

Incorporating intercultural communicative competence in language teacher education

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European Centre for Modern Languages

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Intégrer la compétence en communication interculturelle dans la formation des enseignants

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Foreword

The articles in this volume describe the results of the research and development carried out by four networks in Project 1.2.3 of the medium-term programme of activities supported by the Council of Europe's European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz, Austria. The main aim of the whole project has been to help incorporate intercultural communication training into teacher education in Europe. The networks took on a variety of tasks to investigate how this aim could be best achieved.

The first article is a description of a qualitative study based on questionnaires filled in by teachers of English and French in ten European countries. It offers highly interesting insights into language teachers' views on intercultural communicative competence in language teaching. The study also investigated what impact the participating teachers' educational background had on their views and their classroom practice, what the content of individual teachers' cross-cultural instruction was in the language classroom and what similarities there are in their attitudes towards intercultural studies.

The second article in this volume reviews the literature about the role of culture in foreign language coursebooks before presenting a comprehensive checklist of criteria to help evaluate teaching materials from an intercultural perspective. The article also describes a pilot study conducted among teachers of English and French in six European countries. The study investigated how the participating teachers had rated their teaching materials on the thirty-six-item checklist. The questionnaire study was followed by interviews to gain deeper insights into teachers' perception of the role of intercultural activities in teaching materials. On the basis of the research results, the author also provides a list of useful guidelines for the supplementation and adaptation of foreign language teaching materials.

The third article is a short description of another publication of the same project. It introduces *Mirrors and windows*, a practical intercultural communication textbook for language teachers, trainers and learners. The aim of this textbook is to help integrate intercultural communication training in language education by providing teaching materials with an intercultural focus. The article presents the structure of the book and the topics treated, and it describes the innovative features of the publication.

The last chapter in this volume treats a topic that is very important, but often neglected in education: it is about assessing intercultural communicative competence. The authors review possible methods of assessment in intercultural communication courses at academic institutions for teacher trainees in English as a second or foreign language. A collection of innovative and imaginative sample tests for assessing intercultural competence among teachers and teacher trainees who have completed a course in intercultural communication is attached to the article.

The authors of the present studies believe that it is of great importance to increase intercultural understanding in the world, and incorporating intercultural communication training in teacher education should be one of the first steps in this process. The research and development described in this volume is intended to contribute to the integration of intercultural communication training in teacher education programmes.

Ildikó Lázár

The views of teachers of English and French on intercultural communicative competence in language teaching

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1. Introduction

1.1 General presentation of the project

The Council of Europe focuses its actions on promoting linguistic and cultural diversity as part of its policy concerning the building of European identity. Foreign language teaching is seen as comprising not only linguistic performance and verbal communication, but also such abilities as intercultural consciousness and intercultural skills: “le savoir-être” and the abilities of discovery of “the other”.

Under these conditions the teacher, the backbone of the teaching system, becomes the mediator between two – or more – cultures. It needs to be recognised that the content of educational processes is influenced by the teachers’ views as much as by official syllabuses and coursebooks. The way education is executed in the classroom depends very much on what individual teachers think is appropriate. Hence trying to see what is inside the teachers’ minds seems prerequisite to any steps undertaken in order to implement any necessary changes (or support the existing system). The research project described here was carried out with the recognition of the key importance of teachers’ views about language education with respect to intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in a broad European context. It was believed that valuable insight

into the problems of intercultural communication can be obtained by setting the study in a multinational context, involving ten diverse European countries. We have asked ourselves the following research questions:

- What are the participating teachers' views on the place of culture in language teaching?
- What is the impact of the teachers' educational background on their views and, consequently, classroom practice with regard to intercultural awareness?
- What is the content of individual teachers' cross-cultural instruction in the language classroom?
- What are the common grounds of the attitudes towards intercultural studies of language teachers in diverse European countries?

1.2 Description of the data collected

In order to find answers to these questions we have prepared a questionnaire study which was conducted in the mode of non-comparative analysis. We distributed the questionnaires in our respective countries (Cyprus, Poland, Romania and Slovenia) but a broader scope of the study was made possible thanks to our colleagues who collected questionnaires in their countries: Joseph Chrysochoos in Greece, Raymond Facciol in Malta, Rafn Kjartansson in Iceland, Ildikó Lázár in Hungary, Liljana Skopinskaja in Estonia, and John Strange in the Netherlands.

The questionnaire study for the teachers of English was conducted in ten European countries (Cyprus, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Romania and Slovenia) and for the teachers of French in Cyprus, Estonia, Iceland, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovenia. We collected between three and seven questionnaires from each country, making in total forty-seven for the English group and fifteen for the French. The required respondents were teachers of English and French working primarily with teenagers. Since responding to the questionnaire required time and effort, the teachers were selected largely according to convenience and ease of access. The project was conducted entirely on a voluntary basis.

Almost all of our respondents live in urban areas. With respect to teaching experience, we received replies from a diverse range of respondents, from very experienced teachers who have been working for more than twenty years to recently qualified ones.

The questionnaire (see Appendix) consisted of a brief section determining the age-group of the respondents, their place of residence, and years of professional experience. This was followed by six open-ended questions. The length of the answers was left to the respondent.

1.3 Methodology

The research project was a qualitative study using the methods of textual analysis. We followed the exploratory-interpretive paradigm in the design of the research project: (i) non-experimental design, (ii) qualitative data and (iii) interpretive analysis (van Lier in Nunan 1992: 6). It is our firm belief that a qualitative study offers valuable insights into opinions and attitudes, and that many processes in education can be best studied by using methods of qualitative research in which emphasis is put on the meaning of the events and the beliefs of the participants in the educational process. Open-ended questions do not impose answers, but invite respondents to provide their own explanations of their behaviour. The written texts obtained in the process provide material for discourse analysis and interpretation.

Qualitative research assumes that in social studies a carefully analysed small sample can provide a significant contribution to the understanding of the problem investigated. In interview and questionnaire studies, the language used by the respondents constitutes a filter through which their world view is revealed. The phrasing of the answers, the prioritising of the content of the response, the metaphors used, as well as misunderstanding the questions, all open up venues for a better understanding of the respondents' views. As in other similar research of this type (Byram and Risager 1999: 86), answers are formulated in ordinary language, without the use of specialist terms. Interestingly enough, though, the mostly informal, colloquial language of the responses is on some occasions intermingled with official, formal discourse, and this was taken into consideration in the analysis.

The questionnaires from the French teachers were analysed as a whole by Janeta Draghicescu, while the ones from the English teachers were divided into sets of two items analysed by three researchers (Lucyna Aleksandrowicz-Pędich, Dora Issaiass and Nada Šabec). The results of the primary analysis were then discussed during a network meeting (1.2.3) in Graz in 2002 and later through email correspondence. The analysis involved classification of the responses and textual analysis. Possible generalisations were drawn, but the emphasis was primarily on the respondent as an individual. We have attempted, on the basis of the group studied, to contribute to a picture of the views of a representative European teacher of English or French on intercultural learning.

The results are discussed mostly with country references as this seems to provide a more interesting way of presenting the material collected. The interpretation, as in any qualitative study, results from the respondents' answers as well as from what the researchers themselves have brought into the study through their own way of thinking.

2. Interpretation of the responses to the questionnaire obtained from the teachers of English

2.1 In what ways, if any, was intercultural communication training included in your own teacher education?

None of the respondents studied intercultural communication in a systematic way. This was true for teachers who studied in the 1970s as well as those who graduated only recently. Fairly typical answers to this question were such as the one from a teacher from Cyprus, “I didn’t have such an education either at university or in my career as a teacher”, or “none whatsoever” (from a Hungarian respondent), or “Not in any way, I think” (a respondent from Iceland), or “As far as I remember, not at all” (a teacher from Holland). Another answer from Cyprus represents the entire group studied: “There was no specific training in ICC during my educational courses.” On several occasions the question was clearly misunderstood, or left unanswered altogether.

Most of the respondents, however, admit that intercultural competence was taught in an implicit way through inclusion in such courses as:

- British and American Studies, or courses in the culture of English-speaking countries;
- Sociolinguistics;
- Varieties of English;
- TEFL;
- Linguistics;
- Phonetics;
- English literature;
- Theory of Education;
- Folklore Studies;
- History;
- Psychology (“A brief overview of non-verbal communication in different cultures”, as mentioned by an Estonian respondent).

An answer from a Slovenian respondent is fairly representative, “Apart from the module on American civilisation, there were no modules on intercultural communication training included in my own teacher education. In spite of this, intercultural communication was implicit in some modules (for example, classes with native speakers – lecturers, student exchange programmes).”

Apart from the courses listed, few other occasions for learning about intercultural communication were mentioned. The notable exceptions are: a respondent from Greece who mentioned a seminar on “communicating cross-culturally”; a respondent from Hungary who admitted turning down the opportunity to study a subject called

“Orszagismeret” (Civilisation) which might have included some intercultural communication training; a respondent from Malta who mentioned an in-service course on the subject; a Dutch teacher who gave a title of a book about foreigners in the Netherlands; another Dutch teacher who mentioned methodology classes in Scotland during which cultural differences were discussed, for example in fairy tales; a respondent from Slovenia who mentioned attending lectures at Graz University; a respondent from Romania who wrote about his interest in slang in relation to intercultural communication when writing a diploma thesis.

Many respondents speak of the value of exchange programmes, personal experiences, and being taught by foreign teachers, specifically British and American. A respondent from Slovenia mentions being taught by lecturers from Great Britain, the United States and East Germany with whom they discussed “Differences in our lifestyles, traditions, manners, etc.” A respondent from Hungary says that as a student she “was awarded a Lingua C scholarship which enabled [her] to spend four months in Finland as an assistant English teacher. One of the goals of this project was to promote intercultural understanding and communication through a language that might be a second language for both the students and the assistant teacher.” A respondent from Romania describes her experiences of exchange programmes and being taught by British teachers, stating “My experience in the field is mainly the result of personal efforts and an interest in professional development.”

All the answers that we received point to the absence of any systematic presentation of the topic of ICC. One of the Polish respondents states that “Having been taught by a number of native speakers from England and the United States it was possible to learn a great deal. That said, however, it would not seem justified to say that intercultural communication was ever an integral part of any syllabus. Without a doubt, it can partially be attributed to the simple fact that non-native teachers of English rarely feel qualified or confident enough to delve into intercultural communication.” This answer indicates that culture is seen as the domain of the insider, that only being a member of a culture gives one the privilege of becoming an expert and thus being able to teach about it. In a way this answer indicates why intercultural communication is neglected in education, especially in countries with a high regard for the expertise of teachers. Intercultural communication is so much about sailing in unknown waters, with no secure answers, entering into situations in which the teacher’s position of authority may be put at risk – perhaps this is the reason why intercultural teaching is avoided.

The way Question 1 was answered indicates that intercultural means, first and foremost, contacts between native and target language cultures, and the role of English as lingua franca of communication among people who are not native speakers of English is insufficiently stressed. It also shows that training in intercultural

communication, in order to be effective, ought to combine both the theory and practice of personal experiences.

2.2 Describe some of your own experiences with people of other cultures. How do these affect your teaching?

With the exception of a single respondent from Greece who says that he has “only been abroad once” and “didn’t have the chance to meet people of other cultures”, everybody else has had more or less extensive contact with people of other cultures. For most, the opportunity came with travelling, either on their own initiative and during their free time (during the holidays) or on business. Among the countries visited, they predictably cite the United Kingdom and the United States as the English-speaking countries, and to a lesser extent some European, Asian and African countries. For the majority, the visits were rather short, but some cite longer periods of time, for example a respondent from Slovenia says that she worked “one year as an au pair in a multicultural family in the United Kingdom” and two others that they “have spent some time working in the United States”, while a respondent from Iceland reports living seven to eight years in Sweden and the United States. Quite a few respondents say that they took part in international seminars and workshops abroad, where they met people of different nationalities, and some that they participated in various summer courses with international participants organised by the British Council either in their own countries or in the United Kingdom (Romania). Some also mention international projects such as Comenius (Greece), student exchange programmes (for example, between Slovenia, Poland and the Netherlands, a group of American students visiting a Slovenian university, etc.).

For the majority of the respondents therefore contact with people of other cultures comes with travelling and participating in various international events, but not on a daily basis, as their students as a rule come from very homogeneous cultural backgrounds. There are, however, a small number of respondents for whom this contact is much more permanent and certainly more intense and/or more personal. Namely, two teachers from the Netherlands report teaching in a multicultural setting, one with students of twelve different nationalities. One is from another culture (“Not only English, but also Jewish”) and the other was brought up in a neighbourhood with many foreigners. Another more personal experience is reported by a Greek respondent, who has a fiancé from another country. And finally, there are two respondents from Malta who, during summer, teach English classes to international students, and are thus exposed to different cultures on a more long-term basis, too.

Most respondents find their experiences with people of other cultures very positive and rewarding in that they broaden their “view of life in general” and “contribute to their personal tolerance” (Slovenia) and greater open-mindedness. A Polish respondent thus says, “Meeting people of other cultures gives me a chance to look at myself from a different perspective” and a Slovenian one, “I made friends with people regardless of their religion, skin colour and lifestyle and learned that all the differences make my life much more interesting and rich and that I could only benefit from such contact. A friendship with a young Indian woman, for instance, opened a whole new world to me.”

Of course, contact with people from other cultures may be frustrating at times, too, especially when the differences are considerable. Thus a teacher from Iceland writes that despite using English as a common language with students in Iceland, Sweden and the United States cultural clashes still occurred. Two teachers from Malta complain about the difficulties trying to integrate non-European Muslim students into their summer courses (“I did find integration a bit difficult when teaching non-Europeans together with Europeans as the cultures are alien from each other and I found it difficult to bridge the gap.”). An Estonian teacher, on the other hand, writes about initially difficult communication with some Japanese, but says that his mistaking their reserved and diplomatic behaviour for hostile “turned out to be wrong” in the long run.

On a more general level, therefore, exposure to other cultures for most teachers resulted in greater awareness of cultural diversity (“Foreign classmates in Scotland and Chinese students made me realise that Dutch/western culture is not a global culture” says a Dutch respondent) and their willingness not only to tolerate such diversity, but also to benefit from it, explore new possibilities and share information with others. A major impact of their contact with people of other cultures is thus seen in their attempts to incorporate at least some component of intercultural competence into their own language teaching. Some see it mostly as helping their students “become more tolerant and do away with prejudices ... which in the long run “helps the world come closer and is the best remedy against discrimination,” as one Polish respondent puts it. Others are more practical in looking for very concrete improvements in their teaching styles and techniques.

They find it effective and rewarding that in teaching they can actually draw on their own experiences rather than on materials such as coursebooks alone. That gives them more self-confidence and also credibility with their students. Most report showing students slides and objects brought from their travels, creating their own materials, utilising more authentic materials such as newspaper clippings and videotaped TV programmes, discussing culture-related topics and the like. A teacher from Hungary reports that contact with native speakers made her realise that they make a lot of

“mistakes” according to grammar books (for example, “If I would have known, there is two cats” – American English? Estuary English?), which is why she has become “fairly tolerant of verbal mistakes and often lay[s] more emphasis on getting the message across than on correctness.” (Whether or not this is good, remains questionable.) On the other hand, a teacher from Iceland highlights the problem of different accents in international communication (“Through meeting speakers of English of many nationalities, I have become aware of the comprehension problems that a strong accent may cause. I am therefore more aware of the need for an acceptable standard of pronunciation in international English.”). A few others also emphasise the importance of teaching fluency and of understanding non-verbal behaviour (gestures). With the single exception of a Dutch teacher, who teaches in a multicultural school and says that contact with people of other cultures for him does not make a big difference, everyone felt that there is a lot to learn and benefit from in such contacts and that it is well worth passing it on to their students.

2.3 How much importance do you attach to teaching intercultural competence compared to teaching grammar, vocabulary and the four skills? Why?

Many respondents discuss only the importance of teaching ICC without comparing it to the importance given to the teaching of grammar, vocabulary and the four skills. The majority find ICC very important although a few do not attach much significance to it.

Comparing the teaching of ICC to the teaching of grammar, vocabulary and the four skills, respondents were equally divided. Some think that ICC is more important than grammar and the rest, while others believe it is equally important or less important than ICC. However, the impression given by those who were strongly in favour or attached equal or greater importance to teaching ICC is that this is more in the theoretical/idealistic sphere than what they actually do in practice during classes. Reading between the lines, one inferred that these teachers think well of ICC, but do not systematically teach it in the same way that they teach grammar, vocabulary and the four skills.

