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**MODELLING OF THE TYPES OF APPROACH TO METHODOLOGICAL VARIATION
IN LANGUAGE-CULTURES DIDACTICS:
BETWEEN ECLECTICISM TO COMPLEX DIDACTICS**

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Introduction

The eclecticism of teachers is a way of managing methodological variation that consists in implementing, in an articulated way (distributed chronologically within a sequence or didactic unit) and/or combined (used simultaneously) different constituted methodologies and/or components or "objects" coming from different methodologies¹, starting from the assumption, which defines "eclecticism" as a principle, that the more diversified the teaching-learning modes are, the better they will adapt to the *complexity* of the parameters of the *environment* of this joint action, and the more effective they will be as a result.

Complexity can be described by its paradigm, made up of a series of notions - multiplicity, diversity, heterogeneity, variability, interrelation, instability, sensitivity to the environment, contradiction and the inclusion of the observer - of which I proposed in Puren 046 an illustration by as many characteristics of any class-group as it is permanently presented to the teacher.

The environment, the key element of this paradigm, is taken there, as in the whole of my text, in the sense of a "global system" including the school institution, the aims and objectives, the working conditions, the tools used, the teaching-learning cultures and the socio-cultural context, as well as the learners and teachers themselves. One of the characteristics of the classroom as a complex system is indeed that the teacher and the learners are part of their own environment of joint action: they act and react to each other in particular according to their status, personality, motivation, training, experience and common history. ²

For a conference last January on the theme of eclecticism, for which I had been asked³, I was led to elaborate a notional typology of approaches to methodological variation among authors of books or articles intervening in the field of cultural language didactics since its constitution in the 1880s until the 1980s. I have borrowed the corpus of these authors from that of my *History of Methodologies* (Puren 1988a), adding the authors of the CEFR (COE 2001).

I then realized that this typology made it possible, at the cost of a few additional notions that it brought to light, to characterize comparatively the approaches to methodological variation of the EFL textbook designers of the 1980s, which I had analyzed in my 1994⁴ *Essay on Eclecticism*, as well as the particular approach to the "complex didactics of language-cultures" that I have been personally promoting for more than twenty years (cf. my manifesto article Puren 2003b).

The⁵overall notional model that I have arrived at brings together all the notions mobilized for the analysis of these different approaches, and I will use it in this article to present the

¹ On the notion of methodological "components" or "objects," cf. Puren 2012f. For a list of the seven components currently available, cf. Puren 2019g, pp. 11-12.

² Chapter 2 (pp. 9-14) of the online course "Didactics of Language and Culture as a Field of Research" is devoted to the notion of "environment" (Puren DLC-DR4).

³ "Eclecticism and complex didactics in teacher training: to better manage the complexity of teaching-learning situations in the FLE classroom," Webinar for E.N.S. de Sétif (Algeria), January 21, 2021.

⁴ Puren 2009e, chap. 1.1.2 "Eclecticism and Learning Materials," pp. 16-17.

⁵ I have used the tool of notional or conceptual modelling for the analysis of several other issues, for example, recently, mediation (2019b), distance and hybrid education (2020e), experiential (2021c) and innovation (2021e). Compared to a typology, which is static, a model, even one based on a typology, is dynamic in the sense that it allows for various cognitive operations to be carried out by reorganizing and relating its different elements. Cf. *infra* chapter 3.3.2.1, "A modelling approach", pp. 14-15.

specificities of each of them. This model, made up of four notional groups (visually indicated by alternating white and grey backgrounds), is as follows:

	practice	theoretical	modeler	positive	negative	product	process	learner	teacher	textbook	institution	discipline
1.												
2.												
3.												
...												

These different notions, their oppositions and combinations, will be clarified in the following chapters with the examples that will be given.

I am well aware that my corpus is limited and that my division of the different approaches to methodological variation is arbitrary and questionable. However, I assume that my analyses of this corpus, thus divided, will succeed, if not in saturating the research with the different notions allowing to characterize the different possible approaches of methodological variation in language-culture didactics, at least in building an efficient model for the analysis of all types of approach, by making it possible to immediately show which additional notions would be mobilized.

1. Eclecticism among the designers of FLE textbooks in the 1980s

Introduction to Chapter 1

In my 1994 *Essay on Eclecticism*, I noted a strong rise in eclecticism in FLE textbooks in the 1980s, and my analysis (1994e, pp. 16-17) then highlighted the existence of two types of eclecticism, the first with three variants, the second with two variants. I reproduce *in extenso* in italics these two pages of my essay so that my readers have all the elements of judgement in front of them, with my comments in roman (straight type). I have simply grouped and renumbered the different variants continuously (1.1., 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 2.2), so as to transfer these references to the notional model of eclecticism, *infra* p. 6.

1.1. The eclecticism of adaptation

This type of eclecticism and all its variants are by nature **empirical**, since they are based on the environment to which education must adapt, and **positive**, this adaptation being conceived as justified because it allows for relevant and effective modes of teaching.

