of diversity essentially borrowed from the social sciences.

The range of research approaches targeted by the project was defined as follows:

- the linguistic approach (analysis of interaction and speech) to school and out-of-school intercultural encounters and/or to textbooks and/or to the media;
- the semiological or semio-linguistic approach to the written, aural or audiovisual media, and/or school textbooks;
- the psycho-cognitive approach directing the conception of survey instruments for the relevant attitudes in relations with foreigners;
- the sociological and/or socio-historic approach (analysis of migratory trends, and relations between national, ethnic and regional identities);
- the biographical approach (life and language histories).

The following approaches were eventually adopted:

- a linguistic approach (analysis of interaction and speech) applied to study of school and out-of-school intercultural encounters and/or to textbooks and/or to the media, aimed at highlighting the cultural models involved; a sociolinguistic approach facilitating study of social markers and cultural referents and their significance;
- a semiological or semio-linguistic approach to the written, aural or audiovisual media, and/or school textbooks;
- an approach based on social psychology used to design investigative instruments dealing with the attitudes involved in relations with foreigners in order to identify cultural representations, attitudes and behaviour vis-à-vis foreigners; psycholinguistics aimed at studying cultural identity in acquiring a second or foreign language;
- a sociological and/or socio-historic approach to migratory trends, and relations between national, ethnic and regional identities;
- a biographical approach applied to life and language histories;
- an ethnographic approach based mainly on films, applied to situations of multinational encounters and/or plurilingual exchanges.

These various approaches all have common objectives, namely the functioning of cultural representations, the dynamics of xenophile and xenophobic attitudes, and enhanced cultural models.

3.4 Disciplinary inputs from the team

Team members were co-opted on the basis of this pluridisciplinary principle. During the first workshop they illustrated the variety of approaches with which they were familiar on the basis of the following research models:

- *Hermine Penz*, Graz University (Austria), is involved in discourse analysis, which is pluridisciplinary per se. It borrows its methodologies from the fields of ethnomethodology, ethnography applied to verbal communication, pragmatics and sociolinguistics. The analytical subject is centred on communication environments in which linguistic and cultural meanings are not systematically shared by all the players involved, which means that they must negotiate them and carefully consider their application (or non-application) and the (in)effectiveness of the negotiating strategies which they implement. Two examples of this pluridisciplinary composition were presented at the first workshop:
 - analysis of an interaction process in an Internet forum between some Austrian and British students showed the students using a diversified range of negotiating strategies. They were able to distance themselves from their own interpretative categories and presuppositions. Overcoming their linguistic and cultural frames of reference, they developed verbal strategies which helped them to clarify their different points of view and interpretations. The main strategies involved metacommunication, which helps clear up any obscurities by systematic questions and answers;
 - the second example presented occurred as part of a school exchange between schoolchildren in Britain and Austria, who exchanged documents on the subject of law and order (project organised by Carol Morgan and Hermine Penz on the basis of an earlier Anglo-French project directed by Carol Morgan).
- *Aline Gohard-Radenkovic*, Fribourg University (Switzerland), presented a semiological approach based on a model which she had devised at the request of the Geneva Red Cross, aimed at training “cultural interpreter-mediators”. These mediators are foreigners integrated into Swiss society who are responsible for receiving and supporting war refugees. In co-operation with her partners, she gradually built up a “reading” of representations of the foreigner, of the Other in press articles and in the audiovisual media. In order to achieve this she proposed a semio-linguistic analysis of the terms used in various media contexts over a specified period, highlighting a number of binary representations (them/us, me/Others, good/bad foreigners, etc.). Furthermore, she developed a socio-ethnological approach with the semiological tools for decoding implicit or explicit representations through this iconographic portrayal of all categories of “foreigners” in various media documents (caricatures, documentaries, drawings for an interpreter’s handbook, etc.).
- *Denise Lussier*, McGill University, Montreal (Canada), presented the conceptual frame of reference for developing intercultural competence in language teaching used in the Canadian study entitled “Understanding the development of cultural representations with a view to language-teaching action plans”. This pluridisciplinary research project involves approaches borrowed from semiolinguistics, social psychology and psycholinguistics. The analytical framework is

intended to be both qualitative and quantitative. All the survey instruments, such as the written questionnaire, individual interviews, discussion groups and discourse analysis, have now been completed. The conceptual frame and written questionnaires have been validated with a sample group of 1 000 young adults, thus providing clearer insights into the phenomena of xenophilia and xenophobia and contributing to the research project by linking up cultural representations, ethnic identities and intercultural communication.

- *Geneviève Zarate*, Ecole Normale Supérieure, Fontenay/St Cloud, and subsequently, Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales, Paris (France), presented the Franco-Australian research project which she co-ordinated, *Xenophilia/xenophobia in the French and Australian area of influence*, which was inspired by a geopolitical crisis in Australia triggered by the French nuclear experiments in the Pacific. The project analysed the roles and positions of those who acted as “cultural intermediaries” between France and Australia by symmetrically examining the functioning of xenophile and xenophobic attitudes in crisis situations. The project produced questionnaires, analyses of Australian media documents (press and television adverts involving references to France), and interviews with Australians or French visitors to Australia involved in Franco-Australian relations.¹

4. The project as a research activity

This project concentrates on research and not on research-action, and is therefore atypical in the ECML context. It is not aimed at disseminating or applying an approach tested in the limited context of Europe, at bringing together widely scattered experiments or at trying out ready-made educational schemes in a multinational context. In the context of the initial call for proposals, it is a long-term project aimed at formulating recommendations of a general nature. In this project, the concept of cultural mediation is apprehended as an object to be constructed rather than as a given. Its construction is itself dependent on a multicultural and multinational working context. The diversity of linguistic and cultural contexts represented by the participants is an integral part of the research project and helps to make it more relevant.

¹ This research project is mentioned in three different publications: CAIN, A. and DEVELLOTTE, C. (eds.) (2001), “Crise dans le Pacifique. Les Français vus d’Australie”, *Mots*, No. 64; LEVY, D. (2001), *Les discours de l’altérité. Dévoilements et recouvrements*, No. 7, Ancona: Nuove Ricerche; ZARATE, G. (ed.) (2001), *Langues, xénophobie, xénophilie dans une Europe multiculturelle*, Paris: CNDP (documents, proceedings and reports on education).

4.1 Didactic scope

The didactic scope of the project is defined more broadly than is usual. It takes into account the production of tools and analyses teaching and learning situations at school (language textbooks) or initiated by schools (language exchanges), but is not restricted to these areas, and includes non-school contexts playing a role in the organisation of representations of the foreigner: media conveying images of the countries whose languages are being taught, and personal experience of otherness.

The following data are observed:

- the players involved in cultural mediation, whether successful or not, whether before, during or after a situation of conflict;
- discourses on intercultural contact situations (school exchanges, language textbooks and the media in their relations with current affairs abroad);
- models used to describe changing attitudes, changing pluricultural social lifestyles or redefined identities.

4.2 Establishing a multinational research culture

The project is geared to creating a network of researchers, that is to say setting up a scientific community with joint research experience (multinational research objective-setting, co-ordinated data collection, collective evaluation and dissemination of results), sharing common disciplinary references, and capable of producing an analysis of multinational experience and plurilingual practices. This network is built up during the project and is intended to continue operating after the conclusion of the project.

The participants have three initial levels of expertise. They are expected either to have personal experience of cultural mediation, to have helped design teaching materials relevant to intercultural competence, or to have taken part in a research project studying relations between different cultural identities or representations of the foreigner. At the end of the project this disparity of experiences is expected to have decreased and to have benefited all the participants in the project, who should now share the same research culture in terms of both data gathering and analysis, as well as dissemination of results.

On completion of the project two types of competence are expected of the participants:

- firstly, competence to take part in a multinational project: level of awareness of personal involvement in the realisation of a three-year project and the running of the project;
- secondly, an ability to reinvest the competences secured in producing new teaching tools: degree of awareness of the cultural mediation concept and extent of personal initiative in this field.

4.3 Establishing a common research culture¹

By “research culture” we mean sharing a culture covering all disciplines at a level whose international transversality should help us to surmount possible cultural differences. The more precise aim is to establish a culture of peer relations based on scientific validity free from the constraints of any administrative hierarchy. The word “research” and its academic connotations might cause unease with some participants without university research status. However, for the purposes of the aforementioned disparity, university education was not included in the list of qualifications required.²

An initial profile for participants in the project was drawn up at the first preparatory meeting:

First participant profile

Participants will undertake to participate actively in the project (defining a subject to be addressed by several participants, gathering data in their area, collectively finalising data interpretation and helping disseminate results) for the duration of the project (2000-02), and to comply with the academic code of ethics (sharing collectively gathered data, mentioning the institutional framework of the project and the participants involved in the same research project, and giving priority to the ECML in publishing results).

As far as possible, participants should have the following qualities:

- proven experience with human and social science research methodology;
- individual or collective experience of research in terms of developing or implementing projects;
- general knowledge of the issue of interculturalism in the language teaching and learning field;
- an attitude of tolerance and intellectual and relational openness as a prerequisite for fruitful pluricultural co-operation;
- proper integration in the language teaching field and an ability to function within a language teaching think-tank.

1 Drafted in co-operation with D. Lussier and H. Penz.

2 Participants were asked to illustrate their previous experience in this field, and mentioned the following:

- Kira Irshkanova: representation of emotions in discourse;
- Libuse Liskova: multicultural education at Czech lower secondary schools;
- Karl Rieder: language awareness of teachers and student teachers in the field of intercultural pedagogy;
- Christoph Röcklingsberg: intercultural communication regarding German and Swedish;
- Abdeljalil Akkari: teachers and cultural diversity: institutional constraints and educational creativity;
- Georges Androulakis: attitudes and representations linked to present-day immigration in Greece;
- Weronika Wilczynska: changes in intercultural perception following a Poznań/Rennes school exchange;
- Meta Grosman: intercultural focus in teaching of literature.

This profile was finally considered too demanding, and was redesigned as follows for the purpose of the call for proposals:

Final participant profile

Participants must pursue the purposes of the project and undertake to participate actively for three years. They must subscribe to the ethical principles governing any scientific community and the constraints of communication in a multinational, pluricultural and bilingual (French/English) context.

Participants can have personal experience either of cultural mediation, of designing teaching materials concerning intercultural competence, or of a research project studying relations between cultural identities or representations of the foreigner.

Participants should have active competence in one of the two working languages (oral participation in debates and drafting of theoretical texts) and passive competence in the other (reading scientific literature and analysing documents).

Participants should be ready and able to play an active part not only in the workshop but also in all the activities scheduled under the project.

Given that sharing a research culture cannot be reduced to mere formal compliance with rules validated at the international level, two introductory sessions were held in the first workshop, providing a description of the ethical rules and also an insight into a common research procedure specific to each group.

The following code of professional behaviour was proposed: systematically indicating sources and avoiding plagiarism by providing precise references for the ideas or methods used and observing a standardised presentation of bibliographical references. Attention was drawn to copyright issues. Specific information was provided on the status of persons providing information for the research project, to the effect that they are partners whose rights, values and privacy must be respected. These persons must give their consent before any information on them can be disseminated. They must be informed about the aim of the research project and their role in solving the problem being tackled. Any refusal by such persons to participate and the confidentiality and anonymity of their replies must be respected.

4.4 The research activity

In the first workshop the participants were divided into groups and invited to define projects relevant to cultural mediation. These projects were finalised in three stages: first presentation of a provisional collective project in the form of a poster, commented on by team members; collective development of the research project; and finalisation of the project following team validation and drafting of an abridged research protocol.

Five projects emerged from this initial process. The team members as far as possible ensured follow-up to one chosen project.

The five projects adopted after the first workshop

- Project 1:* Cultural awareness in curricula and learning materials
- Project 2:* How is hospitality represented in social interactions? Intercultural comparison and mediation
- Project 3:* Representations of the concept of “otherness” in advertising: impact on cultural mediation
- Project 4:* Analysis of culture-language interface in order to develop sensitisation strategies in cultural mediation
- Project 5:* Representations of Others and of other cultures in the context of initial and further teacher training

In this initial organisation of the project, the geopolitical distribution was appropriately diversified within each group, even though the groups (four or five members) were too small for all the aforementioned criteria to be met. The common language criterion (English or French) that dominated the first stage in the setting up of these groups subsequently became less important and was replaced by the interest of the common purpose of the work. The curricular dimensions were dealt with in Project 1 and the consequences for initial and further teacher training in Project 5. Three contexts for cultural mediation were examined (media advertising (Project 3), hospitality rites (Project 2), school textbooks and curricula (Project 1)). Project 4 became “Empathy as part of cultural mediation”. Projects 1 and 3 dealt with the concepts of “cultural awareness” and “otherness”.

4.5 Developing the research activity

The initial activity developed in three different directions. However, it should be noted that the five projects outlined at the first workshop remained in force.

As soon as the interpreters were phased out, English became the main common language. The passive bilingual competence defined in the information for participants became more a matter for the French-speaking participants, who opted for a working bilingualism, something which was not observed in participants with a proven command of English. Spanish was sporadically used as a third language. German was occasionally used for the purposes of interpersonal understanding within the group. The language of communication was not a decisive factor in individual choices of projects.

A second development concerned the individual presence of participants. One participant, whose professional project had changed over the three years of the project, suggested more flexible arrangements for participation (circulating questionnaires in his new school), in order to avoid the problem of regular travel. Another participant arranged for a compatriot to replace her.

The third change concerned collective organisation. The organising principle used for each project was complemented by the appointment of a spokesperson for each group, who was entrusted with the following duties:

- ensuring information circulation among group members;
- liaising between the group and the resource person of the team appointed to support the group;
- keeping group records, including conservation of all its productions and exchanges;
- acting as reference person during the group's internal discussions and for its external relations.

In the final year of the project, when the organisation consisted mainly of writing up the results, the chapter co-ordinators were assigned the following duties:

- assigning responsibilities;
- ensuring that deadlines imposed by meeting dates were respected;
- corresponding with the team on behalf of the group;
- proof-reading texts drafted;
- keeping records of all the group's written productions.

The last two functions led to a new "enlarged group" working structure in which members of the co-ordinating team and other participants shared decision-making and other responsibilities. The "peer assessment" procedure specific to the university environment gained ground during the project, even though it was not always identified as such by all participants. The ECML subsequently recommended this procedure for other projects, for purposes other than that initially pursued.

Accordingly, this project strove to develop plurality at all levels of operation, including the general outcomes, paying attention to the plurality of identity in the teaching and learning field, and also in its disciplinary options, namely pluridisciplinarity, and its operational methods, establishing a culture of multinational research.

Chapter 2:

Reference fields and methodologies

Aline Gohard-Radenkovic, Denise Lussier, Hermine Penz, Geneviève Zarate

1. The disciplines involved in the study of cultural mediation

1.1 Psycholinguistics and psychosociology¹

Nowadays, it is generally accepted that language, thought and culture are inseparable and that their interaction requires a new approach to the study of these concepts. Apparently, our vision of the world and our ways of thinking develop from our contact with others and shape our cultural representations. The latter concern both our own culture and those of others. They emerge from a very young age and are reinforced at school. The positive representations lead to xenophile attitudes which are generally expressed by a behaviour and practice of openness to the Other, while negative representations lead to behaviour that is displayed through xenophobic rejection and

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- 1 BOURDIEU, P. (1982). *Ce que parler veut dire*. Economie des échanges linguistiques. Paris: Fayard.
- BOURHIS, R.Y. (1979). "Language in ethnic interaction: a social psychological approach", in H. Giles and B. Saint-Jacques (eds.), *Language and ethnic relations*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- CLÉMENT, R. (1996). "Social psychology and intergroup communication", *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, No. 15, pp. 222-229.
- COLLIER, M.J. and THOMAS, M. (1988). "Cultural identity: an interpretive perspective", in Y.Y. Kim and W.B. Gudykunst (eds.), *Theories in intercultural communication*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- CÔTÉ, P. and CLÉMENT, R. (1994). "Language attitudes: an interactive situated approach", *Language and Communication*, No. 14, pp. 237-251.
- DORON, R. and PAROT, F. (eds.) (1991). *Dictionnaire de psychologie*. Paris: PUF.
- GILES, H. and COUPLAND, N. (1991). *Language: contexts and consequences*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- KIM, Y.Y. (1988). *Communication and cross-cultural adaptation*. Oxford: Clevedon.
- KRAUSS, R.M. and CHIU, C.-Y. (1998). "Language and social behavior", in D.T. Gilbert, S.T. Fiske and G. Lindzey (eds.), *The handbook of social psychology*, No. 2, pp. 41-88. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- LAFRAMBOISE, T., COLEMEN, H.L.K. and GERTON, J. (1993). "Psychological impact of biculturalism: evidence and theory", *Psychological Bulletin*, No. 114, pp. 395-412.
- LINDE, C. (1993). *Life stories. The creation of coherence*. London: Oxford University Press.
- NORA, P. (1983). "Le présent et la mémoire", in G. Zarate (ed.), *D'une culture à l'autre, Le Français dans le monde*, No. 181, November-December. Paris: Hachette/Larousse.
- PENEFF, J. (1990). *La méthode biographique*. Paris: A. Colin.
- VYGOTSKY, L.S. (1962). *Thought and language*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

the refusal of the Other. In psycholinguistics and social psychology, it is impossible to address the study of cultural representations without reference to the knowledge of the self, the ethnic and cultural identity, and without studying cultural signs, social markers and their significance. What happens when we learn a language? How do we manage to acquire the meaning of the words and the culture of a different language? What are our points of reference?

We know that the words we choose are not chosen by accident. For Vygotsky (1962), every word is in itself already a generalisation and a “microcosm” of a much broader contextual world. Words are the reflection of our verbal thought. The latter is not an innate or natural form of behaviour; it is determined by a historical and cultural process, and by the social and political world in which we live. As emphasised by Bourdieu (1982), language is more than a means of communication. Its infinite ability to generate relationships of symbolic value shapes people’s perceptions and their vision of the social world. Mental representations are constructed, that is to say ways of perceiving and appreciating, of knowing and recognising, in which individuals vest their interests and their presuppositions. Thus it is important to stop considering language acts simply as linguistic elements but rather as vehicles of the culture and of the representations that we have of the Other and of different cultures.

We also know that genuine social relationships could not exist without language, just as it must be acknowledged that verbal communication saturates social life. It is the main instrument of thought, interpersonal communication and cultural transmission (Krauss and Chiu, 1998). The converse is also true. Studies in the field of cross-cultural psychology (see Laframboise, Coleman and Gerton, 1993) and in communications science (Collier and Thomas, 1988; Kim, 1988) show that any form of inter-group relationship necessarily involves an encounter between and a sharing of different symbolic systems. In this sense, the study of ethnic identity linked to the social psychology of groups is likewise essential. Individuals reveal important differences in the use they make of the language, and develop their ethnic identity and their representations when faced with other cultures according to their role and the characteristics of the situation (Bourhis, 1979; Giles and Coupland, 1991; Côté and Clément, 1991; Clément, 1996). Unfortunately, we rarely question the ethnic identity of the young people of our generation, that is to say the characteristics that the young people of a single group share and insist on in order to define themselves and to differentiate themselves from the members of other groups (Doron and Parot, 1991). In the teaching of languages, we have been hesitant to integrate the development of intercultural competence as an essential element of all communication and linguistic interaction. The present Council of Europe research project (Zarate, Gohard-Radenkovic, Lussier, Penz et al., 1999-2003) and the Canadian Heritage project (Lussier, Auger, Lebrun et al., 1998-2003) are in our view the only two important projects that study these concepts in connection with the issues of plurilingualism and cultural mediation.

1.2 Sociolinguistics, pragmatics and discourse analysis¹

The use of language in its sociocultural context is the focus of study in sociolinguistics, pragmatics and discourse analysis. Although viewed as separate fields, these areas of language study show a considerable degree of overlap. They all have a high potential to contribute to the analysis of cultural mediation since they are basically concerned with how language is used in its social and cultural context. Other characteristic features of these approaches to the study of language are their interdisciplinarity and broad scope, and diversity within the field.

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- 1 AUSTIN, J. (1962). *How to do things with words*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- BLUM-KULKA, S., HOUSE, J. and KASPER, G. (eds.) (1989). *Cross-cultural pragmatics: requests and apologies*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- BROWN, P. AND LEVINSON, S.C. (1987). *Politeness. Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- CAMERON, D. (2001). *Working with spoken discourse*. London/Thousand Oaks/New Delhi.
- CLYNE, M. (1994). *Inter-cultural communication at work*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- DOWNES, W. (1998). *Language and society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- GRICE, P.H. (1975). "Logic and conversation", in P. Cole and J.L. Morgan, *Syntax and semantics: speech acts*. New York: Academic Press.
- GUMPERZ, J. (1982). *Discourse strategies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- GUMPERZ, J. and HYMES, D. (eds.) (1972). *Directions in sociolinguistics. The ethnography of communication*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc.
- GÜNTNER, S. (1993). *Diskursstrategien in der interkulturellen Kommunikation. Analysen deutsch-chinesischer Gespräche*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.
- KOTTHOFF, H. (1994). *Zur Rolle der Konversationsanalyse in der interkulturellen Kommunikation*, in W. Klein and D. Norbert (eds.), *Interkulturelle Kommunikation, Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik*, No. 93, pp. 95-96.
- KRESS, G. and VAN LEEUWEN, T. (1996). *Reading images. The grammar of visual design*. London/New York: Routledge.
- LEVINSON, S. (1983). *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- SCHEGLOFF, E. (1972). "Sequencing in conversational openings", in J. Gumperz and D. Hymes (1972), op. cit., pp. 346-380.
- SCHIFFRIN, D. (1994). *Approaches to discourse*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- SCOLLON, R. and WONG SCOLLON, S. (1995). *Intercultural communication. A discourse approach*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- SEARLE, J. (1969). *Speech acts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- SPENCER-OATEY, H. (ed.) (2000). *Culturally speaking. Managing rapport through talk across cultures*. London/New York: Continuum.
- TANNEN, D. (1984). *Conversational style: analyzing talk among friends*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- VERSCHUEREN, J. (1995). "The pragmatic perspective", in J. Verschueren, J.-O. Östman and J. Blommaert (eds.), *Handbook of pragmatics*, pp. 1-19. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- WODAK, R. and VAN DIJK, T.A. (eds.) (2000), *Racism at the top. Parliamentary discourses on ethnic issues in six European states*. Klagenfurt: Drava Verlag. Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture.

Sociolinguistics looks at differences in the way people use language and correlates them with non-linguistic factors such as people's race, ethnicity, social class, gender, subject matter, age, etc. Differences in language use may be found with respect to pronunciation, word choice, grammar, language choice in bilingual or multilingual situations, etc. Sociolinguistic variation of this type has frequently been studied by quantitative methods (Downes, 1998).

However, variation may also occur at the level of spoken interaction, for example at the level of turn-taking, the way utterances are marked as particular speech acts or the way information is marked as important in discourse, etc. The area which deals with studying this type of variation in interaction is called interactional sociolinguistics, which uses qualitative methods of analysis.

Interactional sociolinguistics looks at how social and linguistic meanings are created during interaction (Gumperz, 1982; Tannen, 1984; Schiffrin, 1994). Gumperz (1982:131) uses the concept of contextualisation cues, which are surface features of the utterances (message form) "by which speakers signal and listeners interpret what the activity is, how semantic content is to be understood and how each sentence relates to what precedes or follows". The meaning of these cues is usually implicit and is not talked about or noticed as long as all participants interpret them as relevant cues. However, when a listener is not aware of these cues or interprets them differently, misunderstandings may occur. Particularly in cross-cultural communication differences in the interpretation of these contextualisation cues has been shown to result in communication breakdown and negative stereotyping (see Gumperz, 1982; Tannen, 1984; Günthner, 1993; Scollon and Wong Scollon, 1995).

The ethnography of communication (Gumperz and Hymes, 1972) is an approach which studies language in its social context. It is based on the principles and practices of anthropology and considers communication as cultural practice and behaviour. It allows the study of whole sites of communication since it focuses on how language and other activities interact in particular speech events. This is why this approach is particularly suited to study verbal and non-verbal communication involved in cultural mediation and whole sites of cultural mediation.

The social organisation of talk is the focus of analysis in conversation analysis (Schegloff 1972), which is based on Garfinkel's ethnomethodological approach to sociology. The turn-taking system, that is the rules by which speaker change is accomplished in conversation, and other aspects of conversational sequencing such as openings, closings and topic change and development are considered as ways of shaping social meaning. Studies of cross-cultural and intercultural communication have shown that participants from different cultural backgrounds consistently differ in their systems of turn-taking, for example the use of silences, pauses and overlap, etc. (see Kotthoff, 1994).

Linguistic pragmatics deals with language use and the relationships between language form and language use. The central question is how to interpret utterances in discourse, that is “how we get from what is said to what is meant”, since meaning cannot just be derived from decoding the meaning of the words (Cameron, 2001:48).

Verschueren (1995:13f), however, holds that rather than viewing pragmatics as a field of linguistics it should be interpreted as “a general functional perspective on (any aspect of) language, i.e. an approach to language which takes into account the full complexity of its cognitive, social, and cultural (i.e. ‘meaningful’) functioning in the lives of human beings”.

In linguistic pragmatics speech act theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969), the co-operative principle (Grice, 1975) and politeness theory (Brown and Levinson, 1987) have been successfully applied to the study of discourse in intercultural encounters.

Speech act theory, namely looking at the communicative intent and its interpretation in discourse, has been a very important contribution to discourse analysis. Speech acts and their realisation have also been compared across different cultures (see Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper, 1989; and Spencer-Oatey, 2000, on cross-cultural pragmatics).

Grice’s *co-operative principle* (Grice, 1975) is meant to provide an explanation of how interactants can infer the intended meaning in conversation despite the great amount of implicitness in conversation. Grice proposed four maxims of conversation, namely the maxims of quantity, quality, relation and manner, which are meant to be taken as reference points for linguistic interaction, but not as rules which have to be obeyed. Research comparing discourse structures across cultures has shown that there is cultural variation concerning the notion of co-operation. In some cultures (Jewish, Black American, Israeli) saying a lot and being immodest has been shown to be ways of showing co-operation whereas in other cultures, such as Chinese and Vietnamese, being co-operative means saying little and avoiding conflict (see Clyne, 1994:12).

In the *theory of politeness* as proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987), the assumption is that every person has a positive and a negative face, which may be threatened in conversation. According to Brown and Levinson politeness is a strategy to mitigate these threats in verbal interaction. In Brown and Levinson’s view their model can be applied across different languages and cultures, yet they do recognise that politeness may be expressed in different ways in different cultures (see also Cameron, 2001:85).

Discourse analysis comprises various approaches with different (disciplinary) origins (such as anthropology, philosophy, sociology, linguistics and, more recently, social psychology) which differ from each other. Discourse analysis is an approach of data collection and analysis in sociolinguistics and other areas of social research. It also deals with theories of how social reality is constructed and reproduced through language by analysing patterns and structures or processes in text or talk (see Cameron, 2001:17).

Discourse analysis is an interdisciplinary field although it has now established itself as an area of its own. It draws on approaches mentioned in the sections on *sociolinguistics and pragmatics* above, namely *interactional sociolinguistics, the ethnography of communication, conversation analysis, speech act theory, the theory of politeness*, etc. Very often the work of different discourse analysts is grounded in one of these fields, yet in some concrete empirical studies researchers also make use of more than one approach. For this reason, a clear differentiation between the fields mentioned is often impossible.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) focuses on how reality is constructed in and through discourse. Researchers in this tradition pay attention to both the content and the form of practices of speaking and writing (or visual presentation; for visual aspects see Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996). CDA attempts to find consistent patterns (of racism, ideology, sexism, etc.) in a text or a collection of related texts. Although critical discourse analysis has so far mainly been applied to study issues of power, race, gender and ideology (mainly in the media and institutional contexts), it lends itself to study aspects of cultural mediation such as cultural representation and identity issues, particularly where issues of power and dominance are involved. A study of racism in parliamentary discourses in six European states (Wodak and van Dijk, 2000), for example, provides an interesting illustration of how this method can be applied to uncover the racist discourse of the political elite.

1.3 Cultural anthropology and the anthropology of communication¹

Born as a reaction to traditional ethnology in the service of colonialism, cultural anthropology is above all the science of human diversity and difference, its field of investigation being limited neither in space nor in time. Indeed, it is interested in

1 BIRDWHISTELL, R. (1981). "Entretien avec Birdwhistell", in Y. Winkin (1981), pp. 292-303, Paris: Seuil.

BOURDIEU, P. (1972, 1st edition). *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique*. Geneva: Droz (2nd edition, 2000. Paris: Points/Seuil).

GOFFMAN, E. (1981). "La grammaire de la vie quotidienne", in Y. Winkin (1981), pp. 91-101.

GOODENOUGH, W. (1957). "L'anthropologie de la communication: origines, principes, projet", quoted in Y. Winkin, (1996).

HYMES, D. (1967). "The anthropology of communication", in F.E.X. Dance (ed.), *Human communication theory: original essays*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

LÉVI-STRAUSS, C. (1962). *La pensée sauvage*. Paris: Plon.

WINKIN, Y. (1981) (compiled and presented by). *La nouvelle communication*, with Bateson, Birdwhistell, Goffman, Hall, Jackson, Schlegel, Sigman and Watzlawick. Paris: Seuil.

WINKIN, Y. (1996, 1st edition). *Anthropologie de la communication. De la théorie au terrain*. Brussels: De Boeck & Larquier (2nd edition, 2001. Paris: Points/Seuil).

WATZLAWICK, P., HELMICK Beavin, J. and JACKSON, D.D. (1974). *Une logique de la communication*. Paris: Points/Seuil (translation of *Pragmatics of human communication. A study of interactional patterns, pathologies and paradoxes*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.).

understanding the relationships that unite individuals into ethnic or sociocultural groups and in discovering the meaning that exists in an *inter-subjective relationship*. This research, which is based on persons or groups who go beyond borders to live elsewhere or who are in contact with foreigners within their own country or with border countries, adopts an intercultural perspective. Thus, an anthropology of interculturality has developed, addressing not only the study of the components of *culture* in order to become aware of the behaviour associated with foreign models and to reduce culture shock, but also of the components of *cultures and subcultures* in contact with each other and the relationships between individuals of different cultures.

Cultural anthropology is thus an approach that proposes the *transition from simple observation to the analysis of signification and the links between these significations*. From this point of view, the analysis of communication processes occupies a dominant position, giving priority to an ethnographic investigation of behaviour, situations and objects that are perceived at the heart of a given community. It was Hymes who for the first time used the expression “anthropology of communication” (1967) and explains the notion in the following terms: “The role of communication in anthropology must be contingent on the role of communication in the cultures or communities whose ethnographic studies are based on anthropological facts and theories. In any culture or community, behaviour and objects as products of behaviour are selectively organized, used, frequented and interpreted for their communicative value.”

It was with Goodenough and subsequently Birdwhistell and Goffman that the anthropology of communication developed rapidly through a reconsideration of the idea of “culture”, hitherto perceived by European ethnologists and American culturalists as a closed system with fixed cultural traits: “The culture of a society consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to this society’s members, and to do so in any role that they would accept for anyone of themselves” (Goodenough, 1957, quoted by Winkin, 1996). This definition then inspired Birdwhistell (in Winkin, 1981) to state: “Being a member is being predictable”, and Goffman (in Winkin, 1981), who promotes the idea of an “orchestral” concept of communication, since any social group makes sense and possesses its own internal logic. This notion of a “logic of communication”, developed by the Palo Alto school, is based on the principle formulated by Watzlawick and his assistants (1972): “It is impossible not to communicate. The idea of communication defined in this way permits us to (re)think social phenomena in terms of *interactions and processes*.” Winkin (1996) states: “Using a ‘communicational’ framework is to attempt to reflect on the data actually collected in terms of complexity of levels, multiple contexts, circular systems; it is also to conceive a collection of rules organised into codes behind the conduct.”

The tools of ethnography, namely the observation and identification of visual, kinesic, non-verbal signs, in short the entire semiotic apparatus, are called upon to serve this *systematic concept of communication*. However, this interactionist view of communication must be qualified. If the observation of interaction and behaviour is a preferred means of access to the social level, and of understanding the

interrelationships between individuals and groups, the entire social level cannot be reduced to these interactions, as is emphasised by Bourdieu (1972): “The truth of the interaction is never entirely to be found in the interaction.” In this sense, Winkin (op. cit.) proposes a broader definition which we will retain for our study of the notion of cultural mediation: “The analytical framework is communication understood in the sense of ‘performance of the culture’ and no longer as ‘transmission of message’”, and adds: “The anthropology of communication is thus an anthropology without an object; it is simply a way of reading and interpreting life in society.” Thus everything is to be constructed and “cobbled together”, to use the metaphor of Lévi-Strauss (1962).

1.4 Sociology of difference¹

Approached as a social object, mediation is also part of the field of sociology. In this case, it is considered less as the in-between in discourse but rather as an “alternative means of conflict settlement” (De Briant and Paluau, 1990). Since the 1980s, mediation has become an established practice, which, initially empirical, has been codified and, initially nameless and part of the tradition of negotiation, has increased in legitimacy by becoming part of the official administration of social relationships (Six, 1990). It is based on clearly identified examples located between the national and the international

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- 1 AMSELLE, J.L. (2001, 2nd edition). *Vers un multiculturalisme français. L'empire de la coutume*. Paris: Flammarion/Champs.
- BANCEL, N., BLANCHARD, P., BOETSCH, G., DEROO, E. and LEMAIRE, S. (2002). *Zoos humains. De la Vénus hottentote aux reality shows*. Paris: La Découverte.
- BOURDIEU, P. (1993). *La misère du monde*, p. 7. Paris: Seuil.
- DE BRIANT, V. and PALUAU, Y. (1999). *La médiation. Définition, pratiques et perspectives*. Paris: Nathan Université.
- GOHARD-RADENKOVIC, A., BERA-VUSTINER, M. and VESHI, D. (2003). “Quelle est la perception des ‘interprètes médiateurs culturels’ de leur rôle et de leurs compétences?”, *Le Français dans le Monde. Recherches et Applications*, January. Paris: Clé International/FIPF.
- ROY, J.L. (1995). *Mondialisation, développement et culture*. Montreal: Editions Hurtubise.
- SCHNAPPER, D. (1998). *La relation à l'autre. Au cœur de la pensée sociologique*. Paris: Gallimard/NRF – Essais.
- SIX, J.F. (1990). *Le temps des médiateurs*. Paris: Seuil.
- TAGUIEFF, P.A. (1988). *La force du préjugé. Essai sur le racisme et ses doubles*. Paris: La Découverte.
- TAGUIEFF, P.A. (ed.) (1991). *Face au racisme*. Paris: La Découverte.
- TODD, E. (1994). *Le destin des immigrés. Assimilation et ségrégation dans les démocraties occidentales*. Paris: Seuil.
- TODOROV, T. (1989). *Nous et les autres. La réflexion française sur la diversité humaine*. Paris: Seuil.
- TRIBALAT, M. (1991). *Cent ans d'immigration. Paris: Institut National des Etudes Démographiques*.
- WIEVIORKA, M. (2001). *La différence*. Paris: Balland.
- ZARATE, G. (2003). “La médiation en situation de tension identitaire”, *Le Français dans le Monde. Recherches et Applications*, January. Paris: Clé International/FIPF.

space (Roy, 1995)¹ – between a state, its administration and its citizen-consumer – the Scandinavian ombudsman, the Mediator of the French Republic – between the press – television and radio stations, daily newspapers² – and its users, who exercise a right to monitor the quality of the information disseminated. Mediation intervenes at all levels of society, from the level of the European Union, which in the 1992 Maastricht Treaty appointed a mediator, to the level of the family, where it is a question in the case of family break-up of regulating the matters concerning parental authority and divorce while maintaining the solidity of social ties. Mediation is thus an instance established to anticipate or circumvent a situation of conflict between different social actors.

Some institutions, such as the school or humanitarian organisations (Gohard-Radenkovic et al., and Zarate, in Lévy and Zarate, 2003) are responsible not only for providing a voice to a humanism that advocates openness to the different, but above all for imposing respect of the Other by means of acts and attitudes. The recognition of difference is founded on a principle of action and takes as its postulate the fact that cultural relationships do not involve a universal approach of universality, which is denied by day-to-day direct observation. Keen to abandon a utopian vision of social reality that always projects into the future a pacifistic vision of social relationships, sociology of action takes as its postulate the fact that a reading of cultural difference must include the relationships of force that exist in a society and concentrate on establishing a relationship between distinct, at times irreconcilable values and points of view. Researchers are not themselves exempt from this quest for the point of view that is both fair and committed; the “golden mean”, presumed to be that of conciliation, half way between opposing values, is a social artifice devoid of any socially confirmed existence, being neither of one side nor the other. If their analyses and responses are to be anchored in social reality, researchers must relinquish the privilege of an omniscient or neutral point of view and “abandon the unique, central, dominant, in other words quasi-divine point of view that the observer is keen to adopt” (Bourdieu, 1993:7).

A sociology of otherness analyses the dysfunctions within a society, not as an illness that must be provided with a remedy, but rather as a given that must first be described by taking as the basis the diversity of the issues at stake and the interests that are in opposition within a single symbolic space and within the definition of the social ties. The studies on social equality and equity (Schnapper, 1998), immigration (Todd, 1994; Amselle, 2001; Tribalat, 1991) and racism (Taguieff, 1988) generally take this postulate as their starting point when applying a sociological perspective, their priority being the concern to stand out from the common opinion, always suspected of being dominated by prejudice, under the cover of real-life experience. In all these cases, the aim is to combat the received ideas that inhibit the understanding of the complexity of the thought categories that interfere with the perception of the world (Todorov, 1989).

1 One can also speak of “francophone mediation” (Roy, 1995). The merger of the Goethe Institute and Internationes is presented as a “new German mediation structure”.

2 The French press created the position of *mediator* in 1992, responsible for “monitoring the application of the professional and ethical rules imposed on journalists to prevent the latter abusing their power”.

Cultural difference, the central object of social science, is the anchor on which ideologies draw to give shape to national identities by referring to a stereotype and stigmatised Other. Colonialist regimes, as political modes determining the relationship with the Other, totalitarian regimes as the social imposition of a single point of view, that of the dominator, and ethnic confrontations, which instrumentalise prejudices and preconceived ideas for military purposes, are an unfortunately inexhaustible life-size laboratory of ideologies based on cultural difference. A research position that aims to be independent of the effects of social or national ethnocentricity explicitly restores the variety of points of view, their historic evolution, the conditions for their social production and the fantasies that give the strength of belief and truth to prejudices.

Example: cultural difference revealed

In the nineteenth century, when colonial ideology was at its peak, borne by both a fascination on the part of the public for the savage and the strange, and by a positivist vision of science, the idea was born of exhibiting Negro villages whose inhabitants had been deported for the curiosity of the visitors to colonial or universal expositions and for the commercialisation of racial differences. The reconstitution of these deportations and the memory work on these "human zoos" have contributed to a history of the places where the relationship with the Other has been diverted to the benefit of the spectacular and mediated through museography. These expositions, cultural in-betweens "inventing" the relationship with the Other, nourished a collective European imagination in which the Other was stigmatised. The sociological and historical intention is to reveal these mediated symbols of the colonial era, repressed from our relationship with the exotic, and thus to offer a revisited and thereby didactically mediated relationship with the Others.

BANCEL, N., BLANCHARD, P., BOETSCH, G., DEROO, E. and LEMAIRE S. (2002). *Zoos humains. De la Vénus hottentote aux reality shows*. Paris: La Découverte.

2. Research methods

In the context of the present study, it can be said that the research sub-groups have felt it was necessary to make an inventory of various facets of the concept of cultural mediation linked with the didactics of modern languages. Two groups chose a descriptive type of research. The first (Project 1) explores sensitisation to culture in the curricula and teaching material. The second (Project 4) studies the concept of empathy as an integral element of cultural mediation, taking as its starting point observations gathered in the classroom. A third group (Project 2) pursues an exploratory/interpretative type of research, studying the concept of hospitality and aiming at proposing examples of situations that are representative of diversity in the European context. The two other groups have chosen a descriptive and analytical type of research. One group (Project 3) studies the representations of the concept of otherness in advertising and the concept of cultural mediation. The other group

(Project 5) studies the representations of Others and other cultures in the context of initial and in-service training of teachers.

We know that different types of research call for different research methodologies. The latter must vary and adapt to the different types of research applied. The survey instruments chosen can be from various sources: case studies, interviews, observation, written questionnaires, discourse studies, etc.

Some methods are more appropriate to qualitative types of research (case studies, observation, biographical approach, ethnography, interviews, discussion groups, discourse studies). Other methods of a quantitative nature will use modes of investigation that permit the researchers to address larger groups of subjects. In this case, preference will be given to written questionnaires and public opinion polls. With respect to this research, we present a synthesis of the various research methods used by each of the research sub-groups.

2.1 The questionnaire

The questionnaire has dominated since the beginning of the psychometric approach, its objective being to enrich the research aimed at a better empirical and systematic knowledge of reality. Used above all in psychology following the development of attitude and motivation tests, it quickly spread to the field of education given its ability to maximise individual differences and to facilitate the comparability of the results and the reference to the standard. More recently, sociology has adopted it as a means of determining social facts or for the purpose of probing the intentions of the social actors.

The questionnaire as a research tool should satisfy very precise objectives. It proves appropriate if the aim is to identify certain social factors, to determine their presence or absence, or to assess the relevance, frequency and generalisation of the information obtained. Generally, it serves to identify the different layers of the sample of subjects questioned. No question is unmotivated, and each must correspond with one of the dimensions and sub-dimensions of a conceptual frame of reference constructed to this end. Precise indicators have to be linked to each dimension. In many cases, the first thing is to specify the social determinants (gender, age), social status (employee, professional, academic), individual and family status (married, single, widow/widower), social capital (category of employees) and social conditions (number of children). Very frequently, these are questions of fact. Following this, the questionnaire will address the indicators that cover the visions of the social world linked with each of the sub-dimensions of the framework of research. These are questions of opinion and perception.

A questionnaire may include questions with closed responses or questions with open responses. *Questions with closed responses* are those where the person questioned must choose between preformulated responses. Closed response questions may be unique when they offer the alternative (yes/no), or they may be *multiple reply questions*, where

they list a number of possible answers. They are *ordered* if they ask for responses to be selected according to an increasing or decreasing order.

Closed response questions

a) Single response

Q65. Do you wish to speak a language of one of the minorities in Slovakia?

Yes No

b) Multiple responses

Q8. What is your mother tongue (the first language you learnt)?

a) Slovakian b) Hungarian c) German d) English e) Other

c) Ordered responses

Q24. (Questionnaire/Canada)

Using the statements below, indicate according to order of importance (1 being the most important/5 the least important) the five principle reasons that best describe your motivation for learning a different language.

a) Honestly I don't know; I really have the impression I am wasting my time learning French.

b) In order to obtain a good job later.

c) Because I would feel at fault if I couldn't speak French in Canada.

d) For the pleasure that I have when I excel myself in my studies of a different language.

e)

f)

Three types of scale are possible. The Thurstone scale is used to measure the intervals or the subjective equidistances (favourable, neutral, unfavourable) on the basis of a list of statements concerning the same subject and to which values or scores are attributed (favourable means 6 points, neutral 3 points, unfavourable 0). The Likert scale presents a continuum of positive and negative attitudes starting from which the respondent should state if he or she is entirely in agreement, generally in agreement, of no opinion,

On the other hand, *open response questions* are those which the persons questioned are free to reply as they wish. They suffer from the disadvantage of being more expensive since encoding cannot be carried out in advance and it is necessary to proceed to the inventory of the responses before constructing the code and entering the data received. In such a case, it is known that the judgments applied by the encoder can become a source of bias if they hinder the thoughts of the respondent. Moreover, if the information is too disperse, it may become unusable with respect to the subject matter of the research. It is true that it provides more information about practices or concepts, but it can also be vague or simply uncodable. Having said this, open response questions have advantages. They benefit questions by category without imposing a mode of response on the respondent, which, possibly and if the responses are easily summarised, can provide valuable information to the researcher.

Open response questions

What do you do in each of the following situations? Why?

1. You are queuing to be served at a café and you are in a hurry. In front of you, there is a student who has difficulty in making himself understood in your language by the attendant and nothing is happening.

Action: _____

Reasons: _____

This leads to the need, in the preparation of a questionnaire, to delimit the question extremely well in order to give the responses a better framework. In every questionnaire, it is often beneficial to adopt a compromise between open response and closed response questions. The closed response questions provide information in the strict sense, or facts about reality, while open response questions provide the opinions and descriptions suggested by the questions.

2.2 Semi-directed interviews¹

In social science, more particularly in socio-ethnology or in anthropology, the interview with semi-open questions, to be distinguished from the directed interview with closed questions, is a preferred analysis instrument according to Boutin (1997) and Bertaux (1997). The latter gives the following reasons: “In a quantitative inquiry, the data has a double function: it provides reliable statistical descriptions of collective phenomena constituted by the aggregation of behaviours, attitudes and even individual opinions, and, a function more difficult to satisfy, it verifies the hypotheses.” He adds: “In ethno-sociological inquiry, the data fulfils very different functions. It cannot lead to a statistical description; it does not serve to verify hypotheses; it serves to show how a social world or a social situation ‘works’.” This descriptive function is thus essential and leads to what Geertz (1986) calls a *thick description*, an in-depth description of the social object taking into account its internal social relationship structures, its power relationships, its tensions, its process of permanent reproduction and its transformational dynamism.

In studying cultural mediation, which is *at the heart of these social processes* and these *interrelational dynamics*, recourse to the interview using a socio-ethnological approach can be an appropriate tool. In fact, one of its characteristics is to lead from the specific to the general by establishing a relationship between individual cases, what they contain in terms of factual data within their specific context, the descriptive or explanatory indices proposed by the subjects, and by revealing reoccurrences or consistencies from one discourse to another, from one opinion to another, from one explanation to another, on one and the same subject, in response to one and the same question. This process allows concepts and hypotheses to be drawn up about these reoccurrences. From this perspective, the function of the data is not to verify hypotheses that have been previously elaborated, but rather to assist the construction of a body of hypotheses in the course of the analysis.

However, different methodologies can prove to be complementary. To illustrate these, we have two examples of interviews: the first by Gokalp et al. (1997) and the second by Varro (1997), which we presented to the participants. These two studies show a similarity of approach which is primarily of interest because they propose two

1 BERTAUX, D. (1997). *Les récits de vie*. Paris: Nathan/128.

BOUTIN, G. (1997). *L'entretien de recherche qualitatif*. Ste-Foy (Quebec): Presses Universitaires du Québec.

ELIAS, N. (1983) (French translation). *Engagement et distanciation. Contribution à la sociologie de la connaissance*. Paris: Fayard/Pocket – Agora.

GEERTZ, C. (1986). *Savoir local, savoir global. Les lieux du savoir*. Paris: PUF.

GOKALP, A., KASTORYANO, R. and DE TAPIA, S. (eds.) (1997). *L'immigration turque et kurde: la dynamique segmentaire, la nouvelle donne générationnelle et le nouvel ordre communicationnel*. Paris: CNRS.

VARRO, G. (1997). “Les élèves ‘étrangers’ dans les discours des institutions et des instituteurs”. *Langage et Société*, No. 80, June. Paris: Maison des Sciences de l’Homme et de la Société.

investigation and analysis methods on the basis of the same corpus, and a cross-analysis of the results thus presents a more in-depth description and interpretation.

**The use of a fictive ethnic group:
crossing of the results of a questionnaire
with those of complementary interviews**

The researcher carries out an inquiry, conducted by means of questionnaires with closed responses, on the classification – from the most appreciated to the least appreciated – of groups of all origins living in France by young Turks and Kurds, introducing an invented ethnic group, the Movaks. The aim of this study was to see how individuals belonging to a specific group express their concept of the different, foreigner or French. The study permits the identification of judgments that these young people apply to their neighbours, friends and fellow workers, and their concepts of the same persons as spouses, brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, etc., according to their “ethnic” membership. However, the initial results were not sufficient to understand the reasons that dominated these classifications leading to judgments and prejudices as applied to a particular group, specifically the “fake” group which was at the bottom of the list. Consequently, interviews were carried out on the basis of a representative sample of the population investigated by questionnaires to find more about “this hidden world where racism and exclusion are created” (Gokalp, op. cit.)

**The discourse of institutions v. the discourse of the actors:
content analysis and discourse analysis**

The researcher (Varro, op. cit.) proposes the intersection of two levels of analysis starting from a corpus made up of a ministerial report (Bocquet, 1992) and interviews conducted with six primary school teachers working in introduction to the French language classes (CLINS). The aim of this research is to analyse the perception of the “foreign” pupils in the discourse of the institutions and the actors of this institution. The first study consists of a discourse analysis that systematically identifies the epithets attributed to “French” pupils and those attributed to “foreign” pupils, bringing together and classifying the terms recurring in the official discourse in a table entitled the “paradigm of difference”. This was followed by interviews with the teachers on a single question, “Can you tell me about your teaching method with the non-French-speaking pupils at the school?”, and applies two methods of analysis.

