# ACTIONAL PERSPECTIVES AND CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES IN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE DIDACTICS: TOWARDS A CO-CULTURAL CO-ACTIONAL PERSPECTIVE[1]

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## Abstract

In this article, the author reviews the succession, in French school foreign language teaching, of the different methodologies that have been developed, by showing how each one has been built on a mode of adequacy between its action perspective (i.e. the actions that it prepares students to carry out in a foreign language) and its cultural perspective (i.e. the cultural competences for which it prepares the students). He defends the idea that the new (social) action-oriented approach proposed in the Council of Europe's Common European Framework constitutes a rupture from the action perspective of the communicative approach, and that it therefore implies a rupture from the cultural perspective that was linked to it, that of the intercultural. Finally, he outlines what the new corresponding coherence should be, which he calls "co-actional-co-cultural perspective", while specifying that in the framework of the "complex didactics" that he promotes, it is not a question of substituting this new coherence for the previous ones, but of adding it to the panoply of instruments already available for the management of the teaching/learning process.

## Keywords
Methodologies, communicative approach, intercultural, actional perspective, co-actional, co-cultural

## Abbreviations

AP: Actional Perspective, "Perspective actionnelle" in CECR, "(social) action-oriented approach" in CFERL, "SAOA" in my most recent publications in English (see Puren 2019g)
CA: Communicative Approach
CECRL: Cadre Européen Commun de Référence pour les langues (see. COE 2001 in Bibliography)
CEFRL: Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (COE 2001)

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[1] This article is the first one I wrote on the "perspective actionnelle" ("perspective actionnelle" in the French CEFR, "social action approach" in the CFERL, as soon as I read the final version of this Council of Europe publication in 2001. Since the publication of this text in 2002, I have replaced the expression ""co-cultural-co-actional perspective" by "co-lingual-co-cultural perspective", which seems to make more sense in order to take into account both the actional perspective in the two major domains of language and culture. The "co-language" and the "co-culture" are the common language an culture that actors must create or borrow in order to work together effectively. It is for example, in relation to the didactic culture (the teaching-learning culture), what is called the "language of the classroom" (instructions and questions, in particular). See also Puren 052, point 4. (Author's note dated May 3, 2021)

"Thought is born out of action to return to action."
Henri Wallon, *De l'acte a la pensée,* 1942.

"Thought starts from practice and goes back to practice."
Paul Langevin, *Écrits philosophiques et pedagogiques,* 1947.

## Introduction

The title chosen for this article requires some explanation: I borrow the expression "operational perspective" from the drafters of the Council of *Europe's Cadre européen Commun de Référence pour les Langues (*COE 2001)[1], who defined it thus at the very beginning of the chapter (2.1) they devote to it:

> *Un cadre de référence doit se situer par rapport à une* **représentation** *d'ensemble très générale de l'usage et de l'apprentissage des langues. La* **perspective** *privilégiée ici est, très généralement aussi,* **de type actionnel** *en ce qu'elle considère avant tout l'usager et l'apprenant d'une langue comme des acteurs sociaux ayant à accomplir des tâches (qui ne sont pas seulement langagières) dans des circonstances et un environnement donné, à l'intérieur d'un domaine d'action particulier. Si les actes de parole se réalisent dans des activités langagières, celles-ci s'inscrivent elles-mêmes à l'intérieur d'actions en contexte social qui seules leur donnent leur pleine signification[2].* (emphasis added)

I shall here give this expression of "actional perspective" the broader meaning that it seems to me to deserve, since the various frames of reference that have followed one another in the history of education and training - that of languages and cultures - have all necessarily been defined at their own time according to an overall conception[3] of theuse and learning of these languages.

On this model of the expression "actional perspective", I will use that of "cultural perspective" to design the successive conceptions of culture envisaged both in its use and in its learning.
The two theses that I will defend in this article are the following:

1)The external coherence of each methodology is constructed from its actional perspective through the maximum coherence (i.e. the maximum homology):

–*of this purpose,* namely, the actions that we want pupils to be able to carry out in the foreign language in society when they leave the school system, actions which together constitute what I call the "social objective of reference";

–*and of the means,* namely the actions that we make the pupils in class carry out in order to make them reach this objective.

