CULTURAL COMPETENCE AND ITS DIFFERENT COMPONENTS
IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SOCIAL ACTION-ORIENTED APPROACH
A new didactic issue

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Résumé

La « compétence interculturelle », telle qu'elle reste généralement conçue en didactique des langues-cultures, a fait l'objet depuis des années de toute une série de critiques, que l'on rappelle brièvement. Elle ne peut plus, en particulier, être opposée à la « compétence culturelle », mais doit être considérée comme l'une de ses composantes, en relation nécessaire avec deux autres composantes apparues précédemment dans la discipline, transculturelle et métaculturelle. Un modèle de compétence culturelle suffisamment complexe doit même désormais intégrer deux composantes supplémentaires, pluriculturelle et co-culturelle, parce qu'elles sont exigées par les deux nouveaux enjeux apparus dans le *Cadre Européen Commun de Référence*, à savoir le vivre ensemble et l'agir ensemble dans une Europe multilingue et multiculturelle. L'article illustre cette nouvelle problématique culturelle en didactique des langues-cultures en présentant l'exemple d'un manuel de FLE dont l'approche culturelle vise à faire travailler simultanément l'ensemble de ces composantes de la compétence culturelle.

Mots-clés : composantes de la compétence culturelle, perspective actionnelle, interculturel, co-culturel

Abstract

"Intercultural competence", as it remains generally designed in language and cultures' teaching, has been criticized, which we will briefly recall. It cannot, in particular, be opposed to the "cultural competence", but must be considered one of its components; necessary in connection with two other components previously appeared in the discipline, trans- and meta-cultural approaches. A model of cultural competence complex enough must now include two additional components: pluricultural and co-cultural because they are required by the two new issues emerged in the Common European Framework of Reference, namely living and acting together in a multilingual and multicultural Europe. The paper illustrates these new cultural issues in language and cultures' teaching by presenting the example of a FFL textbook the cultural approach of which aims to all these cultural competence components work all together.

Christian PUREN: "Cultural competence and its different components in the implementation of the social actional-oriented approach. A new didactic problem"

Keywords: cultural competence components – social action-oriented approach ("perspective actionnelle" - intercultural - co-cultural.

Introduction: a complex model of cultural competence

Communication competence has long been the subject of various component analysis models, the most recent one - which is not the most elaborate - being that of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL) of 2000, with the linguistic, pragmatic and socio-cultural components, each of these components being in turn the subject of a definition by extension: linguistic competence, for example, is itself described by its lexical, grammatical, semantic, phonological and orthographic components. On the basis of an analysis of the historical evolution of language didactics and of the current issues related to the consideration of plurilingual and pluricultural competence and to the implementation of the social action-oriented approach, I have, for my part, proposed the following model for the definition of cultural competence over the last few years[1]:

COMPONENT	DEFINITION	PRIVILEGED DOMAIN	PRIVILEGED ACTIVITIES	CORRESPONDING METHODOLOGICAL
trans-cultural	Ability to recognize in the great classical texts the "common fund of humanity" (E. Durkheim) which underlies all of "classical humanism" and nowadays the "Philosophy of Human Rights", and to recognize its counterpart in every man, beyond the diversity of cultural manifestations and claims.	universal values	*translate*: recognize	traditional methodology (until the end of the 19th century)
meta-cultural	Ability to mobilize cultural knowledge and extract new cultural knowledge about and from authentic documents studied in class or consulted at home.	*knowledge*	talk about: identify, react, analyze, interpret, extrapolate, compare, transpose, judge, evaluate	active methodology (from the 1920s to the 1960s in French school education)
inter-cultural	Ability to identify the misunderstandings that arise during initial and occasional contacts with people from another culture, due to its prior representations and interpretations linked to its own cultural reference.	representations	*speak with s.o.*: discover, communicate	communicative approach (from the 1970s to the 1990s)
pluri-cultural	Ability to live harmoniously, in a multicultural society, with people from completely or partially different cultures.	attitudes/ behaviors	*live with s.o.*	plurilingual and pluricultural methodologies (from the 1990's, and in the 2000 *CEFRL)*
co-cultural	Ability to act effectively over a long period of time with people from completely or partially different cultures, and to this end to adopt and/or create a culture of shared action ("co-culture").	conceptions, contextual values	*act with s.o.*	social action-oriented approach and (in the 2000 *CEFRL*

