27

Piotr Romanowski

Intercultural issues in the era of globalization

Studi@ Naukowe
pod redakcją naukową Sambora Gruczy

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Warszawa 2014

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Warszawa 2014

Skład i redakcja techniczna
mgr Agnieszka Kaleta

Projekt okładki
BMA Studio
e-mail: biuro@bmastudio.pl
www.bmastudio.pl

Założyciel serii
prof. dr hab. Sambor Grucza

ISSN 2299-9310
ISBN 978-83-64020-26-1

Wydanie pierwsze

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Table of Contents

Preface

The present volume covers a wide range of intercultural issues pertaining to the challenges, hopes and problems of the globalized world. The interdisciplinary and truly international debate is made possible thanks to the contributions delivered by prominent scholars from Belgium, Brazil, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Turkey, Ukraine, the United States and Poland. The contributors who are all academic teachers at renowned European and American universities investigate language teaching, linguistics, literature and cultural studies.

All the articles in this volume refer to the concept of intercultural communication, without which the daily understanding of messages across different cultures and social groups would be impossible, not to mention the fact that most of us exist in pluringual or multilingual societies where communication is continually encoded, transmitted and finally interpreted.

Major concepts and challenges of intercultural communication are defined and discussed from the theoretical viewpoint by Elisabetta Pavan and Paola Baccin, Jan Van Maele and Katrien Mertens. Managing cultural diversity successfully through the application of selected classroom strategies is examined by Servet Celik, who in his paper pronounces the need for multicultural education. Correspondingly, Tomasz Róg stipulates numerous techniques used in the process of assessing intercultural communicative competence whereas Marek Derenowski proposes school projects as a tool used in the development of intercultural awareness. A more applied approach is chosen by Ardith J. Meier proposing the development of negotiation skills as part of intercultural communicative competence. The need to educate FL teachers for the role of intercultural mediators is voiced by Teresa Siek-Piskozub, who concludes her article with a framework for training intercultural foreign language pre-service and in-service teachers. Marta Vinnaine Vekony stresses in her article the importance of student teachers' self-awareness while Esim Gürsoy postulates an innovative approach as to how intercultural awareness can be integrated to the young learner classes. Patricia Friedrich and Mariusz Marczak investigate the application of new technologies and their impact on the development of intercultural communicative competence. Werona Król-Gierat offers an analysis of the content of selected EFL coursebooks where she attempts to trace the presence of intercultural issues. Grażyna Kiliańska-Przybyło shares the results of research related to the concept of a foreign language classroom conducted among Polish and Turkish students of English. In a like manner, Nataliya Vovchasta looks at the types of educational activities, which are aimed at the development of intercultural communication and applied in Ukrainian institutions of higher education. The significance of pragmatic competence is brought to the attention of the reader in Hadrian Lankiewicz, Anna Szczepaniak-Kozak and Emilia Wąsikiewicz-Firlej's debate of the interplay between culture, context and meaning in the classroom. Adrian Lesenciuc's contribution offers an interesting insight into the contemporary multiculturalism of Romania and the many communication patterns existing in this country. Last but not least, Filomena Capucho, Katja Pelsmaekers, Ludwina Van Son and Ángel L. Miguel Martín remind the reader of linguistic diversity in contemporary European societies and the necessity

to develop pluringual abilities of their citizens. By debating on the benefits of the Intermar Project and the Redinter Consortium, they all articulate the major premise of current European language education policy.

The publication of this volume was made possible through the support of Professor Sambor Grucza, the Head of the Institute of Specialised and Intercultural Communication at the Faculty of Applied Linguistics of the University of Warsaw. The editor also wishes to express his deep gratitude to all the members of Studia Naukowe Editorial Board.

Piotr Romanowski

Developing Intercultural Awareness – an Ongoing Challenge in Foreign Language Teaching

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is not to outline a specific curriculum or methodology for use in the foreign language classroom, rather this paper will describe an attitude teachers and learners should adopt. A framework will be provided for understanding the cognitive patterns related to the shift from communicative competence to intercultural communicative competence.

The teaching of culture is arousing great interest among foreign language teachers, nonetheless the problems most language teachers must face, such as uncertainty about which cultural aspects to teach and how to use and adapt authentic materials to integrate course books, may lead to unexpected difficulties. However, even though it is widely acknowledged that to be competent speakers in a language it is necessary to know and understand the main issues about the culture which has moulded it, in most course books, lessons concentrate on linguistic structures and forms, putting aside cultural elements: it is not unusual among teachers 'to do on their own'. Corbett (2003) highlights that the integration of culture in the language classroom has been gaining ground in the last three decades, nonetheless it still has a marginal part.

1. National Culture, a possible unit of study

It is a fact that the Portuguese language exists and that there are non-Portuguese languages. There is an Italian language and there are non-Italian languages, a set to which Portuguese belongs. We cannot study Portuguese as a historical language because this would mean including all the aspects (diatopic, diachronic, diastratic, and diaphasic) of this maxiset.

In the cultural sphere we can make an analogy between the historical language and the culture of a nation. In the scope of linguistics, we speak of functional languages (Coseriu, 1980). In other words, Italian cannot be taught as a historical language, but a part of the Italian language can be taught from in its synchronic, syntopic, synstratic or symphasic aspects. A historical language is a

> language constituted historically as an ideal unit and identified as such by both its native speakers and speakers of other languages, usually through an adjective "of their own": Portuguese language, Italian language […] (Coseriu, 1980: 110).

It is a system that includes countless inter-related sub-sets that overlap at many different levels. Language, like culture, cannot be studied in its totality. We must isolate elements into smaller sets, known as functional languages. For methodological

purposes, one or another sub-set (one or more functional languages) must be chosen for analysis of its linguistic features.

A functional language belongs to a cultural group that consists of a given number of persons who share a system of habits, beliefs, values, rules and knowledge. If we describe culture as a system of communication shared by the members of many different social groups, this communication system is a functional language.

When a group is isolated according to the criterion of nationality, it has a corresponding historical language. This macro-group is comprised of infinite groups communicating with one another through functional languages that are part of this historical language. There is the Portuguese language of Brazil and there are the Brazilian people, such as there is the Italian language and there are the Italians. The two sets can only be studied when considered as an intersection of numerous sub-sets characterized as macro-sets through distinctive functional traits. We cannot approach the culture of a nation in itself, but only its manifestations in a synchronic (when?), syntopic (where?), synstratic (with whom?) or symphasic (in what situation?) context, or in a diachronic, diatopic, diastratic or diaphasic context.

To understand this choice of approach, one might consider a cultural manifestation such as music, which can be studied over time, in which case music is studied from a diachronic perspective. An approach could be simultaneously syntopic and diachronic, in which case one would be studying Italian music over time but in the perspective of only one region (i.e. Neapolitan music over a period of time). Or one could consider the numerous regional musical festivals and events of today, which means studying it from both a diatopic (throughout the regions) and synchronic perspective simultaneously.

The choice of approach allows the researcher to decide whether Italian music is the music produced in Italy or the music produced in the Italian language. In the same manner, one can decide whether Italian gastronomy is to be considered the combination of all of the Italian regional gastronomic cultures or if it consists of the elements that, hyperonimically isolated, are present in the gastronomic culture of all of Italy and that have managed to become icons of this gastronomic culture, since they circulate throughout the entire peninsula.

This means that the teacher has many paths by which to approach Culture (with the capital letter) but our main aim in this essay is to emphasize that cultural awareness can be obtained as a process, so one of the tasks of the foreign language teacher is also approaching the culture (in lowercase). Mainly in this case, the teacher role is to separate and organized pedagogically cultural information (relating to everyday aspects) according to the parameter settings described above.

2. The role of culture in the process of teaching and learning a foreign language

The concept of linguistic competence was first introduced by Noam Chomsky in the 1950s. In the 1960s it was believed that at lower levels of study, the teaching of a foreign language should focus solely on form, structure and vocabulary. Only after these elements had been learned would it be possible to introduce cultural aspects. In the 1970s the sociolinguist Dell Hymes introduced the concept of communicative

competence and, in the 1980s Canale and Swain brought this concept into the sphere of foreign languages. They argued that communicative competence consisted at least of grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence. Widdowson's (1978) work on discourse led Canale to refine the concept of communicative competence, which went on to encompass the component of discursive competence. In the late 1980s, Jan Ate van Ek moved yet farther ahead and theorized the existence of six components of communicative competence, which are: linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discursive competence, strategic competence, sociocultural competence and social competence.

In 1993 the Brazilian linguist José Carlos Paes de Almeida Filho stated that learning another language means learning the language of the other. But just who is this "other"? Our ancestors? The conquerors? Foreigners? The barbarians? In any event, the author maintains that the teaching-learning process calls for a gradual „de-foreignization of the language of the other." In other words, to the extent that as students progress in their learning, so they proceed to appropriate the new language. It then gradually ceases to be a foreign language and becomes a part of each student's identity. Learning, therefore, depends on the level of identification and of tolerance toward the target culture (not only each student's tolerance, but that of the teacher too).

Communicative approaches call for activities in self-knowledge, which consist of interaction regarding ideological topics and conflicts and require that emotional factors be respected and that empathy with the target cultures be encouraged. However many manuals, described by their authors as communicative, still relegate culture to a mere annex at the end of each unit in the course.

3. Which competencies for teachers and learners

Despite the inroads made in recent decades, there are still some people who maintain that high-level linguistic competence (or proficiency) is sufficient for a person to communicate adequately and thus avoid problems in communication. In other words, they consider that linguistic competence can be equated with communicative competence. In fact, a speaker who masters the phonetic and morphosyntactic rules and who has a good knowledge of the vocabulary of a foreign language has a good chance of being successful when communicating with another speaker of this language. High-level linguistic competence, however, can lead the listener to the mistaken conclusion that there is full implicit agreement between the two speakers as to the meaning of different types of expressions, and that both share the same information about the world and acknowledge some kind of (inter)-cultural awareness.

As stated above, in the Seventies the focus in language education shifted , and language was no longer considered an independent and unitary system but rather a form of social activity: attention shifted from what language 'is' to what language 'does' (Wilkins, 1976).

As well as cultural arguments, clearly identified by 'culture with a capital C' in the formalistic approach and in the structural methods of the 1950s, whose orientation was more structural and linguistic, teachers began to consider what Lado (1957)

defines as *ways of a people*. They refer to culturally connoted behaviours, sometimes treated in an anecdotic way (Brooks 1964, Norstrand, 1974), in order to develop students' cultural competence.

The many of the difficulties teachers sometimes face when integrating culture into language education stem from a past where culture was related to a static vision, one whose elements were clearly defined, and which featured concrete and objective facts that could be taught and learned as useful information. Students are and were told about countries and peoples, about others' lives, history and famous people, and cultural knowledge was seen mainly as facts and artefacts, as Literature, Art, Architecture, Music.

This kind of approach may turn out to be highly problematic since, in the future, most language teachers and learners will be operating in a multicultural setting, so their communication will be intercultural, and what they need is intercultural competence. Consequently, the focus of the teaching and learning process must consider cross-cultural factual knowledge about one's own and other's cultures, but it must also contemplate a practice concerned with the development of all the socio-cultural / intercultural skills necessary to understand non-linguistic cultural communication in new or unfamiliar situations (Pavan, 2010). A factual knowledge that is not cross-cultural may turn to be far from linguistic and communicative aspects and might omit elements fundamental to the intercultural awareness development, such as the value systems, beliefs, attitudes, variations inside a community, the consideration of the individual as a representative of his/her uniqueness inside a community, the way language and culture contribute to the creation of meanings.

The term cross-cultural is descriptive and may be related to factual knowledge; it refers to the various elements we can recognise in different cultures, it has no ethical implications. The term intercultural, on the other hand, refers to the changes affecting two people interacting, with tolerance and respect for their interlocutor. It implies the application of different values to specific situations, and it has ethical implications, because it refers to concrete problems.

Culture teaching may also take advantage from a new perspective regarding native speakers teachers. After the widely accepted adoption of the Communicative Approach, foreign language teaching seemed to rely on the native speaker as a model, a standard to imitate to achieve high level linguistic competence. Nonetheless the foreign language learner is not to be considered a monolingual who must add a foreign language to his/her mother tongue, neither can s/he go back in time and be a 'native speaker' of the foreign language s/he is learning.

Byram, Nichols and Stevens (2001) affirm that such a model might be useful with regard to linguistic/grammatical competence and, according to Byram (2001), linguistic and grammatical competence are part of the process of teaching a foreign language, nonetheless reflections on the nature of interactions between native speakers of a language and foreign speakers of that language, or between foreign speakers of a language which is serving them as a *lingua franca*, has led to the recognition that it is neither appropriate nor desirable for learners to model themselves on native speakers with respect to learning about, and understanding, another culture.

Byram (1997) suggested that being an intercultural speaker implies being able to engage with complexity and multiple identities, thus avoiding the stereotyping which accompanies perceiving someone through a single identity. It is based on perceiving the interlocutor as an individual whose qualities are to be discovered, rather than as a representative of an externally attributed identity. According to Kramsch (1998) this implies a language learner who acts as a mediator between two cultures, interprets and understands other perspectives, as well as questioning what is (and isn't) taken for granted in his/her own society.

Byram (2001) affirms that the intercultural speaker is "someone who has an ability to interact with 'others', to accept other perspectives and perceptions of the world, to mediate between different perspectives to be conscious of their evaluations of difference (Byram and Zarate, 1997; Kramsch, 1998). Where the otherness which learners meet is that of a society with a different language, they clearly need both linguistic competence and intercultural competence; furthermore, as our societies are multicultural, we can state that intercultural competence is necessary whether a different language is present or not.

According to Sercu (2005), foreign language education is, by definition, intercultural, hence training students for successful interactions in a multicultural setting has thrown light on the close relationship between language and culture (Risager, 2007).

4. The elements of the teaching environment

Most people agree that four elements interweave in teaching and learning : the teacher, the student, the context (the place where the learning takes place) and the object (of the learning). Teachers and students may or may not share the same native language, and the context may be the native country of either one or the other, of neither or of both. In addition, the object might be the teacher's native language or his/her second language, or a foreign language that s/he has learned and now teaches professionally.

The situation of teaching can be considered mono-cultural only when a native language is being taught and the class is homogeneous. In this case, we have all four elements sharing the same language and the same culture. In addition, the object of study is this same language and this same culture.

When a foreign or a second language is being taught, the teacher and his/her students may share the same native language and the context may be the country of both, but the object must always be a foreign language and a foreign culture. The teaching-learning situation of a foreign language always implies contact between cultures because at least one of the four elements does not belong to the language or to the culture of the others. In the teaching-learning process, besides the target culture, a number of other factors are in play, including the co-cultures of each student, the intersection of co-cultures of all the students in the class, the teacher's co-cultures, the school's co-cultures, the students' co-cultures (or styles) of learning, and the teacher's co-cultures of teaching. The success of this process depends on the harmonization of all these cultures in close contact.

5. The aim of language education

Language education must include the culture of the target community (Hinkel, 1999; Lange and Paige, 2003; Byram et al., 1994), since according to the definition of a plurilingual approach given in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment* (CEFR) (Council of Europe 2001:4) linguistic competence and fluency are not enough for an effective communicative competence. The intercultural dimension of language education and intercultural competence has been widely researched by, among others, Byram and Flemming (1998), Byram (1997), and Byram and Zarate (1997).

The CEFR (Council of Europe 2001:5) states that the aim of language education is no longer to achieve 'mastery' of one or more languages, each taken in isolation, with the 'ideal native speaker' as the ultimate model. Instead, the aim is to develop a linguistic repertory, in which all linguistic abilities have a place and students are given the opportunity to develop a plurilingual competence, through the knowledge of different languages. Further on (Council of Europe 2001:6) plurilingualism is defined in the context of pluriculturalism: "language is not only a major aspect of culture, but also a means of access to cultural manifestations".

Nonetheless, as argued above, culture is often neglected in language curricula and foreign language teachers are less concerned about how to meet the cultural knowledge needs of learners so tend to concentrating on meeting their linguistic needs and the four languages skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening.

However other skills are equally important for success, even in a situation where cooperation and understanding and linguistic skills are already high; both socio-pragmatic competence and intercultural awareness are also crucial, as linguistic fluency alone is not enough to ensure effective and efficient communication: it is but one skill of the many required for intercultural communicative competence.

Intercultural communicative competence widens the concept of communicative competence to include intercultural competence, where inter- may refer to the changes affecting the speakers interacting and to the new knowledge derived from this; and to the learning of certain cultural elements, or values, and the re-evaluation of existing ones. This process implies both an awareness of self and of the other. The term intercultural competence may be used to describe the ability to work across cultures with awareness and understanding of cultures at a general level, and it includes communication and a wider knowledge of the world.

In the CEFR (2001:23) intercultural competence is listed at the sixth language acquisition level (Mastery), nonetheless our experience as teachers leads us to suggest that this kind of competence could and should be taught from the outset, since it is a fundamental element of active citizenship.

Students must be offered a frame of reference in terms of culture specific and culture general knowledge, and of insights into the way in which culture affects their own language and communication. Subsequently the teacher will help them in gradually changing their cultural competence in intercultural competence. Language education must face the challenge of teaching intercultural awareness alongside the

other skills and of developing a wider and more general competence which allows learners to use any language(s) as a lingua franca, in a multicultural context.

Appropriateness and effectiveness of communicative actions and of speech acts, such as politeness strategies, requesting, greetings, apologizing and so on, are culturally bound. The same action, not only the same words, can have different meanings in different cultures and the intention and the force of the act are often different as well. For example, in Italian culture, accepting an offer immediately may be considered impolite, so it is better to refuse at least twice before accepting and, depending on the situation, the refusal may be strong in terms of vehemence. In most north European cultures it is the opposite.

However any representation of the target culture must be carefully constructed: sometimes folkloristic stereotypes may correspond to the traditional way a people see themselves and, as such, can be used, but in order to develop sociocultural knowledge and intercultural skills it is much more productive to develop

> Knowledge, awareness and understanding of the relation (similarities and distinctive differences) between the 'world of origin' and the 'world of the target community […] intercultural awareness includes an awareness of regional and social diversity in both worlds. It is also enriched by awareness of a wider range of cultures than those carried by the learner's L1 and L2. This wider awareness helps to place both in context. In addition to objective knowledge, intercultural awareness covers an awareness of how each community appears from the perspective of the other, often in the form of national stereotypes. (Council of Europe 2001:103).

As is the case for language teaching, a culture can be taught implicitly or explicitly. We can refer to socio-cultural rules (ways of doing or acting in given situations of intercultural communication) or encourage the students to observe first themselves and then their co-citizens, and, finally, analyse elements of the target culture and make a comparison. In the teaching-learning environment, such elements are in school books and in materials prepared by the teacher, in authentic materials and in inputs presented in the classroom and inputs the learners will encounter autonomously in their individual study.

6. Foreign language education: enculturation and acculturation

The foreign language classroom is where each learner's culture and the target culture meet, and where the teacher is both an individual and a representative of the target language and culture, and may even also share the learners' culture.

Von Humboldt affirmed that learning to express oneself in words other than one's own is to acquire a new standpoint in our world-view; the individual who decides to learn a new language will enter unfamiliar territory, come into contact with new realities, values, attitudes and risk acting in a wrong way.

The teacher helps the learners to successfully interact with strangers, but, since in the past native and target language used to correspond to distinct nationalities, speakers used to attribute a specific cultural identity to their interlocutors. This meant to rely on one specific linguistic code, paying little or no attention to the

sociolinguistic and pragmatic components of communicative competence, taking for granted the correspondence language vs culture. But using a language in a multicultural context implies the fact that any language could be a lingua franca and that there might not be such a correspondence as national language – national culture (Pavan, 2011).

Today the foreign language education context has changed, and the role of teachers, cultural contents and representations must all be reassessed: Cortazzi and Jin (1999: 201) state that "the portrayal of cultural variation is important; otherwise learners will be led to see only a unified, monolithic culture. Both inter- and intra-cultural variation need to be represented."

Teachers and teacher trainers must be aware of the issues concerning intercultural communication studies and research, and acknowledge the fact that intercultural awareness should be considered a basic skill alongside the four language skills, especially since teaching environment is increasingly multicultural.

Intercultural awareness should be considered a skill to be developed in an on-going process, and not a fixed objective to be taken into account on its own: language education refers to culture as a cluster of rapidly changing dynamic elements, but it also refers to the different behaviour of people who, thanks to their enculturation, are able to critically assess the cultural norms of a situation, and who, consequently, may act differently whithin their own culture.

The assumptions of a culture-centred, or monocultural, awareness refer to enculturation, a process in which the mother tongue is the cultural element preserving, perpetuating and developing people's traditions. Mother tongue competence is essential to enculturation and mastery of a language is a condition to be an effective member of a culture and society.

Teaching a non-native language implies assisting acculturation, not enculturation. This leads the learner from a native culture centred perspective, to awareness of their own culture and then on to intercultural awareness, a process through which it is possible to provide and acquire the multiple perspectives necessary to understand and interpret reality that, as we have stated, is multicultural.

Such a process implies the ability to decentre and the willingness to consider and understand others' points of view which, beyond the acquisition of second and foreign languages, will lead to a dynamic approach to culture. This aspect is described in Byram (1989) and Kramsch (1993), who affirm that in order to develop their intercultural competence, learners must have an understanding of their own culture as a starting point, then gradually decentre from their own culture. Teachers must deliberately involve students in this process, helping them developing strategies and skills useful to the decentring process thanks to which they would develop knowledge and skills useful to understand and interpret new experiences.

According to the Council of Europe (2001), the objective is plurilingualism: the foreign language acquisition process will allow the students to acquire a new vision of the world, making them autonomous and flexible toward their own linguistic and conceptual system through which they were encultured.

Teachers working with second language learners must consider the learners' linguistic, cultural, social, working, academic, etc., needs as well as their language proficiency; they must foster the development of their students' intercultural awareness and encourage them to interact with others, not to be afraid of making errors, either linguistic or cultural, since they are part of the learning process and, above all, necessary for learners to raise their own awareness and heighten understanding.

7. Intercultural awareness: a fundamental skill within communicative competence

As stated at the beginning of this essay, the cultural component is sometimes still treated separately from language, it is 'added' to the curriculum, in a hierarchy where language comes first, creating what Kramsch (1993:8) defines "a dichotomy of language and culture".

According to the Literature, being an intercultural speaker implies developing a solid intercultural awareness; and we can foresee that foreign language teaching practices will shift from description to modelling, so as to design a process of competence building. Intercultural awareness is a skill that has to be developed within an ongoing process, it is not a fixed objective to be considered separately, apart, on its own, and the process we suggest is that of observation, analysis and comparison; the activities proposed give practical examples of how such a process might be carried out in class.

First of all the learner's own awareness of language and culture must be raised, teaching him/her to analyse the various elements and finally guiding him/her towards a comparison that is not biased, where different points of view can be recognised, mediated and, eventually, accepted.

Last but not least this process also seeks to affect learners: to increase their knowledge of themselves, their communicative and interactive skills, to heighten their awareness and encourage acquisition of other languages and knowledge of other cultures.

Cultural awareness must not be a separate teaching objective, it must be developed in all teaching and learning processes: we suggest teachers should present as many different aspects and examples as they can of intercultural situations, paying attention both to the verbal and to the nonverbal elements of communication which can influence, and sometimes even damage both communication and the teacher-learner relation. With our activities we mean to present and fulfil an active participation, where interaction and confrontation lead to a personal insight, avoiding a static representation of culture, that of facts and artefacts, and paying special attention to values and beliefs, social conventions and expectations.

We tried to present solid basis and reasons for actively developing intercultural awareness, which entails a shift from description (usually linked to cross-cultural studies), to modelling, in order to design a process of competence building (Balboni, 2006; Pavan, 2010). Descriptions can be memorised, they are isolated and discrete content elements, and can be used when the 'right' situation appears and they lead to

factual knowledge. According to Bloom (1956), who identified three learning domains, the cognitive, the affective and the psychomotor domain, the cognitive domain is a process which begins with the acquisition of facts (knowledge); secondly the facts are understood (comprehension), thirdly they can be applied to new situations (application). Knowledge is then organized and patterns recognized (analysis), as a consequence it can be used to create new ideas (synthesis) and at last the learner can discriminate among models and can assess (evaluation) the relative merits and validity of information or ideas. Fink (2003) proposed a taxonomy of "significant learning" that involves aspects of both the cognitive and affective domains and emphasized the fact that learning involves changes in the learner. According to Fink, foundational knowledge refers to understanding and remembering information, basic facts, ideas and perspectives: in addition to being able to recall information and ideas, the learner also needs to be able to apply his/her knowledge or skills to new situations.

At the beginning of this essay we described a static vision of culture, which can be problematic both because the interest in cultural aspects relates to arts and artefacts and it may be far from linguistic and communicative aspects, and for its lack of the fundamental aspects necessary to the development of intercultural awareness, such as values, variations inside a community, the acknowledgment of role of the individual as a representative and an active agent of personal and unique aspects inside a culture, the way in which language and culture contribute to the development of significative meaning.

In an anecdotic and formalistic approach learners cannot acquire competencies they can use to understand and interact with people from different cultures, since what they have learned, far from being static, changes quickly and often, depending on place, setting, context and participants. Furthermore, according to Atkinson et al. (1993) learning is a relatively permanent change in behaviour that results from practice.

Training for intercultural awareness means creating and nurturing the conditions in which both the knowledge of classic *Cultural* aspects and the acknowledgement and understanding of different ways of life may lead to to the development of intercultural communicative competence, a skill to be developed in a life-long on-going process. Anecdotic (cross-cultural) narration may be a means to reach a new knowledge referred to the social consequences diverse behaviours may have in different cultures, nonetheless it must be integrated with an adequate cultural and intercultural awareness.

8. Pedagogical strategies and techniques for teaching culture

Foreign language teachers who want to include cultural reflection in their courses have various materials at their disposal – from textbooks to authentic materials which can be didacticised and used at any time during a teaching unit. It is important to keep in mind that cultural reflection cannot be considered as merely an appendix to a course. Rather, it should be present in every activity, including when we present, reflect or practice linguistic elements. Here are three examples of activities which are contextualized in an Italian as a Foreign Language course for Brazilians, in Brazil,

and the teacher may be Brazilian or Italian. The activities are: "Brazil: land of the Samba and Italy: land of the Tarantella"; „Forewarned is forearmed" and "I describe myself, you draw me". The pedagogical game "Brazil: land of the Samba and Italy: land of the Tarantella" (*Il Brasile della samba e l'Italia della tarantella* – O Brasil do samba e a Itália da tarantella) (Baccin, 2007) comprehends two sets of goals: the first refers to culture, and aims to stimulate discussion about stereotypes of Italians and Brazilians. The second is strictly linguistic, since the discussion involves choosing between subjunctive (present, past, past perfect or imperfect) or indicative tenses. For the role play, the teacher divides the students into two groups. The first group are „the Brazilians" and the second, „the Italians". The teacher explains that each group should make up sentences using structures like: *penso che, ritengo che, credo che*[1] + past or present subjunctive to talk about the most common stereotypes of the other group i.e. of Italians and Brazilians. Thus, the first group will make up sentences like: *penso che gli italiani ballino la tarantella in tutte le feste di compleanno* (I think that the Italians always dance the Tarantella at birthday parties). And the second group will make up sentences like: *penso che i brasiliani ballino la samba per strada mentre vanno a lavorare* (I think that Brazilians dance the Samba in the road on their way to work). The teacher may write the sentences or the concepts on the board and may even suggest some sentences. Then, each group discusses and refutes the hypotheses that the other group has made about them. Now the indicative, not the subjunctive, should be used: *non tutti i brasiliani ballano la samba e soprattutto non si balla per strada quando non è Carnevale* (Not all Brazilians dance the Samba, furthermore they only dance in the streets at Carnival). Then the teacher asks the students to rewrite the sentences previously written using the past subjunctive or past perfect: *credevo che i tutti i brasiliani ballassero la samba, ma mi hanno detto (ho capito; invece si sa che) questo non è vero, anzi ci sono dei brasiliani che non ballano la samba* (I thought that all Brazilians danced the Samba, but I was told this is not true, that there are Brazilians who cannot dance the Samba). At the end they discuss the stereotypes that have emerged during the activity and to what extent certain thoughts can interfere in intercultural communication and how the Italian language student can prevent stereotypes from becoming prejudice or being interpreted as racist in intercultural communication. The teacher concludes that all these stereotypes belong only to the Brazilian students' culture, including the stereotypes imputed to Brazilians.

Just like the previous one, the second activity called „Forewarned is forearmed" (*Uomo avvisato mezzo salvato – quem avisa amigo é*) has two goals. The first aims to raise awareness of the students' own cultural models. The second, relates to linguistic goals and aims to practice the formal imperative. The teacher separates the class into small groups or pairs, according to the number of students, and asks each group to prepare a booklet with advice in the imperative mode (do's and don'ts) for Italians who visit Brazil. Each group is given a different profile of visitors, such as: a group of businessmen who come to the country to visit a national company; a group of teenage exchange students; a group of Catholic priests who come for a religious meeting; a

[1] I think, I believe, I assume.

group of football fans who have come to learn more about Brazilian football, etc. Each group presents its booklet to the other(s) and they discuss the relevance, and justification, or otherwise, of such warnings. The teacher then suggests that the students should look for Internet sites which warn foreign tourists who come to Brazil. Finding out how the foreigners see our culture usually triggers discussion which often casts doubt on some of the warnings given.

The last activity was drawn from the didactization of texts published by the projects Kidlink kidproj-Italian *Io mi descrivo, tu mi disegni* 2001[2] and *Eu Me Descrevo, Tu Me Desenhas* (I Describe Myself, You Draw Me)[3], in which students from several countries describe themselves and talk about their own behaviour, interests and traditions. By comparing the texts of Brazilian s students with the ones written by Italians we notice changes not only in the lexis and in the sentence structure, but also in the choices about what to describe, what adjectives to use and what to talk about. By using the same contents in both languages, as provided in the site above, would supply different models and help the students to build his/her cultural awareness. The positive outcomes of this activity lead us to advise teachers to replace the descriptions included in the textbooks for authentic texts available in blogs, social forums, or personal websites.

Conclusion

The challenge we have presented is highly dynamic, since practices that are in the learner's culture can be modified and adapted to deal with different situations, they can be created and adjusted depending on various elements and on different interactions. Such practices define the cultural context in which interlocutors communicate, structure and understand their own world. This approach does not come up to a static vision of culture, dealing with facts and artefacts, it refers to actions and to the ability to understand and apply one's knowledge to new situations. To fully understand a culture, a way of living, one must master its linguistic aspects but also its values and attitudes. We can affirm that cultural competence does not only refer to the knowledge of culturally related aspects, but also to the acquaintance with, to getting in touch with a specific culture, generating behaviours which will allow interaction and communication to satisfy the speakers' expectations.

Teachers should consider the different practices which can be found in diverse cultures, the various interaction processes and the mastery of the different hints which can be inferred in a situation. The aim of the process is to understand what is going on in order to act properly, according to the situation.

The act of communication, which underlies the possession of communicative abilities and willingness to interact, must be considered as the ability to negotiate messages and meanings in an intercultural perspective and to generate appropriate behaviours. The process we have described, whose main issue is to increase language

[2] Available at: http://www.kidlink.org/kidspace/start.php?holdnode=132 (Accessed April 1, 2013).
[3] Available at: http://wwwusers.rdc.pucrio.br/kids/kidlink/khouse/kids/projetos/escrDes2003.html (Accessed April 1, 2013).

learner awareness of the intercultural dimension in communication, is part of a life-long learning process in which the learner acknowledges which and how many competencies s/he must master in an intercultural situation and s/he is an autonomous learner, i.e. has acquired the learning to learn skills and competences, according to the definition in which learners are the persons ultimately responsible for language acquisition and for their own learning processes:

> It is they who have to develop the competences and strategies and carry out the tasks, activities and processes needed to participate effectively in communicative events. However, relatively few learn proactively, taking initiatives to plan, structure and execute their own learning processes. Most learn reactively, following the instructions and carrying out the activities prescribed for them by teachers and by textbooks. However, once teaching stops, further learning has to be autonomous. Autonomous learning can be promoted if 'learning to learn' is regarded as an integral part of language learning, so that learners become increasingly aware of the way they learn, the options open to them and the options that best suit them. Even within the given institutional system they can then be brought increasingly to make choices in respect of objectives, materials and working methods in the light of their own needs, motivations, characteristics and resources." (Council of Europe, 2001: 141).

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Plurilingual Education for Pluricultural Encounters

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Introduction

Studies about communication are not new. It is, in fact, one of those topics that motivate researchers of many areas, the social public, the media, and all those whose jobs require knowledge in communication and/or communication skills, like politicians, actors, jurists, doctors and, obviously pedagogues and teachers. The processes of communication can be studied from different perspectives. One of the most important contributions from the philosophy of language studies is the dialogic approach of Francis Jacques (Jacques, 1979, 1985; Grillo 2000); in the field of psychology and sociology, the Palo Alto approach (Watzlawick, 1991, Winkin 1981) also opens extremely interesting insights for all those who wish to solidly found effective practises on the domain of Foreign Language and Intercultural learning. Therefore, in order to justify why plurilingual training is an absolute need whenever we want to educate people for pluricultural encounters, I will briefly present some of the main conclusions of these two "schools of thought". I will thus oppose to the current theories on the importance and need of the generalized use of English as a lingua franca (De Swann, 2002, 2004), showing why, on intercultural education, plurilingualism is needed. In the context of plurilingual education, I will show why and how intercomprehension may be an effective answer, in terms of time and effort and simultaneously in terms of respect for diversity and of intercultural awareness and intercultural competencies. The concrete application of Intercomprehension in the educational field will be illustrated by a critical description of the Intermar courses, which have been created and tested for initial or in-service training in the Navy or Merchant Marine. The conclusions that we may take from the Intermar experience will show how plurilingual education actually opens an effective access to the development of intercultural competencies that are indispensable for professionals in the maritime areas.

1. From "telegraph" to "orchestra"

In the early 20th century, the new philosophical paradigm, which opposed to the old classical views on ideas and representations, considered that the meaning of any utterance depended on its logical form. Therefore, the nature of its components and the role they played in a sentence would determine its conditions of truth, which would lead to the possibility of understanding. Later, the pragmatic approach put the focus on communicability, believing that the meaning involves a set of syntactic, semantic and pragmatic conditions, and depends on the articulation of these conditions.

However, in the context of contemporary Philosophy of Language, this model is deeply challenged by the proponents of a dialogical conception, who argue that the

meaning is not „expressed" by a speaker, but co-constructed by the interactants (Jacques, 1979, 1985, Grillo, 2000). Therefore, communication cannot be reduced to an exchange or transfer, but is primarily a process of sharing between partners in dialogue.

The importance of each partner in a dialogue and the dependency of meaning from the relationship that is developed between them have also been stressed by the Palo Alto School. One of the famous axioms which have been proposed by Paul Watzlawick is stated as following: "Every communication has a content aspect and a relationship aspect such that the latter classifies the former and is therefore a metacommunication" (Watzlawick et al., 1967: 54). This means that the relational aspect of communication underlies the construction of meaning, which is in fact a co-construction. Successful communication is therefore dependent on the quality of the relationship that is built between interactants and on mutual understanding and acceptance (cf. Karpowitz, 1991).

2. Living in a globalized world

Several authors, such as Friedman (2000), consider that the globalization process started many centuries ago, namely after the epoch of maritime discoveries with its consequent *Diaspora* and increasing contacts with parts of the world unknown or hardly known before the 16th century. Nevertheless, we may locate the global shift of perspectives at the end of the 20th century. This shift originates in deep historical changes such as the fall of the Berlin wall, and also in the huge transformation caused by the sudden development of information and communication technologies: the global implementation of the Windows computer system, Netscape in 1995 and the Internet after 2000 (cf. Munshi, 2006).

In fact, during the last 15 years, we have participated in a true technological revolution, centred on digital processes, which "remodèle à un rythmeaccéléré les fondementsmatériels de la société"[4] (Castells, 1998: 21). This revolution may be compared to the industrial revolution in the 18th and 19th century: "With the convergence between Internet and mobile communication and the gradual diffusion of broadband capacity, the communicating power of the Internet is being distributed in all realms of society life, as the electrical grid and the electrical engine distributed energy in the industrial society." (Castells, 2007: 246)

The new technological reality shapes our lives and the world at large, and has determined the development of the globalization process. Even if we may wonder whether globalization is actually just a complex contemporary myth, the truth is that the phenomenon has affected society and the individuals themselves and created new cultural identities. However, the change may cover two distinctive, opposite results:

- The grouping of individuals around primary identities (cf. Castells, 1998: 23), leading to an increasing social fragmentation which is opposed to the globalized networks. Identities grow more and more specific, thus more difficult to be shared. Fellow human beings become strangers and represent a

[4]"reshapes in an accelerated rhythm the material foundations of society" (my translation).

threat. Fundamentalisms of all sort are thus spreading, based on religion (with all the negative consequences that we have witnessed in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Israel, Palestine, and elsewhere), politics (with a growing importance of extreme-right parties in countries like Austria, the Netherlands, France and Belgium) or nationalist and regionalist beliefs (in the Basque Country, Cataluña and Belgium).

- The sharing of cultural identities, leading to a sense of belonging to various international groups that exceed the borders of one's native country. Individuals construct a new identity that is no longer simply based on their language, but which is built on enculturation processes that allow stronger links between people and cultures and contribute to the general development of society and of the self. As Benko (2002: 282) affirms: "Não precisamos apenas de cadeias de abastecimento, mas também de cadeias de almas que liguem os seres humanos uns aos outros com o fim de alcançarem o potencial da humanidade"[5].

Thus, globalization may provide"a good opportunity to reflect on the efficiency of the tools which the intercultural enterprise so far has developed to promote intercultural understanding […]" (Saint-Jacques, 2012: 46). But this is only possible if rooted in effective communication between social groups and/or individuals. The awareness about the importance of the interpersonal dimension in the construction of meaning, which was stressed both by Jacques's theories of dialogism and the Palo Alto School, is therefore essential in the context of pluricultural encounters.

In order to achieve this two conditions are vital:

- Individuals should be aware of the specificities of intercultural communication:

  A knowledge of intercultural communication, and the ability to use it effectively, can help bridge cultural differences, mitigate problems, and assist in achieving more harmonious, productive relations." (Samovar, PoRter, McDaniel, 2012: 8)
- Language learning methodologies should be coherently adapted to intercultural communication needs.

3. Language learning for pluricultural encounters

Pluricultural encounters are, by definition[6], plurilingual ones. Therefore, the question of the language that is used for intercultural communication is vital. This question is far from being consensual as it certainly depends on a wide range of options that are not simply linguistic, but also political, economic, pragmatic and even ideological. In fact, language policies mostly depend on the perspectives on social cohesion, on the respect for linguistic and cultural diversities, on education and on communication.

[5]"We do not simply need supplying chains, but also *chains of souls* that link human beings aiming to achieve the full potential of humanity" (our translation)

[6]We may conceive transversal factors , in culture, which compose the culture of an individual or a social group (cf. Capucho, 2006), but each one of us is strongly characterized by the culture that is linked to our mother tongue and the society in which we are brought up.

Two main positions may be defended: either we agree on using a common *lingua franca*, which is nowadays, obviously, English ("English has established its position as the global *lingua franca* beyond any doubt" -Mauranen, 2009: 1) or we become largely plurilingual. Discussions opposing plurilingualism and monolingualism (the development of a *lingua franca* in Europe[7]) are thus consistent and have not yet been closed.

Several authors argue for the use of English as the sole language of international communication and use various designations to name it: English as an International Language, English as a Lingua Franca, World Standard English or Global English (cf. Price, 2004) or even, in a recent jargon, Globish (cf. Baer, 2009)[8].

In 2004, De Swaan, insisted on the same arguments that he had fully developed in his 2002 book: "In the general confusion of tongue, in which no indigenous language can predominate, English automatically imposes itself as the sole, obvious, solution". Similarly, after presenting his arguments in favour of a sole lingua franca, Van Parijs concludes:

> […] we can accept without rancour or resentment the increasing reliance on English as a lingua franca. We need one, and only one, if we are to be able to work out and implement efficient and fair solutions to our common problems on both European and world scales, and indeed if we are to be able to discuss, characterise and achieve, again Europe- and world-wide, linguistic justice.(Van Parijs, 2007: 243)

The use of Globish has even been presented as a sort of natural phenomenon akin to the sun rising and setting everyday (cf. Baer, 2009). However this somewhat extreme position hides some elements that somehow oppose active citizenship and the construction of a democratic European society or simply effective intercultural communication, as Tremblay (2009: 32) clearly denounces.

I will not develop my position on the debate that opposes lingua franca and plurilingualism, which I have presented in two previous papers (cf. Capucho, 2010, 2012b), but specifically focus on the problematics of the construction of meaning, as it has been exposed by Eco, 1988 or redefined by Rastier, 1990. If meaning is the result of triadic relation between signifier, signified and referent, how can it be co-constructed when the speakers are not aware of the multiple representations of referents that may be at stake when using a common lingua franca? Representations are closely linked to culture (as Wittgengstein, 1953, puts it, «to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life») and whenever a linguistic code is emptied from its cultural foundations, it is emptied of clear referents, especially when the referents are abstract or strongly linked to representations of the world. There is not a unique cultural basis that underlies a lingua franca but as many cultural bases as the ones of the speakers.

[7]I will focus my analysis specifically in the European context.

[8]For more information about the " way of referring to communication in English between speakers with different first languages", see Seidlhofer, 2005: 339

The cultural diversity of speakers who use English as an International Language is largely recognized:

> Although there are, and have previously been, other international languages, the case of English is different in fundamental ways: for the extent of its diffusion geographically; for the enormous cultural diversity of the speakers who use it; and for the infinitely varied domains in which it is found and purposes it serves. (Dewey, 2007: 333)

But when learning and using his lingua franca, are they aware of all the referential diversity that is hidden behind each use of the language? How is the relationship built if people cannot perceive the actual representations of the Other? In fact, the problem in the common use of a lingua is not simply "decoding", as studied by Pitzl[9] (2005: 52), but it arises from different referencing and the lack of awareness about implicits and cultural representations of reality. Interpreters often complain about the difficulties in translating foreigners who think they speak English, but who are actually using some kind of pidgin that they are the only ones to understand (cf. Reithofer, 2010). This implies that in lingua franca interactions the main problems are not limited to intelligibility but that are often zones of misunderstandings that are not perceived by the speakers and therefore they are not negotiated but taken for granted. Is dialogism possible when the speakers are not aware of the differences of representations that may be conveyed by the words?

This problem should be considered in foreign language education, if we actually aim at developing intercultural communication skills that go much beyond the knowledge of general stereotypes. One of the possible and effective solutions is to implement a larger plurilingual education that may develop awareness of otherness, and which may be simultaneous to the learning of English. In fact, as Frath (2010: 295) explains:

Other languages are necessary if we really want an open global society. Languages are windows to other cultures and traditions, which in turn help us look at our own cultures with a more critical eye. The only use of English will turn other languages into provincial languages without influence and they will run the risk of becoming irrelevant. An English-speaking global village will only produce a semblance of community. Communication will take place, but at a low level with no in-depth understanding of cultural differences. We shall believe that "we are the world, we are the people" because we buy the same clothes, listen to the same music, watch the same movies, and drink the same lemonade. We shall think that another culture is just like ours but in another language. Yet if peace is to be a global goal of mankind, it is the differences which have to be understood and accepted. Such understanding is not within the reach of any lingua franca.

But, how can we conciliate the learning of English and the learning of other languages without increasing time, effort and costs in an unreasonable way? Amongst other possibilities, the Intercomprehension approach may be an effective solution.

[9] Pitzl mentions "understanding" but all her examples concern mainly "decoding" rather than "interpreting"

4. Intercomprehension

The concept of Intercomprehension (IC) has been under discussion for more than 20 years now. Since the beginning of the 90's, several European teams have been studying it and its implementation in the process of language learning. Definitions may vary according to the many theoretical schools, or to the direct pragmatic aims of specific applied research (cf. Capucho, 2011a). One of the most recent definitions takes Intercomprehension as "the process of co-constructing meaning in intercultural/interlinguistic contexts*"* (Capucho, 2011b).

The development of such a process will lead to the ability to understand, to a certain extent, one and/or several languages, by using existing communicative (discourse) competences (plurilingual skills from personal life experiences). This may be enabled by the fact that languages belong to specific families (the Romance languages, the Germanic languages, the Slavic languages), which share a great number of linguistic features (lexical, morphological and syntactic); however the possibility of IC between languages belonging to different families has also been demonstrated (cf. Ollivier, 2007, Capucho, 2011a), and some recent projects have specifically focused on this possibility. The knowledge of English may, as well, become a bridge for the development of IC in Romance families (cf. Robert, 2011).

Intercomprehension is, therefore, a new form of communication in which each individual uses his or her own language BUT understands that of the others. The innovative aspect of IC consists mainly in this idea of being able to understand a language in spite of not having learnt it before. Therefore, it allows plurilingual interactions to play an important role in intercultural communication, avoiding the systematic use a *lingua franca*. In fact, IC is a natural process, which has been accepted by all those who travel around the world and by those who live in border regions (cf. Capucho, 2008). It was thought impossible, until very recently, to implement IC in the context of formal school learning. However, the efficiency of IC has been proved in the context of at least 183 different training events that have been surveyed so far (http://www.formations-redinter.eu/) and in the context of more than 25 projects (http://www.redinter.eu/web/proyectos). It is a flexible approach that may be adapted to personal and institutional needs.

5. INTERMAR

Some of the latest LLP projects on multilingualism have been specifically designed in order to address professional needs on the tertiary sector or on naval and maritime contexts, showing how the development of Intercultural Awareness is increased by the simultaneous learning of English and of other languages, under the Intercomprehensionapproach. INTERMAR[10] is one the most promising examples of this.

By developing intercomprehension (IC) processes, the project aspires to provide maritime professionals in Europe with IC strategies that assist language learning

[10]Intermar has been funded by the LLP programme, under the reference 519001 – LLP – 2011 – PT – KA2 – KA2MP, between November 2011 and October 2013.

during initial or in-service training in the Navy or Merchant Marine. Seafarers come into frequent contact with different languages both on board and ashore. In addition they are required to live and work with colleagues from diverse cultural backgrounds. English is the lingua franca at sea. However, as a means of bolstering effective communication, plurilingual strategies and skills have been considered a bonus. An understanding of other languages and cultures will foster better human relationships, enhance the wellbeing of the seafarer and in general prove invaluable for the multilingual, multi-ethnic crews of the 21st century. Double synergies may be developed between the learning of Maritime English and the construction of IC competences, paving the way to learning other languages using IC-specific activities and tasks. Enhancing competence in Maritime English whilst facilitating plurilingualism will thus lead to improved communication and greater levels of safety on board.

Intermar (www.intermar.ax) offers blended 60-hour courses of uniquely designed modules focusing on IC in Romance Languages, Germanic Languages, Baltic Languages and Russian, Intercultural Awareness and Maritime English. Modules contain learning materials and collaborative tasks, many set in a maritime context. However, in order to avoid the dangers of a pure functional approach to language learning, tasks concern not only professional themes but also other social interactions adapted to the motivations and needs of young adults.

The learning is structured in a progressive spiral, starting with an ice-breaker module and a specific module on Intercultural Awareness. These two introductory modules shape all the subsequent language learning that is entirely aimed at the simultaneous development of IC skills and competences in intercultural communication. And the knowledge and competences that are acquired in each module are to be re-used in the following ones.

6. Plurilingualeducation for pluricultural encounters

In this paper I have presented two perspectives of the communication processes that highlight the importance of interaction between speakers in the co-construction of meaning. I have shown how the option for the learning of a unique lingua franca may hide essential features of pluricultural interactions and how frequent misunderstandings may avoid awareness of otherness. Therefore, I have proposed a new perspective of plurilingual education, which is based on the implementation of a comprehensive approach of the concept of Intercomprehension. It does not oppose to the learning of English, but it enables to develop complementary synergies between English and other languages in order to develop the awareness of otherness and allow a full dialogic view of pluricultural encounters. As an example of this approach, I have presented the INTERMAR project, which may show that, in fact “Languages, like the sea, don't divide but set us free”.

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Classroom Strategies of Turkish EFL Teachers in Managing Cultural Diversity

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Introduction

Extensive research has demonstrated that successfully educating a multicultural population depends on addressing diversity-related issues in an effective manner (Ameny-Dixon, 2004; Şahin, 2006; UNESCO, 2010). As the UNESCO Global Monitoring Report (2010) cautions, failure to account for multicultural needs in the public education process may result in the marginalization of minority populations and the widespread academic failure of non-mainstream students. Accordingly, the Turkish Ministry of National Education (MoNE) has recognized the importance of addressing cultural diversity in public education (CoE, 2001, 2011; MoNE, 2005) in order to ensure that all of Turkey's citizens are adequately prepared for success in a globalized world.

With communicative skills in English increasingly viewed as indispensable in virtually every career field (Çelik, 2013; Türkan & Çelik, 2007), this issue is of particular concern with respect to English language instruction, where the responsiveness of language teachers to cultural diversity has been shown to have a significant impact on academic motivation and success (Ricento, 2005). As Şahin (2006) points out, students' attitudes toward a foreign language may be affected by a wide range of issues, both with respect to their own culture and in terms of their perceptions of native speakers of the target language. Therefore, Byram and Feng (2005) stress the responsibility of foreign language teachers for treating multicultural concerns appropriately in the classroom.