2) The internal coherence of each methodology is built by maximizing the appropriateness of its action and cultural perspective.

If these two theses are correct, the new "actional perspective" of the Council of Europe necessarily implies a move away from the intercultural perspective currently dominant in language and culture

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[1] Original English version: see COE 2001 in Bibliography.

[2] English original: *The approach adopted here, generally speaking, is an action-oriented one in so far as it views users and learners of a language primarily as 'social agents', i.e. members of society who have tasks (not exclusively language-related) to accomplish in a given set of circumstances, in a specific environment and within a particular field of action. While acts of speech occur within language activities, these activities form part of a wider social context, which alone is able to give them their full meaning*. (CEFRL, p. 9)

[3] It will be understood further why in this case I use for my part "conception", and not "representation".

didactics, since this corresponds to the communicative approach adopted thirty years ago, in the early 1970s.

I propose to model the different historical configurations taken in France by this double adequation by means of four pairs of concepts (the first actional, the second cultural): translation/values, explanation/knowledge, interaction/representations, co-action/designs. It is to designate this latest historical configuration - currently emerging in Europe - that I will use the expression "co-cultural co-actional perspective".

## 1. The dual "translation/value" perspective

This twofold perspective corresponds to the traditional school method of teaching/learning modern languages as it was modelled at the time on the school teaching of Latin and Greek, which remained dominant in France until the end of the 19th century.

The social objective of reference corresponds to that of a time when travel abroad - and travel by foreigners to France - is still very rare and limited and concerns only a tiny minority of the population. It also corresponds to a "pre-mediatic" period, in which documents of foreign language-culture are rare, the most available being the great literary texts.

In this traditional methodology, the actional perspective is that of **translation**. This method is also called "grammar-translation", the theme being mainly used in language teaching, the version in the service of cultural teaching, and the homology between the two types of translation: in adult education, learners are trained in the instantaneous oral theme to prepare them to communicate in a foreign language; in school education, they are made to translate texts classified in the classroom to prepare them to be able to continue reading them later on. Until the end of the nineteenth century, in fact, the didactics of languages-cultures functioned under an indirect paradigm, i.e. it was considered that to understand a foreign language perfectly was to make an instantaneous and unconscious mental version of it, to speak it fluently was to make a similar theme. It was therefore logically thought - by applying the same principle of maximum adequacy of means and ends - that in order to teach a foreign language, it was necessary to have the learners translate intensively until their translation becomes instantaneous and unconscious.

In this case, we can speak of a "universalist" actional perspective, inasmuch as not only are all the languages supposed to be covered by the same didactic device, but they are also perfectly reversible: with the exception of the language of the instructions, a manual for teaching Italian as a foreign language to French people, for example, can be perfectly identical in its texts and exercises to a manual for teaching French as a foreign language to Italians.

The cultural perspective of this methodology is equally universalist: it is that of the "Humanities", whose ideological core is made up of the three closely related **values** of True, Beautiful and Good. As Emile Durkheim explains in one of his pedagogical conferences in the 1900s, what we are trying to make pupils find in the great classical texts are not the particularities of this or that culture, but on the contrary the "common fund of all humanity" that these universal values are supposed to constitute. We are not interested in cultural knowledge, but in that "general culture" which the instruction of 15 July 1890 for Classical Education presents in these terms: "The true end which the teacher, while attaching himself passionately to his daily task, must constantly have in mind, is to give, by the virtue of a knowledge most of which will be lost, a culture which remains. »

In professional translation as it is currently conceived, awareness of the cultural specificities of the original text often leads to "rendering" them by means of equivalences in the reader's culture. In the traditional method, on the contrary, the postulated universality of cultural contents (at least of those of interest) legitimizes a translation that is supposed to reproduce them by means of close correspondences: the meaning of the research is supposed to be given by the literal translation, even if it will then have to be rewritten in "good French". The actional perspective and the cultural perspective are therefore perfectly adequate, the former being put at the service of the latter in school education.