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[1] For a detailed presentation of this model with several examples of application as an analysis grid, I refer readers to my article PUREN 2011 (available online in French and Spanish, see bibliography). This article also contains a detailed study of the conception of cultural competence in the CEFR, based on a detailed (and critical...) analysis of all occurrences of the terms "cultural", "intercultural" and "pluricultural".

Criticism of the intercultural

Surprisingly, the definition of cultural competence has rarely received as much conceptual attention from language and culture educators as that of communicative competence, and some may conceive of it as a binary opposition between "cultural competence(s)" and "intercultural competence(s)":

1) as if there is no "inside" in any culture;

-No culture, whether collective or individual, is stable or homogenous, all of them being the provisional result of constant processes of "interculturation", a concept that sociologist Jacques Demorgon (2005a) contrasts with "interculturality", which considers only contact between cultures that have been previously essentialized.

-Every national culture is composed of "varied subcultures", in particular "sexual, generational, professional, regional and foreign", to use the expression and enumeration proposed by Louis Porcher and Martine Abdallah-Pretceille 1996 (p. 18 et seq.).

2) as if the intercultural could be thought of in isolation from other components of a complex cultural competence, especially transcultural and multicultural;

-For there to be intercultural contact, there must (as Monsieur de La Palice would have said...) be different cultures, therefore multicultural; and for this contact to be maintained over time, there must be a common interest, necessarily referring to a minimum of shared values such as openness to the other and enrichment through the discovery of the other, *i.e.* transcultural.

-Differences can only be appreciated (in both senses of the word: to recognize and value them), which is the objective of intercultural education, if we first recognize in the other a human being as oneself - which is transcultural - and if we recognize the right of the other to maintain differences with respect to his own culture - which is multicultural.

Taking up one of the main ideas of his work cited above, J. Demorgon, in an article published the same year (2005b), explains the need not to ignore any of these three components of cultural competence:

> *(...) I criticize interculturality as a pole that sets itself up as a whole. However, multiculturalism is irreducible because it concerns juxtaposed, separate, segregated, even hostile cultures. The transcultural is also impossible to suppress because it refers to the common denominator that people in multicultural situations are obliged to invent if they are to communicate and act together, as a minimum. Traditionally, the great religions, the great ideologies, the unifying heroes, have tried to integrate these three dimensions. (...)*
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> *Certainly, in their various forms, the multicultural, the transcultural and the intercultural could be taken for satisfactory solutions, successively according to the moments, and even simultaneously in different places. However, there has been a problem, and one realizes it every time one of the three perspectives pretends to ignore or fight the other two. It would be wise to see that maintaining this ternary antagonism is a precaution in relation to the complexity of the real world in which we must be able to act together.* (p. 400)

3)as if what is at stake in the encounter between two individuals is only their cultures of origin, whether they explicitly claim it or not;

-Individuals, at least in Western societies, have conquered such a margin of autonomy and can now have such different experiences that their culture is a personal patchwork of elements from different origins that they have chosen themselves in part to create an original identity. The French sociologist

Bernard Lahire has developed this idea at length, in particular in two books with titles that speak for themselves: The plural man (1998) and The culture of individuals: cultural dissonance and self-distinction (2004).