Many respondents attach importance to the teaching of ICC because, as a teacher from Iceland says, “this topic is great for creating discussion in the classroom” and “helps the teacher to recognise what is unique in his own cultural context as well as in the target language”. One teacher from Poland claims ICC to be “inseparable from teaching English”, as “Without ICC, students will be unable to make sense of the communication process despite their grammar and vocabulary.” The majority of the respondents gave a reason why they considered the teaching of ICC more or less important even though there were quite a few who do not explain why they hold that particular opinion. This, again, could imply that what they say is actually quite theoretical and not perhaps what they practise in their classrooms with their students.

Typical explanations of why the teaching of ICC is or should be given a lot of importance mention helping “to avoid misunderstandings”, enabling “efficient communication” more “than the correct use of grammar and vocabulary”, making “learning easier and more relaxed especially in classes with one or two foreigners” or being useful to people travelling abroad by saving them from embarrassing situations. A teacher from Romania advocates paying attention to the teaching of ICC because “students need it as they will be working and living in multicultural environments”. A Slovenian stresses the fact that “[insufficient] intercultural competence is less likely to be tolerated than mistakes in grammar, vocabulary and the four skills” whereas another person from the same country considers ICC as a top priority since it would promote “respect for foreign cultures”. A teacher from Cyprus further adds to this theme by saying that “nowadays the principles and values of life have changed and priority should be given to notions such as tolerance, peace and love” since “the EU is a reality”. Another teacher, from Poland this time, says that “special attention” is paid to ICC as it makes language “more real and tangible to the students” than grammar and vocabulary ever do.

A lot of teachers stress that ICC is/should be integrated into the lessons or used to incorporate new structures and vocabulary.

In several cases, teachers wrote that they do not attach as much importance to the teaching of ICC as to the teaching of grammar, vocabulary and the four skills because it is not included in the syllabus or the school curriculum. An Estonian teacher admits that ICC is a small component in her teaching compared to grammar, vocabulary and the four skills because of the limited number of lessons and the gaps in students’ knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, etc. A teacher from Iceland believes that “Grammar, vocabulary and the four skills are more important since the students have to know the basic skills to communicate effectively and being fluent in a foreign language prevents misunderstanding between people of different cultures.” In addition to this, a Romanian teacher thinks there should not be so much importance attached to ICC as, “Mastering a foreign language comes through grammar, vocabulary and the four skills.” Moreover, a Hungarian considers dedicating “lessons directly to ICC quite unnatural” and said that she did not pay extra attention to it during teaching due to “the pressure of time” and the fact that she could not find authentic ways to incorporate ICC into the school curriculum.

The answers to the question concerning the importance attached to teaching ICC in comparison to grammar and the four skills indicate its noticeable presence in the teaching styles of the group of respondents, but remain inconclusive as to the number of ICC activities in the language classroom.

2.4 In what ways do you create opportunities for students to understand and experience other cultures? How do you help them to avoid intercultural misunderstandings?

Judging from their responses to the second question, it comes as no surprise that most respondents try to create as many opportunities as possible for their students to understand and experience other cultures. In doing so, the majority of the respondents choose culture-related topics from coursebooks (*New Headway, Opportunities*) and use the opportunity to include their own personal experiences in the discussion. They place special emphasis on providing the necessary background information and on pointing out the differences between the way people of different cultures perceive things. A Slovenian respondent says that she “accept[s] the students’ reactions and tr[ies] to explain certain things they don’t understand or think strange.” Some write that they try to give as active role as possible to their students – an Estonian teacher, for instance, invites students who have visited English-speaking countries to talk about their experiences, and a Romanian one asks them to create posters, work on projects, comment on authentic materials and the like. Another one, also from Romania, says that she encourages her students to keep an open mind and not let prejudice alter their communication.

In addition to modern textbooks, which most find quite helpful in terms of exposing students to a variety of texts that include social and cultural information, almost all the respondents use other, primarily authentic, materials as well. These include videotapes and recorded TV programmes – even soap operas – articles from newspapers and magazines, films and the like.

Other ways of creating opportunities for the students to actually experience other cultures involve inviting English-speaking guests to the classroom, organising language weeks every year (Estonia), and actively encouraging students to establish contact with their peers from other countries either through the Internet (email, chat rooms), getting pen-pals or through visiting foreign countries and participating in various international projects and student exchange programmes. A respondent from Cyprus claims that “Exchange visits with schools from Europe and Canada and European programmes organised by the Council of Europe have proved to be a great opportunity for students to come in contact with students in other cultures. During the last eight years our students have been really fortunate since they have been given the chance to come close together and experience other cultures through exchange visits and European programmes with schools from Greece, Romania, Slovenia, Austria, France, Malta, Belgium, Estonia, Ireland and Canada.”

And while all of the mentioned ways of creating opportunities for the students are to be welcomed it seems that taking advantage of modern technology (such as the Internet)

and encouraging student mobility deserve special attention and are well worth further exploration.

There were just two respondents who do not spend much time trying to create such opportunities for their students. Firstly, a Dutch respondent, who feels that the issue is not very important saying, “I don’t think I’ve ever thought of this – except that I’m very sensitive to pupils asking with a ‘please may I have’ and ‘I would very much like to, sir, thank you very much, my pleasure,’ etc. , but it is all pretty trivial.” Secondly, another from Malta, who says that “at the moment” he doesn’t feel “competent and trained for such issues to be discussed in class”.

As for helping their students to avoid intercultural misunderstandings, most respondents resort to explanation, trying to make them aware of the potential pitfalls. Many make use of personal experiences (“I try to refer to all the situations that I myself have experienced or have heard or read about” – Poland, “I told them how I went shopping, took a bus and a subway, and analysed my own mistakes” – Estonia). Some use anecdotes and a Slovenian respondent says that “In my classroom problem situations are pointed out by means of cartoons or jokes, accompanied by text if necessary.”

Not everybody is concerned about possible misunderstandings (a respondent from Malta says “I’ve never given it much thought”), while others are, but think that misunderstandings are sometimes unavoidable, “for it’s very difficult for students to understand some aspects of other cultures from only books or videos” (Poland) or “because people and cultures are so different” (Estonia). “Avoiding misunderstandings is not fully ‘teachable’ away from the target country. They only get enough knowledge to survive in a foreign culture and they also do not fully recognise its relevance and, if not told otherwise, are likely to trivialise these aspects of foreign language”(Poland).

The analysis of the answers clearly shows that only a negligible number of the respondents do not attribute much importance to developing ICC. The overwhelming majority believe just the opposite. A realisation about its importance came to a large extent through their contact with people of other cultures, which affected both their way of life and their way of teaching. They are thus actively seeking opportunities to increase their students’ intercultural knowledge and awareness, as they believe that this can enrich them both personally and professionally.

2.5 Which aspects of culture do you consider most important in teaching a foreign language? Why?

With the exception of two respondents (one from Iceland and one from Cyprus) who do not attempt to answer the question at all, others try to reply to it as fully as they can.

However, more effort is given to the first part of the question whereas only half the respondents deal with the second part.

Teachers mention various aspects of culture, which they consider most important in the teaching of a foreign language. These include items such as:

- traditions and customs;
- history and civilisation;
- popular culture, legends and myths;
- stereotypes;
- geography;
- religion;
- beliefs (different ways of thinking and reacting);
- theory and practice of democracy and individual rights;
- everyday life and routine, lifestyle and habits (especially of people at the students' age);
- socio-politics;
- art, music, cinema, literature and festivals;
- contemporary life and civilisation;
- food;
- social rules and behaviour, politeness and good manners, and degrees of formality;
- the educational system.

The reasons that most respondents give for considering these particular aspects of culture as the most important in the teaching of a foreign language are not explicitly written or fully analysed. Some people mention that they choose them because they help in communication and, therefore, interpersonal interaction. Students learn how to function smoothly without offending people and how to cope in real situations.

A teacher from Malta observes that learning about the traditions, customs, beliefs and lifestyle of the target nation helps students understand literature better and exposes them to more vocabulary used in the right context. Three Romanian respondents say that learning about different ways of thinking and reacting as well as similarities leads students to a better understanding of tolerance, compassion and generosity, and advances their acceptance of others, mutual understanding and flexibility in their way of thinking. A teacher from Poland argues that we live in a cosmopolitan world and that if we want to be part of it then we should understand “what makes other nations tick”. The respondent adds that “Globalisation necessitates a fuller understanding of other cultures.”

According to a Romanian respondent, everyday lifestyle and habits, music, cinema, literature, history and geography are important cultural aspects in the teaching of a foreign language. They constitute “the interlocutor’s cultural identity”, which, in its turn, “is essential to the process of teaching a foreign language”. By identifying culturally with the interlocutor, a student can then act correctly in the target environment using both proper language and behaviour. A teacher from Iceland goes on to say that cultural aspects such as skills relating to everyday behaviour and historical background are essential since it is important “to function smoothly without offending people and to understand reasons for people’s behaviour that might be different from our own”. A Slovenian respondent emphasises the necessity of teaching social aspects of culture such as interpersonal and non-verbal communication as their oversight could lead to unpleasant experiences which “might discourage learners from further contacts, cause them to lose their confidence” or make them “develop negative feelings towards people from other cultures”.

The choice of aspects of culture to be introduced in the language classroom derives from the teachers’ opinions of the relevance of these topics for ICC, as well as their appeal to the students. It is important that these topics should trigger the students’ motivation and desire to learn.

2.6 Do you think intercultural competence should be given more/less emphasis in foreign language teaching? What are the potential benefits?

Generally, the answer to this question expresses the opinion that ICC ought to be given a good deal of emphasis in foreign language teaching. The potential benefits mentioned by the respondents fall, generally, into two categories. One could be called idealistic, and the other pragmatic.

The idealistic justification of the presence of ICC in language teaching pointed out the values which would contribute to a better world society:

- acceptance and tolerance of differences in people, and respect for others;
- tolerance in all fields and better understanding, fighting prejudice, misconceptions and unhealthy stereotyping;
- the spirit of the European Union, EU integration, and the preparation of a European citizen;
- a hope for world peace – peaceful coexistence among countries;
- learning how to avoid potential conflicts;
- internationalism;
- providing the experience of discovery for students;
- creating open-minded and tolerant societies, and educating unbiased youth.

Respondents are aware of the broad educational value of intercultural studies, which do not constitute only skill formation, but, first and foremost, mind formation.

The truth, which is perhaps not always sufficiently emphasised, that “a foreign language brings people from different countries together so ICC should be given more emphasis in foreign language teaching” is mentioned by a respondent from Cyprus. One cannot but agree with this, as after all this is the reason why we learn foreign languages – to be with people of other cultures.

A number of pragmatic reasons for ICC was mentioned:

- the need for ICC in business and tourism (the increase in the tourist industry) as a precondition for success in these areas;
- preparing for living, working and travelling in other countries;
- the recognition of the shift in many societies towards multicultural communities;
- making lessons more interesting and more fun;
- motivating students by providing real-life situations.

The most pragmatic responses concerning tourism and business came from respondents from Iceland.

Some respondents point out that once we recognise the cultural weight of languages, ICC contributes to a better knowledge of the language studied, as it enhances communication. “Linguistic competence ‘means’ intercultural competence” says a respondent from Greece. This should not only be understood through target language culture as, according to a respondent from Poland, we need “to prepare our students for the kind of communication in which a native speaker of English will not take part.” A respondent from Romania indicates, among potential benefits, “a variety of cultural identities where the transferability of knowledge and skills are at their utmost”. Similar opinion is voiced by a respondent from Slovenia, “A good knowledge of different cultures will help learners to respond successfully to varied communication tasks.” A respondent from Malta points out another important aspect of ICC, namely that it provides “more opportunities for cross-curricular activities”.

Some respondents, referring to this question, point out the necessity of a good approach in terms of teaching methodology: “... it should be taught through authentic situations. In my opinion that approach motivates the students most, as it is a natural trigger to learn more and more about the culture they came across and about the language that mediates it to them” (Hungary).

A small number of answers suggest that there is already enough intercultural competence in language teaching. A respondent from the Netherlands provides a brief “no” answer to this question, while one of the Estonian respondents suggests, “I would not consider giving it more emphasis, that is I think I’ve given it enough weight.” Similarly a teacher from Poland says that “with these new coursebooks the emphasis is just right”. Another Estonian teacher suggests the risk of “overdoing” ICC and pointed out the specificity of learners from her country: “Estonian learners/students are very particular about the correctness of grammar, the extent of vocabulary and the mastery of the four language skills.” Hence these aspects of language learning ought to be given the greatest attention. The same respondent provides an interesting characterisation of her own culture: “The reason could be in the upbringing of the people – everything has to be perfect. You could introduce ICC teaching to your students, but this as a nice change to the class environment rather than putting major emphasis on it.” A Maltese teacher gives voice to the fear that, while ICC should be given a good deal of attention in foreign language teaching, particularly to diminish prejudice, “too much emphasis on ICC might actually widen cultural divides”.

The answers from a Hungarian respondent on the necessity of a proper methodological approach and from the Maltese teacher on the dangers of overdoing the intercultural component underline an important truth about ICC in foreign language classrooms – in order to achieve the desired effects it needs to be done with sufficient preparation and tact on behalf of the teacher.

The need for proper training in how to bring ICC into a foreign language classroom is expressed in another answer from a Maltese teacher: “I really cannot answer this question as I’m not well read on this subject and would not know where to begin.” Also, one of the respondents from the Netherlands answered this question with “I don’t know”.

To sum up the responses to the question about the extent of ICC in language teaching, it can be said that teachers from the ten countries which participated in the study are aware of the importance of the issue and agree that it ought to be given emphasis in the language classroom, but perhaps the move from ideological acceptance to practical solutions ought to be facilitated by training and availability of proper class materials.

3. Interpretation of the responses to the questionnaire obtained from the teachers of French

3.1 In which way was ICC teacher training integrated (if it was integrated) in your teacher training?

The replies given by the fifteen respondents allow two conclusions of a general nature. Firstly, irrespective of the time when the initial training took place and of the institution in which it was provided, training centred specifically on the teaching of ICC was not systematically integrated in initial teacher training. Explicit testimony to this effect was provided by a number of respondents (trained in universities in France or in their countries of origin):

- “In my initial training (bachelor’s degree, CAPES), ICC was not integrated in the courses” (teacher from Malta with between five and ten years of experience);
- “At the time, it wasn’t mentioned specifically” (teacher from Malta with between eleven and twenty years of experience);
- “ICC was not an issue at the time of my training in the 1970s. The issues were cultural knowledge and an awareness of the setting in which an utterance was made, but the idea of combining two cultures was out of the question; we believed in total immersion, which involved the exclusion of the mother tongue in the foreign language classroom” (teachers from Malta, Estonia, Cyprus, Iceland and Romania with more than 20 years of experience).

Secondly, most if not all the respondents were, at various times during their initial training, able to obtain information about ICC and/or even to acquire training elements aimed at teaching this skill. All these cases concerned partial training resulting from the focus of the different courses on their programme:

- courses in French literature and civilisation (Cyprus, Estonia, Poland and Romania);
- courses in methodology (Estonia, Poland and Romania);
- courses in sociolinguistics (Estonia, Romania);
- courses on cultural stereotypes (Estonia);
- practical courses in oral expression given by French lecturers on teaching assignments (Romania);
- activities devoted to the study of language behaviour (Cyprus).

The in-service training courses devoted to individual aspects were mentioned by some respondents as a form that was given priority by the authorities responsible for the further training of teachers (Poland and Romania).

What distinguishes and differentiates the teachers participating in the study on this point is the strictly personal nature of the experience, strongly marked by the geo-

cultural context in which the training and/or the teaching activity of each teacher took place. These were:

- direct contacts for long periods – total immersion in French civilisation as a result of studies in France (Cyprus and Malta);
- direct contacts for short periods, occasioned by study courses, professional visits, (school exchanges and other) or tourist visits (Estonia, Poland and Romania).

The initiative by the individual or the group indicates, for most of the subjects, a recourse to a wide variety of forms and activities, all suitable for the specific teaching situation and the objectives set. Reference is made to:

- personal reading (Malta and Romania);
- school correspondence (Romania);
- the exploitation of authentic documents in video and written form (Romania and Slovenia);
- participation in language classes by foreigners visiting the school or the town in which the school is located (Poland and Romania).

The teachers from Estonia, Romania and Slovenia also claim to have profited from activities in which they participated within the framework of the cultural centres or the Alliance Française.

The variety of professional careers and situations, approaches and methods cited by each teacher with respect to their training for ICC teaching shows, on the one hand, the ephemeral and partial character of this training and, on the other hand, the fact that the skill acquired in this field is almost exclusively the result of self-training.