At a first level, the researcher is interested in the topics actually addressed by the interview partners about their teaching methods with the non-French-speaking pupils: this is content analysis. At a second level, she applies discourse analysis by looking for the ten “loaded” words most frequently used by the teachers in order to refer to non-French-speaking pupils, which it brings together and classifies in a table entitled “distribution of designations”. By intersecting the results of the two analyses, it reveals the similarity of the use of emotional terms to refer to foreign pupils and the use of official terms to designate French pupils, thereby constructing and revealing the statutory difference at the heart of the institution and of the class.

2.3 The ethnographic film¹

The use of photographic or cinematic images as a tool in human and social science research is not new. In fact, anthropologists, ethnologists and psychiatrists, and more recently educationalists, have used images as a raw material for their research. It is no accident that ethnologists were the first to have used this tool (in 1920, when Flaherty filmed the daily life of Nanook the Eskimo), since like the eye, the organ for observation *par excellence*, photography and film allow description and analysis. Other ethnologists, such as Mead and Bateson, elaborated an entire methodology of cinematic ethnography for their field work in the 1940s. It was above all verbal behaviour that drew investigators' attention, with its movements, gestures and facial expressions expressing membership of a certain culture. In other words, the image can reveal the secret code, the shared code that allows communication between the members of a single group, a single community. It was with Birdwhistell (1981) that a new discipline developed in the 1950s, *kinesics*, based on the cinematic image that permits micro-analysis of behaviour, thereby illustrating the communicative theories that were booming at the time (the Palo Alto school).

How can cinematographic ethnography help us in our analysis of communication sequences and inter-individual mediation? According to France (1988; 1989), the two main functions of cinematographic observation are firstly to show the facts that cannot be established simply by direct observation and secondly to describe those that are difficult to recount using language. Let us take for instance the investigation conducted by Triantaphyllou (2000) on encounters by young Europeans as part of school exchanges that we presented to the participants. In these filmed encounters, the author postulates that if the film is considered like a "text" for the study of signs and its language (or semiotics), it can apply the approaches proposed by Morris (Triantaphyllou, op. cit.) to the study of communication: syntax, semantics and pragmatics.

The author describes the decoding process thus: the analysis of the cinematic "text" permits "the description of the young persons' communicative behaviour in the exchange situation such as the breaking of the linguistic code, the use of translation, the use of language as play object (...). A description of non-verbal and para-verbal communication serves to enrich this behaviour. The *syntactic aspect* of communication is combined with the *semantic aspect*. The latter is a subject for the research of symbolism and the extraction of the implicit, as well as interpretation, dependent on syntax."

1 BIRDWHISTELL, R. (1981). "Un exercice de kinésique et de linguistique: la scène de la cigarette", in Y. Winkin (1981).

FRANCE, C. (1988). "La méthode des esquisses: une manière d'observer en anthropologie filmique", in Etudes de Linguistique Appliquée, January-March. Paris: Didier Erudition.

FRANCE, C. (1989). Cinéma et anthropologie. Paris: Maison des Sciences de l'Homme et de la Société.
TRIANTAPHYLLOU, A. (2001). Anthropologie des échanges éducatifs. Ethnographie filmique de rencontres entre jeunes Européens. Berne: Peter Lang/Transversales.

A third approach is necessary, *pragmatics*, which intervenes to study the relationship between the sign and the user of the sign, between the phrases and the speaker. It focuses on the relationship that links the transmitter and the recipient to the extent that it is mediated by communication. Pragmatics, by its own definition, introduces three new concepts, that of the *act*, the *context* and the *performance*. The first insists that language achieves actions, that to speak is to act; the second concerns the spatiotemporal framework, the nature of the participants and the aim of the action, that is to say the extra-linguistic environment; the third, which involves the accomplishment of the act in the context, involves two further concepts: the knowledge of the interactors and their command of the communicative rules.

What does a cinematic ethnography of the exchanges between young Europeans of different languages and cultures mean to us? “The film on the school exchanges,” according to Triantaphyllou, “is a research film whose object is the pragmatics of communication, that is to say the behaviour and strategies of the partners acting in different situations with respect to communication” – to be more precise, in contact situations with foreign interlocutors in their own context and then in their partners’ context. However, according to the author, this cinematic analysis only becomes interesting if it is intersected with an analysis of conversations that have likewise been filmed and conducted with the same actors (social actors and film actors, it should be added) in these European exchanges.

2.4 Participatory observation¹

It was Malinovski (1922) who coined the concept of “participatory observation”, in opposition to the “salon practices” popular amongst ethnologists at the beginning of the twentieth century who based their reflection on ethnographic material supplied by others (travellers, soldiers or missionaries). This new attitude was in response to the need for scientific validity. It involved the investigator himself going into the “field”, cutting himself off from his own society and remaining as much as possible in close contact with the natives, becoming familiar with them in order to create relationships and above all to learn their language, all essential conditions for ethnographic inquiry (Malinovski, quoted by Géraud et al., 1998).

However, other principles are involved in participatory observation based on the ethics of the discipline: “The ethnographer who works in the field has a duty to master, with patience and seriousness, all the phenomena in each of the domains of the tribal culture

1 ELIAS, N. (1983), op. cit.

GEERTZ, C. (1996). *Ici et là-bas. L'anthropologue comme auteur*. Paris: Métailié.

GERAUD, M.O., LESERVOISIER, O. and POTTIER, R. (1998). *Les notions clés de l'ethnologie. Analyses et textes*. Paris: Armand Colin/Cursus Sociologie.

LAPLANTINE, F. (1987). *Clefs pour l'anthropologie*. Paris: Seghers.

MALINOVSKI, B. (1922). *Argonauts of the western Pacific*. London: Routledge.

WINKIN, Y. (1996, 1st edition), op. cit.

being studied, making no difference whatsoever between what is banal, dull or normal and what is astonishing and inordinately striking” (Géraud, op. cit.). This intention of distancing one’s point of view by deconstructing one’s prejudices and one’s presuppositions concerning the group under observation was to become one of the key principles of participatory observation. In addition, this distancing of the subject-researchers, both with respect to themselves and with respect to the subject matter of their studies, can only be based on direct observation, since only the observation of specific situations allows them to understand the implicit principles that organise the others’ experiences. The objective of this approach is to acquire the natives’ point of view, their relationships with life, to understand their vision of their world, and the ethnologist must logically abandon his own vision and his own values. Laplantine (1987) said of Malinowski that he taught us *to look*, which may appear banal today but was revolutionary at the time and represented a veritable methodological break.

This progressive impregnation with the values and ideas of the community being studied was demolished by Geertz (1996), who considered the ethnographic tales by Malinowski or Lévi-Strauss to be a narcissistic reconstruction of the observed reality, more literary than scientific in quality, which distracted research from distanced knowledge. However, within the framework of a discipline that is no longer restricted to the observation of “primitive” groups and that examines modern society and everyday life, both the familiar and the distant, Elias (1983) attempted to reconcile the opponents and the supporters of participatory observation. Each investigator studying the facts of his own society is a participant in this society and as a result is “committed” as a social subject in the object of his study; he can therefore no longer, according to Elias, achieve the distance except at the expense of an “emotional disenchantment”. In this sense, Winkin (1996), arguing in favour of participatory observation as the main basis of the ethnography of communication, recommended the following attitude to his students: “The notion of commitment involves that of ‘involvement shield’, a concept borrowed from Goffman. The involvement shield consists of all the strategies that we will – rightly – use to attempt not to commit ourselves.” However, the observer is not a neutral element in the interactions with direct interlocutors and other protagonists of the situation under observation. The observer participates *de facto* in changes – even imperceptible – in the communication.

How can observations, interviews, readings, reflections, frustrations, commitments and relinquishments be managed at the same time? “As soon as you arrive in the field, you should force yourself to keep a diary” is Winkin’s advice (op. cit.). Participatory observation thus passes through the daily observation of oneself and of one’s practices, and should permit a *double decentring*: that of the observing subject and that of the observed subject. Participatory observation on the one hand and observing participation on the other hand. Can one become totally “disinvolved” in any communication situation, even if it has been defined according to very specific methods? “Is participatory observation a trap?” asked Winkin (ibid.). The question still remains.

2.5 The biographical approach¹

The biographical approach can also take account of the postulate of participatory observation, but is defined first of all by the nature and the method of collecting information in the field.

The biographical approach is part of the western tradition that gives specific value to the words of an individual subject. Autobiography is in some way a starting point and the most accomplished form – being related by the subject – of biography. Autobiography borrows from the religious genre when it is in the domain of a confession. While St Augustine's *Confessions* retraced the path of his faith through his *Promenades*, the *Essays* of Montaigne, the *Memoirs* of Benvenuto Cellini and the *Confessions* of Jean-Jacques Rousseau show that the autobiographical genre has evolved into a secularised form, the humanist's search for himself. In the course of the nineteenth century, this approach was based on the progress of individualism as a philosophy, the invention of intimacy that accompanied the transformation of traditional societies, and the democratisation of society, which involved a redefinition of what was until then considered as egoist narcissism.

From the beginning of empirical sociology to the gradual investigation of new disciplines – psychoanalysis for instance – and new subject matters of study – for instance, immigration as addressed by the Chicago School in the 1920s and 1930s (Znaniecki and Williams, 1918-20) – a methodological field emerged that gave autobiography scientific credit, previously denied because of its links with the

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- 1 Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales (1986). "L'illusion biographique", No. 62-63, June.
BERTAUX, D. (1997), op. cit.
BOURDIEU, P. (1982). *La leçon sur la leçon*. Paris: Editions de Minuit.
FERRAROTTI, F. (1983). *Histoire et histoires de vie. La méthode biographique dans les sciences sociales*. Paris: Méridien – Klincksieck.
GOFFMAN, E. (1973). *La mise en scène de la vie quotidienne*, 2 volumes. Paris: Editions de Minuit (translation of *The presentation of self in everyday life*).
HUGHES, E.C. (1995). *Le regard sociologique*. Essais choisis, (compiled and presented by J.M. Chapoulie). Paris: EHESS.
LINDE, C. (1993). *Life stories. The creation of coherence*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
PENEFF, J. (1990). *La méthode biographique*. Paris: Colin.
PINEAU, G. and LE GRAND, J.L. (1993). *Les histoires de vie*. Paris, PUF/Que sais-je? (No. 2760).
POIRIER, J., CLAPIER-VALLADON, S. and RAYBAUT, P. (1983). *Les récits de vie. Théorie et pratique*. Paris: PUF.
LEJEUNE, P. (1980). *Je est un autre*. Paris: Seuil.
LEWIS, O. (1963). *Les enfants de Sanchez. Autobiographie d'une famille mexicaine*. Paris: Gallimard (French translation).
LOFLAND, L. (1983). "The Chicago Legacy", *Urban Life*, vol. 11, No. 4.
SIMMEL, G. (1984). *Les problèmes de la philosophie de l'histoire*, Paris: PUF (French translation).
ZNANIECKI, F. and WILLIAM, T. (1918-20). *The Polish peasant in Europe and America*, 5 volumes. USA: Chicago, Boston.

“Romanesque” genre. The biographical tool has fully entered the field of research and intensified “field” investigations. The “life story” has acquired the legitimacy of a meaningful totality, not only linked to a means of data collection – the co-construction of a discourse between an investigator and his “informant” – but also linked to a vision of society centred on real-life experience, the shared or appropriated memory, the perception of a fragment of society through discourse relating to this society, specifically in its perception of interethnic relationships.

The biographical approach contributes to opening up the description of the social field. New social categories gain scientific dignity and, with the assistance of the sociologist, recover a “right of speech” often denied by the culturally dominant elements of society. Profiting from the editorial interest¹ of the general public, these descriptions finally removed the biographical approach from the sphere of confidentiality, and cast a spotlight on, for instance, life in the ghettos (*Children of Sanchez* by Oscar Lewis is a basic text in this field), regional traditions, and the life of workers, farmers or militants. Teachers become persons of sociological interest, either because they unburden themselves of a painful past as pupils or as teachers by taking up the pen (*Le Cheval d’Orgueil*, by P.J. Hélias, in Brittany; *Une soupe aux herbes sauvages* by Carles E.), or because the historian exhumes and restores a professional habitus previously neglected (Ouzouf M., *La Classe ininterrompue. Cahiers de la famille Sandre*, Hachette, 1979).

The biographical approach is seen as a decisive stage in the initial training of researchers when they are to confront milieus in which they have not been socialised. Park held forth to his students in these terms: “One thing is vital: first-hand observation. Go and observe the salons in luxury hotels or shelters for the homeless. Sit down on the sofas of residential homes and on straw mattresses in the slums. (...) In short, young people, get your pants dirty by doing real research” (quoted by Lofland, 1983). The training of the researcher passes from personal confrontation to social diversity, seen as an initiation test capable of questioning the certainties that have been reinforced by a social experience limited to a sociologically determined context. The biographic approach thus also interferes with the experience of researchers in the field. Here, everything happens as if the sociologist’s emancipation from his or her ordinary experience of the world – his or her doxies – could not be empirically validated “without tearing up the loyalties and memberships by which one normally belongs to groups, without abandoning the beliefs that are the components of this membership and without denying all links of affiliation or family” (Bourdieu, 1982). The rigor of the biographical approach is not based on the sum of the knowledge or the data collected, but depends in advance on the skills developed by researchers who are personally involved in their initiation into social difference, in taking a distance with respect to their own social history.

1 In France, the “Vécu” collection, launched in 1967 by Robert Laffont, or “Terre humaine”, launched by Plon, introduced the general public to ethnographic sensitivity.

3. In what way do these tools contribute to the study of cultural mediation?

3.1 The analysis of verbal and non-verbal interaction¹

Discourse analysis in its various manifestations has been applied to studying intercultural interactions by a growing number of researchers (Clyne, 1994; Scollon and Wong Scollon, etc.). The topic of cultural mediation has not been discussed explicitly in detail by many studies, yet very frequently intercultural communication studies do address issues which are also relevant for the study of cultural mediation.

Depending on the research question, different approaches to discourse analysis may be particularly suitable for studying cultural mediation. Approaches based on the ethnography of communication and interactional sociolinguistics are particularly apt to studying the interplay of verbal and non-verbal interactions since they are not restricted to the analysis of verbal communication only. Critical discourse analysis would serve as an adequate approach to study cultural representations, as for example the representation of the “Other”.

A substantial amount of research applying the methods of discourse analysis described above has been concerned with studying differences across cultures. Differences between speech acts across cultures (Blum-Kulka/House/Kasper 1989, etc.) have, for example, been studied very extensively, as have different politeness conventions as well as directness and indirectness (recently, Spencer-Oatey, etc.). Yet, so far fewer studies have dealt with the question of how interactants can overcome communication differences when interacting with members of other cultures. However, this question is central when attempting to study cultural mediation in intercultural interactions.

In the following we attempt to show how discourse analysis can be applied to studying cultural mediation in intercultural co-operation. The example is taken from a research project studying intercultural communication at the ECML in Graz. One of the aims of this project is to identify communication strategies which contribute to successful communication in intercultural settings. Very often these communication strategies will be strategies of linguistic and cultural mediation.

Clarification of meaning has been found to be one of the strategies which contribute to successful intercultural communication in the data collected at the ECML. Clarification processes can be applied to all linguistic levels, yet clarification at the semantic and at

1 BLUM-KULKA, S., HOUSE, J. and KASPER, G. (eds.) (1989), op. cit.

CLYNE, M. (1994). *Inter-cultural communication at work*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

SCOLLON, R. and Wong Scollon, S. (1995), op. cit.

SPENCER-OATEY, H. (ed.) (2000), op. cit.

WILLING, K. (1992). *Talking it through. Clarification and problem-solving in professional work*. Sydney, Macquarie University: National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research.

the pragmatic level seem to be the most crucial ones for mediating cultural differences during intercultural interactions. It is argued that linguistic negotiation processes are very often those points in intercultural communication where linguistic and cultural mediation takes place. These negotiation and clarification processes may on the one hand be applied to resolve some kind of miscommunication or communication breakdown. However, if applied during communication which is potentially unsuccessful, these negotiation processes may help to avert miscommunication in the first place so that communication breakdown does not occur.

In intercultural co-operation, clarification of word meaning is very often crucial for a successful outcome. However, in order to communicate how a message is to be taken, clarification of pragmatic intent is also an important strategy of mediating in intercultural encounters. Willing (1992:180) argues that clarification of pragmatic aspects of meaning is more likely to come across as a challenge or even as an affront than clarification in the sphere of semantics.¹ Under the pragmatic aspects of meaning he lists:

- a. Aspects of underlying intent;
- b. Presupposition;
- c. Relevant bridging frames and scripts;
- d. Conversational principles;
- e. Discourse structural expectations;
- f. Mutual knowledge.

Although the moves of pragmatic clarification may be risky on the one hand, they may be the best way of negotiating meaning in cross-cultural communication. One of the reasons for this is that people can make their intentions clear in situations where they cannot expect their interlocutors to share the others' interpretative system; they are able to check their (automatic) assumptions and avoid implicit negative judgments. However, since clarification of (pragmatic) intent is inherently face-threatening, some politeness strategies should accompany this type of clarification.

Pragmatic clarification in the following data is often explicitly used to negotiate different expectations about the process of group work. These different expectations may be based on different cultural assumptions or differences that are grounded in people's personal experience and/or professional backgrounds. The following extract is a transcript from a group session where four workshop participants (Romanian, Swiss, Polish, Maltese) were working on a mini project which involved finding out about the language learning needs of an assistant secretary. In this example the Swiss participant resorts to explicit clarification about how she expects to work in a group. Up to this point the group had not really discussed how they were planning to go about the task of doing a language needs analysis for an assistant secretary at the work place. They

1 WILLING, K. (1992), op. cit.

started to interview the assistant secretary about the different people working at the ECML in order to arrive at the organisational structure of the centre.

Planning a task in an international workshop

- CH: but usually (*laughs*) where we work in groups (*laughs*) ... sorry ...
- P: ok but ... uh ... we have [to know the: uh .../structure/]
- RO: [Peter Smith, what's the nationality, sorry/]
- CH: yes, but if I didn't get it ... [sorry, but] I didn't understand where you are going to
- RO: [of Mr Smith ...]
- CH: I need [some time to understand]
[Is he British or .../?????????]
- AS: he's Irish]
- RO: [Irish.
- CH: most probably you know it ... it's yours for the moment ... it isn't mine ...
and ... I would like to know where I am going,
I don't know ... if it's the same for: ...
- M: I think what uhm ... P has asked her is uh ... mapping out uh ...
a picture of the [whole organisation]
- CH: [this-this I understand] but uh I would like to learn ...
the way to ... to ... to ... deal with that ... if someone decide
for me ... I will never understand (*laughs*)
what I'm doing in that, I would like to say, so at least if we decide ...
if you decide a topic ... you tell us ... uhm before
- P: sorry I thought [/it was/]
- CH: [it's not] a criticism it's that ...
I need [this to understand]
- P: [no, no, no, no/?????/]
- M: that's all right
- CH: to understand what I'm doing]
- RO: [yes, of course

- P: well my idea was to ... we-we started with the responsibilities [of the-
- CH: [yes
the assistant ... secretary
- RO: yes but ... you know ... you know there is a problem uh ... uh ...
if we have someone talking to,
we find all the information we need ... because we cannot uh ...
ask for people all the time we want
to ask something ... so she's here ... we'll ask her,
we squeeze out everything ... out
- CH: uh
- RO: all the information you know
- CH: uh ... for going ... going very quickly ok
- CH: [all right
- P: and then we'll find it easier to identify exactly]
- CH: [yes /?????/?
- CH: [/?????????????????/?]
- P: [how they communicate]
how they communicate within the institution] who they ... uh ... who's [responsible]
- CH: [yes]
[ok]
- CH: yes, [I understand]
- M: [you understand] the secretary assistant's /work/,
- P: where is her place /in the whole structure/
- CH: we are here to learn, I have to learn /at least/ (*laughs*) ok.

This extract illustrates how a participant in an internationally mixed working group uses negotiation of pragmatic meaning to mediate between her own cultural or institutional assumptions of group work and those of the other team members. By using metacommunication she explains her own communicative expectations and interpretations, as a common understanding cannot be taken for granted in this situation. However, the clarification processes applied by the Swiss participant and the other interactants (in combination with appropriate politeness strategies) can be considered as communication strategies which lead to successful communication despite some initial communication problems.

3.2 Revealing cultural representations

The idea of “representations” appeared for the first time with Durkheim in 1898 (quoted by Seca, 2001) in his study of nature and the interaction between “individual representations and collective representations”, thereby establishing a sociology of representations. Since then, the concept has been shared by such a large number of human and social science disciplines that it is impossible to present the variety of interpretations (see Doise and Palmonari, 1986; Jodelet, 1989). The plurality of approaches to the concept and the plurality of the meanings that it carries have made it a working tool that is often difficult to locate and use.

A socio-psychological concept of representations¹

What do we understand by the concept of *representations*? It can be seen as a *system of perceptions in which the models, beliefs, standards and values of a social group are in constant interaction*. Just as with social representations, the first function of cultural representations is to interpret the reality that surrounds us by symbolising it, giving it meaning and by mentally restructuring it (Moscovici, 1961; 1976). Sperber (1996:24, 33) defines cultural representations as a sub-group of the group of *mental and public representations* that co-exist within a social group. *Mental* representations refer to beliefs, intentions and preferences that are specific to the individual. *Public* representations, likewise identified as object by Bourdieu (1982), are to be found in the texts, statements, discourses, images or external signs of whatever kind. These representations are constructed over the course of the years and can be influenced by individuals, events and institutions. They concern simultaneously one’s own culture and that of the Other, and they can be positive or negative. Positive representations (associated with *xenophile attitudes*) are expressed by behaviour and practices of

1 Edited by Denise Lussier.

BOURDIEU, P. (1982). *Ce que parler veut dire*. Paris: Fayard.

BROWN, D.E. (1991). *Human universals*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

BRUNER, J. (1996). *L’éducation, entrée dans la culture*. Paris: Retz (translation of *The culture of education*).

LEGAULT, G. (1991). “Formation à une pratique interculturelle”, *Canadian Social Work Review*, No. 8, 2, pp. 153-167.

LUSSIER, D. (1997). “Domaine de référence pour l’évaluation de la compétence culturelle en langues”, *Études de Linguistique Appliquée*, No. 106, pp. 231-246. Paris: Didier Érudition.

LUSSIER, D. (forthcoming). *Conceptual framework for the development of intercultural competence in language education*. Graduate seminar, University of Durham, United Kingdom.

MOSCOVICI, S. (1976). *Social influence and social change*. New York: Academic Press.

SPERBER, D. (1996). *Explaining culture, a naturalistic approach*. Oxford: Blackwell.

WEAVER, G. (1986). “Understanding and coping with cross-cultural adjustment stress”, in R.M. Page (ed.), *Cross-cultural orientations: new conceptualization and applications*. London: University Press of America.

openness to the Other, while negative representations (*xenophobe attitudes*) are shown through a behaviour of rejection and refusal of the Other.

Weaver (1986:135) and Legault (1991) use the analogy of the iceberg to indicate the influence of a number of factors, including the prefabricated representation, in the development of intercultural communication. On the one hand, at the tip of the iceberg, we find the visible elements of the culture, identified as external culture. The latter refers to verbal or non-verbal behaviour and the customs which bear the mark of a specific culture. The latter may be developed by means of an explicit learning process. They are easily modifiable because they are observable. On the other hand, there is the hidden part of the iceberg, often much larger than its visible part. When two individuals belonging to different cultures meet, each brings different modes of thinking, of values, of beliefs and presumptions. These modes or systems constitute the internal culture and are related to the concept of *savoir-être* developed by Lussier (1997). They are more difficult to change since they involve an implicit learning process and cannot be defined on the basis of objective knowledge.

Since language is a manifestation of cultural identity, every learner, through the language that she or he speaks, brings with him/her the visible and invisible elements of a specific culture. In this way, from a young age, the learners develop collective representations and individual representations. On the one hand, they gradually acquire the dominant beliefs and ways of thinking that prevail within their family and social group. On the other hand, they are aware of the relationships that hold sway in their physical and social environment. They become sensitive to changes. With this in mind, it is necessary to act as early as possible on learners to enable them to develop a better awareness of their own culture and that of others. The teaching/learning of modern languages seems to us to be the discipline *par excellence* for intensifying the openness to other cultures and the contact with otherness in the development of positive cultural representations associated with xenophile attitudes.

It therefore seems that to better understand a different culture as a different culture, it would be necessary to take into consideration the cultural specificities of the Other. With this in mind, it is necessary to develop and establish modes of intervention so as to handle misunderstandings between cultures and to encourage the discovery of similarities and the acceptance of differences. It is also necessary to overcome the individual features and give value to positive attitudes. Thus it is necessary to know how to influence behaviour and attitudes. Since changing behaviour and attitudes demands considerable time, it is necessary to act at an early stage on young people in their development of their system of values. By influencing their knowledge, their *savoir-faire* and their *savoir-être*, it becomes possible to influence the social world, the constituent power of a language being based on structures of perception and thought (Bourdieu, op. cit.). In this sense, we adopt the definition by Brown (1991:40) who represents “culture as mental, behavioural and material”. Like Bruner (1996), we consider education to be the entry into the culture. We believe that teaching languages, by its very nature, embodies the presence of the other cultures, the contact with

otherness in the construction of cultural representations, and because of this plays an important mediation role in the interactions with the members of these other cultures.

A socio-anthropological concept of representations¹

The study of *social or cultural representations* is at the heart of the problems of anthropology, and is simultaneously a concept, an object and an analysis tool: “For anthropology, representations constitute the, if not unique, then at least principle object. Sometimes anthropologists study a religion, a mythology, an ideology, a classification, a practical knowledge, that is to say cultural representations directly, while at other times [they analyse] social or economic institutions, by means of representations (...) that are implied” (Sperber in Jodelet, 1989).

With respect to our present field of study, cultural mediation and languages, sociocultural representations must be conceived *as the objects of transactions and processes*. From this point of view, we adopt the synthetic definition proposed by Seca (op. cit.): “The notion of social representations derives part of its relevance from the need to consolidate the links existing between opinions. It can be understood as a

1 Written by A. Gohard-Radenkovic.

BERGER, C. (2001). “L’Australie et le Canada dans les manuels d’anglais: ouverture à l’altérité ou consolidation des préjugés?”, D. Lévy (ed.), *Hetereglossia*, Les discours de l’altérité: dévoilements et recouvrements. Italy: Università degli Studi di Macerata.

BOURDIEU, P. (1979). *La distinction. Critique sociale du jugement*. Paris: Minuit.

BOURDIEU, P. (1980). *Le sens pratique*. Paris: Minuit.

CINTRAT, I. (1983). *Le migrant. Sa représentation dans les manuels de lecture*. Paris: Crédif/Didier.

DOISE, W. (1986). “Les représentations sociales: définition d’un concept”, in W. Doise and A. Palmonari (eds.), *L’étude des représentations sociales*. Lausanne: Delachaux et Niestlé.

GEOFFROY, C. (2001). *La mésentente cordiale. Voyage au coeur de l’espace interculturel franco-anglais*. Paris: Le Monde/Grasset.

GOHARD-RADENKOVIC, A. (2001). “Le Röstigraben existe-t-il? Représentations réciproques de l’autre entre les communautés francophones et germanophones de la Suisse”, in G. Zarate (ed.) (2001).

HALL, S. (ed.) (1997). *Representation. Cultural representations and signifying practices, culture, media and identities*. London: Sage publications in association with the Open University.

JODELET, D. (ed.) (1989). *Les représentations sociales*. Paris: PUF.

LÉVY, D. (ed.) (2001). “Les discours de l’altérité: dévoilements et recouvrements”, *Hetereglossia*. Italie: Università degli Studi di Macerata.

PAGANINI, G. (ed.) (2001). *Différences et proximités culturelles: l’Europe*. Espaces de recherche. Paris: L’Harmattan.

POULIOT, S. (1994). *L’image de l’autre. Une étude des romans de jeunesse parus au Québec de 1980 à 1990*. Editions du CRDP, Quebec: Sherbrooke University.

SECA, J.-M. (2001). *Les représentations sociales*. Paris: Armand Colin.

SPERBER, D. (1989). “L’étude anthropologique des représentations: problèmes et perspectives”, in D. Jodelet (ed.), op. cit.

ZARATE, G. (ed.) (2001). *Langues, xénophobie, xénophilie dans une Europe multiculturelle, documents, proceedings and reports on education*. Caen: CRDP de Basse-Normandie.

system of practical knowledge (opinions, images, attitudes, prejudices, stereotypes, beliefs), in part generated in the contexts of inter-individual and/or inter-group interactions. It may be marked in form and in content by the ideological position of those who use it. The elements of which it is made up are more or less structured, articulated and hierarchised amongst themselves. It is socially determined.”

This dynamic, evolutive and constructive concept of the notion of representations recalls that of Bourdieu. In effect, these structuring and organisational forms of signs and symbols recall the sociologist’s notion of *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1979; 1980), which sees in this concept “the principle generators of stances defined by their integration within a dynamic and institutional field”, adding that “these structures organise the symbolic processes that intervene in social relationships”.

Representations are thus a *key concept* that covers a large number of phenomena and processes. Doise (1986) summarises this polysemy as follows: “We learn that social representation is an intermediary instance between concept and perception; that it is located along the dimensions of attitude, information and images; that it contributes to the formation of conduct and to the orientation of social communication; that it leads to processes of objectivisation, classification and rooting; that it is characterised by a focus on a social relationship and inference pressure; and above all that it is elaborated in different modes of communication: dissemination, propagation and propaganda.”

This anthropological concept of representations can be illustrated by the following analysis.

Representations of the Other and relational dynamics

From this point of view, we presented to the participants a micro-study by interview that we conducted on the reciprocal representations communicated to the Other by a group of francophone students and by a group of German-speaking Swiss students in our bilingual institution (Gohard-Radenkovic, 2001). The objective was to understand the reasons for the lack of contacts between the two groups during their stay at Freiburg and the resistance behaviour in the learning of the language and the culture of the neighbour amongst future teachers of the “partner language” (French as a second language and German as a second language) who, paradoxically, had chosen the University of Freiburg because of its bilingualism. Do these behaviours depend on prejudices against the other linguistic group expressed by the terms “Röstigraben” or “fossé linguistique”? Through the study of the sociocultural representations applied to the Other and to oneself, to the stay, and the linguistic and cultural experience, it became apparent that it was the social memberships and the practical expectations of the students that defined a certain number of attitudes, expectations and representations of the second language and the training pursued.

It is thus this *interweaving between relational dynamics and representative dynamics* that constitutes the core of our approach to cultural mediation. Representations provide us with an *operating concept*, that is to say it is both the object of study and the

instrument of analysis, and affects all the fields of symbolic activity in human relations and productions. The representations, discourses and values relating to *difference* can be decoded by means of different materials or in different contexts such as the large-circulation aids, for example the media (Hall, 1997), textbooks (Cintrat, 1983; Berger, 2001), or novels for young people (Pouliot, 1994), in bicultural and multicultural educational, political and social contexts (Lévi, 2001; Paganini, 2001; Zarate, 2001) or in professional contexts (Geoffroy, 2001), simply to cite a number of examples since many studies have been carried out on and through representations in the teaching of languages and cultures.

3.3 Identity plurality and mediation¹

In daily practice concerned with plurinational contexts, the manifestations of national group membership are a part of what remains automatic in daily interaction. Questioning the different ways of showing one's identity membership leads to showing that national identities work spontaneously like a given, but are above all "an imaginary construction" or a social and historical "invention".

Contrary to current opinion, it is not sufficient to aggregate the individual wills to give consistency to a national, a state or a social group. The latter only acquire social density if they see themselves in a history, in one or more languages, in a common imagination (Anderson, 1983; Thiesse, 1999). This definition frees the formation of national identities from a dynastic and military basis and insists on the force of a collective identity understood as evolutive, processed simultaneously by the establishment of a reference heritage and by the uninterrupted creation of values, both testimony to the capacity of a society to adapt to the evolution of contexts. However, if what is automatic in the social classification is manifested in discourse, as shown by the enunciative and pragmatic approaches, their social effectiveness is due to the fact that they create hierarchies, relegation or emblems that transmit a fixed vision of the social order. They create a "natural effect" that tends to hide the fact that these taxonomies and these categorisations implicitly govern every concept of the relationships between oneself and the Other. Thus it is necessary to distinguish between the observable evolution of societies and the symbolic force of the foundation myths that give essence to this same society. The beliefs and prejudices draw on this conviction that identity cannot be overcome by the passage of time and that it is above all single and unique. They nourish a "classification demon" (Vigneaux, 1999) that is unaware of historicity.

1 ANDERSON, B. (1983). *Imagined communities. Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso.

KAËS, R. et al. (1998). *Différence culturelle et souffrances de l'identité*, p. 58. Paris: Dunod.

NORA, P. (1984). "Entre mémoire et histoire. La problématique des lieux", in P. Nora (ed.), *Les lieux de mémoire*. Paris: Gallimard.

THIESSE, A.M. (1999). *La création des identités nationales. Europe XVIIIe-XXe siècles*. Paris: Seuil.

VIGNEAUX, G. (1999). *Le démon du classement. Penser, organiser*. Paris: Seuil/Le temps de Penser.

A reflection on identity plurality that adopts an epistemological point of view and not a political one assumes by principle that the core of the pluralist debate is not between the unity of one society and the others, but is also formed within any society and affects even the identity definition of the individual.

The disciplines that introduce questions concerning identity complexity agree that identity is always a paradox, in the sense of “against the doxies” or received opinion, but also in the sense of “contradictory”. Reference can be had to a basis in linguistics (E. Benveniste: “The awareness of oneself is impossible unless it is experienced through contrast.”) or a basis in semiology (R. Barthes: “The doxa is current opinion; the repeated meaning as if nothing was the matter. It is Medusa, it petrifies those who look at it.”) or bases in history (P. Nora, 1984: “The historian is the one who holds up the mirror of a past that is definitively dead (...) it means making history of those things from which we are cut off for ever. In this sense, we tend to make the history of the Other rather than the history of ourselves (...).”), or a basis in demography, etc. One can thus speak of an interdisciplinary consensus, but it is remarkable to note that, despite the polyphonic harmony, this consensus provides insufficient irrigation to the field of the didactics of languages.

The notion of mediation optimises the identity paradox. In effect, it allows us to operationalise it in many respects. The prime function of the mediator is to give a voice to those who have lost it because their identity is denied by other social groups within one and the same society, or broken off within a single family line. A truncated identity generates what R. Kaës calls “cultural suffering”: “Their parents never transmitted the language of their own parents, but rather a different and foreign language, and with this lost (or rather refused) language, a thread has been broken in the continuity of the relationship between the generations” (Kaës et al., 1998:58). The mediator is the one who understands the suffering born from wandering, exile and banishment. He helps the individual overcome mourning and provides space for remedial words to those who need them.

The mediation space is not only that of the return of the word, it occupies the symbolic gap that has been created between the culturally near and the culturally distant. While current usage considers these opposed positions to be irreducible, the mediator perceives the representations of the Other as being dependent on the complexity of what is implicit in communication, on a relational dynamism, on transactions in progress that cause meaning to fluctuate. He is empowered to intervene in the processes that dramatise the severance of meanings between oneself and the Other, and makes an effort to establish continuity.

Chapter 3:

Cultural awareness in curricula and learning materials

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1. Motivation for the research

The turn of the century has marked a new era of increased need for communication on a global scale. The technological means have given virtually countless opportunities for contact and exchange. Terms like *plurilingualism*, *pluriculturality* and *globalisation* are attaining new meanings, ranging from extreme positive humane connotations, to extreme denial and seclusion within one's local boundaries. Going deeper into the reasons for this phenomenon of the modern civilisation(s) is not the aim of our research. However, if linguistic competences can result in improved intercultural communication among the abundance of cultures, then a more profound investigation into the notions such as declarative knowledge (*savoir*), skills and know-how (*savoir-faire*) and existential competence (*savoir-être*) is fully justified. In line with the above statement, the process of successful FL learning can not be fully examined without a deeper insight into (some of) the constituent agents: the national curricula, the learning materials and the teachers' competences to function as cultural mediators.

1.1 Aims and research questions

Within the framework of the ECML project 1.2.2., the national representatives from Croatia, Malta, Slovenia and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" (in alphabetical order) expressed a shared interest in co-operating in team work focusing on the following aims and research questions:

- find the elements of cultural awareness in official documents such as the national FLT curricula in each of the participating countries;
- find out whether and to what extent they encourage intercultural awareness and acceptance of otherness;
- find out whether there is a correlation between the curricula requirements and the officially approved textbooks;
- find out whether the teachers have the necessary competences to function as cultural mediators between the textbooks (the learning materials) and the students.

1.2 The specific objectives

The specific objectives defined for this sub-group are to:

- identify types of cultural representations;
- determine the teachers' competences based on their experiences and practices;
- analyse teachers' understanding and use of materials in relation to their cultural mediation competences.

1.3 Anticipated limitations

While defining the specific objectives, the team members were aware of some of the limitations which might affect the coherence of their work. In the first place, there are differences in the status of the FL reflected in the:

- beginning of FL instruction (earlier or later age);
- intensity of instruction (class periods per week/semester);
- number of FLs in the curriculum (one, two or even introduction of a third);
- types of language materials (imported, locally produced, combined);
- teachers' experience with and exposure to other cultures (target language culture).

The team believes, however, that these limitations do not outweigh the similarities. All four countries are relatively small, with an evident need for a higher communicative competence in a second foreign language. The economies of the participating countries are open to and interrelated with foreign investments. All are Mediterranean countries with a more or less mixed population, openness to otherness and developed tourism (somewhat restricted by the turbulences of the past decade, and especially the increase of international terrorism), with environmental, cultural and historic sites protected by Unesco. In addition to identifying the elements of cultural awareness in the learning materials, the four countries expressed a common need to compare the findings with the relevant sections in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* and draw recommendations accordingly.

2. Type of research

The research will be based on analysis of data from printed materials and from materials collected in the field. It will, therefore, present *descriptive* as well as *empirical* research, in accordance with the theoretical postulates about cultural competences and communicative language learning. The descriptive component refers

to the description of nationally approved curricula in the four countries, focusing on the notion of culture teaching both in the definition of aims and in the examples for other language elements (vocabulary, grammar, etc.). The statistical analysis of the data collected through the instruments designed for field research will constitute the empirical segment of this study.

2.1 Varieties in the descriptive and empirical approach

2.1.1 Each participating country deals with a variety of curricula, both in terms of number and structure. For example, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” has different curricula for the 1st FL, 2nd FL, and even 3rd FL in upper elementary and high school; in Slovenia, the obligatory number of years of FL teaching for primary schools has been extended from four to six in the new nine-year curriculum, etc. One possible solution is to go over a sample of curricula and select the common elements which tackle the problem of culture teaching at all levels. Another approach is to pick out one level and fully examine and describe the explicit and implicit cultural elements.

2.1.2 The empirical analysis of data collected via instruments (grids and questionnaires) might have the following limitations:

- since data collection is voluntary, the number of participating teachers cannot be predicted, neither will there be a consistent percentage of responses;
- the variety of textbooks used at various levels is overwhelmingly great; also, the same teacher uses different textbooks even at the same level;
- teachers prefer anonymous responses; therefore, ensuring that the grid and the questionnaire come from the same informants is virtually impossible.

3. Research methodology

3.1 Research design

Research design encompasses the following stages:

- collection and analysis of national curricula for upper elementary and high schools;
- sampling the culture teaching requirements;
- establishing the teachers’ view on cultural representations in the textbooks;
- teachers’ own perceptions of otherness, etc.

A comparison of results is expected to suggest certain answers to our research questions and help in reaching conclusions relevant to achieving a higher goal: developing xenophilia and acceptance of otherness, while respecting one's own cultural identity. These seem to be the necessary elements in raising plurilingual and pluricultural European citizens.

3.2 Types of instruments

The instruments for achieving the previously stated goals are as follows:

- a survey of valid national curricula at upper elementary and high schools;
- a questionnaire for teachers designed to obtain personal and professional data relevant to the aims of the research, as well as their general opinion on textbook potential, the latter's coverage of curriculum requirements and students' proposals for improving the situation. The questionnaire was first designed to cover eleven closed questions and one open-ended reflection problem. However, in the process of the team's work, it became clear that more open-ended questions would give a clearer picture of teachers' perceptions and practices, so an expanded version was developed (Questions 1-8 on the second page).

First page of the questionnaire:

1	<p><i>Which English-speaking countries have you visited?</i></p> <p>UK <input type="checkbox"/> US <input type="checkbox"/> Canada <input type="checkbox"/> Australia <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>other</p>
2	<p><i>When did you visit them? Within less than:</i></p> <p>5 years <input type="checkbox"/> 10 years <input type="checkbox"/> 15 years <input type="checkbox"/> 20 years <input type="checkbox"/> 25 years <input type="checkbox"/></p>
3	<p><i>How long did you stay in these countries? More than:</i></p> <p>15 days <input type="checkbox"/> 1 month <input type="checkbox"/> 3 months <input type="checkbox"/> 6 months <input type="checkbox"/> 1 year <input type="checkbox"/> 2 years <input type="checkbox"/></p>
4	<p><i>What was the purpose of these visits?</i></p> <p>holiday <input type="checkbox"/> study <input type="checkbox"/> work <input type="checkbox"/> visit relatives <input type="checkbox"/> other</p>

5	<p><i>What was your personal experience in these countries?</i></p> <p>annoying <input type="checkbox"/> adventurous <input type="checkbox"/> made new friends <input type="checkbox"/> experienced cultural enrichment <input type="checkbox"/> improved language skills <input type="checkbox"/> other</p>			
6	<p><i>Do you still keep in touch with (the people in) these countries?</i></p> <p>no<input type="checkbox"/> a little<input type="checkbox"/> a lot<input type="checkbox"/></p>			
7	<p><i>How do you maintain the contact with the visited countries?</i></p> <p>letters<input type="checkbox"/> telephone<input type="checkbox"/> email<input type="checkbox"/> received visits<input type="checkbox"/></p>			
8	<p><i>How do you nourish contact with anglophone cultures? Via:</i></p> <p>newspapers <input type="checkbox"/> magazines <input type="checkbox"/> TV <input type="checkbox"/> radio <input type="checkbox"/> cultural centres <input type="checkbox"/> music <input type="checkbox"/> films <input type="checkbox"/> anglophone friends <input type="checkbox"/> other</p>			
9	<p><i>How do you encourage your students to be open to anglophone culture? Via:</i></p>			
	pen-friends <input type="checkbox"/>	local visits <input type="checkbox"/>	magazines <input type="checkbox"/>	radio <input type="checkbox"/>
	video <input type="checkbox"/>	music <input type="checkbox"/>	films <input type="checkbox"/>	TV <input type="checkbox"/>
	exchanges by mail <input type="checkbox"/>		personal exchanges <input type="checkbox"/>	
	other			
10	<p><i>Sex:</i> F<input type="checkbox"/> M<input type="checkbox"/></p>			
11	<p><i>Age:</i> over 50<input type="checkbox"/> 40<input type="checkbox"/> 30<input type="checkbox"/> 20<input type="checkbox"/></p>			
12	<p><i>Open-ended questions:</i></p> <p><i>What do you propose for (a) teachers and (b) students to improve contact with anglophone language and culture?</i></p> <p>(a)</p> <p>(b)</p>			

Expanded questionnaire (open-ended questions)

1	What elements of your teaching do you consider to be culture oriented?
2	Do you think that the teaching of culture is sufficiently supported by the textbook you are using? Please identify the textbook.
3	If yes, please list some elements in your textbook which make it possible for you to teach culture.
4	If no, please explain what you do to promote intercultural awareness.
5	What would you include in your textbook to support/stimulate the teaching of culture?
6	Do you use additional materials to reinforce the teaching of culture? What materials?
7	How does your experience with native speakers influence your teaching of culture?
8	Are the textbooks you are using in accordance with the national curriculum?

The closed-type questionnaire contains questions about the personal experiences teachers have had with foreign (or other) cultures. The purpose is to establish a correlation between teachers' personal experiences and their perception of intercultural awareness.

The open-type questionnaire is oriented towards the teachers' use of textbooks and their practices in the classroom.

The following is an example of the observation grid used by teachers. It is designed to identify specific cultural representations in the textbooks they are using, categorising the representations as positive, negative or neutral. It contains data of the following type:

Book	Cultural representations	+	-	0	page
Unit 1	Eating habits; visual photo of old-fashioned brownies	√			4-6
Unit 1	A joke based on a cultural stereotype (Scottish being stingy)		√		10
Unit 2	American story of how you can earn money there			√	42

3.3 Sampling and conditions of data collection in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Croatia, Malta and Slovenia

3.3.1 “The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”

3.3.1.1 Survey of the curricula

From the abundance of materials described above in 2.1.1, a sample was taken from upper elementary curriculum 6th grade, 1st FL, from high school, 2nd year, 1st FL, and from high school, 2nd year, 2nd FL. This sample is representative of most (if not all) of the curricula at two distinctive levels (elementary and high) and for two language statuses (1st and 2nd FL).

3.3.1.2 Teachers involved in the textbook analysis (grid completion) and questionnaires

The language teaching advisers¹ from the Bureau for Development of Education at the Ministry of Education and Science were given sixty copies of the grid and questionnaire. This number covers roughly 20% of teachers of English as a FL in *public schools* in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”. The number of teachers who responded to the “assignment” was thirty-two. The reply rate was not due to an unwillingness to co-operate, but to the heavy burden of daily teaching schedules. In any case, the thirty-two teachers who did respond represent a 10% sample and, as will be seen from the relative uniformity of their responses, give an accurate picture of teachers’ experiences, practices and observations in general.

1 Special thanks to Zora Busovska from the Ohrid office and Silvana Veterova from the Tetovo and Skopje office for their help in the distribution and collection of instruments throughout various rural and urban areas of “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, thus making it possible to have a more accurate insight in the FL teaching situation in the region.

3.3.2 Croatia

3.3.2.1 Survey of curricula

At present new curricula for FL teaching are being designed in Croatia, in accordance with the guidelines of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*. However, regardless of the type and level, all FL curricula contain the same elements. Therefore, a sample of secondary school EFL is selected for further data presentation and analysis.

3.3.2.2 Teachers involved in the textbook analysis (grid completion) and questionnaires

The teachers involved in completing the questionnaire and grid represent a sample of 10% of active secondary school teachers (70 out of 550 teachers). All the teachers involved work in public secondary and vocational schools. A small number of those initially involved did not complete the questionnaire. The sample is representative and gives relevant data about the questions of interest to this research.¹

3.3.3 Malta

3.3.3.1 Survey of curricula

Cultural elements in the French syllabus for Maltese schools (2001-02+). The syllabus was compiled by Chev. Frank Gatt, Education Officer for French at the French Curriculum Department, Education Division, Malta. It is intended as a guide for teachers and students of French from Form I to Form V of public secondary schools and a number of private secondary schools. The students' ages in the above secondary schools range from 11 to 16. This syllabus is related to two types of courses: those at junior lyceums and at area secondary schools. The former schools use *Fréquence jeunes* (Hachette) as their textbook, while the latter use *Pile ou face* (Hachette).

3.3.3.2 Teachers involved in the textbook analysis (grid completion) and questionnaires

The teachers of French as a FL who participated in the data collection by answering the questionnaire represent 30% of all teachers of French (30 out of a possible 100). They were distributed throughout the public and private schools in Malta.

The three other countries participating in the project have some experience with locally published textbooks for FL learning and can compare and contrast the present-day

1 Sincere thanks to the secondary school teachers throughout Croatia for their responses, and especially to the ones who analysed the textbooks: Rajka Pticek, Hrvoje Kristan, Doroteja Valentic and Nela Slaming.

situation (imported versus locally produced books). Since Malta has always used only imported textbooks for FL learning, it was decided that more relevant data about “cultural extroversions” would be obtained if Maltese textbooks, “Maltese for foreigners”, were analysed. For comparison purposes, the imported French textbook in Malta, *Fréquence jeunes 1*, by G. Capelle, M. Cavalli and N. Gidon, was also surveyed for the presence of cultural extraversion.

3.3.4 Slovenia

3.3.4.1 Survey of curricula

The new Slovene curricula for FL teaching, as approved in 1998 in accordance with the objectives for FL learning by Jan A. van Ek and the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, all contain a strong emphasis on the intercultural component of language teaching. Therefore, samples of the primary school and secondary school curricula were selected for the purposes of this research, being representative of the status and place of the cultural component in general.