-This empowerment of the individual in relation to constituted cultures is so strong that for L. Porcher and M. Abdallah-Pretceille, the encounter between two people from different cultures must now be considered first and foremost as an intersubjective dialogue in which these individuals will play - more or less consciously, no doubt - on elements of culture just as they will play on elements of language. For these two authors, "it is therefore not so much culture that determines behaviour, including language behaviour, but individuals who use culture for SAY and for TELL YOURSELF WHO YOU ARE" ("pour DIRE et SE DIRE", 1996, p. 73, emphasis in the text). I recently found the same idea, expressed with different concepts, in an online article by Hubert GUILLAUD, editor-in-chief of InternetActu.net, about the new social media on the Internet such as Facebook, Twitter, Google+ or LinkedIn, which undoubtedly facilitate the instrumentalization of cultures by individuals:

> *(...) the challenge is this: to try to make optimal use of the media so that it serves the goals assigned to it. This means that in order to use them, we must both know how to play with our identities and play with their relational capacities, so that they do not lock us into the relationships of proximity that are already ours. It is therefore a question of moving from identity strategies to relational strategies.* (2013)

4)as if different cultures were just meeting.

The communicative approach had been promoted in the 1970s by the first major document of the Council of Europe concerning the didactics of languages-cultures, the Threshold Level, because it corresponded to its political project of the time, which was to facilitate exchanges between the citizens of the different European countries. For this reason, the authors of the different language versions of this document had chosen the tourist trip as a communicative macro-situation of reference. This reference situation had transmitted its "genes" to the communicative approach: they are the inchoative (one meets one's interlocutors for the first time), the punctual (the meeting lasts a short time), the perfective (the meeting ends in a definitive way) and the individual (it is essentially about interpersonal meetings). Here are, in the implementation of the communicative approach, some corresponding "genetic markers":

> -The dialogues in the communicative textbooks always begin at the beginning and end at the end, contrary to what happens most of the time when one lives and works with interlocutors for a long time; the flow of the language course is divided into self-sufficient "didactic units", and therefore evaluable isolation; the learners are taught to greet once and for all at the beginning of a meeting and to take a permanent leave of absence, but the question is not addressed, for example, of what to do when you meet a colleague at work for the second time in the morning in a corridor of your company, when you know that you will probably meet him/her again several times during the day. (genes inchoative and perfective).

> -In the dialogues in the communicative textbooks, it is always the same people who in the same place talk about the same topic of conversation within a limited time; when they are renting, it is much more often hotel rooms than apartments. (punctual gene)

> -The reference group in communicative class is the minimal group for interaction, namely the group of two, in which the interaction is inter-individual; the question of teaching and learning cultures is only approached in the communicative approach from the point of view of so-called "individual learning strategies", even though, as we realize from a social oriented

approach, the first and priority issue in a language-culture class is to define a collective teaching-learning strategy. (individual gene)

However, it is the same DNA that appears in the analysis of the intercultural approach, which is contemporary to the communicative approach and has been configured in relation to it[2]. For example, here is a passage from one of the reference works on the intercultural approach in France, published in 1993 by one of the recognized specialists of this approach, Genevieve Zarate (I underline in italics the marks of inchoativity, and in bold the marks of individuality):

> *The exercise of civilization[3] cannot be reduced to the study of documents, or to the comprehension of texts. This minimal definition is only operative in a strictly academic framework. What is proposed is to put in place competences that will enable the resolution of dysfunctions inherent in situations where the individual becomes involved in a relationship with the stranger and thus discovers aspects of his identity that he has not yet had the opportunity to explore[4]; his quality as a foreigner which is reflected in the gaze of the other, the particularities of his practices which had until then appeared to him as indisputable evidence.* (p. 98)

It is remarkable that the two genes of the inchoative and the punctual are found in all the key concepts of this "approach": approach, encounter, sensitization, initiation, discovery, intercultural awareness.

A genetic mutation in language and culture didactics

The main novelty introduced in the CEFRL and which corresponds, despite what its authors themselves say or think, to a decisive break with previous communicative and intercultural approaches, is the change in the "social situation of reference", the one for which it is a question of preparing learners: it is no longer a question of different countries between which they will have to travel, but of a "multilingual and multicultural Europe" (CEFRL, p. 6). And it is also, by way of consequence, a change of "social action of reference": it is a question of preparing them no longer only to manage occasional linguistic encounters, but to live together and act together with others in the long term. To continue spinning my metaphor, it is a real "genetic mutation" that has occurred in the didactics of languages and cultures: This new situation and action has a completely different DNA from that of the communicative approach, since it is made up of the genes of the repetitive, the durative, the imperfective and the collective; these genes are on the other hand - I come back to this in the paragraph below - similar to those of the situation and action of the class, where it is also a question of the learners and their teacher to live and act together in the long term.