It is clear that it is absolutely necessary to include, on a systematic basis, elements concerning ICC in initial and further training programmes, including the methodology of an approach to ICC in a language class by means of the mother tongue.

3.2 Describe some of your experiences with speakers belonging to other cultures. State how these experiences have affected your teaching activity.

The experiences related by the teachers questioned reveal widely differing situations at two extremes. On this point, it is apparent that there are two categories of teacher: those who have had a very rich and relevant experience that has given them an awareness capable of influencing their teaching activity and those who have had little experience with very minimal relevance on the didactic level.

In the first category, there are the teachers who have studied in France and who have undertaken teaching assignments abroad (teachers from Malta, Estonia and Cyprus).

They have had the opportunity to get to know the different cultures “live”.

Their testimonies concerning the impact of what they experienced on their activities in the classroom is very informative, whether it is a question of what was experienced in everyday situations or what was experienced in the teaching situation. On this point, a teacher from Malta states that the experiences that influenced him “most from the pedagogical point of view, took place during teaching practice (teaching French to foreigners in France) in Paris”.

The same applies to the very relevant comments made by two French teachers in Estonia, namely the influence that experiences in the didactic environment can have on an awareness of the necessity to include ICC in teaching. The first teacher comments that the mere fact of working abroad obliges him to be in active and conscious contact with other cultures. A major element is awareness and respect of the other with his linguistic, cultural and socio-cultural differences. “I try to make the students understand that difference is a source of wealth, but that it’s also vital to make oneself understood, which means that one must become capable of reading the analysis grids of the other and of oneself in order not to misunderstand, and, finally, that there is no culture that is superior or inferior to others.” The other teacher, who tells of his teaching experience with Estonian pupils aged between 15 and 18, says, *inter alia*, that the cultural difference led him to ask, without having really reflected on the issue previously, important questions concerning intercultural skills no longer within the theoretical framework but in practice. “This taught me to know and understand what is meant by difference and its fundamental *raison d’être* in terms of the didactic and epistemological dimension. Within the framework of my function as a teacher of French abroad, I passed from an abstract theory to a specific practice of the problem.”

Individual experiences occasioned by contacts of varying duration, generally short (in-service training courses, visits, bilateral or European encounters), were cited by the majority of the respondents questioned (Cyprus, Poland, Romania and Slovenia). Certain comments made by the subjects questioned indicate the interest that the teachers have in integrating within their teaching activity the elements of civilisation acquired in direct contacts that they have had with people belonging to other cultures, “I profit from every encounter with a foreign speaker. I apply what I learn in the classroom and I ask my foreign friends for authentic documents” (Poland); “My experience with European speakers has induced me to create various communication situations in the classroom in order to teach the pupils the importance of identifying the person they are speaking to according to a number of cultural signs and symbols and of adapting their language and their behaviour to the specific context” (Romania).

Teachers who have had less experience because they are very young and have not had the opportunity of direct contacts with foreigners mainly rely on the written and visual aids at their disposal. In this context, a teacher from Romania refers to the aids at his disposal, specifying the elements of culture and civilisation that he derives from them and the means in which he exploits them: “The textbooks offer many subjects for discussion, with separate pages on culture and civilisation. The VIFAX is of great value, but for communication in rather standard situations.”

The representative from Iceland, who admits not having had any teacher training, provides an extremely interesting statement that allows us to understand the role played by the sociolinguistic dimension of language (language register, the implied and the implicit) in verbal interaction. He admits his own understanding difficulties when in contact with foreigners: he has difficulties understanding the behaviour of the other because he is unable to understand the totality of the situation and, in the case of oral communication, he needs to visualise it in writing.

There is only one conclusion to be drawn by an analysis of the replies to this question: it is necessary to sensitise the decision makers in the different countries if contacts and exchanges are to increase and if these contacts are to be of sufficient duration to allow coverage of a broad range of situations and behaviours, and of achieving the awareness of the need for a change of strategy within the teaching of ICC. To pass from an approach that is essentially informative and illustrative to practical application requires reflection and distancing – two attitudes that are possible on the basis of a real and relatively rich personal experience. An experience of intercultural interpersonal relationships seem to be decisive in determining an effective awareness in teaching behaviour.

3.3 What importance do you attach to the teaching of intercultural competence as compared with the teaching of grammar, vocabulary and the four skills (oral expression, oral comprehension, written expression and written comprehension)? Why?

The responses to this question illustrate that respondents agree in the main. However, their replies include certain nuances that indicate different didactic concepts and strategies.

Some teachers consider that ICC is and must be the dominant element in the teaching process for a number of reasons, the most important of which merges with the ultimate objective of the teaching process, namely to learn to communicate in a foreign language, every communication necessarily implying an intercultural dimension. This point of view is expressed by an Estonian teacher, according to whom ICC represents “what is most important, since it is the backbone of communication. The learning [of

the foreign language] comprises not only grammatical and lexical forms, but, and above all, the ability to communicate with another in a specific and particular situation.”

Taking up more or less the same line, other teachers (Cyprus, Poland and Romania) consider that ICC is equally important alongside grammar and other skills: “I believe that 50% of the activity (in the classroom) should be directed towards ICC, because the essential condition for a message to be understood by the person addressed is not only linguistic correctness but also appropriateness in the communication situation. It must be accepted by the person spoken to” (Romania). One of the teachers from Cyprus considers that “The intercultural aspects are and must always be linked to the teaching of all skills. Culture is a way of life and as the foreign language is a living language, the students must live it.”

The same point of view is upheld by arguments in the field of motivation. Some comments on this point state: “In my view, ICC interests my pupils most” (Poland); “As I gradually realised that ICC was motivating my pupils more, I began to increase the specific opportunities aimed at exploiting this competence” (Romania).

The teachers recognise the relative autonomy of the different skills while affirming explicitly or implicitly the relationship of interdependence between them. These are teachers who have experienced at first hand the effect of cultures on communication. They put forward strong arguments and evidence in support: “Intercultural competence does not replace other teaching. Nor does it head the list. But, in my opinion, it must always be present, if possible in every lesson (although that is not necessarily easy). The objective of a language being communication, people must learn to understand each other in both senses of the word (understanding the actual meaning of the words and understanding the people). Having, in my childhood, experienced intercultural incompetence within my family, I am particularly sensitive to the problem. Living in a foreign country has merely confirmed this impression” (Malta).

A number of remarks and comments made in the replies to this question relate to the different parameters of the teaching situation, specifically to the level and needs of the public and the type of course. A first comment, without doubt valid, made by the teachers from Estonia, Iceland and Slovenia emphasises that at the beginning of learning, during the first two years, grammatical skills and skills in oral expression and understanding are of prime importance in the teaching of French as a foreign language. “ICC is integrated and takes over once the grammatical basis has been acquired through the other skills” (Iceland). In a conversation or comprehension course, for instance, one is often led to discuss cultural elements associated with the target language (Malta). The needs of the class may also at certain moments justify an

approach through intercultural elements. This is the case where pupils are to be prepared for correspondence, within the framework of school exchanges or twinnings, for participating in certain competitions on topics relating to civilisation on the occasion of festivities of the French-speaking communities (Romania).

The comment by a Maltese teacher indicates that in certain school institutions the preoccupation of giving greater importance to ICC is also reflected by the delegation of this responsibility to one of the members of the teaching team. This responsibility is put forward as a strong argument by a Maltese teacher: “I give great importance to ICC as I am mainly responsible for the teaching of French culture. Discussing Maltese and French culture is practically an integral part of every lesson.”

A last comment of importance for the overall discussion focuses on the status of ICC in the official curricula: “The importance of this skill is beginning to be noticed, but I cannot say that any importance is attached to it in the school curricula” (Malta).

From the comments made on the importance of ICC as compared with other skills, it follows:

- that ICC must be integrated within the didactic process at the same level as other learning contents and/or skills;
- that account must be taken of the learning level and the communication needs of the class/group;
- that, in every process, insistence and focus must be placed on explanations/discussions of the difference;
- that it is useful to make use of the experience obtained by certain members of the teaching team and to delegate to them responsibility for the teaching of ICC.

In the light of the difficulties of putting into practice certain aspects of language behaviour, particularly if one is exclusively in a simulation situation and has had no experience of cultural contacts, it is important to provide training courses in the foreign country for most teachers.

In order to ensure a formal framework that allows the implementation of the objectives aimed at by ICC, it is necessary to ensure that official curricula include ICC amongst the learning objectives laid down for the different levels.

3.4 How do you create opportunities for your pupils to make contact with other cultures? How do you help them to overcome the difficulties of comprehension and behaviour in such situations?

The two elements of this question are reflected differently in the responses given by the respondents questioned.

The replies concerning the manner in which opportunities are created for pupils to make contact with other cultures are relatively detailed and indicate a variety of solutions. As a general rule, the main approach is to use literary texts, comic strips, songs, documentary films and other video materials. This consists of defining the ideas, explaining, analysing and discussing (Cyprus, Estonia, Malta, Poland and Romania). Discussion is essential wherever you are comparing a foreign culture with realities familiar to pupils. The analysis of the results shows that in the approach to this type of document from the intercultural point of view, each teacher has their own strategy. A specific example of strategy, both global and detailed, is provided by the reply by an Estonian teacher. This is a strategy structured on two essential objectives “know how to do” and “know how to learn”. These are the stages and the procedures as presented by the author:

- “Approach the general problem from a national and individual point of view, then propose different points of view from elsewhere;
- Ask the pupils to get involved personally by explaining and illustrating a situation that is unfamiliar or even unknown to the teacher (who is a foreigner);
- Present one’s own point of view as an individual and not merely as a teacher.”

Putting this into effect causes difficulties where the means are makeshift, time limited and opportunities rare or even non-existent. When and where it is possible, trips to France or other European countries are organised (Estonia and Romania), or meetings with anyone who can speak about France and the French-speaking world (artists, teachers and other categories of foreigners resident or passing through the town or the region) (Estonia, Poland, Romania and Slovenia).

The different experiences of real contact, whether group or individual experiences, are analysed within the framework of the course, with a focus on the misunderstandings.

Where the teacher’s personal experience allows, the opportunity to address specific aspects of other cultures is created by talking about events experienced, including personal anecdotes (Cyprus and Malta). In this way, the analysis and explanations of the elements that create misunderstandings and incomprehension have more effect and veracity. It is no longer a simulation. Such solutions, however, are only available to teachers who have studied or attended long training courses abroad or who teach abroad.

When what has been experienced is not within the grasp of the class/group, the teacher may have recourse to listening work and to the analysis of verbal interaction or even to school pen-friend schemes allowing the establishment of indirect contacts with speakers belonging to other cultures (Iceland, Poland, Malta, Romania and Slovenia).

Certain topics and activities devoted to the ICC approach lead to the creation of civilisation dossiers. Such an extension of class activity into individual activities outside the classroom is very interesting and beneficial for pupils, who are thereby encouraged to explore cultural worlds selected by virtue of their specific nature. Such an activity obliges the pupils to obtain materials and, by implication, to reflect on the complexity of aspects of culture and civilisation (Romania).

In order to cover a much richer range of situations and in order to exploit thoroughly the situations suggested by the activities in the textbooks, most teachers have recourse to simulations in the teaching environment (Estonia, Poland and Romania). And from this point of view, it should be noted that the difficulties of creating situations with a cultural content, and above all of putting them into practice, have not escaped the notice of the teachers. These difficulties arise from two sources:

- the lack of time available to such activities in the timetable, the time officially provided being calculated only to cover the syllabus (which one is obliged to complete);
- the difficulty of passing from theory and explanation to practice for the purpose of defining and communicating the contents of certain cultural items that are different to one's own culture. One of the Maltese teachers commented, "The cultural content is not very 'practical'" (Malta).

The careful analysis of the replies given to this first part of the question indicates the fact that the creation of opportunities capable of putting the learners in contact with other cultures and above all the exploitation of these situations depends essentially on the expertise and skill of the teacher. And, in this context, the remark made by one of the Estonian teachers is instructive: "There are no fixed rules and no ideal methods. Personally, I trust my own experiences 'on the ground' obtained abroad within the framework of cultures different to my own."

The second aspect raised by the question, namely how to help the pupils to overcome difficulties of comprehension and behaviour in such situations, is, with a few exceptions, answered with the same replies, namely analyses, explanations accompanied by examples, "open" discussions, case studies and simulations (Cyprus, Estonia, Malta, Poland and Romania). As an example, one of the Maltese teachers states: "I help them to overcome the difficulties of incomprehension by means of conversations together, listening to their reactions, making them expand on the same topic. But I don't have a miraculous method."

An interesting remark on this topic is made by the Icelandic respondent, who attempts to put his pupils into real contact situations with people from different cultures. Since the pupils are organised into groups and can consequently participate to a greater or

lesser extent in class or extracurricular activities, he is not in a position to help them all. In this case, he allows them to sort out their problems alone. He is aware that the fact of “leaving them to themselves a little imposes on them the need to make an effort and often gives them confidence.”

Summarising the information provided to this question, it can be concluded that:

- the creation of ICC learning situations is based principally on authentic materials in the textbooks/methods in use and which for the majority illustrate cultural productions marked by the filtration of the author. In addition to this material, there are aids selected by the teacher (literary texts, press articles, comics, photographs and films) which, although marked by their author, introduce into the classroom authentic socio-cultural elements both in terms of their contents and the fact that they are current;
- simulations in a teaching environment serve as a means of translating explanations into practice, and explicitly to illustrate and fix certain behaviours that are marked by cultural specificity. They bear the mark of artificiality and, in the absence of opportunities that allow live updating and the transfer of the information acquired into behavioural facts, all these acquisitions remain passive and, in many cases, are lost;
- the creation of appropriate situations for putting into practice certain cultural contents depends on the experience and the expertise of the teacher;
- the training of teachers in a foreign language and cultural environment, or the exercise of the profession in a different geo-cultural environment are determining factors for the success of ICC in teaching;
- the presence of native speakers on teaching assignments appears to be an ideal solution for solving certain of the problems associated with interculturalism, in the classroom or outside the classroom.

3.5 What aspects of the intercultural problem (cultural-literary productions, arts, etc., civilisation/way of life, linguistic behaviour) do you consider as most important in the teaching/learning of French as a foreign language? Why?

An analysis of the replies given to this question indicates that, for most teachers, it is difficult to determine a hierarchy between the different aspects of the ICC problem. All the aspects have their own importance and “the pupils must be given access to all these aspects, no doubt by means of a progression that has been well evaluated by the pedagogic experts” (Malta). This idea as set out explicitly by a Maltese teacher is taken up in different forms by other teachers, with different arguments in support, thus emphasising the complexity of the impact of ICC on the totality of the didactic process:

- “All the aspects of the problem are important, because each casts a different light on the culture involved” (Estonia);
- “There is no order of importance in the learning of French as a foreign language. The idea of a totality, of a relationship between the part and the whole, must remain the key in teaching” (Estonia);
- “Everything is important, and can be made use of depending on the needs of each lesson and the needs of the learner” (Cyprus).

Nevertheless, the school context does not allow everything to be addressed, and indeed sometimes leaves little choice to the teacher, either because the curriculum does not provide for ICC or because time is limited. In this case, the teacher establishes the priorities that seem to him to be most profitable in the light of various factors considered separately or together.

Many of the teachers questioned claim to give priority in their classes and, consequently, attach more importance to civilisation/way of life and certain language behaviours. The arguments used in support are as follows:

- “These aspects are vital for the practice of the language, to allow the learner to understand a native speaker in direct contact” (Slovenia);
- “These aspects are easier to access and capable of rousing the interest of the pupils” (Iceland);
- “These aspects are closer to the pupil’s own experiences” (Poland and Romania);
- “These are general aspects and it is the language in its entirety in which each learner finds himself” (Cyprus).

Moreover, with respect to these two elements of civilisation/way of life and language behaviour, one of the Maltese teachers noted rightly that they are inseparable, being linked by a reciprocal determining relationship: “Personally, I prefer the aspect of (present) civilisation/way of life, because it is very tangible. I also like language behaviour (for instance, schoolboy slang, easy to relate to my Maltese pupils, whose language is Semitic), which allows me to deviate and to return to the aspect of civilisation/way of life.”

Formal cultural productions (literature, for instance) are addressed when the pupils’ level allows, but also when the teacher, having little personal experience in the field of cultural contacts, has no sources and means at their disposal enabling them to address the aspects of civilisation/way of life. And here, too, each teacher brings their own arguments:

- “I consider cultural productions (literature and arts) to be the most important because they are the representatives of the civilisation and of the way of life” (Romania);
- “Literature allows one to make a ‘photo’ of the culture” (Estonia).