1.1.] *In the first variant, the designer of the course declares that he is adapting it to teaching-learning situations. The [designers]⁶ of The Orange Method (A. Reboullet, J.-L.*

⁶ In all the quotations from my *Essay on Eclecticism* used in this article, I have replaced the term "authors", when referring to language courses, with the term "[designers]" (thus put in square brackets), so as to reserve the term "authors" everywhere for specialists who have published articles or books on the teaching-learning of language-cultures. Beyond the simple reason of contextual convenience (to clearly distinguish here the corpus of analysis of chapter 1 from that of chapter 2), this terminological difference seems to me to be justified by the different status of the two: a textbook, insofar as it proposes concrete teaching-learning devices, comes under the heading of didactic engineering, that is to say, the activity of design. A

Malandain and J. Verdol) announce in their Teacher's Notebook (Hachette, 1978) that their thinking

"The first issue was the conditions for teaching French in the school setting. The two most restrictive conditions have just been mentioned: the limited number of years of study and the weekly timetable. In addition, there is sometimes overcrowding and the limitations imposed by the programs, instructions and examination system. All these variables have led the authors:

- to move away from ambitious methods, seductive experiments, but costly in time and means;

- to set modest goals and provide a conveniently designed instructional package.

» (p. 4)

In variant 1, the teaching-learning situations are now conceived as data to be taken into account a priori, at the very levels of the methodological design and development of the material, and not as constraints disrupting a posteriori the proper application of a universalist methodology in the field;

This variant [1.1] is **textbook-oriented**, since the textbook is presented as having been designed from the outset to provide the best possible adaptation to the target (school) environment. It is also **product-oriented**, since it is implemented in the classroom from the finished product that is the textbook. Moreover, the above paragraph is a good illustration of the **positive** orientation of this eclecticism.

1.2] *In a second variant, it is the teachers themselves, in the field, who must adapt their use of the course to teaching-learning situations. Monique Callamand, for example, writes in the Guide pédagogique d'Intercoodes (Larousse, 1983):*

"We would like to emphasize that the chosen approach is not the only possibility, and that some of our proposals will have to be modulated according to the learning objectives targeted and the teaching conditions, as well as according to the students' mother tongue and their socio-cultural specificity. "(p. V)

1.2] *In variant 2, a new step is taken since the teacher is conceived as the person responsible for the methodological design, instead of being a simple applicator-adaptor in the field of a methodology designed by others (even if it was designed for him);*

This variant [1.2] is **teacher-oriented**, since it is the teacher who is responsible for the adaptation. It would be possible *a priori* to hesitate between the process orientation, with the teacher having to carry out this adaptation constantly, and the product orientation, with the teacher carrying out the adaptation of the textbook to his own environment once and for all. The parameters cited in this passage, which are all constant, clearly tip the balance in favour of the second interpretation, that of **product** orientation.

1.3] *In a third variant, the course designer adapts the course to the didactic traditions of the teachers (traditions which are supposed to be linked in part to the objectives and the teaching-learning situations). Thus the [designers] of Contact 1 (a textbook for secondary school pupils in Africa, C. Boucher and M. -J. Capelle, Hatier, 1980) state that their first methodological option was the desire to innovate without breaking with current teaching practices (Guide du Maître, Foreword, p. 2).*

1.3] *Finally, in variant 3, we go even further (and very far) since we declare that we want to respect "the practices in use", i.e. the practices prior to the introduction of the*

language textbook designer may also be a didactician (this has been my case on several occasions), but he then moves from one logic of action to another.

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new course, by posing a clearly eclectic postulate (innovation can be compatible with tradition) and contrary to the one on which the didactics of the FLE has been based since its constitution (innovation implies a rupture with tradition).

This variant [1.3] is **textbook-oriented** - the court designers make the adaptation - and **product-oriented** - the teacher is asked to implement the adaptation made by the designers.

1.2. Eclecticism in principle

I will correct on two points, as we will see, the analysis I made of this type of eclecticism in my 1994 essay.

1.4] [...] *The [designers] of En Avant la Musique 1 (J. Blanc, J.-M. Cartier, P. Lederlin, Clé International, 1984) state in the Preamble of the Teacher's Book, referring to "grammatical, structural-global audiovisual and communicative methods":*

*"What has most often bothered us is not the variety of these different solutions proposed for the same problem (learning or teaching a language), but the anathema launched by each new prophet on everything that had preceded him. We believe, on the contrary, that there **can be many paths as long as they lead to the right place.***

*We have therefore attempted in our book **to reconcile the different points of view on language teaching**, by choosing to include in the program of En Avant la Musique a selection of the best pieces of structuralist pedagogy or of the communicative approach, and this without any sectarianism. "(p. 3, underlined in the text)*

Even if they pose it as a principle, the authors of En Avant la Musique still justify their eclecticism, like the previous authors, from a practical perspective (cf. reconciliation in the field).

My assertion, in this 1994 essay, that this type and variant of eclecticism "is at the level of didactology" is erroneous, and in opposition to my definition of the didactological perspective from that period (cf. 1999a). The justification of the designers of *En Avant la Musique* is clearly **empirical** (cf. "the paths can be multiple *as long as they lead to the right place*"; "a reconciliation *on the ground*" - I underline -, and their refusal of any "sectarianism"; I speak moreover about them of "*practical perspective*"), and the solution they propose is *didactic* (cf. "to put in the program the best pieces of⁷ the structuralist pedagogy or of the communicative approach").

This variant of eclecticism is also **positive** (cf. "reconciliation", "best pieces") and **product-** and **textbook-oriented**: the designers of the textbook propose the path they have traced, the score they have prepared. This variant [1.4], on reflection, is difficult to distinguish from variant [1.3], in which the postulate (innovation can be compatible with tradition) can lead one to consider it as eclecticism in principle.