In order to determine whether the goals of the MoNE are being addressed in this respect, it is necessary to develop a picture of the present circumstances at the ground level, in Turkey's English language classrooms. However, little information is currently available concerning whether foreign language teachers understand the issues involved in meeting the needs of a diverse student population and whether they are able to cope with multicultural concerns on a practical basis. Accordingly, this study was designed to explore the attitudes and experiences of Turkish teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) working in state-run schools regarding multicultural issues in education. It is hoped that the results will assist in determining whether Turkey's foreign language teachers feel adequately prepared to work with diverse students and whether modifications are needed in current teacher preparation and professional development programs to effectively address diversity in the classroom.

1. Why multicultural education?

Historically, the issues related to multicultural education have been mainly addressed in large, industrialized countries such as the United States (Polat, 2011; Sutton, 2005), where the substantial presence of racially diverse minority populations has made such

discussion imperative. However, in the 21st century, multicultural education, which Banks (2010b) describes as a movement to eliminate the marginalization of any minority or under-advantaged group in the educational process, has increasingly become a topic of global discourse. Critics from nations around the world have pointed to biased content in educational materials, as well as the prevailing assumptions concerning the learning potential of students from non-mainstream backgrounds, as setting up at-risk learners from minority populations for academic failure (Grant & Sleeter, 2007). Increasing awareness of these issues have led researchers such as Banks (2010a, 2010b) and Şahin (2003) to underline the tendency of mass public schooling as promoting an assimilative tendency through the implementation of a "mainstream-centric curriculum" (Banks, 2010a: 233), raising concerns about whether standardized education can effectively address the need to teach students about their own cultural identities while at the same time developing awareness of the identities of others. These concerns have paved the way for the concept of multicultural education (Rego & Nieto, 2000), which Roux (2001) cites as comprising a *culturally responsive* curriculum.

2. Features of a culturally responsive curriculum

Gay (2000) suggests that a culturally responsive curriculum is one which validates the cultural identities of all students by means of (1) acknowledging the legitimacy of the cultural heritages of different ethnic groups, both as legacies that affect students' dispositions, attitudes, and approaches to learning and as worthy content to be taught in the formal curriculum; (2) building bridges of meaningfulness between home and school experiences, as well as between academic abstractions and lived sociocultural realities; (3) using a wide variety of instructional strategies that are connected to different learning styles; (4) teaching students to know and praise their own and each other's cultural heritages; and (5) incorporating multicultural information, resources, and materials in all the subjects and skills routinely taught in schools (p. 29). In order to establish educational programs that encompass all of these features, multiculturalism must be addressed from every aspect of education, taking into account issues related to educational policy and politics, curriculum design, instructional materials, teaching styles and strategies, assessment and testing procedures, counseling programs, community participation and input, languages and dialects of the school, learning styles of the school, school culture and hidden curriculum (Banks, 2010a). However, since it is the classroom teachers who have the most contact with students and who deal most directly with cultural issues, it can be argued that preparing teachers to work with students from diverse backgrounds is especially imperative (Byram & Feng, 2005; Grant & Sleeter, 2007; Ricento; 2008).

3. The role of teacher in implementing a culturally responsive approach

As Byram and Feng (2005) point out, teachers are tasked with the responsibility of preparing their students for success in a globalized world. Treating culture in the classroom is related to this responsibility, particularly when working with students from minority groups. Therefore, as Ricento (2005) stresses, the responsiveness of

teachers to diversity can have a significant impact on students' motivation and success. Peña (1997) supports this contention, noting that students whose unique culture is supported by their teachers are typically more successful than those whose teachers view them as culturally inferior to mainstream students. In this regard, the role of the teacher has been explored from a number of perspectives.

For instance, Rothstein-Fisch and Trumbull (2008) view culture and social harmony in the classroom as closely related, noting that the ultimate aim of classroom management is to create a hospitable environment for teaching and learning. However, Senior (2006) draws attention to the fact that a sense of superiority and racist attitudes are two major factors which violate social harmony in the classroom, as tensions are created through the "development of subtle pecking orders within classes" (p. 115), effectively dividing students from diverse cultural and linguistic subgroups. Such attitudes, she argues, create disruptions that affect the learning process, and teachers must possess the classroom management skills to prevent these issues from becoming problematic. Thus, teachers are charged with organizing the social structure of the classroom in such a way that each student is able to communicate effectively and interact with others in a peaceful setting; to this end, knowledge of the students' individual cultures is vital.

In addition to facilitating positive classroom interaction, Grant and Sleeter (2007) contend that teachers have a responsibility to raise students' awareness of cultural diversity and to foster appreciation for all cultures and traditions. In order to do so, they suggest that teachers should call attention to issues of bias in learning materials, as well as facilitating the meeting of students with members of other cultural groups. Furthermore, in terms of culture-related content, teachers should present alternative perspectives in terms of historical and social events, as well as modeling tolerance and respect for diversity through their own attitudes and actions.

Drawing on the understanding that students must perceive a link between schooling and their daily lives in order for meaningful learning to take place, Irvine (2003) argues that culturally responsive teachers should assist learners in connecting school and home culture by taking the time to form trusting relationships with them. Therefore, she stresses that teachers should be aware of their students' backgrounds, as well as encouraging them to share personal experiences and perspectives. At the same time, interactive instructional techniques should be employed, and teachers should provide constructive feedback, encouraging and praising students when they succeed in a task.

Finally, because teachers often "bring their baggage with them" (Grant & Sleeter, 2007: 105) in terms of their own ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, it has been suggested that teachers should engage in critical reflection of their own teaching practice to determine whether their approach to instruction is appropriate in promoting appreciation and understanding of cultural diversity.

4. The MoNE's multicultural education policy

As is the case in many other industrialized nations, Turkey's educational system serves a large multiethnic and multicultural population. Although the majority of

Turkey's citizens are of Turkish descent, Kurds, Greeks, Arabs, Armenians and a number of other cultural and linguistic subgroups coexist within the country's geographic boundaries (Arslan, 2009) and make up a significant proportion of the population. While researchers such as Kaya (2010) argue that the sociopolitical tendencies since the founding of the Turkish republic have been toward a unified Turkish nation, these minority ethnic groups in Turkey have continued to assert their individual cultural identities. Furthermore, as Polat (2009) points out, ongoing changes in Turkey's public education system, particularly at the elementary level, have created a pressing need to address multiculturalism in the classroom. With such issues in mind, and in light of Turkey's current bid to join the European Union, the national government has adopted increasingly diversity-oriented public education policies (CoE, 2001, 2011; Çelik, 2013; MoNE, 2005).

However, researchers such as Arslan (2009) and Şahin (2003, 2006) contend that the standardized national curriculum does not always account for the needs of students from divergent cultural backgrounds. According to Arslan (2009), the current curriculum comprises teaching materials and syllabi which intrinsically promote assimilation with the majority Turkish culture without reference to the cultural features of other ethnic groups. Likewise, Şahin (2003, 2006) observes that the standardized teaching program presupposes that all of Turkey's citizens require the same kind of knowledge and have common goals and expectations, and thus, it fails to account for the individuality of learners.

5. Purpose of the study

Given the importance of fostering the positive learner attitudes that are needed for achieving communicative competence in English, as well as the demonstrated need to account for cultural diversity in all aspects of public education, it is clear that Turkish teachers of EFL should not only be sufficiently aware of these issues, but also prepared to address them in their teaching. The majority of the existing research concerning multicultural education in the Turkish context (e.g., Bektaş-Çetinkaya & Çelik, 2013; İşisağ, 2010; Polat, 2009, 2011; Yazıcı, Başol, & Toprak, 2009) has focused on teachers' attitudes and beliefs toward multiculturalism, as well as the need to account for diversity in their teaching. Polat (2011), for instance, found that teachers' views toward the need for multicultural education were mainly positive, while Yazıcı et al. (2009) reported that teachers' attitudes toward multiculturalism depended in part on their age, experience, gender, and personal experience with individuals from other cultures.

However, little has been done to determine whether Turkish teachers of EFL have the skills and knowledge needed to cope with cultural diversity in the classroom. Therefore, the researcher believed that an examination of the perceptions of Turkey's foreign language teachers with respect to multiculturalism in education would provide a useful starting point in working toward a deeper understanding of the issue. Accordingly, this study was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. How do Turkish teachers of English as a foreign language understand the implications of cultural diversity in education?

2. What are practicing EFL teachers' beliefs concerning whether they have been adequately trained to teach students from diverse backgrounds?
3. How prepared do Turkish EFL teachers feel they are to address ethnic and cultural diversity in the classroom?

5.1 Methodology

Educational researchers in a wide array of contexts are giving increasing attention not only to the statistical data with respect to current instructional practices, but to the beliefs and experiences which give way to these practices. In this respect, a qualitative approach to investigating the views of the target population is often found to be most appropriate (Creswell, 2007). Consequently, because the researcher's primary interest in this case was with exploring the perceptions and attitudes of Turkish EFL teachers toward issues of cultural diversity, a qualitative research design was selected, using open-ended survey questions to elicit the responses of the participants concerning culturally responsive education.

5.2 Setting and participants

In order to reach teachers who worked with students from various cultural, social and economic backgrounds, the researcher believed it was important to include respondents from diverse regions of the country. As the focus in this case was on the views of in-service language teachers concerning multicultural classroom issues in Turkish public educational system, only teachers employed in state-run institutions were targeted. In this respect, the researcher reasoned that elementary school teachers themselves might, through their professional and social contacts, have the best information on potential respondents who most closely fit the criteria of the population of interest (Johnston & Sabin, 2010). Therefore, a snowball sampling method (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was employed in order to identify "cases of interest from people who know people who know what cases are information-rich" (p. 28). Researchers such as Johnston and Stabin (2010) criticize snowball or chain sampling as a method by which "no statistical inference from the sample to the larger target population … can be made with accuracy" (p. 39). However, with respect to the current investigation, the researcher was concerned with the depth of the participants' experiences, rather than the generalizability of the data. Thus, the method was believed to suit the purposes of the study.

Accordingly, an elementary school teacher working in a public school in the northeastern region of Turkey who was known to the researcher was asked to provide information on colleagues who might be willing to participate in the investigation; a total of 10 EFL teachers working in different geographical regions of the country were contacted and asked to take part in the study. Of the 10 teachers who were invited, 9 agreed to answer the survey questions. The aim of the study was explained to each of the participants before the data collection process, and written consent was obtained. The participants were assured that their identities would be kept confidential; in order

to maintain their anonymity, they are referenced as Participants 1, 2, 3, and so on throughout the discussion.

5.3 Data collection

In order to develop a clear picture of the participants' attitudes and perceptions with respect to multicultural education, the researcher applied a series of open-ended survey questions (Patton, 2002) designed to elicit detailed responses concerning (1) their understanding of cultural diversity and its potential impact on their practice; (2) their opinions concerning the need for multicultural education; (3) their perceptions concerning their training and skills in dealing with multicultural issues, and (4) their personal experiences in the classroom. While face-to-face interviews would have allowed the opportunity to elaborate on the respondents' answers and to ask for clarification, employing written surveys eliminated the issues related to distance and scheduling, allowing the researcher to reach a more diverse group of participants. A list of the survey questions has been included in Appendix A.

5.4 Analysis of the data

The survey data were analyzed according to the five-step process suggested by Kvale and Brinkman (2009). Kvale and Brinkman's technique was originally designed for the analysis of interview data; however, in this case, the researcher believed that the written survey responses were well-adapted to this approach. Accordingly, the researcher first read each of the surveys in its entirety to get a sense of the experiences and overall attitudes expressed by the participants. Then, the individual responses were evaluated and the "natural meaning units" (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009: 207), or themes, found in the discussion were identified. Each of the themes was then restated in concise terms and then interpreted with reference to the research questions addressed in the study. An experienced researcher was asked to review the themes in order to confirm the accuracy of the interpretations (Merriam, 2002). Finally, the researcher tied each of the non-redundant themes together to create a comprehensive narrative, which is presented below in the discussion of the results.

5.5 Results and discussion

When asked to relate their ideas concerning the meaning of cultural diversity, the participants indicated a general understanding of multiculturalism; furthermore, they generally regarded multiculturalism in a positive light and felt that learners' cultural backgrounds should be considered, as supported by Grant and Sleeter (2007) and Polat (2009, 2011). As Participant 3 explained, "If we consider [diversity] in terms of the classroom environment, it means that there are different students from different cultures, countries … perhaps different socioeconomic status, etc. in the same class." Participant 1 elaborated on this definition:

> I think that cultural diversity means differences in terms of language, nationality, religion, etc. among people. People have different backgrounds, education, lifestyles or moral thoughts according to the place where they live and grow up.

> Families, relatives and neighbors play the greatest role in developing the culture of children. For our country, cultural diversity is such a thing that is to be faced in certain regions.

Participant 5 related a positive perception of diversity in the classroom, noting that "For me, cultural diversity means multiculturalism, and it also means richness in many fields: different ideas, more creative people. It also enables people to understand a multicultural democracy and to have tolerance for different people and different ideas."

In line with Gay's (2000) assertion that an affirmative attitude toward multiculturalism is an important element in fostering learner success, it can be argued that the participants' favorable inclination toward cultural diversity indicates a willingness to work with students from a range of cultural backgrounds.

6. The impact of diversity on teaching practice

While the responses of most of the participants made it clear that they had a general idea of and appreciation for diversity, a number of the teachers indicated that the issue had little impact on their own circumstances.

According to Participant 3: Cultural or ethnic diversity is not a problem in Turkish classrooms … Once, I visited an international high school in which there were students from about seventeen countries, but in Konya [a province in central Turkey], I don't see it as a problem.

Similarly, Participant 5 saw diversity as a phenomenon that had little to do with her teaching, although it might exist elsewhere in the country. In her view, "diversity isn't an issue in Turkish schools … Different cultures live in Turkey together, but each culture settled down in a particular area. I think only in İstanbul, different cultures live in the same environment."

While Participant 9 likewise felt that students' culture was not a major concern in her own teaching environment, she acknowledged that the potential existed for conflict between learners from diverse backgrounds. In her experience working at a primary school, she noted that "my students are young. They don't care about ethnic or cultural diversity as much as students in high schools or universities." Even so, she acknowledged that children "can be rude to [students from other cultural groups] or freeze them out, since they are told to do it by parents or peers." Participant 1 agreed with this assessment in describing teaching a class in which there were both Arab and Turkish learners:

Generally, Arabic students have difficulty in understanding nearly all the lessons. Not just in the language classroom; in general they don't make friends with each other much. Sometimes, the Turkish students don't tolerate their mother tongue speaking, and they complain about their Arabic speaking by saying that they don't understand what they say. To be honest, although they make me crazy, I try not to get angry at the Arabic students in front of the Turkish students.

In this case, her response supports the contention of Senior (2006) that cultural differences can lead to conflict in the classroom; moreover, she herself appeared to see the Arab students as "different." This reflects the assertions of Şahin (2003, 2006)

that lack of understanding of multicultural issues fails to account for the needs of all students and tends to leave non-mainstream students at a disadvantage. Furthermore, her attitude toward the Arab students in her class mirrors Grant and Sleeter's (2007) belief that many teachers bring their preconceived ideas into the classroom when it comes to issues of diversity. On the other hand, the teacher also evidenced awareness that allowing negative perception to influence her behavior could have an adverse effect, supporting Grant and Sleeter's belief that reflection on their own teaching practice can help classroom instructors to identify and overcome problem areas.

This group of participants mainly discussed multiculturalism as relating to the ethnic backgrounds of students; however, some of the other participants were more alert to the alternate forms that diversity could take and the potential problems that these could raise in the classroom, including issues related to socioeconomic status and upbringing, as noted by Banks (2010a, 2010b), Grant and Sleeter (2007) and Şahin (2003). For instance, while Participant 4 supported the perception that problems concerning learners' ethnicity only affected teachers in parts of the country with larger immigrant populations, she considered that differences in upbringing and socioeconomic status could lead to conflict in any teaching environment; she noted that this is "a common issue that every teacher faces in the classroom. There is wide diversity among students who come from rural areas and big cities. When they gather in high schools or boarding schools, their interactions may be problematic."

Furthermore, Participant 8, who is Turkish, raised the issue of the current political climate with respect to the ongoing Turkish-Kurdish conflict as it affected her own teaching practice, which directly affected her ability to work with her students:

> In my current school, there is an intense friction between my Turkish and Kurdish students which affects teaching practice as well. I react to this sort of friction whenever it happens in my lessons, but my efforts cannot go beyond my classes.

Additionally, according to Participant 6, "my colleagues who work in Eastern regions of the country face cultural problems not among their students but between the students and themselves because of cultural differences." According to Rothstein-Fisch and Trumbull (2008), the efforts of teachers are critical in smoothing diversity-related conflict in the classroom and creating a positive learning environment, as Participant 8 indicated in her case. However, in circumstances such as described by Participant 6, where teachers find themselves in the cultural minority in the classroom, it can be argued that overcoming the related problems may be especially difficult.

7. Opinions concerning the need for multicultural education

Although only one of the participants expressed direct personal involvement with the issues related to multiculturalism in teaching, many of them indicated a belief that education, and language instruction in particular, should take the needs of all learners into account, as supported by Banks (2010b), Rego and Nieto (2000), and Kaya (2010). Participant 1, in particular, maintained that:

> Teaching should be tailored for students' needs and expectations, because all the students don't have the same culture and background knowledge. Furthermore, students have different levels of language [ability]. Language teaching shouldn't be beyond their knowledge. Students should have fun while learning, not get bored or have difficulty. There should be some adjustments for students' cultures; both students' own culture and foreign cultures might be taught, or students can be made aware that life is better with differences or different points of view.

Her comments were echoed by Participant 5, who asserted that "teaching should be tailored to meet varying needs and expectations, because all children should feel valued and all children can learn." Participant 4 elaborated on this perception, pointing out that "at first look, standardized teaching can be regarded as beneficial in terms of national interests. But our experiences in Turkey show that such an approach brings various negative effects in terms of the efficiency of the teaching process." Participant 3 also brought up the issue of standardization, noting that "students should be taught according to their needs, background and skills. They all are different, have different needs and skills, so we should behave accordingly; but unfortunately, we can't." Her response in this case indicated a belief that English teachers' ability to tailor instruction based on individual needs was impaired by the requirements of the standardized teaching curriculum. Furthermore, according to Participant 8, "I support the view that language classes should meet the needs and expectations of individuals; but I also think it would be difficult to tailor teaching activities according to the varying needs in the same classroom, and this may lead to chaos."

Unlike most of the other respondents, Participant 6 felt that standardization was a better option. As she put it, "I think all students should be taught according to the same standards; otherwise it would be unwelcome when the teaching is tailored to meet the expectations of diverse cultural backgrounds. Participant 7 supported this idea with her belief that:

> All students in a class should be taught according to the same standards; otherwise it would be hard to meet the needs and expectations of every group or background. This approach can also create a uniformed atmosphere in the classroom.

Both of these teachers felt that teaching all students according to the same curriculum might eliminate confusion and allow for equal treatment; however, this view is contradicted by the beliefs of Arslan (2009), Şahin (2003, 2006) and Kaya (2010), who all expressed doubt that a standardized curriculum has the flexibility to respond to the needs of diverse learners.

8. English teachers' beliefs concerning their level of training for dealing with diversity

Although the policies of the Turkish national educational system support the adoption of a culturally responsive approach (MoNE, 2005), none of the teachers felt that their teacher training had prepared them for dealing with diversity. According to Participant 5:

> My formal teacher training hasn't provided me with the tools [for dealing with] diversity in the classroom. I have been trained as if I will always teach the same group, as if all students have the same needs or backgrounds.

Participant 2 expressed concern in this regard, arguing that "cultural diversity is something important that you don't learn at university; you have to manage it on your own, and immediately. It should be taught at university in a detail." On the other hand, in her view, "university education can't do this … the lecturers don't know much about diversity because they—most of them—haven't worked outside the university." According to this opinion, university instructors could not provide the skills needed to deal with cultural issues. Therefore, while Peña (1997) and Ricento (2005) stress the need for developing culturally responsive teachers, it may be that the policies of the MoNE are not being addressed in this case. However, Participant 4 felt that managing diversity was not something that could be taught in any event. Her perspective on this matter was that "formal teacher training has nothing to give young teachers in terms of professional skills or tools to deal with such problems. Teachers' own experiences in their classrooms and in real life may bring them those skills." In this respect, critical reflection on their practice may help them to recognize the areas that need development in terms of dealing with multicultural issues, as argued by Grant and Sleeter (2007).

9. EFL Teachers' opinions of their ability to address cultural diversity in the classroom

Only two of the respondents expressed a degree of confidence in their ability to work with students from diverse cultural circumstances. With over seven years of classroom practice teaching various ethnic groups, Participant 4 felt that "all those experiences have taught me how to interact with students with quite different backgrounds." Likewise, Participant 6 stated that:

> I trust myself in this sense, because … I teach my [Turkish and Kurdish] students as if they are all from the same culture. I approach this issue indirectly, I give examples from their cultures, but I do not label my examples with my students. I appreciate them without emphasizing their differences. I give integrating examples; I mean I try to unify them on a common ground with my teaching activities.

On the other hand, while Participant 1 had both Turkish and Arab students in her class, she revealed that "I don't feel that I am prepared to deal with the problems related to ethnic backgrounds." Participant 5 expressed a similar concern, revealing that "I haven't been prepared well enough to teach students from diverse backgrounds. I have no experience." Participant 2 also mentioned her lack of skill in this area; and furthermore, she felt that the teaching curriculum itself inhibited her ability to deal with these issues:

> As teachers, we should be more prepared for our students' questions. But, for example, last year I was teaching my students daily routines like *wake up, have breakfast, go to school*… etc. But my students wanted to learn to read the Quran,

> to milk the cows, to pick up the animals … because my students live in a village, and their daily routines are different.

In cases where standardized learning materials do not account for diversity (Şahin, 2003, 2006), a knowledgeable instructor might be able to adapt the lesson to establish relevance for learners. However, in this instance, the teacher felt that her lack of skill prevented her from connecting English language learning activities with students' daily lives, as reflected in Irvine's (2003) belief that culturally responsive education entails creating meaningful relationships between school and home culture.

Conclusion

Based on the evidence provided by the participants, it can be seen that overall, they understood cultural diversity as an educational concern; furthermore, they indicated generally positive opinions toward the idea of multiculturalism and the richness it could bring to the classroom. They also understood that potential problems might arise in teaching culturally diverse students, both with respect to instruction and to classroom management. On the other hand, a number of the participants only discussed the issue in terms of ethnicity, ignoring other factors related to students' backgrounds that might affect their learning, such as upbringing and economic status. Therefore, it can be inferred that not all of the teachers who responded to the survey fully understood the implications of diversity; this may be an indication that multiculturalism and diversity issues are not being sufficiently addressed in teacher preparation and professional development programs.

This conclusion is supported in that none of the participants believed that their teacher education programs had prepared them for dealing with multicultural issues in the classroom, and in some cases, they felt that university instructors did not have the relevant experience to help them develop these skills. In addition, several of the teachers expressed that the standardized teaching curriculum precluded diversity and lacked meaning for students who did not conform to the student profile addressed by the required materials. On the other hand, some of the teachers felt that skills in responding to cultural diversity could not be taught in the abstract; these had to be acquired through real-life experience.

In the end, most of the teachers felt that neither their own experience nor their training had prepared them to cope with issues that might arise with respect to cultural diversity. This perceived lack of ability might conceivably create an impediment to dealing appropriately with diversity-related problems if the need should arise, as with the teacher who felt frustrated in working with the Arab students in her English lessons. On the other hand, two of the participants who had already been exposed to multicultural concerns in their teaching believed that their own knowledge and experience were sufficient; they felt confident that they could cope with similar occurrences.

Due to the small scope of the present study, it is not possible to generalize the results to a broader population. Furthermore, the use of an open-ended survey, rather than face-to-face interviews, limited the researcher's opportunity to follow up on the responses or seek clarification from the respondents. Yet the comments of the

participants do provide insight into their ability to meet the needs of students from diverse backgrounds in line with the MoNE's educational policies, making it clear that there is more work to be done in developing culturally responsive educators. One direction for future research might include an investigation of the potential of fieldwork experiences in multicultural settings to develop teachers' self-efficacy in this area, as the teachers in this study who had already had some practical experience dealing with diversity-related problems felt confident in their ability to cope with related issues. Moreover, the coursework content of teacher preparation programs should be reviewed to determine whether issues related to multiculturalism are being adequately addressed from a pedagogical perspective.

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Appendix A – Survey Questions

Dear Colleagues,

You are invited to participate in a research project that explores the classroom strategies employed by Turkish teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in managing cultural and ethnic diversity in the classroom. Your participation in this project involves answering the questions provided below. Your name and any identifying details will be withheld and your confidentiality strictly maintained in reporting the results of the study. Please note that there are no risks or costs associated with being a participant in this study. Although you may not receive direct benefits from your participation, EFL teachers, including you, may ultimately benefit from the knowledge obtained through this research.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study, please contact **Asst. Prof. Servet Çelik, Department of Foreign Language Education, Fatih Faculty of Education, Bldg. C., Ground Fl., Söğütlü, Akçaabat, 61335 Trabzon, TURKEY; E-mail: servet61@ktu.edu.tr**. If you have read and understood the terms above and agree to participate in this project, please proceed to the questions. By answering the questions and returning the survey, you imply your consent to participate in the study.

Instructions: *Please consider the following questions carefully and answer in as much detail as you can.*

1. Describe your understanding of the term 'cultural diversity.'
2. Do you think that ethnic and/or cultural diversity is an issue in Turkish schools in general? Why or why not?
3. Do you feel that there are issues related to diversity associated with English language teaching in Turkey? If so, how would you describe them?
4. Do you think that all students should be taught according to the same standards, or should teaching be tailored to meet varying needs and expectations related to students' ethnic and/or cultural backgrounds? Please explain the reasoning behind your belief.
5. How prepared do you feel to deal with issues related to teaching students from diverse cultural and/or ethnic backgrounds? Please elaborate.
6. Do you feel that your formal teacher training has provided you with the tools you need to deal with issues of diversity in the classroom? If so, please describe how this subject was addressed in your teacher preparation program.
7. Have you personally had any experiences, positive or negative, related to ethnic and/or cultural diversity in your teaching? If so, please describe them here.
8. If applicable, please explain how you have responded to any issues related to ethnic and/or cultural diversity in your practice.

Developing Learners' Intercultural Awareness through the Use of Projects

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Introduction

In the twenty-first century, the world around us is becoming immensely diverse from what it was a century ago. Technological innovations in communication, transportation, economy, and information technology resulted in creation of one of the greatest mixing of cultures that the world has ever witnessed. More than ever before, competence in intercultural communication is required for people to function effectively in public and private contexts. Therefore, there is a very strong imperative to learn to communicate with people whose cultural heritage and background is different from ours. One way to effectively cater for the increase of the learners' intercultural awareness is to make them directly involved in the Project Based Learning (PjBL), which serves as a motivator, a stimulus, and a challenge. While working on their culture based projects, learners have the genuine opportunity to connect the outside world with classroom reality as well as to work on their personal interests and hobbies. Furthermore, culture oriented projects allow learners to encounter these aspects of culture which are not usually present in the foreign language curriculum. Finally, apart from other undeniable advantages, projects may result in the increase of intercultural awareness also among foreign language teachers. Taking all the above into account, the aim of the article is to take a closer look at the usefulness of culture based project work in developing intercultural awareness among foreign language learners.

1. Projects in education

As Wolski (2012: 140) writes:

> Defining what Project Based Learning (PjBL) actually is and what criteria need to be met in order for a task/project to be considered part of the PjBL family may be approached from many different angles. A look through pertinent literature provides a variety of such angles, ranging from simple, one-sentence definitions to more elaborate sets of educational criteria, some being more didactic while others more theoretical.

For the purpose of this article one taxonomy of PjBL will be presented, that of Barron et al. (1998, in Wolski 2012: 142), who focus on the design stage of PjBL instruction. In their research they conclude that there are four crucial design principles whose major role is to add a metacogitive perspective to designing PjBL (and Problem-based Learning for that matter) instruction. The authors explain that the four principles allow for creating a learning situation, in which learners not only acquire content and skills, but also learn to have a deeper understanding of their own learning process, and to

realize the need for revising and having support from the instructor and their peers. The actual four design principles are as follows:

- defining learning-appropriate goals that lead to deep understanding,
- providing scaffolds such as „embedded teaching," „teaching tools," sets of „contrasting cases", and beginning with problem-based learning activities before initiating projects
- ensuring multiple opportunities for formative self-assessment and revision,
- developing social structures that promote participation and a sense of agency (Barron et al. 1998, in Wolski 2012: 142).

For many people, 'project' is a term creating more natural associations with business, rather than education. Nevertheless, projects more and more frequently become adopted by foreign language teachers who recognize the potential benefits resulting from incorporating them into their daily teaching routines. In Polish educational context the value of project work has recently been acknowledged, when projects were introduced as obligatory in primary and junior high school education, although, they can be successfully used at any educational level. A project is temporary in nature, as it has a definite beginning and end. It should also have clearly defined goals and objectives which are to be fulfilled. Furthermore, projects can be seen as means by which we can introduce changes and which usually involve a team/group of people/learners with different skills and capacities working together. According to Scrivener (2005: 365), projects usually follow a 'flow plan'.

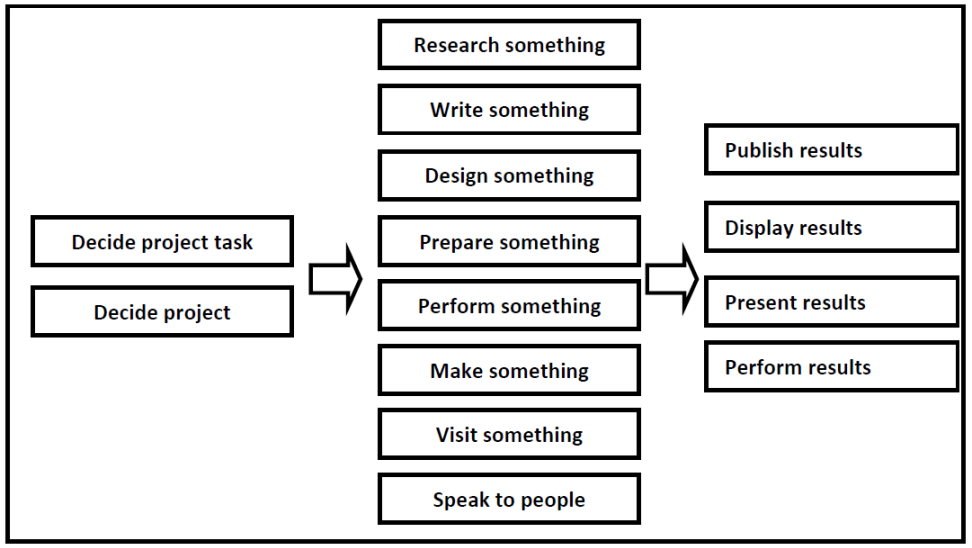

Figure 1. A plan of project work (Scrivener 2005: 365)

Language educators have made successful attempts to characterize project work for educational purposes, which contributed to the list of features presented by Stoller (2005: 110). They include:

1. The focus of project work is on content rather than on language.

2. The teacher serves as a guide, but project work is predominantly learner-centred.
3. The emphasis in project work is on cooperation rather than on competition. Learners work in groups or individually, but finally they share the project and their ideas with the class.
4. Project work enables authentic integration of skills.
5. The culmination of project work is an end product, so learners' effort has a real purpose. As they finish the project work, there is an oral presentation, a poster-session, a stage performance, report, etc. The learners have a purpose to achieve but the another great benefit of project work is the process of creating the final product.
6. Learners become more autonomous and their language skills improve as well as their knowledge of the world increases.

Project work might be dependent of several factors such as an amount of teacher's assistance, the aim of the work and time given to prepare the project. In terms of the teacher's involvement in the work, there are three types of projects:

- *structured projects* which are organised entirely by the teacher who establishes the topic, provides materials and selects the methodology;
- *unstructured projects* which are arranged by learners themselves;
- *semistructured projects* which are coordinated in part by the teacher and in part by learners (Stoller 2005: 110).

Projects may also vary in terms of their final purpose. There can be:

- *Production projects* which are aimed at creating displays, poster-sessions, written reports, photo essays, brochures, etc.
- *Performance projects* which take the form of debates, oral presentations, theatrical performances, fashion shows, etc.
- *organizational projects* which involve arranging and founding a club or a conversation table (Stoller 2005: 111).

Furthermore, Stoller introduces a number of possible benefits of project work in the foreign language classroom, such as the authenticity of the foreign language experience, which suggests that project work supports a more reliable use of the English language than is given in the context of regular classes. Projects also increase foreign language learners' motivation to learn the foreign language that is taught and used in a meaningful context. The use of the learners' language skills in a meaningful context can also be considered as a benefit of project work. Not only learners learn valuable lessons about the respective topics of the project, but they can also get to work on the subject and produce output which they can relate to and learn from, such as an in-class presentation on a topic subject. Very often, projects allow for collaboration. In order to meet task demands they have to interact with other people by paying attention to every kind of input. The cooperation usually takes place among small groups or pairs; thus, such a way of learning is profitable especially for those less confident students because they are not afraid of being mocked when confronting the whole class. Because learners work on many solo activities throughout the day, giving them a time to collaborate will likely be a welcome change of pace.

Furthermore, collaboration allows the learners to complete more work in a shorter amount of time. The additional benefit resulting from collaboration among learners is helping each other whenever obstacles and frustration occur (2005: 29-32).

2. Using projects for developing intercultural awareness

If culture is to have its rightful place in the language classroom so called learners' 'active involvement' is of a paramount importance. Byram and Morgan (1994: 50) stress that learners need to become actively engaged in the interpretations of the world and to compare and contrast the shared meanings of both the culture of the native language and the culture of the target language. Learners should have access to routine and conscious knowledge held by the members of other cultures, so that they have an opportunity to adjust to routine behaviors and ways of communication. They should also learn about various aspects of the foreign language culture in order to further analyze the important values and meanings of the foreign language culture. Nostrand (1966) proposes the following list of ten goals for culture teaching:

1. Knowledge of the cultural connotations of words and phrases.
2. Knowledge of how to behave in common situations.
3. The development of interest and understanding toward the second culture.
4. Understanding of cross-cultural differences.
5. Understanding of intracultural institutions and differences.
6. Research-like projects.
7. Development of an integrated view of the second culture.
8. Ability to evaluate statements about the second culture.
9. Development of empathy toward a second culture and its people.
10. Academic research on second cultures.

If projects are listed as one of the main culture teaching goals they must constitute for a valuable asset during the development of intercultural awareness. Apart from the benefits presented in the previous section, projects are a perfect tool for developing learners' intercultural awareness for a number of reasons.

Discovering new cultures is for the learners and teachers alike, both fun and enriching experience. While travel is the ultimate way to experience the lifestyle, history, food, and customs of another country, teachers can encourage their learners to explore foreign cultures through fascinating, personal, and collaborative projects. During project work, learners experience the exposure to the diversity of intercultural situations which force them to use the linguistic knowledge they already possess. Such situations in which the target language has to be used for real purposes guarantee learners a more effective and enjoyable way of learning. Furthermore, intercultural situations encountered during the project work, can provide learners with new, culture-oriented vocabulary, which will not only enrich their existing lexicon, but will make them more sensitive to the natural link between language and culture.

What is more, thanks to cooperation, learners can become more self-confident and focus on culture related topics they would never investigate on their own. At the same time, collaboration allows for more creative exchange of opinions and ideas, which

may have positive influence on the development of attitudes towards cultural 'otherness'. Learners while working on the project become accustomed to different systems of values, beliefs, customs and points of view. Project work may help learners to acknowledge the fact that cultures are diversified and may not resemble learners' native culture. During the project work the participants may develop new cultural perspective, higher ambiguity tolerance, increased empathy, and the increase of tolerance. However, the process of creating the new perspective may lead to ambiguity, uncertainty, surprise, dissatisfaction or even frustration, if the learners encounter differences which are beyond their understanding but such reactions may be utilized positively. Cultural uncertainty may trigger the process of rethinking learners' own experience. At the same time, it needs to be remembered that the confrontation with cultural differences is an integral part of language learning process (Tseng 2002: 15). It may be an invaluable benefit during the future intercultural contacts with members of other cultures.

Learners working together on the culture related projects get to know more about their colleagues and their interests, or more importantly they can discover new spheres of personal interest, often culture oriented (e.g. movies, music, traditions and customs, travelling etc.). Projects may also be considered by learners as a welcoming break from the classroom routine and traditional topics included in the coursebooks. They have an opportunity to discover unknown and never discussed before culture related issues, and since they work without teacher's direct guidance, they have to develop higher cultural sensitivity and awareness while selecting materials and organizing the final outcome of their work. Even the increased autonomy may prove to be beneficial for the learners' future, outside classroom life when they have to successfully cooperate and interact with members of other cultures.

It should also be explicitly stated that project work often requires from learners to compare and contrast, which involves finding similarities and differences between cultures, or matching to identify specific points and relate them to each other. While comparing and contrasting, learners not only discover other cultures, but their own, native language culture as well. This in turn, may lead to the development of patriotism and appreciation of the native culture. Projects are also problem-solving oriented and invite learners to offer advice and recommendations on intercultural problems and misunderstandings. The processes required in such tasks may differ considerably depending on the type and complexity of the problem, but what they have in common is the fact that they make demands on learners' intellectual and reasoning abilities, tend to genuinely engage them in searching for the solution, and approximate real-life situations.

What is more, while working on the projects, learners have the opportunity to use a variety of tools to present culture oriented issues as well as sources to make the final outcome as meaningful and involving as possible. In order to come up with a satisfying final outcome learners must look into a variety of culture oriented sources such as the Internet, books, magazines, newspapers, etc. They can make use of pictures, photographs, posters, leaflets, songs and their lyrics, movies, poems, etc. This multitude of cultural sources not only broadens the learners knowledge of the

outside world, but it also increases the learners' intercultural awareness. Finally, it has to be explicitly stated that successful project work provides the learners with the sense of achievement, which can result in the development of learners' positive attitudes towards other cultures and members of that cultures.

There is one more undeniable benefit of incorporating culture oriented project work into foreign language classroom. Everything that was written above, in relation to foreign language learners, may be successfully applied to foreign language teachers whose guidance over the project work may trigger positive changes in their own intercultural awareness and perspective.

3. Study

According to Wolski (2012: 143),

> It is beyond question that a great deal of research has already been done on the effectiveness of PjBL (Tretten and Zachariou 1995; Bartscher, Gould, & Nutter, 1995; Marx, Blumenfeld, Krajcik, and Soloway, 1997; Peck, Peck, Sentz, and Zasa 1998) and with this in mind it is tempting enough for instructors to try and implement PjBL tasks in their classrooms.

With the above statement in mind the researcher conducted a small scale study investigating the influence of project work on learners' intercultural awareness, positive attitudes towards other cultures and learners' perception of PjBL. The focus here was on the feelings of personal achievement with both the process and the final outcome of the culture related projects. The study included a group of fifty eight senior high school learners from two classes. There were thirty eight girls and twenty boys, all of them between 17 and 18 years of age. They all had about eight years of English language learning experience and three hours of English per week.

The learners had full autonomy as to what aspect of target language culture they want to explore as the topic for their projects being the focal part of the study. The fact that the topics were entirely learner-generated was supposed to serve as motivational force for learners who needed to spend a significant amount of their free time on the project. Another essential feature to be mentioned, is the group character of the project. The researcher together with the learners decided that the project was to be performed by teams of 5 to 6 learners, which resulted in creation of ten groups (eight groups of six learners and two groups of five learners). It should be mentioned explicitly that the groups were chosen amongst learners without any intervention of the researcher. This full autonomy during group formation was supposed to result in creation of an atmosphere encouraging comfortable work on the projects. After the groups were chosen, learners had a week to decide on the specific topic of their culture related projects. The list of the selected topic included: Group 1 - New York, Group 2 - British traditional food, Group 3 - Visiting Australia, Group 4 - American rock music, Group 5 - Visiting London, Group 6 - The history of rap music, Group 7 - Black English, Group 8 - The Hollywood, Group 9 - Sydney, Group 10 - Halloween and Thanksgiving.

The final outcome of the project was supposed to have either a form of a PowerPoint presentation, a poster to present and discuss, or a 250-300 word essay. The work on culture oriented projects lasted for three weeks, during which learners in their selected groups had to decide on the form of the final outcome, each member responsibilities, as well as to organize resources and materials to be used for the project. The researcher was offering his help and advice whenever necessary, however, for most of the time learners were supposed to work on their own. After three weeks, ten lessons were devoted to the presentation of all the learners' projects. During every lesson, one project was presented to the remaining learners from other groups, who were later asked to provide verbal feedback on the final outcome. Altogether, there were seven multimedia presentations and three posters. Subsequently, all learners working on the projects were supposed to fill in a simple survey assessing their opinions concerning culture based project work and its effectiveness in the development of intercultural awareness. The survey included ten, five-point Likert scale statements designed to investigate the influence of culture based projects on learners' interest in the English language and culture, their intercultural awareness, and how the projects have influenced students' autonomy in learning English. In every statement, 1 meant 'do not agree at all' and 5 meant 'agree to a large extent'. Table 1 presents the percentage of learners' responses to the survey statements. In order to facilitate the analysis of the obtained results, answers 1 and 2 as well as 4 and 5 were added together.

Questions	***Scale*** / ***Total***	1 or 2	3	4 or 5
1. Project work increased my interest in English language	58 **(100%)**	4 **(7 %)**	20 **(34%)**	34 **(59%)**
2. Project work increased my interest in culture of English-speaking countries	58 **(100%)**	5 **(9%)**	15 **(26%)**	38 **(65%)**
3. Project work increased my awareness of intercultural similarities and differences?	58 **(100%)**	3 **(5%)**	7 **(13%)**	48 **(82%)**
4. Project work increased my knowledge of other cultures	58 **(100%)**	1 **(2%)**	4 **(7 %)**	53 **(91%)**
5. Project work made me appreciate my own culture more	58 **(100%)**	8 **(14%)**	12 **(21%)**	38 **(65%)**
6. I developed more positive attitudes towards other cultures	58 **(100%)**	8 **(14%)**	18 **(31%)**	32 **(55%)**
7. I liked working in a group while doing the project	58 **(100%)**	4 **(7%)**	6 **(11%)**	48 **(82%)**
8. I liked the idea of doing the project	58 **(100%)**	5 **(9%)**	9 **(15%)**	44 **(76%)**
9. Project work gave me the feeling of achievement	58 **(100%)**	3 **(5%)**	7 **(13%)**	48 **(82%)**
10. I would like to participate in another group project	58 **(100%)**	4 **(7%)**	10 **(17%)**	44 **(76%)**

Table 1. Learners' answers to the statements

As can be seen from the obtained results, culture based project work received very positive response from the learners taking part in the study. Seventy six percent of the

respondents like working on the project, and even more of them (82%) appreciate the opportunity to work in a group. Only five learners (9%) express negative opinions about taking part in the project. Furthermore, for the same number of learners, project work increases their feeling of achievement. The results for statement 9, unmistakably show that there is a clear agreement among the respondents that the effort put in the preparation of the final artifact brings a feeling of satisfaction. Additionally, what seems to be equally or even more important in the view of the teachers' future work, is the fact that seventy six percent of learners are willing to take part in another project work. All the above mentioned data seem to indicate a generally positive attitude of learners towards projects and show a decidedly stated feeling of achievement with the final outcome of the projects among the study respondents.

More important, however, are the learners' opinions concerning the usefulness of projects in the development of intercultural awareness and the increase of positive attitudes towards other cultures. As Unsworth, Bang and Medin (2010, in Claus-Ehlers 2010: 353) state "culture as such can have a tremendous impact on learning in the school environment". It provides learners with the opportunity to expand their system of values and beliefs as well as their background knowledge, and evolve later on. While experiencing culture, learners may become more aware of intercultural differences and increase their openness to other cultures. What is more, there seems to be a need for multicultural education and the development of culturally-based curricula. These alternatives to regular curricula are said to engage language learners through familiar ways of thinking and knowing since different learners encounter the classroom environment with different styles and strategies for learning.

The survey results seem to support all of the above presented opinions. Project work not only has a positive influence on the learners' intercultural awareness, but it also positively influences learners' attitudes concerning the English language. For sixty five percent of respondents project work increases their interest in the culture of English speaking countries. Equally important is the increase of learners' knowledge concerning other cultures among 91% of the respondents. Only five learners express negative attitudes towards the usefulness of projects in developing learners' interest in other cultures. Even more significant is the fact that as many as forty eight learners (82%) claim that their work on culture based projects makes them more aware of existing intercultural similarities and differences. Because of this, foreign language learners may start to appreciate their own native culture more, as can be seen in the case of sixty five percent of respondents taking part in the project work. Finally, it seems that project work has a positive influence on learners' attitudes towards other cultures. As many as fifty five percent of respondents claim to adopt more affirmative intercultural attitudes.

Conclusion

The results of a small scale study, designed specifically for this article, clearly prove that projects are highly appreciated by learners who, despite some probable organizational and technical difficulties, express an overtly positive attitude towards the outcome of their work as well as the project work itself. The majority of learners explicitly indicate that they do have a feeling of achievement and satisfaction in their

final 'product'. Looking at this from the perspective of the researcher, but also from the perspective of the language teacher I have to draw attention to the high quality of the projects, often going beyond my personal expectations and learners' knowledge of the outside world. Of course, some of the projects contain mistakes and content errors (wrong choice of materials) however, most of them are well-written or well designed. All things considered, learners' positive response to project work is an important reason for implementing PjBL in everyday teaching practice. It does not only build up learners' self-confidence in their own educational enterprises, but it also results in the increased attractiveness of foreign language lessons. Furthermore, projects may have a positive effect on learners self-confidence in their own skills' improvement in terms of language use (writing and speaking skills) as well as information selection and analysis. Another conclusion that can be drawn from the project work is the feeling of positive experience resulting from collaboration among learners. Working in a team builds up interpersonal relations among learners and teaches them cooperation. However, the question remains whether the positive attitudes towards collaboration are the result of efficiency of such work mode or because it is safer for some, less motivated learners. Besides, the obtained results should be of significance to any foreign language teachers involved in project work, since it requires from them to take a closer look into the way the learners perceive its effectiveness or meritoriousness, as incommensurable as they may be.

When it comes to the main supposition of the study, it seems that the results provide confirmation for the positive influence of projects on the development of intercultural awareness. Foreign language learners working on their culture based projects are presented with a unique opportunity to broaden their intercultural knowledge and acquire positive attitudes towards other cultures. Increased intercultural awareness seems to be a sine qua non condition in efficient intercultural communication outside the classroom. Equipped with intercultural knowledge, learners will be able to discover other cultures and exist in the multicultural world. What is more, while working on the culture based projects, learners develop their own passions and interest or discover brand new issues to explore. Projects allow learners to find out more about other cultures in a more involving and unconventional manner. They can move away from typical classroom activities and become more culturally conscious while working on their projects in their own pace, incorporating a multitude of materials and resources. The development of intercultural awareness through projects helps learners in noticing the existing similarities and differences between cultures. This in turn makes them more tolerant, open, emphatic, and flexible towards cultural encountered intercultural 'otherness'. Culture based project work undoubtedly makes learners more aware of their own native language culture, which is an unprecedented advantage, since learners start to appreciate their national culture and heritage and become more patriotic. Project work may lead to a creation of a learner who is, on the one hand patriotic and conscious of his/her national legacy, and on the other hand open and friendly towards other cultures. Such an amalgam of culture related features and increased intercultural awareness is the most distinctive

characteristic of a person who is fully prepared for meaningful intercultural experience.

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Plugged-in: Notes on Lingua Franca, Cross-cultural Communication, and Communicative Competence in the Era of Virtual Connections

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Introduction

A recent post being shared through social media in the last few weeks called my attention as soon as I saw it. It contained a side-by-side photographic comparison of the same public event held 7 years apart – the first time in 2006 and then in 2013. The angle of the shot was the same. We could see a crowd from behind. In the first shot, we were able to discern a few lit cell phone screens, indicating that some cell phone owners were taking pictures of the nightly event; in the second shot, every last person in sight held a lit cell phone in their hands.

Our relationship with electronic devices, electronic media, computers, and the Internet is certainly in a state of constant change, and I hazard to say is becoming one of increased dependence on our part. Some scientific evidence already exists that, in face of electronic stimulation, our brains are changing and that children could be particularly susceptible to the influence of many hours in front to screens (Attewell, Suazo-Garcia, and Battle, 2003) not only intellectually but also socially and in their physical bodies (i.e. as in the correlation between extended hours of inactivity and obesity). Of course hypotheses that predict an increasingly gloom future for our plugged-in societies are often countered by arguments about how these predictions simply give away our nostalgia for some idealized version of the past (i.e. they also happened when the telephone, electricity, and automobiles came about).

Being as it may, most agree that the demands of virtual communications require new skills from all of us – some social, some psychological, some technical and some linguistic. I would like in this article to address some of the demands that virtual communications might pose on users of language, particularly English, and even more specifically on users of non-standard varieties of the language. The later group includes those who learned English as a second, foreign, or additional language, and those whose cultural expressions might not closely resemble those of Inner Circle countries, especially the US as Britain. I call the readers' attention to those specific users even if I understand that these new modes of communication require adaptations from all users, and that Internet language standards are quite different from other language standards that influence linguistic production.

