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Intercultural Learning: Raising Cultural Awareness

This article offers an introduction to the international field of culture pedagogy in foreign language teaching and learning with special reference to the years since 2000. After a short presentation of the multidisciplinary nature of the field and an overview of its diverse development until 2000, the article focuses on a number of contemporary trends: The increasing importance of postmodernism and its emphasis on the individual learner and his/her learning processes and intercultural competence; the development of cultural approaches to literature pedagogy working with the interplay of cultural perspectives; ethnographic approaches to intercultural learning that enable learners to create their own insights into local cultural complexities; ideas of critical citizenship that emphasize the importance of reflection, wondering, criticism and hope as a part of language and culture learning; the idea of culture in language (languaculture); and transnational perspectives on language and culture learning, which foreground the transnational flows of languages across cultural contexts, and hence suggest a more global approach to language and culture learning and the raising of (multi)cultural awareness.

1. Introduction

The Cultural Dimension in Language Teaching and Learning

Language teaching has always had a cultural dimension in terms of content. Reading pieces have been studied that have been written for the occasion, or unadapted literature, and conversational exercises have been constructed on the basis of conversational examples and translated texts. The whole philological tradition represents a relatively integrated approach to language, texts and history, if the teaching of grammar at elementary level is excluded (Hansen 2002).

But not until the last decades of the 19th century did an interest develop for parts of the content of language teaching that go beyond literary education as such, and from the 1960s onwards the cultural dimension in this broader sense began to crystallise out as a more or less independent discipline, called culture teaching or culture pedagogy. Language pedagogy and culture pedagogy did not, however, have much to do with each other until the 1990s, when it was possible to see signs of a burgeoning awareness of each other's work and perspectives – in some respects also a rapprochement, especially under the banner 'intercultural learning' (see Risager 2007).

2. A Multidisciplinary Field

Most of culture pedagogy has been drawing on the humanities and/or the social sciences, but some also draw on developments in linguistics. As to the first category, which is also the oldest one, it can be said that this type of culture

pedagogy has from the outset conceived itself as a corrective to language pedagogy, with its traditionally one-sided linguistic focus. It has partially different theoretical and philosophical approaches, including the hermeneutical interest in understanding – thus differing in those respects from language pedagogy. It has always had a more holistic view of language learning, as it has been interested in man not only as a language learner but as someone who also develops other facets of the personality in connection with language learning – especially a greater knowledge and understanding of the world. This type of culture pedagogy has been particularly interested in teaching about cultural and societal conditions in the countries where the target language is spoken as the first language, and thus with what themes, texts (literary and non-literary) and methods can be used in the teaching in order to develop the students' cultural awareness and intercultural competence. The horizon in terms of content and theme has been and is very broad, with an almost endless range of subjects: everyday life in various countries and in various social groups, subcultures, music and art, educational conditions, regional conditions, the environment, market conditions, economics, politics, technology, etc. The subject English as a foreign language has almost experienced an explosion in that direction. On the basis of this potential abundance of material, culture pedagogy has not least concerned itself with discussing relevant aims, selection criteria, perspectives and methods, also in relation to teaching materials.

As to the second category: culture pedagogy drawing on developments within linguistics, it started with the communicative approach in the 1970s, especially in connection with the work done by the Council of Europe to develop communicative skills and mobility within the European Common Market (Council of Europe 2001). This approach to culture pedagogy tends to focus more instrumentally on the practical knowledge that language users have to possess in order to communicate effectively with the aid of the target language.

Thus the terms 'intercultural learning' or 'culture pedagogy' today encompass a number of different approaches to the cultural dimension of language teaching and learning (Risager 2007). The following sections will give a short overview of the history of the field until 2000, and then focus on culture pedagogy today. The empirical focus is on English language teaching, but the issues presented are in principle common for all foreign language teaching, and some of the works cited happen to take their point of departure in other languages than English.

3. The Development of International Culture Pedagogy Until 2000

Culture Pedagogy in Multilingual Europe Until the 1880s

As mentioned above culture pedagogy generally focuses on the countries where the target language is spoken as a first (or official) language, i.e. it tends to have a national orientation. But it should be borne in mind that culture

pedagogy, and modern language studies in general, do not have to be nationally oriented. Before the latter half of the 19th century textbooks, also those within languages, would have a more universal and encyclopaedic content. For example, J. A. Comenius wrote his Latin primer *Janua linguarum reserata* (in English: *The Messe of Tongues*) (1649) with a content divided into 100 chapters, about topics such as the four elements, the earth, the body, the economy, grammar, music, geography, history, and angels. It was extremely popular and was translated into several languages (see Hüllen 2005; Risager 2007).