1.5] *What remained - the ultimate stage of the recognition of eclecticism by the course designers - was to reverse the argument, by positing the necessity of practical eclecticism from theoretical considerations. The evolution that we saw begin in 1978 with the [designers] of La Méthode Orange thus ends with those of Espaces, in 1990 [CAPELLE, G. & GIDON, N., Hachette], when they affirm that no methodology extends its hegemony over the field of language teaching, and draw the following conclusions:*

⁷ Let us note in passing this term, the idea of which corresponds to that of the methodological "components" or "objects" (cf. note 1, p. 2).

"The time seemed ripe, therefore, for a method that took into account the new foreseeable needs and the creation of a new balance between language learning and communication, focusing as much on the expression of concepts as on the strictly interactional aspect, reintroducing more substantial content, teaching writing as a full-fledged communication, and including in its objectives not only the aspects recently taken into account, but also the acquisition of formative strategies. "(Teaching Guide, Foreword, p. 3)

This variant [1.5] is indeed, as I wrote in 1994, a break with all previous variants. It is certainly based on the environment in order to provide it with methodological answers borrowed from different methodologies (specifically from the communicative approach and the previous active methodology), but the posture is no longer only *reactive*, it wants to be *proactive*, linked to the "new foreseeable needs" and to the evolution of didactic conceptions. It is still a question of a partly **empirical** eclecticism (cf. the taking into account of needs), **positive**, **product-** and **textbook-oriented** (the proposed "method"), but the argumentation also implicitly refers to developments in didactic thinking: hence, for this variant [1.5], the two boxes ticked "**textbook**" and "**discipline**" in the table below. I would no longer write that this is a "practical eclecticism based on theoretical considerations", but that it is an eclecticism combining empiricism and discipline. This positioning thus combines the eclecticism of the textbook designers and that of the specialists in language teaching/learning, which we shall analyze in Chapter 2, either because these textbook designers are also specialists or because they refer to specialists to whom they attribute this competence.

Conclusion of Chapter 1

The different types and variants of eclecticism among textbook designers are grouped in the following table:

GUIDELINES	empirical	scientist	modeler	positive	negative	product	process	learner	teacher	textbook	institution	discipline
1.1	X			X		X				X		
1.2	X			X		X			X			
1.3	X			X		X				X		
1.4	X			X		X				X		
1.5	X			X		X				X		X

The characteristics common to all the variants of this eclecticism correspond to the advertising argument common to all the publishers: "We started from your needs / demands / expectations (the **empirical**), and we offer you a **product** that will allow you to better / well satisfy them (the **positive**). »

The **teacher** orientation of *InterCodes* (1.2) is original, as publishers generally prefer to use the argument of easy efficiency: it would be enough to follow the textbook (**textbook** orientation). The designers of the latter textbook did not immediately refer, as they could have done, to the

didactic training of teachers, which could help them to adapt the textbook to their environment (discipline orientation).

This discipline orientation is taken into account by the designers of *Espaces* (1.5), but it concerns the didactic training from which the designers of the textbook would benefit, and not that of the teachers. It is understandable that this is not a question of teacher training: the higher their level of training, the less credible is the idea that the eclectic adaptation of their practices is not their competence and responsibility, but that of the designers of their textbook... ⁸

The major argument among teachers in favor of maximum diversification of their teaching methods is undoubtedly their ignorance of learning methods. It is also understandable why textbook authors and publishers do not use it: it would weaken their methodological proposals. On the other hand, this is the argument used by D. Abe and M.-J. Gremmo, academic members of the CRAPEL in Nancy - a research center which at that time specialized in autonomy in learning in university language centers - in an article from 1983:

Since we do not know what is actually going on in the black box that is the human brain, it is difficult to know what information to give at the start to be sure that the result is a satisfactory output and therefore a satisfactory intake. In fact, in a traditional course, the teacher suggests a method to promote this acquisition or intake. But if the learner has a different method from the one proposed, he will not be able to learn at all, or he will spend a considerable amount of time trying to understand and acquire the method proposed by the teacher.

It may be possible to solve the problem by offering a wide variety of methods. The learner, by trial and error, is more likely to find the one that suits him. It is this system that is offered on its own: not only are the methods varied, but also the English-speaking documents and [speakers]; only counseling is the fixed point of learning. Learners generally choose to work on several documents and several methods at the same time (p. 113).

2. The eclecticism of specialists in the teaching-learning of languages and cultures from the 1880s to the 1990s

Introduction to Chapter 2

In my general introduction, I announced that I was going to analyze in this chapter "the approaches to methodological variation among the authors of books or articles intervening in the field of cultural language didactics since its constitution in the 1880s until the 1980s" (p. 2). This is a very heterogeneous corpus, as the diversity of their approaches to the eclectic question shows, and the generic term I have chosen here to designate all these authors, "specialists in the teaching of cultural languages", covers different statuses - teachers, inspectors, trainers, academics - and different conceptions of the discipline which are reflected in the way they designate it - pedagogy, methodology, applied linguistics, didactics. Some of them are also textbook designers. The heterogeneity of this second corpus and its partial overlap with the first one do not seem to me to pose a problem, on the contrary, insofar as the aim here is only to bring out a maximum of different notions mobilized in their approaches to methodological variation, so as to enrich the global model.

It was necessary for the analysis of this corpus, precisely, to call upon several additional notions to characterize several new orientations:

⁸ Cf. Puren 2015e, Handout 3, "Scale of Teacher Proficiency Levels in the Use of Their Textbook."

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- "**scientific**", which is opposed to "empirical";
- "**negative**", which is opposed to "positive";
- "**process**", which is opposed to "product";
- "**institution**", which opposes "discipline" and adds to the group already containing "discipline", "teacher", "learner" and "textbook".