3.3.4.2 Involvement of teachers in data collection for the questionnaire and textbook analysis

The above-mentioned instruments were distributed among twenty-five teachers. Only eighteen returned a completed questionnaire, and the number of those who returned the grid was even smaller (as at March 2002 and therefore subject to change). Even though the percentage is not high, the situation and standards of teaching in Slovenia are relatively even, and the responses can be considered as relevant for the purposes of this research.

4. Presentation of data from the curricula survey, questionnaires and textbooks in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Croatia, Malta and Slovenia

4.1 “The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”

4.1.1 Data from selected curricula for EFL

In general, the structure of the national curricula for FL learning/teaching in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” are of the following structure:

- general ID data for the course (name of the course; level; number and length of class periods per week and per year; status of the courses: elective or compulsory; etc.);

- aims of the course;
- previous knowledge required;
- educational components with description of specific aims, examples, guidelines about didactic procedures, etc: listening, speaking, reading, writing, communicative models, grammar, vocabulary and culture;
- survey of teaching methods;
- suggested learning materials;
- types of assessment;
- basic standards for the teachers, the classroom, the school and the equipment.

For the purposes of this research, we shall select and translate/present the specific requirements listed under the label “culture”.

*4.1.1.1 Requirements for teaching culture in the curriculum
for 6th grade, English as the 1st FL*

Source: Nastavna programa po angliski jazik za 6. oddelenie, Republicki pedagogski zavod na Republika Makedonija, Skopje 2000.

Component: culture

The specific aim states that FL instruction should:

- increase the receptive/productive competence, oral and written;
- increase linguistic and sociolinguistic awareness to be utilised in various communicative situations;
- increase the awareness of the cultural characteristics of other countries and nations, stimulate the students in exchanges of information and intercultural tolerance, and develop a questioning/critical approach towards information they receive;
- to stimulate and develop abilities for individual, student-centred work and self-assessment. The above aims can be achieved through the following suggested topics:

Topics	Examples
Myself and others	Family, friends, home, school
Clothes	Types of clothing, colours
Food	Kinds of food, meals, money, measures
Holidays	State, family holidays
Animals	Domestic, wildlife, pets
Environment	Seasons, nature, in the street
Sports and games	Popular sports and games
Professions	Secretary, doctor, policeman, etc.
Geographical terms	Countryside, village, city, country
Free time	Hobbies and pastimes
Transport	Bike, boat, car, train, bus, plane

*4.1.1.2 Requirements for teaching culture in the curriculum
for the 2nd year of high school, English as 1st FL*

Source: *Nastavna programa po angliski kako prv stranski jazik za 2. godina gimnazisko obrazovanje. Biro za razvoj na obrazovanieto na RM, Skopje 2001*
Component 8: culture

The aims of the culture component are to enable the students to:

- acquire knowledge and understanding of certain sociocultural characteristics of other countries through contents, vocabulary and communicative models, in order to develop a positive attitude towards the contribution of the students' own culture and that of other cultures for better mutual understanding and co-operation;
- to develop respect towards the differences and diversity of other cultures, as well as towards the challenges which result from living/working in a multi-ethnic environment;
- to acquire a greater degree of self-awareness in relation to the multi-ethnic surroundings and intercultural communication;
- to acquire a deeper knowledge of the factors which influence the types of communication in various cultures.

The topics from the 1st year of high school continue to be explored in the 2nd year.

Topics	Specific aims ("Can Do" type)	Examples
Historical heritage	The student can express himself orally and in writing about historic events from his own and from other nations' history	Historic events, legends, historical monuments
Country/city	The student can compare lifestyles and habits in various dwelling places	Description, daily life, advantages, disadvantages
Questions of economy and ecology	The student can talk about his immediate environment and the state of his country in a global context	Employment, unemployment, humans and the environment
Travel	The student can use various means of travel, recognise labels, ask for and give information, make reservations in a hotel.	Transport, public transport, labels, sights, visiting museums, asking and giving information, staying at hotels
People and events from science, literature, arts	The student can express himself about the life of famous people from the fields of literature, arts, etc.	Biographies of famous people from the fields of science, art and literature; important literary and art works and events, scientific discoveries
Music and film	Can speak or write about various types of music, film, ballet, concerts, etc.	Songs, ballets, modern and traditional dances, film and pop celebrities, famous motion pictures.
Peoples' ways of life, customs, habits, interpersonal relations	To learn about various customs and habits at the table (table manners) in different cultures, to be able to speak and write about food preparation (recipes) in his own culture and about family relations and behaviours in various situations	Interpersonal relations and behaviours in public, table manners, preparation of food in the student's own country and in other countries, family relations (parents-children), youth, marriage, holidays, celebrations, parties, school life now and before, school rules, university

Telephoning	The student can carry out a simple telephone conversation in English	Models of formal and informal communication on the phone
Media	Can comprehend the main point or the core of some articles in newspapers, on TV and radio programmes in English, etc.	Types of newspapers, magazines, TV and radio programmes, Internet and websites
Communication	The student can, in a simple and appropriate manner, communicate through the listed forms/models of communication	Models of formal/informal communication Formal and informal letters Email Sending fax messages Labels, instructions via illustrations

4.1.1.3 Requirements for teaching culture in the curriculum for the 2nd year of high school, English as 2nd FL

Source: *Nastavna programa po angliski kako vtor stranski jazik za 2. godina gimnazisko obrazovanje*. Biro za razvoj na obrazovanieto na RM, Skopje 2001
Component 8: culture

The specific aim of the culture component is:

- acquire knowledge and understanding of certain sociocultural characteristics of other countries through contents, vocabulary and communicative models planned for this level, in order to develop a positive attitude towards the contribution of the students' own culture and that of other cultures for better mutual understanding and co-operation;

Note: a correlation can be made between the knowledge previously acquired in the 1st FL and other school subjects.

Topics	Specific aims	Examples
Cultural heritage	The student will learn about the traditions and customs related to various holidays	Traditions and customs related to Thanksgiving, Halloween, etc; superstitions; proverbs and riddles

Table manners	The student learns about and can compare types of food, types of preparation and manners of eating in his own and in different cultures	Types of meals, behaviour at the table, eating at a restaurant, menus, national dishes, healthy food, fast food, etc.
Music	The student will learn various songs in the target language	Types of songs: festive, pop, traditional, etc.
Shopping	The student will learn how to function independently in a store	Behaviour in a store, prices, types of payment, etc.
Tourism	The student can express himself orally and in writing about some simple facts about his own and other countries	Countries, capitals, major cities, regions, famous places
Travel	The student can talk about types of transport, give information about lodging, hotels, directions, etc.	Means of transport Hotel lodging, etc.
Communication	Can make a phone call, write a simple letter and use the Internet	Phone calls Letters Internet

4.1.2 Data collected from the questionnaires in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” can be seen in the summarised version (below):

As stated in section 3.3.1.2, thirty-two out of sixty teachers returned questionnaires. This represents about 10% of English teachers in public schools. Their responses to the closed-type questions are as follows:

1	<i>Which English-speaking countries have you visited?</i>
	UK: 14 US: 5 Canada: 2 Australia: 3 other: 9
2	<i>When did you visit them? Within less than:</i>
	5 years: 5 10 years: 6 15 years: 4 20 years: 3 25 years: 3

3	<i>How long did you stay in these countries? More than:</i> 15 days: 1 1 month: 4 3 months: 7 6 months: 1 1 year: 2 2 years: 4
4	<i>What was the purpose of these visits?</i> holiday: 3 study: 6 work: 8 visit relatives: 3 other: 5 (attending a course)
5	<i>What was your personal experience in these countries?</i> annoying: 1 adventurous: 3 made new friends: 8 cultural enrichment: 11 improved language skills: 15 other: 1
6	<i>Do you still keep in touch with (the people in) these countries?</i> no: 16 a little: 6 a lot: 8
7	<i>How do you maintain contact with the visited countries?</i> through letters: 8 by telephone: 5 email: 7 received visits: 5
8	<i>How do you nourish contact with anglophone cultures? Via</i> newspapers: 14 magazines: 18 TV: 20 radio: 6 culturel centres: 11 Music: 17 films: 20 anglophone friends: 12 other: Internet, books
9	<i>How do you encourage your students to be open to anglophone culture? Via</i> pen-friends: 15 local visits: 16 magazines: 17 radio: 10 video: 13 music: 20 films: 20 TV: 13 exchanges by mail: 12 personal exchanges: 3 other: communicate with foreign friends in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”
10	Sex: F: 24 M: 6
11	Age: over 50: 4 40:7 30:11 20:8

The open-ended questions, even though varied, can be classified and grouped into delineated types of responses:

12	<p><i>Open-ended questions:</i></p> <p><i>What do you propose for (a) teachers and (b) students to improve contact with anglophone language and culture? (only 26 teachers answered this question)</i></p> <p>(a)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ visit English-speaking countries: 9 ▪ participate in seminars and workshops: 9 ▪ exchange of teachers: 4 ▪ use all kinds of media (TV, Internet, newspapers, etc.): 13 <p>(b)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ visit English-speaking countries: 9 ▪ exchange of students and scholarships: 8 ▪ contact with native speakers ▪ maintain contact with language through media: 18
1	<p><i>What elements of your teaching do you consider to be culture oriented? (30 responses)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ reading: texts, magazines, songs, lyrics: 19 ▪ listening: music, tapes, original English input: 4 ▪ customs and lifestyle: English food, recipes, cultural heritage: 3 ▪ history: teaching of historical events, dates: 3 ▪ writing and vocabulary: writing letters, formal and informal; selecting appropriate register: 1
2	<p><i>Do you think that the teaching of culture is sufficiently supported by the textbook you are using? Please identify the textbook. (31 responses)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Open doors</i>, 4 teachers (yes: 3, no: 1) ▪ <i>Headway</i>, 26 teachers (yes: 13, no: 6, not quite: 7) ▪ <i>Opportunities</i>, 1 teacher (yes)
3	<p><i>If yes, please list some elements in your textbook which make it possible for you to teach culture. (28 responses)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ reading comprehension texts with topics on professions, education, traffic, literature, meals and table manners, lifestyles, art, music, science, etc: 21 ▪ grammatical and practical exercises: 3 ▪ supplementary materials from the package: tapes and pictures: 5

4	<p><i>If no, please explain what you do to promote intercultural awareness.</i> (28 responses)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ use supplementary materials, other books, pictures, different texts: 7 ▪ step out of the syllabus (note the equation book = syllabus) and use magazines, music and Internet info: 6 ▪ no answer: 15
5	<p><i>What would you include in your textbook to support/stimulate the teaching of culture?</i> (30 responses)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ literature: 5 ▪ pictures and songs: 5 ▪ supplementary materials (video presentations, project and research work): 4 ▪ history: 3 ▪ no answer: 7
6	<p><i>Do you use additional materials to reinforce the teaching of culture? What materials?</i> (30 responses)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ printed materials (magazines, newspapers, books): 27 ▪ visual materials (pictures, posters, video-cassettes): 10 ▪ recreational materials (board and other games): 1 ▪ no additional materials: 3
7	<p><i>How does your experience with native speakers influence your teaching of culture?</i> (30 responses)</p> <p>The answers to this question are quite vague, explaining mostly how experiences with native speakers had improved teachers' communicative skills. One teacher responded that "these experiences helped me see things more realistically".</p>
8	<p><i>Are the textbooks you are using in accordance with the national curriculum?</i></p> <p>The uniform answer was: YES!</p>

4.1.3 Cultural representations in selected textbooks in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"

Teachers' responses in the grid format count all the instances in which they interpret a text, dialogue or picture as a kind of cultural representation, marking it as positive, negative or neutral. The abundance of specific representations can be grouped into several types:

Types of representations
Social identity
Behaviours
Interactions
Pastimes
Lifestyles
History
Habits and customs
Literature
(Social) environment
School and education
Stereotypes

This typology is probably incomplete. However, representations of the listed type were found in the *Open doors* series (used in upper elementary), in the *Headway* series (used in secondary school) and in the locally published textbook, *English for the 2nd year of high school* (this book is currently not being used).

In all the textbooks, the teachers marked as positive a surprisingly consistent percentage of representations (over 70%); nearly 28% of the representations are marked as neutral and 2% as negative. The “positive” marker seems to reflect the teachers’ positive view of L2 elements related to all cultural elements except for historic events and various biographies; these were marked as “neutral”. The “negative” marker was given to a couple of jokes based on cultural stereotypes (for example, stingy Scots).

4.2 Croatia

4.2.1 Data from the curricula in Croatia

At present, new curricula for FL teaching are being designed in Croatia in accordance with the Common European Framework. The ones currently being used were designed between 1994 and 1998. In secondary schools, a FL (usually English or German) is taught as an obligatory 1st FL in all types of schools or as a 2nd FL (mainly in grammar schools or vocational schools for professions in tourism and the like) or as an optional subject (grammar schools).

The present curricula for all types of secondary school state that foreign languages are an important component in the process of education because they enable students from our social and historical background to communicate widely and in this way to better understand and act in their own environment. Students should be acquainted with characteristics of the countries and people whose language they study so as to be able to understand linguistic and cultural messages, develop a feeling of tolerance towards cultures, and critically evaluate the information gained. Students should learn elements of the culture and civilisation of the countries in which, together with the native language, the target language is used in public communication. Through FL teaching, students gain information about life in other countries, history, culture and the economy, as well as participating in the European tradition. Students should become acquainted with the sociological and technical otherness of the country where the target language is spoken, and develop a critical attitude to particular aspects of the foreign culture. Through foreign language teaching not only the general aims of teaching are realised but also universal human, national and ethnic values are promoted. Students should learn how to speak about their own country and its cultural and spiritual values in the foreign language, as well as to gain information about the people whose language they study and about universal human values (protecting human rights, protecting the environment, etc.). They should be aware of their Croatian nationality but be open both to Europe and the world.

In order to achieve these aims a list of situations, topics and contents is given, which enable the learners to develop cultural knowledge, competence and awareness:

- cities and areas of Great Britain, USA, Australia and Canada, and political aspects;
- education, school, learning and the school system;
- literature;
- family;
- free time (film, theatre, TV, school reading, comics, pop music, sport and recreation);
- ecology;
- housing and architecture;
- jobs and employment;
- advertisements and commercials (influence on our lifestyles);
- traditional holidays;
- customs;
- food and eating habits;
- importance of tourism;
- important events in British and American history;

- famous people;
- writing letters, sending telegrams and postcards; visiting foreign countries and coping in an unknown city;
- problems of the modern world.

4.2.2. *Teachers' responses to the questionnaire*

A survey about teaching experience, visiting foreign countries, purpose of visits, positive and negative experiences, keeping in touch with the English language (teachers and students) and ways of encouraging students to be open to cultural differences was carried out among English language teachers in secondary schools. It showed that:

- there are about 360 secondary schools and about 550 English teachers in Croatia;
- the questionnaires were sent to thirty-six schools (10%);
- the expected number of responses was about seventy (12.72%);
- as would be expected, some 94.44% of teachers are female;
- the majority of teachers (about 50%) are aged between 25 and 40;
- teaching experience varies between one and thirty-one years;
- FL teachers travel widely (91.66% have visited between 2 and 8 countries);
- the purpose of a visit was usually holiday, education (21.34%), business, visiting relatives or shopping;
- they had a lot of positive experiences (friendly people, making friends, enjoying the countryside, new cultural experiences, ways of living, contact with native speakers, history and art, developing tolerance, improving language skills, good organisation of life, etc.);
- only seven respondents had a bad experience, such as being robbed, bad accommodation, bad weather, pickpockets, people abroad not knowing much about Croatia;
- 97.05% of the respondents had visited Great Britain; 11.76%, the Republic of Ireland; 32.35%, United States of America; 2.94%, Canada; and 2.94%, Australia – ten teachers had not been to any of the English-speaking countries in the last ten years;
- the longest stay was two years – two teachers, eight months – one teacher, six months – four teachers, but the usual stay was two or three weeks;
- teachers keep in touch with the language and country through various media, newspapers, periodicals, books, Internet, TV, cultural centres, music and film;

- almost all respondents communicate with English speakers using email, the Internet, ordinary mail, the telephone and through visits;
- students communicate less, but the modern media, email and the Internet, have proven advantageous in this field;
- teachers encourage students to find a pen-pal, go on students' exchanges, read magazines (students subscribe to English magazines), listen to the radio, watch television and arrange visits.

4.2.3 *Cultural representations in the FL textbooks in Croatia*

In Croatia, textbooks published in Great Britain and Croatia are used in schools. In the last fifteen years, in grammar schools and many vocational schools imported textbooks (approved by the Ministry of Education and Sport) have been predominantly used in secondary schools for teaching English as the 1st FL. In vocational schools, ESP is taught, but there are few textbooks covering the professions students are trained for (they are locally published), so teachers combine a "general" textbook and ESP materials. English as a 2nd FL is taught using locally published books, rather than the imported ones. In primary schools books published in Croatia are used.

An analysis of teachers' perceptions of the cultural component in the textbooks they are using shows that:

- of the cultural representations in *locally published books*, 29.93% are positive, 21.01% negative and 49.04% neutral;
- of the cultural representations in *imported books*, 29.00% are positive, 31.29% negative and 39.69% neutral.

Teachers mentioned, for example, the following as positive: attending school in Britain (practically no exams until the age of 11), promotion of different cultures, races, nationalities, Croatia, creating and thinking, work, good manners and learning foreign languages.

On the other hand, they saw negative representations in the following: the problems of the modern world, pollution in London, noisy streets, traffic problems, environmental problems, young people under stress, conflicts at school and at home, punishments, jokes about Irish people (drinking problem), the behaviour of the British as visitors in other countries, punishments in schools, etc.

Sources:

HARRISON-PAJ, E. *Can I help you ... with your English*. Zagreb: Školska knjiga.

SOURS, J. and L. *Headway – Elementary, Pre-intermediate, Intermediate, Upper Intermediate and Advanced*.

Think and speak (groups of authors). Zagreb: Školska knjiga.

VALENTIĆ, D. *My vocation in English, 1, 2, 3 and 4.*

4.3 Malta

4.3.1 Data on cultural elements in the French syllabus for Maltese schools

The selected syllabus (specified above at 3.3.3.1) is related to two types of courses at Maltese secondary schools using *Fréquence jeunes* and *Pile ou face*.

The intention of this analysis is to point out the foreign cultural element of the French syllabus in Malta.

The following are the cultural elements mentioned in this syllabus.

Rationale: an opportunity for the creation of a cross-cultural awareness and respect for cultural diversity; a means of access to another people's reality: be it social, intellectual or artistic.

Aims: to equip the learner with the communicative skills required in French-speaking countries and organisations; to enrich the learner's personality through the adequate exposure to French culture and civilisation; to instil awareness of, and tolerance for, "otherness".

Cultural objectives are mentioned as one of the aspects of the syllabus, including encouraging the students to "exteriorise" themselves (*s'extérioriser*), which leads to several exchange opportunities. These suggestions are indeed very consonant with the intentions of the ECML, especially the insistence on exteriorisation of the students and their eventual participation in foreign cultural activities.

The aims of the cultural elements are also explained in the syllabus as follows:

The learning of a foreign language gives access to other values and other ways of thinking. Learning a foreign language means learning to respect the other person.

P. 2: references are made to genuine acts of communication which "cannot take place without a minimal consideration of sociolinguistic and cultural parameters":

The basic headings to be dealt with in the detailed explanation of the syllabus targets are on the following pages. The fifth element among six occupies is prominent and avoids referring to culture as something static but as something active by the word "*compétence*".

P. 5: deals with "*compétences culturelles*". The introduction declares that there is plenty of evidence proving that the teachers of French in Malta are in favour of the culture and civilisation elements in the French syllabus. These elements are now firmly established in all school syllabuses and examinations. The syllabus emphasises that the

student must associate the language that he or she is learning with the sociocultural context of that language.

Paragraph 4 of this, part (b), states that the students are indeed encouraged from the first lesson of their French course to take note of the elements of civilisation in their learning method.

P. 7: lists the characteristics of the learning method including learning a language for practical purposes, visits to the target community, welcoming foreign visitors, exchanges of all types including letters, audio and video-cassettes, CD-Rom projects, etc.

P. 21: the teacher is exhorted to record the marks obtained by students in a number of language exercises including culture and civilisation.

To start with the “Rationale”, we wish to pick out striking examples of cultural extraversion elements. Part 3 mentions “cross-cultural awareness” and “respect for cultural diversity”. What clearer commitment can one have to mutual awareness and respect between cultures as a result of these elements in language teaching?

The fourth part of the “Rationale” emphasises “access to another people’s reality”. This is a clear promotion of putting into practice what the syllabus proposes in theory.

Let us now come to the various parts of the “Aims” which deal with culture and civilisation. The first element goes directly to the practical needs: “equip the learner with communicative skills”. Three words here emphasise practicality in the teaching of culture. The second element refers to the enrichment of the learner through learning about a foreign culture. This is an added aspect to that of bridge-building. Learning about foreign cultures is therefore also self-enriching. Finally, tolerance receives a mention in the third aim, in a world which knows insufficient tolerance. The future is beyond tolerance in acceptance, which the syllabus proves to be fully aware of.

4.3.2 Data from the questionnaires in Malta

Profile of the French-language extroversion of teachers of French in Malta

This profile was drawn up on the basis of a questionnaire distributed to a sample of teachers of French in Malta. There are approximately one hundred teachers of French in Malta, at both public and private secondary schools. Two thirds of the teachers are women, which is the reason why the chosen sample (N) comprises twenty-five women and fifteen men.

We also took into account the age range (25 to 60) and where the teachers taught (80% in public schools, 20% in private schools).

There were sixty-six responses (that is, visits) to the first question: “Which French-speaking countries have you visited?” All the teachers had visited France. They had also visited the following countries, listed by descending number of visits: Switzerland

(40%), Belgium (25%), Canada (20%), Tunisia (10%), Morocco (5%) and Monaco (5%). We believe this data proves that teachers of French want to visit France.

In reply to the second question, “When did you visit these countries?”, the overwhelming majority (82%) of teachers responded that their visit took place less than five years ago. This is a positive sign, as it indicates that teachers of French want to keep in touch with French-speaking countries. This fact is corroborated by responses to the third question, “What was the purpose of these visits?”, 90% of the visits were for holiday purposes. Some 3% were also for study purposes. We see this as an attempt by teachers to combine holidays and studies.

Question No. 3 was aimed at finding out how long teachers of French stayed in the French-speaking countries. In most cases the visits lasted more than fifteen days (66% lasted more than fifteen days and 53% more than one month). We note that there are very few longer stays. The question is then, what kind of encouragement is needed to improve this situation?

It is interesting to observe that even if the majority of teachers visited French-speaking countries on holiday, they stated in response to Question No.5, “What was your personal experience in these countries?”, that their experience had been cultural (93%) and linguistic (83%).

We also wanted to find out if the teachers had had other types of contacts with French-speaking countries. We found the responses disappointing here, as only 30% of teachers kept in touch a great deal with French-speaking countries. Only 40% of teachers kept in touch “a little bit”, whereas 30% had no contact at all.

This means that 70% of teachers of French in Malta currently and regularly kept in touch a little bit or a great deal with French-speaking countries. We wanted to find out what type of contacts they had. The responses are divided into four categories. It is important to remember that – as in other cases where the percentages add up to more than 100% – each teacher may have several types of contacts.

We now come to a less active form of contact by teachers of French with French-speaking countries, namely the media. Question 8 sought to find out how the teachers maintain their contacts with French-language media. The following are the resulting percentages, listed in decreasing order, for the teachers’ choices in this area: television 35%, magazines 32%, newspapers 15%, films 14%, francophone friends 13%, cultural centres 12%, radio 9%, music 8% and books 2%.

Naturally the teachers of French try to combine entertainment and professional advancement, which is why television, magazines and films together play such an important role in the teachers’ choices.

Next comes the responses to Question 9, which was designed to find out how teachers of French encourage pupils to be open to French culture. The responses to this question, listed in decreasing order, are: magazines (16%), pen-friends (14%), other

exchanges (13%), TV (12%), video (12%), travel (8%), radio (5%), music (5%), visits (4%), films (2%) and projects (1%).

We believe there is a link between the responses to Questions 8 and 9. Indeed, the most frequent responses to Question 9 reflect the preferences of the teachers themselves and the importance they attribute to the same possibilities. Thus to a certain extent, the important elements of Question 8 are projected onto Question 9, which implies consistency rather than subjectivity.

The answers to Question 11 provide the ages of teachers of French in Malta. The age percentages are as follows: 20-30 (10%), 30-40 (5%), 40-50 (10%), and 50 and over (5%). We cannot interpret these percentages in any way, since in our original selection we emphasised representativeness based on gender and type of school, with the result that we had no control over the age factor. (We would like to point out, however, that twenty-five of the thirty teachers of French (83%) were under the age of 50, which we consider normal for most school subjects.)

We now come to the last question (No. 12) which, as an open-ended question, was more conducive to free expression – in this case, of the recommendations of teachers of French in Malta of ways in which the contacts of teachers and pupils with the French language and culture could be increased. The responses are in two parts, that is recommendations pertaining to (a) teachers and (b) students. In decreasing order of importance, the recommendations of the teachers regarding ways of increasing their own contact with the French language and culture are as follows: exchanges (26%), training courses (24%), meetings (16%), grants (8%), newspapers (8%), magazines (8%), television (4%), right to be a tourist guide (2%), person responsible for French in Gozo (1%) and peripatetic language attaché (1%).

The following are the recommendations of the same teachers, this time with respect to pupils, again in decreasing order of importance: exchanges (30%), newspapers/magazines (18.2%), pen-friends (13.7%), Internet (13.7%), games/quizzes (4.5%), library (2.3%), posters (2.3%), and an increase in the number of hours of French at school (3.3%).

If these two lists are compared, it is immediately evident that teachers of French in Malta primarily recommend exchanges with French-speaking countries for themselves as well as for pupils as a means of encouraging increased knowledge of French culture and language.

The same teachers also propose some form of linguistic and cultural travel even after their main recommendation (exchanges). Indeed, the responses advocating training courses (24%), meetings (16%) and grants (8%) are ranked second, third and fourth respectively. These responses in favour of travelling to French-speaking countries are far higher than the other recommendations, which do not exceed 8% individually or 24% collectively. The other recommendations that the teachers make for pupils are more or less conventional, especially increased communication with the French-speaking world via the media. Ironically, however, the very last recommendation is

concrete and practical, namely to increase the number of hours French is taught at secondary schools.

In conclusion it should be said that this type of survey is both interesting and useful. Its contents should be studied by the administration and the recommendations it includes should be put into practice wherever possible.

Finally we would underline the frequently reiterated desire on the part of teachers of French in Malta to use their holidays to make language trips to French-speaking countries. Might it be possible at least to contribute to the implementation of this desire by offering teachers a partial subsidy for cultural and language travel to French-speaking countries?

4.3.3 Data on cultural representations in FL/SL books in Malta (Maltese as a FL/SL)

The situation regarding learning Maltese in Malta is as follows: locally produced Maltese books are generally used by three types of learners.

- a) Maltese-speaking Maltese;
- b) English-speaking Maltese;
- c) Foreigners learning Maltese.

Cultural extraversion may be found in the three following Maltese books:

1. *Nimxu flimkien* (Let's walk together) Books 1-12
2. *Id – Denfil* (The dolphin) Books 1-6
3. *Noli noli* (Hide and seek) Books 1-2

In each of these books we have looked for cultural extraversion, that is the presence of references to anything that is foreign including pictures, words, events, animals, etc.

1. Cultural extraversion in the Nimxu flimkien series

- Book No. 1 – no cultural extraversion – (scenes from daily local life)
- Book No. 2 – pictures of a plane, polar bear, lion, river, globe, deer, giraffe, fox, volcano, king's/queen's crown, king, tiger, monkey, seal
- Book No. 3 – scenes from daily local life
various types of wild animals (not found in Malta)
- Book No. 4 – daily local life: urban and agriculture – references to a lion and a wolf
- Book No. 5 – emphasis on metric system
traditional folklore – reference to hats of foreign countries

- Book No. 6 – international transport: means of transport – reference to foreign TV programme (Popeye)
reference to books as windows, as external views
- Book No. 7 – policewoman directing traffic, a rarity in Malta
- Book No. 8 – comparison of Maltese with English – adoption of English words in Maltese
bridge over a river – nonexistent in Malta – reference to a king
- Book No. 9 – foreign traditional costumes
reference to an “empire“
- Book No. 10 – references to letters to foreign countries, Aesop, the UK,
– Maltese-Americans, America, Americans and the Mediterranean
- Book No. 11 – references to France, Italy, Sicily, Lebanon, Libya, North Africa:
Tunisia, Egypt
- Book No. 12 – adoption of the English word “swicc“
references to Italy and English TV, to Italian and English languages,
to names of foreign origin of places and people, to keep to the
original

2. Cultural extraversion in the Id – Denfil series

- Book No. 1 – elements from life around children, including departures to foreign lands
- Book No. 2 – no foreign references
- Book No. 3 – departures away from the home environment
- Book No. 4 – references to Pharaoh and the Israelites, Sicily, Australia, Italy, Vesuvius, Pompei
- Book No. 5 – references to Marco Polo, Venice, Europe, Palestine, China, the scientist John Baird, Salzburg, King William of Prussia, North Africa, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Morocco, Italy, the Vatican, Ancient Rome, Sir Walter Scott, the Olympic Games and Canada
- Book No. 6 – reference to Arab presence in Malta, Australia, the Holy Land, Guglielmo Marconi, St Paul’s (London), St Sofia (Istanbul), Chinese legend, Jonathan Swift, Canada, USA, England, Turkey, Don Quixote, Russian and American space travel and the Suez Canal.

3. Cultural extraversion in the *Noli noli* series

- Book No. 1 – reference to galaxies, the universe, the solar system, space rockets, England and the English, buses, Céline, foreign animals, Swiss costume, Robin Hood, Laurent Ropa and pictures of exotic regions abroad
- Book No. 2 – references to English and Italian dictionaries, people from France, Spain, Greece, Finland, Albania, Tower of London, Mozambique, Burundi, the Eiffel Tower, Coliseum, French arts, Pinocchio, organic farming abroad, Egypt, Syria, China, the Mediterranean and English TV programmes

From an analysis of all the books in the three series above, one may conclude that there are several elements of foreign cultural presence in locally produced Maltese books. We feel that these references are mostly incidental and that the producers of Maltese books should purposely include more of these elements.

For comparison purposes, we have analysed the cultural extraversion in a French imported textbook in Malta, *Fréquence jeunes 1*, by G. Capelle, M. Cavalli and N. Gidon.

In its foreword, the book declares that it “*explore l’univers familier des élèves*”, which gives the user the impression that it does not contain much cultural extraversion.

However, one cannot exclude that elements of this type are to be found among the texts, grammar and exercises of this book. Indeed:

- P. 8 shows a map of France surrounded by its neighbouring countries
- Pp. 12-13 includes references to other countries and their monuments (these pages also mention Scotland Yard)
- P. 34 mentions other nationalities like Italian and Algerian
- P. 35 mentions other languages such as Portuguese, Spanish, and Arabic
- P. 38 shows traditional costumes of other countries
- P. 45 shows map of Europe with linguistic zooming on Germany
- P. 50 mentions children with non-French friends
- P. 69 mentions a foreign TV programme – Starsky and Hutch
- P. 96 gives the opinion of young people from Switzerland, Belgium and Luxembourg about fashion
- P. 97 refers to the rapport between “jean” and Genoa (Italy), Bavaria, the United States, Thailand and Spain
- P. 107 mentions the various types of bread in Greece and Switzerland

- P. 125 includes “Américain, Américaine”
- P. 141 mentions Italy twice
- P. 142 mentions France, Italy, Portugal, Greece, the United States, Spain and Chile

The above elements of cultural extraversion found in *Fréquence jeunes 1* total less than 20 in about 150 pages.

We consider this as insufficient and we suggest that future editions of this textbook increase the number of these elements.

4.4 Slovenia

4.4.1 Data from the curricula survey

The primary curriculum anticipates the acquisition of communicative competence in English in connection with the learner’s own culture and mother tongue, learning about the cultural dimension of English, the ability of contact with and understanding of the cultures (cultural achievements) of the English-speaking communities, promotion of cultural and educational values, and learning to respect and value the otherness/differences of speakers of different languages (*Angleščina UN za osnovno šolo*, 1998:4). In order to be able to accomplish all this learners must acquire sociocultural competence to communicate beyond the confines of their mother tongue and learn about cultures which are characteristic of English-speaking countries (ibid., 5).

The acquisition of sociocultural competence is also related to various topics:

- learners show interest in their own and in other cultures;
- learners learn about customs in the target cultures;
- learners learn about and compare standard behaviour and communication in their own and in the target cultures;
- learners compare their own habits with the habits in the target cultures, whilst trying to establish similarities and differences;
- learners form opinions and find differences between cultures with the help of texts and pictures;
- learners learn to form (critical) opinions on their own habits and the habits of other people in the target cultures (ibid., 31).

Sociocultural competence and autonomous learning

Learners come to know target cultures also through literary texts appropriate to their level of development and knowledge of English: poems, simple narratives, authentic articles, pictures and videos. Several topics are also discussed comparatively with the use of Slovene (ibid., 42-43).

There exists only one series of locally produced textbook for primary schools:

SKELA, J. and BERCE, S. (1992). *Angleški jezik 1. Touchstone 1. Textbook and workbook*. Maribor: Obzorja.

GVARDJANČIČ, A., MARGUČ, D. and SKELA, J. (1996). *Angleški jezik 1. Touchstone 1. Textbook and workbook*, new edition. Maribor: Obzorja.

KING VIDETIČ, L., MAVRIČ, V. and SKELA, J. (1992; 2nd edition, 1998) *Angleški jezik 2. Touchstone 2. Textbook and workbook*. Ljubljana: Tangram.

KING VIDETIČ, L., MAVRIČ, V. and SKELA, J. (1993; 2nd edition, 1993) *Angleški jezik 3. Touchstone 3*. Ljubljana: Tangram.

Only one foreign produced textbook has been approved (prior to the approval of the new curricula):

Cambridge English for schools 1 to 3

An application for approval of another textbook caused considerable conflict, since it was refused for not complying with the new curricula (use of the learner's mother tongue!).

The *secondary curriculum for gimnazija* also anticipates student's acquisition of intercultural communicative competence in English along with the intensified awareness of their own sociocultural determinants and their profounder language awareness. In order to understand the sociocultural context of communication, students study cultures of various English-speaking countries, in particular their literature. They acquire the ability to read integral literary texts in English on their own, thus developing literary competence. The ability to read literature in English aims at enriching students at a personal level and as an intercultural experience, at the same time it should help them to maintain their proficiency in English after leaving school and read for pleasure (*Angleščina, učni načrt za gimnazije*, 1998:4-5).

The recommendations for implementation anticipate the teaching of cultures of English-speaking communities on the background of students' own culture, awareness-raising for greater cultural sensibility, comparative discussion of foreign and students' own culture, and discussion of differences in the concepts of social and cultural institution. Special emphasis is put on the possibility of developing the (inter)cultural sensibility of students in interculturally oriented discussions of literary texts.

Students should develop sociocultural competence by studying the cultures of English-speaking countries, in particular read their literary texts, watch films/videos and learn about different aspects of their cultures. The reading of integral literary texts contributes to the general educational/cognitive aims and to help to develop a lifelong habit of reading in English. Students should acquire the ability to read critically, to pay attention to the original sociocultural context of the text and its particular literary tradition, and to compare the text to (dis)similar texts in Slovene literature. Discussion of literary texts, films, etc., is student-centred, it is to proceed from students' own experiences and, when possible, to include comparison of different components with regard to their cultural origin. In this way, it promotes the students' knowledge of cultures in English and, at the same time, contributes to their awareness of intercultural differences and their own cultural identity (ibid., 9, 13, 20-21).

4.4.2 Data from the questionnaires

The first questionnaire, oriented predominantly to the *savoir-faire* of the teachers as persons, was answered by only eighteen teachers. Their responses are as follows:

1	<i>English-speaking countries visited:</i> UK: 18 US: 6 Canada: 1 Australia: 1 other: Republic of Ireland: 2
2	<i>When did you visit them? Within less than:</i> 5 years: 8 10 years: 6 15 years: 4
3	<i>How long did you stay in these countries? More than:</i> a week: 1 15 days: 3 1 month: 7 6 months: 1 1 year: 1 2 years: 1
4	<i>What was the purpose of these visits?</i> holiday: 10 study: 15 work: 3 tourism: 1
5	<i>What was your personal experience in these countries?</i> adventurous: 8 made new friends: 7 experienced cultural enrichment: 18 improved language skills: 14 other: professional development: 11 better understanding of cultural differences: 1
6	<i>Do you still keep in touch with (the people in) these countries?</i> no: 5 a little: 6 a lot: 5

7	<i>How do you maintain the contact with the visited countries?</i> letters: 8 telephone: 3 e-mail: 1 received visits: 5
8	<i>How do you nourish contact with anglophone cultures? Via:</i> newspapers: 10 magazines: 15 TV: 15 radio: 5 cultural centres: 5 music: 8 films: 15 anglophone friends: 6 other: 1 (Internet) other: 2 (language assistants)
9	<i>How do you encourage your students to be open to anglophone culture? Via:</i> pen-friends: 10 local visits: 4 magazines: 16 radio: 3 video: 9 music: 12 films: 12 TV: 12 exchanges by mail: 11 personal exchanges: 3 other: 1 (books)
10	Sex: F: 17 M: 1
11	Age: over 50: 2 40: 2 30: 10 20: 2
12	<i>Open-ended questions:</i> <i>What do you propose for (a) teachers and (b) students to improve contact with anglophone language and culture?</i> Answers to (a) seminars, workshops – not specified whether only in English-speaking countries or also in programmes of continuous education, such as those offered by the English Department at the University of Ljubljana every year and by the Board of Education on a regular basis; exchanges and visits to English-speaking countries; scholarships to study in English-speaking countries; EU projects such as Comenius; homepages, use of the Internet; reading literature, especially fiction, films, TV, cultural programmes. (Four respondents did not provided any answers to these questions.) Answers to (b) the same as for (a) – one answer: use of TV, films, news, reading fiction, the Internet, pen-friends, visits to English-speaking countries, international exchanges.

The second form, predominantly revealing the *savoir-faire* of the teachers as professionals, was answered by thirty-eight teachers. Here the most interesting,

frequently repeated and representative answers are presented. Answers which point to differences in opinion were counted, no matter whether logical or not. These are the answers concerning *Headway* (in its different editions) only, since it is the omnipresent textbook in Slovenia (there is no locally produced textbook for the same level).

Teachers: thirty-eight; sex: female thirty-six, male two; ages: 28 to 58

1.	<p><i>What elements of your teaching do you consider to be culture oriented?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ use of added texts on teenagers in the UK and Slovenia; ▪ information about the different ways people live, institutions, values; ▪ discussion of national stereotypes; ▪ comparative discussions of food, behaviour, festivities, language use, customs, holidays, literature, language use, music, leisure (one comment: what elements are not culture oriented? This implies that all English (FL) teaching is culture oriented, so the question should be formulated differently!).
2.	<p><i>Do you think that the teaching of culture is sufficiently supported by the textbook you are using (please, identify the textbook)?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ different variants of <i>Headway</i> are used by almost all teachers, since this book in its many editions has been present in Slovenia since its first publication; ▪ <i>Headway</i> is good for discussion of British culture but not for other English-speaking cultures; ▪ it depends on what you think by sufficient, usually it is necessary to add texts about cultural background; ▪ “not sufficient” – eleven responses; “only partially” – six responses; those six respondents added “partially” to “sufficient” – total: seventeen responses; ▪ no foreign textbook is sufficient (do not forget: only British produced textbooks are used); ▪ I often add to the texts or expand on what is in them – twelve responses.

3.	<p><i>If yes, please list some elements in your textbook which make it possible for you to teach culture.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ some texts provoke different responses/thoughts on the part of my students; ▪ certain texts, pictures, language (see: 1); ▪ <i>Headway</i>: English authors, parts of London; ▪ talking about food, etiquette, politics, behaviour, weather, geography, tourism, literature, music, films, jobs, education, nations, good manners, people in the USA; ▪ lives of British celebrities, the British educational system, cultural events, beliefs; ▪ situations: on the phone, at the railway station, Indians, proverbs; ▪ “Postscript” section.
4.	<p><i>If no, please explain what you do to promote intercultural awareness.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I explain the differences between cultures from my own experience; ▪ use: videotapes, authentic texts; ▪ literary texts from the reading list and others (the most frequent answer – almost all respondents – since literary texts form part of the syllabus for the school leaving examination after the 4th year); ▪ comparative discussion of situations as described by the textbook; ▪ ask students to write their own responses about cultures, cultural differences.
5.	<p><i>What would you include in your textbook to support/stimulate the teaching of culture?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ practically all respondents (thirty-two) would like to have more literary texts included (this is in keeping with the traditional teaching and the new demand for literary reading competence in English for maintaining and upgrading language knowledge, as included in our new curricula); ▪ the history of Britain; ▪ more exercise of the type “Postscript”; ▪ more information about customs in English-speaking countries; ▪ more texts on our students’ peers in English-speaking communities; ▪ art, music, institutions, customs.

6.	<p><i>Do you use additional materials to reinforce the teaching of culture? What materials?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ see item 4 (teachers' note!); ▪ Šabec, N. and Limon, D. (2001). Across cultures. Slovene-British-American intercultural communication. Maribor: Založba Obzorja (this book is widely used and is explicitly targeted at intercultural comparisons and understanding); ▪ newspaper articles, tourist information about Slovenia in English, articles from National Geographic and other periodicals, depending on students' interests; ▪ the textbook is only the starting point for discussion using different materials; ▪ texts from the Internet; ▪ presentations by language assistants, speaking about their native (English) culture. (Slovenia has over thirty language assistants from different English-speaking countries who are involved in different ways in English teaching.).
7.	<p><i>Does the curriculum in your country promote the teaching of culture, or rather the acquisition of intercultural communicative competence?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ yes, it does; ▪ (The overall objective of teaching English language is defined in Slovene national curricula for all levels as "the acquisition of intercultural communicative competence" in English, so "yes" is really the only possible answer.)
8.	<p><i>How does your experience with native speakers influence your teaching of culture?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ my own experience supports my teaching of culture; ▪ it helps me make comparisons; ▪ I can share my firsthand experience with my students; ▪ it makes me more confident; ▪ it helps my discussion of the differences between the Slovenes and the British; ▪ it conditions my teaching, makes me more persuasive.

9.	<p><i>Are the textbooks you are using in accordance with the national curriculum?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ yes – twenty-four respondents; ▪ no – two respondents; not entirely – one respondent; and not always – one respondent; ▪ with reservations: I hope so, I think they do: five respondents; ▪ no answer: three respondents; ▪ comments: they are not in accordance with the matura syllabus; the national curriculum does not prescribe any particular textbook: two respondents.
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4.4.3 Cultural representations in the selected textbooks

The responses of the teachers obtained in 4.4.2 are based on the following textbooks:

English as the 1st FL

GREENALL, S. *Reward. Pre-intermediate, Intermediate, Upper Intermediate*. Oxford: Heinemann.

NOLASCO, R. *Streetwise. Intermediate, Upper Intermediate*. Oxford: OUP.

SOARS J. and L. *Headway Pre-intermediate*. Oxford: OUP.

SOARS, J. and L. *Headway Upper Intermediate*. Oxford: OUP.

SOARS, J. and L. *New Headway English Course Intermediate*. Oxford: OUP.

VINCE, M. *Highlight. Intermediate, Upper Intermediate*. Oxford: Heinemann.

English as the 2nd FL

HOPKINS, A. and POTTER, J. *Look ahead. Classroom course. 1, 2, 3, 4*. Harlow: Longman.

HUTCHINSON, T. *Hotline. Starter, Elementary, Pre-intermediate, Intermediate*. Oxford: OUP.

SOARS, J. and L. *Headway Elementary*. Oxford: OUP.

As all the approved textbooks are produced in the United Kingdom and accordingly are not targeted at Slovene learners, teachers are stimulated to provide additional materials for the discussion of cultural and intercultural issues and thus to promote intercultural communicative competence. All Slovene teachers have been through various INSETT seminars promoting possibilities of (inter)cultural awareness-raising. They produce

various teaching materials to add intercultural discussions to UK-produced books. The responses in the questionnaires give implicit data about the teachers' perception of (inter)cultural elements in their teaching materials. However, a typology of representations in grid form was not produced.

Textbooks that add an intercultural perspective from the point of view of Slovene students are also produced locally and targeted at Slovene learners, that is based upon their culture specific experience and knowledge. Such textbooks often deal with individual themes such as leisure:

BARDORFER, E. (1996). *Leisure activities. Supplementary materials – Vocabulary exercises*. Ljubljana: Zavod RS za šolstvo (Zbirka Matura).

More general and more thorough textbooks, such as:

ŠABEC, N. and LIMON, D. (2001). *Across cultures. Slovene-British-American intercultural communication*. Maribor: Založba Obzorja

are used by different groups of students at different levels of teaching.

Textbooks for teachers (supplementary to INSETT)

GROSMAN, M. (ed.) (1998). *Jezikovne zmožnosti za maturo iz angleščine*. Ljubljana: Zavod RS za šolstvo.

GROSMAN, M. (ed.) (2000). *Angleščina – Prenovi na pot*. Ljubljana: Zavod RS za šolstvo.

GROSMAN, M. and BENULIČ, S. (1994). *Književnost in jezik za maturo iz angleščine*. Ljubljana: Zavod RS za šolstvo.

GROSMAN, M. and ROT-GABROVEC, V. (2000). *Šolska ura z Velikim Gatsbyjem*. Ljubljana: Zavod RS za šolstvo.

Published by the Board of Education, all the above textbooks for teachers strongly support the teaching of culture according to the new curricula. The last one includes texts suggesting possibilities for the successful implementation of the new curricula.

5. Data analysis and interpretation

5.1 Analysis and interpretation of the curricula in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Croatia, Malta and Slovenia

Despite the varieties and limitations arising from the different situations in the participating countries (as discussed in 1.3 and 2.1), the newly developed curricula in each of the participating countries show substantial similarities.

In all instances, reference is made to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, thus showing awareness of the importance of this document.

A 1st FL is introduced at primary school level. At an early age the students begin to develop language awareness, to see the relationships between their native language and other languages. This is regarded as implicit preparation for moving away from ethnocentrism, and also as a confirmation of the learner’s own linguistic and cultural identity. Attention is paid to body language and gestures, sounds, music and rhythm, establishing a relationship with certain aesthetic elements of another language. In lower secondary (or upper elementary), 1st FL continues with a gradual shift to communicative competence. This is achieved through various topics, such as sports and games, myself and others, free time, etc.

At lower secondary level a 2nd FL is introduced. It relies on the awareness already developed in 1st FL instruction. Priority is given to comprehension rather than production activities (the *student can do* type of skills versus the *student will learn* type of skills). In the upper levels, the (inter)cultural element is extended from daily life, behaviour patterns, to literature and science, formal and informal interpersonal relations, mobility and employment, etc.

Each curriculum emphasises the importance of developing awareness for cultural diversity and stresses the importance of respect for the Other, whilst also maintaining awareness and respect for one’s own cultural identity.

5.2 The teachers’ competences to function as cultural mediators (based on the responses from the questionnaires)

The *closed-type questionnaire* contains questions about the personal experiences teachers have had with foreign (or other) cultures. The purpose of this is to establish the correlation between teachers’ personal experiences and their perception of intercultural awareness.

The *open-type questionnaire* is oriented towards teachers’ use of textbooks and their practices in the classroom.

Some of the responses to the closed-type questions differ considerably. For example, the answers to the first question (see questionnaire) reveal the following situation:

All the Slovene and Maltese teachers have visited one or more target language countries; in Croatia, 8.44% of those interviewed had not visited a target language country; and in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” that figure is approximately 28%. One possible implication for teachers from “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” could be that in general their linguistic competence might be somewhat lower compared to teachers from other countries. This might result in reluctance to use the language freely and independently. Contact with other cultures is not only achieved through foreign language instruction, since in all the participating countries there is an abundance of opportunities for interethnic encounters. Our research, however, was focused on examining the situation with FL instruction as the medium, and if the FL teachers are expected to function as mediators, their competences should be brought to the highest level possible.

On Question 7. There is an observed tendency to avoid a direct answer to this question. One may speculate about the reasons. One possible reason may be the recently changed nature of encounters the people in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” have with foreigners. In contrast to the more relaxed conditions in the (near) past, when foreign visitors were mainly tourists or experts in various fields, during the past three years (since the beginning of the project) the majority of foreigners appear in UN or Nato uniforms, as part of the deployed contingencies of soldiers in the region. As a result, a sort of mixed feeling has emerged among the local population, affecting the generally very friendly and open manner in which foreigners were perceived in the past. People seem to be more cautious now and more careful in placing their trust anywhere.