## 2. The dual perspective of "explanation/knowledge"

This double perspective corresponds to the so-called "active" method which remained in force in French school education from the 1920s to the 1960s (but it began to be developed in the early 1900s in the reflection on the application of the method used in the second cycle, and has continued as we shall see until today), a method whose evolution is marked by the three official instructions of 1925, 1938 and 1950.

As in the traditional methodology, the same fine-medium homology applied to the new actional perspective is found in the active methodology. In the social objective of reference, it is now a question of enabling pupils to maintain and develop their knowledge of the foreign language-culture by means of these various documents, which are now more and more accessible to all: literature, of course (with a strong reorientation towards the modern novel), but also newspapers, magazines, and later radio and television broadcasts, as the progress of photographic reproduction opens up access to many other types of authentic documents very early on. The pupils are prepared in the same way, teaching them about foreign language and culture by means of a didactic use of these same documents based on the same usage. The educational status and function of the document - the basic support of the didactic unit - the so-called "didactic integration" device, which has been in use up to the present day in the design of the baccalaureate exams, thus corresponds exactly to the status and function of the document as the basic support of the didactic unit - the so-called "didactic integration" device, which has been in use up to the present day in the design of the baccalaureate exams - thus corresponds exactly to the status and function of the document as it was assigned to it at the time in the social objective of reference.

The cultural perspective, for its part, will have to be oriented towards the specificities of foreign cultures: from the moment that more varied and more recent documents become available, cultures will be perceived as living and different from one another. Therefore, the corresponding actional perspective will now require students to have access to and use knowledge (for this reason I propose to speak of a "civilizational" perspective). Adrien Godart, one of the very first theorists of the "direct reading" of literary texts in the second cycle, considered, for example, in 1907 that "what matters are the pressures they [the pupils] receive from immediate and personal contact with literary works, their awareness of being confronted with a particular conception of art or life, their curiosity about the moral, historical and social problems posed by the reading of these works" (p. 281). And almost half a century later, the editor of the 1950 instruction defined the "double object" of foreign language teaching as follows: "to train pupils in the use of the language and to contribute to their internal enrichment through the study of texts representative of the life and thought of the foreign people" (p. 281). These two concerns must never be dissociated".

In the active method as in the traditional school method, it is the action-oriented perspective that is put at the service of the cultural perspective, i.e. from now on the covering, reception and mobilization of the corresponding knowledge. This is the famous French-style "explanation" of texts (the "etude de textes" of the 1950 instruction), which was later adapted for other types of documents, and which is still used today in France as a model both for cultural teaching in the second cycle of schooling and for the final evaluation of this course (the written or oral baccalaureate examination). The only possible didactic analysis of this model of document explanation is not of a methodological type (each text requires a specific approach, hence the obvious paucity of methodological sheets proposed in school textbooks) but precisely of an "action" type: What defines this "explanation" is not a way of doing things required of pupils, it is what they have to do whatever the document (textual, visual, audiovisual or script audiovisual), namely a set of identical actions - paraphrasing and/or describing, analysing, interpreting, extrapolating, reacting, comparing and transposing - but which they themselves have to carry out and organise in a way that corresponds to the specificity of each document.

## 3. The dual "interaction/representation" perspective

This twofold perspective was launched by the initial work of the Council of Europe's "Language Group", which led to the publication of the various "*Threshold* Levels" of the early 1970s *(Threshold Level* for

English, 1972; *Un* Niveau-seuil for French, 1975; etc.), publications which promoted the so-called "communicative approach" (now abbreviated to "CA") throughout Europe. The introductions to all these documents are very clear about the new social objective of reference: the authors propose to facilitate the process of European integration by using language teaching to develop occasional meetings between people from different countries, whether in a tourist or professional context. For this reason, the reference situations used by the authors of these "threshold levels" to determine the list of concepts and acts of speech are those of an initial and short stay. One learns more often to start a conversation than to resume it, to reserve a room for one night than to rent an apartment, and discussions between a foreigner and a native are much more frequent than those between two residents or within a mixed couple.