I will present each variant of this "eclecticism of the specialists" by announcing, in the title of the chapter, the combination of the notions, then by one or several illustrative quotations, limiting myself to the comments which seem to me to be essential.

2.1. Positive empirical eclecticism oriented to the teaching process

We would willingly say that the only general principle of sound pedagogy is that there is no marvelous method, no infallible recipe applicable to all cases; it is that teaching must be modified according to changing circumstances, and that is why there are teachers and an art of teaching. (Morel 1886, p. 46)

The allusion to the **teacher** being a craftsman directs the interpretation of this variant of eclecticism more towards the **process** than the product: it is indeed permanently that craftsmen, for example a carpenter, a tailor or a baker (to take three family examples...), must adapt to the demands of their public, to the raw material they use.

One will note in this passage the central place of the environment (the "circumstances"), as in any eclectic approach. In France, we can even symbolically date the emergence of the notion of environment to the beginning of the reactions of many teachers to the official instruction of September 29, 1863, which asked them to implement the "natural" or "maternal" method: "The method to be followed is what I will call the natural method, the one used for the child in the family, the one used by everyone in a foreign country [...]". A. Wolfromm, director of the *Revue de l'Enseignement des Langues Vivantes*, wrote in 1897:

We do not believe in the effectiveness of a method which would apply to the first study of a foreign language, exactly, but exclusively, the procedures of maternal teaching. There are indeed, between the situation of the mother and the teacher with regard to the child, between the child himself at the moment when his mother initiates him to the first elements of his first language, and the child at the moment when we try to make him place, beside these elements, the elements of a new language, there are, we say, differences which seem to us to call for differences in the subject and the mode of teaching.

2.2. Positive empirical eclecticism oriented towards the institutional product

Adrien Pinloche, criticizing at the time like other teachers the dogmatism of the direct methodology imposed on teachers, wrote in 1909:

There is not and cannot be an absolute system in pedagogy. What one has to do, therefore, if one wants to make progress, is to seek in good faith, experimentally and not theoretically, what each process can give, according to the indications of the moment and the terrain, as the student's psychological evolution progresses, and then not to hesitate to recognize the moment when it ceases to be useful and may even begin to become harmful. And then, instead of obstinately depriving oneself of the benefits of one or the other of these processes, is it not advisable, on the contrary, to combine them in order to obtain the maximum possible yield? The processes of the direct method cannot escape this law. They have, like all the others, their relative value and their useful indications, and consequently also their limit of effectiveness. (Pinloche 1909)

Only one expression in this passage refers vaguely to the supporters of this eclecticism (cf. "if **we** want to move forward," I emphasize). The last direct instruction, that of 1908, had indeed just been published, and this position was still held by individual opponents of the official orientations. A few years later, when he reaffirmed the eclectic position, eclecticism was already a "new pedagogy" for her:

As for the choice of means, as far from the extreme tendencies of the past as from those of our days, it [the "new pedagogy"] knows how to combine all that can be good in the most opposed systems and endeavors to use, after having experimented with them impartially and measured them out carefully, all the procedures that can contribute to reaching the goal, taking into account each time not only the practical but also the intellectual needs of the pupils, and also the nature of the terrain. (Pinloche 1913, p. 5)

At the end of the First World War, this eclectic pedagogy became the new official position. So that Adrian Godart could declare at a conference in Hamburg in 1928, comparing the official instructions of Prussia and France:

Your directives were applied to learn from experience and to coordinate the results. The French instructions (of 1925) are not revolutionary either. They are only a modest stabilization. And like all prudent stabilization, they were preceded by consultations in which teachers representing the most diverse opinions were heard as experts. They are therefore in large part their own work. (Godart 1928, p. 382)

This official eclecticism, advocating a direct methodology combined with certain components considered "traditional" at the time, was to remain the doctrine of the French educational institution for the teaching of all modern languages from the 1920s to the 1960s⁹, and this is why it is possible to speak of a "product-oriented" and "institution-oriented" eclecticism.

2.3. Positive scientific eclecticism oriented towards a disciplinary product

We have in chapter 2.1 (*supra* p. 7), the "positive empirical eclecticism oriented towards the teaching process" illustrated by a quotation from L. Morel comparing the teacher to an artisan. This comparison no longer suited Denis Girard in 1972, as it did others who, like him, were promoting a **scientific discipline**:

Language teaching has the right to exist independently not only as an art, but as a science which does not hesitate to borrow from various other human sciences what they can bring to it. W. F. Mackey has revived the old word "didactics" to speak of this scientific conception of language teaching¹⁰. Why don't we also speak of "language didactics" instead of "applied linguistics"? This would remove some of the ambiguities and give language teaching the status it deserves.

That same year, D. Girard published a book entitled *Pédagogie de l'anglais* (ANTIER *et al.* 1972) with two English school teachers (he was a regional educational inspector at the time). They wrote :

Let us repeat, the solution of the future can only be eclectic, in the positive, not pejorative, sense that Palmer gave to eclecticism:

⁹ These components of the traditional "grammar-translation" methodology have fluctuated over the past half-century. Among the most stable over time, however, are the systematic teaching of grammar through a very progressive and initially reflective procedure (described in Puren 2016c), as well as the reintroduction of translation in L1 for certain functions (functions 2 to 8 described in Puren Table 033).

¹⁰ The translation of William Francis Mackey's 1966 book, *Principes de didactique analytique. Analyse scientifique de l'enseignement des langues* (London: Longman) had just been published the same year in French by Éditions Didier.