Sometimes, a misguided perception might exist that the sharing of a common language of wider communication such as English signifies some also common sense agreement on social and sociolinguistic norms. According to this view, a shared language would mean mutual understandings of values and beliefs and adherence to the same norms of extra linguistic feature usage.

However, what we often see is the existence of cross-cultural conflict resulting from different perceptions of what communication should be like. These conflicts are

heavily influenced by deeply rooted and many times subconscious beliefs, values and attitudes towards culture and users of language themselves. Many times, we are not aware of the power these habits of mind have on us; moreover, if we expand our definition of "cross-culture" to include such phenomena as gender-based cultural values, age-base differences, and medium-based potential clashes (among so many others), we may realize that we all experience instances of conflict brought about by different expectations, values, and beliefs. On the other hand, when people are aware and able to negotiate meaning beyond possible cultural differences, the potential for meaningful, enriching interactions is unimaginable.

For example, in oral, face-to-face modes of communication, we often employ elements such as rules for turn taking, personal space, volume, level of formality (among others) according to our own culturally-informed perceptions of the adequacy of these values in situations of communication. Intuitively, for instance, members of certain speech communities might stand in closer proximity to their counterpart, speak louder or more silently, wait a significant amount of time before taking a turn in speaking, or jump into the conversation before the other person has finished talking. Overtime, if we are immersed in a different culture, we tend to adapt to the new rules, to compare our existing values and possibly to develop an understanding of when what rule is more appropriate.

The difference with virtual communications is that we can be immersed in a variety of cultures at the same time, for short and instantaneous periods. In addition, we might have to merge oral and written modes of communication; deal with ever-changing, fluid rules; and derive fewer contextual clues from our situation of communication.

It is clear to me, therefore, that the English language classroom, if it is to fulfill its role of preparing students for authentic situations for communication, needs to address this expanding reach of intercultural communication in more ways than it has done in the past. If before it was problematic to focus exclusively on purely linguistic features (such as grammar, spelling, etc.) and stagnant notions of culture, now it has become even more unrealistic to limit students' experiences to that.

So one possible pedagogical maneuver for helping students deal with the increased demand for cultural understandings is to expand our working definition of communicative competence (whatever framework you prefer in that respect) to include Internet competence and at the same time pay special attention to the existing realm of strategic competence. I am using "Internet competence" here as an umbrella term (under the even more encompassing realm of sociolinguistic competence) that includes all forms of digital communication. I am particularly interested in the modes that fuse oral and written communication features (such as chatrooms, instant messenger, and even social media). With this expanding notion, we as teachers can then devise a plan to help students develop such competence.

1. Communicative Competence

Following Chomsky's formulations on competence (1965, for example) and Dell Hymes's expansion of the term to the realm of sociolinguistics through his own notion

of communicative competence (Hymes, 1972), several varying models of communicative competence have emerged. The most widely used is arguably the one proposed by Canale and Swain (1980) and further refined by Canale (1983), according to which communicative competence involves four competencies, namely grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence. It is noteworthy that in its first conception, Chomskyan competence was inspired by notions of native-speaker competence (Alptekin, 2002), and thus communicative competence as originally described, had as its antecedent the idea that native-speaker norms are the rule. Developments in World Englishes (Kachru, 1983 and after) and the subsequent blurring of the lines between native and non-native users, as well as the complex, pigeon-hole defying relationships between language users and the languages they use, have caused many suggestions for revision of the models of communicative competence to appear.

However, rather than dwell on the many possible frameworks and variations to the construct of communicative competence (for example, Bachman, 1990 with a greater emphasis on pragmatic competence or Celce-Murcia et al., 1995 with its actional competencies), I will suggest that what is important for the discussion at hand is an acknowledgement that to satisfactorily communicate across cultural lines, users of language need in the very least knowledge of the following: linguistic features, discourse elements, sociolinguistic/pragmatic norms, situational variations, and, to bring it all together, strategies to utilize this knowledge and/or compensate for its lack in varied contexts of communication. Of course, the classic distinction between knowledge and performance is crucial here as knowledge is virtually inaccessible through a direct route.

The acceleration of intercultural, intranational, and international communication, in turn facilitated, or made to escalate to an even greater degree, by digital communications, I argue, made even more salient the role of situational variations and the challenges of sociolinguistic knowledge. Furthermore, the fusion between the four traditional skills (i.e. speaking, listening, writing, and reading) brought forth by these digital forms of communication signifies that fewer and fewer students of language need one or two skills more than the others as it tended to happen when a communicative language teaching framework started to be applied to language classrooms across the world.

In a not-very-remote past, it was common enough for a student to come to a language classroom, an English classroom in many cases, and posit that what they really needed to do was "speak English." Today, that is not so anymore; the very notion of "speakers of English," has been almost universally replaced by the term "users of English," which in itself is indicative of this blurring of skill lines. The Internet in a way forces us to be competent in speaking, writing, listening and reading in creative combinations at any point in time. As an anecdotal example, I have recently guest-edited an issue of a literary magazine, in which poems are not only to be read online but are also performed by the poets themselves to be heard (through MP3 recordings) on the website the way the authors intended.

2. Whose norm, whose culture?

A common way to address issues and features pertaining to the cultural elements that must be acknowledged and understood for successful communication to occur is to refer to need to "master" the "culture of the target language" (the expression is present, for example, in the work of Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor, 2008). This, more often than not, refers to the alleged importance of being familiar with cultural expressions of what we have come to know as Inner Circle countries, most notably Great Britain and the United States.

However, we now know there is no unifying culture binding together users of English across the world, but even if we were to take these two traditional contexts associated with "English language culture," we would have to acknowledge that great variation exists within them, both among their so-called "native-speakers" and the many other users of language that inhabit and visit such places. Even then we would not be able to satisfactorily refer to "culture of the English language." The same ways that we have come to refer to Englishes in the plural should be mirrored in the ways we refer to cultures in all of their richness and variation.

I have argued elsewhere that the need for the strategic level of communicative competence to be highlighted in language classrooms around the world has never been greater (Friedrich, 2012). If we take digital communication into account, I venture to say the need becomes even larger. At any point in time, representatives of the many cultures of English may be in contact with one another, potentially with very little or no preparation time before the interactions occurs. Compare, for example, the differences between physical travel and virtual travel to understand what I mean: recently a group of professional, business travelers I know was preparing to go on an educational trip to a South American country. Prior to their departure, these individuals were offered a lengthy workshop during which items such as standards of physical proximity, ways to greet, subjects appropriate for informal conversation, suitable business and casual attire were discussed in as much detail as time allowed (note that the advice was given also with a subculture in mind: that of urban, upper middle class professional dwellers of this metropolitan South American city). Upon their return, these individuals reported feeling much reassured by the tips and even pleasantly surprised by the accuracy of the information they received in advance.

In instantaneous Internet interactions, it is not always feasible to prepare for intercultural communication to the same degree. First of all, not always is one aware of the cultural biases of the people they might come in contact with. Next, there might be too many cultures or subcultures represented for one to know which will provide the normative standard. Finally, the users of these modes of communication might have become hybrid representatives of the many cultures they themselves have experienced. In light of these complications, it seems intuitive, as I have suggested before, to rely heavily of strategic competence, the one feature of communicative competence that helps a user of language make up for improper (although I don't particularly like this term) or incomplete knowledge of any of the other competencies. In this particular case, making up for lack of or the ever-increasing demand for greater

sociolinguistic knowledge is chiefly important. That is, it is in the space created by local norms and global interactions that strategic competence thrives.

3. Is strategic competence abstract of concrete?

One of the ways of dealing with strategic competence and features of intercultural communication is teaching these features as abstractions rather than *a priori* assigning them static values that supposedly cover what happens in the so-called "target culture." For example, it is one thing to teach students that physical proximity, level of formality, digressive patterns, uncertainty tolerance, and gender and hierarchical dimensions are all features that vary across cultures and users of language. It is quite another to ascribe to Americans a preference for more personal physical space, informal language, non-digressive patterns, low tolerance for uncertainty, and flatter gender and hierarchical lines. While students should be aware that these are all features that vary and are influenced by cultural values and beliefs, to assign stereotypical, immutable assessments might result in clashed that we were meant to try and avoid in the first place. What if the American this person meets actually has a personal preference for formal speech even in situations deemed by many as informal and sees clear hierarchical lines as a value to be upheld? What would be the consequences of previously established, supposed truisms about American cultural values in this case?

So dealing with the concepts themselves rather than prescribed values allows learners to fill in the blanks as they communicate. Of course, tendencies can be discussed: it can be argued that US Americans in a comparison to Brazilians *tend* to prefer less digressive patterns and be puzzled by conversations that take many thinly related paths at the same time. This approach makes it possible for students to hypothesize beforehand, but make decisions *ad hoc*. It also facilitates the application of ideas to a broader take on culture (they can see, for example genre, age, geography, and social class as potential sociocultural divides and not only nationality or mother tongue).

4. Of the nature of virtual cross-cultural clashes

In his thorough article, Steven L. Thorne (2003: 38-40) explains that "e-mail, instant messenger, and forms of synchronous chat, are deeply affected by cultures-of-use." He contends that human "actions are mediated by social-semiotic tools (language, numeracy, concepts) as well as by material artifacts and technologies." Among the latter, he places e-mails, instant communication tools, etc. As with any "culturally specific tools," he proposes we see these digital artifacts as able to "serve a diversity of functions for some," and at the same time have very specific uses for others.

While this gap was certainly more true of the time when Thorne conducted his study and published his work (some of his collected material dates back to 1997), it remains the case that people utilize digital artifacts for a variety of functions to a greater or lesser degree. This alone would signify large differences across distinct "Internet cultures." Put into contact, for example, a highly socialized Internet gamer

and an individual who mostly uses e-mail to stay in touch with geographically dispersed relatives will present such dialectal variations in linguistic code alone (i.e. their varying linguistic competence) that there can be reason enough for communication not to occur successfully even before we involve the other competencies.

Once we do involve the other competencies, we realize how many variables impact the outcome of virtual communications, especially (and this may be my own personal bias) at the sociolinguistic level. For example, in face-to-face instant communications (or those held over the phone), we rely heavily on suprasegmentals (i.e. tone, stress, and prosody) to indicate mood and our attitude toward the subject and/or the interlocutor. When we use instant forms of written communication, conveying these same paralinguistic features can be a challenge. Sometimes, aware of this difficulty, we record suprasegmentals as we would in a script ("sigh," "pause," "lol"), but the effect is not exactly the same of spontaneously laughter, a surprised sigh, or a sarcastically produced word. Other times we use emoticons to at least show our understanding that something is being lost in cyberspace. Still not uncommonly, we find ourselves wondering about the meaning of features of virtual communications: was a person's tone formal and detached because they associate written language with that style or because they want to convey dissatisfaction and aloofness? Is a person not answering an "instant" form of communication because they have been busy and away from the computer or are they trying to show dissatisfaction and frustration? The reality is that we participate in these interactions leaving even more to chance in terms of perceptions and understanding than we already do in other less-mediated forms of communication. Because we now dwell in this fluid universe, the possibilities of intercultural clashes are magnified.

5. What have teachers, learners, and users of English online got to do with it?

The function "English as a lingual franca" (Berns, 2009; Canagarajah, 2007; Friedrich & Matsuda, 2010), has meant a need to better understand more domains of use including those represented in digital and computer-mediated forms of communication. It has also meant that students of language need to develop more sophisticated strategies for lingua francas to work as such. In the case of "English as a Lingua Franca" (ELF) this function is actually performed by a number of Englishes that carry with them different cultural baggage and the users' different levels of understanding and conveying of social norms, values and beliefs. The very characterization of a lingua franca as a function rather than a linguistic variety carries an acknowledgement that while the overall role might remain somewhat steady (and even that is questionable), the form will likely have changed the next time we look.

It is in this fluid environment that teachers must teach, students must learn, and users of English must negotiate meaning. Bretag (2006:982) suggests that,

> An alternative view of interculturality is that it involves ongoing, mutual development that occurs in the relationship or dialogue between the teacher and learner. It is a matter of mutual transformation rather than transmission,

regardless of the socio-cultural-linguistic backgrounds of the teacher or students.

According to this view, a dialogic relationship needs to be established between teachers and students of language without the assumption that the teacher, although likely a more advanced learner of the linguistic code in question, possesses all of the answers to the cultural conundrums that growing multiculturalism (especially in view of digital communications) has created. That is, the teacher might know English, for example (narrowly defined), but he or she is also still being constantly acculturated in the new modes and the new varieties that digital communication constantly creates.

Communication with counterparts all over the world, some or many of whom we have never met in person, also requires an exploration of issues of trust. This is particularly significant because in many online communications there can be a tacit understanding that truthfulness and cooperation are not to be transposed from physical reality to virtual reality in seamless ways. That is, a belief exists that it is justifiable to express opinions, cultural values and beliefs that are not one's own just to see what kinds of reactions they cause in the interlocutors. Therefore, much greater effort needs to be placed in understanding the motivations and the effects of flame wars, trolling, and other Internet-specific sociolinguistic phenomena.

If cultures were never fixed and static, virtual communications only helped us realize just how fast changing and mutable they can actually be. In this context, teachers and students must find ways to negotiate meaning that leaves space for *ad hoc* assessments and decisions, so our frameworks have to be equally fluid. Gone may be the times of stereotyping Americans as "time-conscious," South Americans as "verbose," and Scandinavians as "direct" in their language production, and this might actually be a good thing.

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Intercultural Awareness and its Integration to Young Learner Classes: Prospective Teachers' Views

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Introduction

Globalization has changed the reasons for learning foreign languages. In the methods era aim for language learning was primarily to communicate with native speakers and culture was seen as an integral part of language learning to enhance interaction. However, with this rapid change towards globalization not only the aims for language learning but also the starting age has received a change. Nowadays, many countries in Europe such as Poland, Croatia, France, Belgium etc. and in Asia such as China, South Korea, Taiwan, and India start foreign language education at primary school. Current trend in foreign language teaching is to teach children. The EU supports early language learning by encouraging governments to start L2 in pre-school or primary school (Enever & Moon, 2009). The changes in the field of language teaching during the post-methods era have encouraged the language educators and the policy makers to seek for ways to develop language teaching so that it meets the needs of the global community by focusing on interculturalism and by lowering the age of language learning.

Being the lingua franca, English is still one of the most frequently favored foreign languages. The mobility of people increased the need to interact with each other as they no longer use English to communicate with native speakers but also with speakers of other languages. Alptekin (2002) argues that the notion of communicative competence requires a new definition in order to identify English as a world language. Culture has been a part of communicative competence since Hymes' (1972) stress on sociocultural knowledge. In their earlier study Canale and Swain (1980) also identified sociolinguistic competence as one of the constituents of communicative competence, which deals with social rules and social context. As social context is an inseparable part of the culture it refers to "culture-specific context embedding the norms, values, beliefs, and behavior patterns of a culture" (Alptekin, 2002: 58). However, this earlier monolithic view of culture has become inadequate for the current needs of the language learners/users. In the previous view, language learning was equated with learning of the target language culture. However, as the needs changed language learners/users needed intercultural knowledge to communicate with people from various L1 and cultural backgrounds. Thus, upon Byram's (1997) notion of critical cultural awareness (CA), intercultural communicative competence gained popularity and attention. Sercu (2006) argues that current aim of foreign language education is not related to the attainment of communicative competence anymore. Alptekin (2002) also points out that earlier understanding of communicative competence is utopian as the communicative partner is not always a native speaker. He further claims that it is not adequate to reflect the current lingua franca status of

English. Cultural awareness as part of communicative competence can be defined as "a conscious understanding of the role culture plays in language learning and communication (both first and foreign languages)" (Baker, 2011: 63). The necessity to consider English as an international language (EIL) has also shaped our perceptions of teaching cultural information. Alptekin (2002) points out the need for a new pedagogic model, which views English as a way for intercultural communication. For him in such a model the development of intercultural communicative competence is important so that the learners can communicate with other target language users. Meyer (1991: 137) defines intercultural competence as "the ability of a person to behave adequately in a flexible manner when confronted with actions, attitudes, and expectations of representatives of foreign cultures". The development of knowledge and awareness on cultural differences and the strategies to deal with these differences should be a component of this pedagogic model. In addition, learners need to be prepared for communication with other people at the international level. Thus, the materials and activities should provide examples of appropriate discourse among native and non-native language users and should be relevant to learners' lives.

Cultural awareness about the target language is no longer helpful to provide international communication and cannot compensate for intercultural competence. English, being the lingua franca (ELF), is not only used in inner circle (USA, England, Australia, New Zealand, etc.) and outer circle (India, South Africa, Philippines, etc.) but also in expanding circle countries (Turkey, Poland, China, Japan, etc.) in which English is learnt as a foreign language. According to Crystal (n.d.; 2008) the number of people who use English in expanding circle are more than the inner and outer circle. This fact brings about the need for communicating in English with global users. The older belief that language learning requires the need for learning the target language culture is not satisfactory for ELF as intercultural communication takes place within the global community. Baker (2011) argues that not just the development of cultural awareness but also the intercultural awareness is essential for communication in the expanding circle. Hence, activities and materials that aid intercultural awareness should be a part of foreign language curriculum. Intercultural awareness from a global perspective is defined as follows:

> Intercultural awareness is a conscious understanding of the role culturally based forms, practices, and frames of understanding can have in intercultural communication, and an ability to put these conceptions into practice in a flexible and content specific manner in real time communication. (Baker, 2012: 66)

As the orthodox views of language teaching that sees language as a linguistic code are no longer the sole perception of language educators due to the shift in education theory toward intercultural understanding, the responsibility of the language educator has also expanded. Language teachers are now required to teach the linguistic code within the sociocultural background of the target language and help the development of intercultural competence (Castro, 2004). Teachers' understanding of the culture, their cultural and intercultural awareness, and also their skills and abilities to incorporate this knowledge and awareness appropriately in the language learning

materials and activities are crucial for the implementation of the current view of language teaching within ELF.

Culture teaching is considered motivating and engaging (Türkan & Çelik, 2007). In addition to its benefits such as developing positive attitudes towards diverse cultural backgrounds, improving learners/users communicative ability with global language community, and developing the skills for intercultural communication, culture teaching can trigger learners/users interest and curiosity. Language in that case can serve as a medium to learn about others rather than an end in itself. Gürsoy (2010: 234) argues that "attitudes, behaviors and value judgments develop at early ages". Therefore, integrating culture and language learning to young learners at primary school is important as culture is considered as a "fifth skill" due to globalization and consideration of English within EIL (Tomalin, 2008). Language teachers should try to incorporate cultural content to TEYL (teaching English to young learners) to help children develop positive attitudes and understanding towards others. Language teaching with a focus on intercultural understanding helps the individuals in the globalization process. Due to the current communicative needs of individuals and opportunities for mobility, interaction with many people from various cultural backgrounds is inevitable. Children, at a young age, will get to learn that "different" is not bad thus; develop positive feelings without being judgmental. However, as characteristics and cognitive abilities of children are different from adults, selection of the cultural content and finding out the most appropriate means of introducing it requires trained instructors who possess intercultural awareness and knowledge themselves. Teacher education programs should train prospective teachers not only in the content area but also in intercultural language teaching. These programs should equip the prospective teachers with the skills to present cultural content at the appropriate age and linguistic level.

Children, by nature, are curious, imaginative, and talkative. Learning about other children in other cultures would no doubt trigger their curiosity to learn. Noticing similarities and differences will help them to learn and understand more about their own culture as well as others'. However, as children are still in the process of their cognitive development, cultural content selected and used in activities should be appropriate with their cognitive stage. According to Piaget, children between the ages 7 and 11 are at the period of concrete operations (Dworetzky, 1993). Thus, they cannot understand hypothetical and abstract concepts. The topics, activities, games, tasks, projects should be selected according to their conceptual and world knowledge. The "here and now" principle should be applied throughout the process. According to this principle, "any content addressed to young learners must only include what they know as topics existing in their immediate environment ('here') and what they can hear, see, and find out in their current time (the 'now')" (Arıkan, 2012: 241). Furthermore, Gürsoy (2012: 77) argues that "themes that are chosen according to the "here and now" principle and that are interesting help children create a map of related issues in their minds". This way it is argued that learners can activate their background knowledge, which in turn, will help them to organize old and new information. A close look at children's every day actions and behaviors might help the teachers to

select issues that are within their students' knowledge and experience (which are concrete) and relate similar and new information on to the "known". By this way it can be possible to teach intercultural awareness to young learners/users of English with limited cognitive abilities and metacognitive knowledge.

With the new education reform in Turkey in 2012 primary and secondary school language curriculum has also been changed. The new English Language Program as announced by the Ministry of National Education (MNE) in February 2013 emphasizes the importance given to intercultural competence as follows:

> In consideration of the *CEFR*'s emphasis on developing intercultural competence and appreciation for cultural diversity (CoE, 2001), cultural issues are also addressed. Elements of both the target culture and international cultures are presented in a positive and non-threatening manner (Elyıldırım & Ashton-Hayes, 2006) in keeping with the themes of each unit, at the same time stressing the value of home culture in order to avoid the formation of negative attitudes. Learners/users are exposed to simple phrases in world languages that include greetings, counting and so on as they learn about aspects of other cultures that are similar to or different from their own (MNE, 2013: IV).

The new program lowers the age for language learning to 6,5 (second grade) thus not only young learners (7-11) but also very young learners (children up to age 7) will be the focus of language teaching process. There are cognitive differences between these two groups as well. For this reason, the guidance of the curriculum in integrating cultural elements to the learning environment is essential. With its new content and objectives the newest curriculum leads the teachers to use cultural information provided. However, teachers would still need theoretical and practical information regarding the integration of cultural component during their pre-service education at the ELT departments. Moreover, their confidence in themselves regarding their own intercultural knowledge and understanding and whether they possess such knowledge is also crucial in bringing in an intercultural point of view to their language classes.

1. Methodology

The current study aims to focus on prospective ELT teachers' ideas about intercultural understanding and its development with young learners as well as their self-perceived beliefs about their skills to integrate intercultural understanding to primary school EFL lessons. The research aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the prospective ELT teachers' ideas about teaching culture in the foreign language classes?
2. What are the prospective ELT teachers' self-perceived beliefs about their skills to incorporate intercultural awareness?
3. What are the prospective ELT teachers' ideas about developing intercultural awareness with young learners?

1.1 Participants

87 prospective ELT teachers studying at a large state university in Turkey contributed to the study. All of the participants have taken "Teaching English to Young Learners"

course, thus gained some theoretical and practical knowledge on teaching children.

1.2 Instrument

Data is collected via a 20-item questionnaire prepared as a five-point Likert scale and developed by the researcher. Expert opinion was taken for the content validity of the questionnaire from three teacher trainers in the ELT Department of a state university in Turkey. Upon the advised changes the questionnaire was piloted on 10 prospective teachers in the ELT Department. Additional changes were made to provide both the content and the face validity of the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was calculated by taking Cronbach's Alpha coefficient and found reliable with a .712 alpha value.

1.3 Data Analysis and Results

Data gathered from the questionnaire is analyzed by using SPSS 13. Frequency analysis was made and also means and standard deviations were calculated to interpret the data. As an answer to the first research question we can say that the prospective teachers had positive ideas about teaching intercultural awareness and developing intercultural understanding and the majority (88.5%) viewed culture as an inseparable part of language teaching. In addition, results showed that they possessed an intercultural view (93.1%) rather than a monolithic view of teaching culture. The prospective teachers (90.8%) seemed to be aware of the effects of globalization and the importance of teaching/learning about different cultures. Their answers showed their understanding about the importance of gaining knowledge about the similarities and differences between cultures for the development of intercultural awareness (96.2%). They are against the sole teaching of the culture of the target language community and indicated that intercultural awareness requires knowledge about norms, beliefs, and behaviors of one's own and other cultures (94.3%). Similarly, the majority viewed intercultural awareness as an integral part of foreign language development.

As for the second research question, which is related to their skills to teach culture to young learners, the percentages are not as high as their views presented previously. Only a small number of participants (37.2%) think that they possess intercultural knowledge. Similarly, 34.5% think that they have adequate knowledge about the British or American culture to teach their students. This result indicates that the participants lack information on the target language culture as well as on intercultural knowledge. Moreover, less than half of the participants (47.1%) stated that they know how to present cultural information in the classroom. Yet, slightly more than half of the participants (59.8%) indicated that they can provide cultural information at children's cognitive level. Although they claimed that they did not possess adequate intercultural knowledge to teach, 71.2% claimed that they have developed intercultural understanding. 58.6% found themselves skillful and knowledgeable enough to prepare materials and activities to develop intercultural awareness in young

learners. Thus, 67.8% indicated that they would like the teacher's book and the course books to lead them in preparing activities for intercultural understanding.

The third research question investigated their ideas about developing intercultural understanding with children. The answers are promising that most of the participants (87.3%) think that ICA should be developed as early as primary school. However, they were not sure whether children can understand cultural differences at a young age. Thus, 47% indicated positive and 41.1% indicated negative views about the issue. 21.2% of the prospective teachers stated that they have no idea related to the incorporation of ICA within the new 4+4+4 curriculum. 56.4% stated that they were happy that the new language curriculum integrates ICA. Finally, only a small number of participants (39%) claimed that children should learn about their culture rather than the other cultures.

1.4 Discussion

The research results are remarkable that they emphasize the importance of teacher training process. Although the prospective teachers had positive ideas and beliefs about the integration of culture to language teaching to young learners they seemed to lack the skills to do this. The result is supported by the previous studies. In their study Türkan and Çelik (2007) claim that ELT programs lack cultural content and that the prospective teachers are not prepared to teach cultural information. Thus, they advise teachers to develop themselves and seek for ways to integrate culture to their language classrooms by identifying and recognizing their weaknesses. Although the development of intercultural awareness and knowledge is an important issue for professional development, to provide standardization in education, teacher education programs should reconsider their content so that they furnish the cultural needs of prospective teachers. It can be inferred from the results that the pre-service teacher training fails to support prospective teachers in developing knowledge and skills in intercultural understanding as well as the ways to implement this knowledge in the classroom. Most of the participants are not aware how to integrate cultural content to the primary school language classroom and they are not sure whether they have the skills to help child learners to develop ICA. According to their self-perceptions, participants are not satisfied with their own knowledge of cultural information.

The majority of the participants viewed intercultural understanding and awareness as essential. Moreover, rather than the monolithic view of culture teaching they had positive ideas about the integration of information from various cultures. According to their self-perception, as they do not know the ways to help children develop intercultural understanding they like the course books and teacher's books to guide them in preparing materials and activities. The results also showed that quite a significant number (21.2%) of the prospective teachers are unaware of the cultural content of the new primary school language curriculum. This is mostly due to the fact that the curriculum was launched only two months before the data was gathered. Hence, they may not have the time to examine the curriculum yet.

The results suggest that teacher training process should include information about culture teaching and learning within a global perspective within ELF. In addition,

practical aspects of integrating culture to language teaching by helping trainees develop skills and abilities to prepare materials and activities needs to be considered as an indispensable component of pre-service teacher education. Children, as a special group of language learners/users, require careful planning and presentation of the language material. Due to their cognitive differences from adults they may encounter difficulties in understanding abstract concepts. However, they are also advantageous as value judgments and attitudes develop at a younger age (Gürsoy, 2010). As one of the aims of early language learning is to help young learners develop positive attitudes toward the target language it is important for them to understand and appreciate cultural differences as well. However, as mentioned above, this understanding cannot focus on a single culture nor it can ignore speakers' native culture. Presentation of cultural similarities and differences can help children to understand their and other cultural norms, values, and belief systems. Certain criteria should be taken into consideration while presenting cultural topics. Firstly, since language teaching to young learners lays down its roots on the "here and now" principle (Arıkan, 2012; Gürsoy, 2012a), selection of the cultural topics should also consider children's current needs and interests. Secondly, most EFL child learners do not have a reason for learning another language as they can perfectly communicate in their mother tongue. Thus, activities that presents or examines cultural issues should give an immediate reason for doing the activity. Third, cultural topics should be relevant to their daily lives. This way it will be easier for them to create links between what they do in their everyday lives and the new information. Fourth, children are curious by nature, projects, tasks, and activities that trigger this curiosity about different cultures can be valuable opportunities for the development of intercultural awareness. Fifth, children are talkative (Halliwell, 1992; Moon, 2000; Gürsoy, 2012b) and egocentric. Creating opportunities for them to talk about themselves with children from other cultures via synchronous or asynchronous online communication would be a wonderful opportunity to get to know another culture and making friends. During the process children can learn to appreciate differences.

In conclusion, although it is possible to help children develop ICA, teachers' own intercultural knowledge as well as their knowledge about how children learn and their skills to use that knowledge when teaching constitutes an important place within EIL. Therefore, the teacher training programs should supplement their curriculum with such knowledge to help the prospective teachers to bridge the gap between communicative competence and intercultural competence. As Turkey has developed an interculturally sensitive English program for the primary schools, teacher education process needs to consider the teachers current needs as shaped by the national and global objectives.

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Is the Concept of a Foreign Language Classroom Defined Locally or Globally?

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Newtonian space, time and matter are not intuitions.
They are recepts from culture and language.

Benjamin Whorf

1. Language classroom in metaphors - background to the study

Although the concept of classroom (including language classroom) seems uncontroversial and simple at the first sight, it may have various meanings (van Lier 1988: 5- 9). Gabryś-Barker (2010) defines language classroom in terms of space. She distinguishes two dimensions of language classroom, namely: physical dimension and mental (interactive) one. The former, i.e. the physical one, refers to purely physical aspects, such as: seating arrangement, walls, windows, equipment, decoration, and is fairly homogenous. The latter, however, seems far more interesting, as it allows to go beyond the first impressions guided by the observable behaviours. It also enables to understand the nature of classroom interaction as well as the relation between the physical and mental spaces. Mental space, as described by Gabryś-Barker (2010), is the interaction between the teacher and learners and between learners themselves. It denotes individual autonomy ("space to breathe"), and also, most interesting of all, classroom atmosphere.

Gabryś-Barker (2010) says that mental (interactive) aspect incorporates studies about a personal nature e.g. altruism, aggression, and also those of an interactive nature, e.g. acting in the presence of an audience, social facilitation, personal space and territoriality. In the opinion of Tudor (2001: 104- 105) language classroom is a social as well as pedagogical reality. The very conceptualization of the language classroom is determined by the students', teachers' and other participants' perception of the classroom and the meaning which classroom learning has for them. What also counts is the respect to language learning, understood in a narrow sense of the term as an attitude towards to the very act of learning, but also defined within the broader framework of the value systems and goal structures applicable to particular contexts. The review of literature on language classrooms and the metaphors offered seem to reflect these two tendencies.

First of all, classroom can be perceived as workplace (De Guerrero and Villamil 2001) or a controlled learning environment (Tudor 2001: 105), where the purpose is to enable students to learn a language by the creation of conditions in which language learning can be undertaken in a structured manner. This view is close to what Breen (1986, in Tudor 2001: 106) refers to as experimental laboratory. Similarly, Legutke (1996: 11) conceptualizes classroom as laboratory, but defines it as a place in which

both teachers and learners carry out 'experiments and research'. This involves: hypothesizing, planning, carrying out plans, evaluating and systemizing.

Classroom is also often referred to as training ground for the mastery of immediate and future language use (Legutke 1996: 11). It is governed by rules and conventions and directed towards internalisation, habitualisation and development of learning routines. Farrell (2006) goes a step further and compares classroom to a battleground with a teacher acting as a general, i.e. a person who controls.

Another set of metaphors looks at classroom as a place of communication or a place for communication. For Tudor (2001: 105), the metaphor of communicative classroom encompasses two dimensions, namely: classroom learning as a preparation/ rehearsal for language use outside the classroom. In this understanding of the term, language classroom is the place where student's communicative needs are taken into account, which in turn increases his/her learning and practice opportunities. The second dimension refers to the exploration of the communicative potential of the classroom itself and focuses on characterizing classroom communication. These two dimensions, according to Tudor (2001: 112), help to redefine the role of the classroom; 'the classroom for communication' and 'the classroom as communication'. Legutke (1996: 11- 12), however, prefers the metaphor of classroom as a communication centre, which is defined as a place where teachers and learners communicate about language, culture, about learning and learning to learn, about meaning and learning to mean.

Two other metaphors available in the literature conceptualize language classrooms as observatories (Legutke 1996: 11-12) or studios (Legutke 1996: 11-12). The former concentrates on the process of exploring various aspects of target language culture by means of different media. This allows teachers and learners to gather data from both direct and mediated encounters, bring them back to the classroom and discuss them (Legutke 1996: 11-12). The latter centres on classrooms as studios for text production, where texts denote a variety of types from diary entries to contributions in discussions.

For Tudor (2001: 105), classroom can be also associated with a school of autonomy. This understanding is closely linked to learner autonomy, self-direction and learner empowerment; it expands the concept of the classroom which includes the traditional setting as well as conditions for independent, self-directed learning (self-study centres or other independent learning facilities).

Additionally, Tudor (2001: 105) identifies the classroom with socialisation. In this sense classrooms are likely to reflect the core beliefs and value systems of a given society at a given point in time. Tudor talks about 'imposed socialisation', i.e. preserving certain beliefs and values of social nature; introducing students to a given culture and social system and socialising them into it. In contrast, 'emergent socialisation' allows classroom participants to develop their own set of norms and their own form of self- organising socialisation (Tudor 2001: 124).

If we look at a classroom from the learner perspective, it is often compared to home. Moyles (1995: 35) claims that classroom's prime function is to 'house' the teacher and the learners in a kind of 'workshop' (or playshop!) context which supports

crucial interactions between them. Moyles (ibid.) adds that the vital elements of the classroom context concern: the physical context; structures (including routines) and resource management; rights, responsibilities and rules; behaviour and communication.

Kramsch and Sulllivan (1996: 203) extend 'home' metaphor by comparing classroom to family, which stay together, learn together and is supposed to help each other inside and outside the class. In other words, classroom may offer supportive context, which is necessary for some groups of students.

Finally, a classroom is frequently compared to a stage, which provides the space for the teachers' and students' performance, both scripted and improvised (Armstrong, 2003; Janowski, 1989; Marchant 1992). Classrooms are distinctive and recognizable, says Armstrong (2003), not only by the very physical arrangement of furniture, but also because of the convention (i.e. what's going on inside).

2. (Language) classroom and novice teacher

The role of classroom context in shaping teacher's perceptions and behaviours is recognized by many authors (Allwright and Bailey 1991; McIntyre 1994; Woods 1996). Some of the authors stress the significance of an ELT classroom context for young inexperienced teachers who may treat it as a training ground and a learning environment (McIntyre 1994; 81), where they gather experience, practice and knowledge about diverse classroom situations. For novice teachers classroom often serves as a battlefield where they try to control and understand but test themselves as teachers (McIntyre 1994: 83) when they are trying to survive in a lonely and often professionally isolated occupation. Classrooms, including language classrooms, allow novice teachers to 'work a body of knowledge out experientially over time' (Clandinin and Connelly 1986: 383, quoted in Efron and Bolotin Joseph 2001: 76). In other words, classroom practice enables the trainees to develop personal and practical knowledge as they 'participate in educational situations', which is different from a theoretical or officially sanctioned knowledge base (Connelly and Clandinin 1988: 54; quoted after Efron and Bolotin Joseph 2001: 76). Szesztay (1996: 37) stresses the fact that the personal nature of such learning makes the difference between knowing about and understanding them. Classroom practice also provides the foundation for teachers' daily actions, interactions, and decisions (Efron and Bolotin Joseph 2001: 76). Thiessen (2001:317) points out that constructing classroom routines involves teachers in developing a more critical awareness of everyday classroom operations. This, in turn, is closely related with self-understanding and self-improvement, which helps teachers to act out not intuitively but more deliberately. As a result, the cognitive schemata of novice teachers become more elaborate, more complex, more interconnected, and more easily accessible. They develop larger, better-integrated stores of facts, principles, and experiences to draw upon.

The context of work can have a powerful 'wash out effect' as it eradicates teachers' beliefs developed in their professional training. On the other hand, school context can exert beneficial and supportive impact on teachers' initial beliefs, and as such can facilitate further development (for details see Tsui, 2007). Observing the

trainees' evolution and modification of beliefs is a unique experience helping to trace the process of becoming a language teacher. Classroom context also serves as an awareness raising platform, which informs teacher about individual or typical (context/ cultural specific) routines (De Guerrero and Villamil, 2001; Pugh et al., 1992). This is clearly illustrated by fig. 1. See App.1

Woods (1996: 48) refers to ESL teachers as a 'tribe' or subculture with shared behaviours, shared language and shared understandings of the concepts referred to by that language, and also for researching the 'normal daily activities' that are characteristic of that subculture. The culture of language teachers, then, involves a set of basic issues around which their beliefs and actions fill a particular spectrum. They share a common vocabulary of language teaching, including terms such as 'proficiency', 'grammar', 'cloze' and 'input', and such phrases as 'information gap activity', 'communicative approach' and 'it's like pulling teeth' – although, as with any culture, the precise understanding of the terms will vary and will be determined by particular contexts. Woods (1996: 49) claims that: teachers also have common concepts of appropriate behaviour patterns related to particular social situations, e.g. the classroom, the teachers' meeting, the afterclass student consultation, the resource room browse, the hallway gossip, and so on. However, the frequency of pattern implementation may vary, quite the same as the internal structure of these patterns may be susceptible to modifications.

Studying metaphors of pre-service, novice teachers seems relevant not only because of their potential to generate fresh and stimulating metaphors about various aspects of the teaching/learning process, including the opinions about language classroom. Another reason lies in the usefulness of metaphors for revealing teacher' and learners' thinking (Cortazzi and Jin 1999: 150; de Guerrero and Villamil, 2001; Pugh et al., 1992; Siek-Piskozub and Strugielska 2010; Wan, Low and Li 2011) and showing how teachers and learners "construct representations of themselves and their experience" (Kramsch 2003: 125). Metaphors also shed some light on the trainees' perceptions of the reality of language classroom and the context of learning, which directly leads to understanding novice teachers' behaviour and actions (Borg 2006: 131). They shed some light on the teachers' expectations as well as their perception of control and power (Oxford et al. 1998). Levine (2005: 175) defines metaphors as a timely connecting tool that bridges past to present and theory to practice. It helps us to select paths that impact our practice. For Levine (2001; 2005: 173- 174) studying and analyzing metaphors provide a better understanding of what kind of a teacher one wishes to become and how s/he perceives one's role in teaching: 'treasure hunts metaphors', 'cabinet stew metaphor', 'patchwork quilt metaphor' and 'garden metaphor' would indicate the role of the teacher that one wants to adopt and indirectly spark passion in what one is doing.

3. Aims of the study

The study aims at comparing classroom metaphors generated by Polish and Turkish student teachers at the beginning and at the end of the academic year. This allows us to see how student teachers' beliefs evolved throughout the year and verify to what

extent the beliefs are determined by the cultural context or teachers limited experience. In particular the study was expected to shed some light on the following issues:

- to compare the initial beliefs about language classroom held by Turkish and Polish student teachers (i.e. the beliefs held by the trainees on entering the teacher training programmes).
- to compare final beliefs of these two groups (i.e. the beliefs trainees have after a one-year training programme and some teaching practicum).
- to determine the extent to which the beliefs reflect teachers' awareness of professional practice (or lack of it) or the impact of cultural variables.

4. The Participants: Turkish and Polish teacher trainees' characteristics

In Turkey, 45 ELT students attending the final year of Faculty of Education (Çukurova University) took part in the research. The age of the students ranges between: 21-23. Gender: 35 Females, 10 males. In Poland, the study was conducted among 37 teacher trainees, aged 20-22, who have been attending teacher training programme (II-year students of English Philology Department, University of Silesia). Gender: 30 females, 7 males. Candidates from both groups are future teachers of English. Below are the characteristics of particular teaching contexts.

Poland	Turkey
Specialization in two subjects (in this particular study: English and German	Specialization in two subjects (in this particular study: English and Turkish
After the overall course the students obtain BA degree. Graduates are qualified to teach at all levels of education. However, they need to enroll for MA programmes to achieve full teaching qualifications and MA degree.	Graduates are teacher candidates and they are to take an examination including basic skills, and pedagogical content. If they pass the examination, they are appointed to different levels in schools located in different parts of Turkey. A few of them prefer to work in private schools.

Tab. 1. Turkish and Polish teacher training standards

Despite the differences, there are also some similarities across the programmes:

- Pedagogical training (the overall course - 360h, including the following courses: language pedagogy, methodology of ELT, SLA theory, psychology). In addition, they take such courses as Linguistics, Psycholinguistics and Research Methods,
- Practical training (180 h – observation and teaching under the supervision of others; the students are supposed to complete observation sheets, prepare lesson plans and write self-reports),
- ICT competence,Command of a foreign language (B2, B2+) (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages).

5. The course of the study and research tools

The trainees in both contexts were supposed to complete a questionnaire, which consisted of a task aiming at eliciting metaphors by asking students to complete a stem (ex. the classroom is like…). This task served as a catalyst for reflection and a cue for self-inquiry. As it was part of a larger training, some other data collection procedures included the following: a sentence completion task, the aim of which was to elicit background information about the students, their expectations, beliefs and initial motivations they bring to the programme (some examples include the following: I'm a teacher because…; My main qualities as a teacher….) and an evaluation sheet, which aimed at helping students to verbalize their comments about the changes they have noticed and to evaluate the training.

The questionnaire was distributed twice, at the beginning (i.e. October 2009) and at the end of the academic year (i.e. April 2010 for Turkish students and May 2010 for Polish students, respectively).

As this paper focuses on the conceptualizations of language classroom, only teacher trainees' beliefs about classroom will be presented. Personal cognitions the trainees bring to the training programme would be supplemented with the evaluation the trainees provided after a year of training, namely the description of the things the trainees found most surprising in the classroom teaching.

6. Cross-cultural comparison and metaphors about the classroom

See App. 2

Classroom was conceptually one of the most difficult issue to define. The metaphors generated by the two groups of the trainees were incoherent and inconsistent, and to a certain extent focused on different dimensions of language classroom. For Turkish students classroom is a place, which is further exemplified by a building (e.g. a factory, a garage or a laboratory), an area (e.g. a training field, a garden) or a room (i.e. part of the building- the examples: a library, a studio). For Turkish students classroom is also associated with a feeling, an experience of both something positive (e.g. relaxed atmosphere) as well as negative (e.g. a nightmare). Finally, classroom is perceived by Turkish students as a miniature of a society.

Polish students share some similarities, although certain differences are also observable. For Polish students a classroom is compared to a place, often a sacred one (this metaphor is non-existent in the group of Turkish students). Polish trainees use the following associations: a building (e.g. home, a place of work, temple of knowledge) and an area (e.g. a battlefield). In the post questionnaire, the comparison to a different world with different rules appears. Interestingly, Polish students perceive language classroom as a separate entity (world) with its own patterns and rules, whereas Turkish students see it as a copy of the world outside the classroom. Another difference concerns the way in which the metaphors are expressed. In other words, conceptually speaking the metaphors offered by Turkish and Polish students bear some similarities, yet the associations that these metaphors evoke and wording used

to describe them differ in both groups. This, in turn, results in various attributions, aspects, behaviours or acts. The following examples illustrate the point:

Classroom as a military organization
Turkish students – *training field, army* (the metaphors imply: order, discipline, practice, obeying rules) Polish students – *battlefield, war* (the metaphors imply: chaos, unpredictability of the final outcome)

Classroom as a place of work
Turkish students – *factory, laboratory, garage, workshop* – the implication: cooperation, interaction, working together
Polish students– *a place of work (an assembly line*)- the implication of hard, automatic and mundane work that does not require much thinking effort)

Unique, original classroom conceptualizations applicable to one group only
Turkish students – *classroom as a miniature of society*

Polish students – *classroom as a temple of knowledge* (no biblical or religious references to any aspects of teaching / learning process).

Worth noticing is the fact that the metaphors provided by the Polish students at the end of the training significantly outnumbered the metaphors produced in the pre-questionnaire. It seems that at the beginning of the study, the subjects had some difficulty in describing language classroom and provided no verbalizations. As far as emotions are concerned, we may risk the statement that after a year of training negative metaphors, i.e. those evoking the associations of hard, mundane work or struggle decreased in frequency and were gradually replaced by the metaphors of home, a garden or an enjoyable place.

In the pre- questionnaire Turkish students associated classroom with home, i.e. a cosy and comfortable place offering conditions sufficient for growth and development. Surprisingly, this metaphor disappeared in the post questionnaire, quite the same as the metaphor of factory. Instead, after the year of training the metaphor of garden, perceived as an enjoyable place was intensified. Quite frequent was the metaphor presenting classroom as a free and enjoyable environment or a playground (play garden).

In the group of Polish trainees 3 metaphors were competing with one another, namely: classroom as a battlefield; home/ shelter and a place of work. After a year, the trainees were likely to associate language classroom with a place of friendly and safe atmosphere which they remember because of early experiences with language (home metaphor). They also visualize language classroom as garden, i.e. place where they can grow in linguistic terms and where "knowledge blossoms". Metaphors which portray language classroom as a hostile place (battlefield metaphor) or a sacred place (temple metaphor) are less frequent. This also applies to some new metaphors, i.e. those that appeared at the end, e.g. farm (2), scene (2), different world (2) or bus (2).

The year of training is significant in one more way, namely; it helped to systematize the trainees' views. At the beginning of the training in both groups the associations were vivid, sometimes surprising, yet unexplainable. Additionally, they were incoherent, fragmentary and loosely linked with other aspects of teaching/ learning process as if depicting it from various angles. The best example to illustrate the point comes from the group of Polish students who associated teaching mostly with journey, guiding and filling the empty vessels. At the same time classroom is compared to a battlefield, home and place of work. One- year training contributed to building a more consistent, organized and structured view of the teaching/ learning process, where certain elements are interlinked. In the post- questionnaire, the metaphors describing language classroom better correspond to the metaphors about teaching than in the pre- questionnaire where the link was not so observable. For example: if for Turkish students teaching is like growing a plant (6), tending a garden, then the classroom is viewed as a garden with various, colorful flowers (10). Similarly, if they associate teaching with playing a game (6), then classroom is seen as a free and enjoyable environment; a play garden (10). One more example provided by the Turkish students looks at teaching as an art and at classroom as a theatre hall, music room (3), which brings the association of a room where art is created.
Similar regularities are noticeable in the group of Polish trainees. Thus, if teaching is associated with growing garden or parenting/ bringing up children, so classroom is referred to as garden (6) or home (8). Teaching is always compared to sharing knowledge by Polish students, with classroom compared to temple of knowledge. Such a comparison was not found in Turkish group.

7. Conclusions and implications for further study

Answering the question posed in the title, I can say that there are certain similarities in the way foreign language classroom is defined in literature and the students' data. This may suggest that certain characteristics of foreign language classroom is shared globally or determined by professional training. However, a precise meaning of the concept is further refined locally, in relation to contextual constraints and personal experiences. This, in turn, corresponds to what Towsend (2011) describes as the needed paradigm for education, namely: Thinking and Acting both Globally and Locally. The value of this particular study is connected not only with its impact on the knowledge and beliefs of those who participated in it. It might be also helpful for others as an informative and awareness raising task, indicating the impact of various training contexts on teacher thinking.

For the teacher trainees, the interactive and instructional dimensions of the language classroom caught trainees' attention and proved to be the most challenging to deal with. The former can be understood as a space for teacher - students communication and interaction, whereas the latter is defined as a space where language is practiced, where both teachers and learners gather some of linguistic and non- linguistic skills. The physical dimension of the language classroom, namely the arrangement of classroom space as well as teacher's management of this space, was not perceived by the trainees as worth reflecting about or difficult to deal with.

Some metaphors proved to be common across the contexts, suggesting that that teaching is to a certain extent determined by culture and cultural/ social contexts in which it is performed. Consequently, students in both groups conceptualize some ideas similarly (e.g. classroom as home or garden). However the difference lies in their intensity or frequency of appearance, for example garden metaphor was presented by Polish learners in the post questionnaire, whereas in Turkish group both at the beginning and at the end of the training period.

The awareness- raising value of the training is also undeniable. Students in both groups appreciated the opportunity of comparing and commenting upon metaphors generated by other teacher trainees. This, in turn, can be seen as a step further into the process of 'defamiliarisation' (Shklovsky, in Pulverness 2004) or developing 'cultural self-reflexiveness', which is defined by Pulverness (2004) as 'seeing ourselves as others see us' and 'seeing how we see ourselves'. The course resulted in some, yet limited, impact on the trainees' perception of the classroom concept. After a year, the following changes in teacher trainees' beliefs were observed:

- reorganization and rearrangement of beliefs (this refers mainly to changes in the frequency of occurence). For example, the initial metaphors of a factory (Turkish group) and a workplace (Polish group) did not appear in the post questionnaire. Probably, the learners realized that classroom interaction means more than conveying meaning, and its success depends on a variety of factors. Another example concerns frequency. The home metaphor (the most frequent one in the Turkish group) was replaced by the garden metaphor. In contrast, in Polish group this particular home metaphor intensified after the training.
- relabelling (ex. in Turkish group classroom was described as garden in pre–quest., however in the post- quest. It was presented as a garden with various, colourful flowers).
- reversal (ex. Polish group associated classroom with both positive and negative associations- the metaphors of battlefield/ war and home; whereas in the post- questionnaire classroom was presented by positive metaphors of home and garden). Although battlefield metaphor also appreared in the post-questionnaire in the Polish, yet it was not that intensive.

The impact of the theoretical training does not necessarily imply change, as Borg (2006: 65) states, but can also take the form of reinforcement in prior cognitions. This was also proved by the data obtained from the students.