Certain teachers go further in the presentation of the details that they consider relevant to the question. This was the case of an Estonian teacher who emphasises the level/register of language as being an element that marks language behaviour. Making pupils aware that each communication situation is individualised, amongst other things by the language used, means making them aware of “the complexity of a language culture”.

It follows directly or indirectly from various comments that accompany the replies that it is up to the teacher to choose and to establish the optimum balance between the different aspects to be taught. It is up to the teacher to “find/create the transitions from a linguistic content to a cultural content and, conversely, to open the doors” that allow pupils access to different aspects of ICC, while still ensuring the learning of French as a foreign language in its totality and in its complexity (Cyprus, Estonia, Malta and Romania).

Taken together, the points of view expressed by the teachers regarding the aspect raised by this question are in agreement. Consequently, it is not a question of giving more or less importance to specific aspects of ICC, but of giving priority to the various aspects at different times during the learning process, depending on the specific situation in which the teaching process takes place (level and needs of the public, means, etc.).

The school context being restrictive, a teacher who finds it preferable, necessary or urgent to address aspects of (current) civilisation/way of life or of language behaviour must always refer to the pupils’ own culture, which allows the transition to an explanation of the possibilities for interaction. If the teacher wishes, or finds it necessary, to insist on cultural productions, it is recommended to choose contemporary products with, if possible, current interest.

Given the same restrictive character of the school context, and specifically the restricted time available to the teacher in most cases, it is necessary to intervene with the decision makers to ensure the provision of sufficient space (classes and activities) in the official curricula for the teaching of ICC.

3.6 In your opinion, should one insist on intercultural competence in the teaching of a foreign language? Why?

In a general manner, the respondents taking part in the study recognise the necessity of insisting on intercultural competence in the process of foreign language teaching. However, there are certain nuances apparent in the manner in which this point of view is adopted and in the nature and strength of the arguments presented in its support.

In this context, many teachers adopt affirmative responses without reservation:

- “Absolutely!” (Malta);
- “Of course one should insist” (Cyprus);
- “Beyond doubt ...” (Malta).

Other replies are reinforced by references to the necessity of such a choice:

- “Yes, one must insist ...” (Estonia, Romania).

To emphasise the logical necessity of such an approach, one of the Maltese teachers comments that “One should not insist on it just because it’s a fashion! It’s something that is self-evident!”

The arguments presented are more or less differentiated in nature, but all focus on the totality of the teaching process and its objective.

Related to the teaching process, considered in its totality, the affirmation of the need to insist on ICC is justified, on the one hand, by the fact that “this competence has been neglected for too long” and secondly “because the other skills are more obvious and easier to transmit” (Malta).

Related to the objective of the teaching process, the affirmation is supported by comments of the type:

- “in the past [to be understood as “when language teaching did not address the intercultural element”] a language often remained knowledge that was not put into practice” (Iceland);
- “The interest in learning a language is extremely reduced if the language is decontextualised” (Romania).

Related to the socio-political situation in Europe, the same affirmation is fully justified if account is taken of the need to become aware of the differences that individualise the people of Europe – a defining idea and concept for the construction of a united Europe. One of the Maltese teachers made this idea explicit by referring to his own experience: “We long thought that because we were Europeans, the differences were perhaps non-

existent. Nevertheless, having myself experienced the shock of disorientation, I can confirm that ICC is an element that must no longer be neglected.”

The range of advantages that the acquisition of ICC has for the learners is rich and varied. Account is taken of the immediate effects on the totality of the teaching process, which becomes more motivated and more effective in its educational objectives. In this context, it is pointed out that:

- ICC enables learners to become aware of their own way of thinking and of their own culture (Estonia, Poland, Romania and Slovenia);
- ICC provides keys for decoding and becoming aware of one’s own abilities to understand (Iceland);
- a better understanding of the world is the essential condition for the education of a European citizen (Romania);
- in the longer term, in an age of socio-cultural and economic integration, sensitisation to adaptation to a different way of life benefits exchanges, knowledge and reciprocal support within the framework of European co-operation projects (Romania).
- a better understanding of the target culture ensures better adaptation in the event of professional or tourist mobility, and ultimately mutual comprehension. The learners are much more motivated and set themselves objectives such as a stay, a visit, contacts, studies, etc. (Malta, Estonia and Cyprus).
- in perspective, ICC prepares for physical exchanges and exchanges on the Internet. It is becoming increasingly necessary to understand each other in every sense of the word, because the more exchanges are made, the greater the risk. This is the path that allows mistakes and misunderstandings to be avoided, and a faster and more adequate integration in a different cultural context (Malta).

The teachers who teach in a context where the culture is different to their own are unanimous in recognising that a didactic and epistemological approach focused on a different cultural axis establishes the principle of otherness, the fundamental basis for establishing intercultural competence.

It is evident that the perception of the importance or rather of the necessity of granting more or less importance to ICC in the process of teaching a language is regarded differently by the teachers who have experienced a long stay in a culture different to their own and/or who teach abroad, and by teachers who have only benefited from institutional training in their own countries. Short-stay visits, even organised by foreign specialists, are in most cases only capable of informing, rarely of training and, sometimes, even in the latter case, the training stops at basic principles and goes no further than the typical aspects that define stereotypes.

The arguments submitted by the teachers in favour of an insistence on ICC, depending on the needs of the class/group, the specific conditions and course of the teaching process and the perspectives of the public, are strong arguments. However, the problem must be addressed with tact and with a two-fold objective: to sensitise learners to become aware of otherness, and implicitly to be tolerant, and also to make learners aware of their own skills of comprehension.

4. Concluding remarks

The analysis of the responses to the questionnaires supplied by teachers of English and French from several European countries allows certain general conclusions.

All the respondents recognise the important role of ICC for communication in a foreign language, and, consequently, recognise its significance in foreign language teaching. It is generally agreed that intercultural awareness-raising and ICC skills should be contained in the teaching process. The perception of the problems of ICC differs for individual teachers and depends on various factors such as age, experience, the teaching context, and, importantly, the education the teacher received. Those teachers who benefited from various stays abroad and education in a multicultural environment hold a clearer view of the importance of the issue. Direct contacts and experiences of everyday life in a culturally different environment seem more influential for the formation of views of the teachers than the training received through traditional educational channels. Teachers who have had their own personal intercultural experiences are better able to recognise the principles of ICC and can find more adequate methodological approaches to present the message of the other cultures in ways which increase the appreciation of the significance of this message by the learners. Those teachers who have had only short or accidental contacts tend to resort to approaches of an informative and expository character.

All the respondents declare unanimously the need to include in the pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes the theoretical and methodological elements of intercultural studies, which would constitute the foundations for systematic education in this field. To create the basis for a systematic presence of the intercultural component in foreign language education it is necessary to:

- clearly define the field of ICC in all its dimensions, taking into consideration its dynamic and continuous evolution;
- define the operational concepts to be used in the teaching process;
- determine the strategies adequate for presentation of various activities in the classroom;
- present teachers with detailed programmes and materials in the written and video form with guidance on how these materials ought to be used.

Bearing in mind the importance of personal experiences with foreign language and culture, it is important that the authorities make decisions concerning teacher education that offer the trainees opportunities for prolonged contact with other cultures.

5. References

Byram, M. and Risager, K. (1999), *Language Teachers, Politics and Cultures*, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Nunan, D. (1992), *Research Methods in Language Learning*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

6. Appendix – The questionnaire (English version)

Dear Teacher,

This questionnaire constitutes international research into foreign language teachers' views and attitudes concerning intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in teaching English (or French) as a foreign language. The project is carried out under the auspices of the European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz, Austria, by a group of researchers:

Lucyna Aleksandrowicz-Pędich, University of Białystok, Poland
Janeta Draghicescu, University of Craiova, Romania
Dora Issaiass, Lanition Lyceum A', Limassol, Cyprus
Nada Šabec, University of Maribor, Slovenia

The subject of our research is ICC in language teaching. We understand it as, primarily:

- preparing students for communication in English with people of diverse cultures, with the assumption that successful communication involves language skills, but also understanding behaviour, values and attitudes of others;
- incorporating in the process of teaching English the awareness of the existence of other cultures (not only target language culture) as well as the skills to deal effectively with people from those other cultures.

This questionnaire contains six open-ended questions.

We would also like you to fill in some information about your own teaching context.

Thank you very much for your help!

1. Where you teach:
Name of the country ...
(Tick where appropriate)
Capital city
City
Town
Village
2. Age-groups you teach
Pre-schoolers
7-11
12-15
16-19
Adults
3. Years you have been teaching
Fewer than 5
5-10
11-20
More than 20
1. In what ways, if any, was intercultural communication training included in your own teacher education?
2. Describe some of your own experiences with people of other cultures. How do these affect your teaching?
3. How much importance do you attach to teaching intercultural competence compared to teaching grammar, vocabulary and the four skills? Why?
4. In what ways do you create opportunities for students to understand and experience other cultures? How do you help them to avoid intercultural misunderstandings?
5. Which aspects of culture do you consider most important in teaching a foreign language? Why?
6. Do you think intercultural competence should be given more/less emphasis in foreign language teaching? What are the potential benefits?

The role of culture in foreign language teaching materials: an evaluation from an intercultural perspective

Liljana Skopinskaja

Introduction

Textbooks used in foreign language (FL) instruction are primarily designed to facilitate language learning, but they cannot simply do that since language learning is inseparable from its cultural context. As Cunningsworth states, “A study of language solely as an abstract system would not equip learners to use it in the real world” (Cunningsworth 1995: 86). For that reason, it is usually expected that FL teaching materials (TM) should include elements of the target language culture. Moreover, many documents analysed by Byram (1993, quoted in Cortazzi and Jin 1999: 197) highlight three general goals of FL instruction:

- the development of communicative competence for use in situations the learners might expect to encounter;
- the development of an awareness of the target language;
- the development of insight into the foreign culture and positive attitudes toward foreign people.

But as Byram stresses, these three aims should be integrated. The extent and ways of incorporating cultural aspects in FL instruction vary in different TM, and therefore it is important for the FL teacher to know what to look for in a particular language textbook in order to decide if it is suitable for attaining the aforementioned goals.

The current article treats the role of culture in FL instruction in terms of the cultural content of the TM used in secondary education. The study presented in this article originated after the workshop on incorporating intercultural communicative competence in pre- and in-service language teacher training, held at the European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz from 2 to 7 April 2001. As a follow-up to this workshop a network group “Materials Evaluators” was set up and a team of researchers (Liljana Skopinskaja (Estonia) – co-ordinator, Lina Guobienė (Lithuania) – spokesperson, Hilde Beate Lia (Norway) – member, Karl Bauerfeind (Germany) – member in the initial stages) decided to explore the issue of intercultural awareness as reflected in contemporary FL instruction.

Our network group agreed to concentrate on the TM, that is coursebooks, workbooks, activity books, cassettes, videotapes, CDs, teacher manuals, which are currently employed at the intermediate level of secondary education (13-16 age-group). Thus, the

problem to be studied consists in, first of all, establishing a suitable evaluation checklist of FL TM from an intercultural perspective and, secondly, analysing a variety of English and French language TM on the basis of the established criteria. Next, we examine advantages and disadvantages arising from the differences in the representation of culture in English versus French TM, and local versus international TM. Finally, guidelines for FL teachers are provided in order to incorporate intercultural issues in their lesson design through adaptation and supplementation of the existing instructional materials.

Defining the cultural content for FL classes

One of the most difficult problems confronting FL teachers is the choice of adequate instructional materials. What should students learn about a foreign culture to be able to function in that culture? Different academics offer various suggestions concerning the cultural content of FL TM. In order to answer the abovementioned question, it is essential to examine some ways in which culture is reflected in FL textbooks.

Patrick Moran (2001: 15-18) offers four categories where culture is identified as:

- knowing about, relating to cultural information – facts about products, practices and perspectives of the target culture as well as students' own;
- knowing how, referring to cultural practices in the everyday life of the people of the target culture;
- knowing why, constituting an understanding of fundamental cultural perspectives – beliefs, values and attitudes;
- knowing oneself, concerning the individual learners' self-awareness. In other words, students need to understand themselves and their own culture as a means to comprehending the target language culture.

Whereas the categorisation of culture concentrates mainly on description, the treatment of the cultural content in FL materials should also include analysis, comparison and contrast, which is more in keeping with the comparative method suggested by many scholars (Pulverness 1995).

One of the aims of the FL classroom is the development of the learners' awareness of intercultural issues and their ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in a variety of situations and contexts, given the increasingly international nature of contemporary life. In order for this to happen, learners need first to acquire knowledge about the target language community and then they need to reflect on their own culture in relation to other cultures (McKay 2002: 83). That is, in acquiring knowledge about and reflecting on the target language culture, students need to be encouraged not simply to observe similarities and differences between the two cultures, but they should also

analyse them from the viewpoint of the others and try to establish a relationship between their own and other systems (Byram 1997: 14 and 34; McKay 2002: 83). This “perspective consciousness” (Strasheim 1981 quoted in Tseng 2002: 12), or the ability to “decentre” (Kohlberg 1983 quoted in Byram 1997: 34), or establishing “a sphere of interculturality” (Kramersch 1993: 205-206), is the precondition for successful intercultural communication as well as understanding other cultures. Or, as Woodward maintains, “Working with the mirror principle means there is always a recognition of difference but it is mutual difference” (Woodward 2001: 105).

To sum up, the present research project views culture in terms of intercultural communication, that is as “the ability to enter other cultures and communicate effectively and appropriately, establish and maintain relationships, and carry out tasks with people of these cultures” (Moran 2001: 5). Concepts like “intercultural awareness” and “inter-cultural communicative competence” are especially important in the present study.

Intercultural awareness, described as “sensitivity to the impact of culturally induced behaviour on language use and communication” (Stempleski and Tomalin 1993: 5), comprises awareness of students’ own culturally induced behaviour, awareness of the culturally induced behaviour of the target language community, and ability to explain their own cultural standpoint.

ICC, according to Byram (1997), requires certain attitudes, knowledge, and skills to be promoted, in addition to linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse competence. The attitudes refer to curiosity and openness as well as “readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one’s own (Byram 1997: 34 and 57). The acquired knowledge is of two kinds: on the one hand, knowledge of social groups and their products and practices in one’s own and in the foreign country, and, on the other hand, knowledge of the general processes of individual and societal interaction (Byram 1997: 35 and 58). Finally, the skills comprise those of interpreting and relating, discovery and interaction as well as critical awareness/political education (Byram 1997: 34 and 61-63). Byram also maintains that the FL classroom provides ample opportunities for the acquisition of the abovementioned skills, knowledge and attitudes, provided it proceeds under the guidance of a teacher.

With these points in mind, we intend to examine various attempts to develop ICC in FL instructional materials and activities.

The cultural nature of contemporary FL textbooks

In terms of the cultural nature of FL textbooks there exist several classifications of TM. So Dunnet, Dubin, and Lezberg (1986) differentiate between the two types of

textbooks: one-dimensional and two-dimensional ones. To the first group belong the materials that focus on the target language culture and leave few possibilities for comparison, “unless the teacher injects a question, such as, ‘This is what Americans do. What do you do?’ or ‘This is the American view. What is your view?’” (Dunnet, Dubin and Lezberg 1986: 153). Two-dimensional textbooks encourage intercultural understanding. They treat culture-related themes from two different perspectives, thus simulating both comparison and contrast between the target and the source culture.

Cortazzi and Jin distinguish further between the three types of cultural information to be presented in FL TM:

- source culture materials that draw on the learners’ own culture;
- target culture materials that refer to the culture of the country where a foreign language is used as a first language;
- international target culture materials that employ a variety of cultures where the target language is used as an international language, namely lingua franca (Cortazzi and Jin 1999: 204).

The present research paper reveals a minor tendency in European FL TM to mirror a single culture only. The exclusive focus on either the source culture or the target culture may nevertheless be found at primary school level. In the majority of cases, FL textbooks tend to exemplify the usage of the target language in international encounters.

Most FL materials that are currently being employed in secondary education in various European countries fall into two broad categories: international/global textbooks and local/locally produced textbooks (Newby 1997: 7; Freebairn 2000: 5).