On Question 8. If we read the requirements stated in the national curricula, we will see that at all levels equal value is placed on local and foreign elements, namely interculturality. It is clear that the textbooks printed in Great Britain are not targeted towards any specific consumer and are basically geared towards presenting the target language culture. The implication is that the majority of teachers are not really familiar with the national curriculum or are mistaking the textbook as the curriculum. If that is the case, then serious consideration should be given to textbook selection. The guidelines in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* seem to be quite useful in this respect. A locally published textbook with a combined team of writers (native speakers and local experts) seems like a reasonable solution. Slovenia has managed to find a compromise to solve the problem, by actually supporting the production of supplementary learning materials by Slovene authors.

5.3 The textbooks and the cultural representations

The *grid* was designed to highlight specific information about teachers’ perceptions of the cultural component in the textbooks they are using and, alongside the questionnaire, to provide an abundance of data about the way textbooks function as tools for cultural mediation in the teachers’ hands. The responses – the cultural representations described (observed by teachers) – are based on verbal and visual data in the various textbooks.

At the very beginning of the project, the locally produced textbooks for EFL learning were removed from the schools in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”. An obvious weakness was that some of them were outdated and contained elements of the system before the transition. Another weakness, in comparison with the textbooks offered by foreign publishers, was that they were printed on inexpensive paper, with few coloured pictures. On the other hand, they represented a real blend of cultures, taking into consideration not only the target language cultures, but also the abundance of cultural diversity within “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”. They compared and contrasted local and foreign elements, customs, events, holidays, making it obvious that the number of similarities is enormous, but also that differences make the world a richer place. However, the general tendency in the early transition days was that what is foreign (that is, western) must be better, combined with the advantages of the imported books and probably the marketing element too, making it possible to introduce *Open doors* and *Headway* and leaving virtually no choice for other options or choices.

The teachers looked for cultural representations in the selected textbooks and found many. They grouped them into several more general categories, thus producing a sort of typology for grouping or sorting out the representations. For example, they listed a number of representations under social interactions, beliefs and behaviours, and social identities, but also socialisation and lifestyles, historical issues, etc. Teachers marked the representations as positive, or at times neutral. Only on a couple of occasions did they mark a representation as negative, and that was a situation related to a (Scottish) stereotype. In their descriptions, the ones that are positive are those which present the target language culture favourably, and the ones that are neutral are those which are not biased or are merely factual (for example, dates of historic events). The paradoxical situation is that, even though these representations in all the selected instances are from “another culture”, they imply ethnocentricity, since they come from an English-speaking world and “teach” about the English-speaking world. Such textbooks cannot induce pluriculturalism and, moreover, cannot help in developing self-consciousness and self-respect for the students’ own cultural identity. The situation in Croatia and Slovenia has found a compromise to bridge this gap between the textbooks and the curricula. As presented in the respective sections, Croatia has locally produced textbooks for primary level, and Slovenia has published supplementary books to help the teachers. The Maltese textbooks seem to show much greater consideration for cultural diversity: even in the primary level books students can gain a full picture of the pluricultural world and of their own place, even if the cultural “extroversions” are mostly incidental.

In Croatia, textbooks published in Great Britain and Croatia are used. In the last fifteen years, in grammar schools and many vocational schools, imported textbooks (approved by the Ministry of Education and Sport) have been predominantly used in secondary schools for teaching English as the 1st FL. In vocational schools, ESP is taught, but there are few textbooks covering the professions students are trained for (they are locally published), so teachers combine a “general” textbook and ESP materials.

English as a 2nd FL is taught using locally published books, rather than the imported ones.

In primary schools, books published in Croatia are used. The requirements on the teacher are enormous, and the realisation of the aims depends on his or her competence and the selection of textbooks. The textbooks usually contain texts (information, facts) about culture and a series of exercises (dialogues and role-plays) to learn how to behave, what to say, in a certain situation, and the very responsible role of the teacher is to give students an opportunity to develop cultural awareness. The starting point is the learner's pre-knowledge of his or her own culture. That is the reason why locally produced textbooks (since they contain a national component) should be preferred, but are not, because they often lack enough facts, which the learners are very much interested in. Books published in Croatia offer materials for comparing and contrasting cultural information, depending on the stage of learning.

Data analysis and possible interpretations regarding the textbooks used in Malta and Slovenia followed the presentations in the respective sections. In respect of a French book used in Malta, the number and type of cultural representations was described as insufficient and incidental. In Slovenia, the lack of self-representation is compensated for by supplementary local publications. Based on the teacher's responses to the open-ended questionnaire, the inter-group discussion led to the conclusion that the overly pragmatic curricula and textbooks leave little (if any) room for the teaching of literature. How is that related to intercultural awareness?

Literature teaching has been a traditional component of much of secondary English language teaching, so teachers have always used literary texts as a starting point for all kinds of discussion. This has made it relatively easy to gear the teaching of literature towards cultural teaching for several reasons:

- literary texts embody lots of interesting and well-organised culture-specific information about people, and their actions, behaviour and experiences, which all reveal signs of their embeddedness in particular (English-speaking) cultures, so they invite discussion about other/different cultures and their practices;
- discussion of culture-specific traits and differences in connection with literary texts makes it possible to discuss cultural differences in complex ways which never hurt students, and in ways which make it possible for students to empathise and open up to the otherness of different cultures;
- we think this is the main reason why the so-called "language through literature" movement has so successfully reintroduced literary texts all over the world;
- learner-centred approaches make it possible for students to develop their own responses and get full insight into the difference of other patterns of behaviour, cultures, etc;
- paying special attention to the differences in various elements of literary texts – characters and their beliefs, assumptions, actions, etc., the presence of material

objects in comparison with the student's own culture, expectations, beliefs and values – can generate intercultural awareness-raising discussions;

- last but not least, literary texts can preserve more authenticity (in so far as any text can be said to “have” any authenticity!) when they are outside their original (authentic) situations, because they are never targeted at such narrow audiences as for instance newspapers, magazines, etc.

5.4 Concluding notes and recommendations

To summarise our research by referring back to the research questions:

- each of the participating countries has implemented in their national FL curricula – in more or less detail, and in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages – the subtle elements of cultural awareness;
- they encourage intercultural awareness and acceptance of otherness in the new European context; cultural components have even become part of the national matura exam; however, we believe that the emphasis on the development of xenophilia should be more specific;
- there is insufficient correlation between national curricula and approved textbooks; even in instances when teachers give affirmative answers to the explicit question about the correlation, they immediately follow up by elaborating a number of strategies to make up for the lack of correlation (for example, various types of resources, and compare and contrast); we believe that a better correlation can be achieved if textbooks are written by teams of native speakers of the target language and local experts.
- the teachers seem to possess the necessary competences to function as cultural mediators; however, it should be pointed out that competences are not necessarily followed by appropriate performance, or classroom behaviour. We have based our conclusion on teachers' answers, not on classroom observation. It would be probably fair to say that even a FL teacher is likely to adapt his or her performance to the overall socio-economic or socio-political situation of the region. As we have seen, a certain percentage of teachers have not visited any of the target language countries. In order to ensure a higher cultural mediation competence, we suggest that both PRESETT and INSETT programmes place a greater emphasis on the above concept. Apart from – or in addition to – this, direct exposure to the target language culture should become part of teachers' professional training.

Chapter 4:

Empathy as part of cultural mediation

**Kira Irishkanova, Christoph Röcklinsberg, Olga Ozolina,
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1. The choice of the subject matter

The chapter addresses the phenomenon of empathy as part of cultural mediation. The main purpose of the study is to bring into prominence the issue of empathy, which is underscored and underrepresented in the bulk of language pedagogy research and current teaching practices. Understanding what empathy is and what role it plays in cultural mediation is important for determining its role in language teaching and learning. The chapter examines conceptually the nature of empathy trying to combine insights from several disciplines. The backbone is provided by the cross-cultural communication studies, recent theories of language teaching and learning, cognitive linguistics and discourse analysis. The chapter offers an overview of the approach developed for identification of empathy in discourse. The study is mainly based on observation and deals with cultural, linguistic and paralinguistic patterns, discourse exponents, of empathy, building in the context of cross-cultural communication.

In recent years there has been a radical shift in the theory of language teaching/learning which has far-reaching implications. The intercultural dimension which aims to develop learners as intercultural mediators (Khaleeva, 1989; Byram et al., 2002) is recognised as highly important to communicative language teaching/learning. Cultural mediators need to develop intercultural competence, namely the ability to ensure a shared understanding by people of different cultural backgrounds and identities. They should be able to better understand, explain, comment, interpret and negotiate various phenomena in the target language culture. These activities constitute cultural mediation, which is known as a dynamic concept with relations to a range of variables.

One of the universally accepted variables which has direct practical relevance to intercultural competence and cultural mediation is the capacity for empathy.

A survey of some of the existing literature on language pedagogy reveals that there is little concern with empathy. The most comprehensive volume of the Council of Europe, the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, gives no mention of empathy, describing mediation activities in terms which leave them unrelated to that phenomenon. Interestingly, the term sympathy which is very often confused with empathy is accepted as an important requisite in the section on micro-functions. We must admit that language teachers show very little interest in empathy. It

poses a theoretical and a practical challenge. Many of them cannot tell empathy from sympathy. It is especially puzzling as empathy, being a cultural pattern, represents the context within which a more collaborative and a more supportive classroom environment is built up. Besides it can smooth the way for a more effective, cultural mediation and serve as a guide for evaluating mediation skills in cross-cultural communication. It would be a mistake to restrict the promotion of effective cultural mediation to sympathy, which by itself is important but not sufficient.

Many language pedagogy researchers also seem reluctant to deal with empathy. The reasons for the resistance are various but they mostly boil down to the following. A number of researchers think that empathy, in so far as it is expressed by an individual, is a personality trait very much related to private feelings, attitudes and too subjective to be a serious scientific issue.

By contrast, communication studies have been tackling the issue of empathy since the last quarter of the previous century. If in the early 1970s there were very few books in which empathy was discussed as a cross-cultural phenomenon, at present the situation has changed: empathy has appeared on the scene of scientific discussion. No serious researcher in the theory of communication neglects empathy, suggesting that it is an important skill which plays a vital role in any communication. The conclusion is made that any communication may break down if there is no empathy. It is acknowledged that the problem of empathy becomes more acute in cross-cultural communication which requires a high degree of understanding of real cultural differences and patterns. This recent change shows an increased awareness of empathy and its relevance to cross-cultural communication.

A sound background is provided for the claim that empathy is one of the characteristics that help teachers set up a positive, supportive and effective learning environment. H.D. Brown, for example, admits that communication requires “a sophisticated degree of empathy” and calls for more attention and investigation “to determine if empathy is something one can learn (...) especially cross-culturally. If so, then it would not be unreasonable to incorporate empathy in language teaching method” (Brown, 1993). He calls for more rigorous attention to empathy and, specifically, he proposes developing drills and exercises for teachers to run language classes on a high-empathy basis.

A fair amount of useful work done on empathy by some scholars and its neglect by language teachers stimulated the choice of the topic for our chapter. Despite its widespread acceptance few attempts have been made to provide empirical support for empathy use in intercultural communication. Moreover, full implications of empathy for cultural mediation remain largely unexplored as it is a relatively new research subject.

In this chapter we give a brief survey of different perspectives that have directed research on empathy, put forward a theoretically grounded working definition of empathy as a cross-cultural perspective, study its discursive mechanism, and consider how cross-cultural communication is shaped and affected by empathy manifestations. In approaching empathy, we think it reasonable to tackle those areas of communication

that are important within the language teaching and learning perspective. Consequently, the chapter focuses on the cultural contexts of classroom and everyday communication.

Four participants in the research observed language classroom and everyday discourse between people of different cultures and within one culture: English, German, French, Latvian, Romanian, Russian and Swedish. Classroom communication involved either a teacher and a group of students belonging to the same culture (Latvian, Russian) or a teacher (native speaker) and a group of students with a different cultural and linguistic background (English, French, Russian). Everyday communication is represented by dinner talks of German and Swedish students.

A number of assumptions are brought to the project.

Culture is a system of human knowledge, behaviour peculiar to people together, with material objects used as an integral part of this behaviour (Britannica, 1994).

Language is an essential instrument and integral part of culture.

Cultural mediation is a broad category which covers understanding, explication, commenting, interpretation and negotiating various phenomena, facts, texts, behaviour, situations, feelings, emotions, etc., between people belonging to different cultures or subcultures.

The following issues are addressed in the chapter:

1. A working definition of empathy as a cultural mediation perspective.
2. Some linguistic, paralinguistic and cultural patterns of empathy building in English, French, Latvian, Russian and Swedish.
3. Strategies of empathy building in cultural contexts of classroom and everyday cross-cultural discourse.

2. Toward a working definition of empathy as a cultural mediation perspective

2.1 The notion of empathy in various disciplines

The chapter does not attempt to provide a complete coverage of empathy, as to discuss all that goes under the rubric of empathy within the confines of the chapter would be impossible.

The concept of *Einfühlung* was translated by Titchener (1909) as empathy which literally means “in suffering or passion”. But the etymological meaning of the word and its present-day use are different.

The notion of empathy is of equal interest to many disciplines where it is conceived and approached in different ways.

Sociologists tend to think of empathy as self-conscious effort to share and accurately comprehend the presumed consciousness of another person, including his thoughts, feelings and perceptions. It is a merging with the physical sensations and emotions of someone (*International encyclopedia of social sciences*). They want to find out if empathy is a voluntary or involuntary capacity, emotionally neutral or negative, if it involves only affective or cognitive elements as well.

It is defined in sociology as the self-conscious awareness of the consciousness of others.

Psychologists concentrate on the empathiser and his or her ability to maintain an awareness of the imaginative nature of the transportation of oneself into another. The empathiser needs to explore his or her own inscapes, develop insights and create the inner clarity.

Therapists look at empathy as a counselling technique, a trained skill, “showing sensitivity to the client’s feelings through active listening that shows careful and perceptive attention to what the client is saying” (Rogers, 1951).

Empathy is also examined from the perspective of linguistics. Linguists refer to it as a pragmatic concept and define it as the speaker’s identification, which varies in degree, with a person/thing that participates in the event of the state that he or she describes in a message (Kuno, 1987).

From the point of view of ethics, empathy is the principal basis for our ability to care about other people. In ethics it is linked to a communicative process of affect attunement, in which parent and child respond interactively to each other’s moods, feelings and attention, typically at a level beneath that of conscious awareness. Affect attunement is considered a precondition for true empathy. According to Stern (1985) empathy involves a number of cognitive processes; that is, remembering empathic knowledge from experience of emotional resonance which facilitates understanding how another person feels (Bechtel and Graham, 1998).

Cross- (inter-)cultural communication studies have accumulated a lot of information on empathy. Its relevance and importance is not in question. It is placed in a social context of interaction between people of different cultural identities and background. It has been scrutinised and identified in numerous ways. Much of the literature in communication studies accounts for empathy as an effective capacity, an inherently complex feeling, the third element of cultural competence (Nostrand et al., 1996). Kramsch and Nelson (1996) take a somewhat different focus stating that empathy is an informed openness toward other cultures and is above all an attitude. It is recognised to be an essential element of cultural competence which promotes “fruitful intercultural relations and the development of an insightful and objective perspective on one’s own culture”.

Bennet (1998), picking up on Bell's work, offers his speculations on empathy which bring us closer to its understanding. He traces the elements constituting empathy and holds that empathy is a multidimensional notion and formulates a comprehensive approach focusing on three complementary dimensions:

- cognitive, when the empathic person takes the perspective of another person, and tries to see the world through the other's point of view;
- affective, which is recognised by many scholars as dominant, when the empathic person experiences the emotions or feelings of another;
- communicative, when the empathic person signals understanding and concern through verbal and non-verbal means.

Bennet comes up with five steps of developing empathy:

- assuming difference;
- knowing self;
- suspending self;
- allowing guided imagination;
- allowing empathic experience.

A slightly different definition is given by Dodd (2001) who points out that empathy is a significant relationship skill helpful in intercultural effectiveness.

In language learning and teaching, empathy is understood as a "personality variable", as "the projection of one's own personality into the personality of another in order to understand him or her better" (Brown, 1993).

It is emphasised that empathy involves understanding others' feelings and points of view, being sensitive to others' needs. As it was mentioned, much insight is provided by Kramsch and Nelson. They note that empathy is a unique element of cultural competence where the affective component is dominant. This peculiarity affects the way empathy should be taught and learned: "The development of affective qualities cannot be correlated with the progressive acquisition of either linguistic skills or cultural knowledge. The development of open and accepting attitudes toward people who are different may precede the acquisition of simple linguistic skills and cultural knowledge, whereas superior linguistic ability and cultural knowledge may not be accompanied by a very great empathy" (Kramsch et al., 1996). They suggest a four-level scheme which takes into account the development of cognitive and behavioural components of empathy.

Stage 1, the learner:

- is curious about similarities and differences between the home and the target culture;
- shows willingness to understand the differences encountered.

Stage 2, the learner:

- is tolerant of differences between the home and target culture;
- is open and accepting of different people;
- recognises the depth and complexity of cultural differences;
- shows an active interest in the search for understanding of the target culture.

Stage 3, the learner:

- is aware of the problem of accepting the norms of another culture while maintaining one's own values and identity;
- shows fair-mindedness and tolerance in trying to solve an embarrassing situation or a cross-cultural conflict;
- can adjust behaviour and conversation according to the situational context and to the expectations of the participants.

Stage 4, the learner:

- recognises the importance of understanding manifestations of the target culture in terms of its own context;
- is aware of his or her own cultural perspective and of how this perspective influences one's perception of phenomena;
- can act and react in a culturally appropriate way while being aware of his or her "otherness" (Kramsch, 1996).

2.2 Empathy as a component of cultural competence

The attention given to empathy in so many disciplines implies that empathy has important practical consequences and is recognised as important, that its development takes different directions, and that like other terms it can be interpreted in many ways even within one discipline depending on the purpose for which it is used. A survey of communication studies indicates that so far there is no clear-cut definition of what empathy is in the field of cultural mediation. The brief outline of definitions reveals that there is a great deal in common between the definitions though some of them demonstrate differences and at first sight may look even contradictory. While generally accepting empathy as a component of cultural competence, scholars differ on its nature:

some refer to it in terms of attitude, others in terms of skills, some consider it a product, others – a dynamic process. In our view they are all true in describing empathy from different perspectives and the differences between them are the result of differences in the research focus. The approach we are advocating in the present chapter integrates all these perspectives, focusing on empathy as an attitude and a skill. The approach is consistent with the well-known finding that any attitudinal phenomenon requires non-attitudinal background capacities in order to function. In the case of empathy, it implies familiarity with different cultural reference systems, an ability to develop understanding from the other’s point of view, an ability to temporarily identify oneself with the other, and an ability to make sense of verbal and non-verbal correlates signalling the shift of the cultural perspective.

2.3 The conceptual approach to empathy

As is indicated earlier, empathy is commonly described as a three dimensional phenomenon: cognitive, affective and communicative. The suggestion forwarded here presents empathy as a multiple construct which, at the very least, involves four dimensions. An additional component comes into play: there is certainly a strong cultural dimension. From a communicative perspective empathy appears to qualify as a cultural pattern,¹ one of the cultural universalities of communication. It is the cultural dimension of empathy which provides a link between the cognitive and the affective dimensions, on the one hand, and the communicative, on the other (see the following simple sketch):

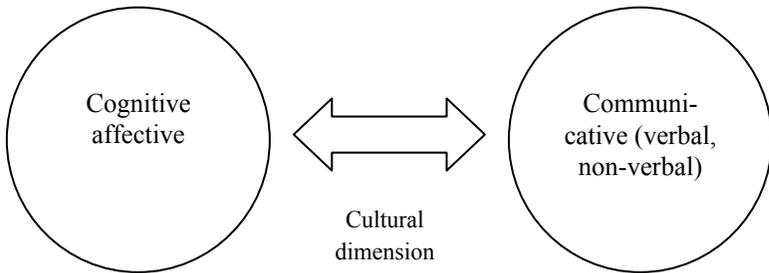


Fig. 1

1 Cultural patterns are empirical analogues of culture understood as knowledge (Shore, *Culture in mind*, p. 44). Cultural patterns could be constructed as mental representation (forms of knowledge). They are heterogeneous and could be classified along different lines. From a structural perspective, there are non-linguistic patterns (image schemas, action sets, olfactory patterns, sound-image models, visual models, etc.) and linguistic patterns (scripts, prepositional patterns, lexical patterns/grammatical patterns, symbolic patterns, sound-symbolic patterns, verbal formulas, narratives, trope patterns, emotion patterns).

Characterisation of empathy in terms of four dimensions is confirmed by the conceptual frame¹ of empathy which might look like this:

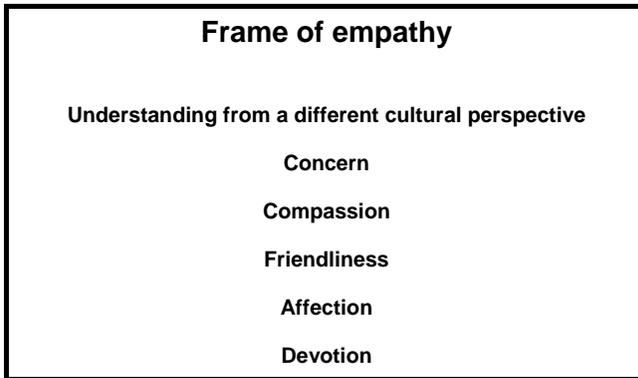


Fig. 2

The frame of empathy includes six concepts which designate certain properties and correspond to the above-mentioned components. Any action of empathy can be qualified with respect to the top concept. It is understanding from a different cultural perspective which is always true of empathy and it indicates three dimensions simultaneously – cognitive, communicative and cultural – as it implies a shift in the cultural perspective of the speaker in the process of communication. The rest of the six concepts (Fig. 2) suggest the affective dimension and represent terminal slots; as empathy can be modified according to the degree of concern, compassion, friendliness, affection and devotion. They are related to the frame through the general pragmatic knowledge of the degree of empathic actions and in this sense they are part of the frame.

2.4 Empathy versus sympathy

The conceptual approach can help us to define what should be counted as empathy as distinct from sympathy. Clarification of the difference between these two notions is essential to understanding the phenomenon of empathy. However, existing definitions prove inadequate. To make the difference between them more explicit it is useful to build up a conceptual frame of the notion of sympathy and compare it with that of empathy.

¹ A frame is a data structure representing stereotypical situations in terms of features that are always true of such situations, as well as terminal slots for features which may take on a variety of different values but must be assigned some value in a given situation (Bechtel and Graham, 1998). A frame is a collection of slots and slot fillers that describe a stereotypical item. A frame has slots to capture different aspects of what is being represented. The filler that goes into a slot can be an actual value, a default value, an attached procedure or even another frame (that is, the name of a pointer to another frame).

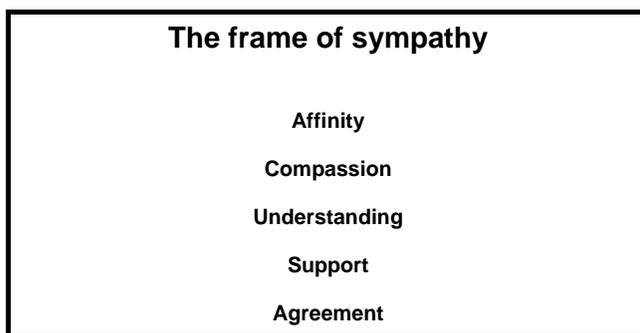


Fig. 3

The framings of empathy and sympathy reveal some overlapping concepts (affinity, compassion, understanding) which are very often the source of confusion and at the same time produce different profilings. The frame of empathy profiles understanding from the perspective of a *different culture*, while the frame of sympathy profiles understanding not as the top concept but as an additional one, it is understanding from the perspective of the *speaker's own culture*. The constructive framings foreground the essential difference – the shift in the cultural perspective in case of empathy and its absence in the conceptual frame of sympathy. As we can see the two frames offer different construals of the process of understanding, highlighting a qualitative difference between empathy and sympathy.

The definition of empathy we propose in our study is intended to help language teachers identify empathy, analyse and evaluate mediation activities which are very much related to empathy and to stimulate language teachers to use and to teach it.

In view of the above-mentioned considerations, empathy can be conceived of as a set of abilities which are acquired through the process of learning and have the form of communication attitudinal skills and strategic knowledge of communication behaviour proper from a different cultural perspective. The model of empathy we have developed describes four dimensions and six concepts. In the frame of concepts, it is “understanding from a different cultural perspective” which is assigned the key role in cultural mediation.

3. Empathy discursive mechanisms

This section deals with empathy building which is related to language classroom realities. We mean to draw language teachers' attention to the phenomenon of empathy to increase their awareness of empathy in their profession (if they want to improve their professional competence), which may be a first step in developing empathic strategies in classroom communication. To use the above-mentioned strategies effectively,

language teachers would want to know the types of empathy and classroom cultural contexts where it may be appropriate and suitable to employ empathy, they should become more aware of their own use of classroom language to make conscious modifications to the way they normally do it.

We hope that the results of the observation and research will benefit both: developing more effective mediation activities and efficient classroom management.

The study is mainly based on the data collected by observation language classes and note-taking. There are two types of data collection: in the first type, we immediately noted the teacher's every utterance that seemed to be relevant for the point under consideration. As a second type, we manage to write down the teachers' language performance as a whole. The classroom observation was done over a period of six months. The study sites are Moscow State Linguistics University, Herriot-Watt University (Edinburgh, UK), Babes-Bolyai University (Cluj-Napoca, Romania) and a secondary school in Riga (Latvia). The classes of French, English, Latvian and Russian as second languages were run by teachers, native and non-native speakers of the target languages. During the observation the main area of concern was to take down as much as possible of the teachers' talk with a specific aim in mind: to analyse teachers' language performance from an empathy perspective and to study different ways of manifesting empathy across cultures.

3.1 Empathy building in language classroom communication

The term institution is used here in its sociological meaning and is concerned with such activities by which people are integrated into a certain society, or *establishment*, that is education institution transmits knowledge and develops skills, justice institution combats crimes, etc. Institutions have their own sets of norms, systems of rules through which they exercise power on individuals and systems of roles which participants are expected to fulfil and through which institutions regulate individual behaviour. Institutional discourse is that kind of discourse which is very much determined by the systems of rules, roles and relationships which exist in this or that institution.

A classroom is a complex social environment where roles as well as status and power relationships are regulated by the framework of this social institution and so are functions performed by teachers and students. There are social roles with characteristic activities for the teachers and for the students. Their participation is framed into a scenario which is controlled by institutional regulations. The role of teachers is to help students learn by transmitting knowledge to them and by setting up situations in which students can learn effectively. Teachers have the authority status in class. They have more power and control than students. By the way a teacher talks to his students we can immediately identify a classroom setting. Some of the linguistic patterns used by the teacher are unlikely to be tolerated in any other discourse. For example, a typical teacher question, "What do you mean?", asked in a different situation about some remark which as a rule passes unnoticed may cause bewilderment and develop into

violent reaction (Stubbs, 1995). Teachers are supposed to have conversational control over the relevance and correctness of what students say and when and how much they may speak (Stubbs, 1995). They decide who is to speak and judge answers. A teacher can easily interrupt a student. Teachers' advice is considered to be more important than that of students.

In classroom discourse four main discourse planes are distinguished: 1. content is the subject matter of lessons; 2. organisation is the school timetable, with "period", "morning", "week", "term", etc; 3. discipline is the arsenal of control devices and sanctions; and 4. discourse as the exchange routine of questions, answers, explanation, etc. (de Beaugrande, 1997).

Language classes are more specific in the way the language is used in class: one and the same language is used in all the discourse planes as the subject matter for class organisation, discipline problems and in the exchange routine.

Talk in general is an indispensable part of teachers' classroom performance, but for language teachers it has an additional dimension: besides being the tool and the medium it is "also the artefact that teachers and learners are trying to construct with the tool" (Nunan and Lamb, 1996). It is widely assumed that the language the teacher uses in class may influence the process of developing students' communicative competence in a considerable way, as a learner is usually dependent on the model given to him by the teacher and may learn a lot of the language from what he hears his teacher says.

As teaching is a complex activity, language teachers have to do a lot of things in the target language: giving instructions, informing, explaining, asking questions and replying to questions, suggesting, persuading, requesting, giving commands, apologising, encouraging, correcting, confirming, objecting, etc.

In this section we are interested in empathy building contexts in language classes and focus our attention on teachers' classroom language performance.

We have claimed that the essential concept of empathy is understanding from a different cultural perspective. To get more certainty on that point we would like to illustrate it with several examples taken from our observation data of language teachers' classroom discourse.

It is very common for a teacher to encourage a friendly or relaxed learning environment. Many teachers try to establish warm, trusting, supportive rapport with their students. The observation of language classes highlights a number of ways of doing it. One of the typical ways applied by language teachers in different countries is to show concern and encouragement when their students are struggling with some assignment which they find difficult.

3.1.1 Classroom communication as an institutional type of discourse

Below are fragments of classroom discourse belonging to language teachers of English, Latvian, Russian and French:

English teacher of English – Russian students

1. “Try to say what you think it is about. Your guess could be as good as mine.”
2. “It’s not easy, have my sympathies.”
3. “I’m sorry to put you through this boring exercise.”

Latvian teacher of Latvian – Latvian students

4. “Nē, tur, bērni, ir pavisam vienkārši.”
(No, children, it is very simple).
5. “Jā, jā, jā! Pereizi. Tieši tā!”
(Yes, yes, yes! Right. That’s it!).
6. “Jā, droši!”
(Yes, come on, don’t be afraid!)

Russian teacher of Russian – Italian, Korean students

7. “Очень хорошо!”
(Very well!)
8. “Молодцы, правильно догадались.”
(Well done, your guess is right.)
9. “Сейчас мы с вами будем делать одно сложное задание.”
(Now we are going to do a difficult exercise).

French teacher of French – Latvian students

10. “Oui, d’accord. Très bien. C’était une bonne idée.”
(Yes, ok. Very good. That was a good idea)
11. “Cette leçon n’est pas difficile.”
(This lesson’s not difficult)
12. “Allez, c’est pas grave, si vous ne savez pas, on est là pour cela.”
(Go on, it’s not important if you don’t know it, that’s why we’re here)

It is quite obvious that all the utterances, even taken in isolation, demonstrate the teachers’ friendly attitude towards the students, their understanding of the students’ difficulties and desire to encourage them. This is easily rendered by the vocabulary used: “very well”, “well done”, “as good as mine”, “that’s it”, “have my sympathies”, etc.

However, there are sufficient grounds to differentiate utterances (3) and (9). There is one interesting feature of these examples that distinguishes them from the rest of the samples. They are marked for empathy. Utterance (3) has the form of apology. The teacher asks the students to do a grammatical exercise which is rather long and he apologises for that. At first sight it seems rather strange to hear the words “boring exercise” from the teacher as it works against the teacher’s interest. But it can be explained with reference to the way in which the concepts of empathy and sympathy are framed in the previous section. When the teacher says “I’m sorry” he really expresses concern and understanding from his own perspective, he sympathises with the students. But the following words “to put your through this boring exercise” immediately signal a shift in the teacher’s perspective, who temporarily identifies with his students and views the situation from their point of view showing his empathy towards them.

A similar shift and change of roles is observed in utterance (9) in a class of Russian with Italian and Korean students where the pronoun “we” and the adjective “difficult” function as the role shift markers and indicate the teacher’s empathic attitude towards his students.

Utterances (1, 2, 4-8) impart a lot of attitudinal information and reveal the teachers’ friendliness, understanding, concern and support – the properties which are implied by the frame semantics of the notion sympathy.

3.2 Three kinds of perspective shift of empathy

The data inventory of empathic utterances collected during the language classes observation can be clearly differentiated. The samples are formally and functionally heterogeneous and can be systematised with reference to three particularly relevant aspects:

- the shift of perspective;
- discourse acts (micro-functions in terms of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages);
- discursive mechanisms of empathy (verbal/non-verbal).

The shift of perspective can be attributed to three kinds of changes:

3.2.1 A role relationship change

A role relationship change in a class setting is when the teacher adopts his students’ role and views the teaching process (materials, assignments and activities) from the students perspective. Typical in this respect are the following utterances:

- (1) “I’ve nearly finished tormenting you with these things” (activity orientation) – the teacher says to his students at the end of a teacher-elicited exchange with them when the students are answering his questions. The main point of interest here is the word “tormenting” which is evidently damaging to the teacher. Its use is explicable as a framing of empathy. This utterance is multifunctional. In addition to empathy it displays irony, apology and in a way it summarises the activity.
- (2) “Sorry to give you such nasty things” (learning material orientation) – such phrases frequently occur in teachers’ talk in various cultures (English, Latvian, Russian). They usually precede teachers’ assignments to a class, a group of students or one student. Though they assume the form of apology, their functions are different: as a matter of fact, they play down the difficulty of their assignment, show teachers’ mild irony and encourage students.
- (3) “This is quite tricky” (assignment orientation) – the phrase has a lot of synonyms: “quite difficult”, “demanding”, “hard”, etc. It is the word “tricky” that designates the teacher’s role change in class.

3.2.2 *A reaction change*

A reaction change: as a rule a negative reaction is changed into positive when the teacher is not happy about a student’s improper behaviour, for example, a Latvian teacher addresses a lazy student entertaining himself in class with the following words which invite him to take part in class activities:

“Tu taču gribēja lasīt, vai nē?”

(You wanted to read, didn’t you?)

The utterance has a clear direct addressee orientation.

3.2.3 *A change linked to another language’s cultural norms*

A change linked to another language’s cultural norms: when the teacher identifies with certain referential or semantic categories of another language/culture. It can be illustrated, for example, by the use of understatement by a Russian teacher of English in a Russian-English translation class with English students:

“Could I have it again, please?” (instead of the imperative form “Repeat, please!”).

“Am I clear?” (instead of the more direct phrase “Did you understand it?”).

As is known the Russian language is more categorical, more direct, more straightforward as compared to English, and the Russian teacher avoids using more categorical utterances (though they are quite possible in such situations) and employs understatement typical of English culture.

3.2.4 Three types of empathy

The first kind of change can be identified as *sociocultural empathy*. It is always constrained by the teacher's role and his or her relationship with students.

The second type of change exposes *psychocultural empathy*. This kind of empathy is much dependent on the personal traits of the teacher.

The third kind of change is related to *anthropological empathy*. It does not depend either on the personal qualities of a teacher or his or her relationship with students. Anthropological empathy demonstrates a shift towards a different culture.

3.3 Discursive functions of empathy in classroom communication

With regard to discursive acts (micro-functions) our empirical findings reveal that empathy most frequently fulfils the following functions:

3.3.1 Encouragement

“Don't you feel bad about asking it, it's involved.”

An English-speaking teacher encourages Russian students to come up with questions about translating some Russian words into English, which present a difficulty to Russians. It is the word “involved” which indicates that the teacher has entered a role shift.

3.3.2 Apology

“This is a harsh thing to ask you to do it now.”

The statement is a discrete form of apology as the teacher asks the students to translate a Russian newspaper article into English right at the very beginning of the class, which is the first Monday morning class.

3.3.3 Showing disapproval, avoiding conflicts

“You'll have a chance to shine”, a teacher says to a student who is not proficient in English but is chatting to a classmate.

3.3.4 *Checking students comprehension*

“Am I making sense?”, a Russian teacher says to British students. The question comes after the teacher’s explanation of a Russian grammatical item.

3.3.5 *Correcting students’ errors*

“Could I just mention one thing, it is that tricky word ‘demonstration’”, an English teacher says to Russian students.

The English word “demonstration” presents a difficulty to Russian students as in the English language it usually indicates public meetings or marches to show opposition, while the Russian text they were supposed to translate implied festivities.

3.3.6 *Showing interest*

“Why it’s like that beats me”, the verb “to beat” has a fairly informal use in this statement which is typical of students’ speech. In this context the phrase belongs to an English teacher and indicates his role change.

“May I have your attention, please?”, the teacher begins the course with this opening line of a song sung by Eminem, very popular among students, and he uses the song’s intonation. The quotation creates, indirectly, a common background, and students open up to the teacher. (A Romanian teacher teaching English to Romanian students.)

3.3.7 *Criticism*

“Mēs atkal esam gatari klausīties” (We are prepared to listen to you again), the Latvian teacher makes that remark to the student who spoke in such a way that nobody could hear him. The pronoun “we” is a signal of the teacher’s empathic attitude. Another example of the teacher’s mild empathic criticism is observed in the English class of an English teacher with Russian students, “Am I alone feeling confused about that episode?”

“Excuse me for interrupting myself” (a Romanian teacher to a Romanian student during an English course), the teacher addresses one of the students who was not attentive to the course and was talking. Light humour can create empathy, the student knew that the teacher was talking to him, but all the other students did not realise that, and therefore a kind of secret complicity was created.

3.4 Non-verbal mechanisms of empathy in classroom communication

Up to now, we have only illustrated and discussed verbal mechanisms of building empathy. However, in addition to verbal expression our observation reveals non-verbal mechanisms of empathy building: bodily movement, postures, facial expressions and various paralinguistic means.

It is a commonplace that non-verbal communication reflects many of the cultural patterns which exist in different cultures. Some scholars refer to non-verbal communication as the hidden dimension of culture. Non-verbal messages are identified as either universal or culture-specific. Facial expressions of some emotional states, a smile, for example, are considered to be innate and universal, while interpersonal space belongs to culture-based cues.

Communication studies differentiate several types of non-verbal messages: physical appearance of speakers, proxemics (space use), kinesics (body motions: shrugs, blushes, eye movement), paralinguistic means (voice use), and tactile behaviour. Non-verbal messages are assumed to serve six functions with respect to verbal messages: repeating verbal messages, contradicting them, substituting for them, complementing or emphasising part of verbal messages, and regulating the flow of conversation (Gudykunst, 1998).

Basically, four types of non-verbal messages appear to be relevant to the study of empathy in a language teacher's classroom performance: teacher-student conversation distance; eye contact and body movement; and voice use and touching. In our case the non-verbal cues mentioned above are influenced either by the cultural identity of the students or by the target language/culture. Two functions can be referred to: the function of complementing the verbal message and that of emphasising its part.

A particular interesting manifestation of non-verbal anthropological empathy was observed in a teacher's performance in a language class where she had to deal with groups of students belonging to different cultural identities. It was a Russian class run by a female Russian teacher and there were four Italian and three Korean female students present. It is important to remember that Italian culture belongs to high contact and high touch cultures. Italians prefer keeping close distance in a conversation and touching is evaluated as positive. Koreans belong to a low contact culture, which suggests maintaining greater interpersonal distance and avoiding touching. The teacher's non-verbal behaviour was very flexible. Addressing the Italian students she moved closer to them, frequently used gestures, kept eye contact and occasionally touched them. Her behaviour was entirely different with Korean students: the teacher tried not to violate their personal space, keeping apart, and never touched them, though she made use of positive reinforcements; displaying friendly smiles and pleasant facial expressions. The teacher synchronised her non-verbal behaviour with the cultural identity of the students, which is related to establishing rapport and liking. At the same time changes in her non-verbal performance demonstrate a shift in her cultural perspective which is a signal of empathy.

Non-verbal mechanisms of empathy building are found to underlie a number of situations observed in language classes as in the following example of a French class in a upper secondary Latvian school.

The students in the classroom look very sleepy and very passive. The teacher's efforts to change the situation do not produce any effect. The teacher says in French, "Ah, je vais vous apporter du balzame pour ne pas vous endormir."¹

The word "balzame" is pronounced in Latvian, with the Latvian voice pitch. The non-verbal message (the voice pitch) functions here as complementary to the verbal mechanism of cultural empathy.

An example of psychocultural empathy is manifested by a French teacher who starts whistling to control the students' behaviour (a role change).

3.5 Empathy building in everyday communication

In this section, empathy building components are identified within everyday talk. We will show that the shift of perspective, discourse acts and discursive mechanisms of empathy as they are described in classroom discourse above are even relevant for constituting social interaction regarding both the speaker and the hearer. The examples are taken from two ninety-minute video-recordings with German and Swedish students having dinner. One German native speaker group and one Swedish native speaker group are videotaped in a comparable situation. Five (two female and three male) Swedish and five (two female and three male) German students were separately invited to the same place, at Linköping University in Sweden (November, 2000). In both groups, the students are nearly graduated and knew each other before as fellow students but they have never met in this specific situation before. They were asked to discuss at some point during the dinner the question "What differences do you see between Sweden and Germany (people and country)? Discuss as many examples as possible." In the analysis we will mainly focus on aspects of empathy building components regarding both the organisation of talk and the speakers and hearers role.

3.5.1 *Empathy building strategies of conviviality of consensus in Swedish students' dinner talk*

The first sequence analysed comes from the Swedish group.² The students were discussing the difference between German and Swedish table manners focusing on the

1 "Balzame" is the name of a strong Latvian alcoholic drink. See the chapter on hospitality.

2 The transcription follows the conventions as they are used in conversation analysis described in Hutchby and Woolffitt (1998). All the names mentioned in the dialogue samples are fictitious.

fact that in Sweden you have to say “Tack för maten” (Thank you for the meal) after the meal, which you do not have to do in Germany when the following takes place.¹

- 68 Albert: men asså (1.7) va e va e den största
skillnaden mellan sverige och tyskland? ska
vi gå (här) rundan liksom (.) man få välja
en sak (.)
*but well (1.7) what is the biggest
difference between Sweden and Germany? Shall
we go the round kind of (.) you may choose
one thing*
GAZES AT EVERYBODY APART FROM ELISABET
- 69 Anders: oj=
wow
- 70 Albert: =så har väl christoph nåt å jobba me
then christoph maybe has something to work with
- 71 Emil: mm preci
mm exactly
- 72 Elisabet: mm
mm
- 73 pause: (1.3)
EMIL LICKS THE SPOON INTENSELY
- 74 Albert: så man få välja en sak=
so one may choose one thing=
- 75 Anders: =(ja) tänka lite
=(yes) think a little
- 76 Albert: mm=
mm
- 77 Veronika: =∅o gud∅
=∅o god∅
- 78 pause: (2.2)
(2.2)

1 Also, this kind of lexical expression is highly culture related and empathic but will not be analysed in this chapter.

As we showed in the analysis of the classroom discourse, the kind of empathy building exponents used is highly related to the activity the participants are involved in. In this section the main activities involved are the activity of a focus-group and the activity of having dinner together (which itself is a multi-activity). The first task is to examine how empathy occurs within these activities.

In line 68 Albert makes a request. Although the students already have mentioned several differences between Sweden and Germany his request is very much like the focus-request from the beginning, now re-raised after 74 minutes. The timing is actually not irrelevant here. In reformulating the focus-question at the beginning of the dessert, he restarts the focus-discussion on cultural differences. The student also gives a kind of conclusion of what they have done so far, pointing to the further development of the activity and what should be done and said next adding a new point to the initial request “biggest”. Hence, his request has a look-back-perspective and a look-forward-perspective to the embedding activity of a focus-group. But reformulating the focus-question, posed at the beginning of the main course, now, at the beginning of the dessert, is also an acknowledgement to the activity of eating a two-course meal. In that regard the request is in line with the activities of both the focus-group and the eating. But it also goes along within the social activity of having dinner together, since one could argue that Albert is suggesting a playful round-game activity when suggesting “one may say one thing” (74). By embedding the request in these ongoing activities and by choosing the time for this request, the student (Albert) shows empathy to the other participants. But again, empathy is also achieved in terms of a shift of perspective. In reformulating the original focus-request, he puts himself in the shoes of the teacher asking the group again to discuss further cultural differences. He confirms this shift of perspective in continuing his turn with “then Christoph has maybe something to work with”, making the teacher the author of the request.¹ But this case is even more complex; empathy is shown to the other participants even on a further level since the request is not directly addressed to one single person but to everybody as a group member, including himself. The other participants are asked not in order to please the requestor but in order to have some, duty-oriented, focus-question results. This makes it easier for the other participants to go along with the request without anybody losing face, including the requestor.

A reaction of another student (Anders) to the request in line 69, “wow”, demonstrates the difficulty of complying with the request, also therefore the first student immediately takes up his turn which is aligned by two other students (71, 72). In this way the three of them show empathy to Anders.

Discursive mechanisms of empathy can also be traced and are relevant regarding the organisation of talk. Requests and directives usually lead to a whole set of actions. More than that, it is a typical feature of requests in interaction that every participant is involved when it comes to requests (Goodwin, 1990). Also the Swedish example

1 Goffman (1981) describes this phenomenon in interaction as “footing”. In our work we give it the name of role changing.

proves that the initial request is followed by several actions by all participants, verbally and bodily. As we could see in the analysis of classroom discourse, eye contact and/or other body movements are crucial exponents for empathy building. Of course, they are also very important in everyday communication. In our Swedish and German examples, the primary body position of the participants is sitting on the chairs around the table. The torso is oriented to mutual orientation and towards the plates with the dessert. The body is positioned to handle the multiple ongoing activities. What we do with spoons, forks, knives, plates, cups and glasses is part of the cultural knowledge in western societies. These tools can also become relevant in social interaction. Emil (71), for example, licks his spoon after the request for a long time. Instead of eating the cheesecake with it, he uses it as a tool for marking thinking, which can be regarded as showing empathy as a hearer, because of taking the request seriously.

Interaction is culturally affected and can be played out differently in different cultures (Blum-Kulka, 1997). In our example, the high number of alignments is remarkable. To agree actively to a request and to what degree, that is how to show empathy to the speaker, is required by culture. As shown in several studies, Swedish society generally tends to strive for consensus (Daun, 1998). Also in Swedish everyday communication, people try to attain conviviality through consensus (Röcklinsberg, forthcoming). Hence, it is important for the members of a group to agree on suggestions made by somebody, at least in the first place. Especially in social activities like dinner conversations, a potential face-threatening request must be confirmed by the participants, which is reflected in the high number of alignments in the Swedish data. In doing these alignments empathy is shown to the role of the speaker.

The next part of the analysis of everyday communication compares different empathy building components in Swedish and German conversation concerning the focus-request “What differences do you see between Sweden and Germany (country and people)? Discuss as many examples as possible!” As we will see the Swedish and German participants react differently to speakers’ narratives, which demonstrates that empathy in everyday communication manifests itself differently in different cultures.

In the first sequence, one of the participants of the Swedish group reports what you are not supposed to say within certain cultures. As we are unable to exploit the possibilities of a video presentation, we shall concentrate here on the verbal aspects.

- 39 Veronika: fast de e lite olika i olika kulturer (.)
 för i vi- vissa uppfattar ju de som att (.) om man säger så a: de
 var jättegott eller ɔjaɔ (0.6) då: är de som att (0.7) säger man
 de så förväntar man sej inte att de skulle varit gott
*although this is a little bit different in different cultures
 because in some cultures they think that if you say it was
 really good or well done then this is like saying that you were
 not expecting it to be good*

- 40 Elisabet: mm=
mm=
- 41 Albert: [mhm]
[mhm]
- 42 Veronika: [ɔeller rolitɔ]
[or nice]
- 43 Elisabet: mm=
mm=
- 44 Anders: =ja just det=
yes exactly
- 45 Albert: =vilken kultur ä-om (.) för de säger
[ja all]tid (.)
which culture em because this I [always say]
- 46 Veronika: [ɔja vet inteɔ]
[I don't know]
- 47 Albert: [där måste ja passa]
[there I have to watch out]
- 48 Veronika: [ja hh ja vet] kommer inte ihåg
[yes hh I don't know] don't remember

In this sample a student (Veronika, 39) first quotes someone saying “it was really good” and uses the past tense as in direct speech followed by concrete comments on that utterance related to different cultures – “you were not expecting it to be good”. This statement is a very general one from somebody who wants to show empathy to their host but does not mention which culture this example relates to, there is therefore no change to another language’s cultural norms. Nevertheless, three other students make alignments by saying “mhm” (40, 41, 43) and (44) even in a more emphasised form “yes exactly”, which is a frequent form of minimal response in Swedish. This kind of alignment is a typical move in Swedish conversation (see also above). It does not necessarily mean that you agree with what has been said. Alignments can occur even if you do not agree or did not quite understand what has been said. In line 41, Albert aligns to the statement, although it turns out in line 45 that he did not understand what had been said. When asking “which culture em because this I always say” he adds a reason why he has come back to the question and why he wants to know more. He blames himself for the fact that this information is necessary just for him, and not Veronika for her lack of information. He is simply showing empathy to the speaker by putting himself in a bad light by possibly behaving incorrectly in a certain situation instead of questioning the speaker’s statement. Mutual appreciation and avoiding situations which could lead to dissent or conflict is highly valued in Swedish everyday

communication – higher than actual knowledge and understanding of what is said as far as content is concerned (Daun, 1998).