In conclusion, I can say that teacher practical knowledge is described as open and developing rather than stable and exhaustible. While defining it, Freeman speaks metaphorically that teacher knowledge is 'an emerging loose group of tools', which change when and as you use them' (Freeman 2001: 5). This calls for further inquiries in the field of trainees' perceptions of L2 classroom and the evolution of their beliefs as well as the cross- cultural studies of FL teacher cognitions.

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Acknowledgements
I would like to express my gratitude to Cem Can and Hasan Bedir from Çukurova University (Turkey) for their help in obtaining data.

App. 1.

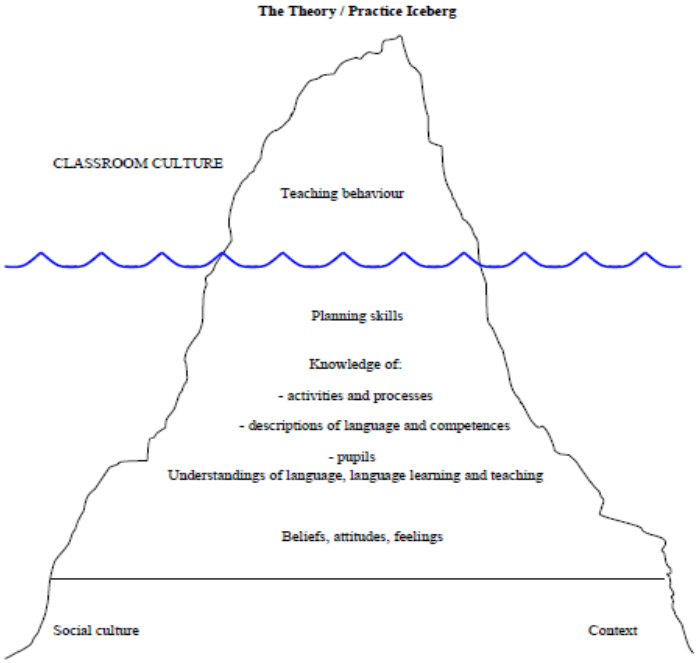

Fig. 1. The theory/ practice iceberg (Malderez & Medgyes1996: 115)

App. 2.

Classroom is like …	Classroom is like …	Classroom is like …	Classroom is like …
Turkish / Pre	Turkish / Post	Polish / Pre	Polish / Post
Home (7) Factory(6) (workshop, garage, laboratory) Garden (3) A nightmare (2), Training field (2) A small simulation of the world (4) A studio, stage (3) A place containing many colorful and educational stuff (2) Relax atmosphere (2) An office Army A dreamland A kitchen	A garden with various, colorful flowers (10) A free and enjoyable environment; a play garden (10) A simulation of real world (4), A miniature society A theatre hall (3), Music room A place of departure for new, colorful world (2) Teaching place (2) A prison (2) A box, aquarium (2) A field (2) Library (2) A stage (2) A fixed room (2) Sleeping place,	Battlefield (war) (5) Home (5) A place of work (5) (an assembly line) Temple of knowledge (4)	Home (8) Garden (6) Battlefield (2) Temple (2) Farm (2) Scene (2) Different world (2) Bus (2)

Tab. 2. Turkish and Polish trainees' beliefs about language classroom (frequency of occurrence)

Developing Pragmatic Competence of EFL Learners: Selected Theoretical and Practical Assumptions

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Introduction: The interplay between culture and pragmatics in the classroom

The starting point for the discussion of the development of pragmatic competence of foreign language learners will be Jacob Mey's words that both culture, pragmatics and especially their teaching cannot be defined or developed into competences in a vacuum. Instead Mey (2004: 28) suggests that:

> Cultures don't belong to individuals; neither can they be transported *ad libitum*: they presuppose the existence of a cultural environment, a growth context, just as the properly conditioned soil is necessary for successful (agri)culture. On the other hand, if pragmatics is defined as a theory of human behavior (linguistic and otherwise) which explicitly depends on, and is conditioned by, the contexts of the users, we must ask ourselves what in the actual circumstances is feasible and desirable for the individual and for the group to opt for and realize.

Thus, Mey questions the sensibility of teaching intercultural and pragmatic competence not only outside an intercultural environment but also out of context. This raises yet another question of the sensibility of teaching intercultural competences in a foreign language classroom where most often the teacher who is to mediate and facilitate learning is, at least in Polish schools, a non-native speaker. Is it, at all, feasible in such conditions to attend to the needs of learners and prepare them to successful functioning in today's intercultural world?

It becomes more and more widely accepted that learning a foreign language is not a gradual replacement of one's native, acquired at childhood, culture but rather enriching this initial culture with grains of the target language culture. Learning a foreign language will always mean "taking in" or assimilating some constituents of the FL culture but never a complete replacement. According to Cook (1992), in mind of a learner the languages he or she knows or learns, including the native tongue, become interconnected and form a unitary multicompetence. Additionally, classroom reality and common sense enable us to put forward that learning a foreign language does not lead to native culture impoverishment or sterilization. Instead, at least in Polish schools, we can observe that, for example, less proficient learners' knowledge of English speaking cultures is very limited and, but for their occasional use of some fashionable English words for objects from the domain of pop or mass culture, their "Polishness" is untouched.

As far as more proficient learners of English are concerned, we may hypothesize that they may constitute evidence for the rightness of the tenet, especially supported by bilingualism and multilingualism studies, that speaking a foreign language 1) opens up our horizons, 2) makes us mindful of complexities of human communication and aware of the dynamicity and unpredictability of interactions and the results of speech acts, and 3) makes us sensitive to their cultural and intercultural impact on daily existence and interactional demands. Furthermore, proficient learners of foreign languages, due to varied experience in social interactions, gain metalinguistic awareness, e.g. realize that language, culture, conscious and unconscious knowledge representations create a very complex system, mostly very much bound to a given context and thus very fleeting and unique, which escapes easy definitions or rules. In particular, speaking a foreign language poses, in most cases, a chance for us to become more conscious of the elements constituting our own and a foreign culture and, what is more significant, of the manner in which cultures bear influence on us. It has become a cliché almost that bilingualism or multilingualism make individuals more sensitive to our interlocutors' needs. Finally, as research conducted by Ewert and Bromberek-Dyzman (2008) shows, learning a foreign language also changes our perception of L1. Here the terminology coined by specialists in language acquisition and learning come in useful. This means: simultaneously with their development or emergence of interlanguage (Selinker, 1972), learners develop their idiosyncratic interculture. This could be supported by the research results of Szczepaniak-Kozak (2012), i.e. that language and culture learning/experience is in fact a very individual process, escaping easy classifications, and always ultimately leading to a greater self-realization, cultural intelligence and mindfulness. Finally, it needs to be stated, following again Mey (2004: 35), that – paradoxically for us – to be intercultural, we must have an intra-cultural basis, which is not enough to "guarantee or promote a healthy intercultural environment".

The issues and concepts mentioned above led some researchers to question the time honored definition of culture as a fuzzy set of behavior conventions, attitudes, beliefs and products common to a particular group that is regularly exercised and which influences its members' behavior and interpretation of other people's behavior (Spencer-Oatey, 2005a: 4), with some variability across the group and time. At the time of this writing it is widely accepted that a culture of a particular group may be manifested only in some of the above mentioned areas. For example, employees of the same company, called by some researchers a work-based community of practice, may follow the same work-related behavioral conventions and refer to the same artifacts and work philosophies (e.g. the company's mission statement; cf. Wąsikiewicz-Firlej, 2012). But, at the same time, they may hold, for example, very different religious views. In other words, "the group may show cultural patterning in certain aspects but variability in others" (Spencer-Oatey, 2005b: 340) and still bear this name.

Towards the end of the 1990s there appeared a constructivist approach to defining the concept of culture to suit better the specificity of intercultural encounters (cf. Blommaert, 1998 a, b, 2001; Rampton, 1995). As it is aptly captured in an interview

conducted with Helen Spencer-Oatey by István Kecskés (2005b: 335), such encounters create an entirely new context in which the rules that will govern the relations between cultures do not yet exist and hence must be constructed. Norms in this view arise directly out of the communicative process, occasioned by the need of individuals to coordinate their actions with others. […] 'culture' is situational in all its meanings and with all its affiliated concepts and depends on the context in which concrete interactions occur. Culture cannot be seen as something that is 'carved' in every member of a particular society or community. It can be made, changed, manipulated and dropped on the spot.

This approach argues against seeing culture as a static and essentialist notion escaping easy identification with national or ethnic membership, thus strongly recommending interpreting communicative behavior taking circumstantial elements into account (Blommaert, 1998a: 4-5, 7). However, it needs to be highlighted that for culture to remain culture there must remain some stability and situationality cannot be its primary feature. Again, as Spencer-Oatey (2005b: 340) suggests: "Even though behavioral and communicative conventions are typically situationally dependent, very fundamental assumptions and values can be pan-situational and immutable (despite being operationalised differently in different contexts)". Additionally, an individual performance and mindset would be resultant of one's learning and experience gathered in numerous groups within which we interact, work or learn, our national/tribal group being only one of them.

1. Pragmatic competence in a foreign language

Pragmatic competence (PC), called by some actional, is defined as "the ability to comprehend and produce a communicative act" (Kecskés et al., 2005: 363). PC is believed to include *inter alia* a speaker's awareness of social distance and social status and their conditioning influence on interaction, their cultural knowledge of politeness principles, and linguistic knowledge, both of the explicit and the implicit kind (ibidem). Pragmatic competence may be related to and studied in the view of two subdivisions put forward by Leech (1983), i.e. pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics. Pragmalinguistic competence stands for linguistic resources used in different languages to perform speech acts (Cenoz, 2008: 125) and relational or interpersonal meanings (Rose and Kasper, 2001: 2). It includes pragmalinguistic knowledge which, according to Kasper (2001: 51), requires harmonizing linguistic resources (form, meaning) to express contextually adjusted message of an appropriate force (imposition). The resources, including established situational routines or linguistic forms, which intensify or soften speech acts, are chosen to convey a particular communicative act depending, for example, on the intended directness/indirectness or the degree of imposition (Rose and Kasper, 2001: 2). As far as sociopragmatics is concerned, it refers to the connection between socio-cultural environment and the communicative action in which it takes place, e.g. deciding whether to refuse our neighbor's unexpected request to take care of her child while she is away or whether to decline an unwanted invitation (Kasper, 2001: 51). Thus, sociopragmatics is "very much about proper social behavior", which is modulated according to "social power,

social and psychological distance and the degree of imposition involved" (Rose and Kasper, 2001: 3, 5).

Learners of foreign languages develop their pragmatic competence simultaneously with other elements of their communicative competence. This development takes many stages and there is much evidence to support the tenet that PC is one of the last elements which is learnt. Interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) is the study of "L2 learners' developing (unstable, deficient, permeable) pragmatic knowledge" (Kasper, 1992: 207) and the "development and use of strategies for linguistic action by nonnative speakers" (Kasper and Schmidt, 1996: 150). "Since pragmatics is about culture, and culture is rooted in pragmatics, the intercultural dimension, both in its theoretical aspects and its practical applications, has to conform with pragmatic principles in order to be acceptable and appropriate inter-, not just intra-culturally" (Mey, 2004: 45).

From the conception of ILP[11] in the early 1980s, which drew on the interlanguage hypothesis of Selinker (1972), research in this field concentrated mostly on pragmalinguistic differences in realization of speech acts in different languages or on speech acts performed by native and nonnative speakers of particular languages. That approach allowed formulating a fairly tentative and widely accepted tenet that there are important differences in the selection, distribution and realization of speech acts in particular languages. Similarly, there are differences among speech acts performed by L2 speakers coming from different linguistic and sociocultural backgrounds. Non-target like performance (previously known under the name pragmatic failure) may occur due to students' inappropriate transfer from L1 to the second/foreign language (Thomas, 1983). This way oriented research should be more precisely called cross-cultural rather than interlanguage as often these studies seek reasons for or explanations of cultural breakdowns, and concentrate on pragmatic failures or misunderstandings related to their performers' varying native languages or varieties of languages. This line of research adheres to the assumption that

> (…) each speech community has some values and beliefs which are the basis of their own culture. The speech acts they produce reflect this culture and therefore different cultures do not produce or understand speech acts in the same way. Studies in cross-cultural pragmatics analyse the strategies and linguistic forms used in the formulation of speech acts (Cenoz, 2008: 126-127).

Currently, we can observe a transition in the research paradigm as more and more researchers study acquisition of pragmatic competence in a second or foreign language for example in classroom conditions, trying this way to answer the question how non-native speakers comprehend and produce speech acts and whether there is any natural

> route of development in the acquisition of L2 pragmatic patterns and also whether formulaic speech plays a role in such acquisition (Barron, Warga, 2007: 114).

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11 In this particular case used as an umbrella term for interlanguage and cross-cultural pragmatic research.

Some studies also had an interventional character and indicated that explicit teaching of pragmatic competence is more effective, especially when it involves some sort of input enhancement defined as

> any pedagogical intervention that is used to make specific target features of the input more salient as an effort to draw learners' attention to these features (Takimoto, 2006: 394).

That action may take various forms, e.g. listening to or reading texts, exposure to written texts with highlighted (with color, underlining or bold font) target structure and, for example, questions to be answered. In follow-up activities students may be asked to use the target structure in a production task. However, a crucial thing is to provide students with an opportunity for intensified exposure to the target element (in the same or altered form) called input flood (Ellis, 2003: 159).

2. Acquisition of pragmatic competence

Acquisitional pragmatics when applied to foreign language learning poses a question whether there is any relation between linguistic proficiency in a foreign language and pragmatic competence. There are research reports that provide us with evidence supporting truly contradictory findings, i.e. that our increasing linguistic proficiency triggers an increase in pragmatic transfer (positive correlation hypothesis) and that a learner's improved linguistic proficiency leads to a decrease in pragmatic transfer (Kasper and Rose, 2002). To account for pragmatic failure, many studies exploit the notion of pragmatic transfer, or cross-linguistic influence, which according to Kasper (1992: 207) is "the influence exerted by learners' pragmatic knowledge of languages and cultures other than L2 on their comprehension, production and learning of L2 pragmatic information".

Pragmatic transfer comes in two forms. Positive transfer namely reaps successful exchanges whereas negative transfer, "based on the assumption that L1 and L2 are similar where, in fact, they are not, may result in nonnative use (or avoidance) of speech acts, semantic formulas, or linguistic form" (Rose and Kasper, 2001: 29). This type of transfer may be conditioned by factors of either or both a pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic character. As Cenoz (2008: 131) suggests, pragmalinguistic failure happens when a learner uses "linguistic elements which do not correspond to native forms and can produce breakdowns in communication or socially inappropriate utterances", whereas sociopragmatic failure happens when a learner "produces an inappropriate utterance because he/she is not aware of the social and cultural rules affecting speech act realization in a foreign language. These rules can involve a different perception of social psychological elements such as social distance, relative power and status or legitimization of a specific behavior". In the context of language variability, the problem is also considered by Lankiewicz (2012).

Currently, it is becoming more and more evident that transfer is not simply shifting an L1 element to L2 or from one part of the mind to another, but rather this process consists in two systems accommodating to (Cook, 2002: 18) or interacting with each other. Some researchers, e.g. Cenoz (2008); Ewert and Bromberek-Dyzman (2008),

argue for a more inclusive, bidirectional or even blending definition of transfer, which would take into account the influence of L2 on L1. Their reports indicate that nonnative speakers of English differ in their use of the mother tongue from monolingual speakers. For example, the study reported by Cenoz (2003), which involved mostly monolingual speakers of Spanish and bilingual Spaniards who are fluent in English[12], showed not only that the bilingual students used similar pragmalinguistic elements to formulate requests in English and Spanish but also that they used in Spanish their interlocutors' first name more often, preferred more indirect strategies and displayed a wider range of syntactic downgraders, lexical downgraders and mitigating supportive devices, which are features considered typical of English pragmatics. This indicated that there is a bidirectional interaction and relationship between the two languages spoken, which is in line with the intercultural style hypothesis advanced by Blum-Kulka (1991).

3. Differences between native and nonnative speakers

Bardovi-Harlig (1996, 2002 in Cenoz, 2008: 131-132) identified four main differences between the way native and nonnative speakers use speech acts:

1. native and nonnative speakers may use different speech acts. An example of this was reported by Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1990) and Bardovi-Harlig (2001), who found out that native speakers used more suggestions and nonnative speakers used more rejections.
2. native and nonnative speakers may use different formulas for the same speech act. For example, nonnative speakers may give additional explanations when they 'waffle' by mitigating supportives as reported in Cenoz and Valencia (1996).
3. they may use similar formulas but the content may be different. For example, an explanation is provided by both a native speaker and a nonnative one but their contents differ.
4. the utterances produced by native and nonnative speakers may differ in the linguistic forms used.

Furthermore, nonnative speakers differ in perception and evaluation of speech acts from native speakers. For example, as Liu's (2007) study proves, Chinese learners of English regularly fail to recognize pragmatically correct test items.

4. Situations and their language

Following Mey (2004), we do not consider in this writing the concept of a context but rather the concept of a situation. In different cultures there are not only different regularly occurring situations but also characteristic and distinct linguistic behavior bound with them, i.e. precoded sentence chunks. It is now commonly accepted that in some socially important or frequently taking place occasions requiring speech activity such chunks are activated or retrieved. They usually "vary in terms of their fixedness

[12] Some of them were trilingual.

in speech from a set of rigid formulae to a set of conversational prescriptions, which may be filled in a variety of acceptable fashions (Herbert, 1991: 382). For example, Poles when inviting a person to their house would say *Wpadnij na kawę* (Eng.: *Call on me for coffee*), which does not necessarily mean that during this visit coffee will be drunk. Instead, it is an utterance used to invite somebody over for a chat with or without a drink. Some foreigners might be disappointed at an invitation only for a coffee because in some countries it is customary to serve an alcoholic drink during this social occasion. This would rarely be a case in Polish houses. And an example from English, research conducted in the 1980s by Wolfson and Manes (1980) on complements in American English provided evidence that out of the 700 complements they collected 80 per cent were utterances relying on an adjective phrase to carry the positive semantic value. Interestingly, two-thirds of all adjectival compliments included only five adjectives: *nice, good, beautiful, pretty, great* (after Herbert, 1991: 384). Wolfson and Manes's (1980: 123) studies revealed that "complements are highly structured formulae which can be adapted with minimal effort to a wide variety of situations in which a favorable comment is required or desired" (after Herbert, 1991: 385). A similar pattern of formulaicity was found out by Herbert (1989) and Holmes (1988) in South African and New Zealand English respectively and later supported by a Polish corpus of complements collected by Herbert (1991).

Conventionalized expressions tied up with situations are labeled "situation-bound utterances" (SBU; cf. Kecskés, 2000; Mey, 2004). Other terms used for these are, just to name a few, prefabricated expressions, formulaic expressions, verbal routines or gambits. Knowing and using SBUs is a very important marker of foreign language proficiency as SBUs enable learners to perform not only successfully and faultlessly in daily interactions in a particular foreign language, but also in a manner that is acceptable to native users of the language, indicating their communicative competence. Additionally, such routines enable the hearer to immediately recognize the speech act.

However, by no means can SBU guarantee successful performance in all situations across all cultures. Instead, they are useful for initial and superficial interactions but lose their potential in situations requiring more precision, becoming more complex or simply escaping standardization. Mey (2004) rightly claims that SBUs will be useless in interactions in which indirect speech acts, often more difficult to interpret by foreign language learners, appear. This is due to the fact that there are numerous ways in which a particular speech act can be performed. Despite definite advantages of SBUs for language learning, teachers should always bear in mind that, "[t]he problem is that we cannot isolate a speech act from its context, and even if we think we have found the perfect intercultural formula for a particular act, it may turn out that the correspondence was superficial at most, or even non-existent (Mey 2004: 39; and Mey, 2001: 215).

Finally, it is worthy of mention that learners should be sensitized to the fact that speech acts of a particular kind, e.g. complements or invitations, may appear universal but the type of the situation in which they appear, the details of their form, their function and frequency vary according to a particular language. To perform them, different conventions of communication, and not cultures, are deployed. Additionally,

studying them following principles of the ethnography of speaking may reveal information on a cultural value system, religion, or political organization. To illustrate, we can refer to the previously mentioned study of compliments conducted by Herbert (1991: 393-394) and a study carried out by Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (1989: 75). Both scholars notice that as of the late 1980s self-praise was avoided in Polish complements except for cases of complements on new possession. This was a direct result of the economic situation in Poland of those times, when acquiring some desirable consumer product, purchasing it or, to render more accurately the spirit of Poland in that period, wangling something was considered an achievement worthy of complement due to the addressee's persistence, personal connections or good fortune. Common sense dictates that complements of contemporary Poles are different as different Polish economic situation today is.

5. Selected aspects of interlanguage pragmatics with regard to Polish learners

As our own research results indicate (cf. Szczepaniak-Kozak, in press), advanced Polish learners of English are influenced in their language production by the degree of imposition, social distance, and relative power between the speaker and the hearer. However, they use specific strategies, not necessarily those which would be used by native speakers. Additionally, they seem to take into account the three social factors considered vital for the selection of politeness strategies, i.e. the social distance between interlocutors (D), the ranking of imposition (P), and the degree of risk (R).

Generally, even advanced Polish learners of English rely on a small set of formulae and lexical devices to internally modify speech acts. In a sample of requests collected by Szczepaniak-Kozak (in press) from advanced learners of English it was visible that they all used some syntactic and lexical downgraders but the linguistic means applied to realize the speech act were not very varied. At this stage of their interlanguage pragmatic competence development they could not apply linguistic resources with the native like appropriateness either. In this respect they resemble other nonnative speakers of English. For example, it has been argued in other studies that "internal modification is particularly sensitive to level of proficiency and is part of a late developmental stage", e.g. Trosborg (1987), Economidou-Kogetsidis (2009).

Additionally, Polish learners of English tend to be verbose, especially when they are less advanced. Verbosity and smaller lexico-syntactical variety have been identified as indicators of lower EFL proficiency. For example, as far as internal request modification is concerned, in one of the earliest studies in interlanguage pragmatics on requests, Kasper (1981 after Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2009: 84) found that her German learners of English exhibited some differences in the use of internal modifiers as compared to English native speakers. The learners employed downtoners less frequently and did not use consultative devices at all. The same applies to Faerch and Kasper's (1989) study of Danish learners of English or German. Other pragmatic interlanguage developmental studies, e.g. Barron (2003), revealed similar patterns, i.e. the underuse of downtoners and overuse of the politeness marker *please*. At the same time, various studies indicate, including Szczepaniak-Kozak (in press a, b), foreign language learners' requests are very often mitigated by means of an explanation for

the request (e.g. grounder). The learners soften the impact of the request also by apologies for the requesting act or try to cost minimize. This way the turn seems verbose.

Finally, with regards to the directness of speech acts, less advanced Polish learners of English prefer the mood derivable to perform a request. Most of them do not realize that in high imposition contexts biclausal request forms are preferred, e.g. *Would it be possible for…?*, instead of the monoclausal form *Could you…?*

6. Developing learners' pragmatic competence

Naturally, developing pragmatic competence in a foreign language context with a very limited exposure to naturally occurring linguistic input and scant chances for interaction with native speakers differs in numerous aspects from acquiring pragmatic competence in a community where the language is used. Some of these characteristics are (Cenoz, 2008: 132):

a) foreign language learners usually identify themselves with their native language and culture and find adapting to the sociocultural norms of the target language, which are frequently considered remote, unnatural;

b) the model of pragmatic competence offered in other contexts by native speakers is shown only indirectly through teaching materials. In the case of English it is even difficult to identify one model of reference because of its different regional varieties.

c) the interaction with native speakers in natural contexts is very limited and in some cases there is no interaction at all. This situation implies that there is no feedback for the student and no communicative need.

As far as teaching materials and other forms of input are concerned, Bardovi-Harling (2001: 25) suggests that in teacher-fronted talk it is impossible to include a variety of speech acts and their realizations that would equal everyday native speech. For example, Kasper (2001: 36), basing on research results of other scholars, puts forward that

> teacher-fronted interaction is substantially more restricted in providing pragmatic input […]; it presents shorter and less complex openings and closings, a limited range of discourse markers and little politeness marking.

Additionally, refusals and complaints are the speech acts which are slowest to develop, while requests are seen as among the fastest (cf. Barron, 2003; House, 1995, 1996; Trosborg, 1995 after Barron and Warga, 2007: 114).

Gaps in the model presented by the teacher can be naturally filled in by conversations available in teaching materials, e.g. coursebooks. However, as research results indicate, most commercial materials either contain dialogues with speech acts which were under/overrepresented, not represented at all or not complete. In the cases a particular speech act was represented, the forms selected did not correspond to actual native speakers' speech, e.g. 80 per cent of the invitations found in a textbook evaluated by Bouton (1996, in Kasper, 2001) used for the actual act of invitation a form which stood for only 26 per cent of conversation time in native speaker corpus of invitations.

To amend that most research including interventional teaching indicated that including structured input tasks and drawing learners' attention to target features during tasks through, for example, explicit feedback in the form of metalinguistic comments and elicitation, are vital to prompt learners into using the target forms (Takimoto, 2006: 395-396). According to Ellis (2003: 159-161 and IS 1), structured input tasks, which require learners to listen (less so to read) to a specially designed input including plentiful examples (flood) of one target structure are of a special importance. Students are expected to consciously attend to the target element and understand its meaning in focused tasks. This may be done in the form of a gapped text from which words containing the target structure were removed, true-false statements, checking boxes, selecting the correct picture, drawing a diagram, performing an action. Ellis stresses the importance of nonverbal or minimally verbal response in such tasks. Addionally, the preference for oral input is a result of the fact that oral texts require real-time processing, which creates better conditions for acquisition (Ellis, IS 1). An example of a structured input task, taken from Takimoto (2006: 416-417), is presented below.

> *Read the following situation and the dialogue and choose the more appropriate request form out of two offered for each underlined part and indicate your choice by circling '(a)' or '(b)'. Then, listen to an oral recording of the dialogue and indicate whether the actual request used in the dialogue is '(a)' or '(b)'.*

Situation: Yuka is about to start her car when she notices that her car battery has gone flat. She needs to go to school now and she does not have any other means but to ask her landlord, Mr. Brown, whom she has never spoken to before, to give her a ride to school. Her landlord is extremely busy, but she decides to ask her landlord to drive her to school.

> Brown: Hello.
> Yuka: Hi, you are Mr. Brown, aren't you?
> Brown: That's right.
> Yuka: I'm a tenant next door. My car battery has just gone flat and I can't start my car. I really need to get to school. **1. (a) I was just wondering if I could by any chance get a lift; (b) I am just wondering if I could by any chance get a lift.**
> Brown: Well, actually, I am really busy helping other tenants moving into this apartment. So, I can't really help you.
> Yuka: I understand, but it's important that I get to school today because I have exams.
> Brown: Tell you what. I've got my mobile phone. Why don't you call a taxi company?

Additionally, in most instances students learn, remember and use a target element better when they work out the rules of its use on their own. Ellis recommends for that purpose consciousness-raising tasks in which learners are provided with data to get a

feel for the meaning and use of the structure followed by verbalizing the rule. During a lesson this may be done in the following sequence (Ellis, IS 1):

- Listening task - students listen to a text that they process for meaning.
- "Noticing" task - students listen to the same text, which is now gapped, and fill in the missing words.
- Consciousness-raising task - students are assisted in their discovery how the target grammar structure works by analyzing the "data" provided by the listening text.
- Checking task - students complete an activity to check if they understood how the target structure works.
- Production task - students are given the opportunity to try out the target structure in their own sentences. The aim of the production task is to encourage students to experiment with the target structure, and not its mastery.

All in all, research conducted by Takimoto (2006) indicates that L2 pragmatic competence may be enhanced by manipulating input and stimulating retention of the material by allowing students opportunities for a deeper mental processing of the target structure data.

Conclusion

Rounding it off, after analyzing the results of a number of studies on the effect of instruction on pragmatic competence development, Kasper and Rose (2002, in Cenoz, 2008: 132) conclude the following: i) pragmatic competence is teachable; ii) instruction has a positive effect on it and iii) explicit instruction with ample practice opportunities produces the best results. Furthermore, in the majority of cases more proficient learners are also more competent speakers, e.g. when it comes to the use of modality markers[13], but classroom successful performance does not guarantee competent and effective performance outside it. What counts most is a frequent, interactive and heterogeneous exposure to and social interaction in the target language. Heterogeneity counts here as experience gathered in unfamiliar cultural situations facilitates developing adaptability, resourcefulness and perceptiveness.

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[13] Downtoners, understaters, hedges, subjectivizers, intensifiers, commitment upgraders and cajolers (Bardovi-Harling, 2001: 27).

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Intercultural Issues Raised in Selected EFL Course Books: Early English Education in Poland

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Curricular Guidelines for Early School Foreign Language Education in Poland introduced in 2008 specify that attitudes conditioning efficient and responsible functioning in the contemporary world should be developed in young students. Thus, linguistic knowledge ought to go hand in hand with intercultural awareness. According to the core curriculum, a child finishing the third grade of primary school is supposed to know that people speak different languages and that to communicate with them s/he has to learn their language.

Besides, in 2006 the European Parliament and the Council issued a recommendation on key competences on lifelong learning (from pre-school to post-retirement age), as a measure in response to globalisation. The Commission Communication *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality* and the subsequent Council Resolution of 27 June 2002 identified the provision of 'the new basic skills' as a priority being particularly important at a time when all Member States are challenged by the question of how to deal with increasing social and cultural diversity, which was later stressed in the report of the Council on the broader role of education adopted in November 2004. Thereby, all Member States should develop the provision of key competences, inter alia through ensuring that initial education and training offers all young people the means to develop these competence to a level that equips them for adult life, and which forms a basis for further learning and working life. As we read in the Annex to *Recommendation of European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning*, since globalization continues to confront the European Union with new challenges, each citizen will need a wide range of abilities to adapt flexibly to a rapidly changing and highly interconnected world. What is understood as a 'competence' is a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context. The Reference Framework sets out eight key competences:

1) Communication in the mother tongue;
2) Communication in foreign languages;
3) Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology;
4) Digital competence;
5) Learning to learn;
6) Social and civic competences;
7) Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship;
8) Cultural awareness and expression.

The above competences are all considered equally important, because each of them can contribute to a successful life in a modern society. Moreover, many of them overlap and interlock: aspects essential to one domain will support competence in

another. Let us take number 2 and number 8, for example. Improving communication in foreign languages and developing cultural awareness and expression are inextricably intertwined, and hence they ought to be taken for granted in the context of Early Education. After all, cultural knowledge includes the understanding of the cultural and linguistic diversity in Europe and other regions of the world, as well as the need to preserve it. Besides, a solid understanding of one's own culture and a sense of identity can be the basis for an open attitude towards and respect for diversity of cultural expression.

According to Celik and Erbay (2013), with the increasing role of English as a global lingua franca, the integration of language and culture has been one of the focal concerns of foreign language education. In order to pave the way for the development of Intercultural Communicative Competence, it is essential for language teaching materials to present various cultural elements which are not limited to those which exemplify native English speaking cultures alone (Alptekin, 2002 in Celik and Erbay, 2013; Cortazzi and Jin, 1999; McKay, 2003 in Yuen, 2011). It is also important to highlight that in this day and age people do not necessarily have to travel in order to interact with others from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. As Cortazzi and Jin (1999: 198) reason, "popular music, the media, large population movements, tourism, and the multi-cultural nature of many societies combine to ensure that sooner or later, students will encounter members of other cultural groups". The world in neither monolingual nor monocultural (Byram, 1991 in Celik and Erbay, 2013).

Having recognised the need for intercultural training, the following paper is an attempt to explore whether this kind of content persists in EFL course books marketed in Poland. Following Celik and Erbay's (2013) tracks, it also aims to find out to what extent these materials – if present - account for the development of global citizenship, helping young learners to look beyond the limits of their motherland, appreciate beauty in cultural diversity, avoid stereotyping of others, and in the end, contribute to global understanding. In order to investigate how elements of different cultures are presented in a currently-used elementary course books for children in Poland, descriptive content analysis was employed and gathered in a chart. Three randomly selected course books were sampled for the purposes of this study, each targeted for a different grade - 1, 2 and 3, respectively: *Footprints 1, Primary Kid's Box 2, New Bingo 3*. The blind choice of materials from both local and international publishers ensured the problem to be treated cross-sectionally, though on a very limited scale. It allowed to discern the main tendencies, shortcoming included. At the same time I wish to make it clear that no publicity is my goal.

Course book	Elements of native culture	Elements of target culture	Elements of other cultures
FOOTPRINTS 1		Special section on festivals (aim: familiarizing young learners with the culture of English-speaking countries; learning a song)	Unit 1: What's your name? • Picture of a small group of multiracial children with a mulatto teacher

		1. Bonfire night 2. Christmas 3. Easter <u>Special section:</u> Look at the world – 2. Food: • Labelled picture of a typical English breakfast (listen and point)	• Picture of two children of different skin colours • Image of a black postman • Image of two children of different skin colours playing a game • Picture of a Pakistani boy making a poster with images of multiracial children <u>Unit 3:</u> I've got a robot • Picture of multiracial children • playing cards <u>Unit 4:</u> Have you got a dog? • Picture of multiracial children playing cards <u>Unit 5:</u> The monster dance! • Image of a black girl • Image of a party (one adult and a group of multiracial children having fun together) • Picture of multiracial children playing cards <u>Unit 6:</u> This is my home • Picture of two boys playing cards (one white, one black) • Picture of multiracial children making a cartoon house <u>Unit 7:</u> I like milk • Picture of multiracial kids with different meals • Picture of a white teacher teaching a black boy • Picture of a Pakistani girl <u>Unit 8:</u> Fun time!

			• Comic strip with white and black characters • Picture of two groups of multiracial children playing a game • Picture of multiracial students making a poster Unit 9: I can swim • Chart with pictures of multiracial children • Picture of multiracial girls playing cards together Unit 10: Goodbye! • Two pictures of a black boy drawing • Picture of multiracial children playing • Picture of multiracial children making a board game Special section: Look at the world – 1. Pets (lesson aim: familiarizing young learners with children's life in other countries; names of animals) • Pictures of children and animals from different countries 2. Food (lesson aim: familiarizing young learners with children's life in other countries; names of foodstuffs) • Pictures of multiracial children and traditional meals • Speech bubbles, ex. a slant-eyed boy: *I like fish and rice. I like peas.*
PRIMARY KID'S BOX 2	Special sections on:	Special sections on:	Unit 1: Hello again!

	• Grandma's Day and Grandpa's Day • Mother's Day and Father's Day • Children's Day COMMENT: The above sections can be regarded also as presenting target culture and/or both native and target.	• Halloween ('Trick of Treat') • Christmas • Easter (egg hunt) (aim of the above: teaching students the vocabulary connected with Halloween/Christmas/ Easter and familiarizing them with traditional customs)	• Picture of a white and a slant-eyed girl spelling colours <u>Unit 2:</u> Fun time! • Image of multiracial children doing different activities together • Image of a white boy and a black girl saying chants • Image of multiracial children paddling in water <u>Unit 3:</u> At the funfair • Image of multiracial children spending time together • Image of multiracial children – illustration to a song <u>Unit 4:</u> Our house • Image of a black boy • Image of multiracial children playing together in a living room <u>Unit 5:</u> Party time! • Image of multiracial people in a zoo <u>Unit 6</u>: My classroom • Image of a multiracial classroom • Image of a black girl describing her classroom <u>Unit 7:</u> Play time! • Image of multiracial people in a toys' shop • Image of a black baby doll • Image of three white girls and a black boy on a camp <u>Review unit 7 and 8:</u> • Picture of a Canadian Inuit girl • Text describing and pictures representing the Inuit girl's everyday life

NEW BINGO! 3	Unit 5: Family and friends Lesson 23: Mother's Day in Poland • Short text about how it is celebrated • Song Unit 6: Thing around us Lesson 28: Countries and languages • Sentence with the Polish flag - *Children from Poland speak Polish* Unit 7: The world around us Lesson 32: Where is it on the map? • Map of Poland (asking about the location of cities) • Text 'My country Poland' about different regions Lesson 33: Where do you live? • Describing the home city/town/village	Unit 3: Maths problems Lesson 13: How much is…? • The British currency Unit 4: Weather and seasons Lesson 19: Christmas is coming Unit 8: Travelling and planning Lesson 39: My plans for the summer holidays • Image of Big Ben Special section on travelling and planning • Comic strip with one picture of the Parliament and Big Ben in London with an appropriate speech bubble	Unit 6: Thing around us Lesson 28: Countries and languages • Sentences with flags, ex. *Children from Spain speak Spanish* (+ the USA, Italy, Japan, Great Britain, Greece) • International song • Image of a souvenir shop Unit 7: The world around us Lesson 31: Continents and their animals • Map of the world, names of continents • Characteristic animals for a given continent – images, guessing rhymes and descriptions Unit 8: Travelling and planning Lesson 39: My plans for the summer holidays • Image of the Eiffel Tower Special section on the world around us – zoo • Comic strip with a picture of a lion plus a label plate *(…) They live in Africa and India (…).* Special section on travelling and planning • Comic strip with one picture of the Eiffel Tower in Paris plus an appropriate speech bubble

Analyzing the above chart, we can clearly distinguish the main strategies presenting cultural content used in the selected course books. We can also see whether the representation of foreign cultures in them reflects the status of English as an international language. Nevertheless, we should start from the premise that materials designed for primary grades 1-3 are governed by a slightly different rules than those

for older and more advanced learners, for example no long written text can be included, or even none in the case of the 1st grade. What could be questioned is the depth of cultural content in textbooks.

With a view to answering the research questions, all of the cultural elements presented in each course book were analysed in terms of three patterns of culture: native culture, target culture and the culture of other countries. The overall examination demonstrates that the representation of cultures is dominated by festival descriptions and pictures representing people from other countries or of different race. The presentation of the UK and the US traditions alone turns out to be not enough to engender successful intercultural communication. After all, Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) is related to one's awareness on others' cultures as well as his/her own culture (Hamiloglu and Mendi. 2010). The results revealed that that each course book involved cross-cultural (native, target, other) elements in varying degrees, except for *Footprints 1* with no overt references to the home Polish culture.

The locally published course book – *New Bingo! 3* – differs from those published internationally (although these being also reviewed by Polish methodologists and accepted by the Ministry of Education) in one fundamental way. It is designed and written for specific students in mind, which allows for a greater inclusion of native culture content or some contrastive analysis of native, target and other cultures. Reimann (2009), in his critical analysis of cultural content of EFL materials in Japanese textbooks, observed the same tendency.

To sum up, although the number of intercultural issues varies in numbers and cultures chosen, the types of elements includes are generally similar: holidays, festivals, tourism, pictures.

By reason of a plethora of choice, English teachers periodically face the problem of selecting course books series for their students. As I reckon, the future of EFL pedagogy should be taken into account, which undoubtedly comprises the integration of intercultural content. The content should serve as a window into learning about the target language culture (American, British, etc.) and other cultires. Meurant (2012) views that primary aims ought to be considered, and he suggests these include:

- the importance of diversity,
- the recognition of multilingualism and bilingualism as normal,
- and the fostering of autonomous language learning.

Additionally, Graddol (2002 in Meurant, 2012) argues that, as the number of non-native speakers of English in the world exceeds the number of native speakers, non-natives are more likely to use the language as a medium of communication with other non-natives, not necessarily with natives. It may stem from limited opportunities for direct contacts with target language users, which causes lack of self-confidence and a fear of communication failure. Non-natives may feel more secure while talking to a person being in the same boat. Consequently, considering the issue of course book selection, Reimann (2009: 85-86) observes:

> As most language learning contexts are limited to the classroom environment and communication opportunities with members of the target community are

> few, it is essential that texts and materials provide this missing element of realism as accurately and objectively as possible. This has often been problematic especially when deciding whose culture to present, and how to present cultural content without stereotypes or essential perspectives, while keeping information relevant and interesting. Most textbooks are marketed for wide audiences and therefore tend to generalize in terms of skills, acceptable subjects, or cultural content. (…)
>
> English as a Global Language and Intercultural Communication are by no means new concepts and have long been regarded as essential components of language learning. (…) The mythical native speaker's language and culture remain the benchmarks from which to gauge proficiency and competence while the notion of English as an international language with its many diverse cultures, forms and representations remains elusive and abstract.

Cultural references in textbooks are in fact mostly limited to titles, unit chapters and arbitrary content or tourist information (Reimann: 2009). Paige, Jorstad, Siaya, Klein, and Sobly (2003 in Yuen, 2011), in their view of the literature on culture learning in language education, note that language textbooks often represent cultures by taking a 'tourist's perspective'.

To conclude, if English teachers want to consciously and wisely integrate intercultural issues in their daily school practice, I would advise them to evaluate the didactic material based on the following criteria proposed by Reimann (2009: 88), which he used for examining various texts, but which can be equally well used for our purposes in mind:

1) Does the course book actively seek to engage the students through language or cultural content?
2) Does the course book offer an unbiased perspective of culture?
3) Does the course book consider the language culture?
4) Is there any connection or reference made to the learners' own culture in order to establish relevance?
5) Is culture used purely as a source of facts to learn about or is it presented as stimulating material which students can learn from?
6) Does the course book further basic stereotypes or is material presented objectively for students to make their own discoveries and interpretations?
7) What are the goals of the course book? What is the actual purpose of including cultural content?
8) Are the goals of the course book a linear approach to developing native like proficiency or a more holistic approach to understanding the diverse culture and communication styles of English as an International Language?

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The Role of Enculturative / Acculturative Factors and of Informal Education in Shaping Intercultural Communication Patterns within the Romanian Village

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The Romanian national curriculum, characterized by an old monocultural tradition, currently faces its first challenges, in the light of an intercultural dimension projection. Although multi- or inter-cultural education has not represented a major topic for debates, Romania displays models of intercultural interaction. The Romanian village is the cradle of an uninterrupted multicultural cohabitation and it may constitute the starting point in projecting the intercultural dimension of the national curriculum. Nevertheless, how could there be an adequate answer, on behalf of culture, to intercultural aspects, outside the projective institutionalized frame? What intercultural communication patterns lead to such a projection? The current paper aims at identifying the thinking patterns, together with behavior and intercultural communication patterns within the boundaries of the Romanian village, through an analysis achieved in two villages. The former village, Cața, is situated in Brașov County, in the South-Eastern part of Transylvania. It was founded by Germans and it is inhabited by different ethnic groups – Romanians, Hungarians and Gypsies, in high percentages. The latter village, Breaza, is situated in Suceava County, in the region of Bucovina, and it represents the home of various ethnicities, such as: Romanians, Hutzuls, Boikos and Ruthenians, speakers of a Ukrainian dialect, but equally for descendants of Germans, Poles, Jewish, Slovaks, Hungarians and Gypsies, although they were declared Romanians by the latest census, of 2011, in a percentage of 99.74%. The starting point of our study was the very analysis of the communication predisposition of ethnic entities participating in the rural community's everyday life, manifested as a predisposition of the ethnic group to engage into dialogue, or as a predisposition of configuring a unique, trans-ethnic cultural frame. This predisposition may be found in the noticeable behavior of the village inhabitant, who engages the intercultural dialogue or fails to do so, who participates in configuring the informal communicative system with network nodes situated within the ethnical boundaries or within a trans-ethnic rural community. Equally, the study intends to identify the role of enculturative/acculturative factors (perceived as accomplished acquisitions throughout a lifetime, available, even in the absence of deliberate learning), and the role of informal education (the real process of continuous acquisition, through the use of influences and education resources provided by life standards) in shaping the optimal answer, in relation with intercultural challenges.

1. The Intercultural Dimension of the National Curriculum

The adequate openness toward the Romanian multicultural reality may be transposed within the national curriculum's radiography. The Romanian formal educational background is the one that offers the frame for interpreting the accurate projection of

the openness toward the multicultural or intercultural. In the United States of America or the Western European countries the concern related to the integration of the intercultural dimension within the national curricula is present in both theoretical and prospective plans; nevertheless, its implementation does not necessarily follow the need for diversity but mainly the need to answer certain factual issues with which these societies are confronted: immigrants, cultural minorities etc. In general, based on Sartori's assertion (2000/2007: 54), there is an important distinction between the answer to the real problems of the pluralistic society and the inaccurate projection of the summative answer to everybody's problems (multicultural approach). If the pluralistic action becomes valuable apparently naturally, it implying an engagement in respect of reducing differences and following the meaning of *e pluribus unum*, multiculturalism, charged with ideology, engages in respect of highlighting differences, following the meaning of *e pluribus distinctio*:

> Pluralism has never been a "project". It has gradually sneaked in from a misty and dramatic foregoing of history. It is a vision of the world that positively appreciates diversity, but it is not a producer of diversity, a *diversity machine.* In opposition, multiculturalism is a project in the real meaning of the term, if one considers the fact that it advertises for a new society whose accomplishment is configured by it. Multiculturalism is equally a producer of diversities, that is able to produce diversity, given the fact that it is engaged in highlighting differences by intensifying them and thus, multiplying them. (Sartori, 2000/2007: 100)

The European pluralism – a reality built on the skeleton of a community infrastructure, *Gemeinschaft* -, differs from the North-American multiculturality, which, for example, gives birth to "strengthened identities" and whose practical paths have become norms and examples of good practice in an intercultural Europe of consensus enriched by the common living. Therefore, under these circumstances, the subject of projecting the real intercultural dimension of the national curriculum is also sensitive for the European states in which the national curriculum is projected as being multicultural. This aspect, of adjusting the multicultural curriculum to the pluri-/intercultural reality, reflected by numerous specialized studies, is characterized by the difficult problem of changing the national curricula.

> By the passage from the current reality – characterized by a display of general principles belonging to intercultural pedagogy (tolerance toward alterity, multiperspectivity as a didactic approach, promotion of plurilinguism, knowledge transfer toward a heterogeneous school audience) – to a superior level of didactic performativity: transposing these principles into practical activities, activities of genuine training (Alleman-Ghionda & Perregaux, *apud* Crețu, 2001, pp.131-132).

The same difficulty is equally characteristic for the Romanian society, in which the intercultural dimension was integrated in a document with regard to educational policies, the National Curriculum (*Curriculumul Naţional pentru învăţământul obligatoriu,* 1998). Moreover, in the Romanian education system, the aspects of multi-, trans-, and interculturality are approached through a series of either optional or

facultative disciplines, which are, in most of the cases, ignored by pupils or students (who are, in turn, perceived as the product of a monocultural education). Added to these, Romania has aligned to the issues of interculturality late enough, fact that led to its keeping in an obscure zone with regard to the institutional openness toward others, as Kenneth Cushner observed, in 1998, in *International Perspectives on Intercultural Education*:

> Intercultural or multicultural education has not represented a theme for hot topics debate for most of the public, not even for the professional community from Romania. There is still a long persisting fear of interculturality, even under the circumstances of recent and unexpected political changes and despite its rich cultural mosaic. Democratic principles, although mentioned in written documents, are rarely applied. The current aspect of many governmental documents leaves room for individual interpretations; therefore, there is this tendency of preserving the monocultural identity tradition. (Cushner, *apud* Nedelcu, 2008:76)

While the recent theoretical approach, after the year of 2000, still syncopated, has managed to cover an empty space, at operational level, the aspect of intercultural dimension within the national curriculum is still uncovered. The problems related to the implementation of an intercultural curriculum are in strict connection with a set of vulnerabilities of the Romanian education system. This institutional system, different from the Romanian society, is not yet prepared for the openness, diversity and tolerance. Within its limits there are discrepancies between the educational contents and the multicultural realities of the present world, the intercultural problems are perceived as inadequate for the Romanian reality and they are treated as being marginal and lacking importance; the teaching staff are not ready to face intercultural challenges and do not possess the competences or attitude necessary for the openness toward alterity; researches aim mainly at theoretical schemes and do not show applicability, in the absence of a coherent model of curricular re-dimensioning, in a sense of implementing the intercultural dimension, respectively, a coherent model for forming intercultural competences. In a compensatory manner and in the spirit of multiculturalism, the Law of National Education, issued in 2011, sets the background of positive discrimination with regard to national minorities. For example, national minorities, different from the Romanian ethnic group, benefit from the establishment of schools irrespective of the number of students: "*Within lower secondary schools and upper secondary schools taught in the language of national minorities, unique in town or village, the status of legal person is granted without regard of the number of students"* (*Legea educației naționale*, 2011, Art.45, paragraph (6)). Furthermore, financing per student, in case of national minorities is superior to financing Romanian students. Intending to solve the problem of openness toward alterity, the Romanian state comes into disagreement with the country's Constitution, according to the Education Law. The Constitution guarantees the broad frame of equality of rights and obligations regarding people of Romanian ethnicity and people belonging to national minorities. The multiculturalist character (including its ideological hint) of the Romanian normative framework with concern to the national education is

compensatory in relation with the absence of some satisfactory pluri-/intercultural policies and it is completed by preferential treatment in favor of national minorities, far from the natural norm of pluralism, which is functional at society level.
These identified problems belong to the Romanian education system and they characterize it (leading to the highlighting of the formal mimetism toward the normative common framework), so long as the problematic aspects previously mentioned are answered, at the level of European Council, UNESCO etc., by means of projects and recommendations. In fact, a manner of going beyond the current setbacks and of adopting the intercultural direction, by appeal to modernization, was mentioned by Liviu Antonesei, back in 2005 (2005:39-43). This manner, aiming at reducing the shock of Europenization and globalization, involves passing to *the level of educative ideal*, from the formal adopting of the model of citizen to its real implementation, at *the level of educational objectives*, it implies deducing the whole assembly of objectives, not only as instructional objectives, at *the level of contents*, it consists of mainly reconsidering the place and role of anthropological and social disciplines, studying of foreign languages in tight connection with the culture and civilization they belong to, the comparative study of history (including cultural history) etc., and at *the level of educators*, it requires the upgrading of all teachers in the spirit of European modernity values and interculturality, so as the function of cultural irradiation may become active with them.