Returning to a more didactic language and to the concepts of learning and use used by the authors of the CEFRL, we will say that in the communicative approach there was a discrepancy between

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[2] This combination between the two approaches is the result of a historical conjunction of communicative and intercultural paradigms found elsewhere than in language and culture didactics: cf. the key concept of "intercultural dialogue" used since the same period by major international institutions such as UNESCO, OECD, the Council of Europe and the European Commission.

[3] The curious expression "exercise of civilization" is probably equivalent here to "work on culture". What G. Zarate criticizes in this first sentence is the French school education of the 1920s and 1960s, which emphasized the metacultural component of cultural competence: students were asked, for the study of authentic documents, to mobilize their acquired cultural knowledge and to extract new cultural knowledge.

[4] It should be noted that G. Zarate's conception is the exact opposite of that of L. Porcher and M. Abdallah-Pretceille, for whom the individual, in his relationship with the Other, is capable of manipulating his own identity elements. A complex approach to the question - which seems to me to be empirically validated: don't we have representations of which we are perfectly aware? -, leads to the idea that both cases can occur, even in the same individual in the course of the same exchange.

situations and learning actions on the one hand, and situations and usage actions on the other: In fact, we propose to train learners to exchange later on in the foreign language in the foreign society with foreigners, while they are, in a learning situation at school, in their own country and among natives of their mother tongue[5]. On the contrary, there is a natural homology between the two situations and the two actions, which the authors of the CEFRL explain when they write that "the perspective favored here is [...] a social action-oriented approach in that it considers above all the user and the learner of a language as social actors who have to accomplish tasks...". "(p. 15, emphasis added), and that these tasks can be as simple as "moving a cupboard, writing a book, taking the decision in the negotiation of a contract, making a game of cards, ordering a meal in a restaurant, translating a text in a foreign language or preparing a class newspaper in a group". (p. 16, emphasis added) Note that these examples are taken from the various fields of use proposed in the CEFRL: personal, public, professional and educational.

To live together, the authors of the CEFRL introduce two specific competences, one linguistic (multilingual competence), the other cultural (pluricultural competence), and a new specific linguistic and cultural activity, mediation. From the reading of the paper publication of the definitive French version of this document (Paris: Didier, 2001, 192 p.), it seemed necessary to introduce in parallel, in order to cover the requirements of the preparation to act together and the implementation of the corresponding methodological construction -the social action-oriented approach-, the concepts of co-actional competence (ability to act together, linguistically or not) and of co-cultural competence (see PUREN C. 2002).