The next example reflects this, although it is related more specifically to the German language and the focus-question. The student, Albert (12), mentions an idiomatic phrase in German as a direct response to the focus-request:

- 12 Albert: men de tycker ja e en skillnad allså de e så viktig å säga guten appetit
but this I think is a difference I mean it is so important to say guten appetit
- 13 Veronika: mm/
mm/
- 14 Albert: [har du] också upplevt de att de e jätteviktig=
[have you] also experienced that it is really important=
- 15 Elilabet: [m]=mm/
[m]=mm/
- 16 Veronika: [och när man satt i men]san
[and when you were sitting in the caf]eteria
- 17 Albert: [allså de när man när man] man behöver inte känna varandra
[I mean it if you if you] you don't need to know each other
- 18 Veronika: mm
mm
- 19 Albert: [för att] liksom man ska säga
[because] like you have to say
- 20 Veronika: [mm]
[mm]
- 21 Elisabet: mm
mm
- 22 pause: (1.3)
(1.3)

In this example, the student (Albert, 14) directly requires alignments “have you also experienced that it is really important”, although one student has already confirmed his statement (13). However, it is remarkable that no further comments occur. Instead, the whole sequence ends in mutual alignments followed by a longer period of silence,

which is also an important part of Swedish conversation (see Adelswård, 1992), exactly as in our examples above.

3.5.2 *Empathy building strategies of conviviality of dissent in German students' dinner talk*

Finally, we will analyse two German examples in order to demonstrate how empathy is expressed in everyday German communication. The activities concerned, the participation framework, the focus-question and also the topic discussed is similar to the Swedish group. However, the conversation develops differently as the, quite typical, following example demonstrates.

- 1 Igor: aber was mir fei auffalle isch isch em aus meiner erinnerung (1.4) dass die (.) schweden anscheinend besser auf deutsche zu sprechen sind als die norweger =weil ich hab in erinnerung dass die (.) norweger/ auf deutsche net gut zu spreche sind.
= wir waren nämlich amal in norwegen un ham gecampt auf einem (1.2) so da war i no relativ klein auf einer wiese wild gecampt ne zelt aufgestellt und dann kam der bauer irgendwann mit seinem traktor und der hat uns gfragt wo wir denn her seien und dann ham wir gmeint ja aus deutschland un dann hat er gmeint gut
dann gehen sie bitte (1.5) mhm/=
- but you know what I have have recognised um in my memory (1.4) that the (.) Swedes talk better about Germans than Norwegians do =because as far as I remember the Norwegians don't talk well of Germans. =we were actually in Norway once and camped on a (1.2) so then I was relatively small on a meadow wild camping you know put up a tent and then at some time the farmer came with his tractor and he asked us where we come from and then we mentioned well from Germany and then he said ok then please leave (1.5) mhm/=*
- 2 Claudia: =warum?
=why?
- 3 Ina: □war n grund [da? (xx)]□
□was a reason [there? (xx)]□

- 4 Igor: [a ja/wegem] zweite weltkrieg
(1.4) weil die deutschen gar net nett warn
zu den norwegern
*[well yes/ because of] the second world war (1.4) because the
Germans weren't very nice to the Norwegians*
- 5 pause: (1.6)
(1.6)
- 6 Armin: ja aber (.) du musch mal so sehen (0.7) von
welchem land in europa kannst du behaupten dass sie ä (0.7)
dass da die dass die froh sind wenn wir also dass die auf die
deutschen froh (sein) (.) ich mein dass (.)
irgendwie [(freundschaftlich)]
*yes but (.) you have to see (0.7) from which country in
Europe you can claim that they um (0.7) that there they that
they are happy when we I mean that they (are) happy about
the Germans (.) I mean that in a way [(friendly)]*
- 7 Igor: [ich seh da aber scho n unterschied]
[well I see a difference there]
- 8 Armin: generell generell was du sowieso nicht
generalisieren [kannst]
generally generally anyway something you can't generalise

Compared to the Swedish data, one of the most remarkable differences is the different response shots. During the whole narrative (1) no minimal response, not even as a continuer, occurs. After having reported what the Norwegian farmer said and the narrative's climax, "ok then please leave", nobody takes the turn during 1.5 seconds. At last Igor aligns himself to his story by saying "mhm". Nobody else gives this direct alignment. Instead, one could argue that in a way the narrative is questioned by two students who want to know "why" this happened and ask for logical reasons for that behaviour (2, 3). But the interest shown and the curiosity to know more about the situation is another way of alignment and to show appreciation of the story. In German conversation, the content of stories is often taken very seriously. Empathy is shown not through appreciation of the fact that somebody has said something but by commenting on what somebody has said. A student's (6) response though is even more contradicting. He challenges the speaker (4) and the story by wondering if one could expect something different and prepares for a direct conflict between the male participants. The student (4) accepts and recognises the "attacks" by defending himself immediately (4, 7). Helga Kotthoff (1989) called this phenomenon the "conviviality of dissent", something which is especially typical of behaviour among men in a German conversation. This behaviour is diametrically opposed to the Swedish kind of alignment, which demonstrates that through the choice of different response shots different strategies of empathy are used. Within one culture one can rely on this

knowledge and will be offended if somebody disregards these communicative rules. The whole fluency of the conversation will be disturbed and as a consequence minor break downs throughout the conversation will occur, as exemplified by inappropriate turn-taking strategies within the specific culture.

Whilst running the risk of oversimplifying, one could say that the Swedish group shows empathy by making alignments, whereas in the German group empathy is expressed by making explicit comments on what has been said or by evaluating the actions described. The following example illustrates this:

- 1 Igor: ne aber also was ich welche was ich eben
 noch n sehr grosser unterschied find sind
 diese queuing tickets i mein die muss man
 jetzt schon mal erwähne wenn man amal n video
 «[aufnimmt]
*well but well what I what what I actually find one more big
 difference are these queuing tickets I mean those have to be
 mentioned when doing a video-recor[ding]*
- 2 Claudia: [die was?]
[the what?]
- 3 Igor: diese queuing tickets die muss man jetzt
 scho mal erwähne wenn man scho en video aufnimmt.
*Those queuing tickets this has to be mentioned when doing a
 video-recording.*
- 4 pause: (1.5)
 (1.5)
- 5 Ina: ☐(xx) [queuing tick]ets?☐
 ☐(xx) [*queuing tick*]ets?☐
- 6 Herbert: [aber]
[but]
- 7 Igor: [die hat ne an-]
[they have anoth-]
- 8 Claudia: [die die]
[the the]
- 9 Herbert: [bei der post]
[at the post office]
- 10 Claudia: [(xx xx)]
[(xx xx)]

- 11 Igor: [zieh ne nummer und] steh an ne
[take a number and] and queue you know
- 12 Ina: ach (das)
o that
- 13 Claudia: aber [eh] ich mein des is doch aber nicht
recht dass das=
*but [um] I mean that is not right though
that they=*
- 14 Herbert: [aber]
[but]
- 15 Ina: =is [en] gutes system [find ich]
=is a good system [I think]
- 16 Herbert: [em]
[um]
- 17 Claudia: [ich finds auch]
[I think so too]
- 18 Armin: [ja ich find au(jetzt)]
net nur schlecht
*[yes I can't find that only
bad either]*
- 19 pause: (0.6)
(0.6)
- 20 Herbert: na[ja] deutschland hat auch angefangen langsam
well [yes] Germany has started too slowly

Here also the reactions to the content of Igor's statement about queuing tickets in Sweden are remarkable. After a long pause of 1.5 seconds where alignments would have been possible but did not occur, Herbert directly opposes saying "but" (6). Claudia also rejects the idea (13), followed by Herbert again who is still trying to get the turn and starts with "but" (14). Meanwhile Ina takes the turn (15), valuing directly the system of having queuing tickets as "a good system", which is aligned by Claudia (17) and Armin (18) – "yes I can't find that only bad either". In Swedish conversation these comments would represent a sort of criticism of Igor. In German conversation though, valuing and/or commenting on the content of what has been said is a way of showing empathy to the speaker. It cannot be interpreted as criticism, since there is no evidence of this in the data. Igor does not mention if he personally likes or dislikes the Swedish system of queuing tickets nor does he defend himself.

We will conclude this section with another Swedish example, showing that in Swedish conversation no evaluation of the speaker nor of the content occur although the topic provokes and invites jokes or comments, at least about the Germans.

- 184 Emil: □kan□ nog hålla me et de där. (.) men ja (e
de inte) en annan sak som ja me- som de är som kanske
påverkar hur dom är o de e så trångt där (0.6) så ja
har som exempel badat i en såndär a (0.9) va hete de (1.3)
em ä baggerschee
*□can□ agree to that. (.) but yes (isn't that) something
different as I mean as this is as maybe it influences how
they are and this is that it is so narrow there (0.6) so I took
for example a bath in such a (0.9) how are they called (1.3)
um a baggersee (GERMAN TERM FOR ARTIFICIAL
LAKE WHERE PEOPLE GO TO HAVE PICNICS,
SWIM, ETC.)*
- 185 Albert: mm
mm
- 186 Emil: när [alla] ligger – ligger på sina
handdukar o så e de en
*when [everybody] lies – lies on their towels and then there
are three*
- 187 Veronika: [mm]
[mm]
- 188 Anders: [mhm]
[mhm]
- 189 Emil: de e en decimeter mellan varje handduk o så
e de (.) ett fotbollsplan med människor (0.6)
*there is one decimetre between each towel and so there is (.)
a soccer ground with people (0.6)*
- 190 Veronika: hh=
hh=
- 191 Emil: =o alla [splitter] nakna
=and everybody [skinny] dipping
- 191 Anders: [o]
[wow]
- 192 pause: (2.5)
(2.5)

- 193 Emil: så de var=
so there was=
- 194 Anders: =oj
 =*wow*
- 195 Emil: fast ɔmɔ a då kommer ja ioförsej osökt in på
 freie körperkultur också de e en *tema
*though ɔmɔ um there I actually touch by chance also the
 freie körperkultur this is a *subject*
 SKRATT (5.3)
 LAUGHTER (5.3)

To summarise, our data of everyday communication reveal two kinds of shift perspective. In terms of discursive functions we could demonstrate that showing disapproval in everyday German conversation turned out to be a strategy of showing empathy to the speaker, as far as content is concerned, since it stresses the importance we give as hearers to what is said. This function also could be called “conviviality of dissent”. In everyday Swedish conversation, conflicts are avoided by means of direct alignments. We call this phenomenon “conviviality of consensus”.

4. Conclusions

To conclude our discussion of empathy, we would like to stress that it is important to recognise empathy in its simple, logical form as a transitive relation between people, a purposeful four-dimensional attitudinal skill, an important component of cultural competence and part of cultural mediation.

Conceptually, the most important characteristic of empathy is understanding from a different culture’s perspective. The study produces the evidence of three types of empathy: sociocultural, psychocultural and anthropological. Its content can be represented verbally and/or non-verbally. The ways empathy is put into effect may differ within one culture and cross-culturally. Cultural and language diversity are resources for building empathy in language teacher performance in the classroom and in everyday discourse.

In language classroom and everyday communication, empathy is practised in order to fulfil a number of micro-functions: encouragement, apology, showing disapproval, comprehension check, error correction, etc. According to our preliminary observations, the most successful classes were those in which the teachers made use of empathic actions. As for everyday communication, it confirms the same kinds of shift perspective and certain similar functions. According to our data, everyday communication turned out to be most effective if the participants resorted to verbal

and/or non-verbal empathy actions. An important area for future investigation would be to find empirical evidence to prove the effectiveness of empathy as part of cultural mediation in different spheres of communication.

Language teachers should be taught to run classes on a high-empathy basis and should teach their students how to practise empathy in everyday communication in order to avoid or remedy conflicts. It is also important to develop a “portfolio approach”, namely a number of descriptors assessing empathy as part of cultural mediation according to levels of language/culture proficiency (European Language Portfolio).

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Chapter 5:

Hospitality in intercultural teacher training

Weronika Wilczyńska, Libuse Liskova, Sigurbjörg Eðvarðsdóttir, Heike Speitz

0. Meeting trainers' needs

Is it possible to envisage an objective for learning foreign languages that is more obvious and more natural than preparing for encounters with people who speak different languages and come from different cultures? The question seems rhetorical – the ease and the multiplicity with which unprecedented interethnic contacts are currently established at all levels, with all the intercultural difficulties, risks and dangers involved, are sufficient in themselves to demonstrate the significance and urgency of such training.

To give an idea of the potential pitfalls in the area indicated in our title – namely that of hospitality – we would like to cite just two examples, taken from a number of cultural incidents reported by the members of our small team. The first concerns a French colleague who felt under pressure rather than appreciative when being offered a rich social and cultural programme during her visit to a Polish university. The second is an anecdote-type episode of a Czech expedition to Iceland: after being invited to a dinner table, the Czechs exclaimed “Oh, there is twice as much here as we are able to eat!” This was not meant literally, but was rather an expression of appreciation which is considered polite in Czech culture; however, to the Czechs’ unpleasant surprise, the hosts – without uttering a word – took half of the food away, as Icelanders are quite direct in this respect. Obviously enough, goodwill and linguistic competence do not prevent the partners from misunderstanding. This happens because we tend to base our expectations concerning demonstrations of hospitality, on the one hand, on what is considered polite and accepted in *our* culture and, on the other hand, on the schemas or stereotypes of the other culture as perceived by *our* culture. If these expectations are not met, we might feel disappointed and consider our foreign counterparts anything from impolite, insensitive and indifferent to imposing, overprotective or wearisome. Such misguided judgments or misunderstandings can seriously complicate co-operation or negotiations to be conducted. It is hardly surprising therefore that European didacticians and language policy experts should be unanimous in stressing the crucial role of education in this regard.

As educators, we find that the success of such an undertaking depends to an important degree on the professionalisation of teachers precisely with respect to developing the intercultural competence of learners. But, despite the huge number of studies on

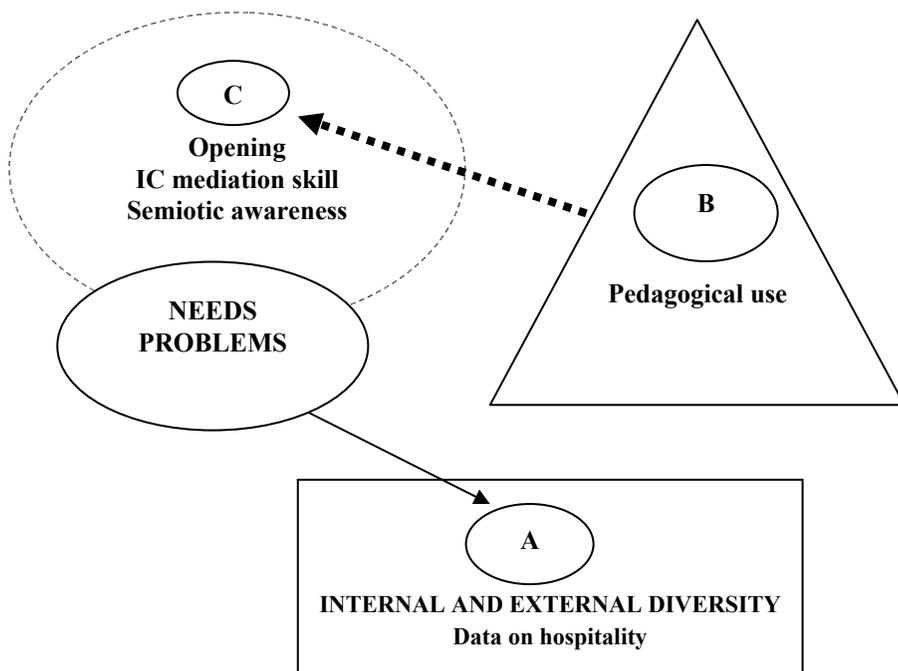
intercultural communication carried out in related fields, specifically didactic considerations still remain incomplete and/or are too general, and empirical studies are desperately lacking. It is a fact that teachers today have at their disposal a full range of manuals and audio/video materials about “civilisation” as well as teaching methods oriented towards a “culturalistic” exploitation of these materials. Nevertheless, even though teachers are usually aware of the importance of the “cultural component”, the didactician always finds it difficult to offer them benchmarks that are definite and at the same time flexible and deep enough to provide a firm basis and to create a coherent overall approach. Our study on hospitality is conceived as a modest contribution to this effort.

1. The general pedagogical approach

We believe that intercultural teacher training is crucial, given the complexity and the often enigmatic nature of culture – of which we are a part and which is a part of us, and which is also so intimately linked with our identity that it is impossible for us to clearly perceive its overriding significance in our everyday routines. For these reasons, the teaching approach has to focus on increasing awareness and on discovery rather than proceeding on a “do and do not” basis.

The starting point of our didactic strategy will be the difficulties and risks that our teachers face in the field in question. It comprises three levels of action:

- (A) The gathering of cultural data likely to highlight the diversity of customs at both the intracultural and the intercultural levels;
- (B) The analysis of this data from an educational perspective that is sufficiently diversified and extensive to enable measurement of the relative aspects of customs. Specifically, we need to show that in different societies:
 - a particular form of behaviour can represent different values (and be interpreted in various ways) and vice versa that one value can be expressed by different forms of behaviour;
 - the overall conceptual field (in this instance that of hospitality) may be quite broad and internally organised in a different manner;
 - the value of the idea itself may receive varying levels of emphasis;
- (C) The development of an open cultural attitude, based on knowledge and intercultural know-how, including knowledge of intercultural mediation.



It will thus be a matter of helping the trainee teacher develop an awareness of the semiotic nature of cultural phenomena, and of promoting skills and know-how as well as existential competence in order to neutralise or overcome problems of intercultural communication.

Moreover, if we dispense with the goal of achieving “complete” competence with respect to a foreign culture, we need to choose with care those examples or areas to be exploited educationally, so that our choices do not compromise the economy of our approach. For this reason, the cultural data to be exploited in teaching languages must in our opinion comply with certain prerequisites:

- it must be representative of phenomena that exist outside the two societies concerned and, preferably, be part of universal experience – which means that it can be observed, transposed and/or utilised with respect to other pairs of languages/cultures, thus enabling the diversity and relativity of the cultural phenomena to be ascertained more effectively;
- it must constitute (or belong to) a sufficiently broad and complex system in order to serve as an illustration of *what is symbolic culture* and how this functions;

- it must play an important role in establishing, maintaining and/or modifying *interpersonal relations* and therefore be perceived as an experience that is both familiar and fundamental – which would be highly motivating for the trainee teacher;
- and, last but not least, it must enable *objective observations* at the level of verbal and non-verbal interactions, which would allow the theoretical to be rooted in the practical;
- clearly hospitality, as a highly conventional social custom, fully complies with all these criteria. In addition, our experience of intercultural contacts (for example, exchange programmes at schools and universities – Erasmus) fully confirms the reality of the problems posed by the custom of hospitality in an intercultural context.

2. Hospitality as a cultural model

2.1 The present state of research

Hospitality has been and continues to be the subject of many studies in ethnography and cultural anthropology, although most of these studies focus on traditional and closed (“exotic”) societies. As far as Europe is concerned, the overwhelming majority of research work is concerned with regional or ancient folklore customs. Indeed, phenomena of ordinary culture are rarely studied in our contemporary societies, mainly because of their complexity, their heterogeneous and individualistic character, and their dynamics, which is compounded by technological progress (Camilleri and Cohen-Emerique, 1989).

Although foreign travel has now become commonplace, it is very unusual for studies to be conducted *within the context of intercultural communication*,¹ even though there is a relatively large number of articles in which elements of hospitality customs appear amidst other “cultural differences”. It is then a fact that there is very little appropriate documentation available to foreign language didacticians in this field, despite its importance to intercultural contacts. Nevertheless, in spite of frequent cultural interaction, hospitality appears to be one of the social phenomena with respect to which conventions remain particularly lively – due to its very nature as an exceptional relation and the challenges it poses.

1 We shall not be looking here at the many studies on the intercultural relations between western societies and migrants who have taken up residence there.

2.2 The meaning attached to hospitality

We shall talk here of hospitality when one person – hereinafter H1 – invites and receives into their home another person – hereinafter H2. And yet this definition, by virtue of its concise nature, tends to stress the triteness and universality of this custom and hide its social function and symbolic meaning, which have gradually been revealed by research.

Thinking on hospitality customs has long been dominated by M. Mauss' ideas pertaining to the act of giving gifts. Accordingly, many researchers regard it to be essentially the exchange of a symbolic gift, emphasising reciprocity in a cycle of three dimensions (*giving, receiving, returning*) and the reversibility of the roles of giver and recipient (Godelier, 1995).

Contemporary research not only significantly expands this framework (Godbout, 1997), which is certainly too restrictive, but also modifies it by emphasising specific aspects of the practice:

- it is essentially the celebration of a *link between the parties* and its function – more than the act of giving – and of the maintenance or even the strengthening of that link in the future;
- it is experienced as a powerful instance of *sociability* and implies the convivial sharing of a privileged *event*; it can mark important stages in H1's life cycle or annual celebrations;
- in all these cases the custom of hospitality is in principle *free in nature*. If it does represent an obligation, this is more of a moral than a legal or formal one. The freedom applies equally to H1 and H2, and is particularly evident outside the networks of kinship or utilitarian-style relationships, where it can follow a more or less regular pattern, determined by the parties involved;
- it always takes place within the *space* of the hosting party, as a sign of his or her accommodating intentions and goodwill – to which the hosted party must respond with indications of gratitude and commensurate behaviour;
- it is subject to *conventions* that are usually more rigid and formal between parties who are less close. In fact, it is a sort of contract of honour established during the act of *invitation*.

These characteristics already give an idea of how demanding and risky it can be to assume either of the roles of H1 or H2 in an intercultural context.

2.3 Intracultural variation in the models

This phenomenon, whose significance should not be underestimated, is defined in our opinion by two different yet equally important factors:

- The multiplicity of contexts:
 - hospitality takes place between different parties (individuals, groups, societies) of more or less equal status (in a symmetrical or, by contrast, in an asymmetrical relationship);
 - its purpose can be more or less utilitarian (playing host to political refugees, visits among neighbours) or, on the other hand, without any vested interest and simply sociable (a meal among friends);
 - it can be more or less routine or exceptional in nature.
- The authenticity requirement for H1 and H2

The custom's conventional character is not always easy to observe, as it is often understated or even hidden by the parties involved, since by its very nature this type of encounter requires a personal commitment to signify the *sincerity* of the attitudes and behaviours, which are in fact socially predetermined. This aspect, which no doubt contributes a great deal to the considerable variation in hospitality customs, should not obscure their highly coded and symbolic character, which is similar to what can be observed in other social interactions.

We believe that it is essential for future teachers to be aware of the factors that govern the variability of these customs in unicultural and intercultural contexts.

2.4 Principal categories of analysis

Hospitality customs are determined by a huge variety of parameters and contexts, which means that we must propose a summary typology in order to be able to demarcate the target of our analysis more clearly.

With respect to the nature and social function of hospitality, we need to differentiate three types of hospitality based on whether or not constraints and/or utilitarian purposes are involved:

- a) External constraints on offering/receiving hospitality:
 - family solidarity within a network of kinship;
 - moral obligation (political refugees, pilgrims, etc.).
- b) Offer of hospitality with a vested interest:
 - commercial hospitality.
- c) Absence of a vested interest and constraints:
 - hospitality among friends.

We may therefore establish a basic distinction between:

balanced symmetrical relationship ↔ unbalanced asymmetrical relationship

It would seem that the characteristics stated in 2.2 and in particular the aspect of being free in nature, the sociability, and the positive significance for the development of the relationship are most evident in the case of hospitality without a vested interest or constraints (type c). Since we will focus on this type of hospitality for the rest of our analysis, we would like to point out that it corresponds most closely to the intercultural contacts that occur, for example, during exchanges of foreign language trainees and/or teachers.

2.5 The foreign trainee teacher in an intercultural hospitality situation

Depending on the status of the partners involved, the principle of variation (see 2.3) may also apply to foreigners. It is therefore more than likely that during intercultural contacts, the foreign partner will benefit from special treatment.

- a) he or she will be expected to have unknown traits and therefore also to practise unknown customs – thus a certain degree of “exoticism” may be welcome;
- b) he or she will also be expected not to know the local customs – and may therefore benefit from a certain tolerance with respect to behaviour or questions that would not be easily accepted on the part of fellow countrymen.

Such an amended attitude will be much less likely regarding someone who has already travelled to a given country and/or has a high level of language skills – he or she will thus no longer be safe from the pitfalls linked with intercultural differences in this area.

If partners are able to actively avoid this type of determinism, it is thanks first and foremost to their intercultural openness – which in our view remains the fundamental condition of success – and then to their intercultural skills (Lussier, 1997). Indeed, in a specific situation a great deal will depend on:

- a) the cultural presuppositions of each of the partners;
- b) their strategic skills in identifying and taking divergent models into account – and therefore their capacity for cultural mediation.

3. Hospitality as a research topic in language didactics

Like any complex social custom, hospitality can be addressed from different viewpoints and angles. In the following we shall focus on its conventional aspect by analysing it first and foremost as a symbolic cultural phenomenon while limiting the analysis itself to the type of hospitality selected above.

3.1 The challenge of hospitality

Hospitality is essentially a celebration of mutual recognition at the level of sociability. It is expressed by a polite and attentive, even quite courteous, welcome in one's own space. And this is precisely the challenge of the encounter, which makes the situation as delicate for H1 as it is for H2. If H2 is invited to "feel at home" and to make himself or herself completely at ease, he or she should not take this literally or, even worse, abuse the situation. If, in turn, H1 goes to a lot of trouble to prepare a welcome, he or she will avoid saying a great deal about this or even mentioning it. Thus each partner has to be able to play a complementary role in order for the encounter to be a success, which will then have a positive effect on the continuation of the relationship. Our observations, then, will focus on this subtle and delicate game, which due to the status inequality involved calls for a sharing of responsibilities to ensure the complementarity of roles.

3.2 Sensitive aspects in terms of their symbolic/conventional nature

For this subtle game to succeed, it must rely on harmonious co-operation with regard to the observance of conventions, which taken together bind H1 and H2 via a virtual contract. The symbolic value of these conventions is defined by the attitudes shared by a given community. What, then, are the abilities that underlie our acts of hospitality?

- *The ability to identify the type of event*, which is defined by a characteristic configuration of such parameters as: occasion, moment, form, number of participants, etc. The spectrum ranges from going to H1's country house for a quick beer to spending a fortnight (or even longer) there. For H2 this information must determine, for example, how to dress, whether to bring a gift and if so, what, how long he or she should stay, etc.

This knowledge/know-how seems relatively easy to acquire by observing scenes of hospitality, for instance, in foreign video documents.

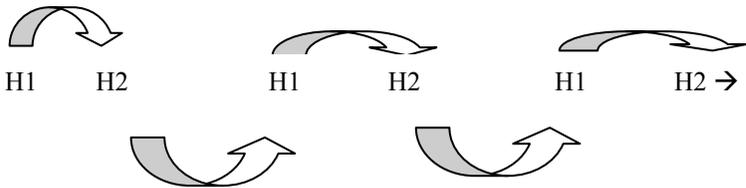
- *Knowing the general scenario of the event* and its specific characteristics – this pertains to the phase before and after the event, but also to the staging of the event itself (for example, whether H1 should be thanked the next day by phone or the sequence and type of dishes to be expected).
- *Appreciating the semantic value of the different elements and approaches* – this ability can often be very difficult to acquire, given the non-bi/univocity between form and function at the intercultural level. These last two capacities are illustrated in the table below:

When? (stages) What?	Before ...	During ...	After ...
Physical manifestation	Invitation	Encounter	Planning for a next encounter
Semiotic interpretation	Act → social contract which imposes new statuses upon H1 and H2	Offering/receiving hospitality → playing asymmetrical, conventional roles	“Paying back”, namely reversing roles: H1 → H2 and H2 → H1

- *Being hospitable/showing one’s familiarity with the role of being a guest* – this translates into exchanging compliments, niceties, urging guests to enjoy the hospitality to the full, etc.

Since we are dealing here with verbal and para-verbal behavioural attitudes that are adapted according to different situation-related parameters, it is difficult to observe the way in which each model operates (hence the need to provide explanations during the teaching). Often the difficulty is compounded by the requirement of personal involvement on the part of the partners (guarantee of their sincerity), which increases the interpersonal variation of what actually happens. In addition, applying these models will require a very high level of competence in L2 and therefore (at least) a certain amount of experience.

- *Ensuring reciprocity* – the reversibility of the H1/H2 roles.
In intercultural contacts the foreign visitor will most likely play the role of H2, while in his or her native country he or she will generally have the status of H1:



Nevertheless, the willingness *vis-à-vis* reciprocity must at least be expressed, even if it must remain theoretical. Reciprocity can also be expressed in the same situation of hospitality in the form of exchanges of compliments and signs of attentiveness, such as an expression of mutual esteem.

3.3 Taking intercultural variation into account

We have already emphasised (see 2.3) the variation of models and conventions within the framework of the same culture. Without going further into this aspect here, we would like to mention it as a factor that can significantly complicate systematic observation, and which therefore must be taken into account in the research methodology. Nevertheless, in the didactic approach adopted here, observing *diversity* – whether it is interpersonal, intracultural or intercultural – can constitute a value *per se* (see Wilczyńska, 2002), inasmuch as it illustrates the real differentiation between social interaction and the factors that govern it.

The student should be aware of this phenomenon and be able not only to identify the factors involved, but also to make selections in order to compare what is really comparable, not being content with overly generalised formulations, but rather seeking out the specific characteristic of each respective model.

4. Research report

The research reported below has an exploratory character and our approach is basically qualitative. Its aim is to provide genuine data, significant for intercultural, intracultural and interpersonal variation in relation to hospitality patterns. Though further on we also present detailed quantitative results, no statistic validity can be claimed for this part of the analysis. Its value is complementary in showing variation and, to some extent, also some characteristic tendencies in pattern distribution.

4.1 Research questions

Given our general pedagogical strategy (see 1), the research questions were defined as follows:

- 1) Taking the example of having guests for dinner, to what extent and in which respects do intercultural models of hospitality differ in various European countries?
- 2) What are the verbal and non-verbal behaviours and habits used in the contexts that have been selected as showing significant diversity?
- 3) How can these findings be exploited for raising cultural awareness in teacher education and language learning?

These questions determine the three stages of the research procedure described below.

4.2 Research procedure

Stage 1 – Designing tools for collecting data

Despite the multiplicity of hospitality situations, it is possible to classify them according to a set of parameters such as type of event, age-group, social background, etc. (see 2.3).

Therefore, we decided to narrow our field to the following configuration of parameters:

Event \ Age-group	Light refreshment	Dinner	Staying overnight
up to 35			
35-50			
above 50			

After limiting the scope of our research as shown above (in grey), we produced a script for the chosen event, namely dinner, based on our intercultural experience, capacious enough to include relevant information with possible variations for different cultures. The size of this chapter does not allow for reproducing it here in its full extent. The script served as a basis for designing the questionnaire for a pilot study that aimed at identifying the most “sensitive” areas to be explored during the main research. It was conducted in our respective countries with fourteen respondents. After analysing it, we adopted the following modifications:

- excluding well-travelled persons (namely foreign language teachers) from our research because of their greater familiarity with intercultural patterns;
- interviewing people aged 35-50, since the middle-age generation is likely to show well-established patterns of behaviour. Besides, from the practical point of view, this is the category into which our teachers and their foreign partners would most probably fall;
- focusing on six areas that showed maximum diversity (see the table below);
- distinguishing between receiving relatively close friends – “friends” and “others”. The latter category includes, for example, a visitor to our institution, a new employee or a foreign colleague.

As a result, we adapted the original questionnaire as follows:

1. Arrival	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Which day of the week is typically chosen? 2. What time of the day? 3. Do you expect the guests to arrive on time? 4. What delay is tolerated? 5. How are greetings done, verbally and non-verbally?
2. Gift for hosts	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you expect guests to bring gifts? 2. What are typical gifts? 3. Do you open a gift immediately? 4. If the gift is, for example, a bottle of wine or a box of chocolates, do you open it and offer it to guests? 5. Are you expected to show satisfaction with the gifts? If yes, how?
3. Food and drinks	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are typical dishes? 2. How are these dishes served? Simultaneously, or in a certain order? 3. Are there any rituals or formulas to start and finish eating? 4. Are the guests encouraged to have a second helping, or to eat more? If yes, how? 5. What are typical drinks? Are water/soft drinks/alcoholic drinks/hot drinks usually served? 6. How are drinks served? Simultaneously, or in a certain order? 7. Is there any ritual or formula when drinking alcohol?
4. Conversation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What topics would be considered safe? 2. What topics should be avoided?
5. Offering help	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are the guests expected to offer help, for example with washing up? 2. If they do, is their offer accepted?
6. Leaving	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When are the guests supposed to leave? 2. How is saying good-bye done verbally and non-verbally? 3. Is there any way of saying thank you for the meal, either when leaving or later?

The questionnaire was prepared in two linguistic versions: English and French.

Stage 2 – Main research – Conducting interviews

The interviews were conducted by seven members of the Cultural Mediation project, namely those from Austria (AT), the Czech Republic (CZ), Greece (GR), Iceland (IS), Latvia (LV), Poland (PL) and Spain (ES). There were two criteria for the choice of interviewers: being representative of a diverse geographical location and of a larger cultural area (Baltic, central Europe, the Mediterranean, Scandinavian).

Each representative chosen was asked to interview five respondents from their own country whilst following these instructions:

- 1) Please conduct this interview orally and individually with five persons aged 35-50.
- 2) If your respondent's answers sound vague, for example "It depends ..." or "It is difficult to say ...", ask him or her to be more precise or to give an example. Try to be inquisitive enough to grasp your respondent's beliefs about what the proper way of receiving people would be.
- 3) Take notes during your interview.
- 4) Before starting interviewing explain its general purpose – which is collecting data about how people behave in a given situation. If the interview is conducted in a language other than French or English, please translate the answers into one of those languages.

Stage 3 – Identifying the areas of diversity and analysis

After receiving the completed questionnaires the data were compared and discussed. Consequently, we identified four areas in which the answers showed significant differences and which, therefore, might be considered as representative of the diversity in cultural patterns: greeting upon arrival, expectation of a gift, drinks and offering help with washing up. In other areas the differences were either minimal or too dispersed, and therefore they were excluded from further analysis.

4.3 Analysis and discussion of the results

The analysis consisted in assigning different data (answers) to previously defined categories corresponding to our pedagogically oriented criteria. As stated above, those categories and criteria were established with the aim of showing intracultural, intercultural and interpersonal variation in patterns.

The analysis was conducted with reference to the following set of statements:

- 1) Cultures are based on relatively coherent sets of internal patterns of behaviour (symbolic meaning).

Globally, the data show that acts of polite behaviour are essential for signifying mutual esteem and building social links. People are usually not aware of the symbolic value of hospitality, both in general and in particular.

- 2) Sharp differences in expectations or behaviours may be significant of divergent culture standards (risk of conflict - cultural mediation is probably needed).

Whereas in the Czech Republic and Greece a gift seems to be greatly expected, in Austria it is not. (see Table 2).

- 3) We are often unconscious of those patterns.

“I don’t expect gifts from others, but I always give one myself” (PL-4)

- 4) Cultural patterns are more or less conventional:

- a) some are rigid (typical gifts, scripts for specific social events or occasions, etc.)

“I expect a gift, and I always bring one” (IS-1)

“Soft drinks are for children” (IS-1)

“I don’t wash up when the guests are still in my house” (IS-1)

“The guests should suggest helping, but I always refuse” (PL-1)

“I accept help only from very close friends, the others are to be served” (PL-1)

“Helping with the washing up? Absolutely not! The kitchen is not a place for the guests!” (PL-1).

“Friends would kiss and the others would shake hands” (S-5).

- b) others are more flexible

Typical gifts are flowers (AT-2, GR-1, IS-5, LV-2, PL-5), wine (AT-2, CZ-4, GR-2, IS-5, LV-2, PL-3), and sweets and chocolates (AT-1, GR-3, PL-2).

Kissing may also differ; in Poland people give two kisses, in Iceland one (on the cheeks). In the Czech Republic, kissing is rather rare (when it happens, it is one kiss, sometimes on the lips).

“I don’t necessarily expect a gift, but they all bring something” (AT-1)

- 5) As hosts or guests, we appreciate receiving or displaying polite behaviour as marks of mutual esteem, essential in building social links.

- “I don’t expect a gift but I like receiving one” (IS-1)
- “I don’t expect any gifts but I find it nice” (PL-1)
- “I don’t expect a gift, but it’s nice of them to bring something” (AT-1)
- 6) Cultural patterns are conditioned to some extent by local conditions (geographical characteristics, climate, local products, etc.).
- Becherovka* – Czech herbal digestive served after the meal (CZ-1)
- Ouzo – Greek alcohol served as an aperitif or digestive (before or after the meal) (GR-2)
- Coffee and cognac – served after the meal in Iceland (IS-9)
- Vodka – served during the meal in Poland (PL-3)
- Riga Melnais Balzams* (black balm) – drink served to foreigners in Latvia
- No hot drinks offered in Greece (GR-5). Hot drinks are regularly offered in the Czech Republic (CZ-5).
- 7) Intracultural patterns differ depending on how close the relationship is and whether the partners belong to the same category, such as male-female, age-group, etc.
- “We shake hands or kiss; it depends on age and familiarity” (AT-1)
- “We shake hands and kiss with our friends, but only shake hands with the others” (AT-4)
- “Very close friends help taking plates off the table, that is normal” (IS-1)
- “I accept being helped only if the guests stay overnight and if they are very close friends” (PL-1)
- 8) Being able to play the “hospitality game” qualifies hosts and guests as culturally competent in this respect.
- “The offer of washing up is not expected, but some guests offer it. The offer is not accepted” (CZ-1)
- “We express an interest in the gift by appreciating it (saying how we love the gift, how well it was chosen), and asking for some details (where it was bought, why it was chosen)” (GR-4)
- “I don’t want my guests to help me, but I help when I’m invited” (IS-1)
- “The offer of washing up is not accepted (friends help all the same)” (PL-1)
- “I accept help from friends only if they really insist!” (PL-1)

- 9) Random differences in cultural practices may be significant in inter-personal variations.
- “The offer of help with washing up is not expected, and it wouldn’t be accepted, as each household can have a special way of washing up” (CZ-1)
- “I don’t drink alcohol, so I ‘forget’ to offer it to my guests” (IS-1)
- “I don’t like taking the plates off the table when I’m invited, so I don’t accept help from my friends” (IS-1)
- 10) Some cultural patterns are significant in terms of present-day tendencies in the evolution of standards.
- a) Technological advances modify everyday habits.
- “Nearly everybody has a dishwasher, so to show their goodwill the guests would just take the plates off the table” (IS-comment)
- b) Adoption/propagation of global patterns – “Americanisation” of everyday life.
- Coca-Cola seems more frequent than other soft drinks (CZ-2, GR-5, PL-7)

4.4 Quantitative results for selected areas

The tables below give quantitative results for the four areas selected for further analysis. When read horizontally, the numbers show the diversity among seven European countries. The columns give the variation within a given country.

Table 1: Arrival of guests – Greetings

	Austria		Czech Republic		Greece		Iceland		Latvia		Poland		Spain	
	Friends	Others	Friends	Others	Friends	Others	Friends	Others	Friends	Others	Friends	Others	Friends	Others
Total of respondents	5	4	5	1	5	5	10	10	5	4	9	7	5	5
Only verbal	0	0	3	0	0	0	2	2	0	2	0	0	0	1
Shaking hands	4	4	1	1	1	4	2	8	2	3	3*	7**	0	4
Kissing	5	0	1	0	5	2	6	1	3	0	6	0	5	0

* Of these three, one said that handshakes are only between men.

** Of these seven, two said that handshakes are only between men.

Table 2: Expectation of a gift

	Austria		Czech Republic		Greece		Iceland		Latvia		Poland		Spain	
	Friends	Others	Friends	Others	Friends	Others	Friends	Others	Friends	Others	Friends	Others	Friends	Others
Total of Respondents	5	4	5	1	5	5	10	10	5	4	9	9	5	5
Definitely yes	0	0	2	1	3	4	2	2	0	0	1	0	0	0
Probably yes	0	1	2	0	1	0	5	2	4	3	4	3	1	1
Probably not	2	1	1	0	1	1	3	3	1	1	2	3	3	3
Definitely not	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1

Table 3: Drinks offered

	Austria		Czech Republic		Greece		Iceland		Latvia		Poland		Spain	
	Friends	Others	Friends	Others	Friends	Others	Friends	Others	Friends	Others	Friends	Others	Friends	Others
Total of respondents	5	2	5	1	5	5	10	10	5	4	9	9	5	5
Water	3	1	0	0	3	2	8	8	3	1	1	1	5	5
Soft drinks	4	2	4	1	5	5	4	1	4	4	7	6	3	3
Alcoholic drinks	5	2	5	1	5	5	9	9	5	4	4	2	4	4
Hot drinks	3	2	5	5	0	0	10	10	4	4	9	9	5	5

Table 4: Help – washing up: help is offered/help is accepted

The figures below show the ratio of the number of respondents who answered in the way indicated.

	Austria		Czech Republic		Greece		Iceland		Latvia		Poland		Spain	
	Friends	Others	Friends	Others	Friends	Others	Friends	Others	Friends	Others	Friends	Others	Friends	Others
Total of respondents	5	4	5	5	5	5	10	10	5	4	8	8	5	5
Yes	2/2	0/0	0/0	0/0	3/2	0/0	2/5	1/2	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	1/1	1/0
Probably yes	0/2	0/0	1/1	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/4	0/0	1/0	0/0	1/1	0/0
Probably not	1/0	0/0	1/0	0/0	0/0	1/0	1/1	0/0	5/1	2/0	2/1	3/1	3/3	3/0
Not	2/1	3/3	3/3	1/1	2/3	4/5	7/4	9/8	0/0	2/4	5/6	5/6	0/0	1/0

As mentioned before, establishing quantitative results from an open questionnaire is rather a delicate operation. The reasons for this are:

- the wording, either by respondents or interviewers, might not be exact;
- respondents may differ in their assertiveness level, cognitive style and communicative efficiency.

5. Pedagogical suggestions

Various activities are possible – to be done either individually or in groups. They may refer more or less directly to the data exposed in this chapter (questionnaire, grids), students' personal experience, observation of video materials, etc. Here are some pedagogical suggestions:

- 1) Reflecting upon intercultural encounters
 - think of your personal experience related to your previous travels abroad; did you notice any “odd” or “surprising” behaviour whilst being invited by local people? Try to explain them in intercultural terms;
 - suppose you receive a foreigner at your place. Imagine possible clashes. How would you cope with such a situation in order to avoid possible conflicts/misunderstandings?
 - watch video materials (extracts from documentaries or feature films, teaching materials) showing hospitality situations. To what extent do your observations coincide with the data presented in this article?
- 2) Comparing cultural behaviours
 - compare behaviours of a given type within one culture/more cultures and think, using your own experience, of possible explanations (intracultural and intercultural);
 - compare selected patterns of behaviour in close/faraway countries.
- 3) Exploring cultural patterns of behaviour
 - complete the questionnaire or a selected part of it individually and then discuss the answers in groups of two to four;
 - select some questions and ask foreign friends (for example, by email) to answer them. Discuss the answers (similarities, differences, possible risks or complications).

- 4) Preparing for cultural mediation
 - select a setting (country, partners, social event, etc.) and create a dialogue based on a set of data collected by yourself or presented in this article, for example, “arrival of the guests” (greeting, giving/receiving a gift), polite conversation at the table, etc.

Of course, the above suggestions may be modified according to the actual situation and specific pedagogical objectives.

6. Conclusion

We would like to conclude our thoughts on hospitality – a highly symbolic practice – by expressing the view that it is regulated by a contract in which each party is linked by specific obligations that have the common characteristic of contributing to the satisfaction and pleasure of the other party. Given the inequality of status, these roles are largely complementary and follow a scenario whose plot is socially predetermined – which allows expectations to be formulated, governs behavioural attitudes and interpretations, and allows evaluations to be made. Nevertheless, the need for sincerity and the great variety as regards status help make the models both more flexible and more opaque – which can complicate our observation of them.

Since hospitality is such a complex, dynamic and variable phenomenon, a qualitative approach seems highly suitable in studying it. Although it is extremely difficult to obtain clear, definite results, it can be useful to work on the cultural patterns of hospitality in teacher training. Undertaking action research in this field might prove highly desirable for teacher trainees since it could improve their observation skills, critical reflection and mediation abilities in relation to intercultural encounters.

We would like to thank our colleagues: Georges Androulakis (Greece), Olga Ozolina (Latvia), Conchita de Miguel (Spain) and Hermine Penz (Austria) for their precious help in collecting data in their countries.

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Chapter 6:

Representations of the concept of otherness in advertising and cultural mediation

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Advertising documents can be used in foreign language/culture classes on both a linguistic and a cultural level. They can serve as aids for the expression of a learner's reading and for the analysis of a cultural situation. The mechanisms that govern readings and analysis are complex. Our¹ aim is to describe the processes involved in the use of advertising documents conveying an image of the Other in order to highlight the foreign language/culture teacher's role as mediator. After initially setting out our research methodology for the analysis of the reception of advertising documents conveying an image of the Other, we will illustrate the processes of (de)construction of a cultural identity created by advertising documents of this kind based on examples. Finally, we will propose an activity of intercultural mediation to foreign language/culture teachers who use advertising documents.

1. The reception of advertising documents conveying an image of the Other

Our working team, bringing together teacher-researchers from Austria, France, Greece and the Netherlands, set out to conduct an analysis within a comparative framework of how expressions of the concept of otherness in advertising are received. The aims of this comparative study were to reveal (1) the potential of a useful tool in the teaching of foreign languages and cultures, (2) the processes concerning identity that are brought into play by the representation of the Other and (3) the role of cultural mediator that can be played by teachers who make use of this culturally laden tool of advertising. The teaching of foreign languages is inseparable from an approach that sets culture in context and from the process of increasing awareness of otherness.

1 The team consists of four teacher-researchers from different disciplines and educational backgrounds: linguistics, sociolinguistics, semiotics and psychoanalysis.

1.1 Culture, representation of the Other and otherness: definitions

The notion of culture occupies a central position within the field of human and social sciences as a whole. Culture is simultaneously action and a state of being, as well as that which falls between the two, that is a process of education. It is action¹ in the sense of the cultivation of the self or of one's mind, the development of creative faculties or the expression of the life of a community. It also denotes a state of being as defined by the knowledge, skills and qualities of educated people. It can be seen as the referent of socialisation² as it is that which gives sense to the body of social practices; it constitutes a field of reference that allows people to position themselves within a relationship of belonging or exclusion with respect to a social group, to extrapolate the definition made by E. Tylor in 1871 according to which culture "is the complex whole that embraces knowledge, beliefs, art, morality, law, customs and other capacities or habits acquired by man in his role as a member of society".³ We would like to recall C. Lévi-Strauss'⁴ notion of culture as a collection of symbolic systems incorporating language, matrimonial rules, economic relations, art, science and religion in which the relational aspect is the decisive factor. As a mental and physical practice, it calls for exchange and necessitates the recognition of what is identical and what is different. And in the words of E. Benveniste, we would like to clarify that culture, defined "as a highly complex collection of representations, organised by a code of relationships and values (...) is a universe of symbols integrated into a specific structure and is made manifest, and is transmitted, by language".⁵

Systems of representation, symbolic apparatus, referential structures, such is a culture considered as an ensemble of significative practices of which it can be supposed that advertising practices form a part.

Finally, and especially in France for almost a quarter of a century, culture has had political connotations, which in a certain sense is the key to the France of President Mitterrand. "Culture is a political notion that plays a part in the very government of society" asserts Pierre Emmanuel.⁶ He distinguishes three dimensions of culture: humanist, that which allows the individual to develop harmoniously, embracing cognitive knowledge, skills, know-how and the cultivation of the mind; social, entailing the civilisation of a human group and the expression and representation that society gives of itself through its activities; and lastly ideological, as culture is also in part a "systematic conditioning of the individual and collective psyche".

1 BÉNETON, P. (1975). *Histoire de mots, culture et civilisation*, pp. 157-165. Paris: PNSP.

2 KOK ESCALLE, M.-C. (1988). *Instaurer une culture par l'enseignement de l'histoire. France 1876-1912. Contribution à une sémiotique de la culture*, pp. 10-14. Berne: Peter Lang.