2. The Romanian Village – the Cradle of Transcultural Relationships. A Methodological Projection

Starting from the necessity of highlighting the roles of the normative cultural communicative behavior within the Romanian society, thus aspiring to identify intercultural communication patterns, the present study aims to answer the rigorous and adequate need of methodological projection and to create, based on this design, the frame for interpretation, beyond the limits of *physis.* Nevertheless, in order for interpretation not to be set on a merely speculative diversion, on a simplifying type of knowledge regarding a sensitive domain, of intercultural dialogue, and in order to avoid debate related to stereotypes and prejudices, the research must be projected and accomplished rigorously. Wishing to identify patterns of intercultural communication within the Romanian village, by means of interdisciplinary analysis of patterns of thinking and communicative behavior present within the local multi-ethnic communities, we also identified the role of informal education and the role of enculturative and acculturative factors in converting the optimal answer in relation with intercultural challenges.

In our study analysis was focused on intercultural communicative relationships between Romanians and representatives of the main ethnic groups (in terms of percentages) found on Romanian territory, namely in the villages of Caţa (Braşov) and Breaza (Suceava). The former village is situated to the South-East of Transylvania, it was founded by Germans and it represents a cultural space in which Romanians, Hungarians and Roma people live together and hold high percentages of the total population. The latter village, Breaza, situated in Bucovina, represents a

background where Romanians, Hutzuls, Boiks and Ruthenians, speakers of a Ukrainian dialect, but also descendants of Germans, Poles, Jewish, Slovaks, Hungarians and Roma people, although they were declared Romanians by the latest census, of 2011, in a percentage of 99.74%. Following the perspective of our intentions, of screening the climate of intercultural communication and its educative role within the Romanian village, the most appropriate direction is the one derived from the cultural relativism, namely, a research based on intercultural coordinates, in the manner of the study achieved by Vulcănescu (1937) – Noica (1973, 1987) – Brumaru (1990, 2001), without disregarding the ethno-psychological perspective, especially that of Gusti (1928-1938) – Bernea (1985) morphological school. The Romanian village has stood for an attraction pole within the community analysis from mono-disciplinary perspective or pluri-disciplinary one, focused on anthropological/ ethnographic/ sociological/ demographic, geographic studies etc., implying the engagement of specialists in these fields of knowledge and resulting in referential researches, but it has not been the objective of an analysis from the intercultural communication perspective or from the perspective of the role detained by this type of communication in the informal intercultural education. The qualitative research was focused on observable and tacit knowledge, through the participative, peripheral observation method, based on observing details and their objective description and interpretation, completed by the intensive, nondirective, unstructured, unique, personal, face-to-face and documentary interview. The research methods, techniques and procedures were emphasized in relation with two major directions of methodological organization: one direction regarding data collection, materialized through participative observation technique, peripheral, doubled by a survey based on interview individually administered by means of a working instrument: an interview guide aiming at communication elements in intercultural context (S-P-E-A-K-I-N-G guide), based on Hymes' studies (1972; 1974); the other direction regarding data interpretation, through qualitative- comparative analysis of documents or results of other researches. Throughout our research, we achieved the extensive observation of four ethnic groups, within the Cața community, and of two ethnic groups within the Breaza community, doubled by interviews with eighteen inhabitants of the former village, respectively, ten inhabitants of the latter village.

3. The Role of Enculturative/ Acculturative Factors and of Informal Education in Developing the Intercultural Awareness

In case of the two villages investigated there are some common elements that lead to a general conclusion: both environments are permissive in relation with the intercultural communication, whereas the constituted community is at least a speaking community, multiethnic, governed by norms of the common living, specific to that particular village. However, the differences between the organizations of social life within these two villages, between the level of their "decomposition" under the action of urban civilization, the level of traditional life alteration, lead to identifying important differences inside the economy of the analytic whole, thus becoming

preponderant in connection with the similarities that are based on informal multicultural education. This form of education, reduced to the particularized answer to the question: How does the small community (family) and the large community (village) teach us to act in relation with multiethnic challenges?, condenses a set of norms regarding the common living, norms that are based on the principles of common living, derived from practice, and not from following Western models.

The informal education, perceived as the real process of acquisition in a lifetime, consisting of attitude formation, of values interiorizing, of achieving skills and knowledge from daily experience, is strongly influenced by the intercultural background in which it takes place. The use of influences and educative resources from the multicultural environment represents the major way of acquiring the values of pluriculturalism. Therefore, in order for the informal education to become visible there must be a favorable context as well. Enculturation, everything that is acquired during a lifetime existing in that particular environment without a deliberate learning, different from socializing and informal learning; it is another way of cultural closeness and of learning the methods of appreciating the other in the limits of *pluribus unum*. The unpredictability of producing the two forms of learning, deliberate or not, detaining an adaptive role to a plural society that values openness, equally involves the incapacity of precisely dissociating the causes. Exploring and enlarging the knowledge horizon, the cultural immersion in the other's world are the results of living together and of the community's intelligence and not of a rigorous institutional projection. In the limits of such an understanding of the nature of relationships within the Romanian pluriethnic environment, we can identify the following categories of differentiating factors, in connection with the social organization. These categories will lead to the configuration of some adaptive education forms and, implicitly, to the identification of some interactional patterns:

- family typology and the relationships of the large family with the local community, involving the family role in the informal pluricultural education;
- relationships with the administration, with tradition and customs, namely, relationships with the norm.

3.1 The informal intercultural education within the family. Forms of family organization.

The Breaza family, preponderantly mixed, grants a higher degree of independence to its children who become adults, without manifesting its tutelage over them in a particular manner. Marriage at early ages is often encouraged and so is distance, or separation from parents. The role of parents, within the village's boundaries, is perceived as manifest until children need support or assistance. If education continues until children are considered 'old', in accordance with the village's norm (Bachelor's studies or Master's studies), the tutelage extends, which is quite atypical since those children are not prepared for the needs of the village: boys are not specialists in cutting grass, wood chopping, sheep raising and girls do not sew, knit, weave, paint eggs etc. – traditional activities, consequently, they are not capable to integrate appropriately within the community in case of a contest to prove their skills. Even under such

circumstances, "abandonment" is encouraged, by reducing the family support so as the child should be able to live independently, to face life being already prepared for doing it. The financial support of the parents should occur only occasionally and without affecting the authority and independence of the young person engaged in his/her own social life. The youth independence is acknowledged by the villagers by particular naming (nicknames, calls given as a result of individual features, in association with manifest qualities or defects, of internal nature or of relational nature). The lack of one's own identity label, as a rule, a Ukrainian one, although it is not a appreciative one, is rather a sign of adjustment failure.

In Cața, on the other side, the family is under the tutelage of a *pater*, of a father and master of the "clan", who offers guidance for life, especially the moral life of a young person even after the young person's social integration as distinct entity, respectively after the settlement of his/her own family. Within the village, the hierarchical architecture of tutelage is imposed, and identity is given by the father. Generally, the two organization models, in connection with the thinking patterns, are relational patterns, respectively analytical patterns, described by Stewart & Bennett (1991:43) as:

> People with relational patterns of thinking come from backgrounds in which neither equality among persons nor differentiation of roles are as accentuated as they are in the background of those with analytical patterns of thinking. Culture groups where the analytical type appears are more formally organized; privileges, responsibilities, and status in the groups are distributed in orderly fashion. The individual in these groups has a greater freedom to leave the group and to "refuse to act in any capacity not defined by his job" (Cohen, 853).

Under the circumstances of family control, of coordination of integration, adjustment, life and social engagement based on a family network well supervised by the head of the clan, the genealogy links are controlled and the family cohesion is the one that contributes, in a transfamiliar manner, the involvement in the young person's support. Starting from the village involvement in organizing and preparing the wedding of a young person from the village, an increased degree of cohesion is noticed, it is a transethnic cohesion, in relation with each of the Cața villager's contribution. But even this type of involvement implies an appeal to the hierarchical architecture of the family: the net of genetic ramifications, known and involved in the event, holds the major role, next to the spiritual parents of the young couple, then, following the order of importance, the closer neighbors are involved, and then, the remaining people of the village, irrespective of their ethnicity. In Breaza, yet, due to the imposed independence (or inherited because of hard times when families used to have about ten children), the degree of the village cohesion in organizing the major events of life is low.

Following the same interpretation, we can notice, on the one side, the predefined family structure, "the good breed" being impossible to be changed by personal success or failure, in Cața, as compared to Breaza, where, "the good breed" is the one who gains performance, who is successful in life, thus being able to change his family's fate. There are also identical perspectives, even in case of negative occurrences: the

negative spiritual heredity is annihilated by "penitence allowance" after more than one generation in Breaza, the community accepting that someone from a modest family to gain prestige, in time, whereas in Cața, reticence is much higher, the negative spiritual heritage being carried along up to the last descendant (the family curse). Breaza constitutes, thus, a community in which *"we all are relatives among us"*, where control over origin is not important in terms of genealogy nets, but in terms of place. The worldwide spread of important people of the village is known by the community and community tries to recover these people. Cața being a community in which control over genealogy belong to the *pater*, there is evidently an exclusivist form of belonging to a specific family, to a specific "good breed", the worldwide spread of those who were born in Cața being unknown to the community, and the trial to recover them belongs to the family and authorities, and not to community.

Naturally, the village may be regarded as a larger family, although even here, there is a fundamental distinction between the two villages. In Breaza, the family community is organically bond to the extra-family one, transethnic, for sure, while, in Cața the family community is bond to and strengthened within an ethnic group, rarely marginal, through mixed marriages, this is how a ethnic family community is created and an interethnic dialogue. In this case, of preponderantly mixed families of Breaza, the blood relation breaks any possible connection with the difference, discrimination, the family education being achieved in accordance with values of tolerance, understanding, openness toward the other, irrespective of his/her ethnicity. In Cața, on the other side, the preponderantly ethnic family teaches the intercultural dialogue, but in a marginal zone, in association with the difference transmitted by the blood relation. In conclusion, the mixed family, from Breaza, represents a multicultural school in which relationships with the others are taught, they are natural, whereas, the family of a true ethnicity, from Cața, constitutes a school for living as a family within the ethnic enclave, but it does not hold the strength and consistence of the interethnic schools.

3.2 The informal intercultural education within the village community. Relationships with the norm.

Starting from the village organization as a large family, in Breaza, respectively as a limited number of families, in Cața, cultivating the ethnic group's values, in the former case we can notice the organization as a larger biological entity, with its own rules and aims, of the "earth", of the nature of things, whereas, in the latter case, the village is a formally structured administrative unit, coordinated through a system of norms transmitted through the proximity structure. The organic form of the aim, as a norm for the larger village family, the organization in agreement with nature, with the spiritual meanings derived from the aim, from the ground implicitly entail the preservation of the village in its organic functionality. The artificial form or relationships based on imposed norms, organized in compliance with the human law, constitutes the grounds for taking the village out of its organic, historic functionality, for its dismantling as a social group of a community type, and reconfiguring it as a society. Community, with its organic laws, with its blood relations manifests within

the boundaries of ethnicity. In this moment, Cața faces two opponent tendencies: on the one side, the tendency to relate to the organic norm, in agreement with its necessities, nourished by the organization from Paloș and Beia sub-divisions, by the high percentage of the Romanian element in Cața and by imposing the same norms, through contamination, on Roma people; on the other side, the tendency to divide, to maintain certain ethnic borders. The problem consists of the fact that, despite the attempt of imposing a manner of relating to the organic norm, the answer given by the Roma people, to a large extent separated from tradition, is not that of accepting relational patterns of thinking. The Roma people relate to the institution of the father but they oppose the unstructured mixture, following the thermodynamics, in a community with a self identity that is more important than the nation identity. Their answer is shocking: they isolate themselves, leaving the houses given to them sixty years ago, in order to form marginal colonies, especially in Cața and Drăușeni sub-division. Probably that, in time, being strange from traditions, they will create the organic connection with the Romanian majority population: the first signs are already visible – they speak mainly Romanian, are preponderantly Orthodox believers etc., nonetheless, the difficulty of such a process is even bigger once the Romanian population has accepted the German norm of organization, and the Roma people are not naturally bond to confession, they giving up rather easily upon insistence coming from various religions or religious groups to adhere to a specific spiritual community, for modest material gains. In parallel, although open in the marginal, although a form of "spiritualization of frontiers" of the ethnic group with the other ethnic groups may be invoked, the Hungarian population struggles for their language identity, even if the result is a form of self-enclavisation and of its preservation within the limits of some cultural and language patterns of mediaeval origin. The difference between the Hungarians from the Szekely region and those from Hungary is one of the spirit of the time. The Hungarian of Hungary lives the multicultural reality of the twenty-first century Europe, while the Hungarian from the Szekely region lives a form of enclavisation specific to mediaeval mentality, preserving, in parallel, a language with an important mediaeval aspect. Under these circumstances, one cannot claim the lack of intercultural dialogue. The chance that Cața holds consists of this very external norm, of German origin, which is convenient for all co-habiting ethnic groups and which offers aa appropriate background for intercultural dialogue. Cața is a village where intercultural dialogue is achieved by appealing to the norm imposed by administration, in agreement with the historically imposed one, now having become customary law, whereas in Breaza, due to metisation, one cannot speak of intercultural relationships (in a place with 99.74% of the ethnics declared Romanians, the intercultural dialogue cannot exist), but only of transcultural communication.

The forms of state institutions in Breaza, at the level of villages, are, accordingly, respected but not accepted as entities or tutelary authorities. They can be contradicted, or opposed by the natural, nature, aim, ground. In Cața, on the other side, the forms of state institutions met at the level of the bigger village are respected and obeyed as tutelary forms of manifesting authority. They cannot be contradicted, the aim being temporary and the norm perennial. That is why, in the limits of intercultural dialogue

between the two villages, the school and church, not opposing the sense, are accepted and obeyed as tutelary institutions in Breaza, while the Council/Village Hall and gendarmerie/ police, the institutions that assure the enforcement of norms are respected as tutelary institutions in Cața. looking at things from a different angle, the state institution is the only generator of conflict in Breaza (in the Breaza people acceptance, irrespective of their ethnicity, the institution does not follo the sense, the natural aim, the functionality and intimate nature of the village's oder: *Well, in our village things go differently. You cannot understand them!"*); in Cața, it is a source of stability, of equilibrium, a nucleus around which the system of norms organization gravitates.

Traditional acts, ritually repeated, are present in both of the analyzed villages. In Breaza, the traditional act is, in many cases, imposed even in relation with the Orthodox Church's norm, but with the latter's agreement, without repudiating the tradition of the place associated with the Orthodox ritual – a superior form of developing "skills" specific to the Christian community. The pre-Christian and Christian norms harmoniously join the daily activity of Breaza, but not that of Cața, where distinct forms of traditional acts are filtered by interethnic acceptance, fact leading to the impossibility of configuring an "action community". Orthodoxy is translated in the place's norm, in the former case, the Orthodox Church essentially becoming a church of the village and not a church of the state, as Bernea argued (2006:37). By translation in the norm of the place, the Orthodox church from Breaza has become a live church, not a dead institution, as the case of many churches from Cața is, where the liturgical ritual is no longer practiced. Communication through ritual being a form of community re-signification, of relating to cultural or transcultural symbols, the traditions belonging to the calendar cycle, which join the life cycle or the labor cycle are more symbolically charged regarding acts and agents within the Breaza community, but more diversified in Cața, where the horizon of convergence appears pretty remote.

The relationships with cultural practices are those which certify the tendencies of aligning groups to their models of organization: Breaza, based on the community model, Cața based on societal model, with community structures in dialogue. The norms of time and their meaning are not justified in Breaza, they do not come from the "wisemen" – and this happens even if, from the administrative point of view the village is relatively new. In reality, Breaza, with its transethnic spirit has pre-existed Breaza officially settled back in 1814. As a result, in this village the collective sense of the unwritten norm predominates, but it is perceived as a rule, as an imposition from a community code. However, in Cața,the norms are perceived in their anthropic functionality: here, the unwritten norm belongs to the ethnic community, assuring its survival and resistance to assimilation.

4. A Model for the National Curriculum Design. Also a Model for a Multiple Europe?

For the better understanding of the role of informal education and of intercultural communication within the Romanian village, by the examples of good practice named

Cața and Breaza, the exploitation of differences is not important. Yet, these differences deserve to be reminded from another perspective, that referring to the possibilities of modeling and interpreting cultural relationships at the level of both national and European educational policies. The two models of good practice in intercultural relationships may become model elements in projecting the forming/ training in the spirit of activating the function of legitimation and preservation of culture, of projecting an intercultural curriculum, not in agreement with form borrowings from the European cultural space, or, worse, from the American one, but in accordance with the Romanian inter- or transcultural reality. A specific tendency in the Romanian research of interculturality, by focusing on foreign models with regard to formal communication, preponderantly mediatic and political, respectively, by manifesting disinterest toward the intercultural phenomenon at the level of the Romanian rural community, is detrimental with respect to configuring a natural process of approaching the issue. Still, this fact does not constitute a wonder as long as, although coming from the same interval, the Machiavellian principles are more acknowledged within the Romanian cultural space than the teachings of Neagoe Basarab. Similarly serious is the fact that the European cultural model of Edgar Morin, drawn at the same time with that of Noica's, is better known and promoted within the Romanian scientific space.

We could wonder, together with Ernest Bernea, Octavian Paler or Grigore Georgiu, what would have become of the Romanian village. Are there reasons to feel threatened by the dissolution of the cultural identity, by the Romanian spiritual disintegration, by the organic lack of equilibrium of the Romanian village? All we are left with is to turn the village into a museum, including the intercultural education and communication, now at an old age or maybe to export models of good practice? Should we learn, according to Ralea, how to be Romanians through European models, or should we offer them a manner of learning Europeanism through Romanianism? Let us allow the new wave of seasonal migration, of Romanian workers seeking employment, most of them far from the heart of villages, in Germany, Italy, Spain, France etc. to bring Europe home or to discover that Europe, with its multiple and indivisible spirit, lies in the Romanian village? Or maybe, let us simply abandon the ideological label, the *–ism* from our identity connection and let us understand that once we belong to the local community rather than to the ethnic one, we belong to the European community while still preserving the Romanian ethnicity of our culture intact (and not the afferent Romanian character)?

Reaching this sensitive point, of projecting the European cultural model, we believe that the study of the two rural communities, Cața and Breaza, is illustrative. The model of Morin (1987/2002), involving the multiple as a monochromic structuring of North-Western European origin of the Jewish-Christian-Greek-Latin values, explained by appealing to dialogic, opposes Noica's model, from the architectural view; and it is a model born from the South-Eastern European polychronic reflux, explained by appealing to the paradox of understanding the multiple one, following the understanding model, at its first council of Nicaea (325 d.Hr.), of Godliness (Father, Son and the Holy Spirit) as a unique body, which can be

translated by the mathematical equation **1=3**. Therefore, a cultural background, organized by norms of interaction of West-European origin, like Cața's, is an example of *unitas multiplex* explicable through dialogic, implying intercultural dialogue in the limits of non-conflict. Another background, which erodes the possibilities of intercultural dialogue, while internalizing it and transforming it into transcultural dialogue, implying the preservation of diversity in the limits of a unique, community identity, of the distinction Father-Son-Holy Spirit within the limits of non-distinctive, is the communicational background of Breaza.

Regarded as a homeometric unit of a rather limited culture – the Romanian culture- which values the dialogue, the openness, while preserving the authentic, respectively, of another larger culture, born from the polychromic reflux of the Byzantine space, the European culture that may be perceived as multiple, in the spirit of "communion", the Romanian village may itself represent a model of a possible configuration of the European identity, in consonance with the "European cultural model" (Noica, 1988/1993). Even so, within a Europe in which the West is prevalent in rapport with the East, North and South, a South-Eastern model is less considered due to the fact that Romanian authorities, administrative and epistemic, import models and forms of interculturality from the West or even overseas, as if the issue of cultural relationships had never existed in Romania. The models of good intercultural practice found in Cața and Breaza may or may not be considered. Still, they exist and offer real solutions to real problems and not solutions to fictitious issues of a communication specific to the current Romania, not the eternal Romania. The joy of consensus, convergence, consistency, of intercultural dialogue existing within the limits of the Romanian village is, unfortunately hindered by the blindness of administration.

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Towards an Experience-driven Approach to Teaching Intercultural Communication

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In this paper we define our evolving vision on teaching intercultural communication from the viewpoint of our personal experiences with a mixed student population in the International Educating Classes of Group T in Leuven, Belgium.[14] Adopting a non-essentialist perspective on culture and intercultural encounters, we describe and visualize in some detail how we have structured various types of learning activities around student experiences of intercultural encounters. We then explain that this experience-driven approach will be more effective if it is also discourse based, theory referenced, and interaction oriented. Our observations so far give reason to believe that the approach that we propose can help students gain a deeper insight into intercultural interaction both in and outside the classroom.

1. Cultures don't meet, people do

The approach towards the intercultural that we adopt in our teaching stems from what is commonly referred to as a non-essentialist view of culture (Holliday, Hyde & Kullman, 2010; Holliday, 2011). This view rejects essentialist notions of cultures as pre-existing, bounded, homogeneous entities that define people's behavior, which has become an increasingly untenable position (Philipps, 2007). An essentialist approach to culture has been shown to go hand in hand with stereotyping, us-versus-them thinking, culturism (i.e. the reduction of the other to predefined traits of the culture they are assumed to belong to), and the deployment of culture as an explanation of, or an excuse for one's own and the other's behavior (Hoffman, 2013). As a result, an essentialist approach has been shown to yield 'narratives of inability' (Holliday, Hyde & Kullman, 2010:53), preventing people from working out of their strength. Nevertheless, the essentialist view has remained the dominant paradigm in popular writing (business, tourist and survival guides) as well as in some widely cited academic texts (Hofstede, Lewis, Pinto, Trompenaars, …). In a similar vein, an essentialist approach to teaching the intercultural would suggest that successful intercultural communication depends on knowledge of the target culture, the target language, and the knowledge of translating between the target and native cultures and languages (Shi-Xu, 2001).

We position ourselves with a non-essentialist approach to culture, by contrast, that does not reduce people to their cultural backgrounds. This approach is mindful of the whole person and the particularities of each situation with an eye for what connects

[14] We gratefully acknowledge the insightful feedback that we received from Gianna Hessel and Basil Vassilicos on an earlier version of this manuscript. We would also like to thank Lutgart Dusar, Edwin Hoffman and Silvia Prins for the enlightening conversations in the course of developing the figure of the 'crystal canvas' that is described in this paper. Any remaining flaws and loose ends are obviously ours.

and what separates people in a given encounter. As a result, it is easier to recognize diversity both within and across groups when one adopts a non-essentialist approach. Rather than viewing cultures as distinct entities that define, let alone determine people's behavior, culturality is considered as a process in which meaning is jointly constructed (Dervin, 2009b).

Accordingly, in a non-essentialist approach, the intercultural is not considered to be an external mechanism that is set in motion by the biodata of the interlocutors. Differences in nationality, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, occupation are by themselves neither a sufficient nor a necessary condition for interculturality. Consequently, interpersonal or intergroup encounters cannot *a priori* be qualified to be intercultural (or not) by referring to the presence (or absence) of differences in nationality and other group memberships. Cultures don't meet, people do, as the saying goes. As a result, the intercultural can only arise in the encounter itself. Barrett, Byram, Lázár, Mompoint-Gaillard & Philippou (2013:7) recognize this in their definition of the intercultural encounter when they point to the participants themselves for revealing and making salient its intercultural dimension. In our experience this has indeed proven to be a valid starting point and, for practical purposes, we consider an encounter to be 'intercultural' whenever one of the parties involved qualifies it as such, either at the moment of occurrence or in retrospect.

How this translates in our approach to teaching intercultural communication is explained below through the quadruple qualification of 'experience driven', 'discourse focused', 'theory referenced', and 'interaction oriented'. Student experiences of intercultural encounters provide the principal input for our teaching activities. That is why we qualify our approach first and foremost as *experience driven*. These experiences come to us as language, and new discourses are in turn created by sharing, examining, and reflecting on one's own and each other's experiences. At a more basic level, all experiences can be said to be constructions of our discourses and consequently, we need to look at the *text*, a term that is here meant to include and transcend the linguistic sense, and the *context* of the discourse in order to discover the intercultural dimension of an experience (Shi-Xu, 2001). What is more, by analyzing student discourses, we can reveal the students' underlying and often implicit theories on what constitutes the intercultural and how to interact in intercultural encounters. We believe that we would not fully shoulder our responsibility as teachers if that would be the end of it, though. Action speaks louder than words. Therefore, our approach to teaching intercultural communication would not be complete if it was not oriented at interaction and we did not stimulate our students to experiment actively both in and outside the classroom.

2. Experience driven

In accordance with Byram's (2008) axiom of being intercultural, we have made our students' intercultural experiences the very focus of attention, analysis and reflection in our teaching. Drawing on a variety of techniques (including journal writing, storytelling, focus groups, talking circles, debates, ...), we elicit student experiences as the principal material to feed our teaching activities and propel the learning process.

Since we have mostly been teaching mixed groups of home and international students, these elicited experiences often relate to the interaction among students within the class group itself. This focus on the student mobility experience – including the experiences of international students in their temporary 'cloakroom communities' (Bauman, 2004), their experiences with home students and their experiences with others in the academic and the wider host environment - has recently been gaining ground in intercultural studies (see e.g. Byram & Dervin, 2008; Dervin, 2009a; 2009b; Dervin & Layne, 2013).

From our teaching practice to date has emerged what we have termed "the crystal canvas of experience-based learning activities" (Figure 1; Van Maele & Mertens, 2012). Because they are so precious to our practice, we visualized the experiences as a crystal. Just like the manifold facets of a crystal reflect the external light as well as its intrinsic structure, we have witnessed how working with experiences from a variety of perspectives can reveal valuable information about the external observers - that is, our students - as well as about the multi-faceted nature of the experience itself. Surrounding the crystal at the center, each circle on the canvas represents one type of teaching activity. In clockwise fashion, these activities are the following: narrating the experience through a variety of media and channels; describing the experience (i.e., to jot down the parties' words and actions); reconstructing the interpretation that each party assigned to the other's language and behavior at the time of the event; and diagnosing the experience from a certain distance: "Looking back, can you put your finger on what happened?" Further, experiences provide the input for broader *intervision* activities in which students offer advice in the spirit of collegial counseling: 'If this situation should present itself again, what could you do differently?" In the final activity type on the canvas, students engage in role-playing or simulating alternative scripts and scenarios for the central experience.

We also learned that student performance in the listed activities tends to improve when students are also trained in skills that support the various types of activity. The arrows in the figure refer to such supporting skills, aiming to enhance, again in clockwise fashion, the facility of recalling and expressing memories; the quality of observation that accurate description relies on; the agility at reframing, which allows for flexibility in interpretation; the suspension of judgment that is required for independent diagnosis; the faculty of invention that unleashes creative solutions and advice, and the spirit of experimentation that enriches simulation.

Sometimes we help students hone selected skills through dedicated activities; at other times we integrate these supporting skills in our teaching in a more cursory manner. Sometimes we set up activities as a series in a learning cycle; at other times we focus on just one or two activities, possibly in iteration. In doing this, we have been inspired by a number of other models, which all seem to echo Bennett & Bennett's D-I-E adage (Describe-Interpret-Evaluate, see http://www.intercultural.org/die.php), such as PEER (Prepare-Engage-Evaluate-Reflect: Holmes & O'Neill, 2012), ODIS (Observe-Describe-Interpret-Suspend judgment: Ting-Toomey, 1999), and 3RA (Spencer-Oatey & Davidson, 2013).

Finally, underlying all the types of activities and supporting skills that we bring to the experiences is the canvas itself, the fabric of which is awareness. While the crystal reveals different acts through which our intercultural experiences can be illuminated, the fabric of the canvas stands for open awareness. This open awareness is not to be confused with the action of directing attention, which excludes as it focuses on one object or another. Awareness here refers to a more intuitive 'ability to notice where we are' (Mipham, 2003) which is by definition 'choiceless' (Krishnamurti, 1980).

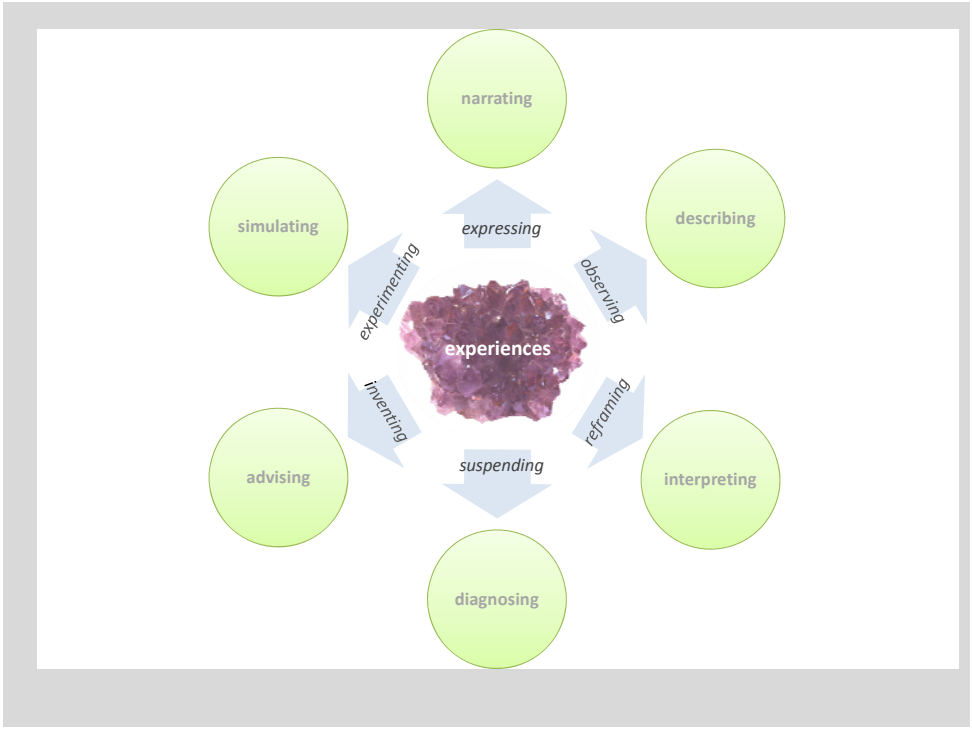

Figure 1. The crystal canvas of experience-based learning activities

3. Discourse focused

The (con)textuality of experiences, as explained above, requires that we focus on discourses in order to access the intercultural dimension of the encounters. Discourse is here defined as 'text-in-context', and the plural form 'discourses' can refer either to a collection of instances of discourse or to a multitude of types of discourse (Shi-Xu, 2001). The focus on discourses also offers a window for investigating the use of lingua francas in international student groups (Dervin, forthcoming), an example *par excellence* of how speakers present and construct themselves as intercultural individuals.

In our teaching practice we start by considering student-produced (inter)personal discourses (Van Maele, Mertens & Scatolini, 2011; Van Maele & Mertens, 2012). From there, we tend to widen our scope to intergroup, organizational or societal

discourses, including the dominant discourses of everyday talk and the media (e.g. Peeters, 2012, a documentary about sexism in the streets of Brussels).

This constitutes the first sense in which our approach is discourse focused: we analyze existing, student-provided text-in-context through close reading (listening, viewing), inspired by models for the analysis of intercultural discourse (Hoffman, 2009) and adhering to pragmatic guidelines for empirical research (Verschueren, 2012). Yet, there is also another sense in which our approach to teaching intercultural communication can be called discourse focused. As teachers, we attach great importance to initiating and fostering discourses of diversity and equality with our students, as advocated by Shi-Xu (2001) or Holliday, Hyde & Kullman (2010). To promote this in our teaching, we create space and time for genuine dialogue, which is characterized by the practices of 'respecting', 'suspending', 'listening' and 'voicing' (Isaacs, 1999).

4. Theory referenced

If our teaching is driven by experiences that can be studied as discourse, then what is the function of theory in our approach to teaching intercultural communication? Just like we have fully referenced the text that you have in front of you, we reference what emerges in the classroom by pointing toward relevant concepts, models, frameworks, and theories. That is why we call our approach theory-referenced, rather than theory-based. One framework that we have recurrently referred to is Hoffman's (2009) TOPOI framework for intercultural communication. This acronym stands for five perspectives from which you can view a situation and act on it: Tongue (i.e. language), Order, Persons, Organization, and Intentions. Other sources that we regularly refer to include the theoretical models of intercultural competence of Deardorff (2006), Byram (2008), and Ting-Toomey (1999) as well as several competency frameworks that find their origin in research in professional contexts, notably Global People (Spencer-Oatey & Stadler, 2009) and INCA (Prechtl & Davidson Lund, 2007).

Finally, it is important to point out that referencing is not limited to existing publications. To the contrary, some of our activities are intended to generate original codes, concepts, categories, and theories of intercultural communication. A dialogue starting from a journal entry or from student comments on a (controversial) statement (e.g. *Knowledge about the other culture is essential for successful intercultural dialogue*) provide such chances for theorizing together with the students. The richest pool, however, remains the student accounts of their experiences, which, as mentioned above, reveal their often implicit theories of identity, belonging, what is effective and appropriate in interaction, and other key ingredients of intercultural encounters.

5. Interaction oriented

By qualifying our approach as interaction oriented, we position interaction firmly as part and parcel of the learning process. Like Kolb (2007), we recognize that a learning cycle is not complete without 'active experimentation'. The teaching activity of simulation and its supporting skill of experimentation in Figure 1 attest to this. The

arena in which students act out scenarios for behaving in encounters requires an interaction that complements the more detached position from which they analyze these encounters. The orientation towards interaction may be most outspoken in the simulations but it can also be found in other types of teaching activities from the crystal canvas: interaction on the stage for narrating, at a forum for describing, in the circle for advising, ... Because interaction in itself is no guarantee for intercultural learning, in a second wave students are asked to interact through dialogue and reflection on the learning experiences they just engaged in.

To interact in this way demands competences that transcend the competence to communicate effectively and appropriately with people from other cultural groups. It requires an "intercultural interaction competence" that includes the ability "to handle the psychological demands and dynamic outcomes that result from such interchanges" (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009:51). Hoffman's (2009) TOPOI framework, which applies to both analysis and interaction, is again a valuable guide.

Finally, we would like to point out that the interaction that we envisage cannot be restricted to classroom activities. The individuals in our classroom are more than students; they each belong to and engage with multiple other groups. The entire world is our classroom. In order to promote transfer, we offer students a variety of contexts outside the classroom for interventions - performances, creations, events - that lead to a broader range of experiences and, hence, we hope, an enhanced awareness.

Conclusion

Taking a non-essentialist perspective on culture and intercultural encounters, we have introduced an approach to teaching intercultural communication that is driven by experiences, based on discourses, referenced with theories, and oriented towards interaction. This approach has developed from our teaching practice and from listening to our students, whose experiences have been a constant source of inspiration. We expect that our views on teaching intercultural communication will keep evolving as we meet new students with new stories, yielding new insights and, if we can act on it, new learning activities. Already today we appreciate how structuring our views as described in this paper has stimulated and facilitated the search for and selection of learning activities. The crystal canvas has created a space for us to think up, explore, and try out a diversity of activities, some of which might otherwise not readily be recognized as promoting intercultural learning. The figure has been helpful in setting direction but never in an exclusive way. It should not be taken as an exhaustive model for curriculum development. To the contrary, we offer the crystal canvas as a starting point for dialogue to all teachers and researchers of intercultural communication. We also share and discuss it with our students as a way of creating alignment in defining the goals that we want to pursue and the paths that can take us there. That is why we consider our students as our original intended audience for this paper.

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The Use of Computer-Based Techniques in Developing EFL Learners' Intercultural Competence

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Introduction

Contemporary EFL teachers' response to increasing globalisation and internationalisation is the implementation of the Intercultural Approach (Byram 1997; Byram 2008; Corbett 2003) to foreign language teaching. Social and cultural changes to contemporary world, including increased migration and professional or educational mobility, have created circumstances in which EFL learners need to implement the target language in multi-cultural/multi-ethnic settings, which most frequently involve communication between non-native speakers of English. Therefore, English is used not so much as a foreign language but rather a *lingua franca*, i.e. a medium of international communication (Graddol 2006). As a consequence, the goal of language learning is the development of learners' language competence in the target language but more aptly, intercultural communicative competence, as recommended by Byram (1997).

In Byram's (1997; 2008) view, the desirable model of competence in the modern-day world is a combination of two, otherwise separate, types of competence, which can be developed independently of each other: communicative competence and intercultural competence. While the former pertains to the development of language-related competences, i.e. linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence and discourse competence, the latter refers to four major elements which are believed to foster effective intercultural verbal/non-verbal interaction: (i) the affective component (attitudes), (ii) the cognitive component (knowledge); (iii) the action-oriented component (skills); and the educational component (critical cultural awareness) (Byram 1997; 2008).

It may be stated that Byram sets EFL teachers' and learners' goal today as that of interculturally-focused language teaching/learning, which apart from educating learners in the target language is simultaneously meant to further their intercultural competence.

Both types of competence which were merely introduced above merit a further elucidation. As Byram (1989) postulates, linguistic competence, delineated very much in Chomskyean terms, denotes the application of one's repertoire of language rules in order to receive and understand target language messages as well as to produce accurate spoken or written language.

Sociolinguistic competence, whose concept was originally introduced by Hymes (1972), embraces the ability to attribute relevant meaning to the language produced by one's interlocutors in congruence with their implicit intentions, the meanings which they overtly express or on the basis of meanings which surface in the course of the mutual negotiation of meaning in a particular communicative setting.

Discourse competence signifies the ability to construct specific types of text – both written or spoken – e.g. a formal letter or a dialogue, which would be compatible with the conventions adopted by target language users. As Gałkowski (2006) observes, discourse competence might be additionally facilitate the negotiation of new, intercultural text types which could fulfil particular purposes in instances of intercultural communication. Such a new discourse type might emerge out of communication in lingua franca contexts, which by default appear to be characterised by a relatively large degree of unpredictability, where interlocutors may need to spontaneously improvise while negotiating meaning, and where pre-taught patterns of interaction will not universally lead to communicative success.

Byram's (1997) intercultural competence comprises: (i) attitudes, (ii) knowledge, (iii) action-oriented (skills), and (iv) critical cultural awareness, otherwise labelled as political education. Byram (2008) has also produced an alternative taxonomy of his model of intercultural competence based on the concepts of *savoirs*.

Savoir être refers to attitudes. According to Byram, effective intercultural learning requires learners to display attitudes of curiosity and open-mindedness, which are likely to augment intercultural exploration. Learners need to feel readiness to experience and handle difference, which may involve the necessity to defamiliarise oneself with one's native culture in order to look at it from an outsider' perspective, as well as to take on adopt an insider's perspective while exploring the target culture.

Savoirs denotes the knowledge of social groups, including their past and present geographical space, institutions, cultural products and practices, which forms the foundation of intercultural learning. However, knowledge does not equate to cultural information, exclusively. In addition, it must be expanded in order to cover: the nature of the very notion of culture; the means through which to increase intercultural interaction; and the mechanics of societal and individual interaction, including „the types of cause and process of misunderstanding between interlocutors of different cultural origins" (Byram 2008: 231).

Savoir comprendre signifies the skills of relating and interpreting, i.e. the ability to interpret documents or events from a foreign culture, and the ability to relate them to their equivalents from the learner's own culture. A skilled intercultural learner is supposed to be able to identify: ethnocentric perspectives in document or events, predict areas of potential misunderstandings, along with their causes; and be able to negotiate divergent interpretations of cultural phenomena.

Savoir apprendre/faire refers to the skills of discovery and interaction, which enable one to acquire knowledge of cultural products and practices, and implement one's intercultural communicative potential, comprising attitudes, knowledge and skills, in real time in situations of actual intercultural interaction with strangers.

Savoir s'engager, otherwise known as critical cultural awareness or political education, is the ability to evaluate cultural products, practices and perspectives – originating from both one's native and foreign cultures – on the basis of overtly stated criteria (Byram 2008). Savoir s'engager is expected to serve the purpose of: recognizing potential intercultural conflicts, actively identifying and implementing intercultural communicative solutions through the negotiation of meaning in real time.

Critical cultural awareness is also supposed to help intercultural mediators to realise that difference needs to be accepted as part of intercultural interaction.

1. Exemplary computer techniques in intercultural language teaching

A considerable number of printed materials have been developed to augment the development of intercultural communicative competence in the foreign language classroom. They come either in the form of intercultural coursebooks, such as *Changing Skies* (Pulverness 2001) and *Mirrors and Windows* (Huber-Kriegler 2003), repositories of stand-alone intercultural activities, e.g. *Cultural Awareness* (1993), *Developing Intercultural Awareness* (Kohls & Knights 1994) and *Intercultural Language Teaching Activities* (Corbett 2012), or materials aimed at stimulating self-reflection on intercultural encounters, e.g. The *European Language Portfolio* (ELP 2000; 2004; 2006; 2007) and *The Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters* (Council of Europe 2009).

However, the development of intercultural competence is also possible through the implementation of information and communication technology, which may involve the use of purpose-designed intercultural courseware, culture webquest tasks, e-journals, concordancers, web projects, and forms of internet communication, including chat and online communicators.

Korhonen (1999) discusses an example of intercultural language teaching courseware *The Same but Different*, which was developed for Finnish polytechnic students. The program was inspired by *The Culture General Assimilator*, an intercultural teaching technique which was introduced by Brislin et al. (Cushner & Brislin 1996). The technique consists in learners analysing a number of intercultural incidents by selecting from a range multiple-choice explanations of the cultural phenomena which the incidents in question illustrate.

The *Same but Different* program follows the same pattern and offers learners a set of 25 tasks which feature an intercultural incident each. As the incidents depict intercultural misunderstandings which arise in the course of intercultural encounters, program users are incited to engage in intercultural learning by analysing the situations presented and selecting appropriate interpretations on the basis of insights into both the target and native culture. In effect, they need to familiarise the familiar while de-familiarising the familiar, to use Byram's (1997) conception of intercultural education.

As Korhonen (1999) postulates, due to the fact that the afore-mentioned activities are performed by learners in electronic format – which feature includes a variety of hyperlinked multimedia resources – learners are offered an opportunity to delve into a learning format which would is not attainable in the case of traditional, pen-and-paper activities. The very nature of hypermedia permits autonomous learning, where intercultural discovery and exploration occur at the learner's discretion. In other words, learning is non-linear and cultural phenomena may be explored through alternative access paths, depending on the decisions taken by individual program users.

The program does not merely transmit cultural data to students, but rather makes them accessible through interrelated hyperlinks. This kind of material stimulates the rise of multiple associations, and encourages learners to interpret cultural events from disparate perspectives. Thus, it promotes what Kramsch (1993) refers to as relational learning.

As Korhonen (1999) rightly observes, the nature of the software and the work modes that it permits makes *The Same but Different* a suitable resource not only the purpose of in-class work, but also self-study, in which case the program may supplement face-to-face learning.

Another advantage of the hyperlinked media provided within the software is the likelihood of learners arriving at more accurate picture of the cultural phenomena which they investigate through the intercultural incidents which they work on. Due to the fact the cultural incidents demonstrated in the program are appended with additional information, supplied in the form of on-screen text or hyperlinked graphics, learners are more likely to become involved in deeper-level analysis than in the case of pen-and-paper tasks, where the number of resources and learning paths is limited by default.

What is noteworthy is the fact that the program is in addition supplemented with a section which discusses the theory of intercultural communication (Korhonen 1999), which allows learners not only to develop intercultural skills but also expand culture-general knowledge, corresponding to Byram's (1997; 2008) *savoirs*.

Overall, it may be stated that computer programs such as *The Same but Different* expand teachers' repertoire of intercultural activities based on multimedia resources, which in turn are likely to increase motivation and learner involvement in the intercultural foreign language classroom.

Concordancers are software that permits "(...) the user to search for a word or phrase and provides him with exhaustive lists of such words or phrases in context" (Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk 2000: 210). They may be stand-alone applications, e.g. *Simple Concordance Program* (http://www.textworld.com/scp), *Phrase Context* (http://www.hjkm.dk/) and *Wordsmith Tools* (http://www.lexically.net/wordsmith/index.html), or websites, such as: *WebCrop Live* (http://www.webcorp.org.uk/live/), Corpus of Contemporary American English (http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/), *Britsh National Corpus* (http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/) or *KwicFinder* (http://www.kwicfinder.com/KWiCFinder.html).

Concordancers lend themselves to intercultural teaching, notwithstanding that they were originally intended to be utilised within linguistic analysis studies. In Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk's (2000) view, concordancers can be utilised in order to conduct computer-enhanced analyses of language corpora which may yield data reaching far beyond mere linguistic discrepancies between particular language systems. Concordance-based analyses can also reveal how the conceptualizations and possible extensions of the use of particular language concepts – which may appear to be seemingly universal – are likely to differ between language systems. This may, in turn, help foreign language teachers and learners investigate how selected constructs

have been categorized by representatives of different cultural groups in both international and national contexts.

Concordancers can, therefore, empower learners to explore the cultural disparities between different sub-cultures within their native and target language societies, as well as juxtapose the two cultures so that they can be perceived *vis*-à-*vis* each other. Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (2000) cites an example of this kind of sociolinguistic/sociocultural analysis, where by scrutinising queries obtained from a concordance program, gender perceptions can be examined within particular social groups, e.g. journalists. This kind of analysis may assist learners in realising that concepts which are mistakenly considered as interculturally transferrable are culture-specific. As a result, learners do not only gain invaluable insight into varied cultures and their perception modes, but they also develop awareness of the culture-bound nature of human perceptions. What substantially increases the value of concordancers as a tool for intercultural language learning is the fact that any language samples which they return in response to a given query are provided within the context in which they originally occurred. Thus, they permit learners to study not language and culture as two separate entities, but as two interwoven, and mutually complementary elements, as reflected by the following terms: *languaculture* (Agar 1994), *language-and-culture* (Byram, Morgan et al. 1994), *culture-in-language* (Crozet and Liddicoat 1997) or *language-culture* (Risager (2007). All of these notions, albeit to varying degrees, were coined up in order to bring to the fore the intricate bonds between language and culture. Therefore, concordances give EFL learners an opportunity to explore the socio-cultural and situational contexts in which certain expressions are likely to appear in the target language, on the basis data derived from varying text/discourse types and text authors. This may additionally develop learners' media competence (Schulte 2000), which is a vital skill for effective exploration of today's media-driven knowledge society.

The inherent potential of concordancers for (inter)cultural learning has been confirmed by Liaw (2006), who posits that data returned by concordancing software may help students locate reading texts through which they can expand their cultural knowledge. She reported that cultural education may be stimulated by the use of concordancers in ways different from the teacher's agenda. She described a study where a concordancer was originally supposed to foster intercultural learning through lexical, syntactic and textual analysis of meanings. However, as it was concluded, the participating students used the information which they obtained from the concordancer in order to identify texts which they later voluntarily read in order to expand their cultural knowledge (*savoirs*).

Liaw (2006) admitted that the effects of that mode of (inter)cultural learning had not examined, however, her study demonstrates that concordancers can have wider applications in intercultural teaching which go beyond the primary functions of the software. As has been illustrated above, concordancers constitute a resource which falls in between computer programs which can be used offline and those which require an internet connection. What follows is a discussion of computer-based techniques in

intercultural teaching which can be implemented in online mode, exclusively: webquests, e-journals, chat and communicators.

The culture webquest technique was originally developed by Bernie Dodge (Dodge 1995) of San Diego University. It takes the form of a learner-centred, web-based assignment which involves learners in interaction with information available within a variety of online resources with a view to constructing/expanding their own knowledge (Dodge 1995).

Dodge (1997) differentiates between short-term webquests, which span from one to three class units, and mostly aim at the acquisition of integration of knowledge, and longer-term webquests, which may last between a week and a month, and whose outcome is the extension and refinement of knowledge. In a typical format, the webquest task features: (i) an introduction, which provides the learners with the context of the assignment, along with the most essential introductory information pertaining to the background of the task; (ii) a task, i.e. the actual problem that the learners need to deal with or a number of questions which they will have to answer; (iii) a set of annotated links to meticulously pre-selected websites which the learners need to visit in order to extract information which will help them solve the problem or find answers to the questions set. The resources that learners are directed to may vary from online texts, forms of e-conferencing and databases to offline materials; (iv) a delineation of the process that the learners will need to follow in order to complete the assignment; (v) guidelines which can assist the learners in organising their work; and finally, (vii) a form of conclusion which is supposed to round the task up by summarising the learning that has taken place throughout the task and highlighting the applicability of the knowledge attained to contexts beyond the very task (Dodge 1997; 2000).

Dudeney (2006) posits that a webquest task ought to ideally concern issues relating to real life while, at the same time, it ought to arouse learners' interest. The context of the task must be clearly laid out so that learners feel sufficiently engaged in it.

