

6.3.1 Survey on « Representations of others and other cultures in the context of the initial and ongoing training of teachers»*

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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.