Current Issues

I propose to schematize in this way the whole of the current situation in language and culture didactics:
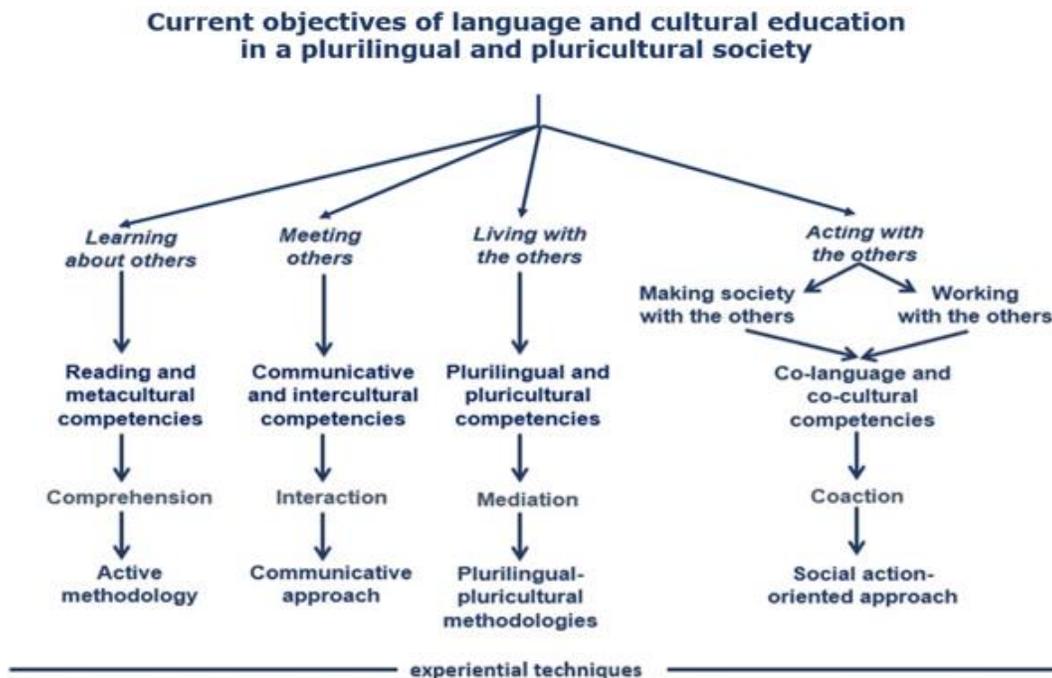
[5] Hence the constant recourse, in the communicative approach, to simulation, whose function is to artificially re-establish homology: learners are asked to interact with each other in class as if they were users with strangers in society.

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Acting together, however, has a historically new and important characteristic, and that is that it functions as a natural integrator of all the components of cultural competence. This is what I presented in my 2011 article as an "empirical validation"[6] of my model of the components of cultural competence (p. 7):

In order to be culturally competent in a long-term action such as "socializing" with other citizens, professional work or collective learning of a foreign language and culture,

it is indispensable...	Component of cultural competence
-to create a co-culture of joint action	co-cultural

but also...

-to agree on attitudes and behaviors acceptable to all;	pluricultural

and it is very useful...

-to be able to distance oneself from one's own culture and to be attentive to the misunderstandings and misinterpretations always possible between people of different cultures	intercultural
-to have a good knowledge of the culture of others,	metacultural
-as well as to share universal values beyond those specific to the common action environment	transcultural

In the last part of this article, I will illustrate the need to redefine the place and status of the intercultural among the components of cultural competence in language and culture didactics by presenting the work on culture as it is concretely organized in a FFL textbook whose didactic design I directed, *Version Originale 4* - B2 (Paris: Éditions Maison des Langues, 2012).

The organization of work on cultural competence in a social action-oriented textbook

The adoption of a social action-oriented approach modifies the cultural issue, to the extent that one will naturally be interested first in the cultures of action, and this simultaneously in the different possible fields of action, personal, public, educational and professional.

In the manual Original Version 4, the unit of each didactic unit is of course the unit of action, as it is logical from a social action-oriented approach, but this action is also defined in a sufficiently generic way to be able to be applied in each of these different areas. For this purpose, fundamental actions have been retained which every democratic society must not only authorize among its citizens, but also promote and even organize. They are, from unit 1 to unit 10 - and the names of these actions have been retained as titles of the corresponding units -: "inform", "manage one's image", "live better", "link", "live together", "have chances", "be able to say it", "engage", "create", "circulate".

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[6] Another major implication of the social action-oriented approach is the shift from communicative competence to informational competence, the latter can be defined as the ability to act on and through information as a social actor: see PUREN 2009. I present three other types of validation: sociological, philosophical and cognitive (see chapter 2, pp. 7-11).

I will take here the example of unit 7, because it can be entirely downloadable in pdf in real format on the publisher's website[7]. It is entitled "To be able to say it": it is a question for all citizens, individually or collectively, to have the possibility of denouncing and protesting to defend their ideas, their values and their rights. In each unit of this manual, two different types of action are proposed to the learners, the first one "serious" - here it is a question of making an online petition on a cause of collective interest that the class must choose -, the other one of another type: playful, comical, imaginative, creative, artistic... - The idea here is to write an open letter to the mayor of Paris to protest against the announced demolition of the Eiffel Tower, whose maintenance would be too expensive for the city's finances. But the learners and/or their teacher can of course imagine other types of variants other than those proposed in the textbook, for example according to the different areas of action of the CECRL, or according to different themes, different types of final production aimed at, etc. One can of course envisage different choices by groups, which will allow for a differentiated implementation of the pedagogy.