As regards the conclusion, Dodge (2000) claims that it will have a motivating effect on the learner if the webquest is brought to a close with a specific final product, e.g. a multimedia presentation, a grid/information chart to be filled with the information gathered or a role-play. This expands learner involvement to product preparation as well.

A webquest task is learner-centred, query-driven, process-oriented and interpretative in nature. In the light of Kurek's (2004) proposition that a webquest task helps learners develop the so-called *multiliteracies*, including academic literacy, critical literacy, and electronic literacy, it may be stated that it is applicable to intercultural training. Practically, all of the literacy types listed by Kurek (2004) are prerequisites for successful intercultural mediation. Academic literacy allows one to read and appropriately respond to foreign language texts in varied fields. Critical literacy equips learners with the ability to critically assess text credibility and draw conclusions from the information which they obtain, while electronic literacy empowers learners to use information and communication technology for

communication, materials preparation, publishing and self-study. It may, therefore, be considered as a tool for testing out learners' *savoir apprendre/faire* (Byram 2008).

The richness of the potential forms of intercultural learning which may be fostered by webquests is succinctly illustrated by Dodge's (1997) account of the webquest-stimulated learning experience. Dodge refers to Marzano's (1992) repository of thinking skills and maintains that all of them can be practised within a webquest. They comprise: (i) comparing, i.e. recognising similarities and differences between the phenomena observed; (ii) classifying, which signifies categorising items with regard to their characteristics; (iii) inducing, which denotes using one's observations for the purpose of inference-making; (iv) deducing, which is *translating* sets of general principles into effecting consequences; (v) analysing errors, i.e. perceiving errors of thinking made by self or others; (vi) constructing support, gathering evidence which would confirm particular claims; (vii) abstracting, which means recognising recurrent patterns and regularities within the information obtained; and finally, (viii) analysing perspectives, which may refer to recognising and verbalising idiosyncratic schemes of perception.

Culture webquests may focus on intercultural issues, but they may also have a linguistic focus. However, as it has already been suggested, language and culture are interrelated, and even language-focused webquest tasks may be conducive to intercultural learning, if properly handled. Examples of (inter)cultural webquests, which have been referred to as *culture quests*, have been presented by Buchowska (2004) and Marczak (2004). An interesting alternative to a conventional webquest in the intercultural-focused EFL classroom may be its reversed variation, in which learners are requested to prepare webquests themselves, either for their class mates or foreign partners. In this way, they need to actively explore culture, e.g. by actively seeking and selecting (inter)cultural resources.

As Meier (2007) proposes, an electronic journal is an internet-based periodical publication which can be used to publish content, e.g. articles, and audio-video materials. In its more elaborate it may be additionally hyperlinked to an external media library, from which could obtain content relevant to a topic of interest to them. What is more, an e-journal may provide content on the basis of which activities for students may be designed. Meier (2007) brings to the fore the straightforwardness of the e-journal as a content editing and publishing tool, which derives from the fact that in order to be able to use it, one needs to possess only the most basic internet skills.

In Lee's (2010; 2011) view, e-journals may be also defined as a form of blogging. She perceives blogs as online journals, which can be used in two basic formats: personal and collective. While personal journals, which are kept by individual learners, facilitate the development of self-expression and self-reflection skills (Yang 2009; Lee 2010), collective journals/blogs are maintained by groups of learners, and foster collaborative learning (Lee 2009). In consequence, it may be stated that they lend themselves perfectly to intercultural learning as self-expression and self-reflection along with collaboration are conducive to the development of intercultural competence. E-journals may fulfil a number of roles in intercultural language education. For instance, they may be a substitute for or a supplement to coursebook

texts through which learners expand their intercultural knowledge. They may also stimulate intercultural project work, which was illustrated by Żylińska (2003), who – along with her learners – participated in a Finnish online project where international learners uploaded their own texts and multimedia materials, e.g. images, to an e-journal published on an internet page, so that they could be read shared with a larger audience. E-Journals can also constitute a platform for intercultural communication, learners meet in order to exchange cultural information and discuss issues relating to intercultural experience.

The benefits of this form of learning lie in the fact that learners are able to select collaboration partners with regard to their age or language proficiency. The topics are likely to reflect the (inter)cultural interests of the learners involved in e-journal writing, such as graffiti or school life (Żylińska 2003). The textual content featured within the journal entries is likely to be enhanced through a range of multimedia, e.g. still images, video clips or audio recordings, as a result of which, the selected aspects of culture will be explored in greater depth than when it is done through text-based materials alone. What is more, learners involved in journal writing will be able to represent their own culture in to others in a much more detailed manner, thus contributing to increased understanding with their project partners.

It has been observed that on average e-journal texts, uploaded by project participants, tend to be extensive in length as well as characterised by a comparatively good quality of the language which they feature. Thus, it may be inferred that learners find e-journal projects involving and motivating (Żylińska 2003), which may in the long run promote their desire to explore numerous dimensions of other cultures.

E-journals constitute an invaluable source of materials for intercultural analysis in that they permit one to identify and compare texts written by representatives of various cultural and social groups, differentiated by age, interest or ethnicity. That, in turn, may ameliorate the study of people's identity, viewpoints, attitudes to life and strangers, e.g. foreigners, as well as aid learners in gaining insight into their self-identity and native culture. At the same time, one must be aware that the implementation of e-journals does not automatically translate into intercultural understanding, as it was demonstrated by research carried by Meier (2007). Meier's (2007) study involved a telecollaboration project where and learners from five South African schools exchanged correspondence and content with their project partners from seven Finnish schools. As it was reported by her, contrary to the researcher's predictions, the use of the e-journal for project work „(...) obscured rather than improved intercultural understanding" (Meier 2007: 655). Therefore, she concluded that e-learning techniques, such as e-journals, may be effective tools with which to develop learners' intercultural understanding only on condition that on the one hand learners are carefully introduced to the tenets of intercultural understanding and on the other hand the e-learning formats are skilfully blended with traditional, face-to-face education, ameliorated by the direct presence of a teacher.

As illustrated by Murray (1995), as well as Kern and Warschauer (2000), although the basic functionalities of Computer-mediated communication (CMC) were utilised as early as in the 1960s, computer-mediated communication has been used on a larger

scale since only two decades later. Depending on the nature of the tools whose use it involves and the modes of information interchange which it permits, computer-mediated communication falls into two major categories: synchronous communication and asynchronous communication.

Synchronous communication is characterised by the transmission of information in real time, without delay, hence its alternative name – *simultaneous communication* (Kern and Warschauer (2000). It may be carried out in two modes: one-to-one and one-to-many interaction. A typical text-based form of synchronous communication is Internet Relay Chat, commonly known as simply *internet chat*, where users at the remote ends of an internet connection exchange messages by typing them at the computer keyboard. Synchronous communication may also be realised through the use of instant messaging applications, which with the advent of videoconferencing have created now opened opportunities for people to communicate in real time not only by means of text but also voice/video calls (Krajka 2012). A list of currently available web communicators includes, but is not at all limited to: *Skype*, *GG*, *Yahoo! Messenger*, *ICQ* or *Windows NetMeeting*, which is being replaced by *Windows Live Messenger*.

The most sophisticated form of synchronous communication are Multi-user Object Oriented platforms (MOOs), which are text-based virtual realities where users interact in a synchronous fashion (Haynes and Holmevik 1995), or Multi-User Dungeons (MUDs) – otherwise referred to as Multi-User Dimensions and Multi-User Domains (Harley 1996) – where users can not only interact in real time but also explore virtual worlds by interacting with the objects they can find there (Krajka 2007). MOOs/MUDs can feature worlds which are either entered by students or collaboratively constructed by them. Educational MOOs are e.g. *Tapped In* (http://www.tappedin.sri.com/), or *SchMOOze University* (http://schmooze.hunter.cuny.edu/).

An extended format of MUDs/MOOs, which incorporates the latest advancements in information and communication technology and also lends itself to educational applications, are contemporary virtual worlds such as Second Life (http://secondlife.com/). Asynchronous communication consists in the participants relaying messages to one another with delay, which means that once information has been posted by the sender, some time may elapse before it is collected by the recipient. Asynchronous web services embrace email, bulletin boards, mailing lists, blogs or wikis.

As Romiszowski and Mason (2004) maintain, it is probably due to the time shift that asynchronous communication prevails in educational settings. However, in the light of research conducted to date, it may be stated that intercultural foreign language teaching can be facilitated by both synchronous (Thorne 2003; Takagi 2008; Jin 2008) as well as asynchronous (Osborne 2000; Penz 2001; O'Dowd 2003; Czaplikowska 2007) forms of computer-mediated communication (CMC). An illustration of how (synchronous) CMC may be utilised in order to develop foreign language learners' intercultural competence is the case of internet chat.

Toyoda & Harrison (2002) administered a telecollaboration project which involved the use of web (internet) chat and reported that online communication in real time has the potential to help educators create a setting where learners have an opportunity to test their own intercultural skills in the course of an intercultural interchange. What is more, their findings implied that synchronous computer-mediated communication is likely to inherently involve intercultural learning. As it was observed, despite the fact that Toyoda and Harrison's (2002) chat project was not focused on cultural training, its participants – learners of Japanese who conversed via online chat with native speakers of the language – engaged in intercultural learning. Presumably, it happened due to the fact that while the learners and Japanese native speakers were exchanging messages online, they needed to rely on numerous cultural conventions and sociocultural norms in order to negotiate the meaning.

In Levy's (2007) view, internet chat which serves the purpose of intercultural communication may stimulate effective interaction as it requires learners to follow a range of cultural rules which affect their interpretation of the meanings expressed as well as the manner in which they interact with their partners, e.g. pertaining to the roles that they need to adopt. This kind of context may be conducive to effective intercultural communication as long as it is meaningful. As Levy (2007) concludes, the participants of the Toyoda and Harrison (2002) project, including both the native and non-native speakers of Japanese, on many occasions failed to establish mutual understanding due to their misinterpretation of the (inter)cultural context of the communication acts which they were part of.

Intercultural communication via web chat that involves non-native and native speakers of the target language may pose problems as the latter are bound to produce incomplete/abbreviated messages, which may be easily misinterpreted by the former (Levy 2007). In addition, it could be added that non-native speakers are likely to follow their own semantic patterns while attempting to use the target language, which aggravates the difficulties faced by both parties engaged in online communication.

Similar problems may be caused by the scarcity of a text-based verbal interaction, which is devoid of the nonverbal clues, e.g. facial expressions or gestures, that are normally taken for granted in face-to-face communication. Lack of eye contact may also affect the turn-taking practices of the chat users, the more that they need to act under the pressure of time.

Since asynchronous CMC involves the exchange of delayed messages, as was indicated before, chat-based interaction whose goal is to foster the development of foreign language learners' intercultural competence may be enhanced by a functionality which would permit communicators to save their conversation lines when the chat ends. That kind of functionality is provided by online communicators such as *Skype* or *GG*.

As Corbett (2003) posited, the merit of intercultural learning, particularly that organised along the lines of ethnographic studies, lies in the data analysis and the resultant discussion that follow intercultural encounters. What Corbett suggest is, therefore, the implementation of time delay, which would facilitate intercultural reflection. That is, perhaps, where the significance of the prevalence of asynchronous

forms of CMC in education – highlighted by Romiszowski and Mason (2004) – stems from.

In concordance with that, enhancing chat with a text-saving functionality would transform a technique in synchronous CMC into a hybrid (synchronous/ asynchronous) one. In effect, while learners could interact with representatives of other cultures in real time, they would subsequently be offered an opportunity to analyse the culture-bound aspects of their intercultural exchanges, e.g. the discourse patterns and semantic interpretations, with the benefit of hindsight – perhaps, in the comfort of their own home. This kind of solution renders internet chat as a tool for intercultural interaction as well as the collection of (inter)cultural data.

2. Impediments to the use of ICT in intercultural education

There are a number of both pedagogical and technological impediments to the effective utilisation of information and communication technology in intercultural language teaching. The pedagogical dimension of computer-enhanced intercultural language teaching in the EFL classroom may be impeded by factors such as teachers' realisation that, in at least some contexts, teaching programmes do not call upon instructors to resort to information and communication technology while tackling the cultural component of language education (Żylińska 2009). For instance, learners are expected to memorise declarative knowledge, which they later recall and report upon evaluation, rather than tele-collaborate with foreign partners. This *backwash effect* (Promodrou 1995) of examinations on instructional procedures in the language classroom occurs even in settings where examination criteria formally embrace components of intercultural competence, as in the case of the new format of the extended level of the secondary school-leaving examination in Poland.

Computer technology, including online materials, may also be reluctantly used by teachers due to the limited socio-cultural context of electronic content. As it has already been demonstrated, Levy (2007) points out that particular forms of online communication, both synchronous and asynchronous, may impair the learners' ability to make appropriate socio-cultural and linguistic inferences on the grounds of the limited clues which they obtain from their co-communicators. It would take a fairly experienced intercultural mediator to successfully counteract the lack of contextual clues in intercultural communication contexts, which are inherently prone to constitute a challenge to language learners due to the complexity its culture-bound elements, e.g. non-verbal clues.

The same applies to the lack, or shortage of, paralinguistic clues in technology-mediated intercultural communication (Ware and Kramsch 2005). Ware and Kramsch (2005) maintain that the absence of e.g. gestures or intonation – which are essential for an adequate decoding of messages – from online communication may cause perplexing ambiguity. The poverty of nonverbal clues in online interaction had also been raised by Crystal (2001), who drew attention to the lack of „(...) sharable, multi-directional, and multi-dimensional (visual, tactile, and especially verbal)" (Crystal 2001: 9) components in computer-mediated communicative exchanges.

Last but not least, while developing language learners' intercultural competence, teachers must also be prepared for their students falling prey to the fallacy that the instructor is sufficiently knowledgeable and skilled in order to arrange for effective ICT-mediated intercultural language learning. As a result, in the case of failure, they may hastily blame it on the teacher (Belz 2005). Thus, it is of paramount importance to raise learners' awareness of the nature of intercultural learning, the multiple dimensions of intercultural interactions and the competences which effective intercultural communication involves (Byram 1997; 2008).

Insofar as technology is concerned, Belz (2005) claims that the use of technology in intercultural language teaching involves problems relating to the administration of the computer infrastructure at school. He states that due to the limitation of the timetable, teachers may find it hard to arrange for a lesson in the computer room. It is also possible that teachers – whether or not they can be classified as digital immigrants rather than digital natives (cf. Bayne and Ross 2007) – display a degree of resistance towards the idea of incorporating information and communication technology (ICT) in the classroom. That was observed by both Bandura (2007) and Żylińska (2009) in the case of Polish EFL teachers, who seemed reluctant to use technology at large to aid their teaching, despite its availability at schools.

As Gajek (2009) posits, teacher's infrequent use of technology may stem from lapses in their computer literacy, e.g. the limited ability to operate the computer or handle technical problems. At the same time, newer research results imply that, perhaps, the longer ICT has been available, the more positive attitudes towards it one can identify in teachers. For instance, Marczak's (forthcoming) findings reveal that Polish EFL teachers; current attitudes towards ICT in foreign language teaching are very positive, with a vast majority of the teachers examined in his study subscribing to the view that computer-assisted language learning is more intensive than non-CALL instruction, and that by and large, computer-assisted language learning is more effective than non-CALL work modes. Recent data suggest that a definitive majority of EFL teachers in Poland use ICT in order to enhance EFL teaching, and a fifth of their teaching time is spent on computer-mediated teaching. Strangely enough, the same study revealed that a significantly lower proportion of EFL teachers utilise ICT for the purpose of teaching culture.

All in all, it must be underlined despite the shortcomings of ICT-based techniques in intercultural language teaching, it is perfectly plausible to enable learners to practice electronic intercultural encounters as international communication is increasingly realised via the internet (Graddol 2006).

Conclusion

In the light of what has been demonstrated above, it may be stated that information and communication technology does lend itself to intercultural language teaching. However, one must be cognisant of the fact that it does not constitute an ultimate solution to problems which both foreign language teachers and their students are likely to experience in the course of intercultural training. ICT may be perceived as yet another channel, or perhaps of number of channels, through which cultural

knowledge, skills and awareness can be developed, but it is by no means a tool which inherently and universally effective.

Undeniably, the most promising quality of ICT-mediated intercultural learning derives from the fact that it does not expand the teacher's repertoire of intercultural techniques to be used in the EFL classroom and permit exploration of a range of cultures, including one's own, but it also promotes genuine intercultural interaction, be it synchronous or asynchronous. Yet, similarly to any other teaching/learning solutions, technology does not guarantee the development of learner's intercultural competence. The value of computerised activities is to a large extent determined by the quality of the ensuing intercultural analysis and reflection. Otherwise, the intercultural experience it may aid will be superficial, and instead of fostering cultural insight, it will reinforce stereotyped perceptions of the familiar as well as the unknown, which is precisely the opposite of is viewed as the goal of intercultural education.

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Developing Negotiation Skills as Part of Intercultural Communicative Competence

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Introduction

Pointing out the current, increased communication between diverse populations across a range of domains may land one firmly in the ranks of banality. It is precisely this banality, however, that underpins the goal of foreign language teaching advocated here, namely, the development of intercultural communicative competence. Such a goal indicates a readjustment of pedagogical priorities, imputing greater importance to the development of negotiation skills than has hitherto been the case. The aim of this article is to justify such a readjustment in priorities and explore the role of negotiation skills in foreign language pedagogy. In doing so, a relationship will be forged between a view of communication that assigns culture and context an important role and a pedagogical approach that implicates flexibility, noticing, and strategic communication as components of negotiation skills. The first section will address the concept of intercultural communicative competence. This forms the basis for the second section, which connects a communication model to a pedagogical goal that highlights the importance of negotiation skills. Three interrelated aspects of negotiation skills will be discussed in the third section, followed by suggestions of ways to develop them.

1. Intercultural Communicative Competence

One can encounter various terms in the literature to describe a broad concept referred to in this chapter as intercultural communicative competence (ICC). Other oft-used, similar terms include the following: intercultural communication competence (e.g., Chen & Starosta, 1996; Wiseman, 2003), transcultural communication competence (e.g., Ting-Toomey, 1999), and intercultural competence, which is subsumed under a more broadly conceived intercultural communicative competence (e.g., Byram, 1997; Byram, Nichols & Stevens, 2001). A plethora of components have also been proposed as comprising the aforesaid terms. A major broad division subsuming such components often includes knowledge, skills, and attitudes (e.g., Byram, 1997; Hofstede, 1991), which themselves subsume numerous components. Spencer-Oatey and Franklin (2009), for example, include active listening, linguistic accommodation, building of shared knowledge, and stylistic flexibility as communication competences. Prechtl and Lund (2007) identify components such as tolerance for ambiguity, behavioral flexibility, respect for others, knowledge discovery, and empathy. Holliday, Hyde and Kullman (2004: 48) refer to "disciplines" for intercultural communication that are couched in imperatives, such as "seek a deeper understanding of individual people's identity".

While the definitions of the broad rubrics and their proposed components may differ to varying degrees, depending on a particular author's focus and juxtapositions, one is probably reasonably safe in saying that they are all concerned with competences that lead to effective communication when interactions involve those of different cultural backgrounds (both intranational and international). It should be noted that, in this chapter, the construal of intercultural communicative competence follows a model of communication that boldfaces negotiation of meaning and identity. The next section will describe such a model which, in turn, forms the basis for advocating the development of ICC as the goal of foreign language teaching, one which leads to prioritizing aspects of negotiation[1] in the classroom.

2. From Communication Model to Pedagogical Goal

In considering a communication model, one might do well to establish what would appear to be a mostly uncontroversial function of language, namely, to communicate effectively. Effective communication can be broadly depicted as successful conveying of one's own communicative intentions and a successful perception of the communicative intention of one's interlocutor. Ting-Toomey and Chung (2005:18) underscore the interactive aspect, describing communicative effectiveness as, "the degree to which communicators achieve mutually shared meaning and integrative goal-related outcomes". Such communicative success is, however, decidedly less than simple. A personage no less venerated than Aristotle, in the *Rhetoric*, alluded to the complexities inherent in effective communication, noting that good communicators are those who vary their language in accordance with their audience. Audiences and their members, of course, are far from static, predictable entities; rather, each represents a constellation of interacting variables, including expectations, behaviors, affect, and identities that often fluctuate with changes in the context. The challenges posed by such fluidity are perhaps nowhere more prominent than in intercultural communication, where differing underlying cultural values and beliefs add to the constellation of variables.

The ever-changing constellation of interacting variables points to a process-oriented view of communication, that is, one whose essence is a dialogic process involving a negotiation of meaning, aptly summarized by Lustig and Koester (2005:10) as "a symbolic, interpretive, transactional, contextual process in which people create shared meaning". An important resource for the interpretive process is context (Goffman, 1974). This is true whether context is construed as the immediate situation, as including socio-cultural and socio-historical influences (see e.g., Meeuwis, 1994 on "institutionalized prejudice"), or as a process itself. The "dynamic mutability" (Goodwin & Duranti, 1992: 5) of context-as-process refers to a constantly evolving context, whereby the meaning of what has been said becomes part of the context of the subsequent interaction, an on-line creation of context that is framed and reframed in negotiation (e.g., Banks, Ge & Baker, 1991; Kramsch 1993, 2000; Roberts, 1996).

Context and contextual variables can be differently interpreted by interlocutors as they are informed by underlying values and beliefs that can also differ (Meier, 2004,

2010). As Lie (2003: 4) notes, "interpretation is always biased and bounded". The underlying values and beliefs that constrain interpretation are part of subjective culture, which is defined by Philipsen (1992: 7) as, "a socially constructed and historically transmitted system of symbols and their meanings, premises and rules".

The view of communication depicted above, involving a negotiation of meaning informed by interplay between culture and context, is of particular relevance to foreign language pedagogy since the goal of the latter is generally to prepare learners to create shared meaning with precisely those with whom one does not share a culture. In other words, foreign language learners are being prepared to competently engage in intercultural communication, which, as we have seen above, presumes a negotiation of meaning. This meaning, it should be noted, can also include meaning assigned to others in terms of their identities as well as the meaning that one seeks to convey regarding one's own identities.

An individual's identities can include a variety of dimensions (e.g., age, gender, social class, occupation, nationality, religion), some taking precedence over others, depending on the context, and some having different valuations across cultures. Cooley's (1922) looking glass self and Snyder, Higgins and Stucky's (1983) revolving images suggest that others' perceptions of our identities and reactions to them will impact our own perceptions of our identities. As Collier and Thomas (1988: 108-112) observe, aspects of identity are "framed, negotiated, modified, confirmed, and challenged through communication and contact with others" with the desired outcome being "a confirmation of the preferred identity". Our identities then are very much a social construction (e.g., Goffman, 1967) subject to negotiation and renegotiation. In the case of intercultural communication, a preferred identity that may well not be the default setting, and one which thus requires negotiation, is that of a legitimate speaker, namely, someone to be accepted and heeded, someone whose contributions are to be believed or considered of value (e.g., Bourdieu, 1993; Miller, 2003).

Negotiation of meaning and identity thus assumes a central role in becoming an effective communicator, particularly in intercultural communication. The act of two people talking does not necessarily result in negotiation; in fact, many of us have witnessed or experienced communication that was marked by lack of negotiation and was less than successful. An underlying assumption of negotiation is thus a mutual willingness to cooperate in a joint venture of arriving at meaning, a meaning that involves a hybridity of interactional and transactional functions. Without this willingness, negotiation cannot occur. Even when negotiation occurs, however, it can be done more or less adeptly. I would submit that the quality of negotiation is dependent on at least the following three interrelated aspects: noticing, communication strategies, and flexibility. The development of these three aspects will lead to improved negotiation in intercultural interaction and as such, should receive priority in foreign language teaching/learning. Figure 1 below depicts the centrality of negotiation and three of its aspects in ICC. The arrows indicate the relatedness of noticing (N), communication strategies (CS), and flexibility (F).

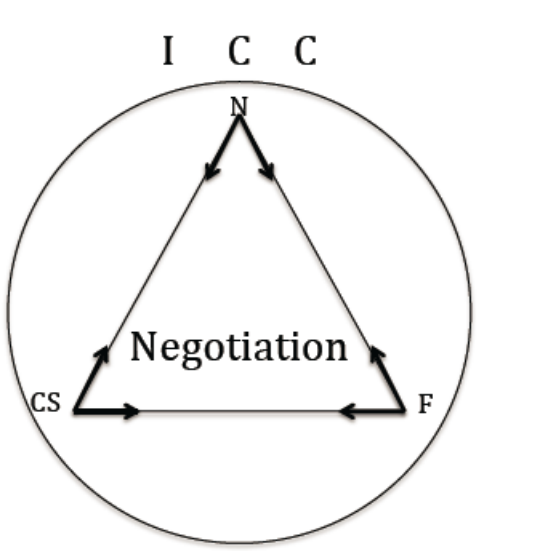

Figure 1. Negotiation and Intercultural Communicative Competence

In sum, the goal of foreign language pedagogy must be the development of intercultural communicative competence and its inherent negotiation attributes. This is especially so in light of a world that is as multi-faceted in terms of culture, context, and interlocutor as the one in which we travel. While I am in no way arguing that traditional aspects of foreign language teaching such as grammar, vocabulary, or pronunciation, should be neglected, I would argue that aspects of negotiation, as explicated above, need to receive attention in the foreign language classroom and be accorded a status equal to that of traditional aspects, not as isolated, add-on components, but as aspects to be mindfully woven into the overall tapestry. The following three sections will focus on the three aspects of negotiation deemed worthy of such incorporation. Although the three are interrelated, it is useful at this point to address each separately.

Noticing

In general, noticing can be said to transform the implicit into the explicit. Schmidt (e.g., 1990, 1993, 1994, 2001) imparted to noticing a notoriety of sorts within the field of second language acquisition, claiming that "more noticing leads to more learning" (Schmidt, 1994: 18). He depicted noticing as "attendant processing" (Schmidt, 1993: 35) or conscious registering of a stimulus, the ultimate goal of which appeared to be native speaker proficiency. Ting-Toomey (1999: 97) broadened the notion of noticing with her concept of 'mindfulness': "attending to one's internal assumptions, cognitions, emotions, and simultaneously attuning to other's assumptions, cognitions, and emotions", which extends beyond attending to discrete surface level linguistic features of a native speaker. This broader scope seems better suited to ICC with its greater focus on the dynamic roles of culture and context.

In light of the goal of developing ICC, at least four objects of noticing can be identified (cf. Meier, 2003). The first is awareness of a language-culture connection, in regard to both one's own languaculture and that of one's interlocutor's. In fact, an awareness of one's own languaculture has repeatedly been identified as a prerequisite to an awareness of the same in others (e.g., Byram, 1993; Cortazzi & Jin, 1999; Kramsch, 1993). Secondly, one should be aware of relevant contextual variables, that is, the variables that play an important role in informing linguistic behavior (e.g., status, age, gender). The third object of noticing requires an emic perspective (cf. Alptekin, 2002). This involves an awareness of potential differences in others' perspectives, including varied meaning assigned to relevant contextual features. The last object of noticing is an awareness of one's own and others' communication styles and strategies.

Because the role of cultural values and beliefs in one's assessment of context and linguistic behavior generally remains at the unconscious level, noticing plays an especially important role in regard to all four objects of noticing cited above. Learners need to become "smart and selective noticers," being aware of what to be alert to. If interactants do not notice relevant aspects of intercultural communication, their meanings may be mutually misconstrued, resulting in damaging judgments at the personal level and perhaps even more harmful stereotypes at the national level. I would additionally submit that noticing can be self-perpetuating or incremental: If foreign language learners are initially made aware of ways cultures and perceptions of contextual variables might vary and how this variance, in turn, might relate to communicative behavior, they are more likely to have a heightened awareness of this in subsequent interactions, and thus be in a better position to negotiate meaning. Noticing thus also serves the goals of greater learner autonomy and agency and provides a basis for practicing communication strategies that are also a part of negotiation, that is, part of ICC.

Communication Strategies

Communication strategies (CS), since their inception (Selinker, 1972), have received increasing attention as an important facet of language learning -- as part of strategic competence (Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980) and then in terms of taxonomies, pedagogy, and related cognitive style (e.g., Bialystok, 1990; Dörnyei & Scott, 1997; Faucette, 2001; Kasper & Kellerman, 1997; Littlemore, 2001; Poulisse, 1990). This attention typically concerned itself with addressing deficiencies in a speaker's linguistic resources, especially lexical gaps (e.g., Kasper & Kellerman, 1997), in pursuit of native-speaker proficiency. A goal of ICC, however, leads to a consideration of CS, not so much in terms of deficiency and native-speaker proficiency, but more in terms of strategies to negotiate issues related to cultural and identity meanings. Such issues can include achieving immediate communicative goals as well as more general personal, social or professional goals, which, in their depth and breadth, can present greater challenges. Additionally, communication strategies not only play a role in dealing with problems in intercultural communication after they occur, but they are also involved in planning that may prevent a problem from

occurring, or at least attenuate it (e.g., Cohen, 1996; FitzGerald, 2003; Liddicoat & Crozet, 2001). It is not the intent to provide a comprehensive taxonomy of communication strategies, but some that might be deemed to be especially relevant to intercultural communication would likely include the following: providing an example (or asking for one); achieving a balance in speaking turns; paraphrasing (or requesting a paraphrase from one's interlocutor); requesting clarification; employing metacultural or metapragmatic statements, reframing intended meanings (see e.g., Blommaert, 1991), and perhaps even code-switching in its function of signaling identity.

Being aware of differences in communication styles (e.g., relative directness; use of silence) and attending and responding to one's interlocutor's communication style play an important role in the employment of communication strategies. For example, direct requests might be more or less effective, depending on whether they would or would not pose a threat to an interlocutor's face. Sensitivity to one's interlocutor's preferred communication style and subsequent adjustment of one's communication strategies thus contribute to more effective negotiation of meaning and identity and also presume a certain amount of flexibility.

Flexibility

Flexibility is inherent to process and since negotiation is a process, it follows that flexibility is conducive to ongoing dialogic negotiation and thus, is part of ICC. Meyer (1991: 137) specifically cites being able to behave in "a flexible manner" in his definition of intercultural competence. Begley (2006: 591) declares flexibility to be "the antithesis of ethnocentrism". Leaving one's own frame of reference (cf. Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2005), considering "a new set of relationships and expectations" (Goodwin & Duranti, 1992: 31), and recognizing the legitimacy of perceptions other than one's own certainly requires flexibility. Indeed, Chen and Starosta (2006: 239) speak of "the power of flexibility" in making "psychic shifts". This would be especially evident in cases where interlocutors notice that communication has not been successful, identify possible reasons why, and accordingly employ strategies to set things right. Flexibility is also relevant to negative levels of anxiety, which might be viewed as the emotional extension of uncertainty (e.g., Gudykunst, 1995). Flexibility thus includes an ability to deal positively with uncertainty, at least to the extent of not allowing uncertainty to inhibit communication. Flexibility also allows one to take risks, trying out alternative perceptions and being willing to attempt to reframe a particular notion, employ paraphrase, or use metacultural statements. In short, inherent in flexibility is a responsiveness to difference and to the unexpected, which requires adaptation to context and it alterations, both physical and social (which must be noticed to be responded to).

I would submit that at least the three aspects of negotiation discussed above must be addressed in the foreign language classroom. Where they have been marginalized or even non-existent in the classroom, they should be assigned a priority equal to that of traditional linguistic skills, a priority that does not necessarily imply so-called native-speaker competence. How exactly they should be prioritized remains open to

discussion and will likely receive different responses depending on at least the teaching context and the projected usage context of the target language.[3] In any case, it is useful to consider possible ways to develop noticing, communication strategies, and flexibility. The next section will provide some considerations in the form of suggestions of types of activities that could be incorporated into foreign language classrooms in attempts to openly address the development of ICC.

Ways to Address Noticing, Communication Strategies, and Flexibility

The activities suggested in this section are compatible with a culture general approach (Meier, 2003), which, while applicable to a particular target language, does not seek to teach "cultural rules" of a target culture or ways to assimilate to that culture. Rather, in a culture general approach the role of a specific culture is viewed as a vehicle for providing examples of the broader scope of intercultural communication and for understanding and developing needed skills. The activities suggested below are thus less about a transmission of facts and more about awareness-raising, reflection and problem-solving.

Because the scope of this chapter does not allow for detailed descriptions of lesson plans or pedagogical tasks, the suggestions presented are of a relatively general ilk. Detailed descriptions of a wide variety of activities can be found in the many source books and publications targeted at language teachers (e.g., Fantini, 1997; Pedersen, 2004; Thiagarajan, 2005; Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2004; Utley, 2004). Also, due to the interrelatedness of the three aspects of negotiations, the following discussion will not address each separately. It is indeed rare for one type of activity to address one aspect of communication in an isolated way.[4] Noticing will serve as the starting point, because without it, communication strategies and flexibility cannot come into full play.

Ethnographic Methods

One way to effect noticing is to draw on ethnographic methods, which promote awareness of one's own meanings and those of others that might differ from one's own. This might include activities involving questionnaires, observation, interviews or surveys (e.g., Bateman, 2002; Byram & Fleming, 1998; Quinn, 2000). Questionnaires, for example, can encourage self-reflection, evoking awareness of one's own values, beliefs, identity, and linguistic behavior as well as that of others. Observation (e.g., how a particular speech act is carried out in a particular context or contexts) can help the learner to notice the connection between linguistic behavior and contextual features. Interviews (structured and semi-structured) also encourage learners to listen to others as they engage in face-to-face interaction and to practice communication strategies. Surveys, while distancing the learner from respondents, have the advantage of yielding a large number of responses for comparison and identification of patterns. Questionnaires and surveys might address an array of topics, preferably of interest and relevance to the learners (e.g., family traditions, educational issues, professional expectations). Discussions based on the results of activities such as the above encourage personal engagement and further draw learners' attention to

different ways of construing reality. Films, both commercial and didactic, represent another resource for observation, reflection, and discussion. Roell (2010), in addition to providing a list of possible films containing culturally-related issues (e.g., racism, stereotypes, intergenerational conflict), discusses ways to exploit them in the classroom (e.g., pre-viewing and post-viewing activities, projects). Strategic questions on the part of the teacher in all of the above play an important role in promoting noticing by prompting learners to focus on salient features of situated interaction. Communication strategies likewise offer themselves as objects of observation and practice in all of the above, and can be encouraged by making learners aware of them and their potential uses.

Learning Facilitative Concepts

The distinction between description, interpretation, and evaluation (Gudykunst, 2004) is relevant to ICC since foreign language learners (i.e., intercultural communicators) need to notice or be mindful of how readily one leaps to interpretation and evaluation, employing only the measuring stick of one's own culture rather than considering alternative meanings based on others' differing values and perceptions of contextual variables. Such awareness forms a basis for developing flexibility, as does bringing learners' attention to cultural dimensions and orientations (e.g., Hall, 1976, 1983; Hofstede, 1980, 1991; Schwartz, 1990). The latter provide heuristic tools for noticing ways in which cultural norms may differ and their potential influence on communicative behavior. It is difficult to consider alternative perspectives if one is unaware of what such perspectives might be. This awareness is facilitated if one has words to assign to possible differences in perspectives. Individualism and collectivism, for example, have been demonstrated to play an important role in speech act performance across cultures, as have different orientations to power distance (Meier, 2010). Different communication styles (e.g., Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2005) and conflict management styles (e.g., Ting-Toomey, 2006), as informed by cultural orientations, are likewise important aspects to be aware of. Likely areas of breakdown can be signaled on the basis of cultural orientations. It is important to note, however, that such orientations are not intended to be used as fixed categories upon which to predict some sort of fixed behavior; Indeed, this would run counter to the entire notion of negotiation and flexibility.

Cultural orientations can, however, play a role in problem-solving tasks such as critical incidents, case studies, or dialogues exhibiting different culturally-related assumptions. Scenarios from published scholarly studies on speech acts can likewise serve as a springboard to elicit learners' responses to the scenarios eliciting speech act behavior and stimulate discussion regarding how these responses would vary in light of different contextual variables and different cultural perspectives. (See e.g., Félix-Brasdefer, 2006, for suggestions on teaching negotiation in speech acts.) The misunderstandings portrayed in critical incidents offer an opportunity for learners to notice that something has gone awry in communication, consider alternative causes in terms of perceptions of the context. Consideration of possible ways to have prevented the misunderstanding and ways to deal with misunderstandings after they have

occurred evoke communication strategies and perhaps actual practice thereof, if critical incidents are translated into role play activities. It should be noted that although critical incidents, in their inception, were designed to elicit a correct solution among a multiple choice of solutions, this is the antithesis to how they are used within a culture general approach. A somewhat more challenging variation of critical incidents can also be found in dialogue form (Storti, 1994), but again caution must be exercised in order to avoid impressions of fixed "answers."

Simulations and Role-plays

Simulations and role-plays engage learners, facilitate noticing, focus on interaction styles, and provide opportunities to employ a variety of communication strategies. One simulation, namely, the time-honored "Albatross" (Batchelder & Warner, 1977), is especially well-suited to raise awareness of the distinction between description, interpretation, and evaluation (see above) as the audience watches a silent scene from a fictitious culture and seeks to interpret it. The equally venerable "Barnga" (Thiagarajan & Steinwachs, 1990) is a card game that presents communication barriers, unfamiliar and changing expectations, potential conflict, and a need to deal with all of the latter in order to reach one's goal (e.g., win the game or perhaps to just peacefully interact). Another simulation conducive to noticing, using communication strategies, and exercising flexibility is baFa baFa (Shirts, 1973), which creates two imaginary cultures (i.e., a trading culture and a social culture) with different cultural norms and expectations. Members of one culture "travel" in small groups to the other culture to accomplish a task and then return to their own culture and inform their members about the other culture. In another activity that creates the need to negotiate both meaning and identity, members of teams are assigned diverse communication styles and preferred approaches to completing tasks. The teams are then directed to build a tower out of spaghetti and marshmallows (www.rowett.ac.uk/edu_web/spag_towers_instruct). "Chatter" (Thiagarajan, 2001) is yet another simulation, one that raises awareness of diverse communication styles and offers potential for exploring ways to deal with ineffective communication resulting from the different styles. Drama too has been employed to raise cultural awareness and has, for example, received attention in an entire section of a book by Byram and Fleming (1998).

Computer-mediated Communication

Where appropriate technology is available, computer-mediated communication (CMC) can offer an added dimension to the immediate classroom context, going beyond simulation to more authentic intercultural communication. Electronic conferencing (e.g., Truscott & Morley, 2001), email interaction (Jogan, Heredia & Aguilera, 2001), and virtual fieldwork (e.g., Carel, 2001) exemplify more specific forms of CMC engagement. Careful planning and structuring of such communicative tasks, however, is required to ensure that the interlocutors from different cultures and dominant languages have the tools necessary to engage in effective negotiation of meaning (e.g., Ware, 2005). A possible exercise, for example, might involve posing a

series of questions to interactants in two different cultures (e.g., If you were going to live on a different planet, what three things would you take with you?). Student partners in the two cultures could then compare and explain their answers. Differences and similarities could be shared in an entire class discussion in the foreign language classroom, identifying ways underlying values might have informed choices. A foreign language classroom can, using types of activity such as those cited above, be a place where learners are encouraged to use language creatively and adaptively to negotiate meaning and identity more effectively and become more interculturally competent communicators, which is precisely what the goal should be.

Conclusion

Developing ICC should be an articulated goal of any foreign language classroom, moving ICC from the margins and the footnotes to become part of the main text. A core aspect of this goal is the negotiation of meaning and identity. Components of negotiation have been identified and activities have been suggested to develop them, thereby also developing ICC. This in no way obviates the need for more traditional language areas (e.g., grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation) that have generally enjoyed longstanding priority in foreign language pedagogy, but places negotiation of meaning and identity on the same page with such areas. The kaleidoscope of priorities in foreign language teaching requires added colors and dimensions. In other words, a case is made for adding goals, not replacing goals. If this is not done, important constituents of effective communication remain marginalized or totally ostracized, which does not serve the needs of language learners, who are the ultimate priority.

Acknowledgements: My appreciation to Maryna Lysun for her helpful comments.

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Footnotes

[1] As Wenger (1998) explains, "I intend the term negotiation to convey a flavor of continuous interaction, of gradual achievement, and of give-and-take" (p. 53).

[2] The three aspects of negotiation receiving focus in this paper are certainly not the only aspects of negotiation or of ICC. They are, however, deemed worthy of focused consideration in a readjustment of priorities in foreign language pedagogy.

[3] In considering any pedagogical activities, materials, or approaches, it must be recognized that specific types of activities or materials can contain cultural biases that make them more or less suitable for a particular group of learners (Meier, 2007). Hence, teachers themselves must possess

an awareness of relevant aspects of intercultural communication and have a relatively sophisticated level of ICC in order to notice such potential biases and to exercise flexibility in adapting activities and materials to their own context and learners.

[4] Because aspects of linguistic competence have traditionally been the focus of textbooks and teacher education, they are not addressed here, although it should be noted that linguistic competence is a necessary and important part of overall intercultural communicative competence.

Learning and Assessment Language Portfolios in Higher Education – the Intercultural Example of Intermar

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Introduction

International jokes beginning with "an Englishman, a Frenchman and a Spaniard are…" represent a humoristic encounter for 95% of the population. But for a philologist this represents a challenge. How do they communicate? English is internationally accepted as the Lingua Franca in nearly every field in Europe. In the last three decades some voices have arisen stating that other means are not only possible but advisable. As such, should non-native speakers make an extra effort to produce hardly-understandable, often-incorrect utterances in English when they could be speaking their own language? As it has been said

> No es cierto que para que dos personas se entiendan deban hablar la misma lengua (o variedad lingüística). Poniendo cada uno de los interlocutores un poco de esfuerzo e interés en llegar a la comprensión es posible la comunicación entre variedades de la misma lengua o entre lenguas diferentes pero próximas geográficamente (Moreno Cabrera, 2006)

Some would argue that our own language would probably not be understood by our interlocutors. And, today, we would have to resign and admit that they are right in most of the cases. But, hopefully, not for a long time as those voices we made reference to are working hard to implement the concept of INTERCOMPREHENSION in some education systems. Among all the concepts that have made an impact in the field of language learning methodology in the last twenty years, probably the most productive one has been that of INTERCOMPREHENSION. Consequently, many definitions have been given, all of them in relation with plurilinguism and pluriculturalism. A theoretical one could be *"the process of co-constructing meaning in intercultural/interlinguistic contexts"* (Capucho 2011), which is to say a way of communication in which the interlocutors use their own native language being able to understand the other's native one. This natural ability is what experts are transferring to educational and formal language learning contexts to develop comprehensive skills which allow the students to manage themselves quickly, as they do not have to invest long time in learning how to speak in those second or third languages.

Intercomprehension, within this concern for the role of languages and language learning in building a multilingual society, puts forward a fairer communicative exchange: each partner speaks their language but understands the other, in a manner that respects diversity and claims the ability to communicate in minority languages or „off the market". We travel around Europe (or the world) to discover other cultures, even those unknown and small ones to which we feel attracted for one reason or

another. Cultures are identified, among other elements, by their native languages. These cultures are not being fully enjoyed nowadays because of the global use of English. Understanding these languages would be a new motive in a multicultural and intercomprehensive world.

The process from the acknowledgment of INTERCOMPREHENSION as a natural ability to the actual implementation in the classes with students of many different fields has been and is possible thanks to the work of teachers and experts who have created a large amount of materials, which are not fully used at all, especially in formal education contexts.

Europe is the cradle of many different projects about INTERCOMPREHENSION since the beginning of the new century. Most of them revolve around a language family. This is the case of IGLO (Intercomprehension in Germanic Languages Online) or EuRom4 (Romanic Languages). However, the last ones are encompassing almost all the existing languages in Europe, as they work with the three main families: Baltic, Germanic and Roman. Ambitious projects like EuroCom or GALATEA joined many universities to create multicultural materials which could be offered to students all around Europe[15]. Nevertheless, putting those materials into practice is not as easy as it would be desirable. New methods constantly face old obsessions which are extremely difficult to set apart. It seems clear that in an educational context the first element, the most important one as it is the creator or the process itself, is the educator, the teacher, the professor. Students are usually ready and normally decided to adapt themselves to the method proposed by the teacher, as he/she is supposed to bring the best possible ways and options to achieve the objective. It is also true that in some low or medium education contexts most students look for the minimum required level to continue with their studies. But it is not like that in high education ones. Or, at least, it should not be. When considering high education contexts students are part of an interchange of knowledge whose starting point comes from the professor's experience and creates a circle that, some years later, ends with those very students being the professors of the next generations. In a more theoretical style,

> Claro que, aun tratando de evitar el trauma, no es posible dejar de contemplar la resistencia al cambio y la necesidad de reconstrucción sobre la superación de esas resistencias. Resistencias que deben vencerse desde una formación del profesorado centrada en una reconceptualización ideológica {enfoques técnico-burocráticos y gerenciales del cambio), desde un análisis de la congruencia existente entre el cambio que se propone y el estatus de la cultura ya existente {enfoques culturales) o desde una valoración positiva de esta resistencia encaminada a una reconstrucción crítica que se apoye en la colaboración comunitaria ante el cambio (enfoque crítico) (Vez, 2007: 505)

[15] South America is also taking a step forward in the field of INTERCOMPREHENSION. Some examples are the Project InterRom in Argentina or the International Seminar on the "Formation of Roman Languages Intercomprehension" held in Valparaiso, Chile.

Here we have the notion of interculturalism linked with education. We cannot separate them as they are born from the same nature and therefore should be parts to be taken into account when designing and developing new educational methods.

> Una Europa de políglotas no es una Europa de personas que hablan correctamente muchas lenguas, sino, en el mejor de los casos, de personas que puedan comunicarse hablando cada uno su propia lengua y comprendiendo la del otro, que no sabrían hablar de manera fluida, pero que al entenderla, aunque fuera con dificultades, entenderían el „genio", el universo cultural que cada uno expresa cuando habla la lengua de sus antepasados y de su propia tradición. (Eco, 1993: 376-377)

In order to establish a way of communication, it is enough for us to understand the "cultural universe", the "wit" enclosed in any word independently of the language in which it is pronounced.

In relation to this interpretation there is a current betting for a disassociation of competences *"como una alternativa a los programas convencionales de enseñanza y aprendizaje de estas lenguas*" (Vez, 2007: 502) There should be an initial period of work focused only in the comprehensive skills which will allow the student to understand and interact with other speakers and which would lead them to a posterior stage of creation when the language is almost fully grasped. Many European countries have introduced a plurilingual education policy, with primary students receiving some subjects in English or French and some others in their respective native languages. That is a first step which should be appreciated and valued, but which is clearly insufficient.

> De nada sirve proseguir con una política plurilingüe, con más lenguas enseñadas, con más horas de enseñanza de estas lenguas, más medios didácticos, más programas de intercambio si no cambian las maneras de enseñar (González Hermoso, 1998: 2)

We must forget the old concept of learning-to-pass-the-exams in which our most important tool was our memory[16] and try to move to the new concept of learning-to-learn in which memory is an important tool but it is overtaken by communication itself. We must boost those comprehensive and socio-cultural aspects that are common in origin to all of us and whose diversifying nuances make this notion of, let's say, "intercultural Intercomprehension" so interesting.

Accepting then, that in intercomprehension contexts comprehensive skills should be learnt prior to expression ones, changes should be done concerning teaching methods. In order to provoke this change in the whole process, one of the key elements for teaching (and assessing) is materialized by portfolios.

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[16] "*El problema de la cultura europea del futuro no está, sin duda, en el triunfo del plurilingüismo total (quien supiera hablar todas las lenguas sería como Funes el Memorioso de Borges con la mente ocupada por infinitas imágenes), sino en un comunidad de personas que puedan captar el espíritu, el perfume, la atmósfera de un habla distinta"*. (Eco, 1993, pp. 376-377)

1. Learning and assessment language portfolios

A portfolio is *"a purposeful collection of student work designed to showcase a student's progress toward, and achievement of, course-specific (or other) learning objectives"*[17] The very definition takes us to superior education. Although easy models of portfolios are used in primary and secondary education, the act of selecting and collecting involves a much higher level of difficulty. It is too complex to be made positively by primary level students and mabe not by high school ones, as they are probably not mature enough to oblige themselves to work constantly without a supervisor telling them what to do. Besides, they have not been trained at all to be able to select which works are worthy of a presence in a selected collection. But portfolios should be an alternative in superior education contexts. Clear examples of the good results of learning portfolios used in university contexts have been gathered by the EDUCAUSE LEARNING INITIATIVE. In an article published in October 2005 they studied and analyzed the outcomes obtained in eight private American universities[18]. And even more in language education ones, as we are giving them the tools to meet specific learning competencies (Lorenzo and Ittelson, 2005: 2) and not asking them to solve a concrete mathematical problem with only one correct solution. Thus, the use of learning and assessment portfolios presents a series of advantages before the process begins, during the process itself and at its end for both students and teachers.