The first type of textbook – international or global textbooks – involves instructional materials that are produced for an international market and are therefore appealing to world marketing considerations. Globally designed materials may emphasise either culture-specific or culture-general orientation. Local textbooks, by contrast, are usually produced either by or together with non-native speaking authors. As a rule, these materials conform closely with the requirements of the national curriculum and have an official approval from the Ministry of Education of a particular country. Being firmly located within the educational context of that country, they tend to introduce the local perspective into FL instruction and exhibit features associated with that culture. By incorporating into their structure the contexts and topics with which FL learners are familiar, local textbooks encourage the development of learner awareness of their own cultural identity. Yet, unlike the source culture materials, they include texts and activities which promote students’ awareness of the target language culture as well.

There is a marked difference in the exploitation of FL materials throughout Europe. In some countries, international textbooks totally dominate the educational infrastructure (for example, Poland). In others, international and local textbooks exist side by side (for example, Estonia, Lithuania and the Russian Federation). Elsewhere, in view of strict prescriptive curriculum requirements for each school, only local textbooks may be employed (for example, Norway, Romania and Austria).

Evaluating FL TM from an intercultural perspective

With such a wide range of possible commercial textbooks, FL teachers need to be able to make informed judgments about TM.

Evaluation of FL TM may proceed in two directions. There may be a predictive evaluation (Ellis 1997: 36), namely evaluation-for-selection (Byrd 2001: 415), designed to make a decision regarding what materials to select, and a retrospective evaluation (Ellis 1997: 36), designed to examine materials that have actually been used in the classroom.

As Sheldon (1988: 245) observes, “It is clear that coursebook assessment is fundamentally a subjective, rule-of-thumb activity, and that no neat formula, grid or system will ever provide a definite yardstick.” This being so, the present research project resorts to the means of a retrospective evaluation as such evaluation provides teachers with information necessary for modifying (that is, supplementing or adapting) the existing materials to make them culturally more acceptable. Moreover, a retrospective evaluation also serves as “a means of testing the validity of a predictive evaluation, and may point to ways in which the predictive instruments can be improved” (Ellis 1997: 37).

Breen (1989 quoted in Rea-Dickens and Germaine 1992: 30-32) identifies three phases in the evaluation of classroom materials: materials-as-workplan, materials-in-process, and outcomes from materials. The first type refers to the theoretical value, namely construct validity of materials which provides information about the materials as they stand, that is without any reference to their actual utilisation in the classroom. The second (namely, materials-in-process) generates information about how these TM actually work with a class. The “outcomes from materials” phase represents the relative achievement of learners.

This tripartite division of materials evaluation brings forth the importance of the evaluation of materials-in-process. It is this type of evaluation that is resorted to in the current research project as it can offer certain indicators as to whether particular FL TM are interculturally appropriate or not.

Evaluating FL materials is always a complex process. First, it demands the assessment of the content of a coursebook in relation to its professed aims and objectives. In other words, we should consider to what extent the goal of the cultural instruction is stated in the teacher's book/students' book, that is whether it is primary, or subordinate to other goals. Similarly, the extent of the integration of the cultural content in the course has to be analysed, namely whether the cultural content is presented in context (for example, through texts, dialogues, exercises, etc.), or as isolated facts. Second, FL materials have to be evaluated against the needs and interests of the learners.

The examination of the rationale behind the materials evaluation is logically prior to the drawing up of a list of specific evaluation criteria.

The existing literature in textbook evaluation suggests several (often lengthy) checklists of evaluation criteria. Some checklists do not mention culture (Tucker 1978: 219-237; Wallace 1998), or only imply it in questions like, "In what ways do the materials involve your learners' values, attitudes and feelings?" (Breen and Candlin 1987: 20). Others alert teachers to the following cultural issues: educational/social acceptability of textbook approach to the target community (Ur 1996: 186); possible stereotypes of races and cultures (Harmer 1991: 283); cultural acceptability of the thematic content for its intended audience (Byrd 2001: 417) in terms of students' age, sex and environment (Daoud and Celce-Murcia quoted in Byrd 2001: 425; Davies and Pearse 2000: 150); and awareness of cultural norms (Richards 1998: 138).

Slightly more elaborate are Cunningsworth's (1984), Sheldon's (1988) and Skierso's (1991) evaluation checklists. Thus, Cunningsworth draws attention to the cultural skills as well as cultural knowledge by asking whether the content is culture specific or non-culture specific; whether it is subordinate to language learning or not; and whether the cultural contexts help learners in perceiving and categorising social situations they may find themselves in (Cunningsworth 1984: 75 and 79).

Sheldon's list (1988: 244) highlights the materials' appropriateness, authenticity and cultural bias. He further encourages teachers to ask whether the coursebook presents any stereotyped images of gender, race, social class or nationality; and whether different uncomfortable social realities of the United States or Britain – such as unemployment, poverty, family breakdowns or racism – are omitted from textbooks.

The recognition of culture as a component of FL teaching is reflected in some updated versions of textbook evaluation checklists (Skierso 1991; Cunningsworth 1995) as well as surveys conducted by Gray (2000) and Garant (1997).

In the updated version, Skierso emphasises the existence of different aims of cultural acquisition – cross-cultural/global awareness or acculturation. Her checklist includes points, such as the cultural sensitivity and integration of the subject matter; cultural explanations of differences between British and American vocabulary, pronunciation and grammatical structures; and stereotype-free content of exercises and activities as well as of the artwork (Skierso 1991: 444-452).

Cunningsworth queries whether the social and cultural contexts are, in fact, comprehensible to the learners (Cunningsworth 1995: 92). He further argues that since FL textbooks express some social and cultural values, it is necessary to identify whether there are any gender differences in the coursebook character portrayal. Gray's (2000) questionnaire study of EFL teachers' attitudes to the cultural content of reading materials identifies a number of areas where cultural content is adapted (or even censored) by teachers, and advocates the need to recognise the ELT coursebook's status as a cultural artefact. Garant (1997) in his PhD dissertation uses Sheldon's evaluation checklist in combination with Hofstede's "4-D model of cultural difference" in order to analyse EFL textbooks currently used in Finnish and Japanese comprehensive school courses.

Although the abovementioned checklists reflect the recent interest in culture, these checklists do not focus on the intercultural dimension. Among the more thorough lists of textbook evaluation criteria from the intercultural perspective are Damen's (1987), Byram's (1991; 1994), and Risager's (1991) lists. In terms of evaluating the cultural content in textbooks Damen emphasises the incorporation of a historical dimension; the presence of evaluative comment, either direct or implied, underlying the cultural content as well as the development of intercultural communicative skills (Damen 1987: 272-276).

Byram (1994: 51-52) in his proposed checklist examines the extent and manner in which textbooks include a focus on each of the following areas:

- social identity and social groups: social class, regional identity, etc;
- social interaction at differing levels of formality;
- belief and behaviour: daily routines and moral, religious beliefs;
- socio-political institutions: state institutions, health care, law and order, etc;
- socialisation and the life cycle: families, schools, employment, religion, etc;
- national history: historical and contemporary events seen as markers of national identity;
- national geography: geographical factors seen as being significant by members of the target language community;
- national cultural heritage: cultural artefacts perceived as emblems of the national culture;
- stereotypes and national identity: symbols of national stereotypes.

Another Byram's (1991: 173-184) textbook assessment model comprises four dimensions of analysis:

- analysis at the micro-social level of the social identity of textbook characters;
- analysis at the macro-social level of socio-economic, geographic and historical representations;
- analysis of the viewpoint taken by the author;
- analysis at the intercultural level of mutual representations of foreign and native cultures.

Risager (1991) has used similar criteria to examine elementary EFL textbooks employed in Scandinavian schools.

The present overview of various textbook evaluation checklists provides us with a sound basis for establishing our own evaluation checklist of FL TM from an intercultural perspective, which was one of our objectives.

A pilot study: quantitative and qualitative analysis

In the course of the current pilot study, a list of the following evaluation criteria was developed from research into systematic materials evaluation procedures. Our intention was to examine the extent to which TM include a focus on each of the following areas:

- rationale behind FL teaching materials' design, namely correspondence between the aims and goals of the TM and the students' conceptual framework; correspondence between the aims of the TM and the students' needs and goals; topics suitability as determined by students' age, gender, environment and social setting; and explicit/implicit statement of the goal of cultural instruction;
- cultural content of the TM, that is culturally sensitive versus tourism-oriented portrayal of the cultural character of the foreign society; integration of the cultural content into the FL course; and the nature of the TM character representation with regard to its age, social class, interests, mentality and family situation;
- presentation of content through cultural knowledge, that is inclusion of the historical, geographical, political, ideological, religious and creative arts perspectives to explain the national identity of the target language community; portrayal of different ethnic origins and sub-cultural groups; presentation of socio-political problems, socially acceptable or taboo topics as well as cultural/racial/gender stereotypes; and reference to the learners' own culture.
- presentation of content through attitudinal perspective, that is development of tolerance and empathy towards otherness as well as a feeling of the national

identity; challenging the learners' existing stereotypes; arousing curiosity about otherness; and preparing students for an adequate behaviour in the target language;

- presentation of content through intercultural perspective, that is encouraging learners to compare the foreign culture with their own; and offering mutual representations, images and stereotypes of the students' own and the foreign culture;
- presentation of content through culture-and-language perspective, that is development of students' linguistic as well as paralinguistic awareness; teaching appropriate register; and authenticity of the material used in the texts, exercises, tapes, etc.

Method

After agreeing on our evaluation criteria, the questionnaires, both English and French versions, were issued to sixty-six teachers of English from five countries (Estonia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland and the Russian Federation) and forty teachers of French from five countries (Estonia, Lithuania, Norway, Malta and Romania).

The thirty-six-item questionnaire, which was distributed in the early spring of 2002, asked the participants to rate the questions on a five-point scale, where "0" corresponds to "not at all", "1" to "not really", "2" to "to some extent", "3" to "to a large extent", and "4" to "completely".

Finally, we collated and then averaged the scores for each criterion for English and French TM as well as for international English and local English TM.

Since any evaluation tends to be subjective in terms of rater consistency and content/construct validity, we tried to compensate for this by involving only experienced teachers (each having between 5 and 25 years' experience). The questionnaire study was supported by eighteen interviews with teachers of English (conducted by the network group members) and eighteen interviews with teachers of French (carried out by two Maltese M.A. students, Prascovia Axiaq and Christine Pace). In this way, the results of the study were subjected to a new research paradigm which includes both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis techniques (Brown and Rodgers 2002: 249).

Statistical analysis

As mentioned earlier, Section A of the questionnaire – the rationale – meant to find out, first, the correspondence of the aims, goals and topics variety of the utilised teaching

TM to the conceptual framework as well as the needs and interests of the students; and second, the extent to which the goals of the cultural instruction are stated in the TM design. (See questionnaire in the Appendix and statistical tables in the additional materials to the publication on the ECML website <http://www.ecml.at/publications>).

The figures in the statistical tables (Appendices II-V on the ECML website) show that a majority of teachers rate their manuals' rationale as corresponding to their learners' conceptual framework, scoring 50% (English TM/international English TM/local English TM) and 57 % (French TM) on question A1. Likewise, the responses to question A2 reveal considerable correspondence of the goals of the TM to the learners' needs. As many as 63.2% of the respondents claimed that internationally produced TM correspond to a large extent to the needs and interests of their students. By contrast, only 21.4% of the teachers maintained the same about locally produced coursebooks. This means that local TM give less encouragement to adapt the material to the needs and goals of the students.

As to the topics suitability for the interests of the students, as determined by their age, gender, environment and social setting, the figures show that TM are similar in this respect, most of them scoring "3" (to a large extent), with the exception of English textbooks and locally produced English TM. Only 37.9% of the respondents considered the reflection of gender difference in English TM as suitable to a large extent, as compared to 52.5% of the French manual users. Similarly, 21.4% of the teachers were content with the gender difference representation in locally produced coursebooks, whereas as many as 50% claimed the same about international TM.

While it appears that both English and French TM display considerable statement (rates 2, 3, 4) of their explicit cultural goals, the low figures of local English TM suggest the reverse. Thus 21.4% of the respondents stated that the goal of cultural instruction is not stated at all in locally produced materials, but only 2.6% said this about international English textbooks.

Section B of the questionnaire is concerned with the cultural content. Although materials are often seen as an important means of FLL, this is not their primary function, since language is used in real-life situations for real purposes. TM can hardly contribute to this process by including only tourism-oriented situations or isolated facts of the cultural content. The amount of such material seems to be still considerable among locally produced TM. Some 17.9% of the teachers referred to total neglect of the cultural character representation of the foreign society in locally produced coursebooks, whereas as few as 2.6% claimed this about international coursebooks. The same concerns the extent to which the cultural content is integrated into the FL course. Some 14.3% of the respondents stated that it is not integrated at all in local

coursebooks, yet the subject matter of international English and French TM invites students to discuss problematic, even negative aspects of the target language community, thus contributing to the formation of the students' own views and opinions.

Section C was designed to find out how well TM cross the so-called subject boundaries by including knowledge, namely material on the historical, geographical, political, ideological, etc., perspectives in order to convey the national identity of the target language community. Our study reveals the French and local English materials' weakness in offering useful insight into the political perspectives of the target language culture. 30% and 25% of the respondents claimed that French and local English TM respectively lack the political dimension at all, as compared to 19.7% and 15.8% of the English and international material users respectively. The emphasis of most English TM on communicative skills training results in students' lack of information about socially acceptable as opposed to taboo topics as well as cultural/racial/gender stereotypes. Some 27.3% of the teachers mentioned that English TM totally lack information concerning the taboo topics of the target language culture as compared to only 5% of the respondents using French coursebooks. Similar scores were found in the coursebook reflection of different stereotypes: English TM scoring 15% (rate "0" – not at all) against 5% of French TM. Yet such neglect of social acceptability issues on the part of coursebook authors may lead to social misdemeanours of students in real-life situations and, even worse, to stereotyping and prejudice.

Although international target language materials are generally believed, in contrast to locally produced ones, to overlook the dimension of students' own culture, this is not always the case, since 50% of the respondents mentioned inadequate reflection of their students' own culture in locally produced coursebooks. However, the low score of international TM on the same question (with 21% of the teachers claiming that students' own culture is not represented at all) proves that international TM do not always succeed in making their texts and tasks locally appropriate.

Understanding a foreign culture always entails a change of some of one's attitudes. Therefore, the focus of Section D – attitudes – aimed to explore the role of TM in developing a better understanding and tolerance of others. Often called "the hidden curriculum" (Cunningsworth 1995: 90), this dimension has an important impact on the formation of the students' value system. What transpires from the statistical tables is that international English and French TM scored well on questions D4, D5, and D6 which indicates the development of a national identity, preparation for adequate behaviour when in contact with members of other cultures as well as curiosity awakening about otherness. By contrast, the low scores of local English TM on all questions suggest their relative inadequacy to develop the students' tolerance/empathy

towards otherness as well as to challenge their stereotyped views. 21.4% and 25% of the respondents maintained their materials' total failure to develop tolerance and empathy towards otherness, respectively, as compared to only 5.2% and 5.3% of international coursebook users. Some 53.6% of the respondents claimed that their TM do not really challenge the students' existing stereotypes, whereas only 21.1% maintained the same about international TM. It can be concluded that local TM tend to incorporate tourism-oriented situations and lack problematic, or even negative social and cultural, aspects of the foreign society.

Section D tackled the presence of intercultural awareness in the TM structure. The FLL process invariably involves learners in comparison, since whenever we encounter a foreign culture, we attempt to understand it in terms of our own cultural background. Rather than focusing students' attention on a foreign culture only, the learners should also be encouraged to consider mutual representations of their own and the foreign culture. In other words, TM should offer students some opportunities to reflect on their own culture as seen from the outside. As to comparison of the two cultures, all TM tend to reflect it to a large extent: 37.9% of English TM, 52.5% of French TM, 36.9% of international English TM and 39.3% of locally produced TM users claim this. By contrast, mutual representations of the students' own and foreign culture are either inadequately reflected (30.3% of English TM, 25% of French TM and 28.9% of international TM) or totally neglected (28.6% of local TM).

Section F, while analysing the culture-and-language dimension, as reflected in the materials' structure, shows local English materials' total failure to develop students' awareness of paralinguistic means (35.7%) and relative inadequacy to teach students appropriate register (39.3%), as well as to achieve authenticity of the texts or tapes (53.6%).

Interviews

In order to investigate the abovementioned issues further, thirty-six teachers of English and French were selected for semi-structured interviews in Estonia, Lithuania, Norway and Malta.