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So far from being a term of disparagement or reproach, it implies the deliberate choice of all things which are good, a judicious and reasoned selection of all the diverse factors the some of which may constitute a complete and homogeneous system. ¹¹

What we could call a "reasoned eclecticism" must order both the choice of the linguistic and psychological theories on which we want to base our experiments and the choice of the means and techniques to be used to conduct the experimentation. (p. 76, emphasis added)

The **product** orientation, on the other hand, is well illustrated by the developmental goal of the eclectic configuration in Palmer's quote, which is to achieve "*a complete and homogeneous system*" (I will return to this goal in the conclusion of this chapter 2).

2.4. Negative empirical eclecticism oriented to the teacher

This type of eclecticism is "negatively" oriented because it is recognized by the authors of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, COE 2001)*, not to promote it, but to criticize it. It is well illustrated by the following passage, where the only reference to eclecticism in the whole document is found:

6. How do learners learn?

At present, there is no consensus based on sufficiently solid research on this issue for the Framework itself to be based on any theory of learning.

Some theorists claim that [...].

Others think that [...].

On the other hand, some consider that [...].

In between these two extremes, most "mainstream" students and teachers as well as instructional materials will follow more eclectic practices. (WCC 2001, pp. 108-109)

The eclecticism is attributed to **learners** and **teachers**, and it is of an **empirical** type: they cannot rely, according to the authors of the CEFR, on a theory of learning that would allow them to base their practices on scientific certainties. This eclecticism is therefore conceived by these authors as **negative**, as a default solution: the authors obviously regret this lack of scientific certainty, which means that, in their opinion, it is not possible "at the present time" to answer the question they pose in the title of this passage: "How do learners learn? This eclecticism is finally **product-oriented**, insofar as one can interpret the phrase "[most learners and teachers] *will follow* more eclectic practices": it does seem that the authors assume that both have developed their own eclectic methodology.

¹¹ "Far from being a term of disparagement or reproach, it implies a deliberate choice of all that is good, a judicious and reasoned selection of all the various factors, some of which may constitute a complete and homogeneous system" (my translation). Harold E. Palmer's first book is entitled *The scientific study and teaching of languages* (London: Oxford University Press, 1917).

Conclusion of Chapter 2

The following table groups the different approaches to eclecticism analyzed in this chapter 2 :

	empirical	scientist	modeler	positive	negative	product	process	learner	teacher	textbook	institution	discipline
2.1	X			X			X		X			
2.2	X			X		X					X	
2.3		X		X		X						X
2.4	X				X	X		X	X			

First of all, one will notice the absence, in the corpus I have given myself, of the variant "positive empirical learner process-oriented", which is surprising, on reflection, if one thinks of the importance that didacticists have been giving in their discourse for almost half a century now to the "learner centeredness". This approach to methodological variation as being the responsibility of the learner is, on the other hand, very present, among English and German didacticists, in the expressions *Open learning* (in English), or *offenes lernen* (in German), which are the ones they use instead of the term "pédagogie différenciée" (in French, and among French school didacticists). For the former, in fact, differentiated teaching is not possible: teachers cannot manage or even know themselves in real time the needs and strategies of each of their pupils; only differentiated learning is possible, for which the teacher proposes learning devices supported, on demand, by the necessary aids and guides (cf. Puren & Bertocchini 2001).

One of the effects of this notional modelling of the different variants of "specialist eclecticism", it seems to me, is to cast an original but unfavourable light on the CEFR authors' conception of eclecticism (chapter 2.4 above).

The fact that the notion appears only once in the 192 pages of the document, while eclecticism is, as they themselves acknowledge, dominant in the actual practices of learners and teachers, further proves, if any were needed, the authors' lack of real interest in learning and teaching, despite the subtitle of their book, *learning, teaching, assessment*. As Bruno Maurer and I have amply demonstrated in our 2019 book (Maurer & Puren 2019), the only real concern of these authors is about "assessing", with the aim of promoting the certifications organized by the international bodies that have effective control over the Language Policy Unit of the Council of Europe; yet these external certifications are by nature disconnected from any consideration of prior learning - and therefore teaching - ...

The fact that the eclecticism of learners and teachers is thus negatively connoted without further ado is also surprising: the authors should at least have explained how and why they can, in the absence of scientific certainty as to effective teaching practices, regret the eclecticism of learning practices while at the same time defending the so-called "learner-centredness": this last expression never appears in the text of the CEFR, but one of the principles of the CEFR announced from the very first pages is indeed to "encourage all those involved in the organization of language learning to base their action on the needs, motivations, characteristics and resources of the learner" (p. 4). How could the same learning theory take into account the diversity of these factors acting on learning, their heterogeneity, their variability, their oppositions from one learner to another in a class of 20 or 30 students, in short their complexity?

Moreover, we can understand the interest of Denis Girard and his colleagues in H. Palmer (cf. chapter 2.3 above) by reading the presentation made by Daniel Véronique (Véronique 2019), who considers him to be a precursor of language didactics insofar as he was a pioneer in the field. Palmer (cf. chap. 2.3 above) by reading Daniel Véronique's presentation of him (Véronique 2019), who considers him a precursor of language didactics insofar as he takes as his object the teaching-learning relationship in a double perspective, both theoretical and practical. However, it is contradictory, from an epistemological point of view, to think, as D. Girard and his two colleagues, that it is possible to solve the problem of eclecticism by elaborating a "complete and homogeneous system", since such a system would not, by its very nature, be able to manage complexity.