The present national shaping took place in a particular historical period, in connection with the establishment of nations in Europe and the rest of the world, particularly in the course of the 19th and 20th centuries. From the latter half of the 19th century we can see language subjects gradually becoming nationalised and included in the general upbringing of populations to a nationally structured view of the world. They began to acquire the aim of conveying a uniform image of the various national states, of the language, the literature, the country and the people. Thus a geographical division of labour developed between the language subjects that involved a narrowing and focusing in terms of content: the subject English looked towards England, the English and the English language; the subject French looked towards France, the French and the French language, etc.

Today we see a movement away from the national orientation again, pointing towards a more international and transnational approach in teaching language and culture.

Culture Pedagogy from the 1880s to the 1970s

In the 1880s, when the newly unified German Reich introduced the teaching of modern foreign languages in schools, there was an early discussion among language teachers of the content and aims of foreign language teaching. The various positions were referred to as *Realienkunde*: simple knowledge of realia or facts about the country, *Landeskunde*: knowledge of and insight into the country's geography, history and society (the most unmarked term), *Kulturkunde*: knowledge of national culture (literature, arts, etc.), and *Wesenskunde*: knowledge of national mentality or psychology. There was also, during the Weimar Republic, a discussion about how foreign language teaching could contribute to Germanness – according to the statement *Alle Kulturkunde ist Deutschkunde* (all knowledge of culture is knowledge of Germanness) (Apelt 1967; Risager 2007).

It should be noted that Germany is the country in the world that has had the longest and most profound discussion of culture teaching in foreign languages, maybe because of the centuries-long central role of Germany (or German-speaking political units) in multilingual Europe, including its relations to the neighbouring major powers France and Britain. Still today it is the country in which the discussion is most varied and intense.

After World War II, the first to restart discussions about the cultural dimension of language teaching were people in the USA in the late 1950s and in the 1960s. It could be claimed that the discipline started with the publication of Lado (1957), which deals with (Spanish) language teaching and concludes with the chapter: “How to compare two cultures” Lado defines culture as “a structured system of patterned behavior”, and he suggests comparing units from the two cultures, e.g. meals, or more specifically as, for example, ‘salads’. Thus Lado represents a behaviouristic and very practically oriented approach focusing on the teaching of everyday culture.

Culture Pedagogy in the 1970s

In the 1970s, a number of other countries entered the scene alongside the USA. Culture pedagogy was still a marginal movement within language teaching that was struggling to make cultural content visible, whether it was by upgrading knowledge about and insights into culture and society in connection with the reading of literary texts in higher education, or by implementing a less stereotyped teaching of culture that the existing textbooks at beginner and medium levels could live up to. Among the culture educationalists of the time one can mention Erdmenger/Istel (1973), who call for a needs analysis of pupils before starting culture teaching, Kramer (1976), who proposes to abandon the traditional term *Landeskunde* and draw on the (originally British) interdisciplinary and critical movement Cultural Studies in the teaching of English (see also Kramer 1990; 1997), and Seelye (1974), who presents a number of culture teaching techniques such as the minidrama, illustrating a typical cultural misunderstanding to be reflected on.

The development of culture pedagogy in the 1970s coincided with that which is connected to ‘the expanded text concept’. This meant that other texts were included in language teaching than literary ones in the traditional sense: so-called authentic texts: non-fiction texts of various kinds, often texts from newspapers and magazines, or texts used in everyday life: menus, signs, tickets, etc. It was typical for an understanding of these texts that a greater knowledge of the outside world was called for than the literary, and so new work on non-fiction texts went hand in hand with an increased orientation to culture and society. At the same time, theme-based language teaching began to develop, the content of which was centred round a theme that could then be illustrated with the aid of a number of texts of various genres: extracts from short stories, newspaper reports, statistics, images, etc.

Culture Pedagogy in the 1980s

In the 1980s, with the growth of postmodernism, there was a general cultural turn in the studies of the humanities. This also influenced language teaching in the sense that the concept of culture began to be widely used as an umbrella term for what transcended pure language teaching. ‘The anthropological concept of culture’ came into focus, especially the one developed by the American

anthropologist Cl. Geertz (1973), who advocated an interpretive or hermeneutical approach to the analysis of culture, especially as it is produced in cultural events like the football match, the marriage ritual, the election campaign, etc. Among the anthropologically oriented culture educationalists of the 1980s one can mention Byram (1989) and Zarate (1986), who both offered comprehensive introductions to the field. A more psychological orientation is represented in Baumgratz-Gangl (1990).