3 Quoted by CUCHE, D. (1996). *La notion de culture dans les sciences sociales*, p. 16. Paris: La Découverte.

4 LÉVI-STRAUSS, C. (1951). "Introduction à l'œuvre de Marcel Mauss", *Sociologie et Anthropologie*, p. XIX. Paris: PUF.

5 BENVENISTE, E. (1966). *Problèmes de linguistique générale*, p. 30. Paris: NRF Gallimard.

6 EMMANUEL, P. (1980). *Culture noblesse du Monde*, p. 61. Paris: Stock.

The representation of the Other relates to a pattern of otherness. Within the context of psychoanalytical and anthropological theories, the principle of otherness could also be called the principle of change: it compels individuals to bid farewell to that which was and that which they were, thus allowing them in a certain sense to accede to the “continuation” of themselves, to accept their own evolution, the movement of their lives. Indeed, the beginnings of human life *in utero* are characterised, in the absence of accident, by a perfect harmony between the environment and continuity of the interior state. Birth and the life that follows, on the other hand, introduce the principle of otherness, in other words that which interrupts continuity, all that which disconcerts, unbalances, confronts us with the unknown, the new, in the face of which we are sometimes reduced to helplessness. Associated with otherness is suffering and therefore conflict. And yet it is a prerequisite for evolution, for maturation, for it is in reaction to this disruption that the symbolic function, the function of representation or thought, will form.

What, in a more concrete sense, are the props of this painful and fertile principle of otherness? The baby, who following birth has become totally dependent upon the care it is given, suffers as a result of responses never being as immediate as they were in the womb. This salutary imperfection is the first encounter between the child and reality, which will never subsequently fully satisfy its desires, thus allowing these desires to continue to exist and the child to remain psychologically alive. Otherness will thus lie in the physical and psychological absences of the mother, in her failure to respond exactly to its needs. It is also inherent in the feeling of deprivation and the subsequent violent emotions that overwhelm the child, unable as yet to transform them into images, thoughts and creative activities as it will later. All of this has the effect of interrupting the child’s physical and psychic continuity. If the lack of response and presence is introduced in a gentle, progressive fashion, this will lead the child to develop its powers of representation, the creation of images and later on of thoughts and words in order to help it endure this “gaping” absence and weave a meaning over it so as not to be totally helpless and racked by distress. Even in this favourable case, it will retain the vestiges of this distress linked to the confrontation with otherness at the beginning of its life. Otherness will also be inflicted on it by the words of its mother, who will transmit to/impose on the child the categories and limits carved out by the culture of which she is the messenger. Then otherness will appear in the guise of its father, who should gradually intervene between mother and child in order to allow the latter to develop an identity of its own, another source of suffering. Once the individual is psychologically developed, otherness will emerge suddenly within him or her in the form of uncontrollable manifestations of the subconscious and desire. If he or she has been able to develop his or her personality in a balanced manner, this sudden emergence of otherness will be a source of energy, life, fertility and creativity. In the opposite case, not having the interior means to transform this otherness positively, they will be unable to endure it and will protect themselves from it or seek to destroy it.

The construction of individuality passes through the representation of otherness: “The word representation in a wide sense encompasses feeling, thought, intuition, concepts,

and ideas, in a word everything that is the immediate effect in our consciousness of the processes of feeling, thinking, intuiting, conceiving ideas; (...) in its most limited sense, it encompasses only that which feeling, thought and the idea have in common.”¹ Representation, linked to the human faculty of knowledge, is either conscious or subconscious. Whatever its cause, the human faculty of representation is characterised above all by its receptivity, by the tendency of individuals or groups to be affected by ideas (or feelings or thoughts) that are conveyed and transmitted and which they in turn will reproduce and disseminate. Representations are not necessarily nor even frequently put to the test because they constitute arbitrary short-circuits of the multiplicity of reality and consequently of mental procedures that are “economical” but simplifying. Representations deify subjectivity, which very often remains a subjectivity that is not well founded or reproductive. Certainly the illusion of a universal objectivity should not plague approaches to representations by condemning them to aphoristic exclusions.

While the representation of the Other forms part of the development of individuality, advertising makes frequent use of representations of otherness. Is it worthwhile, therefore, to examine these representations and their possible variations among European countries? How are people and places that we perceive to be manifestly different represented? The topics of difference and otherness seem to arouse a secret fascination. In what forms and practices do they manifest themselves in current everyday life? Where do the common representations originate, of which the stereotypes so widely used in advertising documents form a part? Stereotypes involve the selection of striking details in order to put forward a particular meaning; the effect of this procedure is to reduce the complexity of the real, to generalise excessively, to caricature by exaggerating characteristic features, thereby frequently giving rise to a pejorative, negative representation. Stereotypes, although reductive, convey the characteristics peculiar to a cultural society and can serve as raw material for the understanding of a particular culture. It is necessary too to decode their content and the way they work. What is the role and therefore the function and status of an advertising that disseminates images in this process of representation of otherness and what are its possible consequences?

1.2 Research methodology: corpus and surveys

In order to proceed with our analyses of advertising documentation containing a representation of otherness, we selected a limited international corpus of examples from 100 advertising images for each of the 4 countries. Some ten documents were retained from each country, in other words forty in total. These formed the object of a survey into their reception that was more or less detailed depending on the country. We analysed a number of documents in detail and present here a few examples that seem to us particularly meaningful in terms of our analyses.

1 REINHOLD, K.L. (1789). *Versuch einer neuen Theorie des menschlichen Vorstellungsvermögens*, pp. 212-216. Prague and Jena: C. Widtmann and I.A. Mauke.

The criteria used for the selection were: representation of the human and importance of the image. As those interpreting these documents were assumed not to understand the language used, it was essential to use documents that allocated only a marginal place to text. In addition, we were careful to ensure a degree of diversity in the type of products being promoted by these advertising documents.

The choice of advertising material was not without importance: mass-market and quality periodicals were favoured, along with commercial advertising, in order to obtain documents that were as comparable as possible. However, the selection of the corpus soon revealed that the advertising register across comparable media was not absolutely identical from country to country. A large number of comparable adverts, recurrent themes and products of the same kind (perfume, fashion, technology), and also of the same brand, can be found, but it is also apparent in particular that a theme very clearly in evidence in the Netherlands is not present in the same manner in the other countries. Thus the humanitarian and charitable is very conspicuous not only in advertising for aid associations and associations offering social or medical support, presented as organisations playing a fully-fledged role in the economic system, but also in typically commercial advertising. The different types of common advertising convey certain preoccupations of the society from which they originate, the integration and manifestation of social and economic preoccupations in cultural representation and cultural activities.

Surveys were conducted in the four countries in order to test how the advertising documents were received. Appreciation, positive or negative, was on the one hand measured quantitatively (from 1+ to 5-), as were the level of familiarity of the image and the explicit or implicit character of the representation of the Other. Qualitative evaluation, on the other hand, recorded firstly the verbal associations produced by an immediate reading of the document, followed by the narration of the document and then an explanation of this reading and what it implies in relation to cultural reference models, identificatory markers. In order to record this data we used questionnaires containing closed questions and open questions that might contain explanations, and also conversations varying in terms of both length and the degree of prompting offered.

In recording this data, we were attempting to analyse:

1. the implication of the reader/receiver in an identification with respect to self-validation, order or submission, by means of questioning;
2. the sociocultural representation of the Other in values, ideas and symbolic images relating to the imagination;
3. the presuppositions that articulate the representation of otherness in relation to the self, within one's own framework of reference, and which are supposed to explain the differences produced by the reference contexts.

The quantitative data recorded in three countries (Austria, Greece and the Netherlands) were transferred into tables¹ in such a way as to point up any trends. In order to measure the perception of otherness, the average values for appreciation and degree of familiarity (versus foreignness) of the advertising documents chosen (from 1+ to 5-) were entered into the tables; in addition, we compared these values for ten advertising documents emanating from the four countries (four from the Netherlands and two for each of the other countries, Austria, France and Greece) and ascertained that degree of familiarity and degree of appreciation go hand in hand when contrasting advertising on the basis of place of origin.

As a general rule, there is a clear preference for what one recognises as familiar and less appreciation for what one finds strange (unfamiliar). Level of appreciation and familiarity go hand in hand in the case of both advertising emanating from one's country of origin and advertising that originates in other countries. It is evident furthermore that the Greeks appreciate to a far greater extent the Greek advertising they also find more familiar, and that Austrians perceive Austrian advertising as more familiar than other advertising and also appreciate it proportionately more highly; and if degree of appreciation and degree of familiarity also go hand in hand for the Dutch, it would appear that a foreign document can be appreciated more than a domestic document. It should also be emphasised that the relationship between degree of appreciation and degree of familiarity relating to Dutch advertising is different to that which is observed in other countries. This could be explained by the fact that in the Dutch sample a certain number of students are foreigners (French students taking French courses in the Netherlands and Dutch of Northern African or Caribbean origin).

Furthermore, advertising that originates in a country other than one's own is not recognised as familiar. If one compares the three different countries in the perception of advertising as regards origin, it can be seen that the degree of non-familiarity of the non-domestic is comparable, but not the degree of appreciation; Greece differs, just as the three countries differ in their appreciation of domestic advertising of varying degrees of familiarity. We have thus made new calculations in order to be able to assess divergence and resemblance between countries and to see hitherto invisible disparities that indicate reactions of varying strengths, revealing contextual variations from country to country.

Contextual variations appear when the product and quotient of the average values for appreciation and familiarity are entered into the table and their deviation from a neutral average measured. These calculations have been performed for a sample of ten advertising documents. While there is a similarity between countries in the reception of documents such as "Klicq, Nieuw"² (Klicq, New, a Dutch organisation for the reintegration of the jobless into professional life), there are major differences between

1 For reasons of space we have not been able to include the tables in the appendix. Readers are therefore asked to trust our interpretation of the data.

2 Klicq, Nieuw, Dutch advert published in *NRC Handelsblad*, October 2000.

the three countries in the way they react to the Dutch document “Ben boos”,¹ advertising a mobile WAP phone that depicts a Muslim woman (recognisable from her scarf); the same is true for the way the advertising for “LeMoneymag.fr”,² featuring a married couple close to kissing (depicted as the watermark on a banknote), is received.

While it may be supposed that given a common heritage of cultural references there is no substantial difference, within a European context of production and reception, between the procedures and global strategies in terms of advertising expression between the different countries, we have nevertheless sought to reveal the recurrent principles underlying the reactions provoked by the reading of the advertising documents as recorded in the surveys. The correlations underlined above between the degree of familiarity and the degree of positive evaluation – that advertising originating in one’s own country is better liked than that originating in another country – and between the degree of familiarity of a piece of advertising and its country of production – that advertising originating in another country (although it depends which one) is perceived as less familiar than advertising originating in one’s own country – seem to be recurrent. The differences in the corpus of images in individual countries (a), in the reception of the same image in different countries (b) and in the perception of the image of the Other in different countries (c) seem to be so too.

(a) While the images in the Greek corpus are perceived by others as outmoded, those belonging to the Dutch corpus, on the other hand, are regarded as shocking. Thus the use of an image of a veiled woman in mobile phone advertising for “Ben” seems difficult for a French or Greek³ public to accept, and the advert for “Muratti”⁴ featuring a couple in which the man draws the woman to him from the bathtub in which he is seated, grabbing hold of her like an object, provokes a reaction of rejection in France and the Netherlands while in Greece it conveys an attitude of sensuality deemed desirable. Just as the Greek image of women featured in the advertising for Babyliss⁵ curling tongs seems old-fashioned to a Dutch or French audience, that of the enthroned woman in the advertising for KRO,⁶ a Dutch radio and television broadcaster, is highly shocking for the audiences of each country, even if in the Netherlands it would tend to provoke a smile instead, in recognition of the habitual audacity in the expression of certain points of view. The freedom expressed here in the creation of advertising does

1 “Ben boos” (I am angry); “Ben” means “I am” but is also the brand name used by the telecommunications company for its mobile phones; there is therefore a play on words in the association between the product name and the identity of the subject addressed by the image. This advert appeared in the Dutch newspaper *NRC Handelsblad* in October 2000, and also in *Metro and Spits*, free newspapers distributed on public transport.

2 Advert published in *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 28 September-4 October 2000.

3 In the Netherlands and Austria this is indicative of a reality without particular connotations, while in France and Greece it relates to problematic cultural, social and political issues within the national context.

4 Advert published in the Greek magazine *Έφιλον*, 15 October 2000.

5 Advert published in the Greek magazine *7 Μέρες tv*, 11-17 November 2000.

6 Advert published in the Dutch newspaper *NRC Handelsblad*, October 2000.

not, however, dispel the tensions that exist in society provoked by different representations of the world where different beliefs and faiths are concerned. While these observations need to be confirmed, they allow the hypothesis to be put forward that the corpuses of images drawing from the cultural referent of the society in which they originate convey specific images differentiated from the Other and thus from the self. Could it be said that the French and Austrian corpuses occupy a median place within European representations where the relationship between man and woman or the relationship with foreignness, etc., are concerned, whereas the Greek corpus offers more traditional representations and the Dutch corpus more audacious ones?

(b) The way in which the same image is received can vary according to country. Nestlé's¹ "French kiss" advertising, for example, provokes opposite reactions. While the message seems clear and direct as a result of the simplicity of the image, the reactions obtained are not always those one would expect. The face depicted represents canonic beauty for some, rendering the character desirable, while for others it seems inexpressive and lacking in intelligence or else domineering or even perverse. The mouth smeared with dripping chocolate is found repugnant by French and Dutch female respondents while for Greek informants it is a symbol of voluptuous sensuality and not remotely negative. For the latter, the kiss suggested by this advertising is a pleasurable one and emphasises the stereotype of French as the language of love ("French kiss"). It is interesting to note that the advertiser intervenes by expressing in English a stereotype concerning the French.

The combining of registers can be perceived by some as very troublesome while for others it is not or is only so to a lesser extent. The advertising for West² cigarettes, for example, provokes protest and contradiction. According to a Greek student, "the image is characteristic of the feeling of discontent and moroseness that predominates in modern western society". This image is strongly evocative of America, punks, marginality and, for France, disaffected suburban youth. For the Greeks, the challenging of the established order is seen as an acceptable value, even as one imposed on young people; but the choice of marginalisation is condemned. A minority see in this image modernism and anti-conformism, but for others the accent is on a relaxed attitude and the intimate relationship between the two characters, all elements that are seen as positive. On the other hand, perception in France and the Netherlands, for example, is dominated by the elements of violence, defiance and provocation. For everyone, in any case, the association of sport and tobacco provokes rejection, appearing as "politically incorrect".

(c) The image of the Other can appear in a distinct or confused fashion and can form the object of possible contextual differences depending on the country of reception. Persons of colour, for example, appear distinctly foreign to the Greeks; to the French and Dutch, on the other hand, they are part of everyday life and do not stand out as conveying difference or otherness.

1 Advert published in the Austrian magazine *Maxima* in April 2000.

2 Advert published in the Austrian *Cosmopolitan*, December 1996.

Advertising images are produced and perceived in a context of reference that, going beyond cultural differences, puts forward values, legitimises cultural practices and utilises the imagination. While national, these contexts of reference are multiple because they are specific to the different communities of which society is composed. Perception of the image is linked to the system of references of each individual, in other words to that individual's biography, the social, political and educational dimensions of which are unique to him or her. We will therefore be posing the question: to what extent the representation of the Other in advertising is (1) a complex cultural product conveying values that refer to the common heritage and relate to one's image of oneself, (2) a form of discourse that participates in the (de)construction of individual, sociocultural and national identity, necessitating cultural mediation.

2. Readings of advertising images

2.1 The combining of cultural references: an example

Let us take the example of the advertising for A*Men¹ by Thierry Mugler. The setting is the creation of the world: a greyish sea, in the distance to the left, a jagged, rocky coast rising out of the water, a stormy sky. All of this evokes the severity, the threat, even the violence of the non-human. In the foreground a naked, metallic man moves towards us, having emerged from the water. His body is that of the ideal athlete and his angular chin and jaw, pointed ears and smooth skull create the impression of the hardness and machine-like invulnerability of a robot rather than the human, characteristics accentuated by his metallic colour, even if this smooth shell does evoke a pure beauty free from any blemish or defect. He focuses his gaze on us and, as he advances towards us, proffers a perfume bottle that is also metallic. His right hand, which holds it, is that of a man of flesh and blood, however. The colour palette, including the colour of the character's eyes, is harmonised: grey, blue, green and black, therefore isolating the flesh-coloured hand (even though the pink of the body is hinted at in places under the metallic surface). Above his left shoulder the words "Ainsi soit le Parfum ..." (approximately: "Let there be perfume") are written, in black, at the level of his left knee, also in black: "A*Men" and underneath, in white, a signature: "Thierry Mugler". The asterisk that separates "A" and "Men" is repeated on the metallic bottle. A play on words involving "Men", a perfume for men and Amen; a text which is a pastiche of the Bible, associating the creation of the world, the creation of man and the creation of perfume; an image that identifies the ideal person with the ideal perfume and the addressee, who is being looked straight in the eye and towards whom the hand holding the bottle reaches; the association of all these meanings is also represented by the harmonisation of the colours of the whole; all of this forms a complex message aimed at arousing conscious and subconscious associations on the part of the addressee

1 French advert published in *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 28 September-4 October 2000.

so that he will identify with the idealised image and the message that can be identified as follows: just as God has created man, recreate yourself using this perfume-god and become an ideal being yourself.

The stare that fixes us is not a look of respect but one of ascendancy. The hand of flesh and blood appears as a bridge between the addressee who has not yet been recreated and this ideal “new man”. The association between the genesis of the man, the hand of flesh and the rest of the body, which is evocative of science fiction, embraces all of time, past, present, future and beyond this the a-temporal dimension of origin, the mythological non-time of our beginnings, the scene of our conception from which we were absent, the time of the divine creator who by definition precedes us and eludes us. Now this scene can belong to us should we want it to. Our willpower can intervene in our begetting. We can be present at our own begetting, auto-begetting; self-sufficient, we are our own reference, no longer in debt towards anything or anybody. Furthermore, the new man is alone. He is not being asked to share a law with others, but to identify directly with the ideal, not to reach towards it but to embody it directly. There is an abolition of the distance between man and the absolute/ideal that is necessary to the advent of the symbolic and therefore of the relational. This can be linked to the much-vaunted “dissolution of social ties”, another way of referring to the current widespread “individualism”. If man becomes God, he no longer needs anybody. And here he can, because he holds the “principal” in his hand; he has mastered the symbolic dimension from which our humanisation proceeds. This figure does not represent the alienness of the Other; he is potentially an idealised version of ourselves, made divine by means of the abolition of the boundaries by which we are limited. A sign, in the image, of this proclamation of the abolition of the symbolic law that is the law of differentiation, is the abolition of the frontier between the human and the thing, in this case the metallic object, the machine-robot. This ideal man, that nothing would seem to be able to either stop or reach, is an intermediate being who has succeeded in crossing and therefore in making disappear the frontier that separates us from the non-human. He has been able to emerge from his limited condition, which also means conquering death. With respect to the contravention of their founding frontiers, all cultures give themselves over to representations that are in general terrifying because they signify a departure from the human and therefore symbolic condition: just as there exists in all cultures representations of a hybrid between man and animal, such as the werewolf, or between the living and the dead, such as the vampire, which are monsters, here we have a cross between man, object and the divine, which produces a sort of self-created man-god, holder of the very principle from which he proceeds and which we too are invited to seize. Like the vampire, this man-god multiplies by reproducing a being who is the same as himself, not by engendering another. Like the bite of the vampire, which transmits to its victim the a-symbolic principle of the abolition of the frontiers between life and death in order to turn the victim into another vampire, the metallic bottle contains this same principle between thing, man and god. Here too there the message is inverted: the confusion of genera no longer creates a monster but brings about the realisation of an ideal.

This is exactly the opposite message to that which all symbolising structures address to us: the symbolic precedes us, begets us and limits us in terms of time, space and identity. It is we who depend on it and not the other way round; we receive it and discharge the debt by transmitting it to subsequent generations. The relationship of indebtedness towards the absolute thus places us in a relationship with other men because our symbolisation is not only transgenerational; it exists, is passed on and is maintained through daily life with others, in our relational practices, through this subconscious and mutual acknowledgment of our shared humanity which underpins our exchanges with others.

One might object that this is to take what is only an advertising image, a humorous interlude, very seriously. That is right, at least at the level of the conscious. But the elements utilised in these images are cultural, referring to science fiction and more profoundly to the Bible, the great founding narrative of our western civilisation. Moreover, it is possible to see in the allusion that is made to America through the medium of science fiction a reference to the Bible in so much as the American people, among their founding self-conceptions, possess the conception of themselves as the new Messianic people whose mission is to found man again in order to create him anew. The cultural elements that inhabit us without our knowledge affect us in terms of psychological issues. On top of this come directly psychological elements such as the stare that confirms the message of the hijacked cultural elements, a stare of omnipotence, and the attention-grabbing power of the image, particularly when it seems to be addressed to us “personally” and by a being perceived as being more powerful than us, “a higher power”.¹

2.2 The blurring of images of the self and of the Other

Representations of otherness satisfy a need for individuals to belong to a group. As Bourdieu remarks, “[social representations] define proximities and affinities, distances and incompatibilities.”² Zarate establishes the links between representations of the Other and the process of identity creation: “Representations of the Other refer back to the identity of the group that produces them, (...) they organise the relationship between the group and the Other and contribute to naming the alien according to the group’s internal system of references.”³ The commonplace of the definition of identity by means of the Other only reinforces the importance of the representations of the Other and underlines their psychological and psychoanalytical dimension. The opposition between “positive representations” and “negative representations”, inducing xenophiliac and xenophobic behaviours, is simplistic and emphasises the ethnocentrism

1 As evinced by the reactions of everyone who participated in the research interview conducted in France, from which these results were taken.

2 BOURDIEU, P. (1987). *Choses dites*, p. 69. Paris: Minuit, “Le Sens commun” collection.

3 ZARATE, G. (1994). *Représentations de l'étranger et didactiques des langues*, p. 30. Paris, Crédif-Didier, “Essais” collection, 19.

of the perceptions. Indeed, representations of otherness refer back to the relationships between groups, to relationships based on strength (involving symbolic and real power), to preferences and exclusions and to dynamic and complex issues.

Those who are unable to embrace otherness, changing, are confining themselves to an eternal and illusory identity which deprives them of their lives. To accept otherness is to accept death, which is our ultimate otherness, of which deprivation, the renunciation of our early love for our parents, a lack of omnipotence in the face of the real and the subconscious and the death of our past identity are all signs. If otherness is that which is different and consequently intervenes to disturb our continuity, it is easy to project this onto the outsider, someone who comes from another culture, one that we do not understand. If a culture can be defined as one system among others of making sense of the world by articulating it in a certain way, everything that holds this system in check is a priori distressing. On the basis of a sufficiently well constructed representational system, the individual can seek to weave a meaning across the gap that separates him from the other person, that separates the two cultures; otherwise the foreigner will be intolerable to him and will unleash in him reactions of xenophobia (a phobia being the dread of something that is the expression of a subconscious danger). The phobia of strangers is a phenomenon equally relevant to the person belonging to the community of reception and the person arriving from elsewhere, each being a foreigner to the other. The former will refuse to accept him; the latter will fail in the reshaping of identity that is imposed upon him. This is where the question of representation of this Other is articulated: as soon as meaning is lacking, man defends himself against the distress this causes by seeking to create for himself a representation of the disturbing unknown. We know that the phenomenon of the stereotype, for example, serves in a situation of urgency to fill in the gaps in meaning where the outsider is concerned and to cement – in an economical fashion – the identity of the community. The representations of the outsider that we create for ourselves are complex: they consist of characteristics displayed by the whole society, by the sub-groups that make it up, by families and by individuals themselves according to their biographies. These characteristics change over time and with history. Representations give rise to images that disseminate them and allow them to be internalised by individuals in a manner that is both circular and fluid. Every human society is familiar with this system of images carrying essential meanings that is invoked by authorities who represent the community to its members in order that all share in them, recognise themselves in them and as a consequence are also able to identify that which is not oneself.

We have defined a culture as one system among others of making sense of the world by articulating it in a certain way, a system, therefore, intended to introduce the principle of otherness into the group and to its members. This means that the individual and the group are articulated and interdependent, and that their respective structuring functions according to a common principle. One would therefore not be able to dissociate them or set one against the other, even if their concerns do not match precisely. In order to live humanely, every man and every community needs to relinquish the identification of themselves with the absolute and the conception of themselves as omnipotent.

Otherwise, as soon as this corruption occurs, there will be violence and madness. This proclivity has its origins in the beginnings of life of every baby, when it is in a state of total dependence and impotence affecting its very survival. In order to defend itself against the affects of an extreme violence that this state causes it to experience, it develops the converse fantasy of mastering the object that satisfies its needs and on which its life depends. Subsequently, as it becomes less and less impotent, it learns correlatively to accept little by little that the real is not totally controllable. The process of maturing involves a passage from the absolute to the relative. By relinquishing being everything and being able to do everything, man succeeds in being himself and in being able to achieve the possible. Neither god nor object, neither omnipotent nor impotent. This implies that lack, imperfection, loss and death (all aspects of forgoing the absolute) are accepted by everyone and represented by the group. This distance, simultaneously painful and stimulating, between oneself and the whole is otherness: that which changes us, makes us alien to ourselves and which, if we embrace it, allows us to evolve by integrating the new in order to reshape our identity and our life. When we have internalised the gap between us and the absolute, we arrive at the symbolic dimension that is peculiar to the human species: in the space between ourselves and material reality or the entirety of the subconscious, there is room for us to produce representations, images and thoughts run through with our desire, this forward momentum provoked by lack. The symbol is this representation that makes sense of absence.

What makes it possible to approach this equilibrium, for everyone and for the community, is an external mechanism that makes known and guarantees from the outside the humanising principles that can thus be internalised, maintained and retransmitted. Exoskeleton, prop, framework, any of these images could be used to convey this idea. This mechanism is culture, according to our acceptance of it. The principle of this structure is universal, but it is expressed in different ways via the many different cultures. This structuring mechanism is indispensable, and moreover inherent in every human community, but it is not perfect: the state of equilibrium is not easy to achieve, even less so to maintain and transmit. There is a permanent tension/oscillation between the tendency of the mechanism to become more rigid in order to maintain its continuity, and the need for refashioning and evolution, which is necessary to the living.

What are the procedures used in order to instil the structuring principle in the individual and the group? Positions have been instituted within the mechanism by means of which symbolic functions are guaranteed; their role is to address to everyone verbal and visual messages that are ritualised and dramatised while still representing the group. These messages reveal to all how the world and how man as an individual and as member of a group should be. Those who guarantee these functions are not their owners, but are simply their guardians, they are not the authors of the messages, but simply vehicles or conduits and the Law of non-omnipotence is transmitted to and instilled in them along with everyone else. It does not originate with them even if they

are necessarily its interpreters, in other words those appointed to decide, amid all the uncertainty, what is the best expression to give the age-old inherited principle.

In our western societies, these symbolic functions that structure the individual and the group are guaranteed by politicians, judges and jurists, teachers, fathers and sometimes still priests. Their role is to interpret and spread the legacy in terms of laws, values and the whole articulation of the world peculiar to our cultures that present everyone with a view of the world and of man within the world; this way, everyone can give it a meaning and give him or herself meaning. This articulation into categories, therefore into differences, is only possible providing one has relinquished the initial fusion with the whole. The vehicle *par excellence* of this principle of differentiation, of categorisation within our cultures, is the law. The law guarantees the genealogical order, in other words the succession of symbolic, well-ordered positions that is indispensable to the psychological structuring of individuals. The phenomenon of incest, of which sexual relations between a parent and its child is the paradigm and the worst case, but which can take many other forms, is the result of the failure to internalise the necessary renunciation of omnipotence and consequently the principle of differentiation or, to put it another way, otherness.

Thus, whatever expression it takes, culture is a universal mechanism designed to instil in man the structuring principle of otherness. Thanks to the internalised distance, the agreed relativity, man is made human by acceding to the symbolism that allows him to replace a violent act with a representation. The advert for Thierry Mugler's A*Men that we have analysed above illustrates, for example, how by combining cultural fragments and different registers of reference, the image brings about a blurring that, by abolishing all distance, obliterates the structuring principle of identity versus otherness.

2.3 Advertising, publicity and otherness

Western societies in Europe are experiencing a growing crisis in the legitimacy of symbolic functions. The most striking symptom of this crisis is the weakening of the political function, which no longer succeeds in addressing images of the world and of man to the citizens. This is what one often hears called the "loss of reference points, a crisis of values, an absence of political vision" At the same time, it is possible to observe an increase in the strength of the economic, commercial and financial sector in proportion to this deterioration. While the upholders of the symbolic functions may be resigning these functions, these functions nevertheless live on and demand to be maintained. If political power finds itself transferred to financial might, the same will be true, little by little for the whole of the mechanism. Certainly, this transfer occurs neither explicitly nor rapidly. One simply discovers that a function is being exercised by something other than the proper authority. This is the situation with advertising. The challenging of the symbolic mechanism in our societies is conveyed, among other phenomena, by a growing distinction between the public and the private. Who, currently, can distinguish clearly between public and private messages, whether on the walls of the cities or on television? Benefiting from this confusion, commercial

advertising, whose legal status is that of private message, is taking over, to its own advantage, the procedures of the structuring mechanism: it is currently advertising that is showing individuals models of man and the world.

Admittedly, everyone knows that the aim of advertising is to sell, but what people do not know is that the identificatory models to which the symbolising structure exposes us function subconsciously; we internalise them unknowingly, by impregnation. And if this internalisation functions, it is in accordance with the instituted structural position from which this message issues, a position that is already in itself a message for our subconscious: the effectiveness of the message pronounced by a judge, for example, derives from the fact that it is a judge who is delivering it. And the place from which the upholders of the symbolic functions are authorised to speak is the public space. If the streets of our towns and cities, public space, are invaded by advertising, if one no longer has a means of distinguishing between public and private television, if the symbolic functions do not assert themselves more clearly, it is easy for a private but powerful sector to seize ever more of the whole structure and to place the enormous effectiveness of man's subconscious symbolic dimension at its own service, using the procedures belonging to the symbolising mechanism.

To sum up, the market sector is taking advantage of the current confusion concerning the instituted, and thus legitimate, symbolic positions/functions, whose task is to spread the concept of the world peculiar to the particular cultural community to all the members of that community. It benefits too from the disfavour, mistrust and rejection affecting the symbolic structure of our societies. Thanks to these two factors, confusion and disfavour, it usurps or substitutes itself clandestinely for this structure by taking over its procedures and the power of their impact. These procedures are essentially the diffusion of images and messages, perceived by the addressee as emanating from a structure that is both collective and a transgenerational holder of power and authority, therefore "superordinate" to the individual and affecting his or her existential and subconscious concerns. In these conditions, advertising images are able to fulfil perfectly the function of identificatory models addressed "from above" for the subconscious of those who receive them and who are not in receipt of others issued by genuinely instituted positions (or else these are discredited). As a result it is the images of self and Other that advertising sends us that shape the representations of everyone regarding that which he or she should strive to be or avoid being.

The problem is that the logic of the market sector is not to guarantee the anthropological function of structuring individuals and the community by making known the principle of relativity, the necessity of consenting to lack, of internalising, one way or another, the reality of death. On the contrary, it is a question of seducing people (which is the opposite of structuring), in order to make them buy. One is therefore going to spare them all that is painful about the process of maturing and flatter their natural inclination towards regression and infantilism while promoting in particular the fantasies of omnipotence from the early stages of life. Such is the new conception of man, which, primarily via television, seems to emanate from "symbolic

structuring authorities” of whom one is no longer sure of what they are and who is entitled to fulfil these functions.

It is a matter of great concern that an anthropological function is fulfilled by a non-legitimate protagonist who, moreover, obeys a completely different logic. This substitution is fraught with consequences. It is both caused by the shortcomings of the legitimate symbolic functions and contributes to their acceleration and aggravation by leading the majority to internalise a de-symbolised concept of man.

In every cultural system that has not been hijacked from its normal goal, there exists a representation – which is placed under everyone’s eyes – of the absolute, in other words of everything man can believe in and adhere to with the certainty of the unsurpassable value of his belief as an inaugural, principal reference while preserving the feeling, one that generates uncertainty, of attaining it not fully but only in an approximate, imperfect way that thus forever leaves room for evolution, progress, possible improvement and therefore desire. At the same time, there exists a representation of the distance that inevitably separates people from this absolute, but simultaneously allows them to enter into a relationship with it. Everyone tends towards this absolute, a tension that gives their lives meaning on condition that this distance is preserved. The absolute and man’s relationship with it thanks to this distance that is recognised and maintained, this is what is revealed to every individual and to the group in a ritual, theatrical form in every human society. In the case of our societies, a Catholic mass, a republican ceremony or a court of law are all examples of the idea of this type of staging of great symbolic effectiveness. It always entails a modified setting or “stage”, upholders of the functions who are the cogs in the machinery of the structure, the public being addressed, the ritualised verbal and visual message that is addressed to this public, who are always required to recognise the same structure in it: absolute-distance/relationship-self. For the content of the message remains the same in every scenario: everyone has to recognise himself or herself in the collective allegiance sworn to this structural symbolic law. And it is this common allegiance that allows a society to be formed and a relationship to be maintained, here too (in other words at a respectful distance), with others. It is this internalised law common to all that gives us equality of human status.

In the case of advertising, three things destroy the symbolisation that should be the result of the action of the mechanism on the intended public: the first is that emitted by private protagonists, it is not authorised to fulfil this function and addresses an initial counter-message to everybody, namely that if there is no longer any difference between an instituted function and a private protagonist, this signifies that there is no longer any difference between collective law and the “law” of the individual as soon as the individual has the necessary power (in this case money) to impose it. The second factor relates to the content itself of the advertising messages, which, as we have already seen, attempt to instil in everybody the exact opposite of the structuring principle. This second counter-message, contained in the advertising images themselves, is exacerbated by the third factor, the commercial logic that underlies them, for the

symbolisation of the human cannot be bought, it is inherited, transmitted, it exists within the system of relationships between men.

The reading of the advertising documents that swamp our daily lives and make recognised something experienced in daily life requires a process of mediation due to the complexity of the mechanisms it sets in motion.

3. Using advertising documents in language class mediation

3.1 Mediation: concept and principles

The term mediation stems from the Latin “mediare”, which has two meanings. One refers to the act of giving, in the sense of obtaining, procuring, bestowing, the other refers to interposition in the sense of placing between, interposing, interceding. The two senses complement each other to form a definition of mediation with the sense of transmitting by means of. The term mediation was introduced into the field of law and jurisprudence in the United States in 1970. From there it spread to the majority of European countries and the Commonwealth. In this context, mediation presupposes a conflict and implies the intervention of a neutral person.¹ The concept can be used in the cultural domain when dealing with an open conflict provoked by differences in cultural representations. As cultural representations are often implicit, hidden, the process of cultural mediation can justifiably be situated within the framework of the first meaning of “mediare”. Indeed, they do not only stem from explicit, conscious processes, but are due to a large extent to implicit interactions between individuals and their environment. Whatever their cause, cultural representations are notions that entail a mediation, the meaning one attributes to objects, to material things, is constructed on the basis of systems of representation that take shape within cultural, symbolic practices.² An awareness of these schemes of representation facilitates comprehension, the recognition of the Other. This is one of the objectives of mediation.

The psychoanalyst René Kaës³ defines all mediation in a general sense as “a bridge across discontinuities” and the mediator as the person who has to be able to “construct (...) representations capable of creating a link and creating meaning between unconnected, separate elements”. Meaning cannot, however, be fully constituted when the purely conscious, intellectual and controllable dimension of thought is disconnected from deeper dimensions that allow the subconscious meaning to be transmitted via conscious meaning. We are afraid of the subconscious dimension of thought because it

1 KLAMMER, G. and GEIBLER, P. (eds.) (1999). *Mediation*, p. 9. Vienna: Falke.

2 HALL, S. (ed.) (2000). *Representation: cultural representations and signifying practices*, pp. 24 et seq. London: Sage.

3 KAËS, R. (2002). “Médiation, analyse transitionnelle et formations intermédiaires”, in B. Chouvier et al. (2002), *Les processus psychiques de la médiation*, pp. 11-28. Paris: Dunod.

is not controllable, but only its presence in the exchange can give rise to real meaning and real communication. The problem lies of course in passing this subconscious meaning between people who use different cultural channels. The mediator's task is thus not to communicate controlled intellectual content, but to elaborate mechanisms that can allow meaning to re-establish itself for someone who does not understand, which is something he or she cannot guarantee: he or she can master the mechanisms, but not that which happens afterwards, and being able to tolerate this degree of uncertainty forms part of his or her required skills. Drawing up mediating representations is therefore a complex activity that mobilises the totality of the psyche and involves two dimensions: one concerns the knowledge and cultural content to be transmitted; the other is a relational capacity. This activity is at the heart of language/culture teaching.

Advertising offers a rich field for the study of this phenomenon of subconscious, implicit transmission. Indeed, cultural representations play an important role in the creation of advertising and have an influence on its addressees. A study of the creative processes behind advertising documents could be beneficially used in teaching for as we have been able to see from the various analyses that have been proposed, advertising takes its content from the great cultural reservoir of language, literature, art, history and religion. It sometimes hijacks them in a questionable or even reprehensible way, something that teachers often content themselves with pointing out to their students.¹ The stereotypes that are often articulated by advertising images and slogans, though reductive, convey characteristics that are peculiar to the culture from which they emanate and can serve as raw material for understanding a culture. Deciphering their content and the way they function is the task of the teacher within the framework of his or her role as intercultural mediator.

3.2 The task of the teacher-mediator: making gaps in meaning intelligible

Insomuch as advertising images are not direct sociocultural representations but creations based on cultural elements, they necessitate an initial mediating intervention on the part of the teacher. For the teacher it is a question of deciphering the creative work that has presided over the fabrication of the image. The strategies used in the creation of advertising are numerous and vary over time. Recognising them allows the cultural fragments to be extricated from the final composition in which they are mixed up and identified by replacing them within the cultural system from which they have been removed. Only then, in a second step, can intercultural mediation come properly into play.

1 ABADI, M.-C. (1999). *Advertising as a behavior science*, <http://targetmarket.org>

One of the strategies of those who create advertising¹ is to combine the most heterogeneous fragments. This originates in a certain tendency of western societies to reject social differentiations and to counter the prohibitions and taboos that were still being imposed by the social order up to the second world war² with a demand for transgression. Supported in their ideas by the traditional American mistrust of institutions and authority, advertising executives understood the significance of taking over and promoting through their creative work this ideology that pretends to be anti-authoritarian, as advertising relies on conformism and total, uncritical identification. This mixture of cultural elements implicitly addresses the following message to us: the mixing of genres is no longer taboo, differentiating boundaries peculiar to properly structuring cultural mechanisms can and should be denied. This message indicates to us that one can take hold of an articulation of the real world that constitutes a cultural system and change it at will. The symbolic system is no longer transmitted and internalised subconsciously; it can, on the contrary, be consciously manipulated and along with it our conception of man and the world. One frees oneself thus from the restrictive norms and categorisations inherent in every process of individual and collective structuring.

This strategy based on a certain ideology encounters and reinforces a particular characteristic concerning the reception of the image by respondents in France and the Netherlands at least. This is a difficulty in perceiving representations of otherness. For respondents in these countries, nothing appears alien to them, they have the impression that everything is familiar. There are several elements that explain this inability to differentiate: the media environment constantly exposes people to representations deriving from other cultures; as a consequence, these representations, which admittedly do not correspond to the reality of those cultures themselves, are perceived as familiar. In the case of France at least, there is another explanatory element that relates to history and the collective memory. Young people in particular are haunted by a fear of racism³ that has its subconscious roots in the collective trauma of the second world war and (de)colonisation.⁴ This fear is expressed by an emphatic censure of any designation of difference and therefore of the very capacity to think in terms of difference and otherness. The desymbolisation, resulting from the rejection of any instituting structure, in excessive reaction to the authoritarianism of the old social order, also favours the denial and therefore the eradication of otherness. This current taboo within our society concerning the designation of the Other coincides with the western cultural relativism that – in the name of the ideal of tolerance – denies all conflict relating to the category of the Other, thus preventing it from being actually thought and therefore preventing symbolic responses from being made with respect to it. Denying conflict does not

1 RIOU, N. (1999). *Pub fiction, Société post-moderne et nouvelles tendances publicitaires*. Paris: Ed. d'Organisation.

2 LE GOFF, J.P. (1998). *Mai 68, l'héritage impossible*. Paris: La Découverte.

3 Reaction of the French respondents to the image presented by "Ben boos".

4 TRAVERSO, E. (2002). *La violence nazie, une généalogie européenne*. Paris: La Fabrique.

prevent it from existing, but prevents it being transformed through symbolic representation.

The encounter between these two phenomena, heterogeneous composition outside all existing cultural systems (but using them at will) and a blurring of the perception of otherness that even eradicates any thought of it, confirms for individuals this concept of an indistinct world whose frontiers have been abolished: that characterised by the idea “everything is possible”, that of omnipotence. If we take the example of the advertising for KRO, this image is altogether enigmatic even though nothing about it is alien or appears other. Each fragment is identifiable and can be related to the cultural universe from which it originates, but the whole does not make sense because it does not fit into an existing frame of reference. The abolition of the boundaries between self and Other is depicted here by a mixture of registers: Christianity (evocation of the Virgin Mary) and Buddhism (the clothes are evocative of a Buddhist monk), the West and traditional societies (her necklace says “ethnic”), the association of very concrete, personified elements (maternity, breastfeeding, the chubby baby), erotic elements (mouth, breast) and allusions to spirituality (facial expression, halo) and the universe (the terrestrial globe).

What imitates a symbolic system here is in reality imaginary; indeed it is self-created, its only reference being the will of the creator, and indicates that nothing remains of the old categorisations, in other words the former prohibitions and incompatibilities. While the symbolic, received and shareable limits us because it cannot be controlled, the imaginary, which belongs to everyone, knows no restrictions.

It is important for the language teacher to be aware of these differences so as not to give students the impression that an advertising image can directly supply them with the codes and references of the target culture. The work of the teacher in intercultural mediation is additionally to point out stereotypes fashioned for the culture of the Other, while revealing prejudices emanating from his or her own or the home culture. It is thereby possible to enrich the acquisition of cultural knowledge, and through the relativisation of cultural manifestations give access to understanding of the Other, of the Other’s culture.

Thus, in order to understand a particular dimension of the advertising for “Messe Frankfurt”, it is necessary not only to be able to recognise the setting of Wall Street, Manhattan’s temple of international finance, but also to know the German proverb “Seine Schäfchen ins Trockene bringen” that this scenario illustrates. This proverb means to “bring one’s sheep into the dry”, in other words to place one’s money safely, referring to Wall Street, and backs this up using the ingenuousness of the colour white, that of the little rucksacks in the shape of lambs that everybody in the picture is wearing. The individuals, who are looking in every possible direction, are all on the move individually and independently, but all in the same manner, towards the same operation like pieces on a chess board. The individual quest can be pursued in a collective operation, and two people are shown walking together at the same pace in the background of the picture at the end of the street. A piece of cultural knowledge

indispensable to the understanding of the document, namely the implicit proverb, therefore needs to be supplied by the teacher.

The same is true with advertising for Canon,¹ the central object, the Ixus camera, while the centre of focus with its open eye, is ultimately presented as an accessory (an earring); the accessories taken together underline the photograph's main theme, which would appear to be feminine elegance: the aerodynamic glasses – clothing for the eye, “eyewear”, labelled Thierry Mugler – whose smooth brightness contrasts with the wild hair, the bare shoulders whose smooth nakedness contrasts with the shiny pleats of the dress, and the provocative, American-style cosmetic nails whose whiteness contrasts strongly with the black of the lips. The false nails, highly fashionable in the United States, manifesting a taste here for feminine grooming, can also be read as an animal attribute. The animal nature evoked by the hair and the claws is evocative of an eroticism of primitive sensuality. Associated with the most sophisticated and elegant design, it expresses a casual, easy transgression.² The Thierry Mugler label could thus be associated in Europe with a certain animalisation!

The KRO advert, which appeals to people to “share a feeling” as the text makes clear, offers the image of a breastfeeding Madonna with implicit connotations that refer to a common European heritage: on the one hand, the Catholic tradition that turns Mary, mother of Jesus, into the Holy Virgin, a queen who is the saviour of the world, as emphasised by her eyes, turned towards heaven, and the halo that encircles her head and resembles the terrestrial globe; on the other, Italian Renaissance painting, in particular the tradition of Raphael. Fundamental values are associated with the image presented by this advert, the woman referring to the mother of God and Raphael's Madonna's, dominating the terrestrial globe and seemingly standing out against a coffin suggested by the padding that forms the border of the photograph: beatitude and plenitude, universality and eternity, characterising one's own identity and one's relationship with others. Thus an image made up of elements belonging to specific cultural systems refers to norms and values that relate to these cultures but that are presented as universal.

These things that are assumed to be obvious are therefore not obvious; they are relative cultural constructions. It is the teacher's job to show that the explicit refers back to different implicit meanings relating to different cultures by naming and explaining the elements of knowledge. This entails work on the culture of the student and on the language being learned, the individual – teacher and student – being at the heart of this complex dynamic phenomenon.

1 We have not received permission to reproduce this image. Description: the bust of a beautiful black lady in profile, clothed in a figure-hugging blue satin dress which is draped across the top of her bosom. Her hand on her chest is adorned with long claw-like false finger nails. The Canon Ixus camera hangs as an earring. She is wearing black sunglasses designed by Thierry Mugler: her black hair is swept back into a bristling mane. The background is bluish, at the bottom a red rectangle with the inscription in white: “eyewear by Thierry Mugler Ixus by Canon”.

2 BOURDIEU, P. (1979). *La distinction*. Paris: Minuit.

The research conducted by the team evolved during working sessions in Graz and intermediate meetings spread over three years. Within the framework of the multidisciplinary topic proposed to the group as a whole for research into cultural mediation and language teaching, we opted for a type of material used frequently in the teaching of language and cultures: the advertising document. Highly conspicuous in our everyday environment, advertising is loaded with cultural connotations relating to referents peculiar to a society's customs and cultural practices. It is therefore a rich field for the teacher of foreign languages and culture. We were interested in analysing, on the one hand, how it represents the Other in our four countries and, on the other, how this representation is perceived in the different countries. Following a quantitative approach that allowed us to record differences in reception, we chose to concentrate on an analysis of the functional processes at work in an encounter between the individual and advertising, processes that relate, on the one hand, to the identity of the individual and, on the other, to the norms and values structuring society. Our choice of advertising material revealed itself to be judicious because in the teaching of both foreign languages and foreign culture, the advertising document is simultaneously an object of analysis, an instrument that allows the process behind the construction of cultural identity to be observed and a teaching material, a tool for mediation that facilitates learning about culture and the establishing of reading strategies.

Appendices

- Appendix 1: Thierry Mugler Parfum – advertisement in *Le Nouvel Observateur* (28 September-4 October 2000)
- Appendix 2: KRO (the Netherlands), a Dutch radio and television network – advertisement in *NRC Handelsblad* (October 2000)
- Appendix 3: Babyliiss (distributor in Greece: Vassilias S.A.), electrical hair beauty products – advertisement in *7 Μέρες tv* (11-17 November 2000)

Appendix 1



Thierry Mugler Parfum – advertisement in *Le Nouvel Observateur* (28 September-4 October 2000)

Appendix 2



KRO, a Dutch radio and television network – advertisement in *NRC Handelsblad* (October 2000)

Appendix 3

THE BaByliss EFFECT

TRY IT ON YOUR HAIR TOO!

Curl & Shine
ΤΟ ΜΟΝΟ ΜΕ ΑΤΜΟ!

4x4 Crimper

Straight & Shine
ΤΟ ΜΟΝΟ ΜΕ ΑΤΜΟ!

Ταυτό και το πιο επίθετο μάλλο γίνεται... απλά!

Καταργείται και σπινάκι το μάλλο με 4 διαφορετικούς φωνάκι!

Μαλλοί και σφραγιστοί το μάλλο. Δίνει όγκο και λάμψη!

ΑΕ ΤΟΥ ΚΥΑΡΟΥ
ΒΑΣΙΛΙΑΣ

Babyliss (distributor in Greece: Vassilias S.A.), electrical hair beauty products – advertisement in *7 Μέρες tv* (11-17 November 2000)

Chapter 7:

Representations of others and other cultures in the context of the initial and ongoing training of teachers

Denise Lussier, Réjean Auger, Viera Urbanicová, Marcella Armengol, María Paz De la Serna, Maria Concepción De Miguel¹

1. Research context

Chapter 7 has two purposes. The first is to present the procedure advanced by our research sub-group for conducting research, in order to exercise overall quality control and possibly enable the transferability of some of the data collected into more all-embracing contexts. This procedure allows us to propose an interesting research prototype to emulate in similar research contexts. The chapter's second aim is pragmatic, that is, to illustrate the various stages of the present research by means of the work carried out by our group.