All teachers agreed that most of the TM evaluated at intermediate level of secondary education in the respective countries include intercultural activities, but the extent of this incorporation varies greatly from coursebook to coursebook. On the positive side, it was admitted that many TM comprise sections entitled "Culture matters" (*Cambridge English for School*), or "Culture corner", and even "Comparing cultures" (*Opportunities*), the aim of which is to provide cultural input about the English-speaking countries, but with an intercultural element, encouraging thus students'

reflection on the differences between the target cultures and their own. Moreover, *Opportunities* – a specially designed secondary school coursebook for central and eastern Europe – presents culture as the third strand of its overall thematic input. However, in most cases, with the exception of locally produced TM in Norway, the goal of the cultural instruction was not explicitly stated. Thus, 56% of the teachers of French in Malta claimed the subordinate nature of the cultural instruction provided by *Fréquence Jeune I* and *II*.

As to the topic content, teachers mentioned that these were usually appealing to teenagers, ranging from real-life situations (for example, home, family life, parties, sports, travelling, holidays, fashion, etc.) to adventure (for example, virtual tourism and extreme sports) and humour (a variety of cartoon characters). In addition, many TM such as *Snapshot*, *Opportunities*, etc., include serious social issues like disability and racism, homelessness, emigration and immigration, stimulating students to reflect, and providing opportunities for exchanges of ideas. By contrast, some TM use such potentially engaging topics mainly as examples of language study. For instance, the locally produced coursebook *All the World's a Stage* (Estonia) instructs students to listen to a text about the crucial problems of the world and write down the problems.

Another area of concern among teachers which emerged during the interviews was stereotypical representation of other cultures. Thus *All the World's a Stage* presents Britain as a leisure society. *Blueprint One*, in an attempt to teach the comparative degrees of adjectives goes to extremes. By listing all the reasons for going abroad – the weather is better, the food is better ... than in Britain – it succeeds in producing an anti-advertisement for that country.

As to character portrayal, coursebooks tend to introduce groups of teenage characters for learners to identify with. Teachers who used *Snapshot Pre-Intermediate* and *Intermediate* were surprised to find a scarce representation of the multicultural nature of the target cultures. So six out of seven characters in *Snapshot Intermediate* were white. Even a young boy, Jake, who came from Cape Town with a South African surfing team was blue eyed and fair haired. Was it because of his hobby – surfing – which is also stereotypically the domain of white boys?

As far as the coursebook representation of social values is concerned, the value system of the target culture was sometimes found to be at variance with students' own cultural values. So one Lithuanian teacher mentioned that the text "Climbing is our life" (*Snapshot Pre-Intermediate*) describes two English schoolgirls planning to make mountain climbing their hobby. The question raised was how many schoolchildren, especially in eastern Europe, could afford to go training and climbing in the Swiss Alps as those girls did. In the same vein, *Blueprint One*, *Two* and *Intermediate* include many

references to drinking, smoking, eating in restaurants and taking a taxi in London. Therefore, there is danger that coursebook contexts could be viewed quite differently across various countries.

In terms of intercultural activities teachers were pleased to notice that many TM get students to relate topics and texts to their own lives, views and feelings, and compare their own culture with that of other cultures, succeeding thus in personalising the learning process and making the tasks culturally more appropriate. For example, in *New Blueprint Intermediate* students were required to present mutual representations of their own stereotypes and those of other nationalities.

Summary of results

To sum it up, the following strengths and weaknesses in FL coursebook exploitation were detected in the course of our interviews:

Positive trends:

- an increase in attempts to include intercultural activities;
- an attempt to create reality in coursebook texts by including serious social issues;
- an attempt to personalise the FLL process by providing opportunities for exchanges of views;
- a large range of accents and voices which provides good listening practice;
- a variety of genres and text types.

Negative trends:

- subordination of the goal of culture teaching to other goals;
- the absence of controversial social issues in texts and activities;
- tourism-oriented representation of the cultural character of the foreign society;
- stereotypical representation of target cultures as well as students' own;
- the excessive focus on language form, and the neglect of intercultural communication;
- the obvious scripting of listening texts;
- the Anglo-centric focus of coursebooks.

What transpired from our interviews was that the existence of cultural input in the TM does not automatically entail its exploitation. As one interviewee admitted it is the teacher who decides how to use a particular coursebook. What is important to note in this respect is that a coursebook should become a tool in the hands of a teacher who must know not only how to use it, but also how useful interculturally it can be. By having a clear idea of cultural goals of FL instruction as well as bearing in mind the

students' interests and needs, the teachers should try to use their TM critically as well as creatively.

Guidelines for FLT materials supplementation and adaptation from an intercultural perspective

Critical engagement with the coursebook as “a cultural artefact” (Gray 2000) would entail a number of options:

- omit and replace material if the cultural content is inappropriate;
- adapt topics and activities to suit the cultural goals of a lesson;
- add material, either in the form of texts or exercises, if there is inadequate or insufficient coverage of the topic;
- modify material to make it culturally more appropriate.

Thus one option would be to omit a culturally inappropriate text or activity. However, Hyde (1994 quoted in Gray 2000: 278) argues strongly against the idea of censorship. He maintains that, however well intentioned, it robs students of the ability to defend themselves against culturally unacceptable concepts or statements. Hyde (1994 quoted in McKay 2002: 94) suggests a reflective approach instead in which students' attention would be drawn “to their own history and culture, as well as to those of the target culture, in order to explain and contrast the difference”. This involves devising tasks which would equip students with an awareness of difference as well as with strategies for coping with such difference (Hyde 1998 quoted in Alptekin 2002: 63).

Wallace (1992 quoted in Gray 2000: 280-281), for example, proposes the strategy of “finding the right answer” which would encourage students to interrogate texts (as well as cultures which produce these texts) in the following way:

- Why is the topic being written about?
- How is the topic being written about?
- What other ways of writing about the topic are there?

Virtually all topics carry cultural messages, and teachers should not ignore them. Comparison of different cultures could be done via topics that students are familiar with, such as food, sport, clothing, body language, superstitions, etc. (for ideas see Gill and Čanková 2002).

Students may make a list of all the groups they belong to – family, club, sport, etc. – and discuss what makes each group different from the others in terms of clothing, rules, place, activities, etc. (Woodward 2001: 103).

Students could discuss proverbs, sayings and idiomatic expressions and explore the parallels in different languages. In addition, to make students aware of different levels of politeness, the teacher can present them contrasting expressions (for example, “Get that reader for me” versus “Do you think you could get that reader for me?”) and have the students discuss the differences between the utterances, the situations in which they might be used, and who the speaker and hearer are likely to be. Good cultural insights can also be found in newspaper headlines, advertisements, editorials, and comics pages.

On a more sophisticated note, teachers could use Hofstede’s and Trompenaars’ frameworks to set students thinking where the different cultures, including their own, stand on variables such as individualism versus collectivism/power distance/uncertainty avoidance/masculinity versus femininity (Hofstede 1991); or universalism versus particularism/collectivism versus individualism (Trompenaars 1994).

Conclusion

The abovementioned does not pretend to be a thorough analysis of the present status of culture teaching as reflected in FL instructional materials. Our aim in this article is not to generalise from the results of such a comparatively small-scale questionnaire study and interviews – rather, to suggest that this is a field which deserves further research. Our study attempted to provide teachers with a tool for evaluating FL coursebooks and view teachers’ attitudes concerning culture teaching with various FL TM. Although the material presented in most TM serves the purpose of making students conscious of certain aspects of culture, either target culture or their own; the second – comparative stage – should be highlighted. Students should be aware that different cultures provide different cultural frameworks. Through the process of comparison and contrast learners will gain access to more diverse ways of seeing the world, as well as to better understanding of their own culture. They will become culture learners, less ethnocentric, and more culturally relativist. Clearly, FL teachers will find it worth considering intercultural practices in their educational context.

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Appendix – Teaching Materials Evaluation Guide (coursebooks, workbooks/activity books, cassettes, CDs, videotapes, teacher manuals)

General descriptive information

Name of the teaching material (TM): _____

Author: _____

Date/place of publication: _____

Rating scale:

- 4 Completely
- 3 To a large extent
- 2 To some extent
- 1 Not really
- 0 Not at all

please tick

A. Rationale: aims, goals and interests of the teaching materials		
1. To what extent are the aims and goals of the TM (teaching materials) geared to the conceptual framework of the students (as determined by their age, social class, cultural background)?	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
	0	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. To what extent do the aims and goals of the TM correspond to the needs and goals of the students?	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
	0	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. To what extent do the TM cover a variety of topics suitable to the interests of the students, as determined		
a) by their age	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
	0	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) sex (female/male)	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
	0	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) environment (rural/urban)	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
	0	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) social setting (middle class/working class/farmers)?	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
	0	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. To what extent is the goal of the cultural instruction stated (for example, if it is primary to other goals, give a 3 or 4, if secondary, give a 1 or 0)?	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
	0	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. Cultural content		
1. To what extent do the TM reflect the cultural character of the foreign society (for example, if they also include negative or problematic social or cultural aspects, give a 3 or 4, but if they only incorporate tourism-oriented situations, give a 1 or 0 depending on the amount and type of information)?	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
	0	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. To what extent is the cultural content integrated in the course (for example, if it is presented in context, give a 3 or 4, if only as isolated facts, give a 1 or 0)?	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
	0	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. To what extent are the characters in the TM representative of the foreign society with regard to,	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
a) their age	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
	0	<input type="checkbox"/>

b) their social class	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
	0	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) their interests	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
	0	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) their mentality	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
	0	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) their family situation	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
	0	<input type="checkbox"/>

C. Presentation of content: knowledge		
1. To what extent is the historical perspective present to explain the national identity of the target language culture(s)?	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
	0	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. To what extent is the geographical perspective present to explain certain features of the national character of the target language culture(s)?	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
	0	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. To what extent are the political (also ideological, and religious) perspectives of the target language culture(s) taken into consideration?	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
	0	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. To what extent do the TM offer insight into the creative arts of the target language culture(s)?	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
	0	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. To what extent do the TM offer insight into a variety of cultures (for example, British, American, Indian, African, etc.)?	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
	0	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. To what extent do the TM offer insight into a variety of sub-cultural groups (namely, professions)?	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
	0	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. To what extent do the TM offer insight into the socially acceptable or taboo topics of the target language culture(s)?	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
	0	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. To what extent do the TM offer insight into the cultural/racial/gender stereotypes?	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
	0	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. To what extent do the TM offer insight into the students' own culture?	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
	0	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. To what extent do the TM offer insight into socio-political problems of the target language culture(s) (unemployment, pollution, etc.)?	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
	0	<input type="checkbox"/>
D. Presentation of content: attitudes		
1. To what extent do the TM develop tolerance towards otherness?	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
	0	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. To what extent do the TM develop empathy towards otherness?	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
	0	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. To what extent do the TM challenge the students' existing stereotypes?	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
	0	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. To what extent do the TM develop a feeling of the national identity (and an awareness of being a member of an international community as well)?	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
	0	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. To what extent do the TM encourage curiosity about the other culture(s)?	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
	0	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. To what extent do the TM prepare students to behave adequately when in contact with the members of other culture(s)?	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
	0	<input type="checkbox"/>

E. Presentation of content: intercultural awareness		
1. To what extent do the TM encourage students to compare the foreign culture with their own (namely, to observe and analyse similarities and differences between their own and the foreign culture)?	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
	0	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. To what extent do the TM offer mutual representations, images and stereotypes of the students' own and the foreign culture?	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
	0	<input type="checkbox"/>
F. Presentation of content: culture and language		
1. To what extent does the cultural context of the TM develop students' awareness of different linguistic means to express their attitudes?	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
	0	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. To what extent do the TM develop students' awareness of the paralinguistic means to express their attitudes?	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
	0	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. To what extent do the TM teach the register appropriate to the students' needs (formal-informal, slang, regional idioms, etc.)?	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
	0	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. To what extent is the material used in the texts, exercises, tapes, etc., authentic?	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
	0	<input type="checkbox"/>

Introducing *Mirrors and windows*: an intercultural communication textbook

Ildikó Lázár

The result of the research and development work carried out by one of the networks in Project 1.2.3. of the medium-term programme of activities supported by the European Centre for Modern Languages is an intercultural communication textbook entitled *Mirrors and windows*. The book was written by an intercultural team of teacher educators including Martina Huber-Kriegler from Austria, Ildikó Lázár from Hungary and John Strange from the UK/Netherlands with contributions from many other teacher trainers from several countries.

The aim of this textbook is to assist trainers and teachers in integrating ICC training in language education by providing them with teaching materials with an intercultural focus. The main objective is to help the readers reflect on their own culture and then discover other cultures and the relationships between these. They are first invited to look in the mirror at their own culture, and then out of the window at other cultures they may be interested in or want to interact with.

Rationale

The authors of *Mirrors and windows* all work in teacher education in different countries. As teacher educators they have encountered many pre-service teachers who were highly inexperienced in intercultural communication. Despite their grammatical and lexical competence in the foreign language, they did not know how to handle cultural difference. Intercultural experiences pose inevitable challenges to one's personal identity and communication skills. One has to learn how to deal with unexpectedness, ambiguity and otherness as well as the resulting culture bumps or culture shock. The knowledge, skills and attitudes that are necessary for successful intercultural communication have to be observed, discussed and practised. *Mirrors and windows* is a practical textbook that intends to help the trainer, the teacher and the learner in this process by encouraging culture-general discussions about culture with a small "c" in a reflective manner.

As it has been emphasised in the other articles in this volume, language teachers generally recognise the importance of intercultural competence for communication in a foreign language, and its significance in foreign language teaching. It is generally agreed that intercultural awareness-raising and intercultural communication training should be systematically integrated in the teaching process. As regards language

coursebooks, there seems to be an increase in attempts to include intercultural activities, but the goal of culture teaching is usually subordinated to other goals; the cultural content is often confined to tourist-oriented representations of the foreign society and stereotypical descriptions of target cultures are still quite common. With *Mirrors and windows* the authors would like to fill a gap: the stories, tasks and exercises in the book are designed to help explore cultural differences, to provide information about small “c” culture in other countries, to question stereotypes and to discourage judgmental thinking.

The authors believe that it is of great importance to increase intercultural understanding in the world, and incorporating ICC in teacher training programmes should be one of the first steps in this process. Making intercultural communication training an integral part of teacher education would have a beneficial multiplier effect in the field of education and beyond.

Structure and topics

The textbook consists of seven units, each dealing with a different topic. The units are independent of each other and can be used in any order. Related topics dealt with in language lessons could determine the choice of unit for examination and discussion. The units can also be related to the themes suggested by the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*. The topics covered in the book are time, food and drink, conversation and silence, gender issues, love, children, and school.

Each unit starts with an introduction which gives general information about the topic of the unit. The next section is entitled “Reflecting on your own culture” which helps the learners hold up a mirror to make them reflect on their own values, customs, behaviours and attitudes with the help of tasks, questions and cartoons. The third section in each unit is called “Discovering other cultures” and it contains reading passages about other cultures as well as ethnographic tasks and project ideas to foster independent learning and openness towards other cultures. The last section in each unit is “Language work”, and it consists of activities where students can learn more about language through culture.

The teacher’s notes at the end of the book contain some extra information in the form of notes for the teacher or trainer. These notes give additional information on the topic of each unit, helpful hints for organising awareness-raising discussions and activities, and extra ideas for role-playing, critical incidents and other activities for those who want to spend more time on exploring any of the topics. An annotated bibliography at the end of the book gives ideas for further reading, including theoretical and practical books as well as literary texts that help intercultural learning

Target audience

Mirrors and windows has been prepared with language teachers and intercultural communication trainers in mind, but can be used by teacher trainers, teacher trainees and secondary school teachers of any subject. It is in English, which is now widely used as a means of intercultural communication and negotiation, but the ideas and principles can apply to any intercultural situation and the activities can be used by learners and speakers of other languages, too.

It can be utilised in teacher education as a practical coursebook on intercultural communication, or as supplementary material in language development and methodology courses. It can also be used with teenagers and adults in upper-intermediate and advanced language classes as supplementary material, but most activities can be adapted to lower levels, too. It is also suitable for individual self-study and as the basis for project work.

The writing process

The way the book was written is also quite unusual, or at least the authors had never written books in this manner before. Firstly, a group of five teacher educators, who had never met before, began brainstorming the idea of a practical intercultural communication textbook at a workshop in Graz. The five teacher educators all came from different cultures, hundreds of kilometres away from one another. By definition, there were a number of intercultural, and probably interpersonal, differences among the future writers. During the subsequent phases of the writing process there were a few misunderstandings and culture bumps, but finally, the book was written by three of the teacher trainers with valuable feedback and contributions from many others in the project.