The cultural pages, grouped in a section entitled "Cultural tools", naturally precede the final task proposals, which are at the very end of the unit: the documents reproduced in them have been chosen to provide resources for the final action, as well as the grammatical and lexical contents. Thus, in this section of unit 7, there are three devices designed for "There are two in the public domain (the " The Mediator of the Republic" in France and Amnesty International worldwide) and one in the educational domain (the "class delegate" that all students in a class group in French secondary education must attend at the beginning of the school year). As for the field professional, it is covered, after the following unit 8, by a file concerning the Labor Court, a court to which any French employee can appeal in case of disagreement with his company manager.

All these documents, as we can see, are related to what we can call an "organized culture of protest": The learners will be able to assess their personal reactions and compare them with those of others (intercultural component); compare with the culture of their country and, for this purpose, possibly carry out complementary research in groups (metacultural component)[8]; reach agreements in principle on universal values among themselves (transcultural component); identify irreducible agreements, present them rationally and manage them serenely (pluricultural component), and finally decide how they will conduct and carry out together the collective action they have chosen to carry out at the end of the didactic unit (co-cultural component).

Conclusion

At least in the early 2000s, most European didacticians considered that the social action-oriented approach was not significantly different from the Anglo-Saxon Task Based Learning approach, and was therefore only an extension of the communicative approach. I have tried to show here that the social action-oriented approach, if we really take seriously its new purpose of language and culture education - that of training social actors - implies quite fundamental breaks.

I have taken above the concrete example of an implementation in a language textbook. To conclude, I will take a particular example of language courses, those given to migrants newly arrived in France (but also in Portugal, which has become a land of immigration). They don't have to learn French (or Portuguese) to simply discover the country and meet its inhabitants, but to settle there, that is to say to live and work there:

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[7] At www.emdl.fr/uploads/telechargements/catalogue/fle/version_originale/vo4_LE_ue7.pdf [last accessed 2020/01/28].

[8] Explicit comparison between elements from different cultures is sometimes considered an intercultural type of activity. But it is about knowledge, not representations, and therefore, in my opinion, is a metacultural type of activity.

-There is, no doubt, a lot of discovery at this time, because they have just arrived; and there will always be, because we never finish discovering another culture: this is part of the intercultural approach.

-They will also have the legitimacy to keep a part of their cultural identity alive throughout their life in their adopted country, and they will therefore have to manage it - not only by maintaining it but by enriching it - alongside the social culture of their adopted country: this is part of the pluricultural approach.

-They will have to learn to work - young people in school, adults in companies - respecting the culture of these professional environments, and to act as full citizens in their new society: this is part of the co-cultural approach.

-Finally, in democratic societies such as France and Spain, they will have to share - by adopting them, if necessary - values that these societies consider universal, such as the rights of the individual, respect for all religions, the right to religious indifference and even atheism, or even equality between men and women: this is part of the transcultural approach.

-All these approaches can be facilitated, in the language courses that are then given to them, by targeted contributions of knowledge about their host country: this comes under the metacultural approach.

These language classes are themselves multilingual and multicultural micro-societies where learners have to live and work together, and the best way to train them in all these different components of a complex cultural competence is certainly to organize the courses in such a way that these classes are not only a preparation environment for the external society, but an immediate training environment with components that are identical in both societies, because the stakes are the same.

It is high time now, in language and culture didactics, to bring the intercultural component back to its rightful place among all the components of cultural competence, so as to allow teachers to manage the cultural problem in all its complexity, in a more efficient way because it is better adapted to the diversity of audiences, objectives and learning environments. We can only regret that the current "Language Policy Unit" of the Council of Europe proposes for school language teaching, with the theme of "plurilingual and intercultural education" (I underline), in addition to a conceptually ridiculous expression, a culturally reductive finality.

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