Having regard to logistical reasons, particular constraints and the scheduling demands of the ECML, only data collected by Slovakia could be analysed, as these were available when the chapter was written.

2. Procedure for conducting research

The general aim of the entire research project turns on the formulation of propositions regarding the role of cultural mediation and of the competences involved in the teaching and learning of languages. These propositions invoke different fields of research. We may define them according to the knowledge that needs to be acquired and the teaching interventions that need to be promoted. Semio-linguistics aims to interpret literary and media discourse; social psychology puts the emphasis upon knowledge of self, ethnic identity and the development of cultural representations;

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language teaching theory and method concentrate on teaching support, whether on the role of the teacher as mediator or the effective use of teaching resources (teacher training, writing of school textbooks, and the use of reference documentation). Given such diversity, research choices have to be made. Many lines of inquiry are possible. In view of these considerations, we propose the following procedure:

2.1 Firstly, the need to identify the general issues that the research team will explore

Specific issues for the research group

We know that language teachers are conveyors of cultural representations from various information sources: syllabuses, teaching materials, texts used and their own experiences. But do they use such sources to develop intercultural competence on the part of the learners? The teachers are social actors as well as instructors, but do they see themselves as cultural mediators? Although all teachers have intercultural experience, are they aware of it? Although they interpret interactional communication situations in their classes, do they take account of identity processing? Do they adopt strategies to exploit, negotiate or even provide solutions when there are tensions or misunderstandings between groups of learners?

In identifying the various roles pertaining to the “cultural mediator”, it makes sense to consider, as the primary catalyst, the language teacher. By its very nature, the teaching and learning of a modern foreign language embodies the presence of another culture and contact with otherness in the development of cultural representations. Is it not therefore just as important to aim to enlarge the opening onto other cultures as to develop linguistic competence? Language teaching is a subject area particularly favourable to interventions among young people and adolescents. What is the teachers’ role in pursuing such aims? Have they been trained for it? Can they play this role? Do they want to play it?

In attempting to reply to these questions, we are forced to admit our lack of knowledge concerning the situation of language teachers as cultural mediators in their classroom interventions. In the context of the present research, researchers from three countries saw fit to question teachers. We here present the context of foreign language teaching in Andorra, Spain, and Slovakia.

The Andorran context

Andorra is a principality located between Spain and France in which Catalan is the only official state language; it is entirely autonomous in regard to its political institutions and education system. Since our research focuses upon cultural mediation and foreign language didactics, we were interested in the initial and ongoing training of teachers as well as their practice in teaching the culture. In order to collect data, we

questioned teachers from the college and high school of a public sector establishment in Andorra (the Escola Andorrana), where teaching is via Catalan, and teachers from other school education systems in the country (French and Spanish, lay and confessional), where Catalan is taught as a foreign language, with educational levels determined by programmes from the Andorran Government. These teachers teach only Catalan, at a rate of three hours a week. We decided to limit submission of our questionnaire to the institutions close to the Andorran ministry.

A number of criteria governed the choice of this research in Andorra. We thought it important to obtain a profile of modern language teachers with regard to their state of knowledge and training, the teaching they advocate and deliver, and the development of intercultural competence on the part of the students they teach. Key questions explored were:

- a. What are the teaching methods used?
- b. What place do teachers give to teaching the cultural? Is space given to cultural comparisons?
- c. In what way do teachers play the role of cultural mediator (links between languages and cultures) in the language teaching process?
- d. Do teachers facilitate mediation between the mother tongue and foreign or national languages/cultures?
- e. Are teachers sensitive to situations of linguistic plurality?
- f. Do they distinguish between attitudes, forms of behaviour and types of knowledge?
- g. What are teachers' attitudes regarding linguistic differences in class?
- h. What role do cultural representations play in their training and practice?

All these questions were asked in order to gain an overview of the knowledge, practice, attitudes and cultural representations that language teachers may have regarding the language that they teach and their mother tongue, taking account of the language of the country itself also. Moreover we sought to discover whether, considering their training and their own cultural experiences, they play a mediator role.

Self-evidently, all our questions are rooted in the importance we wish to ascribe to the "cultural" dimension. Such a dimension seems to us a vital element in the development of true competence in communication. At present, we have no information to enable us to establish teaching interventions geared to the needs and expectations of teachers. The present research can only hope to bring partial responses to assist our thinking in this area.

The Spanish context

Non-university level teacher training

Pre-service training

Infant and primary education teacher training is provided at the education faculties. They are first cycle (*diplomado*) studies, lasting for three years and including theoretical and practical training. Studies for this certificate may be taken in different specialisations, including foreign languages.

For teaching in secondary education, the requirements are a second cycle (*Licenciado, Ingeniero or Arquitecto*) degree, lasting for four years and provided at the universities, as well as the successful completion of a teaching qualification course, which awards a professional teaching certificate. The teaching qualification course is organised into different specialisations, corresponding to the different subjects taught in secondary education. The course lasts one academic year and includes practical subject matter as well as professional teaching practice. There might be some changes concerning secondary education teacher training, according to the new Organic Act on Quality in Education.

In-service training

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, the Autonomous Communities and the universities offer courses for improving the skills of infant, primary and secondary education teachers.

In 2000, the Higher Institute for Teacher Training (Instituto Superior de Formación de Profesorado) was established as a unit of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport with the aim of organising programmes and activities for teachers throughout the entire state. The General Sub-directorate of European Programmes (Subdirección General de Programas Europeos), also a Ministry of Education unit, offers programmes for teachers in collaboration with different European institutions such as the European Commission and the Council of Europe.

The Autonomous Communities likewise draw up plans which involve different institutions and respond to the training needs of the teachers in their communities. Teachers' centres also perform their functions on an autonomous community basis and develop programmes (seminars, courses, round tables, lectures, etc.) for improving teaching skills.

Teachers at private centres receive training through the plans drawn up in professional associations, trade union organisations and other institutions.

The Slovak context

In Slovakia, the educational context changed radically after November 1989. With the change of political system, the Russian language lost its privileged position in favour of western languages. The lack of qualified teachers in these languages necessitated the “recycling” of former Russian teachers, who had just lost their employment. The universities organised postgraduate courses in order to respond to this need. The shortened training made it possible to resolve the situation in teaching at both primary and secondary level.

In regard to the training of teachers to teach culture and civilisation it must be said that, even in the case of teachers receiving five years’ training, the situation is not ideal, because they learn about the culture and civilisation of the countries concerned almost entirely at university; long stays in the foreign country are still not very common. As for textbooks used in teaching, they still come from abroad and are on occasions complemented by Slovak textbooks.

With the opening of frontiers and the multiplication of foreign contacts, the need for foreign language teaching to contain a cultural component has become more pressing. Hence it seemed essential to us that research into cultural mediation and foreign language didactics should inquire into whether the initial and ongoing training of teachers addresses this need.

2.2 Secondly, the importance of closely identifying the research questions

Given our lack of knowledge regarding the role of modern language teachers as social actors and cultural mediators, several questions arise. Study of the different models of “communication competence” demonstrates that the teaching and learning of modern languages has developed for more than a decade around four components: linguistic competence, discursive competence, sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence (Canale and Swain, 1980; Canale, 1983; Bachman, 1991; Council of Europe, 2001). The integration of intercultural competence within such models is still at an embryonic stage, although three theoretical models have been proposed by researchers (Byram and Zarate, 1994; Byram, 1992, 1997; Lussier, 1997 and forthcoming). Within this perspective, we have every reason to believe that teachers will have developed their own models of reference from their own personal experiences, their practice in situations of intercultural communication and their training as language teachers. Accordingly, we raise the following questions:

General question

Are language teachers able, given their training and cultural experiences, to be social actors in the development of intercultural competence, to act as cultural mediators or even attribute such a role to themselves in the way that they teach modern languages?

Specific questions

1. What are the locations as well as linguistic and cultural practices of the teachers?
2. What are the teachers' perceptions and attitudes in regard to other cultures?
3. What mediation experience are teachers able to use?

Having stated these questions, we were able to draw up an inventory of existing theoretical models and check the relevance of the facts and hypotheses that flow from them. Each of the researchers proceeded to an analysis of his or her needs and of the types of information he or she wished to collect. We therefore sought a conceptual research framework that would enable us to respond to the totality of the research questions.

2.3 Thirdly, the definition of a conceptual research framework

We are aware of the extent to which language and culture are conceptually inseparable. Language is more than a cultural reflection; it constitutes the culture. For Bourdieu (1982), language is more than an instrument of communication. Its infinite capacity to build links between symbolic forces fashions people's perceptions and their vision of the social world. Mental representations are constructed, that is schemes of perception and appreciation, of acquaintance and recognition, in which individuals invest their interests and presuppositions. Hence, it becomes increasingly important to consider language acts no longer simply as linguistic elements but as vehicles of the culture and of the representations that the individual makes of the Other and of other cultures.

Despite recent efforts and research, the relationship between *language* and *culture* seems to us to have been underestimated; hence the need to offer new models of language competence that integrate the development of real intercultural competence for learners of modern languages. For the present research we chose the conceptual framework of Lussier (1997) as a working basis. This comprises three major dimensions: (a) *savoir* – comprising cognitive elements, taking account of ways of life, customary procedures, practices, institutions, and individual and social norms of reference; (b) *savoir-faire* – comprising behavioural elements, concerned with forms of behaviour, plurilingual and pluricultural practices derived from the family, cultural and social environment of individuals and aiming at the development of specific skills related to contexts of communication; (c) *savoir-être* – comprising affective elements, concerned with the mental representations of individuals and the development of

attitudes able to cross over from knowledge of self to sensitivity towards other cultures, appropriation of them and respect for the values of others.

In order to arrive at a conceptual framework specific to the present research (Table 1), we held a brainstorming session in which all the researchers were able to voice their expectations and needs. Our questions turned on the initial and ongoing training of teachers and the cultural representations that they were able to develop in such a context or through their plurilingual and pluricultural experiences. *Table 1: Conceptual research framework – Teachers’ cultural representations and competences in the foreign language*

Dimensions	Sub-dimensions	
<u>1. Savoir</u> Knowledge profile	1.1 Training	1. Initial
		2. Ongoing
		3. Linguistic
		4. Cultural
	1.2 Competences	1. Language L1 – FL and MT
		2. Cultural
1.3 Actual experience	1. Learning experience	
	2. Linguistic and cultural practices	
<u>2. Savoir-faire</u> Behavioural profile	2.1 Behaviour	1. Teaching approaches and methods
		2. Types of activities
		3. Strategies
	2.2 Mobility	1. Family/social/professional
<u>3. Savoir-être</u> Attitudinal profile	3.1 Perception/ attitudes	1. Understanding
		2. Acceptance
	3.2 Role as teachers	1. Tension/negotiation
		2. Mediation

In regard to the first dimension, that of *savoir* elements, the object was, in relation to each of the countries, to evaluate teachers' knowledge. Three sub-dimensions were tabled: (1) their training to teach languages, initial, ongoing, linguistic and cultural; (2) their competence in their mother tongue (MT), in a foreign language (FL) or second language (L2), as well as their perceived level of cultural competence; (3) their actual experience in terms of learning, interactive communication situations, and linguistic and cultural practices. In regard to the second dimension, that of *savoir-faire* elements, the object was to evaluate behaviour linked to the pedagogical interventions of the teacher in the classroom. More specific interests were the teaching approaches and methods favoured, the types of linguistic and cultural activities employed to encourage learner interaction and the strategies deployed to further the development of cultural competence. The third dimension, that of *savoir-être*, is regarded as the psychological dimension of cultural representations. We were concerned to evaluate teachers' attitudes and cultural perceptions. In the first instance, development of cultural *savoir-être* implies an ability to understand and accept other cultures. There needs to be consciousness and appropriation of the other culture. In the last instance, *savoir-être* aims at the internalisation of the individual's own values and development of a system of values that favours otherness and empathy, the ultimate object being the ability to play the role of cultural mediator in situations of tension or conflict where intervenors have sometimes even to negotiate situations of communication.

It is already reasonable to suppose that the interaction of teachers and the discourse, both pedagogical and cultural, that they convey to learners is strongly linked to their training and earlier experiences; hence the importance of inquiry into their level of knowledge, behavioural profile and attitudes in relation to the development of cultural representations.

As we have been able to ascertain, definition of a conceptual research framework is a fundamental stage in any research. It became the framework of reference for each of the countries involved in the research. We were thereby able to ensure the same orientation, the same aims, and the same research questions. Within this perspective, we hope to be able to pool our experiments, knowing that the data collected will be of the same type. In addition, the conceptual research framework has made it possible, in the second instance, to define the operational research framework. This framework covers the methodological aspects of the research and is, broadly speaking, the object of the second part of this chapter.

2.4 Fourthly, definition of an operational framework comprising of the different methodological stages of the research

The methodological procedure (Auger, Séguin and Nézet-Séguin, 2000) proposed and adapted within the framework of the project follows the usual pattern found in the education and human sciences sector. It includes a conceptual analysis and validation of each aspect of the theoretical framework. Validation of the theoretical framework leads to the production of each of the questions or statements of the questionnaire, to

their revision by a committee of experts and to the production of the utilisation protocol. According to well-established standards, a metrological analysis of the items (generic term) follows utilisation of the questionnaire and the collection of data. This quantitative analysis of the items permits their empirical validation and ensures the quality of the interpretation, which is both normative and criteria-led (by reference to a conceptual framework for results), leading to decision-taking or action in relation to aimed objectives.

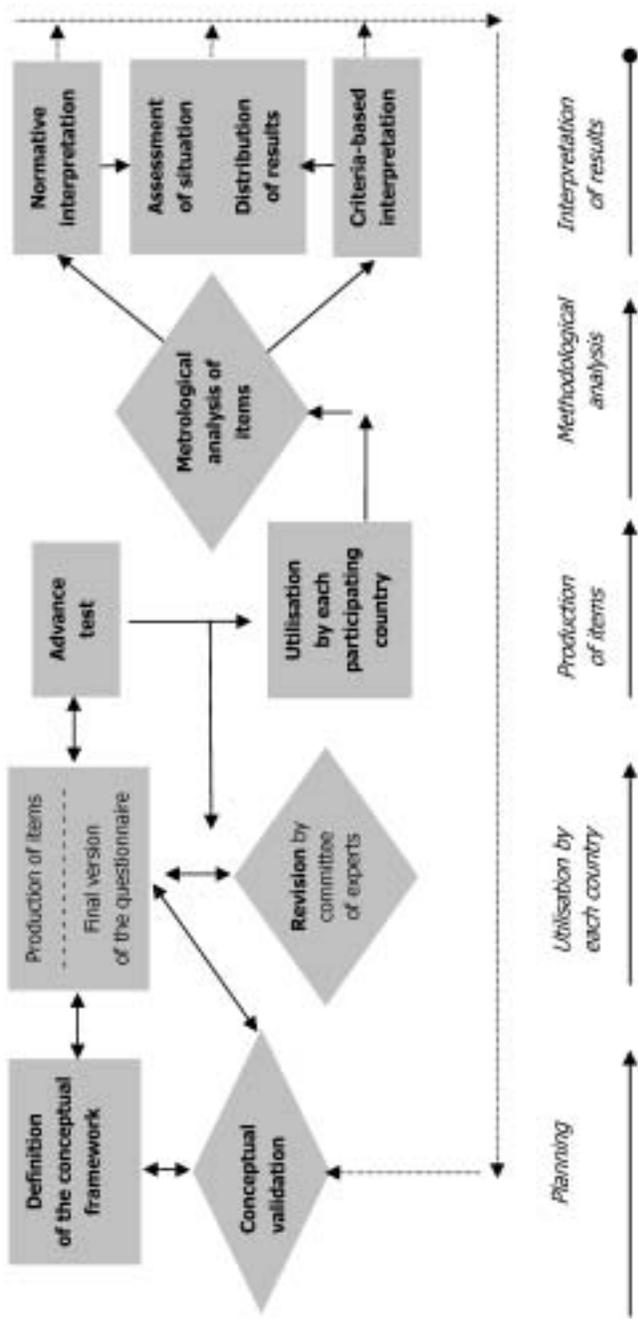


Figure 1: Methodological procedure followed

Figure 1 illustrates the nature of relations between the different stages. Interactive links are represented by lines with double arrows, and there are several retroactive loops between different stages. These interactions and retroactions permit both quality control and validation of each of the stages. The quality control of information relating to the various stages ensures that such adjustments, if necessary, are made between the stages of production.

The text that follows looks again at the methodological stages, describing the results of the present research.

2.4.1 *Planning*

The planning stage aims to assist researchers to identify and define the area of research in line with the determined conceptual research framework. This stage already confronts researchers with the need to describe their research purpose, often in question form, to decide on modes of investigation and the types of interpretations looked for from the collected data. This stage also calls for a tight definition of essential and representative elements of the competences concerned, those that will make up the questions or items of the instrument of inquiry.

For the purposes of the present research, the intention is to respond to the general question and three specific research questions. The research uses an inquiry procedure whose mode of investigation is the use of a written questionnaire. The intended competences were clearly identified when the sub-dimensions of the conceptual framework were specified, and they formed the basis for the development of questions asked. The three countries (Spain, Andorra and Slovakia) from the start accepted the proposed conceptual framework outlined above, though not without requesting the occasional modification or addition. This validation stage took place among representatives of the different countries concerned; it was therefore validated by national representatives.

2.4.2 *Identification of questions for the written questionnaire and arrival at a final version*

The stage at which questions or items in a questionnaire are produced is subject to two constraints. First, that no question should be gratuitous, that is, every question should be a function of the objectives or conceptual aspects investigated, and therefore needs to be both congruent and relevant. Secondly, the framing of questions ought to respect the rules on open and closed-type questions (see Chapter 3, on the development of questionnaires).

The present research questionnaire exists in four languages (French, Catalan, Spanish and Slovak). As the working language of the team is French, the French questionnaire was regarded as the documentary basis and support for all the translated versions: Catalan for Andorra, Spanish for Spain and Slovak for Slovakia. The questionnaire

comprised: a common section (fifty-eight questions) for the three countries concerned in the project; individually distinct sections to adapt the questionnaire to the different demands and specificities of the different countries (Slovakia: sixty-six questions; Spain: sixty-one questions; and Andorra: sixty-one questions).

All the items produced went through a stage of docimological revision and content validation by the team of national representatives under the supervision of Canadian experts. Once the committee of representatives had validated a French version, it was translated into the three other languages (Spanish, Catalan and Slovak).

In addition, since the questionnaire was translated into three different languages from French, revision of items in those languages needed retranslation into French (the language of reference) as appropriate in order to preserve the primary sense. Each national team was responsible for ensuring that their version respected the questionnaire's meaning by retranslating it into French.

2.4.3 Use of the questionnaire by each country

This stage consists in setting up any instrument of inquiry (questionnaire or other) and utilising it according to a standardised procedure, so that all respondents are treated alike regardless of their origin or the country to which they belong. A pre-validation testing session is also required so as to check that the questionnaire's directions and questions are well understood, as well as the general procedure by which it will be utilised. This last phase is mandatory, but it has been observed that in practice it is often disregarded to immediately use the questionnaire.

From the outset, therefore, it was regarded as important to give the research a system of application that would be credible, adapted to the reality of the teachers consulted, simple in terms of accessibility, relevant and fair for all, and realistic as to feasibility of the operation and the time allowed for the questionnaire to be completed.

The Andorran context

The questionnaire was translated into Catalan, which was the only language used for its application. The pre-validation of the questionnaire was first undertaken in the high school where the researcher works. As it is a small centre, it was necessary to appeal to other teachers. As there is a college close to the high school, it seemed useful to have recourse to the teachers of that level to apply the questionnaire.

In Andorra, the researcher gained access to schools via the good offices of the headmistress of the Escola Andorrana, who was able to obtain authorisation to send the questionnaire to other head teachers. Thereafter, the researcher organised short meetings with language teachers in order to explain the questionnaire's aims and provenance (Council of Europe/ECML) and the objectives of the research project.

After reading the questionnaire together, the teachers had an opportunity to express any doubts they might have when replying to it.

Spanish context

The questionnaire adopted for this study was applied to secondary education foreign language teachers working in public schools.

Slovakian context

Within the context of the research, Slovakia opted to utilise a written questionnaire designed for teachers including questions that were common to all the participating countries and questions that were specific to Slovakia. The questionnaire used was in Slovak both for practical reasons and so that teachers of different languages could be questioned. The questionnaire was administered to secondary teachers, because in our opinion foreign language teaching has the strongest tradition at that level. The questionnaire was sent out by email and replies were returned by post.

General description of the questionnaire

In order to expedite the procedure of this inquiry into the current situation of teachers as cultural mediators, there were necessary stages of planning, composition, utilisation, analysis and interpretation of a written questionnaire. The questionnaire constituted both a survey and an instrument of inquiry intended to provide better awareness of teachers' knowledge, behaviour and attitudes, whether xenophile (positive attitudes) or xenophobic (negative attitudes). To this end, the questionnaire was divided into five distinct sections. Section 1 gathered basic general information related to sex, age, nationality, countries and towns of origin, qualifications, means of improvement of skills and types of training undergone. Section 2 related to the linguistic and cultural practices of teachers (thirty questions). Section 3 touched on the cultural perceptions of teachers (ninety-one statements). Section 4 concerned itself with teachers' perceptions of the methods they use with their students with a view to advancing their learning progress (thirty questions). Section 5 addressed teachers' perceptions of their competence with regard to the language. It is important to stress that Sections 1, 3, and 5 belong more to the sort of information gathering that is proper to any survey of practices. As Sections 3 and 4 bear on teachers' perceptions, they use Likert-type scales (see Chapter 3).

It was at this stage of the proposed methodological procedure, that there were observable differences between the different participating countries. The Slovak version was applied to a cohort of fifty-one secondary school teachers. It was therefore a reduced-scale application in which the sample was voluntary or, in other terms, a sample of convenience. It follows therefore that the results have important limits,

making generalisation null and void. However, such a sample of convenience offers a good opportunity to test the questionnaire. In the present context, therefore, what is described should be regarded rather as a pre-validation of the written questionnaire in its Slovak version.

3. Metrological analysis

The analysis stage of an instrument of inquiry consists in assessing its metrological qualities, provided the instrument has been applied to a sufficient number of respondents. This assessment rests on the estimation of statistical indices and leads to a decision to reject, accept or modify each question/item according to criteria of empirical fidelity and validity. Thereafter, the analyses undertaken enable researchers to assess globally the tendencies and frequencies of the observed situation for the whole group of respondents.

The constraints in writing the present chapter allow presentation of tendencies in regard to the three specific objectives pursued for only one of the countries involved in the research, namely Slovakia. The first step concerns the analysis and the description of the results, with understanding that the results flow from the validation of content done by the national representatives in their country and all the while respecting the written questionnaire administration protocol.

Given the limited number of respondents ($N = 51$) and the very large number of items ($N = 174$), no psychometric analysis has been performed with a view to establishing the formal empirical validity of data (especially for Likert scales), although a scrupulous examination was made of the admissible values of data. In this connection, the Canadian team made available to project members an autonomous database called a “data framework” to ensure validity of the data entry (Auger, 2002). This data framework, specific to the research project, checks on admissible values in the entering of data and carries out a brief descriptive analysis for each item in the questionnaire.

4. Analysis and description of results

Analysis of the Slovak version’s data has been performed with the assistance of version 11 of the SPSS programme. This is essentially a descriptive analysis based on hits to each of the questions asked and on the treatment of the information with the aid of average scores. For each of the sections headed in the written questionnaire, descriptive analyses are presented.

The sample of convenience is essentially made up of 88% women (45 out of 51) whose age varies between 22 and 61 years, with an average of 42 years. Their age distribution is as follows: 17% of the teachers are under 29, 14% are between 30 and 40, 52% are

between 41 and 50, and 17% are between 51 and 61. Over 92% are of Slovak nationality, 4% are Czech and 4% are Hungarian. Overall, 96% were born in Slovakia.

The teachers' professional training comprises: 8% bachelor level, 68% master level, 12% doctoral level and 12% other diplomas. In general, 4% of the teachers take university courses (choice 1), 10% field studies in the target language country (choice 2), 12% an individual stay in the country concerned (choice 3), and 8% some other type of training to become better acquainted with the language they teach (choice 4). Teachers also undertake field studies or individual stays (12%) In 12% of cases, teachers opt for the first three possibilities and in 10% of cases for all four possibilities. For 32% of them, there is a mixture of the possibilities. In addition, 22% of the teachers, out of a total of 51, say they speak one language, 29% two languages, 29% three, 16% four and 4% five.

Linguistic and cultural practices

The description of the teachers' linguistic and cultural practices replies to the research project's first question, namely: What are the locations as well as linguistic and cultural practices of the teachers?

If one looks at the options for the teachers to express themselves in Slovak, Hungarian, French and English, they say that they speak Slovak with their parents (91% with their father and 88% with their mother), with their brothers and sisters (90%) and with their friends (82%). We find that 4% of the teachers speak two languages, including Slovak; 10% speak three languages including Slovak. Some 2% use Slovak, French and other languages. The other languages spoken by the teachers are, among others, English, German and Russian (14%), German and Russian (10%), German (8%), and English, French and Russian (4%).

The teachers say that if they could choose a language in which to communicate, they would choose Slovak (57%), English (25%), French (6%), some other language than Slovak, Hungarian, English or French (4%), two languages including Slovak (4%), and three languages namely Slovak, Hungarian and English (2%).

Answering the question "What does Slovak represent for you?", teachers say that for them it represents their mother tongue (50%), a second language linked to school and professional life (12.5%), a combination of the first two options (12.5%), or a second language linked to school and professional life that they have pleasure in speaking outside the home (25%). Answering the question "What does Hungarian represent for you?", teachers say, among other things, that it represents a second language linked to school and professional life (24%), a combination of two options 2 and 3 (6%), a combination of three options (8%) or something other than that represented by the options already mentioned, including a language spoken with their friends (42%).

The questionnaire includes three questions regarding the teachers' perception of their level of competence in Slovak, English and French. Participants have to answer a five-

point scale (inadequate, acceptable, good, very good, excellent). Each question was divided into four sub-questions relating to their competence in reading (R), written expression (W), listening comprehension (L), and oral interaction (S). Table 2 gives a brief overview of the fifty-one teachers' perceptions. They say that they have excellent mastery of the Slovak language in both spoken and written forms, that they have good mastery of English, with better reading comprehension than for the other forms of the language, but that their level in French is inadequate.

Table 2: The teachers' perceptions of their level of competence in Slovak, English and French

Questions	N = (51)	Appreciation	Average
Slovak/R		Excellent	4.90
Slovak/W		Excellent	4.76
Slovak/L		Excellent	4.90
Slovak/C		Excellent	4.78
English/R		Very good	3.51
English/W		Good	3.24
English/L		Good	3.37
English/C		Good	3.20
French/R		Inadequate	2.33
French/W		Inadequate	2.18
French/L		Inadequate	2.29
French/C		Inadequate	2.16

To the questions “Have you recently been in a foreign country?”, “Why did you travel?”, and “In what context did you travel?”, the teachers spent at least two weeks in other countries (47%), less than two weeks (37%) or did not travel at all (16%). Among those who had travelled, 16% said they travelled for the language, 29% to get to know other cultures, 16% within a professional framework, 31% for entirely other reasons and 8% for reasons interacting with the previous options. Travel was undertaken alone (38%), with the family (33%), with friends (11%), as an organised travel package (7%) or organised in some other way (11%).

In regard to the statement “If I visit a country, I would like to be able to speak the language used in that country”, 63% of the teachers said that they were generally in agreement with it. To the question “When travelling, how do you set about things?”, they said that they were on average in agreement about using guides and books so as to organise their own travel (46%); they were in agreement about taking account of the country’s language (43%); and they were more or less in agreement with the remainder of the statements, as is partly shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3: The teachers’ appreciation of means used when travelling

Means used when travelling: N = (51)	Average	Appreciation
1. When travelling, I use guides and books so as to organise my own travel	3.37	Agree
2. When travelling, I use a travel agent	3.12	+ or – agree
3. When travelling, I take pot luck	2.75	+ or – agree
4. When travelling, I take the address of someone there given to me by a friend	3.22	+ or – agree
5. When travelling, I prefer to go with an organised group	2.63	+ or – agree
6. When travelling, I take account of the country’s language	3.45	Agree

According to Table 4 below, concerning the languages of newspapers read, 63% of the teachers responded that they read Slovak newspapers every day, that they never read Hungarian newspapers (82%), that they read English newspapers between once a month and once or twice a week (63%), that they never read French newspapers (59%) or read them once a month or once or twice a week (31%), that they never read German newspapers (41%) or read them twice a year (22%) or between once a month and once or twice a week (31%).

Table 4: Frequency of reading newspapers in various languages

Reading newspapers in	Never	Twice a year	Once a month	Once or twice a week	Every day	N subjects (51)
Slovak	2.0		2.0	33.3	62.7	100%
Hungarian	82.4	2.0	3.9	9.8	2.0	100%
English	13.7	17.6	33.3	29.4	5.9	100%
French	58.8	7.8	11.8	19.6	2.0	100%
German	41.2	21.6	11.8	19.6	5.9	100%

According to Table 5, with regard to television viewing, 84% of the teachers said that they watched Slovak television every day, that they never watched Hungarian television (71%), that they watched English television once a month or once or twice a week (55%) and that they never watched French television (61%).

Table 5: Frequency of watching television in various languages

Watching television in	Never	Twice a year	Once a month	Once or twice a week	Every day	N subjects (51)
Slovak			2.0	13.7	84.3	100%
Hungarian	70.6	13.7	2.0	7.8	5.9	100%
English	15.7	13.7	33.3	21.6	15.7	100%
French	60.8	11.8	7.8	7.8	11.8	100%
Some other language	31.4	19.6	13.7	25.5	9.8	100%

Table 6 presents the frequency of certain forms of behaviour in regard to the use of mother tongue or other languages. Examination of these forms of behaviour for each of the statements gives the following frequencies, expressed in percentage terms. Of the teachers, 74% say that they rarely or generally think in their mother tongue before speaking another language; 94% are generally, often or always mindful of their interlocutors; and they generally and often (65%) use the language of their interlocutors despite their own difficulties to express themselves. In addition, teachers never or

rarely (63%) fail to take account of an interlocutor's own language; they do not tend to fall silent, even when finding it hard to express themselves in another language (59%); they would like to speak as many languages as possible (82%); and they feel disappointment (50%) in regard to failings in understanding expressions in another language.

Table 6: Frequency of certain forms of behaviour in regard to the use of mother tongue vis-à-vis other languages

Statements	Never	Rarely	General -ly	Often	Always	N subjects (51)
Thinking in my mother tongue before speaking another language	13.7	45.1	29.4	5.9	5.9	100%
When the other person does not understand my language, I make an effort to make myself understood in another language		5.9	33.3	15.7	45.1	100%
Use of my interlocutor's language despite my own difficulties	7.8	21.6	37.3	27.5	5.9	100%
Spontaneous use of my mother tongue without concern for my interlocutor	35.3	27.5	17.6	7.8	11.8	100%
Tendency to fall silent if I have difficulties expressing myself in another language	9.8	49	23.5	15.7	2.0	100%
Desire to speak as many languages as possible		2.0	15.7	41.2	41.2	100%
Disappointment felt in not understanding a maximum of expressions in another language	11.8	39.2	17.6	13.7	17.6	100%

The cultural perceptions of Slovak teachers replying to the questionnaire

The cultural perceptions of the teachers help to provide an answer to the research project's second question, namely: "What are the teachers' perceptions and attitudes in regard to other cultures?" This section of the questionnaire essentially comprises statements with which the teachers express degrees of agreement or disagreement according to a Likert five-point scale (totally disagree, disagree, more or less agree, agree, totally agree). The present results are metrologically limited; for the moment (in this pre-validatory phase), one cannot speak of a formally constituted measure or metric, but simply of data related to the specific content of the conceptual framework. Hence it is not appropriate to give an overall score with a view to positioning the teachers on a construct, such as stipulating greater or less openness or reticence towards others.

Table 7 below presents the teachers' perceptions regarding cultural differences. In general, the teachers perceive that cultural differences are not synonymous with "rejection" (98%), "menace" (94%), "difficulty" (88%), or "friction or conflict" (84%). They consider rather that cultural differences are synonymous with "intellectual enrichment" (76%), "interest" (67%), "curiosity" (57%), "surprise and novelty" (57%), "challenge" (49%), or "the exotic" (37%).

Table 7: The teachers' positive/negative perceptions regarding cultural differences

Cultural differences are, for me, synonymous with: (N subjects (51))						
	Totally disagree	Disagree	+ or – agree	Agree	Totally agree	Total %
Difficulty	27.5	35.3	25.5	7.8	3.9	100
Interest		5.9	27.5	37.3	29.4	100
Rejection	52.9	33.3	11.8	2.0		100
Curiosity	2.0	9.8	31.4	31.4	25.5	100
The exotic	9.8	29.4	23.5	21.6	15.7	100
Friction	25.5	23.5	35.3	7.8	7.8	100
Conflict	29.4	29.4	25.5	7.8	7.8	100
Enrichment	3.9	5.9	13.7	31.4	45.1	100
Menace	39.2	35.3	19.6	3.9	2.0	100
Surprise	3.9	17.6	21.6	33.3	23.5	100
Challenge	3.9	11.8	35.3	27.5	21.6	100

Tables 8a, 8b and 8c below describe, in terms of six different aspects, what Slovak (8a), French, English or German (8b), Hungarian or all other minority languages (8c) represent for the teachers. In regard to Slovak, they say that they do not agree that it represents a different way of thinking (74%); they are broadly in agreement (as far as more or less agreeing) that it represents openness towards another culture (74%); they agree (as far as totally agreeing) that it represents the pleasure of being able to read authors in the language (72%); they do not agree that Slovak represents above all difficulties in learning the language; they are between disagreement (44%) and agreement (56%) as to whether they see in Slovak a different sense of aesthetics; and they more or less agree, agree or totally agree (66%) that Slovak represents the opportunity to be more competitive professionally.

Table 8a: What Slovak represents for the teachers

For me, Slovak represents: (N subjects (50))						
	Totally disagree	Disagree	+ or – agree	Agree	Totally agree	Total %
A different way of thinking	32	42	12	6	8	100
Openness towards another culture	24	30	20	14	12	100
Pleasure in being able to read authors	4	6	18	24	48	100
Above all difficulties in learning the language	74	18	6	2		100
A different sense of aesthetics	24	20	28	20	8	100
The opportunity to be more competitive professionally	16	18	26	22	18	100

In regard to other languages, teachers perceive French, English or German as a different way of thinking (69%), openness towards another culture (92%) and pleasure in being able to read authors in French, English, or German (82%). Some 70% of them consider that these languages do not represent learning difficulties, 48% that they represent a different sense of aesthetics, and 90% that they definitely represent the opportunity to be more competitive professionally.

Table 8b: What French, English or German represents for the teachers

For me, French, English or German represents: (N subjects [51])						
	Totally disagree	Disagree	+ or – agree	Agree	Totally agree	Total %
A different way of thinking	3.9	3.9	23.5	39.2	29.4	100
Openness towards another culture			7.8	35.3	56.9	100
Pleasure in being able to read authors		2.0	15.7	29.4	52.9	100
Above all difficulties in learning the language	25.5	45.1	11.8	11.8	5.9	100
A different sense of aesthetics	2.0	15.7	33.3	23.5	25.5	100
The opportunity to be more competitive professionally		3.9	5.9	17.6	72.5	100

As far as Hungarian and all other minority languages are concerned, 49% of the teachers perceive Hungarian or minority languages as a different way of thinking; 49% see them as representing openness towards another culture; and for 52% of the teachers, they represent pleasure in being able to read Hungarian authors or authors in other minority languages. In addition, 44% of them consider that these languages do not represent learning difficulties and 46% of them that they represent a different sense of aesthetics, an ambivalent perception; and in 64% of cases, they do not consider them as offering an opportunity to be more competitive professionally.

Table 8c: What Hungarian or other minority languages represent for the teachers

For me, Hungarian or other minority languages represent: (N subjects (51))						
	Totally disagree	Disagree	+ or – agree	Agree	Totally agree	Total %
A different way of thinking	11.8	7.8	31.4	31.4	17.6	100
Openness towards another culture	9.8	7.8	33.3	29.4	19.6	100
Pleasure in being able to read authors	36	16	24	16	8	100
Above all difficulties in learning the language	22	14	20	16	28	100
A different sense of aesthetics	12	8	46	26	8	100
The opportunity to be more competitive professionally	36	28	20	10	6	100

Table 9 makes it possible to assess the teachers' perceptions regarding a series of given qualities ascribed, in the first place, to their fellow citizens whose mother tongue is Slovak, and secondly, to fellow citizens whose mother tongue is other than Slovak. The general pattern is one of similarity regardless of the mother tongue. Thus the teachers are more or less in agreement in considering their fellow citizens as welcoming, proud, thrifty, respectful, tolerant, generous, warm, organised, honest, elegant, polite and hard working, though they actually have a tendency (according to a frequency-distribution not presented here) to see their fellow citizens as especially welcoming and hard working. On the other hand, the teachers disagree with the description of their fellow citizens whose mother tongue is Slovak as: ignorant, thoughtless, distant, impolite, violent, hypocritical, incompetent, racist, lazy or arrogant. They have a tendency to qualify their responses by the fact of being more or less in agreement.

Table 9: The teachers' perceptions of their fellow citizens' qualities

Statements	In my view, my fellow citizens whose mother tongue is Slovak are:		Average degree of agreement	In my view, my fellow citizens whose mother tongue is other than Slovak are:		Average degree of agreement
	N	Average		N	Average	
Welcoming	51	3.69	Agree	47	3.23	+ or – agree
Proud	51	2.78	+ or – agree	49	3.55	+ or – agree
Thrifty	51	3.24	+ or – agree	48	2.87	+ or – agree
Respectful	51	2.92	+ or – agree	48	2.90	+ or – agree
Tolerant	51	2.82	+ or – agree	48	2.81	+ or – agree
Generous	51	3.12	+ or – agree	48	2.73	+ or – agree
Warm	51	3.35	+ or – agree	47	2.96	+ or – agree
Organised	51	3.27	+ or – agree	47	3.13	+ or – agree
Honest	51	3.02	+ or – agree	47	2.96	+ or – agree
Elegant	51	2.94	+ or – agree	47	2.77	+ or – agree
Polite	51	3.00	+ or – agree	47	2.96	+ or – agree
Hard working	51	3.47	+ or – agree	47	3.13	+ or – agree
Modest	51	3.18	+ or – agree	47	2.62	+ or – agree
Ignorant	51	2.18	Disagree	47	2.15	Disagree
Thoughtless	51	2.08	Disagree	47	2.53	+ or – agree
Distant	51	2.08	Disagree	47	2.47	Disagree
Impolite	51	2.41	Disagree	47	2.60	+ or – agree
Violent	51	2.18	Disagree	47	2.17	Disagree
Hypocritical	51	2.47	Disagree	47	2.53	+ or – agree
Incompetent	51	2.12	Disagree	47	2.17	Disagree
Racist	51	2.22	Disagree	47	2.21	Disagree
Lazy	51	2.45	Disagree	47	2.36	Disagree

Arrogant	51	2.39	Disagree	47	2.55	+ or – agree
Envious	51	3.47	+ or – agree	47	2.83	+ or – agree
Pretentious	51	2.98	+ or – agree	47	3.06	+ or – agree

The teachers' perceptions are more qualified when they consider their fellow citizens whose mother tongue is not Slovak, in the following way: they say they disagree with the following epithets: ignorant, distant, violent, incompetent, racist and lazy. They more or less agree with the following epithets: thoughtless, impolite and hypocritical, though they are partly divided between disagreement and more or less in agreement.

In sum, the teachers have broadly favourable perceptions of their fellow citizens as welcoming, hard-working people. They are less convinced about the other epithets perceived as probably positive. They demonstrate a fair degree of disagreement about all the epithets perceived as probably negatives. That said, there is a need for a formal analysis of the metrological quality of these epithets. It is more than probable that several epithets do not carry the same meaning for all of the respondents. It follows that there are problems of interpretation and empirical validity here for which we have not been able to control in the present research. The results for this section should be seen as a possible reality and not as the reality of these fifty-one respondents.

Roles and actual experiences of mediation as perceived by the teachers

The roles and actual experience of mediation as perceived by the teachers help to provide an answer to the research project's third question, namely: "What mediation experience are teachers able to utilise?" This section of the questionnaire essentially comprises statements whose structure is identical to the foregoing section. The same restrictions apply regarding the items' metrological value.

The teachers had to respond to the following situation: "Two students of different ethnic origin are very strongly arguing on a highly controversial subject: what do you do?" The statements of Table 10 below detail possible actions that could be envisaged, together with the average tendency of the teachers' responses.

Table 10: Opening and inviting negotiation when there is tension among students

When two students of different ethnic origin are arguing on a highly controversial subject, what do you do?			
	N	Average	Appreciation
I try to play down the situation.	51	4.04	Agree
I ask them to stall their opinions.	50	3.78	Agree
I decide to act as intermediary.	50	3.68	Agree
I note their differences so as to intervene better.	49	3.59	Agree
I enter the conversation to give my point of view.	50	3.54	Agree
I interrupt the conversation.	51	3.16	+ or – agree
I make them apologise to each other.	50	2.74	+ or – agree
I make a joke of it all.	48	2.42	Disagree
I let them speak and prefer not to get involved.	50	1.90	Disagree
I pretend not to hear anything.	50	1.58	Disagree
I steer clear of the conversation.	50	1.56	Disagree

The teachers declare themselves in agreement about being attentive to the situation and intervening. They do not agree that, if there is a problem, it should be ignored.

Table 11 below presents degrees of agreement to a series of statements relating to the teachers' *savoir-faire* and *savoir-être*. Their *savoir-faire* is assessed in terms of their behaviour in regard to various teaching approaches or methods, as well as activity that could potentially encourage language learning. Their *savoir-être* pertains to their perceptions and attitudes, including the role the teacher might play in tense situations that could call for negotiation or mediation. The teachers declare themselves totally in agreement with the statement: "The use of the mother tongues of students of non-Slovak origin in class may have a place in the fight against school failure". They are in agreement with a sub-series of teaching approaches and methods, for example, "I try to nurture in the students an attitude favourable to foreign language learning", "I adapt my school programme to the class' linguistic diversity", as well as two types of proposed activity: "In problem-resolution situations, my students learn autonomously"; and "I

create activities that allow the students to feel at ease and have confidence in their linguistic means”. The teachers are more or less agreed or do not share the same perception about being proactive in a situation that could create tension among the students – “I provoke debates in order to bring out the differences between cultures”, “I encourage the students to speak about the tensions that arise from the confrontation of cultures” – or about ascribing school success to the use of one language rather than another: “The ability of foreign students to use Slovak in interpersonal communication is strongly linked to their success at school”; “Linguistic differences influence students’ results when their learning is evaluated”; and “I allow students whose mother tongue is not Slovak to use another language in class if it helps them to understand certain concepts”. The teachers do not agree with the idea that “Speaking a language other than the mother tongue at school inhibits the student’s capacities”.

Table 11: The teachers’ perceptions regarding various approaches or ways of teaching

N	Degree of agreement with the statement	Average	Appreciation
49	The use of the mother tongue of students of non-Slovak origin in class may have a place in the fight against school failure.	4.57	Totally agree
50	I make use of the student’s cultural baggage to introduce cultural facts relating to the studied language.	4.43	Agree
51	I show the students that they should act in solidarity with their fellows, respecting their differences and demonstrating respect for them.	3.65	Agree
51	I try to nurture in the students an attitude favourable to foreign language learning.	4.29	Agree
51	I encourage the students to be sensitive about the differences and similarities between cultures.	4.29	Agree
51	I adapt my school programme to the class’ linguistic diversity.	3.98	Agree
50	I help the students to integrate Slovak into their daily lives.	3.98	Agree
51	In problem-resolution situations, my students learn autonomously.	3.90	Agree

51	I create activities that allow the students to feel at ease and have confidence in their linguistic means.	3.86	Agree
50	I have received preparation to work in a class characterised by linguistic plurality.	3.44	+ or – agree
51	The ability of foreign students to use Slovak in interpersonal communication is strongly linked to their success at school.	3.33	+ or – agree
51	Every teacher (and not just the language teacher) is responsible for the mastering of Slovak by non-Slovak-speaking children.	3.33	+ or – agree
51	Instructions that some teachers may give to non-Slovak-speaking students to use only Slovak is a discriminatory practice.	3.31	+ or – agree
51	I adapt the contents of my programme to take account of the students' culture of origin.	3.22	+ or – agree
49	I encourage the students to speak about the tensions that arise from the confrontation of cultures.	3.10	+ or – agree
51	Linguistic differences influence students' results when their learning is evaluated.	2.92	+ or – agree
50	I allow students whose mother tongue is not Slovak to use another language in class if it helps them to understand certain concepts.	2.92	+ or – agree
51	I provoke debates in order to bring out the differences between cultures.	2.63	+ or – agree
51	Speaking a language other than the mother tongue at school inhibits the student's capacities.	2.45	Disagree
51	I help all students, whatever their linguistic difficulties, to progress and achieve the same academic level.	2.02	Disagree

5. Overall interpretation of results

Criteria-based interpretation is undertaken with reference to components from the field measured, and normative interpretation with reference to the relative performance of the subjects replying to the questionnaire, as well as the characteristics of their reference group.

For the needs of the research, the criteria-led interpretation sought is dual. It is undertaken with the conceptual framework or according to the three research questions. It is therefore possible to relate the units of information (items) to the sub-dimension of the conceptual framework. The first specific question of the research, namely “What are the locations as well as linguistic and cultural practices of the teachers?”, relates to the sub-dimensions “*Savoir*, 1.3 actual experience” and “*Savoir-faire*, 2.2 mobility”. The second specific question of the research, namely “What are the teachers’ perceptions and attitudes in regard to other cultures?”, relates to the sub-dimensions “*Savoir-être*, 3.1 perceptions/attitudes”. The third specific question of the research, namely “What mediation experience are teachers able to utilise?”, relates to the sub-dimensions “*Savoir-être*, 3.2 role as teachers” and “*Savoir-faire*, 2.1 behaviour” of the conceptual framework.

In order to answer the first question, it is possible to sum up the locations and linguistic and cultural practices of the teachers in the following way: teachers would choose Slovak and English as languages for communication; they would be inclined to speak the language used in the host country if they had the possibility; the teachers say that they use guides and books to organise their own travel; they generally read foreign newspapers and watch television, where English is concerned (once or twice a week), French, Hungarian or German (twice a week/never); half the teachers have travelled to a foreign country for at least a fortnight, and one third for less than a fortnight; and they travel to get to know other cultures or for quite different reasons. Travel is undertaken in general alone or with the family.

In order to answer the second question, the teachers’ perceptions and attitudes towards other cultures can be summed up as follows: a tendency to see their own fellow citizens as welcoming and hard working. The interpretation turns on perceptions *vis-à-vis* the Slovak language, and French, English or German.

Slovak

Half the teachers say that Slovak represents their mother tongue; they say that Hungarian represents something other than a second language linked to school and professional life, including being a language they speak with friends. They are more or less in agreement about adapting the content of their programme to take account of students’ cultural origins; they are mindful of their interlocutors; they are open to speaking as many languages as possible; they have fairly positive perceptions with

regard to cultural differences; and they agree that knowledge of Slovak confers pleasure in reading authors.

French, English or German

The teachers perceive these languages as representing an opening towards other cultures, and as offering the pleasure of reading French, English or German authors; they definitely offer the possibility of being more competitive professionally.

The experiences of mediation that the teachers can draw on are subject to several constraints, including their own perceptions regarding the basic soundness of certain teaching approaches, as well as strategies employed. The teachers are in agreement about creating a climate of confidence, of well-being, of respect for other cultures, of respect for cultural diversity and about using students' cultural baggage. On the other hand, they are divided about what means to use.

There is also the research's general question, namely, "Are language teachers able, given their training and cultural experiences, to be social actors in the development of intercultural competence, to act as cultural mediators or even attribute such a role to themselves in the way that they teach modern languages?" This question remains unanswered, given the limits of the present research. These limits are multiple. It must be remembered that the sample is one of convenience, that the number of subjects is too limited compared to the number of questions and units of information gathered, that the Likert scale metrological values are not known and that the exercise is best viewed as a pre-validation of the questionnaire in Slovak. Notwithstanding these limitations, one is justified in inferring certain tendencies and in appreciating the potential of the written questionnaire as an effective instrument of inquiry in further applications. It has also to be remembered that the instrument of inquiry has been translated into four languages. The methodological procedure presented here provides a guideline for continuing to develop the questionnaire of inquiry towards its final versions.