For the same reason, the actional perspective of CA - or, if one prefers, the- reference actions of this methodology, namely the acts of speech, which correspond both to "talking with" and "acting on" the other - are very clearly oriented both towards the management of contact situations and towards the immediate effectiveness of inter-individual communication, which are the most natural issues in this type of situation: The less you know about someone and the shorter the exchange with them, the more the natural challenge is to exchange information without wondering what to do with it afterwards. As in the previous methodologies, we find in CA the same homology of fine-means, logically applied to the type of communication aimed at: the reference activity of CA corresponds to an exercise combining *peer work* (work by two) and *information gap* (the information gap to be filled). To a student in need of a Master's subject and a lover of statistics, I would be happy to propose to determine the percentage -which I hypothesize to be very high - of speech acts and language exchange situations which, in all the "Threshold Levels" and the textbooks that are based on them, are marked by the joint seals of the *inchoative* (they are considered at the limited of their beginning), the *punctual (they are considered to* have a limited duration) and the *interindividual* (they are considered within the limit of a communication between two interlocutors). The concept of "**interaction**" - which is with that of "communication" one of the central concepts of CA - has been historically defined with reference to this precise type of exchanges, as can be seen for example in C. Kramsch, for whom "all discourse is of an interactive nature [...] in the broadest (*sic*!) sense of a mutual interpretation, that is to say, an adjustment, in its elaboration, to the communicative intentions of **a** real or potential interlocutor" (1984, p. 17, emphasis added).

The cultural perspective of CA - which is that of the "intercultural" - can only be understood according to the same social objective of reference that has determined the conception of its actional perspective. The following quotation seems to me to be very significant in this regard:

> *The exercise of civilization cannot be reduced to the study of documents or the comprehension of texts. This minimal definition is only operative in a strictly school context. What is proposed is to establish skills which will make it possible to resolve the dysfunctions inherent in situations in which the individual becomes involved in a lived relationship with a foreigner and thus discovers aspects of his identity which he has not yet had the opportunity to explore: his quality as a foreigner which is reflected in the eyes of the other, and the particularities of his practices which were until now unquestionably evident to him.* (G. ZARATE 1993, p. 98).

In these few lines, after distancing oneself from the previous actional perspective - that of the active method ("document study" and "text comprehension") - we can find the following three characteristics of the actional perspective of CA that I mentioned above, namely the inchoative (themes of "discovery", "gaining knowledge", "openness"), the punctual (theme of "encounter") and the interindividual (theme of the "Other"). As for "representation" - another central concept of the intercultural perspective - it is not surprising that it is defined within the same framework: it is mainly the stereotypical perception, the *a priori* image one has of the "foreigner" before getting to know him personally and having the first direct exchanges with him.

Consequently, CA has the same high degree of adequacy between the actional perspective and the cultural perspective as the two previous methodologies (traditional and active). However, this similarity should not hide the decisive inversion that CA brings about: for the first time (at least in the history of language and culture didactics in France), the cultural perspective is put at the service of the actional perspective, and not the other way round, since culture is considered as a component (called "socio-cultural") of the objective, namely communication competence. The (fortunate) chance

of the juries of the defense wanted me to fall recently, in a thesis dedicated to interculturality, on the very clear statement: according to the author, the objective of CA is to "provide the learner with a cultural competence [that] will allow him to talk about his own culture, to be ready to open up, to respect differences, to be interested in convergences **in order to communicate effectively**. "(Th. NIKOU 2002, p. 108, emphasis added).

## 4. The dual perspective of "co-action/conception"

The authors of the *Common European Framework of Reference of* 1996-1998-2001 cited in the introduction to this article - even if they do not say so clearly, or even deny it at times - clearly distance themselves from the CA of the seventies and its other central concept of "speech act", whose importance they doubly relativize by pointing out that acts are not only speech, and that speech acts themselves have meaning only in relation to the social actions they contribute to achieve (I invite my readers to reread these lines now).