Secondly, the book was largely written via email. Hundreds of electronic messages and attachments were sent from one author to the other and back for comments and revision and then back again for proofreading and further ideas. *Mirrors and windows* was written with only three short meetings to discuss content, structure and style in person. The rest of the brainstorming, writing, discussing and rewriting was done through electronic correspondence.

Innovative features of the textbook

Mirrors and windows is innovative in nature from several viewpoints. Firstly, the aim of the “Reflecting on your own culture” sections is to make students see themselves from the outside. Readers are made to reflect on their own customs, values and attitudes with the help of questions, tasks and cartoons.

Secondly, in the “Discovering other cultures” sections, there are short reading passages about people in other countries. What is unusual about these passages is that contrary to a great number of language books and supplementary materials, they are not about the typical (?) white, middle-class, British (or American), Christian male (or female). Just to list a few examples, these stories include accounts of the experiences of African researchers in Austria, the story of a South African woman taking a driving test in Greece, the adventures of a British teacher getting hungry at the wrong times in Poland and the experiences of Hungarian children.

The tasks and questions that follow the readings invite students to explore cultural differences in attitudes to time, eating, or child rearing, and to discuss gender roles, romantic relationships, conversational styles or educational problems in different cultures. Each unit contains ethnographic tasks and projects where students are asked, for example, to interview people from other cultures about a certain topic, to watch soap operas critically, to collect examples of intercultural differences from literature or to observe differences in gestures.

In the “Language work” section of each unit, students are invited to read and think about how culture is reflected in language. Although most of the examples for idioms and proverbs are taken from English in the activities, the authors also provided sayings and expressions from several other languages for comparison. It is not uncommon in the book to find examples from German, Hungarian, Estonian or Polish, for instance. The aim is of course to raise awareness of cultural differences reflected in language use as well as to familiarise students with the exciting variety of cultures and languages one can encounter in the world.

Conclusion

The authors of *Mirrors and windows* intended to fill a gap in the language teaching materials market by writing a new intercultural communication textbook that can be used either as a practical coursebook or as supplementary material in a variety of contexts. This textbook is innovative in its treatment of the concepts it covers and the methods it uses to raise awareness of intercultural differences and to sensitise students to the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for successful intercultural communication.

Testing times – Testing intercultural communicative competence (ICC)¹

Raymond Facciol and Rafn Kjartansson

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 - 7.2 Work Goals Test 1: collectivism/individualism

Bibliography

¹ Additional materials to this section of the publication can be found on the ECML website <http://www.ecml.at/publications>

Introduction

1. Background

The tests in this chapter were devised within the framework of a project of the European Centre for Modern Languages entitled “Intercultural communicative competence in teacher education”. A project workshop took place in Graz on 2-7 April 2001. The final day of the workshop was devoted to the creation of six networks for continued research into different aspects of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in education, such as syllabus and course design, the creation of teaching materials, teachers’ attitudes to ICC, coursebook evaluation with regard to ICC content and methods of assessing intercultural competence.

A team of three focused on the analysis and development of tests for assessing intercultural competence. The team members were: Raymond Facciol from the Department of Arts and Languages in Education at the University of Malta, who acted as spokesman for the team; Irina Iakovleva from Moscow State Linguistic University; and Rafn Kjartansson from the University of Akureyri in Iceland, who was the team’s co-ordinator.

The team held its first meeting in Graz on 7 April 2001. Two subsequent meetings were arranged; in Budapest from 14 to 16 December 2001 for preparatory discussions and co-ordination, and in Graz from 30 May to 2 June 2002 for a preliminary presentation of draft materials and to decide on further steps to be taken towards the final production of printed and/or website materials. The materials were by and large ready for printing by the end of October 2002.

2. Objectives

The team’s task was to consider methods of assessment in intercultural communication courses at academic institutions for teacher trainees in English as a second or foreign language. The end product of the team’s effort was to be a collection of sample tests for the purpose of assessing intercultural competence among teachers and teacher trainees who have completed a course in intercultural communication.

With the aim of a broad-based evaluation of intercultural abilities firmly in mind, it was decided early on to create tests of diverse formats since varied types of assessment are likely to provide a more comprehensive picture of the respondent’s skills and abilities. Thus, samples are included of highly objective, quantitative and numerically measurable tests of, for example, the multiple choice type. At the other end of the spectrum there are essay questions of a more qualitative nature, where there is a greater need to be alert to the possibility of a subjective element influencing the process of

assessment. These test types also vary considerably in their requirements as far as language skills are concerned, with open-ended essay type tasks being particularly suitable for linguistically advanced students.

It should be possible to assume, however, that students at university level who are preparing to become teachers of English possess language abilities of a sufficiently high level to be able to tackle tasks involving academic writing. This would not only apply to language production, but also to the receptive aspect. The multiple choice tests, for example, although not demanding as far as language production is concerned, are nevertheless based on academic texts which require vocabulary and reading skills at advanced level.

3. Assessment in teacher education

In the preparatory stage, an effort was made to gather materials relating to the testing of intercultural skills at academic level. It was soon discovered, however, that such materials are not easy to come by and the team found it rather difficult to unearth bibliographies relating to intercultural assessment, as, in fact, assessment in general. According to McMillan (2000), “There continues to be relatively little emphasis on assessment in the professional development of teachers and administrators.”

There could be a simple psychological explanation for this state of affairs. In teacher education, assessment may be seen as a poor motivator with low powers of attraction. Teachers are motivated to organise courses and teaching materials, work out interesting ways of presenting knowledge, explain problems to their students and discuss possible solutions. All of the above share the common feature of being positive, supportive roles, the chief aim of which is to assist, encourage and motivate their students. Assessment, on the other hand, with its judgmental overtones, sows the seeds of tension and anxiety; feelings that are not generally regarded as conducive to learning.

Tanner (2001: 1) points out that “People are rarely attracted to the primary or secondary school classroom out of a desire to evaluate student performance. It is teaching or helping that they enjoy and that usually becomes their focus.

Often a minimum amount of time is spent on assessment or “grading”, which is seen as a necessary evil. So, perhaps assessment is in a sense the orphan of the educational process.

This is indeed an unsatisfactory state of affairs, since assessment is an inevitable follow-up to training. Curriculum design and evaluation procedures are like two sides of the same coin. It should also be kept in mind that when teachers are evaluating the

performance of their students, they are also indirectly assessing their own performance as well as the quality of the course in question. Thus, there are strong arguments for devoting proper care and consideration to assessment when preparing any course of study.

In relation to teacher training, special emphasis should be placed on this aspect, since evaluation plays a vital role in the job of teaching. This does not only relate to grading student performance. The teacher also needs training in the objective assessment of his own performance and the quality of his teaching materials. This element of self-assessment is a strong feature in the concept of reflective teaching which has recently come to be seen as an important aspect of teacher training.

4. Criteria for evaluating tests

According to Alexander (1968: 44), “The results on which so much depends are often nothing more than a subjective assessment by some anonymous examiner. Examiners are only human. They get tired and hungry; they make mistakes. Yet they have to mark stacks of hastily scrawled scripts in a limited amount of time.”

A frequent criticism of assessment methods relates to this lack of reliability. It is often maintained that examinations do not focus on the skills and abilities that are seen as a desirable outcome of a particular course. As briefly mentioned above, one way of trying to ensure reliability is to include as many tests of different types as possible; for example, by testing both on a qualitative and quantitative basis. Such collections of tests, given at intervals during the course, may be built up into a portfolio of the student’s performance, rather than presenting them with one examination at the end of term, perhaps focusing on a limited range of skills.

The related concept of authenticity warrants similar considerations. Two definitions are possible here, however, since tests can be authentic in the sense of corresponding closely to the programme of instruction and emphasising areas of study that were given priority during the course. The other definition relates the concept of authenticity to realistic context, that is true-to-life situations. In vocational courses, this type of authenticity is of overriding importance and usually not too difficult to arrange (carpenter, motor mechanic). In an academic context, this can be a more complex matter. How authentic is the testing of intercultural competence on the basis of literary texts, for example? Presumably this depends to a great extent on the ability of the literary writer to create life-like situations, mirrors of reality, for the student to consider and analyse. Critical incidents or culture assimilators are based on authentic circumstances and tests like “Discovering facts” in this collection place the student directly into a realistic situation and would, as a consequence, score high on authenticity.

A third concept of high importance in assessment is validity. To a certain extent, this may be an undue simplification of a complex issue, but a test or assessment technique that is both authentic and reliable is also very likely to fulfil the third criterion of validity. In other words, it should be reasonably safe to regard such forms of assessment as plausible predictors of student performance in real circumstances. As has already been emphasised, diverse testing methods are often seen as a way of approaching the three criteria outlined above.

According to Fantini and Smith (1997: 141) the majority of teachers of intercultural courses appear to make use of variety in assessment techniques. It is interesting to note their conclusion, however, that essays appear to be the most frequently used method of evaluation. The weakness of essay tasks has already been noted, namely risk of subjectivity and emphasis on language ability, the assessment of which may take precedence over the skills that the essay was actually intended to test. Using diverse methods of assessment should help to counteract this problem, especially when the tasks are spread over a period of time (formative evaluation), so that the students' long-term performance is being assessed, not merely how well they manage on one particular morning or afternoon. (summative evaluation). In this context, it is worth drawing attention to the fact that strictly objective, numerically oriented tasks, like multiple choice or short answer tests, are now easily processed by means of technology and feature prominently in teaching packages (for example, WebCT). One might, therefore, expect to see their use increase considerably in the near future.

In spite of the advantages of such tests, however, with respect to rapid processing and grading, their quality is a matter of increasing controversy. Important flaws have been pointed out, such as the risk of guesswork and the impossibility of testing open-ended issues. It would appear that perhaps the most serious weakness of numerically oriented tests is the difficulty of adapting them to the assessment of higher order thinking skills. Appelbaum (1988), cited by Palomba and Banta (1999), reports in relation to multiple choice testing that "This form of test item rarely, if ever, operates beyond the level of simple recall and recognition."

5. Using the tests

Methods of assessment have to be relevant to the training materials presented to the students and they have to reflect the skills that are seen as a desirable outcome of the training process. With this in mind, it is possible to regard the collection of tests in this chapter as capable of double function; that is suitable for use as training materials as well as methods of testing the outcome of an intercultural course. To help ensure authenticity, the test package is of diverse character and groups of tests can easily be combined into portfolios, spreading the evaluation process over a period of time.

6. What is being tested

It is of prime importance, when composing tests, to establish very clearly which competences are being assessed. In the definition of intercultural competence, the team initially paid heed to a threefold division, namely intercultural knowledge, awareness and skills (Hofstede 1994). The first two stages are mainly theoretical. In a successful intercultural communication course, a third stage of a more practical character should ensue; that is translating knowledge and awareness into action whereby new skills and attitudes have developed that help to build up the ability to function successfully in different cultures and communities.

The test package contains several examples of knowledge-oriented tasks with reference to academic texts that would be likely to feature in intercultural courses. (Hall 1973; Hofstede 1994). As we are fully conscious of the fact that educators will never manage to impart all the knowledge necessary to cater for the future needs of their students, it becomes obvious that skills to respond to different situations are as important, if not more important, than the knowledge itself. Skills or methods of obtaining knowledge of an intercultural character can be tested by creating a scenario placing the student in an authentic situation where gathering of intercultural knowledge is required. Examples of such tests are the tasks entitled “Discovering facts” (for example, you are spending a six month period in country X. Present a comprehensive list of sources of information which should cater at least for your initial needs during these months.).

Awareness of cultural differences engenders new attitudes and attitudinal testing is a much more subtle issue than the direct and fairly straightforward testing of knowledge or the acquisition of skills. The assessor is certainly on slippery ground here, although there is an area which one can venture into, namely that of asking the student to describe and analyse other people’s attitudes. In our collection, tests of this type may for example be found in relation to analysing aspects of literary works, as well as in the critical incident or culture assimilator, “The committee from Kuwait”. Cushner and Brislin (1996) provide a rich source of such incidents, exemplifying how a misinterpretation of events can lead to clashes between members of different cultures.

Literature provides a rich source for attitudinal study and analysis as exemplified by tests relating to poems (*Mending Wall, If and i am a door*), short stories (*A Man Called Horse*) and novels (*The English Patient, To Kill a Mockingbird and Walkabout*). Of course, attitudinal assessment on the basis of literary works, automatically includes testing the students’ factual knowledge of the work itself.

Another aspect of attitudinal testing is asking the students to describe and analyse their own attitudes. This can be done by essays or extended answers, for example referring

to topics like racism, ethnocentricity and xenophobia. The problem with such conscious expression of attitudes, however, relates to the fact that the persons being tested are aware of the implicit desirable attitudes that should be expressed in the test. Thus the tests may yield what the students think the examiner wants to see, instead of their genuine feelings and attitudes. In other words, we might well have a conflict between “the desired” (what people really want) and “the desirable” (what people think is right and proper to express).

A more reliable method of attitude testing may be posing a series of individual questions which in combination build up a picture of an attitude, although the person answering the questions may not realise that this is happening. Examples of this type of assessment may be work goals tests 1 and 2 from Hofstede’s (1994: 51-52 and 81-82) analysis of cultural dimensions which can help identify a student’s cultural orientation (for example, collectivist/individualist). Tests of this type would of course be used only to illustrate cultural differences, and not as a basis for grading, since cultural biases cannot be classified as right or wrong.

The above ideas on establishing categories of tests according to what is being tested only operate at a very basic level, however. For a more detailed framework of analysis the reader is advised to consult Byram (1997: 87-111), who provides a detailed framework for analysing tests according to the precise skills and abilities they are supposed to assess: for example, equality, culture shock, perception of time, ability to understand own culture, use sources to understand culture, etc.

7. Peer assessment

One of the methods of intercultural assessment listed by Fantini and Smith (1997: 141) is student presentations. We have not specifically included topics for presentations in our collection. It should be pointed out, however, that some of the essay tasks, for example, analysing intercultural aspects of literary works (*To Kill a Mockingbird* and *The English Patient*) would be equally well suited for oral presentation, giving instructors the option to select the method best suited to their class and course requirements.

The aim of a presentation is to inform or influence an audience. It is this very audience that must be the best judge of the presenter’s performance. A student giving a presentation before his peers should be assessed by them. Authenticity, reflecting the real world, is a key concept in educational practice and assessment by audience is the most authentic evaluation of a presenter’s performance.

It would seem particularly appropriate to include this mode of assessment in a teacher training course, since evaluation is such an important aspect of a teacher’s day-to-day

work. The fact that assessment appears to be a neglected element in teacher training should lend particular weight to this argument.

8. Conclusion

It is our hope that the materials presented here² will be of some help to educators in the field of intercultural studies, either for the purpose of training or testing, or, ideally, combining both of these uses. A final, and perhaps the most important, objective of this package is to suggest ways of compiling additional tests, using, for example, other academic texts and different literary works of an intercultural character. Of such works there will be no shortage in the treasure trove of international literature in English.

² Additional materials to this section of the publication can be found on the ECML website <http://www.ecml.at/publications>

The culture dimension of power distance

Hofstede, *Culture and Organisations*, Chapter 2

Please note that for each question there is one correct answer.

1. Successful artists and scientists usually enjoy

- wealth
- power
- status

2. In small power distance countries, the emotional distance between bosses and subordinates is relatively

- large
- small
- hostile

3. In large power distance cultures, children are supposed to be

- gentle
- hard working
- obedient

4. With a higher level of education, power distance tends to

- increase
- remain unchanged
- decrease

5. In small power distance cultures, subordinates expect to be

- left alone
- consulted
- told what to do

6. In large power distance cultures, the middle class is usually

- large
- non-existent
- small

7. In small power distance cultures, the prevailing political ideologies stress

- hierarchy
- equality
- stratification

8. In large power distance cultures, inequalities among people are

- expected
- minimised
- ignored

9. In large power distance cultures, subordinates and superiors consider each other as relatively

- intimate
- equal
- distant

10. In large power distance cultures, the educational process tends to be

- teacher-centred
- homework-centred
- student-centred

The culture dimension of uncertainty avoidance

Hofstede, *Culture and Organisations*, Chapter 2

Please note that in each question all answers may be correct, incorrect or any combination of correct and incorrect.