6. General conclusion

The preoccupations of the researchers involved in the present research turn essentially on teachers' cultural representations in regard to other cultures as linked to their initial and ongoing training. We know that language teachers convey cultural representations in the classroom from various information sources and from their own experiences. Hence the researchers wished to ascertain the place that teachers ascribe to developing intercultural competence, the contribution of interactional situations in their pedagogical interventions, and what strategies of exploitation or cultural mediation are mobilised to remedy situations of misunderstanding or tension among groups of learners. It was necessary to discover whether the teachers were trained in this regard, whether they were willing to take on the role of cultural mediators, and whether they

could effectively fulfil such a role. It is therefore possible to see the importance of such research for the initial and ongoing training of teachers.

From the experiment among Slovak teachers working in a school environment and in standard secondary level classes, we are able to make two observations: (1) the teachers appear to be already open to the teaching of culture and the development of intercultural competence; and (2) they are, on the other hand, unable to say, in terms of pedagogical procedures and coherent logic, what means need to be given greater importance in order to embrace all the dimensions of the interacting concepts as proposed in the *European Common Framework of Reference for Languages*.

As we have mentioned several times, we cannot substantiate the interpretation of the collected data or the research conclusions except on the basis of a very small sample of fifty-one respondents, all of them from Slovakia. It would be interesting to pursue the research in a larger number of countries in order to discover whether the data collected in Slovakia would be mirrored by data in other European countries. We should then be able to draw a more accurate picture of teachers' cultural representations. We should be able to gain a picture of their initial cultural training and suggest statements for pedagogical intervention that might take account of the weakness and strengths shown up in teachers' current training.

With regard to the general objective of the whole of the research (see Chapter 1), the research of the sub-group of researchers embracing Andorra, Spain, Slovakia and Canada has greatly contributed to defining key issues in the field of language didactics (objective 1). The written questionnaire has made it possible to establish a list of the habits and customs of teachers thereby enabling the didactic potential of intercultural measures to be revealed (objective 1.1). The conceptual framework defined by the researchers makes possible objective and rigorous reproduction of the present research and definition of relationships between the knowledge (*savoir*), language-linked behaviour (*savoir-faire*) and attitudes (*savoir-être*) of the teachers with a view to obtaining a profile of their training and experiences (objective 1.2). The defining of statements in the questionnaire has had the advantage of making viable a non-idealised conception of communication (objective 1.3) and of refining the definition of competences and the concept of cultural mediation (objective 1.4). Lastly, it is necessary to bear in mind the importance ascribed to research training in research-led intercultural concerns (objective 2). In this context, it appeared essential to present the results of the present research, but equally important to display the procedure advanced by the researchers in undertaking the research, in order to exercise some overall quality control and with a view to assisting other researchers to undertake a similar procedure in comparable or more all-embracing contexts.

In the light of the context, the general objective declared in Chapter 1, and the present research, three recommendations are proposed:

1. Rethink the *European Common Framework of Reference for Languages* so as to introduce into it the development of intercultural competence as an essential component in the development of language competence alongside the linguistic, sociolinguistic and discursive components.
2. Formal investigation (by written questionnaire) of the initial and ongoing training of teachers in member countries of the European Community in order to obtain a reliable picture of their training, experiences, cultural perceptions, and of pedagogical interventions set up in differing environments in order to advance an intercultural process.
3. Rethink the initial and ongoing training of language teachers in line with the expectations of the *European Common Framework of Reference for Languages* and needs expressed by the teachers themselves.

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Chapter 8:

Cultural mediation in language learning and teaching as a process

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1. The research objectives and results

1.1 Brief synthesis of research concerns

This first part presents a synthesis of the project's objectives and expected repercussions, while none the less making the link with the research concerns of each of the research's sub-groups.

1.1.1 Purpose, objectives and expected repercussions

The ultimate aim of the present research is to refine the notion of cultural mediation as presented in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* and to clarify its place and role in language teaching and learning.

The objectives of the research are of two different types. The first objective concerns the notion of cultural mediation *per se* and its repercussions on language didactics. It aims to redefine the concerns of the field of language didactics and their relationships (objective 1). More specific aims are: to discover the didactic potential of the notion of cultural mediation (objective 1.1); to clarify the relationships between particular knowledge, intellectual aptitudes and *savoir-être* (objective 1.2); to mobilise a non-idealised conception of communication, sensitive to circumstances of incomprehension or conflict (objective 1.3); and, finally, to seek to identify factors that help to explain the development of cultural representations and which influence the definition of competences within the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*. The second objective is connected with the research intention and aims to train participants in intercultural research through research (objective 2). More specific aims are: to work with participants to establish a research attitude (objective 2.1); to develop expertise in relations with the Other (objective 2.2); and to bring about a practice of communication in a bilingual context (objective 2.3).

As we are at the end of the research project, we believe it important to make recommendations about the teaching and learning of languages, in order to kindle in

language curricula a new openness to the development of intercultural competences. We judge it equally important that a network of researchers be created to carry the research further.

1.1.2 Study concerns of each research sub-group

It is important to point out that the participants involved in the project chose to divide up into five research sub-groups in order to draw up an inventory of differing facets of the concept of cultural mediation connected with language didactics. They did so on the basis of their competences and research interests.

The project “Cultural awareness in curricula and learning materials” (Chapter 3) explores the notion of cultural awareness in curricula and teaching materials made available to teachers. The approach is deliberately descriptive and empirical. The documentary analysis is the fruit of concerted discussion between the participants designed to create a common questionnaire of inquiry. Information gathered by the countries concerned makes it possible to say that the curricula and textbooks studied demonstrate an aim to develop sensitivity towards other cultures and acceptance or tolerance of other cultures. Cultural representations that turn on elements of knowledge are numerous (customs and habits, school and the environment, ways of life, leisure, the country’s history, stereotypes), those bearing on intellectual skills are limited (interactions, behaviour), while those involving attitudes are somewhat rare (social identity). In addition, teachers feel the need to have recourse to various documents of their own choice to better acquaint their pupils with the other culture. This study contributes depth to notions of cultural mediation as conveyed in school curricula and textbooks. It also helps to clarify the relationships between the knowledge base (the *savoir*), intercultural aptitudes (the *savoir-faire*), and the *savoir-être*, in addition to supplying avenues for redefinition of concerns in the field of language didactics and their relationships.

The project entitled “Empathy as part of cultural mediation” (Chapter 4) studies the concept of empathy as an integral part of cultural mediation, using observations gathered in the classroom. The approach is exploratory/interpretative in type. In the first instance, the team presents the evolution of the concept of empathy in connection with that of cultural mediation, and proposes a framework of reference suitable to embrace them. After that, the team identifies the discursive functions (encouragement, excuses, disapproval, criticism, correction of mistakes, checking on comprehension) that can be triggered by verbal interaction situations in class between teachers and pupils; this is achieved through systematic observation and a discussion group focused upon the notion of empathy. This study helps to retrace situations of incomprehension, and to study the role of intervenors as facilitators and mediators in such situations.

The project entitled “Hospitality in intercultural teacher training” (Chapter 5) studies the concept of hospitality as a cultural mediation-linked concern in circumstances where individuals of different cultures have contact and verbal interaction. The aim is

to offer language learning situations that are representative of Europe's contextual diversity. This is essentially a study of the pedagogical aspect. It regards as fundamental the teacher's role as facilitator and mediator. It consisted in gathering physical manifestations and semiotic interpretations (cultural signs) attaching to a hospitality situation involving various aspects of a dinner invitation. The team describes the state of development of the notion of hospitality in addition to supplying teaching suggestions for immediate use in the classroom.

The project entitled "Representations of the concept of otherness in advertising and cultural mediation" (Chapter 6) studies representations of the concept of otherness in advertising and the concept of cultural mediation, given that teachers make use of media and advertising within the totality of the didactic material they employ; it is also taken for granted that teachers of a foreign language and foreign culture owe to their training and experience some knowledge of cultural differences and of the mechanisms that articulate cultural representations in different cultures. Working with his or her pupils on everyday material, like advertising images, the teacher necessarily gets in touch with identity mechanisms functioning within the society of communication, his or her own and that of the foreign language. What is at issue here is the building of an emergent multicultural society. The language teacher, in the capacity of cultural mediator, participates both in a raising of awareness about the identity-linked ties of one group and in understanding systems of cultural reference of another, all of which may be seen as developing a civic competence. This study therefore considers language as an identity component in relation both to oneself and to the Other, in addition to raising awareness as to the contents conveyed through advertising and their impact on the success or failure of situations in which cultures meet.

The project entitled "Representations of others and other cultures in the context of the initial and ongoing training of teachers" (Chapter 7) studies representations of others and other cultures in the context of teacher training. The conceptual framework designed by the team will make it possible to reproduce the present research in an objective and rigorous manner and to clarify relationships between knowledge (*savoir*), language-linked behaviour (*savoir-faire*) and attitudes (*savoir-être*), with a view to obtaining a picture of teachers' training and experiences (objective 1.2). The written questionnaire made it possible to draw up a list of the habits and customs of language teachers, thereby revealing the didactic potential of taking the intercultural approach (objective 1.1). The development of formulas in the questionnaire had the advantage of validating a non-idealised conception of communication (objective 1.3) and of refining both the definition of competences and the concept of cultural mediation (objective 1.4). A last lesson from the research is the importance that needs to be given to research training in intercultural considerations (objective 2). The team presents its research results together with a methodological procedure advanced in order to exercise overall quality control as well as to help others to undertake similar steps in like or more all-embracing contexts.

It is clear that all the sub-groups approached the notion of cultural mediation by looking at its knowledge elements and the development of intellectual aptitudes. Some

of them extended their study into areas relating to the development of cultural representations and of otherness (advertisements, teacher training); others sought to analyse situations of classroom interaction capable of engendering incomprehension (observations of empathy, hospitality scenarios), and one team presented a round-up assessment of curricula and teaching material in current use. This is early work in a research field still far too under exploited. Several approaches merit singling out in order that the various facets of cultural mediation may be appreciated. Particular attention also needs to be given to an interactional analysis of learners' discourse (a semio-linguistic approach), to attitudes in relation to the foreign, to the development of cultural representations and of identity (a socio-psychological approach), as well as to description of phenomena encountered in circumstances of contact or plurilingual exchange (an ethnographic approach); the present research has been unable to touch upon these matters.

1.2 Towards enlarging the definition of cultural mediation (objective 1)

In the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, mediation is defined as follows, in sub-chapter 4.4.4, Activities of mediation and strategies: "In activities of mediation, the user of the language should not express his own thought, but simply play the role of an intermediary between interlocutors unable to understand one another directly. Normally (though not exclusively), the speakers speak different languages. Mediation activities include interpretation (oral), translation (written), as well as summary and reformulation of texts in the same language, when the original text is incomprehensible to the one for whom it is intended."

This definition draws on the four competences in its reliance upon the distinction oral/written, likens certain social communication activities to school exercises ("summary", "text"), simplifies the circulation of meaning in an exchange ("simply play the role of an intermediary"), emphasises incomprehension ("should not express his own thought", "unable", "incomprehensible"), and idealises the transparency of communication. It is a definition that underestimates the twists and turns that meanings can take in the midst of negotiation between interlocutors, and it ignores the social function of mediation, which is none the less broadly accepted in various fields where the handling of intermediate cultural and social space is a professional concern.

1.2.1 Mediation in other disciplinary and professional fields

Other disciplinary and professional fields – politics, the law, economic and social activity – accord mediation an effective place in settling social relations between two parties, groups, communities or states.

Diplomatic expertise depends on the negotiating skill of a mediator between two parties that see themselves as in opposition or conflict. Family mediation proposes a

juridically guaranteed listening situation to help family conflicts reach settlement. Mediation in school settings recognises that school is not a haven from individual or social conflict. In all such cases, mediation, whether public or private, individual or collective, is rooted in a non-idealised view of social communication.

The mediator's function enshrines in law the diversity of points of view, contradicts the systematic recourse to unilateral decision, and legislates the complexity of the representations circulating in a single society or between two societies, where values are not shared and may clash.

In the projects developed here, the attention given to mediation is tending to modify the view taken of classic didactic objects, such as school textbooks, advertising or indeed hospitality, from that of "reflections" or epitomes of society, scholastically reliable because authentic products of a given society, toward that of questionable objects, whose interpretation depends on any number of identity-linked markers of both those who produce them and those who appropriate them.

1.2.2 End-of-project definitions

Three projects ascribe the role of mediator to the teacher:

- "The teacher's role as mediator and facilitator is fundamental. Taking account of the cultural dimension of the language, the language teacher needs to be able to raise students' awareness of the cultural patterns and prepare the students to embrace them in intercultural encounters. Hospitality is just one example among others of subjects that vary widely within Europe and which are, consequently, totally relevant to the language teaching context" (conclusions of the project "Hospitality in intercultural teacher training");
- "It is not just our research attitude that has evolved during the project; the professional attitude of the teachers is bound to evolve also. In the preparation of classes we need to pay greater attention to the teachers who cannot act without empathy" (conclusions of the project "Empathy as part of cultural mediation").

Two projects clarify the definition of the mediator in a more global direction, one applicable to the definition of cultural mediation, extending beyond the immediate school context, thus:

- "A facilitator intervening in the transmission of cultural information, an interpreter of cultures, an agent mediating intercultural communication" (conclusions of the project "Cultural awareness in curricula and learning materials");
- "The cultural mediator is a social agent who designs and puts in place devices that make it possible to restore meaning where meaning has broken off, namely, he or she provides the one who does not understand with the means to understand. His or her contribution consists in both knowledge (*savoir*) and skill (*savoir-faire*); it bears as much on method as on content. It renders the senseless intelligible"

(conclusions of the project “Representations of the concept of otherness in advertising and cultural mediation”).

1.2.3 Repercussions in the didactic field

These definitions open several methodological perspectives. The first is that the circulation of ideas and values between societies eludes the erroneous simplifications which would amount to smugly assenting to the notion that the like and the unlike, the near and the far, are immanent categories that explain national differences by transcending them.

The second perspective is that command of values in a language other than the learner’s mother tongue and in a society into which the learner has not been socialised is not to be gained simply from the transmission of knowledge (*savoir*), understood as information, without questioning the process whereby this knowledge circulates; indeed, such knowledge is itself affected in migrating from one society to another. In this sense, such command needs to be evaluated as a *savoir-faire* and a *savoir-être*.

The third perspective is that systematic and spontaneous reference to national categories, which are overrepresented in the field of school language diffusion and in places where an international dimension is under construction, either hampers cultural mediation activity or renders it inoperative.

2. Training in research through research: a two-track reflexive process (objective 2)

We start from the principle that this research project into “Cultural mediation in language learning and teaching” has been framed by a two-track reflexive process, which is specific in the sense that its development has taken place within our own particular plurinational, plurilingual, pluricultural context.¹ On the one hand, it is a process of conceptual and methodological co-construction within an interdisciplinary perspective. On the other, it is one of co-construction of a reflexive dynamic reliant upon the actual experience of plural communication within the group. This principle is confirmed by the collective evaluation undertaken by each group in relation to their particular project at the final meeting, as well as through responses to individual questionnaires filled in by the participants at the end of the project.²

1 By “pluricultural” we mean in terms of a diversity that includes social, professional, scientific, disciplinary and generational cultures.

2 The questionnaire was drawn up on Hermine Penz’s initiative and collectively revised within the coordinating team.

2.1 The research project as a process of conceptual and methodological co-construction within an interdisciplinary perspective

The founding principles of this research project were clearly defined in Chapter 1. The research focuses on thinking about cultural mediation in language didactics as a process of construction, not on validation or application of some preordained definition, which a diversity of procedures and contexts guaranteeing its soundness is then mobilised to illustrate.

From the outset the research project depended on the active participation of group members and on their professional competences. There was a refusal to be based upon the traditional relationship between a team of “experts” on the one hand and “participants” on the other. This style of relating would have falsified or biased the dynamic even of what one calls “research”, understood as a process of inquiry and common construction around a problem area. Hence the co-ordinators’ concern to call upon researchers, education executives and trainers, who had become aware of the project’s subject area through their scientific culture and professional experience. Such a conception of “research” can only be a source of unease or frustration, as it calls on everyone to look again at their habitual role.

For those more familiar with university-type research situations, the project has made it possible to present results in two modes of diffusion: first, this publication and, secondly, participation in an issue of the periodical *Le Français dans le monde. Recherches et applications* (Paris: Clé International, January 2003), which includes partners from countries that are not members of the ECML. A summary of this will be found in Appendix II. Such an opening to non-member countries avoids becoming confined to a narrow group of countries and brings the project more in line with international conditions governing diffusion of a project of a plurinational nature.

2.1.1 Means of recruitment

A research project involves the bringing together of volunteers or persons interested in a particular problem area that is the object of study. But the institutional context within which it is to work is no indifferent matter. In the present case, the ECML’s recruitment procedure obeyed rules of co-option by its correspondents in each of the member countries over which the host institution had no control. Such is evident from the first question relating to the way in which persons were informed of the project and recruited, namely either appointed by the relevant ministry of education locally (not a matter of choice), informed by superior authority, or more rarely by peers (a matter of choice). We were therefore dealing with participants from a large variety of different socio-professional contexts, with varied status within their home institutions, and who were not all co-opted on the basis of university criteria.

2.1.2 *Motivations and expectations of participants*

It is not unreasonable to presume that the way in which participants are recruited affects their motivation. Responses to the question “Why have you applied for this project/or why have you agreed to participate in this project?” none the less demonstrate unanimous interest in the project’s theme. It could be said therefore that there was a generally shared feeling of “goodwill” towards it.

Where the diverse ways in which people were recruited and their diversity of socio-professional status really impacted was in levels of initial expectation, as reflected in the responses to the questionnaire. Although the majority did not have “mixed feelings”, some expressed reservations and uncertainty, which were to recur throughout the process: “Where are we going? How do we proceed? How are we going to set up a common task with so many different people?” Or else: “First, at the beginning, when the concept of cultural mediation was elicited from us rather than explained (...)”.

Right from the start of the project the procedure was perceived as complex and the instructions given as “directive”, “too rigid”, “vague” or “contradictory”. Consequently, the process of marrying the individual projects coherently within the global project was all the more difficult and tentative, even sometimes “painful” (as one participant was to observe), yet there was a desire from the very beginning to avoid becoming ideologically and conceptually boxed in.

2.1.3 *Collective perception of the research process*

Elaboration of the object of study through the conceptual and methodological choices made by the different groups in the light of the project’s final objectives helped to create a diversity in approach that was closely linked to the national contexts and actual educational situations experienced by the different members.

If it is objected that the definitions proposed by each group in relation to their results and considerations (see preceding paragraph) offer a partial or incomplete representation of cultural mediation and the mediator’s role as globally defined, they none the less have the virtue of intellectual risk-taking, which has undoubtedly proved more constructive than if everything had been provided up front. The diverse provenances and conceptions, those of the corpora and supports selected for the study, the methods of analysis, the detours, the changes of mind, and the choices made – such things as these have greatly contributed to the emergence of procedures whose originality stems from being mulled over and conceptualised by the participants themselves. The examples below demonstrate that such tentative way-finding was not in vain and that they are the result of proceeding by consultation and pooling the participants’ disciplinary cultures in spite of the often-mentioned theoretical and organisational problems.

Thus all the groups (except one, which did not express an opinion) gave themselves a maximum score of 4 or 5 as to the success of their project in terms of consistency and

respect for specific and final objectives, though there were some qualifications – “We determined the aims at the beginning and we realised them”; “Overall we attained our objectives. The number of responses to the questionnaire was not as large as I had hoped”; “Despite all the obstacles and the painfulness of the process, I think the result is not bad”; and “I would avoid ‘Very successfully’ because the pressures and limitations had some impact on the final product. Nevertheless, we managed to reach our general and specific objectives”.

2.1.4 Individual perceptions of the research process

Everyone says that they had their own conception of “cultural mediation” and of the “cultural mediator” at the outset and that they were aware how important it was for foreign language learning to contain teaching on the culture of the Other. Over the three years, the majority experienced either a reinforcement of their original convictions or a progressive evolution in their conception due to the co-construction of the project, while for others the process was experienced as a conceptual revolution both at the individual and collective level. “A large process of discovery, throughout the three years, of cultural mediation as generally relevant to the core of the sort of conflicts and difficult encounters that exist in our societies. And then reflection at the very heart of the comparative work done on confrontation”.

2.2 The research project as a reflexive process of experience in intercultural communication and mediation

It is rare for the object of study in a research project to coincide so strongly and intimately with the very dynamic that gradually forms among the project’s participants. To ponder cultural mediation and the role of mediator in foreign languages is equally to wonder about the spaces of communication and non-communication that are formed in a group with diverse allegiances. It is, moreover, to spot examples of misunderstanding and incomprehension, to make efforts to understand in the language of the Other, which one does not always command that well (or perhaps does not know at all). It is to negotiate rejection, abandonment, to accept differences of status and disciplinary culture, to co-experience, with others, periods of euphoria and discouragement. It is to decode conflicts, both visible and those that are less visible, and try to speak about them, remedy them – or else live with them. It is to learn that “living and working together” in a plurinational and plurilingual context calls for hard work, and that harmony, tolerance and openness to the Other are not easy acquisitions, for all the “politically correct” rhetoric and soothing words that advance such intentions.

Testimony to the emergence of a reflexive dynamic feeding back on modes of communication experienced at different levels both inside and outside of meetings is also apparent in the responses of participants.

2.2.1 *Management of breaks and continuities within groups*

Some destabilisations occurred over time. Some individuals stood down, some gradually gave up and others did not reappear. Different groups handled these losses in different ways: there were those who regarded them “as an objective fact” or for whom “work carried on normally” or “with stoicism”; others, on the other hand, found them hard to take, “great damage both personally and scientifically”, “sad and suspect”, or were indirectly blaming, “a result of how the project was carried out”. A single group maintained its original composition through to the end. All this gives us clues about the evolution of the groups, four out of five of whom changed their configuration and had therefore to renegotiate their links and their project.

2.2.2 *The main obstacles to successful communication*

Asked what factors may have hampered communication, the majority of participants mentioned in turn a lack of openness or listening capacity, given the diversity of views and opinions, particularly on the part of co-ordinators, but also that of a few participants, and a lack of organisation due mostly to changes in instructions between meetings, entailing a waste of time, or to confusions about directives because of perceived conceptual divergences between co-ordinators.

Linguistic difficulties have been mentioned several times under other heads. Though some groups were able to communicate in a language that was common to them all (English or French, with occasional appeal to other shared languages, such as German, Russian or Spanish), others found themselves in groups where the members by no means shared one of the working languages, even though this had been specified as a requirement for this sort of project at recruitment.

The other difficulties encountered in communication (which belong under another head) are of a technical order in relation to the maintenance of contact outside network meetings. While some have appreciated being able to stay in contact electronically in order to continue working on the project, others regretted the lack of institutional support outside of meetings, as either they had no email or fax at the beginning, or did not receive any email and were therefore excluded from information. This impacted upon the internal functioning of the group, but above all upon the perception of the individual’s “engagement” within the project. For these the last resort was sometimes the telephone, or cross-border meetings financed out of personal funds, unknown to the ECML.

2.2.3 *The main factors contributing to successful communication*

Asked “What factors contributed to successful communication?”, respondents stressed the essential role of intra-group relations and values: an attitude of goodwill shown by “willingness to participate and contribute to a common task”; “good understanding”,

“good relations with the group co-ordinator”; “mutual comprehension”; “tolerance towards the opinions of others”; “lots of patience”; and “a shared sense of humour”.

A number of responses gave us identifiable clues to the two-track reflexive process that was going on, namely, in terms of the conceptual maturing that accompanied the development of the project and in terms of the actual experience of being within a group where cultural mediation was at the core of the process of communication in a situation that was plurinational, plurilingual and pluricultural in fact. We quote the observations of two participants who explained this dual process as follows: “With the foreign language, the intercultural communication was helpful to the mediation work of the teacher who assumes consciousness of self and of the Other within a framework of values and norms conveyed by political society. Finally, it was very useful that the project lasted three years as it allowed for maturing. The experience was nourished by actual experience and by the evolution in thinking that came from contact with the questions and from intercultural contacts” and “A three-year intercultural experience is a multifarious product which aims at improving civic reflection within a pluricultural society through the learning of foreign languages”.

2.2.4 Improvements to optimise communication

Some recommend reduction in the number of participants from the member countries, which they judge too great, while others propose managing that diversity by organising small working groups, which would meet more often than once or twice a year. Informal times and places would need to be set up for socialisation, in order to firm up the links within the small groups and in the large group. Others stress that the levels, work experiences and institutional responsibilities of the participants ought to be comparable when the group is set up, especially for a research project of this kind. The majority consider that knowledge of the two working languages is essential in order to assist communication. Some think that three years for such a complex project (in which the meetings are too infrequent) can give rise to a loss of motivation and of direction, to the point where individuals are likely to give up. Others think that it needs to be recognised that such work is a burden that adds to the daily tasks and responsibilities of the participants in their countries, and that means should be found to support them in their commitment. Outside the fact that each participant in the project (co-ordinators included) needs to have an attitude of openness and goodwill, it is apparent that proposals to improve communication essentially concern the institutional framework, along with its methods of recruitment, organisation and financing.

2.3 The training of trainers in mediation in a plurilingual and pluricultural context

The negotiations and re-mediations that occurred between individuals and groups through linguistic proximity and cultural affinity, as well as through the building of new forms of inclusive and exclusive solidarity, clearly contributed to the gradual

formation of new specific modalities of communication within sub-groups, between groups, between the institution and the large group, between the team and the participants, and so on, as the research project evolved. While certain participants have noted and even emphasised the divergences that arose, for example within the team, but equally within the groups themselves and between the group and the team, the notion of “conflict” was never raised either in group dynamics or in the projects, even though tensions and frustrations were broadly present in differing forms and are an integral part of the research project process.

Thus certain recommended steps of “cultural awareness, “empathy”, “hospitality” and the like were able to show the positive value of communicating and relating with the Other, which are supposed to promote harmony and mutual comprehension, even allowing for the fact that the reality is sometimes different in the relations between individuals and between cultures. Likewise, all the conflictual dimensions, often stemming from scientific or disciplinary divergences, from educational values or clashing opinions, but equally from linguistic incomprehension, were carefully avoided or circumvented from the start. The last point, that of linguistic incomprehension of one of the two working languages, clearly needs attending to within a research project process, for it creates misunderstandings and frustrations.

On the other hand, for all their preoccupation with questions of intercultural communication, the host institution, the co-ordinators and the participants themselves never really discussed in open fashion the difficulties in functioning and technical communications that individuals encountered outside the network meetings. Each was left, though already overworked and isolated in his or her own environment, to make out as best he or she could or to find a miracle solution that his or her status did not always permit. A stronger understanding of the processes at work between the different partners might have generated inclusion of a procedure of observation within each project or established a specific project to inquire into operations of mediation set up during the project itself. But this was not done.

This group is by its very nature a sort of plurinational, pluricultural, plurilingual micro-society of an enlarging Europe in search of common values, which contains within itself the simultaneous dynamics of conflict and understanding owing to the diversity of the situations it contains and the inequalities they create. Georg Simmel, the sociologist, postulates that confrontation and conflict are necessary to groups and societies. This project may be regarded as an integral part of the very process of the researchers’ own socialisation into the plurilingual and pluricultural dimension, if only we can try to pin down the factors at work, decode their parameters and rationalise the mechanisms. In-depth investigation is therefore still needed into whole areas of the concept of cultural mediation and of the mediator’s role in the field of communication in foreign languages and that of the training of trainers.

Chapter 9:

Recommendations

1. Summary of recommendations from the various projects

Recommendations from the project

Cultural awareness in curricula and learning materials

The teachers seem to possess the necessary competences to function as cultural mediators; however, it should be pointed out that competences are not necessarily followed by appropriate performance or classroom behaviour. We have based our conclusion on teachers' answers, not on classroom observation. It would be probably fair to say that even a foreign language teacher is likely to adapt his or her performance relative to the overall socio-economic or socio-political situation of the region. As we have seen, a certain percentage of teachers have not visited any of the target language countries. In order to ensure a higher cultural mediation competence, we suggest that both PRESETT and INSETT programmes put a greater emphasis on the above concept. Apart from – or in addition to – this, direct exposure to the target language culture should become part of the teachers' professional formation.

Recommendations from the project

Empathy as part of cultural mediation

Language teachers should be taught to run classes on a high-empathy basis and should also teach their students how to practice empathy in everyday communication in order to avoid or remedy conflicts. It is also important to develop a “portfolio approach”, namely a number of descriptors assessing empathy as part of cultural mediation according to the levels of language/culture proficiency (*European Language Portfolio*).

Recommendations from the project

Hospitality in intercultural teacher training

Undertaking action research in this field might prove highly desirable for teacher trainees since it could improve their observation skills, critical reflection and mediation abilities in relation to intercultural encounters.

Recommendations from the project
*Representations of the concept of otherness
in advertising and cultural mediation*

It is important for the language teacher to be aware of these differences so as not to give students the impression that an advertising image can directly supply them with the codes and references of the target culture. The work of the teacher in intercultural mediation is additionally to point out stereotypes fashioned for the culture of the Other, while revealing prejudices emanating from his or her own or the home culture. It is thereby possible to enrich the acquisition of cultural knowledge, and through the relativisation of cultural manifestations give access to understanding of the Other, of the Other's culture.

Recommendations from the project
*Representations of others and other cultures
in the context of the initial and ongoing training of teachers*

In the light of the context, the general objective declared in Chapter 1 and the present research, three recommendations are proposed:

1. Rethink the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* so as to introduce into it the development of intercultural competence as an essential component in the development of language competence alongside the linguistic, sociolinguistic and discursive components.
2. Formal investigation (by written questionnaire) of the initial and ongoing training of teachers in member countries of the European community in order to obtain a reliable picture of their training, experiences, cultural perceptions and of pedagogical interventions set up in differing environments in order to advance an intercultural process.
3. Rethink the initial and ongoing training of language teachers in line with the expectations of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* and needs expressed by the teachers themselves.

2. The social role of the cultural mediator in a plurilingual situation

The following propositions go beyond this project to two other considerations, individual and collective, of European scope, namely: (1) a report entitled “Identities and plurilingualism: pre-conditions for the recognition of intercultural competences”,¹ submitted to the Language Policy Division² of the Council of Europe at their request; and (2) concerns expressed in an issue of the periodical *Le Français dans le Monde. Recherches et Applications*, cited in 2.1, in which four articles related to the present research have appeared.³

2.1 Mediation: from the concept to the recognition of a competence and its evaluation

During the course of this project, the notion of mediation has benefited from a particular light being shed on it through inclusion in the full, albeit provisional, version of the “Guide for the development of language education policies in Europe”,⁴ in sub-chapter 2.2. Plurilingual and pluricultural repertoire: the pluricultural component (Beacco and Byram, 2002):

“The acquisition of a plurilingual repertory throughout life is associated with the development of an awareness of the cultural complexity of the environment [...]. Individuals may become able to live with others in new linguistic surroundings, and may be able to identify with the values, beliefs and behaviours of other groups as a consequence. Where such changes take place, individuals have an understanding and experience of at least some aspects of the lives of people of other languages and other cultures. This also means that they have the potential to interpret one way of life and to explain it to those who live another. This intercultural competence is crucial in the development of mutual understanding of different groups, and is the role of intercultural mediators of all kinds, from travel guides, to teachers, to diplomats and so on. Intercultural competence and the capacity for intercultural mediation are thus one of the potential goals of language teaching, enabling plurilingual individuals to acquire a capacity for living in the multilingual environment which is contemporary Europe.”

1 ZARATE, G. (2001). “Identities and plurilingualism: pre-conditions for the recognition of intercultural competences”. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

2 former Modern Languages Division

3 GAUTHERON-BOUTCHATSKY, C., KOK-ESCALLE, M.C., ANDROULAKIS, G. and RIEDER, K., “Retrouver le sens perdu ou les fausses identités document authentiquement publicitaire”;

GOHARD-RADENKOVIC, A., BERA-VUISTINER, M. and VESHI, D. “Quelle est la perception des ‘interprètes médiateurs culturels’ de leurs rôles et de leurs compétences?”;

PENZ, H., “Médiation culturelle et linguistique au Centre européen pour les langues vivantes”;

ZARATE, G., “La Médiation en situation de tension identitaire”, in D. Lévy and G. Zarate (eds.), *Le Français dans le Monde. Recherches et Applications*. Paris: Clé International, January 2003.

4 But not included in the synthesised version.

A debate has been initiated. The definition of the *Framework*, cited in 1.2, and this latest version are not at the same level. The first, espousing a position expressed in a chapter on the use of the language by the learner/user, assimilates mediation to interpretation and translation. This definition infers that the intermediate space is neutral or “simple”, mastery of which rests on linguistic-style technicity. The second, benefiting from fuller consideration, is located in a more marked context than the first, that of plurality and complexity. There is restoration of the social dimension (“values, beliefs and behaviours of other groups”); the approach to this competence is more interventionist and therefore more in line with the “perspective of positive action” as defined in Chapter 2 of the framework. It so happens that, as this project has progressed, the debate has developed: from being seen as an activity, mediation has been evolving in the direction of a competence, which constitutes a prerequisite for its evaluation.

General Recommendation 1:

The concept of mediation is contributing to reflection on the intermediate space between cultures defined as a specific space in which transactions of sense operate that are all the more complex inasmuch as they are in a plurilingual context. The identification of this context and the validation of the intercultural activities connected to it depend upon recognition of mediation as a competence in its own right.

2.2 The cultural mediator: an agent for social cohesion

The intercultural mediator regulates the functioning of the social bond and contributes to the cohesion of a society in so far as he or she possesses “conceptual tools independent of national categories”, “orientates cultural description towards description of cultural continuities”, “introduces the symbolic dimension into didactic description so as to account for the complexity of forms of identity functioning”, and has built for himself or herself “didactic tools to give body to objectivation” (or cultural awareness), “to encourage the validation of acquisitions from non-school experience of otherness, leading to recognition of ‘mobility-derived capital’”.¹

A more elaborate definition of the social agent is offered in these terms:

1 ZARATE, G. (2001), op. cit.

- Possessing intercultural experience of which he or she is aware, marked by:
 - specific individual and family history;
 - capital built up from relating with the Other either already acquired or anticipated;
 - conscious reflection on experience of linguistic and cultural otherness.
- Interpreting communication situations in terms of the plurality of identities involved by:
 - ascribing special importance to a symbolic reading of linguistic and social plurality over and above spontaneous reading of the ordinary;
 - introducing plurality of points of view as to identity when interpreting a plurilingual and pluricultural situation;
 - knowing how to interpret complex processes as to identity, such as implicit classification systems, contradictory accounts of a national history and definition of interacting identities.
- Identifying himself or herself as a mediator, namely, when sensing himself or herself involved in constructing the social bond in situations characterised by cultural and linguistic plurality, when adopting strategies of explanation, negotiation or re-mediation, and when agreeing to take risks in situations of identity stress.

General Recommendation 2:

Competence in mediation. Competence in mediation linked to plurilingual competence is constitutive of certain social functions assuring the social bond. Deeper exploration of these functions needs to be undertaken with a view to their academic validation, recognition of them, and their evaluation in the professional marketplace.¹

2.3 Research conditions preliminary to recognition of the social role played by the cultural mediator

In the report “Identities and plurilingualism: pre-conditions for the recognition of intercultural competences”, which presents a critical perspective on the early options effected by the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* and the

¹ Some of them are named in the provisional version of the “Guide for the development of language educational policies in Europe” (“Travel guides, teachers, diplomats”). According to the version available in April 2003 on the website of the Council of Europe’s Language Policy Division.

early versions of the *European Language Portfolio*, we proposed the following avenues for reflection in order to promote the propagation and recognition of intercultural competences:

- establish conceptual tools independent of national categories, which are currently indirectly used in linguistic description. This measure would help to remedy the distortions which, though pointed to in the framework, result from inadequately mastered representations of the foreign and end up creating cacophony at the European scale;
- direct cultural description towards description of cultural continuities, which helps to correct the effects produced by the “language barrier”: encourage playing-down of visions of cultural division, refuting perceptions of the Other in terms of menace; establish a graduated typology of conflicts, mediation activities and cultural remediation procedures;
- introduce the symbolic dimension into didactic description in order to take account of the complexity of identity-linked functioning: identities that are sometimes silent, sometimes revealed; recourse to an open range of identity positionings (local, regional, national, ethnic, linguistic, European, international and so on), taking account of successive readjustments arising from individual experiences of transnational mobility; views of the Other which may be reversed when there is change from a situation of no contact to one of actual proximity;
- create didactic tools able to forge objectivation (or intercultural awareness): didactic devices that function on the basis of interrelating at least three languages and cultures; acknowledgment of intercultural expertise, even if there is no equivalent linguistic corollary; and self-evaluation of competences. In this regard, the European Language Portfolio is the closest existing tool in this approach;
- promote validation of acquisitions due to non-school experience of otherness, preliminary to recognition of “mobility-derived capital”. This validation ought to be conjoined with a scholastic or institutionalised reflection inviting objectivation. Taking account of this experience, both actual and distanced, ought to help to develop the evaluation modalities already sketched out in the European Language Portfolio.

This project is specific about some of the avenues set out above. The social role played by the mediator cannot be limited to correcting effects produced by the “language barrier”. It

encourages playing-down of visions of cultural division, refuting perceptions of the Other in terms of threat, establishes a graduated typology of conflicts, mediation activities and cultural remediation procedures, and has recourse to an open range of identity positionings (local, regional, national, ethnic, linguistic, European, international, and so on), taking account of successive readjustments arising from individual

experiences of transnational mobility. It is capable of views of the Other which may be reversed when there is change from a situation of no-contact to one of actual proximity.¹

Competence in mediation is identifiable via analysis of concrete situations and ground-based study, using an ethnographic approach. It cannot be established on the basis of an idealised society, but needs to take account of actual experience of symbolic negotiation between interpretations that differ more or less acutely.

General Recommendation 3:

Conditions of research designed to go more deeply into mediation must not ignore study of identity conflicts, including xenophobic conflict, and the study of their resolution.

**2.4 Towards a social reading of intercultural communication:
the questionable reference to neutrality
in the field of language teaching**

In an issue of the periodical *Le Français dans le Monde. Recherches et Applications* entitled “La Médiation et la didactique des langues et des cultures”,² which somewhat extends this project, the following analysis expands on this recommendation:

We must not

disguise the fact that communication in its totality may be in itself a strategic stake for the opposing parties, whether or not they are confronted by activities of translation or interpretation. In the affirmative hypothesis, the mediator is equally involved in a situation founded on more or less radical opposition of points of view, and his or her language and discourse are not immune from the conflictuality of the moment. In that case, mediation is always up against a situation in which the mediator has bias and one that calls for description in its complexity. If the mediation belongs to the logic of intermediate space, this cannot be confused with the logic of the *via media* or middle way. Unlike some idealised position, where to be midway between the two parties signifies neutrality, a sort of mental *no man’s land*, the mediator occupies a specific position, that of an agent duly mandated to resolve a conflict over which the protagonists no longer have any control. The mediator’s position needs to develop towards that of a third party, the guarantor of a space, a link that is sometimes tenuous, but a link nonetheless, through which communication, however minimal, may pass. If it is admitted that the more conflictual a situation is the more the competences of a mediator are sought and tend to become developed, then an acute conflict is an important source of information for describing the activities of mediation. In this connection, it is worth

1 ZARATE, G. (2001), op. cit.

2 “La médiation et la didactique des langues et des cultures”, in D. LEVY and G. ZARATE (eds.), op. cit., p. 175.

citing the following perspective, opened by Pierre Bourdieu, who finds more illumination in the study of incomprehension than in mutual comprehension: ‘In order to understand what happens in locations that bring together people whom all else divides, obliging them to cohabit in either ignorance or mutual incomprehension, in latent or declared conflict, with all the suffering that ensues, it is not enough to declare where right lies on this or that point of view taken in isolation. Such points need to be addressed as they are in reality, not in a way that relativises them, giving free rein to the tragic, which is born of confrontation without the possibility of concession or compromise over points of view that are incompatible because equally grounded in social rectitude’¹ (Zarate, G. (2003), op. cit., p. 175).

The conclusions of this project share those declared in the same issue devoted to mediation:

Language didactics need to be recognised as a field organised around tensions that express themselves at an international level but which are handled on a daily basis by agents who are involved often personally and always professionally. Defined as a plurilingual space for the transmission of values issuing from different cultural systems with varying degrees of compatibility, this is an evolving field, and its evolution is reshaping the role currently ascribed to salient features in this terrain – learners, teaching tools, teachers. The issue is about validating competences which are exercised in a number of professions not ordinarily seen as linked – translators, interpreters, teachers, agents of diplomacy and humanitarian effort – although they perform similar functions, those of intermediaries restoring scrambled communication: listening to opposing parties, explaining disguised significances, recontextualising references given in a stereotyped or oblique form, reconstituting truncated identities, settling conflicts sliding out of control. This approach should help to establish a description of such competences, for example within the framework of a European Language Portfolio, based on observation of social practice in plurilingual and pluricultural situations where the mediator’s functions in relation to contexts more or less characterised by linguistic and cultural otherness are likely to be recognised.²

3. Recommendation on extending the project

In the first medium-term programme, the project “Cultural mediation in language learning and teaching” appeared grouped under the title “L’Eveil aux langues, compétence interculturelle et aspects multilingues” (Language awareness: intercultural competence and multilingual aspects) together with a variety of other categories concerning a level of teaching, a type of competence and a plurilingual context. It might have spawned exchanges among projects, but was not used to that end. One can

1 BOURDIEU, P. (1993). *La misère du monde*, Paris: Seuil.

2 LEVY, D. and ZARATE, G., “La médiation dans le champ de la didactique des langues et des cultures”, D. Lévy and G. Zarate (eds.), op. cit., p. 189.

only regret the fact at this time when there is a call to define a European policy on pluriculturalism in the plurilingual situation.

The second call for a project advanced the notion of “social cohesion”. Since this could not be introduced into the field of plurilingualism and pluriculturalism without a necessary appeal to the disciplines of the social sciences, which this volume explores, the ECML had to broaden its field of ancillary disciplines. In the list of examples illustrating the part entitled “Orientation des projets et activités” (Orientation of projects and activities), it is striking to discover that the entries relating to “social cohesion” are not clearly explained. It is as if the ECML did not have access to the disciplinary culture that would allow initiatives explicitly involving that dimension to take shape. Entries like xenophobia, cultural distance and proximity, conflict, representation of the foreign, geographical mobility, and acknowledgment of the complexity around identity in the plurilingual context beg to feed into more familiar entries (use of the media and new technologies, intercultural consciousness-raising, evaluation of actual experience due to mobility, new professional profiles), thereby generating an innovative dynamic.

The notion of “cultural mediation”, albeit a didactic response that is objectively consistent with demands for policy formulated in terms of “social cohesion”, currently has poor visibility in the field of didactics, as is confirmed by the choices of the ECML. Yet this project throws light upon a notion whose scope can be readily anticipated, whether in regard to its capacity to harness classic objects of study (advertising, etiquette, school textbooks), investigations regarding the attitudes of teachers in the transmission of values, or the disciplinary broadening advocated. So many avenues of research require a context more attentive to innovation than that of an institution still seeking to make its mark on the European university scene.

General Recommendation 4:

The ECML is requested to be the initiator or partner in a project between European institutions with the aim of setting out a policy of research and development to improve the visibility of intercultural competences in a plurilingual context and develop the competence of mediation.

Appendix I:

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Appendix II:

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La médiation et la didactique des langues et des cultures

Introduction

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GISELE PIZZANI 34

L'entretien d'enquête est une interaction marquée par les influences réciproques entre interviewé et intervieweur, et notamment par la représentation que l'un se fait des attentes de l'autre. Lorsque chercheur et informateur ne sont pas issus du même système culturel, l'appartenance à deux cultures différentes place alternativement les deux interlocuteurs dans une position intermédiaire, non plus exclusivement reconductible à des critères d'identité nationale.

Restaurer le sens perdu ou les fausses identités d'un document esthétiquement publicitaire
CHIARA GAMBINO-FORNOSSINI,
MASSIMO RIZZI, EUGENIO RIZZI, avec la collaboration
de GEORGES ANTOUARD et de RAUL RIZZI 44

En didactique du FLE, le document publicitaire est depuis longtemps utilisé en tant que reflet direct de la culture. Or la logique qui sous-tend la création publicitaire introduit des significations implicites qui interfèrent entre les univers culturels utilisés par les publicitaires et les destinataires des publicités, et qui ont par conséquent un impact sur les représentations identitaires de soi et de l'autre. Le travail de médiateur de l'enseignant consistera donc à savoir décrypter pour les apprenants les deux registres de significations, publicitaire et culturel, ce qui nécessite d'être pris en compte dans la formation des enseignants.

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ALICE GOSWAMI-ROBERTO,
MIRIAM BOU-VISIERE et DIANA VISE 58

À travers des entretiens biographiques, cet article analyse la perception que des « interprètes médiateurs culturels », ainsi désignés en Suisse francophone, ont de leur rôle et des compétences nécessaires auprès des familles réfugiées et immigrées dans les milieux éducatifs, médico-pédagogiques, services hospitaliers et sociaux d'accueil.

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Le dictionnaire bilingue : de la médiation lexicologique à la médiation didactique
MONIQUE FOUASSIER-BENOÎT CASAS 71

Une description de la facture très spécifique du dictionnaire bilingue – choix, présentation des entrées, indications métalinguistiques – permet de comprendre comment s'opère la médiation d'un système linguistique à l'autre. Par ailleurs, conçu comme ouvrage de consultation – médiation didactique –, le dictionnaire bilingue peut constituer un instrument d'apprentissage.

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SARA PIZZANI 100

Ce prototype de la « littérature » italienne de la médiation didactique – étroitement liée aux changements ethniques de ce pays – qui utilise Marco Polo, Ibn Battuta et leurs voyages respectifs en Chine, nous enseigne que la dialectique de connu et de l'inconnu, du proche et du lointain construisent – simultanément chez l'enseignant et l'apprenant – savoirs, jugements et goûts. Mais où se situe la médiation par rapport à ces savoirs ? L'équidistance objective proclamée est-elle possible ou même souhaitable ?

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avec la médiation interculturelle ?**
DANIELLE LOHÉO 112

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en situation d'échange scolaire**
MARTINE ANASTAS 121

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le cas de l'étudiant Erasmus**
DENISE ROUSSEAU 136

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au Centre européen pour les langues vivantes**
HÉLÈNE PEZE 141

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montre, à travers une sélection d'interactions entre les participants, comment se nouent, se gèrent et se négocient des conflits où interviennent dimensions nationale et supranationale.

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Par ce témoignage autobiographique, l'auteur montre comment une médiation scolaire initiée lui a finalement permis de conjuguer les différents aspects (travail, loisirs et construction) d'une identité plurielle.

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environnant l'éducation au conflit**
JULIE HÉLÉNA 164

L'internet, considéré aujourd'hui comme primordial et indispensable en tant que support de communication et de transmission, ne manque évidemment pas de fournir des espaces dédiés au débat, à la revendication de la paix et des droits de l'homme contre les conflits armés et également pour l'éducation et la sensibilisation des enfants et des jeunes concernant ce sujet. D'où la présentation de quelques sites sur ce sujet.

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GISELLE ZAVATTE 171

En observant des pratiques de médiation réussies, ici sur le terrain de Sarajevo, dans le cadre d'une action humanitaire, cet article repère les étapes et les stratégies employées pour restaurer la communication rompue en situation de conflit ethnique et introduit dans la réflexion sur la pluralité linguistique et culturelle, les situations d'intolérance extrêmes et un questionnement sur une neutralité idéaliste.

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Appendix III:

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Cultural mediation in language learning and teaching

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This training project for learning about research through research brought together representatives from over twenty-five of the ECML member countries. Its results are contained in a publication and a set of recommendations addressed to policy makers, the overall aim of which is the introduction of cultural mediation into the debate on language didactics.

Whereas most innovations in language didactics appear in the form of new teaching tools, the Cultural mediation in language learning and teaching project chose to follow a new path by adopting a "learning by doing" approach to research. It attempted to tackle several challenges:

- to experience the variety of different teaching cultures of the participants as a source of innovation rather than as an obstacle;
- to adopt a pluridisciplinary approach by introducing references taken from the social sciences in order to develop reflection on the role of languages in social cohesion;
- to try and provide answers to a question hitherto rarely raised in the didactics of languages and cultures, namely the place of cultural mediation itself.

Readers may judge the extent of the project's success for themselves by reading the findings and recommendations that came out of the project.

A network of researchers devoted to the question of cultural mediation, bringing together different European institutions, is to work on concrete follow-up to this project.



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