There is the one evolution that is only suggested, but whose direction is clearly seen in relation to previous methodologies, which can easily be extended into the future. In the traditional methodology a "reader" was formed by having him/her **translate** (documents), in the active method a "commentator" was formed by having him/her **speak on** (documents); in CA a "communicator" was formed by creating linguistic situations to make him/her **speak with** (interlocutors) and **act on** (those interlocutors); in the actional perspective outlined by the *Common European Framework of Reference (to* which I will henceforth reserve the abbreviation "AP"), the aim is to train a "social actor"; this will necessarily imply, if we want to continue to apply the fundamental principle of homology between ends and means, to make him **act with** others during the time of his learning, offering him opportunities for "co-actions" in the sense of common actions with a collective aim. It is this dimension of authentic social issue that differentiates co-action from simulation, a basic technique used in the communicative approach to artificially create situations of simple language interaction between learners in the classroom.

This concept of "co-action" is not new: it is particularly used by some constructivist psychologists - parallel to the concept of "socio-cognitive conflict" - to integrate into Piagetian theory the collective dimension of the subject-object relationship which they feel is necessary. One of the forms of implementation of this conception of learning has long been known in pedagogy under the name of "project", in what is precisely called "project pedagogy". It is this term of "project" that was spontaneously used by the authors of the language textbook (*Busy Box,* Éditions Multicolores, *2002*, for teaching English to French children) where I noticed for the first time the didactic units systematically built not from a simulated communication situation, as in CA, but according to authentic collective actions that the pupils have to prepare and carry out among themselves: a Christmas show, the birthday party of one of them, mini-Olympiads for all the pupils of the school.

However, I will use the term "co-action" and not "project" here for the following three reasons: 1) it is not historically marked by the different conceptions and implementations of the "pedagogy of the project"; 2) it clearly marks the evolution of the actional perspective between CA and AP, from "interaction" to "co-action"; 3) it allows me to propose in parallel the concept of "co-cultural" in opposition to that of "intercultural".

The appearance of AP can only be understood, like that of the former CA, in relation to the social objective of reference, and the passage from one to the other only through the evolution of this objective. Whereas the CA objective, as we have seen, corresponds mainly to the problem of meetings and exchanges, the AP objective is part of the progress of European integration: it will now be considered that every student must be prepared to study partly in a foreign language, to follow part of his university course abroad, to make part of his professional career in another country. And even to work in France in a foreign language: this was already the case in distance exchanges (writing in Portuguese to a Brazilian company, telephoning an Austrian colleague in German) or on the spot (holding a work meeting in Spanish with Mexican engineers), but these were more or less one-off exchanges whose analysis and management could still be based on an intercultural perspective. The culmination of the process of globalization in some companies has created qualitatively different situations which can only increase in the future: for example, already - whether we welcome it or

regret it - French executives on a French site of a French company are regularly required to work in English not only with Germans, Americans or Italians, but with other French people.

It is true that the intercultural perspective in the didactics of languages and cultures has broadened in recent years to include questions related to situations of permanent contact between different cultures, as is the case in multicultural societies and in individual or collective phenomena of cultural interbreeding. So much so that Maddalena DE CARLO, in 1998, in her book on the subject, can assign to this perspective the objective of preparing us to "live together with our differences" (p. 39). But when it is no longer just a question of "living together" (co-existing or co-habitating), but of "doing together" (co-acting), we can no longer be content to assume our differences: we must imperatively create similarities together. This modification of the cultural objective of reference requires nothing less than a shift in the didactics of culture from a "product logic" - the only one historically implemented to date, all methodologies or approaches taken together - to a "process logic" which is more in line with a modern, i.e. dynamic, representation of cultural realities. It is clear that the intercultural focus on the theme of "alterity" has only been possible to this extent up to now because it did not give priority to common action, which requires the development of identical conceptions, i.e. shared objectives, principles and modes of action because they have been developed jointly by and for collective action.