On this point, the proponents of position [2.2] differ from those of position [2.3] only in the instance of validation of this system, the former having recourse to the institution, the latter to science. Compared to the first variant of this type of eclecticism (chapter 2.1 above), that of a Morel or a Wolf fromm at the end of the 19th century, it is doubtful that there has been any progress, because in passing from variant [2.2] to variant [2.3], we have only passed from one mode of simplification to another¹². What "complex didactics" proposes is precisely not to evacuate complexity, but to manage it as well as possible.

3. The approach of methodological variation in complex language-culture didactics

Introduction to Chapter 3

As announced in the general introduction of this article, my main objective here is to show the specificities of an approach to methodological variation where it is no longer considered as eclecticism, but as complexity management. I announced this necessary evolution and proposed the notion of "complex didactics" as early as 1998, in an article entitled "Eclecticism and complexity in school didactics of foreign languages".

And since no new constituted methodology is announced (because the didacticians no longer have the means, nor the desire, to constitute a new one), it is now necessary and urgent to found what I call a "complex didactics". This can be defined by its project, which consists no longer in constructing for the teachers and [designers] of didactic materials a prefabricated, global, constant and universal coherence, but in proposing to them the means of constructing themselves and for themselves (and the learners...) multiple partial, provisional and local coherences, and of articulating them to each other. (Puren 1998b, p. 7) ¹³

¹² Cf. Edgar Morin's distinction, presented in Puren 063, between (1) the scientific paradigm, which he considers valid in the exact sciences, (2) the paradigm of simplification, in which the scientific paradigm is unduly applied to the humanities, which is not adequate, and (3) the paradigm of complexity, the only one he considers valid in the humanities. One can discuss the epistemological characteristics of the didactics of languages and cultures, but it seems to me impossible, without scientific delirium, to consider it as an exact science, given the human nature of its object, namely the relationship between a teaching process and a learning process.

¹³ In Puren 058, I give a synthetic presentation of the four types of coherence available with their characteristics: closed coherence, open coherence, multiple coherences (this last one is the one indicated at the end of the passage quoted here), virtual coherence. The "closed coherence" is that of any methodological system, whether it is institutional or scientific. I consider in this last version of document 058 (June 2021), contrary to what I write at the end of the passage quoted here, that "a complex didactics of languages-cultures must be able to manage differently [all] these types of coherence in adequacy with the whole of the parameters of the plural environments of teaching-learning".

I return to this question in the preface I added in 2008 to the beginning of my *Essay on Eclecticism*. I will be forgiven the following long self-citation, at the end of which I would now add scientific eclecticism to empirical eclecticism:

My Essay on eclecticism is not less dated, insofar as the perception of eclecticism can occur only on a background of expectation which is that of the type of coherence that I described above, namely a global, strong, permanent and universal coherence. In the field of perception that is ours today, this background of expectation has disappeared, and the notion of "eclecticism" itself no longer has any meaning: we find ourselves "simply" (if one can say so!...), teachers, [designers] of textbooks, trainers and didacticians, faced with a complexity that we must henceforth think of and manage as such and in accordance with the ideas of our time. We have the means to do so, if we know how to look for them and mobilize them, since the "complexity paradigm" ¹⁴is now taken into account in all the Human Sciences. I think that reading this essay on eclecticism can be useful for teachers and trainers, because the new epistemology it promotes allows us to envisage the overcoming of this empirical eclecticism in favor of a conception of our discipline that is more adapted to the real issues and difficulties that teachers and trainers are confronted with, that of a "complex didactics of languages and cultures". (Puren 1994e, Preface of October 2008, p. 7)

3.1. The four principles of complex didactics

I take up again a passage from my 1998 text, apologizing for the distribution of ideas already presented above, to illustrate how the four principles of complex didactics I present there define it in relation to the two related issues of coherence and eclecticism:

- 1. Any system (such as a constituted methodology), in order to achieve coherence, must simplify the complexity to avoid contradictions.*
- 2. Practitioners, confronted daily with this complexity in their classrooms, have always been more or less eclectic, especially in times of official dogma and even at the cost of a certain guilt: any dogma, in fact, by its very nature, prohibits more than it authorizes, impoverishes more than it enriches, and makes the teacher's task more difficult by preventing it from becoming more complex. (p. 3)*
- 3. The diversity of teaching practices and the proposals of textbook (designers) can only appear as eclecticism against a background of an expectation of a single, global and permanent coherence. If this background disappears, what is observed is no longer interpreted as a mixture of different coherences, but as the management of complexity.*
- 4. The didactics of language-cultures has, at present, neither the means nor the will to reconstruct a coherence of this type. This discipline can, and must, propose complex modes of observation, analysis, interpretation and intervention capable of replacing the eclectic approach.*

One cannot therefore speak, in the case of complex language-culture didactics, of a "type of eclecticism", but according to the expression I have chosen here, of a particular "approach to methodological variation".

¹⁴ Cf. Puren 063, where I present schematically Edgar Morin's opposition between the "scientific paradigm", "paradigm of complexity" and the "paradigm of simplification" which one ends up with if one wants to apply the scientific paradigm, which does not suit him, to the didactics of language-cultures. [Note of June 2021]

3.3.2 Characteristics of the methodological variation approach in complex didactics

3.3.2.1 A modelling approach

The answer of complex didactics is of course **disciplinary**, but it is, contrary to all the forms of eclecticism we have seen so far, neither empirical nor scientific, but **modelling**.