At the very beginning, the implementation of a portfolio system allows the whole community to

> create a shared vision of the purpose of education based on values of the community (Gómez, 2000, Second section, para. 3)

The portfolio should be created with the interaction of all the responsible institutions deciding in common the products to be included, the assessment information needed and the way this information should be provided (Gómez, 2000, last section). Besides, the portfolio system will give the students the freedom to work without the stress of the exams system, choosing by themselves what aspects of the subject/seminar are touching them the most and selecting carefully what artifacts reflect their improvements in the best way. Moreover, high level language learning processes require a maturity level on the part of the student and the use of portfolios clearly ease that need. If we take for granted that our students are able to (because they are mature enough to) follow a personal process of language learning (as we all accept that it is impossible to learn a language relying only in a few hours at the school), it seems quite unfair to lock up their acknowledgments in a fixed, unique and limited exam. As the processes of learning are individualistic, so should the ways of

[17] Park University, Faculty Development Portfolios, http://captain.park.edu/facultydevelopment/portfolios.htm

[18] The Universities presented in the article are: Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology; Alverno College; St. Olaf College; California Lutheran University; Portland State University; Johns Hopkins University; The Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium and Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis

presenting the progress achieved. Going back to the theoretical frame on which Intercomprehension is based,

> (…) is conceived first and foremost as a person's ability and willingness to give meaning to discourse in concrete interlingual/intercultural communicative situations (…) in order to interpret a message in an unfamiliar language, people will rely on non-linguistic elements in the situation which they may (deem to) recognize from familiar communicative situations in their own language or culture.[19]

As we are taught by hermeneutics, interpretations are as plural as human beings are so we should not limit their margins. In terms of linguistic processes which, in addition, would have been assessed, portfolios represent the most accurate method to obtain the intended results. Probably the most difficult part to be created in a portfolio system is that of assessing. With classical exams and numeric marks moved aside, it is time to decide

> on common goals for student learning and performance and how they will be assessed, develop scoring rubrics and checklists, and agree on standards of performance to be attained. (Gómez, 2000, last section),

we are going to find as many different portfolios as students we have in the class. Some components will be common ones while some others will be totally distinct but every portfolio must be valued with the same stick. In any case, a well-balanced scoring method will

> *provide an authentic description of what students can do* (Gómez, 2000, last section)

, and this is an enormous target to aim to in comparison with what a mere exam could produce. We are moving from a quantitative procedure and score to a qualitative procedure in which the students choose wisely which their best work have been and the teachers evaluate the acquired aptitudes by focusing on the effectiveness of the work done. The most accepted scales have been given by scoring rubrics, *„a standard of performance for a defined population"*[20]. Instead of choosing numeric ratings they are changed for non-statistic but easily-understandable levels which encompass a huge range of performances as they are not marking but communicating expectations of quality around a task. But, as we said, it is not easy. Once again we face here the big trouble of convincing teachers and professors about these new methods. Teachers should be trained to assess using an open criteria standard which is going to mean a huge challenge and would involve a high effort on their part. Training should include discussion and not imposition, always bearing in mind that the final intention is to reach an above average reliable level in comprehension skills in new languages. If this first step is taken, students will get on the bandwagon swiftly.

[19] http://www.eu-intercomprehension.eu/description.html
[20] The National Science Education Standards (1996)

2. The intercultural example of INTERMAR

One of the latest projects about INTERCOMPREHENSION in Europe is INTERMAR, a project funded with support from the European Commission (519001 – LLP – 2011 – PT – KA2 – KA2MP) and directed by the Portuguese Professor in the Portuguese Catholic University, Dr. Filomena Capucho. The project intends *"to create a European community of maritime and naval institutions that share an IC approach to foreign languages"* (INTERMAR public report, 2012, page 3) with the team work of 18 institutions from 11 European countries. The fact that INTERCOMPREHENSION means both a new method for learning languages and a way to interact and share cultures is certified in this project. As it was exposed in the last INTERMAR public report and recognized by the European Authorities, INTERMAR aims at four of the eight EU key competencies for lifelong learning: *communication in foreign languages, learning to learn, social and civic competences* and *cultural awareness and expression* (INTERMAR public report, 2012: 11). Nonetheless, one of its objectives is *"to raise awareness of cultural and linguistic diversities in the professional and social context on board and in port"* (INTERMAR public report, 2012: 5) and its slogan is *"Languages, like the sea, don't divide but set us free".* As it can be seen, there is a clear intention in this project to link education in acknowledgements with the education in values, especially cultural ones. When taking off in this adventure, one of the clear features was that the activities and the final students' outcomes should be presented as portfolios. Work started to design a portfolio which should be both easy to follow for students who are definitely not accustomed to this way of working and for teachers not familiarized to assess in this way. And obviously, it should be designed in a way that the objectives could be accomplished. There are six different modules available for the partners and working portfolios are designed independently for each module, each of them containing some inter-related scenarios structured in different activities which try to generate a progression in the student. Activities are generally between A2 and B2 levels so that students can choose what is best for them according to their previous level in the foreseen language. In this sense, the team faced some unexpected problems: on one side, activities were sometimes loosely connected and on the other side, some activities seemed to be quite unrealistic[21]. These were two big problems to solve as we were intending to create situations which could be the closest possible to real life. As it is said on INTERMAR webpage (www.intermar.ax)

> Seafarers come into frequent contact with different languages both on board and ashore. In addition they are required to live and work with colleagues from diverse cultural backgrounds. (…) An understanding of other languages and cultures will foster better human relationships, enhance the well-being of the seafarer and in general prove invaluable for the multilingual, multi-ethnic crews of the 21st century

[21] In relation to this lack of "realism", one of the main aspects to consider when educating in intercultural values are stereotypes. We should be able to avoid them and try to make the students aware of diversities as well as similarities that go beyond national cultures.

so if we want our students to be interested in the activities they should be as real as possible. But the main problem they faced was that activities need to be fully connected under a clear task-based approach**.** We can't forget that we are imparting some knowledge, even if activities are designed to be attractive for the student. The first aim should be the students' improvement in their language skills. With a well designed, clearly structured portfolio, progression is assured as the pupil chooses his/her own pace. In addition, students can discover those new aspects from the new cultures and, at a time, reflect upon their own cultural habits and prejudices.

Opposed to what it could seem, the individuality involved in learning portfolios do not limit team work but fosters it. Generally speaking and in this project in particular, this type of working is commonly linked to a necessary online participation (whether on a platform, a website or a virtual campus). It results as a main part of the work because interaction with partners will be mandatory in order to solve some of the situations with, for example, some roles needed to be played at the same time in order to accomplish a task[22].

INTERMAR portfolios are divided into three main sections. In the first one the students have to introduce themselves and specify how they use the languages they already know. This is a first push to INTERCOMPREHENSION. We are not asking them how good they are at speaking English or at understanding French. This is not what really matters in INTERCOMPREHENSION. Importance is focused on what they can do now with the knowledge they have and what will be able to do after the project, when the students have some new tactics and means to communicate, even in those languages they thought to be absolutely strange and incomprehensible for them.

Then they present a dossier, a list of the work they have produced along the course. In order to be fair in the assessment, this part should include a final scenario each module has that asks the students to reflect what they have learnt. It is not an exam, obviously. In the final scenarios some interaction and fun is replaced by a larger theoretical and productive part, but the sense of learning by communicating and not by studying and memorizing remains there.

This section includes also some self-assessment documents that will show the actual progress he/she is obtaining and some documents in which the student grades the materials. As we said at the beginning of the article, everyone involved in this type of projects is "learning to learn". Both students and teachers should be conscious of the mistakes they commit. And they should also be conscious of what resources are not being useful at all. In this sense, it is absolutely necessary to have a progressive recycling and improvement of the materials used to teach and evaluate[23]. This was not

[22] An example of this feature is presented in this Project. In the INTERPRODUCTION module students are asked to record a video or any other multimedia item in which they present themselves to the other "INTERMARIANS"

[23] Questions like "*What did I enjoy doing the most?"*, "*What did I learn in this Module about Intercomprehension, languages, ways of learning and IC strategies"* or *"What were the major difficulties I had/I still have?"* are mandatory to be answered after each module. According to the materials, questions like "*Are they appropriate to the course aims?"*, "*Are they adapted to your learning needs and motivations?"* or "*Indicate 3 points to be improved in the materials you have used"* are also mandatory for the students.

like that in the past. In the typical, old-fashioned ways of teaching professors were on top of the students. Materials were rarely evaluated, hardly ever changed for new, more accurate ones. The use of portfolios creates a two directions feedback whose only result can be a clearer and fresher process as channel and code are defined and chosen by both the speaker and the recipient, and not only by the former one.

A third section is a classical diary in which the students reflects, in their native language, how the course is going on. It is worthy to remember that we are not looking for a mastery level in the English language or an advanced level in any other. Activities presented go from an A1 level to a B2 one and some of the languages used in the activities have never been seen before by neither the students nor the teachers. We want students who can feel identified with the notion of INTERCOMPREHENSION. Thus, personal opinions should reflect with the highest sharpness which the strong points and the weak ones in the project are. If we force the students to produce in English (or any other language) we would not receive full impressions but limited ones. And, bearing in mind that the final aim of the project is to connect all the European people related to the sea, we would be scorning the intercultural value of these portfolios. We would be devaluing the sense of planning intercultural forums and chats between the students if then we do not allow them to express in their whole identity.

Miguel de Unamuno said *"el progreso consiste en renovarse"*[24]. He was a teacher himself and was absolutely conscious of this need of updating in the field. However, the truth is that education methods change slowly (if so) condemning our students to a waste of time in most of the cases. In a no-frontiers world where movement and change are our daily bread, we cannot afford language, our biggest advantage as human beings, to separate us.

Fortunately, there are always people ready to start the uprising. In the last three decades we are moving forward in the field of languages and INTERCOMPREHENSION is making its space in educating programs. We can find today several projects trying to prove that we do not need a mastery level in English to be understood. The common starting point of every language in the world pushes us to believe that with the appropriate strategies and the certainty of personal success, focusing our efforts in comprehensive skills will drastically ease the communication processes.

In a multicultural world where every item we use in a day comes from a different country and where we have to be in contact with people from all around Europe, language should not be a barrier but the most powerful link between us.

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[24] Since it couldn't be any other way, this sentence was updated to today's worldwide know motto "Adapt or die"

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Getting to Know the Ropes. Reflections on Situation, Task and Activity in a Plurilingual Comprehension Course for Maritime Purposes.

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Introduction

With this paper we would like to address the question of how concepts that have emerged from various angles in contemporary language learning, such as task-based language learning (TBLL) and plurilingual and pluricultural socialization processes with Intercomprehension as its exponent, can be implemented in a multi-language comprehension course for maritime students. We will focus our attention more particularly on the question of what can be deemed appropriate and effective situations, tasks and activities to be included in such a course? *Effective* here may be seen as relating to reaching the goal of the course, i.e. increased plurilingual socialization (during or after the course was taken). *Appropriate* may be related to external factors such as a favourable perception of the course by instructors and other decision-makers (before the course is even adopted).

1. Conceptual framework

Since the 1970s and 1980s, foreign language teaching on the basis of language structure *per se* has gradually disappeared. Instead, a so-called communicative approach took its place, in which the focus shifted to conveying and interpreting "meaning" (Widdowson 1978), albeit in vaguely generalized communicative "events". By the nineties, a new paradigm took shape, i.e. task-based teaching. On the instigation of Prahbu (1987), language teaching increasingly focused on exposure to and use of *naturalistic* language (Skehan, 2003). Whereas some still believed that naturalistic tasks were basically illustrating structure-based instruction, others went more radically for *tasks* as a driving force in course design (Long, 2000). Within that group, many went on to argue that with the use of tasks as a driving force behind course design, there also needs to be a Focus-on-Form (FonF), since the latter is considered a necessary condition for language development (Ellis, 2002; Doughty, 2003; Skehan, 2003).

Consonantly, the late eighties also saw the beginnings of a general shift in educational practices from teacher-centered to learner-centered curricula (Nunan 1988), in which the latter has come to mean that education works best if learners can work in a self-motivated, self-directed and interactive manner. In this approach, the teacher is no longer seen as the source of all knowledge, but as a master learner and resource (Weimer 2002), or, in contemporary terms, as a facilitator. Learning is seen

to be maximally effective when it is "participatory, proactive, communal, collaborative, and given over to *constructing* meanings rather than receiving them" (cited in Little 2007: 20). The emphasis on involvement, collaboration and construction makes learners more empowered than in traditional teacher-centered practices, but more is also demanded of them.

Finally, in language learning, the "ideology of separateness", the idea that every language stands on its own, as a closed system that most of all differs from other language systems, most markedly from the mother tongue, is now clearly losing ground (Bono & Melo Pfeifer 2008). Instead, the notion of plurilingual and pluricultural familiarity and skills or *socialization* is taking over, including a holistic and multiple rather than segmented view of language skills and of language, identity and culture; assuming individuals' partial socialization into language practices and potential linkages between individuals' plurilingual and pluricultural skills; taking a dynamic view of the old term "competence", which is seen as situated, and changing over time and circumstances (Mondada 2005; Coste et al. 2009). Drawing on these and related concepts, a novel approach to language learning also emerged, i.e. Intercomprehension, which aims to bank on and encourage learners' plurilingual skills by focusing on relationships and similarities in (the use of) different language codes.

This evolution in the conceptual framework of language learning is of course not an isolated phenomenon. Sociolinguistics today is taking a similar if not even more radical perspective, in which discrete and reified categories of "language", "culture", "native speaker competence" and "multilingualism" to name but a few are no longer deemed fully adequate to grasp the complex and dynamic reality of super-diversity and polylanguaging (Vertovec 2007, Blommaert & Rampton 2011).

Plurilingualism and language diversity has belonged to official European language policy for a while (cf. Beacco et al. 2010) and most European students today are plurilingual and pluricultural already: they have often been in contact - in their mother tongue as well as in several other language repertories - with instances of situated language use, and have been socialized with them in a fashion that did not start from scratch, but has been incremental. Bono & Melo Pfeifer (2008) name three ways in which students build familiarity and so-called plurilingual competence: transversally, i.e. in the sense that they activate their whole repertory of communicative/interpretative knowledge in the co-construction of meaning and sense; metalinguistically, i.e. through discerning phenomena that have to do with the form of language; and finally metacognitively, through incrementally experiencing greater flexibility and increased speed with which linguistic phenomena are processed and repertories used.

In the next sections, we will discuss how these general concepts could be implemented in a plurilingual comprehension course for maritime purposes, with particular reference to the INTERMAR project (Key Action 2-Languages 519001-LLP-2011-1-PT-KA2-KA2MP), website http://www.intermar.ax.

2. INTERMAR

In the INTERMAR project 18 different European institutions helped to create and pilot a 3 ECTS credit modular course in the years of 2012 and 2013, to be used in maritime language training in higher education. The six modules of the course (Icebreaker, Intercultural Awareness, Maritime English, Romance Languages, Germanic Languages and Russian and Baltic Languages) constitute a novel way to activate plurilingual comprehension for maritime students in higher education. Whereas English is the standard (and mandatory) *lingua franca* at sea, communicative surveys (see e.g. Vangehuchten, Van Parys & Noble 2011) had shown that communicative breakdowns at sea were not uncommon, precisely because apparently 'Maritime English' was not a guarantee for mutual understanding in all the situations that were surveyed. Further familiarization with languages other than English, with 'other' cultural practices and with varieties of 'Maritime English' was considered a priority for maritime students.

How was this to be implemented, however? The project requirements included a task-based approach, with activities that enhanced plurilingual comprehension and would be set in situations that were relevant for students in higher maritime education. It will be shown, in the sections lower, that implementation choices were often far from straightforward, even if in this paper, we will limit ourselves to a discussion of thematic elements and the recontextualization of real-world target practices in communicative situations, tasks and activities that are included in the course.

3. Situation

"Situation" in a language course is ambiguous. First of all, there is the *factual* situation of learners and an instructor in (a sequence of) classroom meetings or, in a blended course, of learners before a computer screen. However, drawing on the belief that language use is linked to certain situations, it is also standard practice to try and import real-world target situations into the language course. Teachers but especially learners are often asked to project themselves into an *imaginary* situation, which is thought to be similar to what may be expected in the real world outside the course.

If a language course is for so-called *special purposes*, such as a course for maritime students, this means that course designers somehow have to rely on *needs analyses* (survey-based, analytical or expert-based) to find out which situations are relevant for the learners in the course. Those situations include participants, relationships, goals, referential fields as well as background circumstances, which will be reproduced, to a certain extent and in a new configuration, in the *imaginary* situations of the course.

In their seminal book on language for special purposes, Hutchinson & Waters (1987) further categorised these target needs as *necessities*, *lacks* and *wants*. Whereas both *necessities* and *lacks* are considered objective, dictated by the target situation, *lacks* refers to the difference between what is objectively needed and what the student already knows. That difference then usually informs the content of the course. Furthermore, *wants* refers to so-called subjective learner needs, which are

nevertheless considered very important. A learner is thought to learn best what he/she *wants* to learn (cf. Jordan 1997:26).

In the conception of Hutchinson & Waters (1987), however, this kind of target needs analysis requires complementation with a *learning needs* analysis: whereas target needs are what the learners need to be able to do in assumed target situations, learning needs pertain to what the learner needs to do in order to *learn* (Jordan 1997: 25). Hence, questions such as "why are the learners taking the course?"; "how do the learners learn?"; "what resources are available?"; "who are the learners?" "where will the course take place" and "when will the course take place" (cited in Jordan 1997: 25) inform the course designer about learner motivation, learning styles, teaching resources, learner identity and other elements which are likely to be part of the *factual* situation.

In the INTERMAR course modules, the *factual* learning situation provides for both face-to-face instruction in a classroom as well as blended learning. Moreover, care was taken to make the tasks and activities incorporated in the modules both collaborative and individual. In fact, rather than being focused on one type of teaching situation, learning resources or one type of learning style, the project participants opted for a broad approach that would do justice to the different groups of learners and institutions that would benefit from the course. As to the *imaginary* situations, the choices were more difficult. Expert-based assessments of crucial target situations in the 'Maritime English' module included several kinds of *safety* and *security* situations on board: *ship familiarisation*, *bad weather conditions* and *man overboard situations*, *ship design*, *emergency warnings* and even *piracy*. Of course, the assumed centrality of these recontextualized target situations is not just a result of their frequency in real life. Other considerations included the importance of effective communication in these situations, and what could be seen as a *lack*, i.e. the assumed relative unfamiliarity of most learners with this kind of situation and its language use. The target situations in the 'Maritime English' module, which attempts to alert learners to *varieties* of Maritime English (in terms of variable practices of pronunciation, intonation, lexico-grammatical use etc.), are in fact all purely maritime, and that is of course not a coincidence: professional activities at sea are conducted in English, and all maritime students therefore need to have English. Moreover, English is also the working and bridge language in this course, in the sense that all instructions are in English. As a result, the gap of an unfamiliar situation will be offset by comparatively high levels of language knowledge.

This rationale is also found in the other modules, but in an inverse way: no other module has such a high incidence of maritime situations. The runner-up is the Germanic Languages module, the language 'family' module of which English is considered to be a part. The maritime situations recontextualized in the module are now somewhat 'closer to home' in several ways, while the target languages are related to (and include) English, but not always transparently so. Target situations here cluster around the theme of *ports of call* and include a *maiden voyage*, a *river pilots' strike* , *medical problems* and *getting a meal*.

In an Intercomprehension course, the perception of similarities and analogies is of capital importance. This could be achieved or activated through noticing the transparency of linguistic features (as in language families), but in the absence of such transparency, other, contextual features matter more. Maritime students may be able to draw on their knowledge of the maritime world, but as they are still students when they take the course, this knowledge might still be limited.

Hence, in the other modules that showcase language use in languages that are not related to English, the situations tend to get closer to what is assumed to be more centrally part of maritime students' knowledge and interests *today*, as opposed to what might be expected in their careers. The Romance Languages module and Baltic Languages and Russian module are cases in point: *chatting people up*, *hiking*, a *sports event*, a *temporary job and accommodations hunt* on shore are just a few examples of the situations that are brought in there, precisely because they are thought to be part of a young maritime student's (desired) experience.

In the next section, we will discuss how these and other target situations may yield tasks which do more than engage learners' interest, and also actively involve learners in processing the language use on offer.

4. Task

During INTERMAR project meetings, the question was repeatedly heard: "What is a task?" As Bygate et al. (2001:2) point out, "task" in language pedagogy has meant many different things to many different people. A task is some kind of activity or a series of activities, and this ties in with the idea that learners learn best by *doing*. The learner is therefore put to work on something that has a real-world focus. Bygate et al. (2001:5) list a number of characteristics and advantages that have often been attributed to tasks. From the point of view of teachers and teaching, tasks have been seen as a *unit of work* in a scheme of work; as such also as *interlinked activity sequences* in the *development of a thematic unit*. Vis-à-vis learners, tasks have been seen as a method of *involvement* and a deliberate starting point for *exploration*, possibly in an *unknown direction*. From the point of view of the learners and learning, tasks provide *orientation* as well as *autonomy*, with room for *interpretation*, and *interactive* development through collaboration. As such, tasks have been seen to elicit *authentic* responses.

In a more essentialist vein, Ellis (2003) posits that in language learning a task primarily focuses on pragmatic meaning, has some kind of "gap" (see also Prabhu 1987) and allows participants to select the linguistic resources needed to complete the task. The task in itself, moreover, needs to have a clearly defined, real-world (i.e. not purely linguistic) outcome.

Long (e.g. 2000) asked the pertinent question as to what the status of tasks really is in course-design. Is it a kind of activity with all the above characteristics that merely serves to make a syllabus which is primarily based on language structure *more attractive*? Or do real-world target tasks *structure* the course? Only in the latter case does he grant that a course is truly task-based. His proposal for real task-based course design includes (but is not limited to) the following three steps:

1. Conduct task-based *needs analysis* to *identify target tasks*: what are the present students likely going to have to do in the future in the real world, using the language(s) that the course is teaching?

2. Classify the target tasks into task *types*. This shift into a more abstract category is necessary, Long claims, for the following reasons: "including the frequent lack of sufficient time to include all the different target tasks identified in the needs analysis separately in a course, and as one way of coping with heterogeneous groups of students with diverse needs" (2000:186).

3. *Derive pedagogic tasks*: these pedagogic tasks approximate real-world tasks (and types) but are adapted to the learners' level of proficiency and age, and work progressively to higher levels.

Even though this was proposed a while ago, it stands to Long's credit that he recognized that classroom tasks should probably go back to real-world tasks in a communicative course, but are also necessarily *different* from them. Only when the language classroom is conceived as content and language integrated learning (CLIL), and the learner uses a foreign language to focus primarily on content learning, he or she performs a truly "real-world task" in its natural context. Language learning is then largely incidental, as in other "natural" language learning conditions. In other language learning environments, bringing so-called real-world target tasks into the language classroom *always* requires abstraction or decontextualization, and subsequently recontextualization, whether the course be task-driven or language structure-driven. Being aware of this fact allows course designers to take full advantage of the new context (and learn*ing* needs, see higher) and adapt the task accordingly.

The INTERMAR course modules are mixed in terms of structuring. There is no denying that the course as a whole is partly based on *language structure*, i.e. the structure and composition of the target language modules is based on language family relationships (Germanic, Romance, Baltic) not on some real-world function of these groups of languages. An exception is the module of 'Maritime English', which has an obvious role in the maritime world. The role given to language families may be explained from the Intercomprehension approach; this approach to language learning relies on learners noticing similarities in form, besides communicative parallelisms, and an opportunity to show off form similarities by grouping related languages is just too good to miss.

Secondly, within the target language modules, both real-world situations and tasks provide structure to the course. In spite of the many tasks, we do not have a radically task-based approach in the sense of the "task" structuring all the ensuing activities, involving productive use of target language, or a consistently realistic outcome other than "understanding". The course is indeed a comprehension course. An additional difficulty is linked, again, to the fact that a familiar task in an unfamiliar language might not be too difficult and even guarantee some language uptake (see Ollivier & Pelsmaekers 2007), whereas an *un*familiar task in an unfamiliar language is bound to be very difficult. The more specialized the real-world situations that are drawn into the course, the more challenging it becomes to conceive of tasks that are familiar (and

different from the eternal "reporting" tasks in various forms – "Send a text/tweet/email message to your friend to explain why your return home will be delayed by a week"). As a result, the best tasks in these modules relate to situations that are assumed familiar to maritime students at present: select a restaurant; find the way to the sports facilities; look for a place to rent.

5. Activity

Whereas sequences of activities can help to constitute tasks, *activity* does not really have a precise meaning in language learning, and as Willis (2008) states, the term activity is a general term referring to things students do in (and outside) classrooms. So an activity could be anything, ranging from two students reading out a dialogue practicing pronunciation, to doing a grammar exercise. However, neither of these activities is meaning-focused work and neither has a goal other than completing the activity. If there is no pragmatic outcome, then an activity in itself is not a task. When task-based learning was gaining popularity in language learning circles, the question was asked pertinently whether there is still room for form-focused activities in a meaning-oriented language course. Many, most notably in Doughton and Williams (eds.) (1998), would respond affirmatively on the grounds that a communicative course which does not at all pay attention to form leads less to development, i.e. the ability of the learner to reach a level beyond pure meaning negotiation – and this is especially seen in the area of language production. Some, like Long (e.g. 2000) would claim that the focus-on-form is only warranted if this focus emerges from previous meaning-making activity, as in corrective feedback to say, an instance of interaction between learners. Others would make a much stronger claim and posit that a focus-on-form can also precede meaning-making, as long as this move is inspired by learners' assumed or observed communicative needs (Doughton & Williams 1998: 7). In this respect, the INTERMAR course is complex-free. Focus-on-form is radically part of the course, very often as an aid to particular tasks (preceding or following them), and sometimes as a preliminary to a whole module. The transversal module on body parts and medical terms in the Germanic languages module is an example. How does it help learners to understand situated language use in the different Germanic languages better? The synoptic view of how correspondences between lexical items in the different languages work may lead to hypotheses in the minds of the learner that may be used in similar or other contexts. In the Romance Languages module, focus-on-form exercises and tables are particularly related to a comprehension exercise that students did previously.

Conclusion

In many ways the INTERMAR course modules are novel and do not fit into the stereotypes of either communicative or form-focused language courses. First of all, like in communicative courses, much attention has been given to situated language-use and pedagogic tasks derived from target tasks. But in contrast to these courses, a great deal of attention is also given to form, and the concept of the course itself has

been (partly) organized in such a way that form relationships determine which tasks and activities are put together.

The course is also innovative in that English, which is the professional *lingua franca* in the maritime world, is less a target language in this course as it is a bridge and aid to learning to understand many other languages and varieties, related ones as well as very distant ones. Learners' professional knowledge, experience of the world and knowledge of communicative practices and repertories enable them to make some progress in barely charted territories of four to six languages at the same time. As a course for specific purposes, it moreover nicely balances attention to specific professional tasks and situations with more generally human interest tasks and situations, which may be more instrumental to learning than a narrow focus on professional activity. In this way, the situations, tasks and activities in the course may be simultaneously effective and appropriate to learners and educational decision-makers. The use of English as a bridge and instruction language also offers the learners more opportunities to enhance their competence in Maritime English, an important professional asset and necessity to be considered.

Preliminary testing results from the piloting maritime and naval academies indicate that some of the modules are more effective for some groups than others, but without much consistent testing in larger groups, it remains difficult to make sensible statements. Extensive testing, careful recording and prompt feedback are therefore on the wish list of the participating partners in order to offer a motivating and challenging way to develop intercultural competence.

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Selected Aspects of Assessing Intercultural Competence in L2 Instruction

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Introduction

The intention of this article is to present theoretical stances and practical solutions regarding the assessment of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in a foreign language classroom. Since our discussion here concerns the educational dimension of ICC, we should stipulate the tools which can be employed by language teachers. When one embarks on developing their learners' ICC, it is only fitting to ensure that this development indeed takes place by demonstrating the extent of success met by the teachers' efforts. The assessment also ensures that the outcome of learning is evidenced. The present author discusses the issues concerned with the assessment starting with the main problematic areas such as the constraints of time, subject of assessment and the objectivism of the assessor. Next, the two main frameworks for assessing ICC put forward by Byram (1997) and European Centre for Modern Languages (Lázár, 2007) are presented, followed by an overview of other techniques which can be used in the process.

1. Preliminary considerations

A large body of works on assessment in language teaching does not mean that very much has been written on assessing intercultural competence. It is therefore not a cliché to say that a number of factors should be taken into consideration when preparing to assess ICC. A pertinent question to pose here is whether teachers should assess language and culture simultaneously or separately? If the focus is on language, the cultural component will obviously be downgraded thus it will be put into question. On the other hand, testing the understanding of culture by means of a foreign language only seems to have little justification. Assessing intercultural knowledge may constitute a relatively undemanding task, however, making informed judgements about one's progress in developing positive attitudes is a more complex issue. Therefore, the main difficulty in assessing ICC lies not in assessing one's level of factual knowledge, but in describing their abilities of adapting to foreign culture, reflecting on it and changing attitudes towards it. First of all, such assessment is preferably formative rather than summative (Lázár et al., 2007: 31) where the former means an ongoing process of gathering information about the learner's progress, that provides guidance for the learner about their progress, while the latter focuses on the outcome of teaching and is an evaluation done by the end of a course represented with a grade. The cognitive, affective and behavioural aspects of developing ICC require a systematic feedback on learner's strengths and weaknesses.

Secondly, a balance needs to be struck with regards to continuous assessment. It is advised to assess ICC continuously, i.e. regularly and rather frequently, however a

danger exists in that such an assessment may not reflect differential variations since the learners' intercultural and linguistic competence "changes at different rates over the course of time" (Corbett, 2003: 201). What is more, when learners are aware that their performance counts from the beginning of the course, it may increase their motivation but leave little room for experimenting and risk-taking. To avoid this danger of over-assessing the learners, Corbett advises teachers to encourage their learners to take part in assessing their own progress and to gather samples of their work (projects, grids, checklists) in a portfolio to show the different stages of their developing ICC.

Thirdly, as Lázár et al. (2007: 31) aptly note, the teacher has to make a choice between "direct" and "indirect" assessment. Direct assessment may take the form of a teacher observing a group of learners performing a task and ticking a grid with ICC criteria. Indirect assessment is usually the pen-and-paper test which assesses the learners' knowledge. Additionally, a choice has to be made whether to assess holistically or analytically (Lázár et al., 2007: 31). Holistic assessment takes place when the teacher takes into account the learner's general ability. In the case of ICC, this implies a global judgment about the learner's competence. In the analytical assessment, the teacher has to focus on parts which constitute the whole. As far as ICC assessment is concerned, this would be reflected in assessing each of its components separately.

A further problem is posed by what is being assessed rather than how. ICC is a competence which is employed in interaction with people from foreign cultures. In a classroom milieu, the chances of such encounter are slim. Although modern foreign language education aims at creating authentic communicative situations in the classroom (Siek-Piskozub, 2001: 68, Dakowska, 2003: 96) rarely do they reflect a natural process of information exchange. On the one hand, teachers can employ highly-simulated communication activities such as role-plays or interviews, and on the other, they can design tasks which are less simulated (inviting native-speakers to the classes, etc.). The latter ones increase the authenticity of the activity, however, they are more difficult to arrange. What is more, the problem remains about the extent to which classroom activities can reflect real-life communication. An ideal situation in which the assessor can observe the learner's behaviour in natural conditions is by and large difficult to achieve. Another issue connected with assessing ICC lays in defining the levels of proficiency. Byram (1997: 76, 107) suggests creating a threshold level for ICC that would differ throughout educational settings and would depend on the environment in which the learning takes place (i.e. the purpose of teaching ICC in this environment). This is linked to the frequency of intercultural contacts in such environment. While the goal of teaching ICC is attainable (unlike the goal of native speaker proficiency), the threshold level should be defined, according to Byram (1997: 107), as the attainable goal of being an intercultural speaker in a given situation. Achieving higher levels of proficiency in ICC is connected with becoming more insightful. Bandura (2007: 96) explains that the assessor could judge such insightfulness by looking at the learner's ability to analyse differing viewpoints which are the core of intercultural misunderstandings.

2. Frameworks for assessing ICC

As presented above, assessing ICC puts a great burden on the teacher/assessor. The factors to be taken into account are many and of a varied nature. The following section concerns practical solutions to assessing ICC. Firstly, two major frameworks that are used in the process are described. Byram's (1997) model of ICC assessment is discussed together with its criticism. This is followed by a description of the model established by the European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz. Next, the present author discusses three major techniques used in ICC assessment, namely project, portfolio, and essay.

2.1 Byram's model of ICC assessment

Byram (1997: 87) argues that assessing ICC equals assessing the learning objectives put forward by the author in his ICC model (1997: 56-64). The four dimensions of ICC are knowledge (savoirs), skills (savoir comprendre, savoir apprendre/ faire), attitudes (savoir-être) and critical cultural awareness (savoirs s'enganger). The assessment of linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse competence, although they also constitute an ICC model, is not the focus of Byram's discussion. Focusing solely on the objectives of the four dimensions ensures that teachers assess the level of ICC reached by the learners. An important factor in the assessment of ICC, however, is the political context in which the learning takes place. This denotes issues such as educational settings and factors of geo-political and societal nature and is most visible in foreign language certification system by which governments can plan for the predicted needs in workforce (Byram, 1997: 87).

Let us now consider the modes of assessment of each of Byram's savoirs. First of all, the assessment of knowledge is suggested to be done through eliciting the learners' factual knowledge (1997: 95). Teachers should therefore look at what information the learners acquired during the course as well as at the possibility that they might have learnt additional information from other sources. The decision needs to be made whether to give credit to this additional learning (Byram, 1997: 96). Secondly, the assessment exercise, apart from checking factual knowledge, could also check the learners' ability to see relationship between the other's and one's own culture. This is done by techniques requiring learners to analyse or comment on a situation (e.g. "critical incidents"). An exemplary task to this end involves the analysis of a conversation between people from two cultures in which one interlocutor feels constantly "cut off," while the other feels their interlocutor is slow to respond. The analysis would require comparing the norms of turn-taking in the two cultures (Byram, 1997: 97).

The afore-mentioned techniques of analysing and commenting resemble assessing the skills of interpreting and relating (savoir comprendre). In fact, since these skills are related to knowledge (savoirs) they have already been introduced in the assessment of knowledge. An example provided by Byram (1997: 98) is the assessment of a written assignment in which a learner has to comment on a potential misunderstanding in translating a document. The pressure of real-time interaction is reduced and the

learner is given the time to analyse the document, refer to their knowledge or use the skills of discovery (savoir apprendre). In doing so, the teacher can combine the assessment of these skills with the skills of discovery. The latter have a pivotal place in the ICC model (Byram 1997: 99) as the learners are free from the constraints of classroom learning. Additionally, they can be related to the skills of interaction (savoir faire) due to the fact that discovery takes place through interaction with native speakers, especially when the intercultural speaker elicits information and asks the native speaker for clarification. Nonetheless, assessing the skills of interaction poses a lot of problems. It is difficult to observe the outcome of an interaction, and the judgment on whether the interaction was successful is open to discussion. Furthermore, interaction takes place in real time and does not allow for collecting data. Byram (1997: 100) suggests conducting discussions with learners after the task, asking them to reflect on their findings, explain the approach they adopted, share their hypotheses about the foreign culture, and explain how they would test these hypotheses. Assessing the skills of interaction is therefore based on indirect evidence and can only be done after the activity. One solution worth considering could be the analysis of a video or audio recording. Another could be collecting analysis documentation by self and others in the learners' portfolios. Similar methods of assessment are suggested by Byram (1997: 102) for assessing critical cultural awareness (savoirs s'enganger).

As far as the attitudes (savoir-être) are concerned, the assessment covers curiosity, openness and readiness to suspend disbelief about one's own and foreign culture. An exemplary evidence for this savoir could be "an expression of preference for 'daily experience' and an interest in other than dominant social groups" (Byram 1997: 91). Such an expression could be elicited from learners by asking them to make and explain a choice, e.g. asking the learner to choose between two representations of an aspect in a foreign culture (these could be drawing, audio or video recording, document, etc.). Their chosen item should be the one, which in the learners' opinion explains the foreign culture best to an interlocutor from their culture. The justification of their choice would show their focus of interest. Learners demonstrate another proof for the development of attitudes by not prioritising their culture over the foreign one. The evidence for it, Byram (1997: 92) points out, would have to be represented in a form of action rather than a statement, and would have to be devoid of any evaluative comparisons of the type "the other's perspective is better than mine".

Summing up Byram's (1997) suggestions for ICC assessment, it is noteworthy that the author avoids a holistic approach to assessment. ICC is treated as a collection of savoirs and therefore its assessment requires assessing each savoir separately. Furthermore, each savoir is divided into a number of objectives and for every objective Byram suggests types of evidence and ways of assessing it. Thus he proposes assessing knowledge through tests and continuous assessment, assessing skills and critical cultural awareness through tests, simulations, grids, discussions and portfolios, and assessing attitudes through tests and portfolios. Learners' self-assessment is also a part of the assessment process, although it admittedly requires a lot of self-discipline. As stated earlier, Byram (1997: 88) pays a lot of attention to the

positive impact of assessment on both the learner and the teacher. Even though assessing ICC is difficult and there is a danger of simplifying it, leading to learning trivial facts, generalisations and stereotypes, we can agree that when it takes into account all the savoirs then

> the learner can see their efforts rewarded, and the teacher and the curriculum planner can give full attention to the whole phenomenon of ICC rather than only that which can be represented statistically (Byram, 1997: 111).

It should be remembered that Byram works at a level of principle and this abstractness may be discouraging for practitioners. His programme of assessment does not provide clear nor ready-made examples of how to implement it in practice. Without such a practical dimension it is unlikely to be appealing to teachers and language educators. Perhaps a more teacher-friendly framework of assessment was created at the European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz.

2.2 ECML's framework for assessing ICC

The European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) in Graz in the years 2004-2006 conducted a programme called "Intercultural Communicative Competence in Teacher Education". As a result, ECML published a guide for languages teachers and teacher educators (Lázár et al., 2007) to implement ICC training into FL teaching. In general, assessing ICC according to this framework comprises the assessment of knowledge (savoirs), know-how (savoir-faire) and being (savoir-être). These correspond to Byram's (1997) intercultural knowledge, skills of interaction and attitudes. Lázár et al. (2007: 27) explain what is understood by assessing the three aspects of ICC. First of all, assessing ICC was for a long time limited to assessing the learners' knowledge of cultural facts. Paper-and-pencil tests were often employed to check the learners' acquisition of information connected with the target culture. The most common were multiple choice, true/false or open questions test. These still appear in abundance in the foreign language school contests. The ECML's framework underlines the necessity of considering three domains when assessing knowledge: the humanistic approach (related to common experience and collective memory), the anthropological approach (related to understanding cultural diversity) and the sociological approach (related to observing the sociocultural contexts of societies).

Secondly, assessing the intercultural know-how (savoir-faire) was more often than not linked to the assessment of the learner's linguistic competence. However, in the intercultural approach interacting with foreigners is extended to the skill of adjusting one's interaction to appropriate context. A successful learner should be able to integrate their experience in the target language to adjust, interpret and negotiate in different cultural contexts (Lázár et al., 2007: 27). This means they should be able to function linguistically in the target culture, interact taking into account the context, adjust to social and cultural environment, integrate with others by means of e.g. exchange programmes, interpret new experience and negotiate in places of conflict.

With regards to assessing intercultural being (savoir-être), this area is one of the most neglected ones in assessing ICC. A focus on differences and similarities between

cultures, related to cultural awareness, left aside the factors related to intercultural being (attitudes). Byram and Feng (2004: 161) underline that teachers very often develop the learners' skills and knowledge hoping it will bring about a change in attitudes. The ECML's framework of ICC assessment stresses the need for learners to reach "critical" awareness. This denotes reflecting on foreign values, beliefs and identities, reshaping one's own and integrating new perspectives into their identities in order to become intercultural mediators, or to achieve intercultural sensitivity.

Since standardised testing, such as discussed above, measure only learners' intercultural knowledge, the creators of the ECML's framework for assessing ICC turn to alternative and informal assessment strategies. Developing ICC is an ongoing undertaking therefore teachers become observers of the process, and not of the product. Thus, what should be assessed is the process of becoming interculturally competent. Here, the teacher has to rely on multiple sources of data and information. In the assessment of intercultural being (savoir-être) these could be "anecdotal records, observation checklists, observation rating scales, documentation of task-related behaviours, attitudes inventories, surveys, portfolios, journals, self-evaluation reports, collection of written products, interest inventories, logs, etc." (Lázár et al., 2007: 29). Systematic indicators or criteria of achieving ICC should be implemented to enhance the objectivity of assessment.

The creators of the ECML's framework for assessing ICC put forward their suggestion about when to assess ICC (Lázár et al., 2007: 32). According to them, there are four optimal situations in which to assess the learners' development of ICC. First of all, it is suggested that before the course starts, it is reasonable to get to know learners' level of ICC. The tool used for this purpose could be self-evaluation either by culture log or by profile diagram, both created at the ECML. Secondly, since continuous assessment of ICC development is crucial, the teacher is encouraged to observe the learners during the learning sequence and refer their observations to specific criteria outlined in a grid. Learners' work may also be gathered in a portfolio of their work. The third assessment situation is at the end of a unit or learning sequence. Here, the teacher may use indirect testing to find out about different types of knowledge that has been acquired up to that point. The assessment of know-how could be done by means of analysing critical incidents, role-plays and simulations performed by learners in small groups. Similar methods can be used in the fourth assessment situation, i.e. at the end of the course. For assessing intercultural being (savoir-être) these could be the same methods as the ones used before starting to teach, this time repeated as a post-test. The self-evaluation tools can be used here as "reflective devices" (Lázár et al., 2007: 32).

In order to make the framework for assessment of ICC more accessible and easier to use, the creators suggest using a special course book Mirrors and windows (Huber-Kriegler et al., 2003) designed specifically to develop ICC at advanced language courses. The book consists of chapters relating to different topics such as time, money, leisure, love, etc. and discusses approaches to these aspects from different cultural viewpoints. The readings on these matters are accompanied by tasks developing both ICC as well as language competence. Apart from the course book, the ECML prepared

culture-log and self-assessment grids for the learners to support the teacher with designing the course and assessing ICC. This practical approach makes the framework facile to use and supports its theoretical background.

3. Major techniques in assessing ICC

Out of the existing techniques used in assessing ICC, three seem to be most favoured by practitioners and theorists (e.g. Byram, 1997, 2000; Komorowska, 2005; Lázár et al., 2007; Bandura, 2007, 2009): a project, a portfolio, and an essay. Since these three are most often mentioned in ICC literature, the present author would like to look at them in more detail. A theory behind each of them will be supported by practical ideas on how to implement them in the process of ICC assessment.

3.1 A project

A school project is usually a long-term task undertaken by learners outside school in which they have to collect information, organise it, draw conclusions and later present their findings in class. The biggest advantage of a project technique is that it is suitable for learners on all levels of language proficiency and allows weaker learners to work at their own pace. As noted by Klimowicz (2004: 35) projects are ideal in the intercultural approach as they conform to the principles of learner autonomy, affective and intellectual stimulation of a learner and are interdisciplinary. A project can take many different forms – a poster, a leaflet, a multimedia presentation, an audio or video recording, etc. The topic of the project is chosen under the teacher's guidance while the rest of the work is done either individually or in small groups. As Komorowska (2005: 156) states, school project helps to train and assess the skills of searching for specific information, comparing and contrasting information coming from different sources, differentiating facts from opinions, interpreting retrieved data, formulating and justifying critical judgments, the skills of linguistically accurate project presentation, and the skills of coherent and cohesive project presentation.

Bandura (2009: 187) adds that projects are the most suitable form of developing the learner's ethnographic skills, which are an important aspect of the intercultural approach. Through becoming a participant-observer of native and foreign culture, a student learns how to use their own experience, observe cultural practices, find out new information about the culture studied, specify the most reliable sources of information, gather, analyse, present, assess and distinguish qualitative and quantitative data, consciously participate in native and foreign culture, and refrain from judgmental statements.

The difficulty with assessing projects lies in conforming to the rules of validity, reliability and practicality (Komorowska, 2005: 22-30) of the test. Ideally, a group of examiners should assess the projects according to the same rules across various educational institutions. However, since projects are in most cases part of a language course, their assessment becomes the teacher's responsibility. Bandura (2007: 92) argues that the learners should also be involved in assessing their projects. Such self-assessment can be facilitated by the use of self-assessment grids, prepared earlier by

the teacher and completed by the learners. This brings another pedagogical benefit since it teaches the learners responsibility, the skill of self-assessment and the skill of working autonomously. It is crucial that teachers help their students choose topics for their projects. A grade for the project should depend on the treatment of the topic. When the issues are covered from many perspectives and not treated superficially, a learner deserves a good grade. Komorowska (2005: 157) mentions four criteria to be taken into account when assessing projects: the cohesion and coherence of the text, vocabulary used, grammatical correctness and appropriate style and register.

3.2 A portfolio

We will now turn to the intercultural portfolio which is a tool for assessing ICC considered most useful by many researchers (Byram, 1997; Komorowska, 2005; Lázár et al., 2007; Bandura, 2007, 2009). A portfolio is a specific type of project, prepared either individually or in groups, whose role is to involve learners in collecting, analysing and presenting information on a given topic. It is a part of a formative assessment, i.e. it is conducted systematically in the course of time, and can be used in end-of-course assessment. A portfolio is documentation not only of the learners' but also of the teacher's work. It can include the recording of interviews conducted by the learner in a foreign language accompanied by their commentary, projects carried out by the learner abroad, reports of their intercultural contacts both at home and abroad, school tests, essays, and translations (Bandura, 2007: 93). Combining formal assessment with self-assessment is an approach present also in the European Language Portfolio (ELP), which was developed by the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe as a tool for supporting the development of plurilingualism and pluriculturalism. The ELP, like any other portfolio, is process-oriented and creates the possibility of new ways of assessing the learners' language and intercultural competencies. Its aim is to give an account of the learner's knowledge, skills and experiences connected with learning foreign languages and new cultures (see for example Newby et al., 2007). As a result, it encourages the lifelong learning of foreign languages, increases the learner's awareness of their competence and promotes intercultural learning.

ELP consists of three elements. First is the Language Passport which is an overview of owner's linguistic identity, i.e. proficiency in foreign languages at a given point in time and is based either on formal or self-assessment using the descriptors introduced by the Common European Framework of Reference (2001). It is also a record of individual's intercultural experiences, formal qualifications and specific and partial competences. All the information included in the passport should state when, by whom and on what basis the assessment was carried out. The second part is the Language Biography which is designed to promote plurilingualism understood as the development of competencies in a number of languages. It is used to involve the learner in planning, reviewing and reflecting on their own learning. The learner is encouraged to express in "can-do" statements their abilities in foreign languages and give an account of linguistic and cultural experiences gained in and outside formal education. The third part of ELP is the Dossier which is used to highlight the results

of self-assessment by including materials showing the learner's development, collecting samples of their work, illustrating their achievements or experiences recorded in the first two parts.

All three parts of ELP are to document learner's development of language skills and intercultural competence. Byram (2000: 10) in his theoretical justification for the use of ELP points out that the self-assessment of intercultural competence reflects his definition of ICC. Bandura (2007: 122), however, claims that the lack of cues and criteria for assessing ICC is ELP's biggest disadvantage. The self-assessment grid in the Language Passport, for instance, does not refer to it at any point. Also, the documentation of ICC is left to the decision of the learners and its assessment depends on readers' intuition. Byram (2000: 12-13) enumerates the following descriptors as ways of the self-assessment of ICC in the Portfolio: (1) Interest in other people's way of life; (2) Ability to change perspective; (3) Ability to cope with living in a different culture; (4) Knowledge about another country and culture. The list is by no means exhaustive. Komorowska (2005: 161) supports the idea of ELP and points out that countries using the Portfolio reported benefits from doing so. In particular, the "can-do" statements contribute positively to the growth in the learners' self-esteem, and by focusing on their abilities they have a stronger feeling of success. A change was also observed in the teachers' approaches to their learners. In place of focusing on their shortcomings, the teachers concentrated more on what the learners can do, i.e. on their competencies. The learners' parents also provided a positive feedback on the use of ELP since they felt better-informed of their children's progress.

3.3 An essay

Another alternative technique of assessing ICC is through the use of essay i.e. a longer piece of writing, which checks the learner's knowledge, the skills of interpreting cultural phenomena and giving opinions. Apart from the afore-mentioned, an essay also checks the learner's language competence. Interestingly enough, Fantini and Smith (1997: 141, quoted in Facciol and Kjartansson, 2003: 77) conclude that from the variety of testing techniques for ICC, most teachers choose essays. Nonetheless, researchers and practitioners (Bandura, 2007: 91; Junkieles, 2002: 93; Facciol and Kjartansson, 2003: 77) admit to the difficulty connected with objectivity in assessing essays. Separating linguistic criteria from factual ones is an issue here. There is a danger that linguistic accuracy may take precedence over factual knowledge the essay was intended to test. For this reason some researchers (e.g. Komorowska, 2005: 158) advise to award 50% of points for the knowledge and 50% of points for linguistic accuracy.

The criteria suggested in assessing the learner's factual knowledge in an essay are as follows: (1) understanding the topic; (2) relationship between the topic and information given by the learner; (3) showing insight into the matter; (4) creative and critical thinking (Komorowska, 2005: 158). The criteria used in assessing the language used in an essay are similar to those in assessing a project, namely the cohesion and coherence of the text, grammatical accuracy, richness of vocabulary and adequate register.

Conclusion

The stance taken in this article involved looking at issues relevant to assessing intercultural communicative competence from a theoretician's as well as practitioner's perspective. As has been evidenced, in the past such assessment hinged too strongly on factual knowledge and only loosely touched upon intercultural skills. This balance is now being redressed. It has also been argued that continuous assessment, although recommended, may not account for temporal variations in one's ICC level. The dynamic nature of ICC and its subjection to individual differences are a matter of an on-going research. Furthermore, the article demonstrated how creating a threshold level for ICC might facilitate its assessment among learners with different language proficiencies. The two major assessment frameworks discussed above testified to the inadequacy or even erroneousness of adopting a holistic approach to assessing ICC. As elaborated in the article, the various *savoirs* of ICC may not only attain diverse levels in an individual but also change dynamically depending on the communicative situation. It has also been expounded that a project, a portfolio and an essay are the three most common techniques in ICC assessment.