1. Britain and Germany differ markedly in their tolerance of

- the unpredictable
- the climate
- queuing
- imprecision
- deviant ideas

2. Extreme uncertainty creates intolerable

- optimism
- anxiety
- ambiguity
- aggression
- idealism

3. In many societies, feelings of certainty are based on

- religion
- television
- neighbourly gossip
- the law
- the newspapers

4. In low uncertainty avoidance cultures, people tend to favour

- grand theories
- religious fundamentalism
- conservatism
- nationalism
- strong belief in experts

5. Feelings of uncertainty are

- inherited
- universal
- learned
- non-rational
- subject to fluctuation

6. The uncertainty avoidance index (UAI) measures tolerance of

- deviant behaviour
- ambiguity
- confrontation
- lateness for an appointment
- open-ended learning situations

7. The more expressive cultures tend to be

- indifferent to religious ideas
- northern in geographical location
- heterogeneous
- easily influenced by outsiders
- lenient in relation to upbringing

8. In countries with a strong UAI, people may well appear to strangers as

- reserved
- easygoing
- aggressive
- fidgety
- relaxed

9. Strong uncertainty avoidance cultures may show a tendency towards

- xenophobia
- rule orientation
- emotional repression
- quietness
- low average alcohol consumption

10. Members of a low uncertainty avoidance culture

- have an inner urge to work hard
- tend to be comfortable when lazy
- are clearly motivated by security
- believe that time is money
- frequently feel that what is different is curious

The culture dimension of collectivism versus individualism

Only one of the answers provided for each of the ten questions which follow is correct. Tick the answer which is appropriate.

1. To succeed in business negotiations in a collectivist culture it is most important

- to be able to present an impressive CV
- to demonstrate speed and efficiency
- to be accepted as a member of the in-group

2. The most common type of family in individualistic cultures is

- the extended family
- the nuclear family
- the one-parent family

3. One of the following is an important “work goal” in a collectivist culture

- personal time
- challenge
- physical conditions

4. One of the following is an important “work goal” in an individualistic culture

- freedom
- training
- use of skills

5. Individualistic cultures tend to be

- poor
- prosperous
- unconcerned with money

6. On a worldwide basis, collectivism is

– the rule

– the exception

– obsolete

7. ... is a key virtue in a collectivist culture

– truthfulness

– punctuality

– harmony

8. In individualistic cultures, people tend to be embarrassed by long

– speeches

– periods of silence

– dinner parties

9. In a collectivist culture, a manager would tend to favour employees that are

– highly experienced

– related to him

– well educated

10. In individualistic cultures, people show a strong preference for

– liberty

– equality

– nepotism

Poem: *i am a door*

N. Rao

1. Explain the “door” metaphor that is central to the poem.
.....
.....
.....

2. Discuss the pain/pleasure paradox of the bicultural person as illustrated by the poem.
.....
.....
.....

3. Focus on the “very Indian” and “very American” phenomena listed in the text. Explain which of these seem to you particularly indicative of Indian/American culture, giving reasons for your choices.
.....
.....
.....

Poem: *Mending Wall*

Robert Frost

1. General comprehension of text:

In your own words, write a summary of approximately 200 words of the incident described in the poem.

2. Poet's attitude to the task at hand:

“Something there is that doesn't love a wall.” Show how the poet describes his own attitude to mending the wall, using quotations from the poem to illustrate your argument, with a special emphasis on the significance of imagery.

3. Poet's attitude to his neighbour:

“Good fences make good neighbours.” Illustrate how the poet describes his neighbour's attitude to the spring ritual of wall-mending, pointing out any significant imagery.

4. Your own attitude:

Do you see a contradiction at the core of the poem? Assess the fairness and objectivity of the poet's point of view.

5. Intercultural skills:

Discuss how this poem could be used, by means of its story line and imagery, to illustrate aspects of intercultural communication and how things may go wrong in the absence of such communication.

Novel: *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Harper Lee

Quotes for comment:

1. “But he’s gone and drowned his dinner in syrup.” (p. 25)

Suggest three or four examples from the story of inappropriate behaviour in an unfamiliar situation and assess the reactions to such behaviour.

2. “You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view – until you climb into his skin and walk round in it.” (p. 31)

Demonstrate how this statement relates to events in the story and discuss its importance for the development of intercultural skills.

3. “Are you being impudent to me boy? (p. 198)

Analyse the techniques Mr Gilmer employs to humiliate Tom Robinson during his cross-examination.

4. “I felt right sorry for her, she seemed to try more’n the rest of ’em.” (p. 197)

Focus on the impact of this remark at Tom Robinson’s trial.

5. “Now what if I talked white-folks talk at church, and with my neighbours? They’d think I was putting on airs to beat Moses.” (p. 126)

Comment on the way Calpurnia manages to adapt to two very different cultures in Maycomb.

6. “Everybody in Maycomb, it seemed, had a Streak: a Drinking Streak, a Gambling Streak, a Mean Streak, a Funny Streak.” (p. 129)

Discuss the theme of stereotyping within the Maycomb community.

7. “In Maycomb, if one went for a walk with no definite purpose in mind, it was correct to believe one’s mind incapable of definite purpose.” (p. 149)

With reference to incidents in the novel, discuss the importance of conforming to established customs and avoiding what may be regarded as deviant behaviour.

8. “Atticus said it was the polite thing to talk to people about what they were interested in, not about what you were interested in.” (p. 154)

Discuss the importance of this approach, preferably with examples, in relation to intercultural communication.

Novel: *Walkabout*
James Vance Marshall

1. At what point do you consider that the misunderstanding between the girl and the aboriginal boy started?

Supply a quote to back your answer.

2. How and when does the white boy start to adapt to his changed situation?
3. Why did the aboriginal boy die?
 - was it because he was biologically unprepared for the germs carried by the whites?
 - how do you personally react to the idea of “mental euthanasia”, openly hinted at by the author?
4. What elements of (a) social structure and (b) socialisation within aboriginal culture can you identify in this novel?
5. What attitudes to nakedness can you perceive in this novel?

Comment on the significance of dress to the two cultures involved. Support your answer with relevant quotes.

Short story: *A Man Called Horse*

Dorothy M. Johnson

1. Apart from the chopping off of finger joints, what rituals manifested that a Crow was in mourning? You must mention at least three actions.
2. Can you equate any of the rituals you have just identified in Question 1 with rituals in your own culture?
3. From what you can see of Crow culture in this story, can you try to prioritise these values, from highest to lowest? (Insert the numbers 1-8 in the boxes below the value.)

Life	Material possession	Being hard working	Respect for the elderly	Sex	Honour	Physical comfort	Respect for tradition

Do you have any comments regarding the answer you have just given?

4. How would you set the same priorities with reference to your own culture?

Life	Material possession	Being hard working	Respect for the elderly	Sex	Honour	Physical comfort	Respect for tradition

Do you have any comments regarding the answer you have just given?

5. Can you notice any linguistic signs of the white man's assimilation of Indian culture?

Formulating hypotheses: culture assimilator

The committee from Kuwait

Analyse the following example of a cultural clash by evaluating the suggested explanations for the problem and choosing the one that best seems to fit the situation. State the reasons for your choices.

Thanks to modern technology, not least the invention of the aeroplane, Iceland has in the past few decades managed to end its geographical isolation out in the mid-Atlantic. The influence of globalisation is making itself felt to an ever-increasing degree and now it is possible to count on being able to buy fresh fruit from southern climates in Icelandic food stores every day of the year.

This integration with the outside world has taken place both at the commercial and political level with official visits by foreign dignitaries becoming usual and expected events within the system of administration.

One such event occurred recently, when a group of parliamentarians from Kuwait paid an official courtesy visit to the Icelandic National Assembly. They were met at Parliament House in Reykjavik by members of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Icelandic Parliament. The committee consisted of several members of parliament, some of whom happened to be of the female sex, the influence of women having increased significantly in recent years in Iceland as in other western countries.

In Iceland, shaking hands when greeting people is an old country custom and even in our hurried times when greetings have tended to become more cursory in character, Icelanders still prefer a handshake when being introduced to strangers, especially on formal occasions.

The Kuwaiti committee duly arrived at Parliament House and were cordially welcomed by their Icelandic counterparts with firm handshakes in true Icelandic fashion. There was a snag, however. The members of the all-male Kuwait group happily shook hands with the male members of the Icelandic Foreign Relations Committee but ignored the proffered hands of the ladies. This gave rise to consternation among the Icelanders and somewhat spoilt the atmosphere of an otherwise friendly and fruitful cross-cultural encounter.

Why do you think the Kuwaitis shirked away from shaking hands with the ladies?

1. The Kuwaitis did not realise the ladies were actually members of the Foreign Relations Committee and mistook them for serving maids.
2. The Kuwaitis mistook the ladies' proffered hands for sexual advances and backed away in embarrassment.
3. Shaking hands is not a usual way of greeting in Kuwait, so the Kuwaitis were a little confused and by mistake did not shake hands with some of the Icelanders.
4. In Kuwait, men and women tend to be socially segregated and it is considered immoral to touch "another man's woman".

(Taken from Cushner and Brislin 1996)

Advertisement analysis 1

Emirates airline

Analyse the following advertisement, with reference to culture of origin, target culture and cultural orientation. Focus especially on the apparent clash between target culture and culture of origin.



ALISARA SIRICHOOMSANG CHIEF EXECUTIVE BANGKOK

“Thanks, Emirates,
for the great
working lunch”

Emirates is another world, far from the stress and strain of corporate deadlines.
A world where your time is your own. Be good to yourself. Fly Emirates.


Emirates

AIRLINE OF THE YEAR 1999

OVER 150 INTERNATIONAL AWARDS, 45 INTERNATIONAL DESTINATIONS. FOR MORE DETAILS CALL YOUR LOCAL TRAVEL AGENT OR EMIRATES. www.ekgroup.com

Advertisement analysis 2

France Telecom

“Harmony should always be maintained” (Hofstede 1994: 67).

With reference to Hofstede’s dimensions of culture, identify the cultural orientation suggested in the advertisement below. Comment on its fit with the culture of origin and potential target audience.

The best way to understand someone is to share the same view.



Telecommerce. No-one pays closer attention to their customers' needs than France Telecom. Take our new e-commerce service. Because we understand that online transaction security - confidentiality, authentication and authorization, from order to delivery - is your greatest concern, we developed Telecommerce. Find out more about Telecommerce from France Telecom: www.francetelecom.fr. You'll find that the outlook for your business has never looked better.

Let's build a smarter world  France Telecom

Portfolio tasks

Discovering facts

- A1 You have just been employed with a company which organises international conferences. You are asked to organise a week-long stay for a mixed delegation of pediatricians from Indonesia. What do you think you should foresee?
- A2 You are going to spend a six-month study period in ...* Present a comprehensive list of sources of information which should cater at least for your initial needs during these months.
- A3 You are working in the human resources division of a manufacturing company which has just acquired a long-term contract from an import agency abroad. The contract stipulates a permanent representation, for quality control purposes, from the co-signatories in your own country. You have just received the nomination of their quality control representative, who informs you that he will be moving to your country for two years ... bringing his family, his wife, a qualified doctor, and two children aged 3 and 12 respectively, with him. What do you think this person will need to know?

Identify and prioritise the most important issues you would expect to have to address.

Researching socio-economic conditions

- B1 *To Kill a Mockingbird* – Harper Lee

Research and describe the social and economic situation of Afro-Americans in the United States in the 1930s. How far do your findings support the conditions described in the novel?

- B2 *To Kill a Mockingbird* – Harper Lee

Briefly analyse the impact of the Great Depression (on what?) and demonstrate how this makes itself felt in the novel.

- B3 *The Free Radio* – Salman Rushdie

Comment on the socio-political situation which you can perceive in this novel.

How far can you corroborate this with facts of your own finding?

Biographical exploration – Multicultural man

Exploring themes central to Ondaatje's novel, *The English Patient*

C1 Michael Ondaatje

A man of two cultures (India/Canada): compose a biographical summary.

C2 Laslo Almasz – fact and fiction

The real English patient. Search for biographical information on Laslo Almasz and draw out aspects of his life and character used by Ondaatje.

How far can you identify the real Almasz with the fictional character?

Write a brief essay on this.

C3 Herodotus of Halikarnassos

Write a short piece on his life, explorations and writings.

Testing story and short answer test: Open Arms

from *A Good Scent from a Strange Mountain* by Robert Olen Butler

The questions in Exercise A are designed to test your knowledge of the story. Only one of the proposed options is correct in each case.

- A. In your opinion, are these statements true or false? **T F**
- | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. The narrator feels hatred for his lost wife. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. According to the narrator, desire brings pain. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. The narrator feels that speaking English is an asset. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. The narrator has very fixed ideas about the correctness of his own beliefs. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. The narrator frequently compares Thap's presence to that of a ghost. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. The death of Thap's family undermines his basic belief in communism. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Dang Van Thap commits suicide because he misses his family. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. Although not a communist himself, the narrator admires Dang Van Thap. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. Thap's presence makes the narrator feel awkward. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. The narrator says that the Vietnamese in New Orleans are a very compact group. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

(1 x 10 marks)

Write your answers to these questions on a separate sheet.

- B. Can you trace two influences of the narrator's Buddhist upbringing in this story?
(2 x 5 marks)
- C. Quote two sentences from the story which indicate that the narrator feels integrated into his new community.
(2 x 5 marks)
- D. Identify two separate cases of conflict of values in this story and comment briefly.
(2 x 10 marks)

The voices of time

Edward T. Hall, *The Silent Language*, Chapter 1

- A. Indicate whether, according to Edward Hall, the following statements are true (T) or false (F).

Hall analyses Anglo-Americans' conception of time, and says that:

T F

1. They think of time in linear fashion.

--	--

2. Their sense of time is "clock-bound".

--	--

3. They segment and schedule time very loosely.

--	--

4. They almost feel guilty if they are doing two things simultaneously.

--	--

5. Their notion of "future" can stretch indefinitely ahead in time.

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- B. "In regard to being late there are 'mumble something' periods, slight apology periods, mildly insulting periods requiring full apology, rude periods, and downright insulting periods."

What would a person aware of intercultural differences understand by this statement? Illustrate with examples.

- C. "Different parts of the day [...] are highly significant in certain contexts. Time may indicate the importance of the occasion as well as on what level an interaction between persons is to take place."

What does the author mean by this statement? How do you feel it applies to your own culture (considering for example the use of the telephone; accepted visiting times, etc.)? Can you enhance its meaning by applying it to two different cultures?

Intercultural interactions

Cushner and Brislin 1996

A. Mark each of the following statements as true (T) or false (F)

T F

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Familiar behaviours that mark well-adjusted persons in their own culture may be seen as indicative of ill-mannered persons in new surroundings. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Most people who have had cross-cultural experiences look back on them as a disappointing, depressing part of their lives. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. There is little individual difference as to how quickly people begin to overcome the inherent difficulties of intercultural interaction. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Culture usually refers to something that is made by human beings rather than something that occurs in nature. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. In many ways culture is a secret. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Cultural values are fluid and easily changed. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. People of goodwill who live in other cultures are not in danger of behaving in discriminatory or judgmental ways. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

B. List four factors which have been seen as the key criteria of a successful intercultural adjustment.

C. Define the following concepts: ethnocentrism, objective culture, subjective culture, misattribution.

D. Briefly describe the concept of culture assimilators and explain why they are useful in intercultural training.

Work Goals Test 2: masculinity/femininity (Hofstede 1994: 81-82)

Rate each of the eight work-related situations on a scale of 0-10.

Least important 0 – most important 10.

Do not use the same grade twice.

- 1. Earnings:** Have an opportunity for high earnings.

Grade
- 2. Employment security:** Have security that you will be able to work for your company as long as you want to.

Grade
- 3. Manager:** Have a good working relationship with your direct superior.

Grade
- 4. Recognition:** Get the recognition you deserve when you do a good job.

Grade
- 5. Challenge:** Have challenging work to do – work from which you can achieve a sense of personal accomplishment.

Grade
- 6. Co-operation:** Work with people who co-operate well with one another.

Grade

7. **Advancement:** Have an opportunity for advancement to higher level jobs.

Grade

8. **Living area:** Live in an area desirable to you and your family.

Grade

Work Goals Test 1: individualism/collectivism (Hofstede 1994: 51)

Rate each of the six work-related situations on a scale of 0-10.

Least important 0 – most important 10.

Do not use the same grade twice

1. **Personal time:** Have a job which leaves you sufficient time for your personal or family life.

Grade

2. **Use of skills:** Fully use your skills and abilities on the job.

Grade

3. **Freedom:** Have considerable freedom to adopt your own approach to the job.

Grade

4. **Physical conditions:** Have good physical working conditions (ventilation, lighting, adequate work, space, etc.)

Grade

5. **Challenge:** Have challenging work to do – work from which you can achieve a sense of personal accomplishment.

Grade

6. **Training:** Have training opportunities (to improve your skills or learn new skills).

Grade

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