For a discipline such as CSD, which is part of the Human Sciences, models are indispensable mediators between practices and theories. A large part of my work has been concerned with modelling for the last twenty years and proposes models of all types concerning numerous domains of the discipline. While waiting for the publication of a "Model/modelling" entry in the "Bibliographies" section of my site, I will simply give below the references of some general presentations:

- Paper 015 presents the differences between theories and models according to Edgar Morin (1990) and Richard Rorty (1995).
- Document 014 presents the different functions of models according to Bernard Walliser (1977).
- The article 2020a presents the system of models in language-culture didactics.
- The dossier n° 3 of the online course "CSD as a research field" (Puren CSD-DR3) is dedicated to "Models, theories and paradigms". In addition to a definition of the concept of "model" between theory and practice (chap. 2.1), there are many examples of models. Since the publication of this dossier, other models have been published elsewhere: I have indicated the most recent ones in note 4, *supra* p. 2.

The models are neither practices that one would have to reproduce, because any practice is only valid for certain environments, nor theories that one would have to apply, because any theory can only generate practices that are limited to those that its coherence authorizes, and that are only valid, like the others, for certain environments.

Models are schematizations and therefore simplifications of a complex reality that cannot, by nature, be immediately apprehended as such. But they are made up of elements chosen in such a way that their articulations and or multiple combinations make it possible to reconstitute this complexity mentally.

The models are mechanisms for generating a multitude of questions (*i.e.*, problematization mechanisms) that make it possible to produce at will a multitude of answers from which the teacher will have to choose according to the criterion of appropriateness, which brings together the joint criteria of relevance and effectiveness. It is these very diverse answers that an observer expecting the implementation of a single coherence will perceive as eclecticism - whether this coherence is provided by an empirical corpus of reference practices, or by a "scientific" set of reference theories.

All these characteristics of models make them indispensable mediators between practices and theories, and privileged tools for managing complexity.

3.3.2.2. A product-oriented approach and a teacher-learner process

One of the criticisms often made - and rightly so - of the empirical eclecticism of teachers is that it would generate, at least among the less well-trained teachers, unstructured practices, and that it would legitimize in their eyes all regressions. It is certain that the discipline of "language didactics" has accumulated for more than a century a whole heritage of knowledge and know-how that practitioners can and must exploit. In other words, the response to complexity must be partly **disciplinary product** oriented.

But what the complex didactics of languages and cultures provides are not ready-made answers in the form of "good practices" to be reproduced¹⁵; they are - to take the metaphor of a customer looking, in a computer store, to compose a computer corresponding exactly to his professional needs - methodological components with external rules of adequacy to the objectives and needs, and internal rules of assembly between the different components: the disciplinary answer to complexity is thus also oriented towards the **teaching process**.

Finally, this response is also **learner process** oriented. The learner, in fact, is a stakeholder in the management of complexity: he or she is at least the co-manager with the teacher, if we refer to active pedagogy and to the central object of the discipline, i.e. the relationship between the teaching and learning processes; and he or she is even the first actor if we refer to the constructivist theory of interlanguage¹⁶.

Product orientation and process orientation are two opposing orientations. Modelling makes this complementarity of opposites possible, which is one of the characteristics of complexity¹⁷: models are indeed products of modelling, but they fulfill certain processual¹⁸ functions.

A frequent case of process-product opposition in school didactics is that of reforms decided by the institution on the basis of determined didactic orientations. They therefore start from a *product*, but they can only succeed, however, if they are generalized and maintained over time, which necessarily implies that the teachers can implement them according to their different working environments, i.e. that there is a *process of* appropriation by adaptation on their part.

On the occasion of a global reform of the teaching of national and foreign languages in Algeria, I proposed a type of research, the "interventional research", originally conceived for public health reforms, which are also based on official recommendations taken from specialists, but which the public must appropriate. See my article 2019c, as well as my proposals for implementing this type of research on the appropriate use of textbooks (2020h). An official reform is a priori oriented towards an *institutional product*, but the two first conditions for it to have a chance of success is that it be combined in the field with the taking into account of *situated teaching-learning processes*, which can only be done if the reform has actually been conceived, immediately downstream of the aims, objectives and contents legitimately imposed by the institution, as a *disciplinary*¹⁹ *product*, and that it be conducted in the field as such.

The particularity of intervention research that makes it an instrument adapted to complexity is that it combines the *top-down* logic with the *bottom-up* logic. It is a type of research that is both opposed to and complementary to the so-called "action research"²⁰ conceived and conducted by field actors with the support of university researchers using the products of didactic research; this action research, in fact, combines the primary *bottom-up* logic with the *top-down* logic.

The following table presents the different concepts used in complex language-culture didactics.

¹⁵ For a critique of what functions as a real "ideology of good practice", see Puren 2007a.

¹⁶ See Vogel 1995, and Puren 1997e for a review of this work.

¹⁷ The union of opposites is one of Edgar Morin's favorite themes in his reflections on complexity, for example in his 1990 book.

¹⁸ Cf. in particular, among the different functions of the models according to Walliser 1977 (repeated in Puren 014), the predictive, decisional, heuristic and concertation functions.

¹⁹ Even if this product must be at least validated by the institution, or even chosen from the outset by the latter between didactic options, or even, as was the case in the language teaching reform project in Algeria between 2016 and 2018, composed by the institution through articulations and/combinations between methodological components available in language-culture didactics (see Puren 2018f).

²⁰ See Puren DLC-MR5, Chapter 1.8, "Action Research," pp. 23-29.