In an interview for the September 1999 issue of the magazine *Sciences Humaines,* the psychologist and pedagogue Andre Giordan defined conception as "the system of thinking set in motion about a project". It is more exactly, in my opinion, a "system of action" that both produces a system of thought and is produced by it, in a recursive loop suggested by the two quotations placed at the beginning of this article. It is the qualitative leap involved in the passage from representations of the other (mobilized in speaking with and acting on) to common conceptions (created for and by acting with) that explains certain well-known facts of experience, such as the experience (experienced by the author of these lines as surely also by some of his listeners...) of old friends who come to be no longer able to bear after a few weeks of the first trip or the first work together. In contrast to representations - which are linked only to perception - conceptions are in fact linked to action, so that it is the latter, and not the former, which are ultimately decisive when it comes to doing things together.

The same is true of values, which are not acquired through teaching (they are not gold of knowledge) or through simple contact (they are not of the order of representation either), but through and for action itself. For the action: there is thus no respect for the other unless there is a willingness to respect him or her and corresponding acts. By action, as E. explains for example. DURKHEIM in *Moral Education*: "For morality to be ensured at its very source, the citizen must have a taste for collective life. But [...] in order to enjoy life in common to the point of not being able to do without it, one must have acquired the habit of acting and thinking in common" (p. 197, emphasis added). This is why, contrary to the main argument used for two centuries by its promoters in schools, the intercultural perspective alone is insufficient to ensure the ethical training of pupils in the context of their learning of a language and culture.

This intercultural perspective is just as insufficient in view of the new social objective of reference. When one works with "foreigners" (but can one still consider as "foreigners", for example, colleagues with whom one has been working for years in their own country, as happened to me several times during my career?...), it is important to take into account the fact that they are "foreigners".), it can no longer be a matter of simply managing the phenomena of (even permanent) contact between different cultures in the best possible way, being aware of the representations which will determine the perceptions, expectations, attitudes and behaviour of others and of oneself: in order to achieve this, it is necessary to develop and implement a culture of common action in the sense of a coherent set of shared conceptions: it is this process which constitutes the object and objective of what I propose to call the "co-cultural perspective".

**Forward-looking conclusion**

At the end of this article, I will model the historical evolution of the forms of adequation between actional perspectives and cultural perspectives in school didactics of languages and cultures as follows:

| *methodology* | | 1. traditional methodology | 2. active methodology | 3. communicative approach | 4. co-actional co-cultural perspective |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *social objective of reference* | | understanding of the great texts of foreign literature | Access to all cultural documents in foreign languages | occasional exchanges with foreigners | realization of social actions |
| actional perspective | operations | translation | explanation | interaction | co-action |
| | means | reproducing | talking about | talking with | acting with |
| cultural perspective | types | universalist | civilizational | intercultural | co-cultural |
| | orientations | values | knowledge | representations | conceptions |

The elaboration of the latest co-actional co-cultural perspective is not only necessary to 1) bring our discipline in line with the new social objective of reference. It is indispensable for at least the following four other strong reasons:

2) This dual co-actional-co-cultural perspective makes it possible to rethink the two interrelated issues of student motivation and responsibility, which are now inescapable in our school classrooms, as we know:

> -As far as motivation is concerned, I can only refer my readers to the excellent chapter that the cognitive pedagogue Jacques TARDIF devoted to 'school motivation' in his 1992 book. In it he develops the idea that this motivation can only be constructed from an action-oriented perspective - that of the "tasks" to be performed - because it depends simultaneously on the perception and conception that pupils have of these tasks.

> -With regard to empowerment (which consists of the personal willingness to act socially by implementing certain values), it is precisely in the most difficult classes that the teaching/learning of a foreign language must imperatively take place within a framework that is both co-active and co-cultural, explicitly ending, on the basis of shared values, the common conceptions that are unthinkable in collective work.