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Educating FL Teachers for the Role of Intercultural Mediators – Challenges and Options

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Introduction

Modern foreign language education has assigned a new and difficult role to foreign language teachers, i.e. the role of an intercultural mediator. The need to develop intercultural communicative competence (ICC) among second and foreign language learners and users has been pronounced for about 20 years now. Built upon ideas stemming from cross-cultural studies as well as from research in applied linguistics, internationally influential documents, as for example *Common European framework of reference for languages* (2001), combine components of intercultural competence, as a part of the so called general competences, with communicative language competences. The model of ICC adopted in the document, as well as in other related documents (e.g. *Developing and assessing intercultural communicative competence* by Lázár et al., 2007), is based on the concept of ICC defined and characterised by Michael Byram (1997). However, it is not the only model offered by intercultural experts. In the article selected models of intercultural development are discussed. Also, challenges that intercultural teaching poses to foreign language teachers, as reported in various studies, are enumerated. Finally, a framework for training intercultural foreign language pre-service and/or in-service teachers is suggested.

1. Different models of ICC

Various models of ICC, its development and/or assessment, have been found useful for varied cross-cultural contexts. For example, the Canadian Foreign Service Institute has developed a criterion-based model to identify an interculturally effective person. The model enumerates the competences such a person needs to possess described around the following criteria: adaptation skills, an attitude of modesty and respect, an understanding of the concept of culture, knowledge of the host country and culture, relationship-building, self knowledge, intercultural communication, organizational skills and finally, personal and professional commitment (Vulpe et al., 2000).

Another often quoted model, particularly in the context of missionary service (see e.g. Sheffield, 2007), is a developmental model of intercultural sensitivity designed by Milton Bennett (1993). The author posits that an intercultural speaker may undergo development depending on six distinct types of experience which he situates on the continuum from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism with denial as a possible first stage, through defence/reversal, minimization, acceptance, adaptation and integration, as the final state.

Yet, it is Michael Byram (1997) and his educational model that is oft-quoted in the context of foreign language teaching and learning and foreign language teacher

education. In his model of ICC intercultural competence, which supplements the communicative competence of a non-native language user, is built of an entailment of different kinds of 'savoir': *Savoir être*, i.e. attitudes of curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own, *saviors*, i.e. knowledge of self and other, knowledge of interaction patterns on individual and societal levels, *savior s 'engager*, i.e. political education and critical cultural awareness, *savoir comprendre*, i.e. skills to interpret and relate, *savoir apprendre/ faire*, i.e. skills to discover and/or interact (Byram, 1997: 50). *Common European framework of reference for languages* (2001), a document accepted by the member countries of the European Union, refers to Byram's components of intercultural competence and so does the guide designed by a group of European experts within the project initiated by the European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe (Lázár et al., 2007).

2. Challenges to ICC development

The issues of ICC development have attracted the attention of researchers in applied linguistics and of foreign language teachers. It has been postulated that foreign language learners learn at least two foreign languages and their cultures, and also develop ICC (see e.g. Pfeiffer 2010: 83). Yet, to make ICC a target of foreign language teaching teachers themselves need to be interculturally competent. However, various studies (e.g. Sercu et al., 2005; Lázár, 2007; Aleksandrowicz-Pędich, 2007; Białek, 2009; Szczepaniak-Kozak, 2010) have shown that foreign language teachers may not be well prepared to assume the role of a cultural mediator nor do they promote ICC development among their learners. Although communicative competence has generally been accepted as the goal of foreign language teaching (Kaszyński, 2009), yet it does not guarantee that foreign language learners will cope with interactions in a cross-cultural context (Schultz, 2007). Interlocutors may transfer their conversational routines (e.g. politeness strategies or directness) from their L1 to an L2 context (Ronowicz, 1995). Pragmalinguistic transfer is a common occurrence in the classroom context. Because of that some foreign language teacher educators call for including the target culture component in teacher education and, because talking about culture is not enough to aim at developing ICC among all graduates - prospective foreign language teachers (Owczarek, 2010), for enriching target culture education with explicit intercultural training (Romanowski, 2011, Róg, 2012).

Although it is believed that the ICC development is stimulated by an intercultural education, there is no agreement as what the objectives of such intercultural education should be, which is another challenge.

For example, Kaikkonen (2001: 64) defines three characteristics of an intercultural language teaching. First, it should focus on the inseparable relationship between language and culture, and the powerful nature of language as a carrier for culture and a means for constructing or comprehending cultural worlds. Next, it encourages learners to construct their own understanding and awareness of culture via observation, experience and reflection. Finally, it values learners' subjectivity by

involving the whole learners' personalities, i.e. their feeling and emotions, thinking and behaviour.

Byram, Gribkova and Starkey (2002: 10) discuss four issues that intercultural education is concerned with. First, it is to help learners to understand how intercultural interaction takes place. Next, it needs to show how social identities become part of all interaction. Then, it is to make learners understand how their perceptions of other people and other people's perceptions of them influence the success of communication. Finally, learners should know how they can find out for themselves more about the people with whom they are communicating. In the authors' opinions, such an approach removes from teachers the burden of being an expert in the target culture. The teachers' role is to help learners to draw their own conclusions from their own experiences with other cultures and eventually to become intercultural mediators themselves.

Various approaches to implementing ICC are recommended and can be treated as complementary. Bandura (2007: 67) suggests a strong learner-centred approach in which teachers allow learners to make use of their knowledge of the mother culture in the process of FL teaching. Thus, the outcome of this process is determined by what learners know, and what skills of interpreting and analysing they possess. It can be a cross-curricular and content-based teaching during foreign language classes with the use of problem-solving tasks or simulations.

Corbett (2003: 96) speaks in favour of an ethnographic approach in which learners observe how meaning stems from the interaction between individuals in a specific context. Ethnography helps combining the learning of a language and culture in order to facilitate communication and interaction. By comparing self with the other it stimulates reflection on and criticism of the learner's mother culture. What is more, it shifts the perspective involving the psychological nature of socialisation and creates the potential of preparing learners for encounters with cultures other than the target one (Byram & Fleming, 1998: 7). Bandura (2007: 71) suggests that learners could conduct what she calls "home ethnography" in which they interview and observe members of their own cultures. Another valuable activity derived from the ethnographic approach is called "critical incidents" or "cultural assimilators". In this activity learners are confronted with an intercultural misunderstanding in a short narrative and are to reflect on their sources and possible outcomes (Corbett 2003: 112). Aleksandrowicz-Pędich (2009: 139) notes that apart from developing ICC the critical incidents offer valuable language practice.

Another approach to ICC development is through experiential learning. Kohonen (2005: 283) views ICC development as holistic involving learning, evaluation and reflection which aim at increasing learner awareness and autonomy. A focal point in this approach is human experience which is consciously processed. This reflection should be followed by a more active participation, risk-taking and social interaction. Faced with new cultures, learners are forced to re-evaluate their personal constructs (values, beliefs, customs, opinions etc.). As a result they construct new meaning, somewhere between their own and the encountered meaning what Kramsch (1993:

13) termed assuming "a third place". Experiential learning may involve different techniques, as portfolios, simulations, case studies, drama techniques etc.

The different ways of developing ICC in foreign language learners may also be used in foreign language teacher education. However, FL teachers also need to develop skills in using such activities and in reflecting upon their effectiveness. This should become one of the objectives of FL teacher education.

3. A framework for training FL teachers to become intercultural mediators

In this section I propose a framework for the ICC development of foreign language teachers in pre-service or in-service education. Apart from a general course in foreign language methodology, as well as ones devoted to the target language and target culture, the suggested intercultural course supplements the prospective-teachers professional competences through integrating their professional skills with intercultural communicative competence. An intercultural stance (a term proposed by Newton, 2012: 31 as better suited than approach or method) is integrated in teacher education in four main ways: through socially situated intercultural communicative activities; through metacognitive reflection on intercultural experiences and observations; through guided analysis of their own culturally shaped perceptions and finally, through foreign language teaching methodological reflections.

The intercultural foreign language teacher training (IFLTT) assigns an important role to reflectivity in professional teacher development. Reflectivity is recognised as an important feature of modern teachers (Wallace, 1991). In the IFLTT framework the following model designed for English as a foreign language teacher training has been followed:

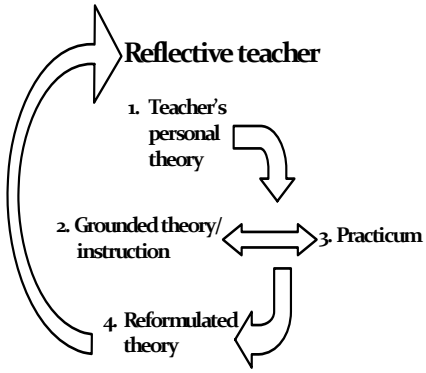

Figure 1. The reflective model of foreign language teacher training (Siek-Piskozub & Jankowska 2012: 541).

To identify prospective-teachers personal theories related to ICC the participants have to design a mind-map of the associations that the term evokes to them on entering the course. It shows what prior knowledge of interculturality they have. A survey of self-evaluation statements, with the use of the 5-point Likert scale, is also carried out. The questions are related to ICC in all of its components as defined by Byram (1997) and is a modified version of the questionnaire designed by Róg (2012, 283-284) for

the purpose of evaluation of the impact that study abroad might have had on foreign language learners.

During the course of the study, at the beginning of each class, participants' understanding of the phenomena (e.g. discrimination), which will be challenged during a targeted experience, are questioned by a pair of student-teachers who are responsible for running the activity. This is followed by offering some explanations rooted in the grounded theory explained by them, and resulting from their own prior study and reflection upon the phenomenon in question. After that the participants get involved in a problem solving task where culturally based behaviour is inevitable (e.g. in selecting - for inclusion and exclusion - of members for a company out of a list of stereotypically nominated ethnic representatives). The tasks usually start as an individual activity giving each learner a chance to reflect on the problem before making a decision; then groups are formed and members of the group need to reach a consensus through a discussion. The decisions of each group are reported to other groups and at the end a reformulation of the concepts raised at the beginning is made, this time with the assistance of the tutor. In the final phase of the activity the tutor stimulates a discussion in what context of FL teaching (learners age, language level, classroom or outside classroom) the activity may be used and what alterations can be made.

The repetition of such cycles leads to the development of the general skill of reflectivity as well as the one related to interculturality. It helps in recognising other points of view and relativising one's own ideas. Participants have also a chance to reflect on the change that they have undergone. At the end of the course they receive their entry reflective tools again and are to reconsider their answers, i.e. correct or abbreviate their ICC mind-maps and revaluate their questionnaire entries (see Appendix, figure 2). The re-evaluated tools serve also the tutor to reflect upon the course stimulating decisions for any improvements in the next addition of the course. The participants are informed that such re-evaluations serve a double purpose: they are to help them grasp the impact that participating in the course might have had upon their ICC, and that it is equally important for the tutor as an action research procedure which is not a mere postulate but a natural need for professional development.

Another important feature of a modern teacher is autonomy understood as an ability to make autonomous decisions about their classes and also a willingness to share responsibility for the learning process with learners (Siek-Piskozub, 2013a & b). In the IFLTT framework this feature is of paramount importance. It is stimulated by making students prospective-teachers responsible for preparing and running in class activities which are to enable an intercultural experience with their colleagues. The decision on the choice of activities is made by pairs of students who are to perform the role of a teacher. The tutor makes only suggestions concerning the available collections of activities related to ICC (e.g. Brander et al., 1995, Gillert et al., 2003). However, it is the students themselves who make the final decision. Within the group performing the activity its participants are free in terms of amount and content of their response in the simulated situation, and sometimes also of the form of their

contribution (e.g. reporting on the outcome, drawing a picture on a poster) (see also Siek-Piskozub, 2013a).

Yet another desirable feature of an FL teacher is the ability to cooperate with others. In IFLTT it is being developed through pair-work when preparing and running the intercultural class by student-teachers. Also while different groups perform their tasks their work is dependent of in-group cooperation.

I used the framework twice (in two consecutive terms) and course participants had positive opinions about it. They found that the ICC course helped them to develop their ICC sensitivity; professional skills as well as the ability to cooperate with their peers (see Siek-Piskozub 2012 for quantitive evaluation).

Conclusion

ICC development is a complex and dynamic process. I agree with Newton (2012: 41) that "[t]o cultivate intercultural sensitivity in learners requires teachers to adopt an intercultural stance towards culture and language". Yet, for teachers to feel prepared to assume the role of cultural mediators, intercultural training adjusted to FL teachers' needs is necessary. Interculturally enriched pedagogy adds value to foreign language teacher training. Not only FL teachers become cultural mediators in their own intercultural encounters but they will feel more confident in addressing intercultural issues in their FL classes

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Appendix

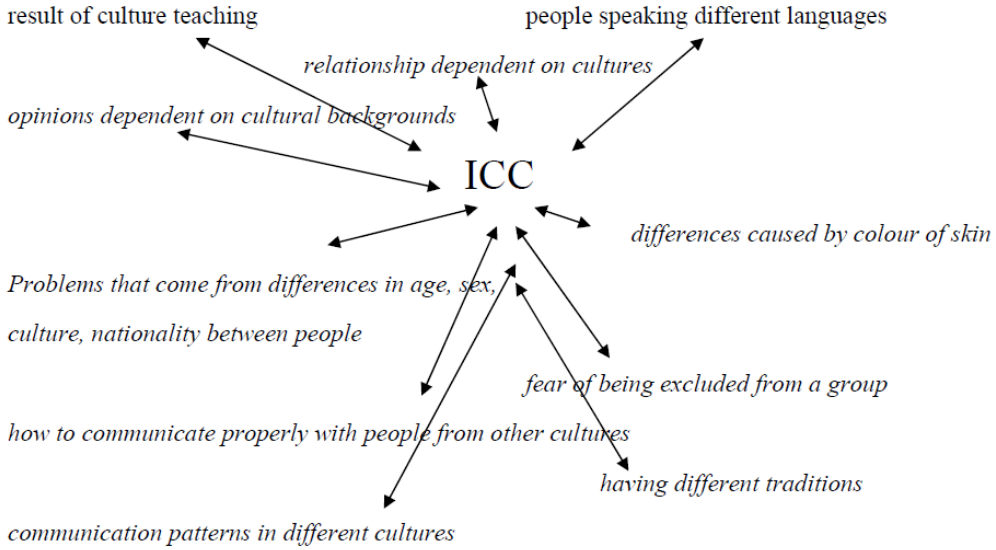

Figure 2. A mind-map designed by a participant in the ICC seminar (new associations in italics, old associations considered after the course as inadequate - crossed out)

The Importance of Student Teachers' Self-awareness and Intercultural Education in Pre-service Teacher Training

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Introduction

The role that teachers play in society is indisputable but this role is influenced by a range of internal workplace pressures and external societal pressure. It presents specific challenges to teachers and teaching institutions and has a great impact on their students and the subject matter taught. This paper cannot give in-depth account of all the changes that affecting teacher training and teaching institutions, it is important to outline those that come from the knowledge of the self and from cultural- intercultural awareness. This study is an attempt to investigate some of the issues and challenges that embedded in teacher education. First I will draw attention to the importance of self-awareness in teacher education and highlight the difficulties of providing support in the period of learning to be a teacher. It will be followed by arguing why teaching culture has a crucial role in the language classroom and how essential intercultural awareness is in the teaching profession. I will, then, give some examples of my own teaching practice and bring to light the responsibility of teacher educators.

Who am I? This question emerges on a daily basis in our lives. Who am I as a teacher? This question also emerges on a daily basis in our professional lives. The answers are equally important and exciting in both fields. While individuals are simply curious teachers need to know themselves as the subjects of their work are humans. In this profession self-awareness and the ability to communicate are both essential to ones capacity to help people learn. Yeh (2006) argues that self-awareness influences our ability to regulate and reflect upon our behaviour and it is directly related to intrapersonal intelligence. Self-awareness is one of the trickiest things to develop and teach, if it can be taught at all. It can be described as being aware of our own capabilities and strengths in order to exploit them. In addition it helps the individual to evaluate his or her behaviour and emotions in different life situations thus making decisions more effective. On the other hand self-awareness means understanding our limitations and weaknesses and serves as a tool to cope with difficulties both in private and professional life. Education, especially teacher education requires self-awareness and self-recognition throughout the whole training period. They can be considered as key components of successful learning experiences as they provide a better understanding what controls your attitudes, thinking, reactions and behaviours. Without self understanding future teachers will not own one of the most essential professional skills: to enable learners to understand them and to share knowledge. Professional self-awareness is an ongoing process by which teachers get to know themselves better. Our development as teachers mainly depends on our willingness but teacher development programs should lay the foundation of teacher professional growth and highlight the connection between a teacher's self-awareness

and his or her ability to build and maintain meaningful relationships with their students. It can be fostered by providing the guiding principles and courses for prospective teachers.

Self-awareness and cultural awareness cannot be separated from each other they are deeply intermingled in individuals. Gold and Roth (1993) described self-awareness as a process of getting in touch with your feelings and behaviours. Learning about our-selves does not happen in a vacuum, the teaching context and especially the training institution itself can and should be supportive in the development of student teachers' self-awareness as well as building a fruitful and reliable relationship with the student teachers. The self and cultural awareness arise in a social context, student teachers are not isolated individuals due to living in different communities and gaining professional experience in different relationships such as: teacher educator-trainee trainee-trainee trainee-children relations.

These connections are essential from the point of self-knowledge and also from the point of cultural and intercultural awareness as we can understand our values and deficiencies only in relation to others. Why does self awareness matter? Good teachers are not good by accident, they are deliberate and intentional and this ability is deeply rooted in on their understanding of the self.

1. Providing support to gain self awareness

Teachers of all age groups, including teacher trainers, are in a unique position to shape and mould attitudes and opinions of other students. Providing support in teacher education to gain knowledge of the self is difficult for different reasons. Trainees can easily feel battered and bruised as learning to teach is very demanding and frustrating and it is quite different from any other kind of learning they have done in the past. I can completely agree with Dollase (1992) who claims that it is a natural process of learning to be a teacher to ask for the opinion of others, mainly for those who are accepted and respected professionals. He also states that most of the students look for encouragement or even criticism. Trainee teachers are extremely sensitive to the evaluation of others – peers, mentor teachers, teacher educators- so one can easily hurt their feelings and can do a lot of harm with an inappropriate evaluation. Giving support, making criticism and not hurting trainees' dignity is extremely demanding but they can contribute to deeper understanding of the individual. Another difficulty with giving support that practising teachers and teacher- educators who have spent a long time in the profession, often think that their own approach and way of thinking and making judgements can be the only standard for all students. Therefore they are often tempted –even with the best intention – to offer their opinion to be followed.

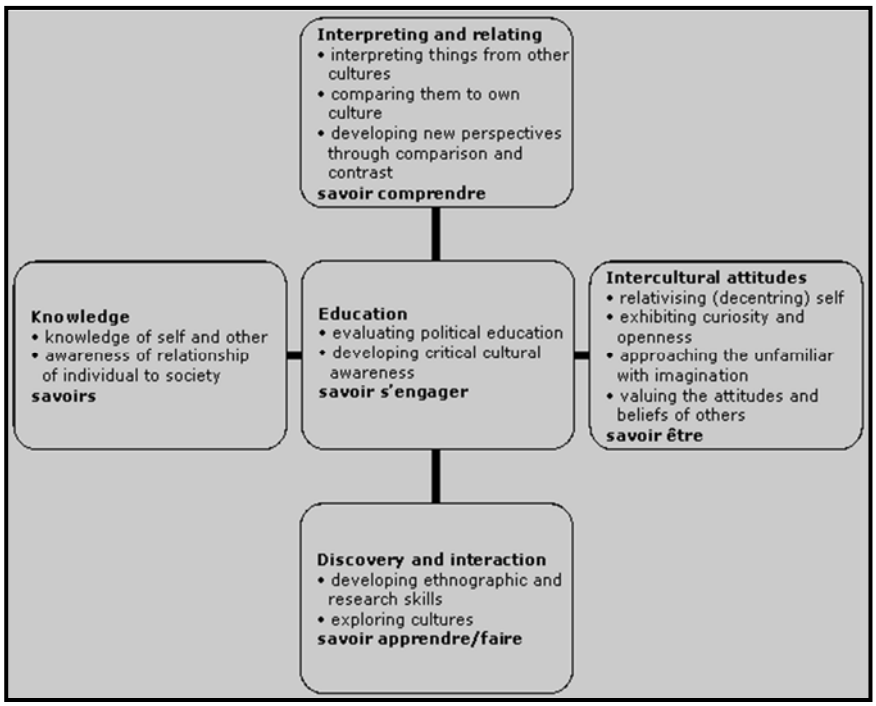
2. Culture in the language classroom

There are a number of reasons why I believe that the teaching of culture and the development of cultural awareness have a place in the language classroom. There has been an extremely great emphasis internationally on the role of culture plays in language teaching. Although considerable amount of research highlights the nature, importance and place of culture in foreign language education (see e.g. Kramsch 2009, 2004; Risager, 2006, 2007), culture still remains in the centre of professional

discussions in the teaching of foreign languages around the world. No one can learn a second language if he or she does not have an awareness of target culture, and how that culture relates to his or her first language and culture. Language and culture are considered by lots of authors as an interrelated inseparable pair for the purpose of teaching and learning (e.g. Furstenberg et al., 2001; Sercu, 2002). I am convinced that intercultural language teaching originates from the point of view that language and culture are integrated part of the individual's development from the very first moments of life. As indicated by Kramsch (1993) culture should be taught as an interpersonal process, not simply presenting cultural facts. Although culture is identified by some scholars as the fifth language skill, Kramsch (1993) goes even further by articulating that: "Culture in language learning is not and expendable fifth skill tacked on, so to speak, to the teaching of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. It is always in the background right from day one, ready to unsettle the good language learners when they expect it least, making evident the limitations of their hard won communicative competence, challenging the ability to make sense of the world around them." (1993: 1) Teaching culture in the target language is one of the best ways to open doors to a completely new world as it serves as a hidden tool to gain a deeper understanding of other ways of life. Having spent many years in the profession I can claim that no student can be competent in the language if he or she does not understand the culture of the target language that has shaped and informed it. While learning language students encounter not only with a new type of grammar and the lexis of the target language but also with a new culture. While it happens they try to associate it with what they already know. This encountering may or may not fit with their preconceptions and may challenge the way of seeing the world around us. When students are engaged in cultural learning, they will naturally compare the foreign values therefore teacher educators have to raise awareness and provide practice that culture should be taught without preconceptions and cultural information should be presented in a non-judgemental way. Byram (2005) argues that in the school curriculum cultural awareness occurs in a narrow and reductive way. At local levels in different school settings, education for culture, if it is taught at all, is typically embedded in an academic subject such as history, literature, social studies and foreign languages. It needs further investigations to find the most appropriate place of teaching culture within the framework of teacher education but I strongly believe that he foreign language classes have priority in this respect. Cultural awareness and communication are strongly interwoven and the ability of standing back from our-selves and becoming aware of our cultural values, beliefs and perceptions is a decisive factor both in the process of learning to be a teacher and in the teaching profession. In addition, the teaching of culture demands a highly developed ability to discover and openness to cultural diversity (Cushner 2007). Teacher educators should be aware of their student teachers existing knowledge and understanding of the world and tailor their curriculum according to it. If the gap between their culture and the foreign culture embedded in language teaching is enormously great, they may reject to accept it. Even though theorists (Byram and Feng 2004) emphasize the importance and effectiveness of experiential learning of cultures, my personal and professional experience reinforces that learning foreign languages within the framework of teacher education is still restricted to classroom settings for most of the student teachers who live in the rural parts of the country.

3. Intercultural awareness in the teaching profession

Although there have been changes made in the teacher education programs throughout the years, the teacher preparation programs are often blamed with not keeping pace with the challenges of the 21st century. There is growing emphasis internationally on intercultural communicative language learning and teaching embracing intercultural awareness. It can be described as one of the most important single educational objectives of current language teaching, and an umbrella term including a certain skill-set and culturally sensitive knowledge. Kramsch (1993, 2004) discusses the connection between language and culture and she also reveals (2009) that intercultural awareness is not merely a skill, but a collection of skills and attitudes better thought of as a competence. It is not just a simple knowledge base, a body of knowledge, but a set of practices involving knowledge, skills and attitudes. Beyond the primary focus of teaching the language itself teachers of foreign languages should attempt to raise their students' awareness of their own culture, and in so doing, help them to interpret, understand, accept and recognize the value of other cultures. Intercultural awareness characterizes a hopeful point of contact between the student teachers' own culture and the culture of the target language and it can act as a means to establishing better relationships among individuals. Byram (1997) sets up five 'savoir' categories to make the content of interculturality more clear and give a guideline for intercultural learning and teaching. These categories may offer a framework and provide significant help for teacher educators to plan their syllabus in accordance with intercultural education and to develop a more critical insight into their own teaching.



adapted from Byram1997)

If there are differences between students which country they live in consequently there should be differences in teacher education programs. Their curricula should be tailored consistent with local needs and circumstances. Most of my student teachers have never spent any time in a foreign country and had no opportunity to meet and experience any other cultures. Consequently their knowledge of foreign culture is mainly based on literature, on the media and on the second language courses therefore it is not easy to digest for them to be able to see culturally different patterns without valuing them. In our rapidly changing world and with the help of different scholarship programs this encounter with other cultures may happen in the near future and they have to be prepared teach the future generation taking into consideration interculturality. Teacher education programs have to take the responsibility for developing culturally sensitive curricula in which great emphasis is put on the histories and contributions of various ethno-cultural groups. Student teachers should be given the opportunity to gain information about the characteristics and learning styles of various groups and individuals. Socio-cultural research knowledge about the relationships among language, culture, and learning can provide information on this field. This is an ongoing process in teacher training which points towards preparing future teachers to be able to make meaningful, engaged learning accessible for all students regardless of their cultural background. In addition, the existence of interculturality in the foreign language curriculum should represent a shift from linguistic to educational objectives. In a nutshell, intercultural awareness is a skill needed by anyone mixing or will be mixed with people from different cultural backgrounds. The aim of intercultural learning is to increase international and cross-cultural tolerance and understanding. Increasing cultural awareness means to see both the positive and negative aspects of cultural differences and to successfully cope with them. Teacher trainers can promote intercultural awareness by designing tasks for their trainees that develops intercultural interaction. There are various ways for student teachers to notice language and culture while they are in task:

- providing more authentic materials involving elements of the target culture
- learning about the culture when engaged in language practice;
- writing a comparative essay on home and target culture
- making a lesson plan for young learners based on intercultural similarities or differences
- giving oral presentation on culturally-related topics
- using realia, maps, photos, pictures, posters and other visual aids to help students develop a mental image
- taking part in debates
- situations and role plays where students can notice the difference of attitudes and behaviours associated with the target culture
- dialogues
- making a lesson plan for young learners based on intercultural similarities or differences
- making connections between language use and cultural values.
- designing or taking part in projects where students can have an exchange with people from different culture

Permanent interaction and active student participation are central parts of intercultural language teaching and learning. If this happens on a daily basis, language learners become language users who are open to discover and acknowledge not only new languages but also new cultures. Classroom interactions are effective if they are based on genuine communications between participants.

4. When should intercultural learning be introduced in our language classes?

Extensive research and professional discussions have searched for answers to the question of the best age to begin learning a foreign language (Harley, 1998; Singleton, 1989) but intercultural awareness is often regarded to be dealt with exclusively for intermediate or advanced learners or as an additional activity at the end of the lesson. The reason for this may be the assumption that students with low level of English are not capable to absorb and understand intellectual concepts. I strongly believe and my professional experience validates that intercultural awareness is important at all levels of learning a foreign language and student teachers should be prepared for it. Introducing students to various cultures while they are young will help them be open to, tolerant of and curious about people who are different from them.

5. Implications for my own teaching practice

Although is widely acknowledged that training does not prepare teachers to manage the specifics of the intercultural dimension (Guilherme, 2002; Gundara, 2003; Lázár, 2001;) little steps can be taken at local level. Sarospatak Teacher Training College is situated in one of the most economically deprived areas of Hungary. This means that most of our students are unable to visit the countries which speak their target language and therefore they will miss out on the experience of living in a different culture. If someone is familiar only with one culture, he or she often tends to overestimate its status and may not be open to values that are different from the known ones. As this is the case, embedding culture within second language teaching is vital in college based lessons. This may be the only experience that our language students receive of the way of life in either England or America. Not only is learning about another culture interesting in its own right, it enables students to become more tolerant of other people and gives them an insight into another way of conducting affairs. This process in turn exposes students to other sets of values and makes them broader minded. This promotes a tolerance which people grounded only in their own culture, often sadly lack. An ongoing observation of young learners' classroom reinforces the fact that early language learning helps learners develop positive attitudes towards other cultures and languages as well as laying the foundation for language learning in later life. Student teachers at Comenius Teacher Training College / Sarospatak, Hungary / were asked to design and set up a task for young learners in which practising the language is embedded within culture and the focus is on cultural and on intercultural awareness. Prior to the task the nature of introducing intercultural learning at primary-level was discussed. Young learners are still absorbing their own culture therefore at this stage of education foreign cultures should be introduced with thoroughly worked

out methodology and the teaching materials should serve this purpose. As a result trainees came up with an activity where the language focus was on reading for both general understanding and specific information and on comparing cultures. Seemingly this is a simple task designed for young learners but it justifies the idea that intercultural awareness can be raised even at the lower level of language learning. Instructions for the children designed by student teachers:

- Work in groups of four or five. (co-operative learning)
- Write down the dates and names of festivals or holidays which are celebrated in Hungary. (brainstorming and raising awareness to young learners' own culture)
- Compare them with the others groups and choose your favourite one or the one you know the most about. (discussion, negotiation and making an agreement)
- Write down the dates and names of festivals or holidays which are celebrated in the UK or in the USA. (brain storming and involving intercultural elements)
- Read the descriptions of two festivals/holidays celebrated in the UK and choose one of them. (a simple reading text is given to the groups : reading for specific information on the target culture)
- Fill the chart below with the relevant information or tick the appropriate place (comparison and application of the newly gained information)

Country	England	Hungary
Name of day or festival		
When it takes place		
Origins or history		
Who participates		
It marks a historical event		
Costumes and ceremonies		
Special food is eaten		
It has a long tradition		
Description of what happens		

This kind of activity enables young learners to get an insight to the target culture and actively participate in the cultural heritage of the people they are studying. With the help of this simple task young learners were given the opportunity to explore and understand similarities and differences between their own and a foreign culture. Once children begin to experience another culture and this encounter with the new culture was positive, it can be an ongoing process and they can build ways of deepening and enriching understanding of a new language and culture. With this in mind it is essential to include intercultural elements in the training of all people involved in teaching young learners.

Conclusion

Education is progressively more important to the success of both individuals and nations, and growing evidence makes obvious that teachers' abilities – including the

knowledge of the self and cultural- intercultural awareness – are extremely crucial contributors to students' learning. Interculturality is one of the key concepts in training teachers in the 21st century and the demands and onus on teachers are increasing, consequently this paper aimed at raising some issues concerning student teachers' self- and cultural awareness and the role that teacher education institutes play in fostering intercultural education. Some the areas were explored in which language teaching and intercultural education overlap. Although several questions arose during this study that call for further investigation, it seems clear that language teaching goes beyond mere linguistic competence and intercultural education cannot be just a simple attachment to the regular curriculum. Cultural sensitivity is an issue all teachers must face and it is especially relevant to those working with young learners thus teacher training programs must prepare future teachers to accomplish their duties as professionals. Finally, teachers must be able continually to learn to address the problems of practice they encounter and to meet the unpredictable learning needs of all of their students.

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The Role of Intercultural Communication in Ukrainian Higher Technical Establishments

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If you speak to a man in a language he understands,
you speak to his head.
If you speak to a man in his own language,
you speak to his heart.
Nelson Mandela

Introduction

The need to consider the issue of on forming intercultural communication of students of higher educational establishments of Ukraine on a new theoretical and methodological level is caused by the increasing dynamics of modern society development and the world community as a whole. Various aspects of intercultural communication are always will be relevant. Scientists from many countries have always taken interest in then. The question of intercultural communication is complex and multifaceted. As the famous explorer of the "Theory of Cultural Dialogue" Mikhail Bakhtin (1986) said that culture only in the eyes of another culture reveals itself more fully and deeply…

During the dialogue meeting between the two cultures, they do not merge and mingle but enrich each other. The Dialogue of Cultures involves sharing the achievements of material and spiritual culture of the countries and peoples, not only in manufacturing, trade, science, art but in other areas. In the social philosophy these relations of different cultures were named cross-cultural communication, which means an exchange between two or more cultures and products of their activities which are carried out in different forms. This exchange can take place both in politics and in interpersonal communication of people, at home, in a family, during informal contacts. And this finding suggests that the intercultural communication has a great variety of aspects which covers various sides of this process, not only linguistic but also social and cultural foundations of intercultural communication. Intercultural Communication means not only direct dialogue of representatives of different cultures but also pragmatic understanding of this communication.

1. The history of the term "intercultural communication"

For example, the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) believed that between German and French nations there are major differences: the French are frank, gallant, courteous, and Germans are more moderate and serious. To what extent the language and culture are interrelated elements of social life, people started to think in 18th century. Consideration of the phenomena of culture and communication in their close connection were carried out in the writing of philosophers of 17th-20th centuries.

Other scholars also insisted on the existence of national character, among them the French historian Lucien Febvre (1878-1956) and ethnographer Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1857-1939), the Russian philosopher Nikolay Lossky (1870-1956), the Ukrainian thinkers Mykola Kostomarov (1817-1885), Volodymyr Vinnichenko (1880-1951) and others.

The notion of intercultural communication was included into the scientific course in 1954 with the publication of the work "Culture as communication: a model and analysis" by Trager G. and Hall E. In this work the cultural communication is concerned as a special part of human relations. Later in the work of E. Hall develops the idea of the relationship of culture and communication not only at the level of scientific research, but also as self-discipline. Further study of the theoretical foundations of intercultural communication was continued by John C. Condon and Yousef F. in the work "Introduction to Intercultural Communication" at first in the intercultural communication the main focus was on the problem of cross-cultural differences. Thus, the basis for cross-cultural research becomes the problem of personality and culture, creating of cultural model of personality: each culture creates a certain type of personality, but also a universal system of values, priorities of models.

In the 70's there appeared the first periodicals concerning the intercultural problems such as The International and Intercultural Communication Annual and International Journal of Intercultural Relations in which issues related to communication, culture, language, various forms of interaction in particular negotiations were discussed.

Modern scholars of intercultural communication in the United States develop it in two areas: intercultural communication as communication and interaction between cultures of different countries and peoples, and intercultural communication as communication and interaction of subcultures within one great culture. The first focuses on the development of university programs, while the other seeks to solve the problems of coexistence of ethnic minorities as the intercultural communication is a multifaceted concept and covers two main components "communication" and "culture".

The problem of intercultural communication as a prior at the present stage of civilization evolution is investigated by Ukrainian and foreign scholars mainly in the context of the communication theory (Harold Lasswell, Norbert Wiener, Claude Shannon, Harold Lasswell), of the dialogues of cultures (Mikhail Bakhtin, Volodymyr Bibler), of a interdisciplinary approach to intercultural communication (Roland Barthes, Anna Wierzbicka, Yuri Lotman, Michail Petrov, Edward Sapir and others).

As to Ukraine, at present the study of problem of "intercultural communication" is still in the process of formation. Modern Ukrainian scholars Pavlo Donets and Tetiana Komarnytska investigate the problems of intercultural communication. In their opinion, when representative of different cultures communicate with each other, certain problems may occur as these representatives a prior belong to different cultures. "These can be the difficulties in understanding, misunderstanding, creating

of individual biases, a further-separation in communication offence and finally – mental isolation"(Kornilov O. 2003).

Therefore, it is obvious that intercultural communication is a very complex skill and inherently is quite time consuming to master. To join in the intercultural communication serious preparation is required. The foreign language in the higher educational establishment is the first and very significant step towards the formation of linguistically interesting personality.

2. Foreign language in intercultural communication

The role of the discipline "Foreign language" in intercultural communication is unique because mastering of foreign language provides functional dialogic interaction of different cultural world outlooks and traditions. Besides, foreign language classes create academic microclimate in which linguistic knowledge and skills of a student are fundamentally combined with intercultural basis S.Ter-Minasova (2004) noted that each foreign language lesson is a crossroads of cultures and practice of intercultural communication because every word gives an idea of the world depending on the national consciousness.

Thus, the mastery of the English language, like any other language, can be confidently classified as a component of the overall culture of the individual by which the individual is attached to world culture. It also should be noted that intercultural communication affects the development of the Ukrainian society. Not less important is the possession of the local lore, because it is a necessary condition for the interpenetration and interaction of cultures of such a complex and multifaceted process as intercultural communication.

Indeed, in a casual conversation with a foreigner who arrived in Ukraine it is hardly ever appropriate to turn to description of the charms of the capitals of the US or the UK, instead of stories about local attractions. Not less important is the role of ethno-cultural components of communicants (traditions, customs, national ceremonies, elements of the national consumer culture, national picture of the world, national artistic culture) in the process of intercultural communication which expands proportionally to the intensification of intercultural contacts.

It is worth mentioning that over 100 nationalities live in Ukraine. The prominent position in the intercultural communication occupies the culture of the representatives of different ethnic communities where ethnic tolerance is a determining factor. Just student surroundings are one of the most intense areas of inter-ethnic and national contacts. Therefore, the important task of modern higher educational establishment to form the communication culture and train inter-ethnic tolerance. In our opinion, a student of the higher educational establishment, regardless of speciality, requires a complex of knowledge and skills that enable to perceive and produce messages containing local lore information both formal and informal intercultural communicative contacts.

3. International cooperation as a part of the educational process

A 2005 study by Kanibolotska Olha said that the world community has formulated the main task for the educational system of each country. The task is to educate the citizen who has an unbiased view of the world, is aware of the cultural differences among the various peoples and tolerates them. International cooperation as a part of the educational process is important for the personal development and prospects of employment, because it creates an opportunity for young people to communicate with the representatives of other cultures and respect the variety of their traditions, motives to verbal communication.

Every year the representatives of higher technical institutions of Ukraine, such as National University of Civil Protection of Ukraine, Kharkiv; Lviv State University of Life Safety, Lviv; Academy of Fire Safety named after Heroes of Chernobyl, Cherkasy exchange their experience and knowledge with representatives of units of Poland, Belarus', Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Germany, Romania during joint international trainings in the sphere of life safety. Practically every spring the Main School of Fire Service organizes international trainings in Pionki, where each group of representatives from different countries exchange their knowledge and experience that consist of four blocks: rescuing and evacuation work, chemical and ecologic rescuing, rescuers' work management and also the work of the staff.

It is also worth mentioning that representatives of the Main School of Fire Service of the PPRD EAST (Prevention, Preparedness and Response to natural and man-made disasters) project, within the framework of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) conducted a series of workshops for representatives of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus', Moldova and Ukraine.

As we can see, modern society brings new demands to professional training of specialists, as they have to use not only deep professional knowledge and be flexible in using it, but also must be ready to solve professional tasks in foreign language communication conditions. Acquiring professional qualifications by students fully conforming to the common European and world standards includes mastery of English with the aim of professional direction. That is why the topicality of the issue of professionally directed technologies for foreign language learning within the system of higher education does not evoke any doubt, since, "… one of the major targets of the university is to provide training of graduates on the basis of implementing new methods and techniques of learning, eurointegration of educational, scientific and innovative processes…" (Kanibolotska O. 2005).

At the same time, international cooperation allows the education to be more „alive" and open to new trends, to deepen cooperation and competition among educational institutions, and also to strengthen intercultural communication. The need for effective intercultural communication, and hence the ability to identify cultural differences of peoples, respect them and find common ground, is particularly acute in the period of independent Ukraine when the issue of joining the European Union encourages the establishment of international and intercultural relations. It should be noted that intercultural communication is not only a science, but a certain set of necessary social skills which are desirable. Therefore, the aim of communication in

an intercultural context is the achievement of mutual understanding and solving of common personal or professional problems.

The central concept in the field of intercultural communication is a "cross-cultural worldview". It is connected with the rapid changes that characterize the modern society. It requires appropriate grounding of a student for the future life. Therefore, the primary role in providing the mobility and competitiveness of students - future professionals in the global labor market belongs to culture and education. The development of the intercultural communication in higher educational establishments should be in three main areas which can be achieved through the participation of students in projects and programs of international cooperation:

- Interlingual communication
- Interdisciplinary communication
- Communication between educational systems.

4. Interlingual communication

Since a language is a social phenomenon, it occupies a crucial role in the formation and development of youth. Language training contributes to the modern worldview formation, the national consciousness of each individual, as well as the ability to live in a spirit of understanding, peace, harmony among ethnic, national and religious groups. From four to six languages are taught in Ukrainian universities today. One of the main approaches to learning a foreign language in the higher educational establishments is a language practice, educational exchanges, participation in international projects and programs that focuses on the intercultural foreign language communication in the context of the dialogue of cultures.

The foreign language as a tool for intercultural communication gives the students the opportunity to communicate with people from other countries, offers them access to the spiritual of national cultures. Now as a 2009 by Svitlana Shekhavtsova indicated that the knowledge of a foreign language as a means of intercultural communication includes not only the ccommunicative competence (the use of knowledge, skills and local lore information), but also sociolinguistic competence, which implies knowledge of national and cultural features of the country which language is studied the norms of speaking or speaking behavior of its speakers and the ability to build one's behavior according to these peculiarities and rules.

Education, training, projects, workshops, seminars and research work abroad enrich the individual experience of students, give them the opportunity to expand the network of their contacts and study a number of other foreign languages.

5. Interdisciplinary communication

Educational activities with forming of intercultural communication should be built on the base of features of the phenomena that occur in real life. Although in the higher military educational establishments such as National University of Civil Protection of Ukraine, Kharkiv; Lviv State University of Life Safety, Lviv; Academy of Fire Safety named after Heroes of Chernobyl, Cherkasy prevail technical disciplines there is a

number of disciplines of social trend and humanities which develop practical professional skills of communication and increase the overall level of individual language culture. They include the Ukrainian language (for professional purposes), Culture of business communication, Rhetoric, History of Ukraine, History of Ukrainian culture, The foundations of democracy, Philosophy, Political science, Religion history, Professional ethics and office etiquette, Demography, Sociology, Ethnic psychology, Psychology of creativity, Theory and practice of education, Higher education of Ukraine and the Bologna process and others.

For example, in the courses "History of Ukrainian culture", "History of Ukrainian and foreign culture" students and cadets get significant supplement knowledge of the theory and history of culture. The teaching staff of the department of Ukrainian studies initiated the introduction of optional courses of the Ukrainian language "Improvement of language training" and "Culture of educational and scientific activities of cadets and students" to help freshmen easier adapt to the learning process and improve the quality of education.

Educational programmes, text books, manuals, methodological materials are worked out in the university, in particular: "Ukrainian language for professional purpose" and "Culture of interpersonal interaction" by Maryna Kulchytska and Olha Shelyukh. Adapting courses in rhetoric and culture of business communication to the practical needs of the field and the current requirements for the professional activity and interpersonal communication, cadets and students of the cultural club create the University literary and cultural wall newspaper "The feather of the Firebird".

It corresponds with Nataliya Halskova's statement (2004) that "the process of acquisition by the students of personal experience of communication with the foreign lingvoculture needs to create situations of practical use of the language as a tool for intercultural learning and interaction"…The scholar offers to expand the limits of the educational process, i.e., she does not insist on an increase of the quality of hours for learning a foreign language, but promotes "the way out of your room" .

It is clear that extracurricular activities in comparison with the educational process provide greater variability and space for many kinds of learning activities of students. It is important, that they provide in contrast to the learning process, organization of joint projects and seminars of different educational establishments.

Extracurricular activities provide the opportunity to communicate in real life with speakers of other languages and cultures. It gives the possibility to master the methods of:

- Organization of intercultural exchange, as a part of the educational process; Carrying out intercultural projects at various levels and content;
- Revealing motivation to study lingvocultural and real communication.

Most scholars agree with an opinion that the use of eextracurricular activities in the process of the formation of the intercultural communication is effective and should be unrestricted. S. Ter-Minasova asserts about the need of "development of communication in the extracurricular clubs, groups, public lectures in a foreign language, the scientific society of interests"

In recent years, the department of foreign languages and technical translation of Lviv State University of Life Safety has “English Club” which focuses on communication skills with foreigners. The goals of the club meetings are the following:

- to improve the knowledge of English among the cadets and students;
- to enrich the level of spoken foreign language for specific purposes;
- to teach them to share interesting and necessary information;
- to assist in establishing contacts and facilitate communication in a foreign language.

Not less important part of the formation of intercultural communication is organizing actions to mark the famous dates and international holidays: round tables, debates, contests and etc.

Since the students from different parts of Ukraine and close and far foreign countries study in Ukrainian universities there are actively carried out the measures, due to which way extends the knowledge of a different culture, changes some communicative and cultural assumptions and affects people’s behavior in the situations of intercultural communication. For example, in our University there is the culturological circle of cadets and students at the Department of Ukrainian studies which during the year organizes scientific workshops, international competitions, anniversary parties, lectures, discussions, master classes, film shows with comments and discussions. At the same time, the pedagogical staff of University regularly organizes and conducts scientific and practical seminars for cadets and students, academic reading about important figures of the Ukrainian and foreign culture, dates and events. The International Competition of Ukrainian language named after Petro Jacyk and all Ukrainian Student Olympiads of Ukrainian language are also held every year.

The staff of the department of Ukrainian Studies does a variety of educational activities by which our youth understands the philosophical meaning of life and sees the world in its best.

This idea has been realized through the following projects:

- parties, lectures, talks devoted to outstanding Ukrainians and citizens of Lviv;
- annual anniversary memorial party dedicated to T. Shevchenko;
- annual workshop for Easter eggs painting;
- performances with staff and students of the University to participate in the annual competition of amateur theatre.

In the University there was introduced a new kind of education a cinema circle which opens for cadets and students the horizons of the Ukrainian poetic cinema. Before films are shown, there is always a pre-lecture on the important issues raised in the films, about directors who made the film. The participation of cadets and students in the work of the theatre circle helps to develop their moral and ethical values and aesthetic tastes.

The participants of the theatre circle of the University do not aim to show the historical events but through artistic word, songs, music, dance they evoke empathy, because just it makes us concerned about, and this is the main trait of a true rescuer.

They say, the story tells about the events by means of the language of figures, and art, literature – by the language of human destinies. The human destiny, a Man is the most important thing in this world. The rescue of people was the main thing which courageous heroes namely fire fighters, liquidators did at Chornobyl Nuclear Power station. Every year our students through dramatizing commemorate this tragic event.

Every two years the International Scientific Conference for Cadets and Students "Culture as a phenomenon of the human spirit" is held. It highlights the traditional conceptual principles and priorities of the modern Ukrainian and world cultural paradigm. The participants (155 people) were the cadets and students not only from our University but from the National Ivan Franko University, National University of Lviv Polytechnic, Lviv State University of Internal Affairs, Lviv University of Business and Law, Dniepropetrovsk National University of Railway Transport, Ukrainian Academy of Printing, Academy of Fire Safety named after Heroes of Chernobyl, Cherkasy, The Main Fire School of Republic of Poland, Institute for Command Engineers of the Ministry for Emergency Situations of the Republic of Belarus.

6. The communication among educational systems

Today the communicative process is a necessary condition for formation, development and functioning of educational social system because through it the connection between generations becomes possible, as well as accumulation and transmission of social experience, its enrichment, the division of labor and exchange of its products, organizing of social activities. Thanks to the modern means of communication there is a possibility to get information and knowledge from different sources, in particular at a distance.

A good example is the creation of the first academic Internet – television in Ukraine. The idea of creating a media resource belongs to the doctor of pedagogical sciences, professor, rector of Lviv State University of Life Safety Mykhaylo Kozyar. "The level of safety culture of our citizens as compared with the European countries is rather low. Getting in extreme situations, people do not know how to act. Teaching safety culture should be started from childhood. As the educational establishment which provides a range of issues in the field of safety, we would like to improve the situation. Taking into account the increasing role of information technologies in the human life, we decided to use the online environment for training aims," – said the rector.

Our Safety TV Channel started its work and functioning on the base of Internet technologies. IPTV is a new technology which will effectively transmit a TV channel via public Internet.

The information environment has a very large impact on people's minds, but not everything that is announced in the mass media is reliable, objective and useful. Therefore, the task of the pedagogue and tutor is to teach a young person to perceive reasonably and evaluate media information. The media culture is around us, so its application in the educational process will be quite natural.

Conclusion

Thus, the intercultural communication is a significant factor in the quality of education which contributes to students' communicative competence and directs them to the foreign language intercultural communication in the context of the dialogue of cultures. So, to train the students for foreign language communication, help them to see the world and at the same time realize themselves an integral part of intercultural interaction, it is necessary to change approaches to the educational process: turn from the theoretical knowledge to practical international trainings, projects, programs, raise the level of teaching of foreign languages, foreign literature. The development and implementation of acquired knowledge and skills by means of the international cooperation will improve the quality of education of young people.

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