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	empirical	scientist	modeler	positive	negative	product	process	learner	teacher	textbook	institution	discipline
3			X	X		X						X
							X	X	X			

In complex language-culture didactics, the approach to methodological variation is necessarily complex, since it must be commensurate with the complexity of the multiple factors to be taken into account. This is the application of one of the first historical laws of systems theory, proposed by Williams Ashby, according to which a system can only effectively manage another system if it has a level of complexity (i.e. a variety of management modes) at least equal to that other system. This law called "required variety" was paradoxically proposed in 1985 by André de Peretti as the scientific basis of differentiated pedagogy, while it invalidated the very idea of "differentiated *pedagogy*": how could the teacher - the *pedagogue* - know perfectly, and manage rationally at all times, including sometimes in real time (by observing group and individual activities) the learning modes of his 20 or 30 pupils... in each class? A complex answer to the question of differentiation cannot be given outside the relationship between differentiated teaching and differentiated learning²¹.

In line with the epistemology of complexity and the systemic method, the approach of methodological variation in complex didactics both distinguishes and links, or, more precisely, distinguishes *in order to link*²² teacher orientation and learner orientation, product orientation and process orientation, practices and theories (through the mediation of models), institution and discipline, the *top-down* → *button up* approach in action research and the reverse *top-down button* → *up* approach in intervention research.

Conclusion

The following table groups together the three models of approach to methodological variation presented in this text, that of the designers of FLE textbooks in the 1980s (chapter 1), that of specialists in the teaching-learning of language-cultures from the 1980s to the 1990s (chapter 2) and that of the complex didactics of language-cultures (chapter 3) :

²¹ Cf. Puren & Bertocchini 2001k, already cited supra, and my Blog-Notes post-dated January 10, 2018.

²² In the "complexity paradigm", according to Edgar Morin (1990), "One seeks to unite distinction (necessary for perception) and conjunction (which re-establishes interrelations, articulations, multidimensionalities)" (according to Puren 063).

	empirical	scientist	modeler	positive	negative	product	process	learner	teacher	textbook	institution	discipline
1.1	X			X		X				X		
1.2				X		X			X			
1.3	X			X		X				X		
1.4	X			X		X				X		
1.5	X			X		X				X		X
2.1	X			X			X		X			
2.2	X			X		X					X	
2.3		X		X		X						X
2.4	X				X	X		X	X			
3			X	X		X						X
							X	X	X			

The hypothesis that I put forward at the end of my general introduction, namely that this notional model would be effective for analyzing any type of approach to methodological variation, remains to be validated. One of the results of the analyses I have carried out in order to build it is that they will have allowed me, beyond a comprehensive description of the approaches presented in chapters 1 and 2, to bring out, in a way that I consider satisfactory, in chapter 3, the specific characteristics of the methodological variation approach in complex didactics of language-cultures.

It would be possible to test the heuristic function of the above overall model. For example, if we start from the differences between the characteristics of the approach to methodological variation among textbook designers [1.1. to 1.5] and in complex didactics [3], one idea that immediately appears is that of implementing, in textbooks, devices designed as models of²³ learning processes, *i.e.* allowing learners to carry out their own management of methodological variation. The idea is not entirely new - it is that of the modular design of didactic units - but this design was teacher-oriented, and the notional model proposed here makes it possible, I think, to analyze it better.

A distinction must be made between, on the one hand, approaches to methodological variation, which is the subject of this text, and on the other hand, their practical application, to which I alluded in the first paragraph of the general introduction, and which consists of "implementing, in an articulated (chronologically distributed within a didactic sequence or unit) and/or combined (used simultaneously) manner, different constituted methodologies and/or components or 'objects' from different methodologies". Recently (Puren 2020f, part ²), I have proposed to differentiate, among these modes of implementation, between the multi-methodological approach, which is content to juxtapose different methodologies and methodological

²³ The use of the term "modelling" here avoids the possible confusion between "model" in the systemic sense, and in the sense in which it is generally used in the analysis of textbooks, for example when it is said that the support documents serve in part as "models" for students' personal production, or that the exercises make them work on grammatical "models".

components, and the plurimethodological approach, which seeks the elaboration of methodological configurations that are no longer composite, but complex, endowed with their own coherence and producing their own synergies²⁴.

In this 2020 article, I have already had occasion to point out that the difference I propose between multi- and multi-methodology is similar to the classic one implicitly made by the CEFR authors between multi- and multi-cultural in the following passage:

Plurilingual and pluricultural competence refers to the ability to use languages for the purposes of communication and to take part in intercultural interaction, where a person, viewed as a social agent has proficiency, of varying degrees, in several languages and experience of several cultures. This is not seen as the superposition or juxtaposition of distinct competences, but rather as the existence of a complex or even composite competence on which the user may draw. (p. 168, emphasis added²⁵)

In this article, I propose a typology of the plurimethodological approach in the form of weak (the articulation of different methodologies or methodological components), medium (their integration) and strong (their combination) versions, with corresponding examples. These three modes of implementation correspond in principle to the management of methodological variation in complex didactics, since the methodological elements are both distinguished and linked. It would be interesting to cross-reference this typology with the overall conceptual model in a methodological analysis of recent teaching materials, by comparing the principles asserted by the designers in the foreword or the teaching guide with the concrete devices they propose in their textbook.

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²⁴ I have already had occasion elsewhere (Puren 2017e) to point out that in the following passage, the authors of the CEFR show some misunderstanding of the epistemology of complexity.

²⁵ But I have also pointed out elsewhere (Puren 2017e, slide #6) that by this underlined phrase, the authors of the CEFR were showing some misunderstanding of the epistemology of complexity, with composite (heterogeneity) being a component of complexity (cf. Puren 046).

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