3) More generally, any language class as such constitutes a certain co-actional-co-cultural framework, since the teacher and learners have to carry out a joint action of teaching/learning a language-culture which they can only carry out together on the basis of a minimum of common conceptions. The double perspective proposed here is therefore naturally suited to any type of teaching/learning environment, unlike in CA, where the school environment was constantly felt to be artificial (hence the systematic use of simulation in this methodology).

4) This dual co-actional-co-cultural perspective is best suited to all collective arrangements - they have multiplied in recent years and are likely to become more widespread in the years to come - where language is taught/learned for and through action with a social dimension, in particular:

> –primary education: children are less interested in the foreign language itself than in the interesting activities they are offered to do together in the foreign language;
> –the so-called "European" classes and bilingual curricula, where the foreign language is a collective instrument for learning other school subjects;
> the different forms of "collaborative learning" (such as learning in tandem[1]), in which learners carry out their common project of both learning and teaching;
> –the TPE '"Travaux Personnels Encadrés" which are projects in French high school, where the foreign language can be used as a tool (documentary, for example) for the realization of a research file to be defended before a jury;

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[1] Tandem language learning is a method of language learning based on mutual language exchange between tandem partners, where ideally each learner is a native speaker in the language the other person wants to learn. (Wikipedia)

–preparation for the CLES (Certificat de compétences en Langues de l'Enseignement Supérieur français, Certificate of Language for Higher Education), for which students will have to demonstrate a certain competence in the use of the foreign language for their university studies: being able to take notes on a lecture in a foreign language, preparing a presentation in a foreign language, etc.

5) This co-actional-co-cultural perspective is also the most adapted to the Internet, whose newness and specificity consist less in access to documentation (there were already libraries and the media), in multimedia (already implemented systematically, for example, in the audiovisual courses of the 1960s) or in synchronous or asynchronous communication (there was already the telephone), In this context, the company has created "groupware", computer systems that integrate the processing of information and communication activities with the *aim of* helping users to carry out collective *work.*

"...***but*** *with the objective...* ", I could have written above to mark very precisely the dividing line between the communicative approach and the co-actional perspective. By dint of applying the internal principle of the homology of ends and means to communication (to make communicate in order to teach to communicate) for the last 30 years in the didactics of languages and cultures, we have in fact ended up forgetting that in the extra-curricular world, communication is not an end in itself but a means at the service of socially significant activities.
In the same way, by focusing in the intercultural perspective on the relationship between the personal discovery of otherness and the awareness of one's own identity, the latent fantasy of a kind of "individual essence" has been fed, forgetting two fundamental questions that the ethical objective of school education makes unavoidable: the "existential question" (we know, for example, Sartre's formula, for whom the problem is not so much knowing what we are as what we are going to **do** with what we are), and the "social question" (what can we **do together**, despite and with our differences?).
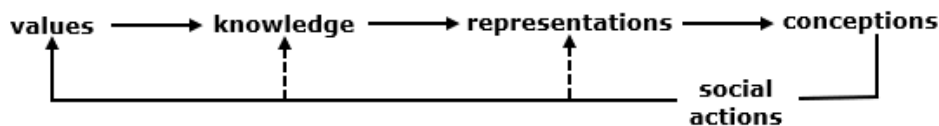
The elaboration of this co-actual-cultural perspective, with its modes of implementation in didactic materials and classroom practices, goes well beyond the limits of this article as well as my current competences: indeed, it is part of a research program that has yet to be conceived and carried out. But it seems obvious to me that this programme will have to begin with an energetic questioning of the communicative and intercultural approaches as they have today become too comfortably established in their dominant position in the didactics of languages and cultures. After three decades of being the driving force behind and representing innovation, they, like all those who have preceded them, are now inevitably overtaken by the evolution of society.

The fact that they are "outdated" does not mean that they should be rejected and replaced by newer ones, at least if the old conception of progress by substitution has been abandoned in favour of a modern conception more adapted to the complex nature of the didactic problem, that of progress by enriching different perspectives which must be constantly used according to the objectives, situations and changing needs of the teaching/learning process:

–As we have seen, the conceptions mobilized in social actions bring values into play, and nowadays they require diverse forms of translation - both interlanguage (simultaneous or consecutive translation, interpreting, etc.) and intralanguage (summary, synopsis, report, editing of quotations, rewriting after collage of extracts from various origins, etc.).) - which the authors of the *European Framework* have grouped together under the general heading of "mediations" and which they rightly consider to "occupy a considerable place in the ordinary linguistic functioning of our societies": we find the, even if its conception is of course modified by the evolution of needs, ideas and techniques, the characteristic configuration of the traditional methodology *(translation-values).*

–On the other hand, it is obvious that the configurations of active methodology *(explanation-knowledge)* and communicative and intercultural approaches *(interaction-representations) are* still indispensable for the management of teaching/learning processes in institutional (especially school) settings. The co-actional-co-cultural perspective presented here is therefore to be considered in a logic opposite to that which has prevailed until now in the didactics of languages-cultures, no longer linear but recursive, no longer exclusive but integrative:

- As far as its cultural perspective is concerned, cultural knowledge and awareness of intercultural representations obviously help in the elaboration of conceptions for joint action, but this elaboration itself can only take place on the basis of shared values, one of which, when implemented in action, creates a need for new knowledge and leads to a reexamination of existing representations, which in turn leads to a modification of the initial conceptions, and so on:

-

```
values ──────► knowledge ──────► representations ──────► conceptions
        ▲                ▲                      ▲                      │
        │                ┆                      ┆              social ─┘
        └────────────────┴──────────────────────              actions
```

- As far as its actional perspective is concerned, the notion of "project" (in the very general sense of conception of an action) loops the object-subject shift, a shift which I showed in my already quoted 1998 article how it made it possible to highlight the three historical versions of the intercultural perspective, at the same time as it limited its now exhausted possibilities of autonomous evolution. The idea of the project, in fact, rests in pedagogy on the formative value of a permanent process of modification of the object by the subject, and of adaptation of the subject to the object thus modified by itself:

```
object ──────────────────► object
       ▲                          │
       └──────── project ─────────┘
```
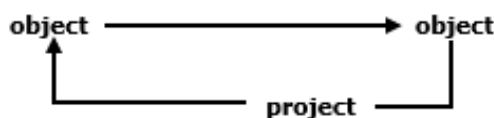
- Finally, as regards the prefix applied to its double perspective ("co-actional-co-cultural"), the notion of "social action" of the *European Framework* clearly reintroduces in language and culture education the collective dimension that had been forgotten in CA due to the unilateral development of the notions of "learner-centred" and "autonomy". The objective of school-based teaching/learning of languages-cultures is not only the training of autonomous individuals, but also that of citizens who are both creative and responsible, active and supportive. From this point of view, too, the historical shift from object (collective) to subject (individual) in language and culture didactics has now reached its limits. It is time, in our discipline, to remember that an individual cannot be free alone or in a dependent community and that he can only find meaning in his life through projects that will necessarily involve others; to integrate the notions of "collective intelligence" and "learning society" already developed in other places; and to consider therefore that it is also the class group and small groups as such that must become "autonomous learners". In his *Introduction to Complex Thinking,* Edgar Morin gives as an example of a recursive loop "the society produced by interactions between individuals, but which, once produced, feeds back to and produces individuals" (1990, p. 100). In our classrooms, we also loop the individual learner and the collective learner:

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```
student  ──────────────► learner
group                     subject
      ▲                        │
      └────────────────────────┘
```
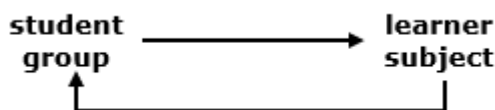
It is certainly not the least historical interest of this co-actional-co-cultural perspective to finally impel in the reflection on the teaching/learning of languages-cultures these recursive loops characteristic of complex thinking, and as such - the constituents of this "complex didactics of languages-cultures" now indispensable to think about the new stakes and respond to the new challenges of our time.

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