The visual aspect of cultural teaching was strengthened in the course of the 1980s. This was due to the development of video technology, which made it possible to record films etc. from television and use them directly in teaching, and which meant a much more realistic and detailed mediation of the situational context for language communication. It also led to a greater opportunity to work with concrete, visible aspects of language, culture, society and nature: non-verbal communication (gestures, proxemics, etc.), clothing, interiors, street environments, landscapes, flora and fauna, etc.

Culture Pedagogy in the 1990s

In the 1990s the interest in intercultural learning and culture pedagogy really took off, as many (but by no means all) foreign language teachers and researchers all over the world began to see intercultural learning as an integral part of language learning. Among the still very influential works one can mention Kramsch (1993) on language, culture and context in a postmodern perspective, and Byram (1997) on intercultural communicative competence. Byram presents a model comprising five components:

	Skills interpret and relate (<i>savoir comprendre</i>)	
Knowledge of self and other; of interaction: individual and societal (<i>savoirs</i>)	Education political education critical cultural awareness (<i>savoir s'engager</i>)	Attitudes relativising self valuing other (<i>savoir être</i>)
	Skills discover and/or interact (<i>savoir apprendre/faire</i>)	

Figure 1. Factors in intercultural communication (taken from Byram 1997: 34)

The model was developed in collaboration with Geneviève Zarate as part of their common work for The Council of Europe, which is why the components have both an English and a French designation. It includes many disciplinary perspectives. Firstly, it draws on the social psychological tradition of wanting to cover knowledge, skills and attitudes (and the relations among them) in models

of the individual in social life. Secondly, it not only emphasizes knowledge, but also the ability to interpret and understand texts and cultural events (cf. the above-mentioned anthropologist Geertz). Moreover, it includes an ethnographically inspired component: doing fieldwork, discovering and/or interacting with people from the foreign culture, and last, but not least, it places at the centre – especially when applied to educational contexts – political education and critical cultural awareness. Thus for Byram intercultural learning also means becoming an active and engaged citizen.

The 1990s were very much characterised by internationalisation. There was a marked increase in study travel, especially within the Common Market/EU as a result of the major exchange programmes, and this benefited language teaching. The explosion within Information and Communication Technology, including the Internet, also came at this time. These developments led to far greater access to transnational personal contacts than before: some language learners – potentially at least – gained greater opportunities of meeting learners from other countries, either physically via student exchanges and school trips (especially in Europe) or via e-mail (see Byram/Risager 1999). This meant that the teaching of culture tended to become more oriented towards experienced culture and personal cultural encounters, i.e. a much more individualized orientation emerged.

4. International Culture Pedagogy Today

Postmodernism Unfolded

The history of culture pedagogy can be interpreted as a struggle between modernism and postmodernism. The modernist identity was predominant until some time in the 1980s and has to do with an emphasis on the content dimension. Typical of it is that it stresses the knowledge-related result of culture teaching: as cohesive a knowledge as possible of cultural and social conditions in the target language country or countries. The objective overview is given high priority, the realistic and all-round picture of culture and society. This understanding of culture pedagogy has gradually found expression in the cultural representations to be found in textbooks for beginners and continuers: They were modelled more or less systematically as a ‘panorama’ of society, as a reproduction of ‘society in a nut-shell’ (for a critical discussion of this, see Risager 1999).

From the 1980s onwards, a postmodernist tendency was added that gradually came to dominate culture pedagogy, though without completely ousting the older view. The postmodernist tendency typically emphasizes learning processes and the raising of cultural awareness. It focuses on diversity in the individual students’ qualifications and life experiences, their attitudes and emotions, their ability to understand and deal with ‘the other’, their ability to mediate between various languages and various cultural contexts. The interest in poetics and narrativity are also part of this development: playing with language, with

different perspectives and voices, with imagined worlds (Kramersch 1993). The focus on the individual has also meant a boost in the interest in intercultural competence, including assessment (for an overview of interdisciplinary research on intercultural competence, see Hu/Byram 2009). But there are still modernist features in culture pedagogy, for example in textbooks and official syllabuses, which tend to emphasize knowledge of culture and society (for examples of extensive textbook analyses, see Doyé 1991; Sercu 2000).

Cultural Approaches to Literature Pedagogy

Literature teaching is of course culture teaching in itself. But a number of people who also see themselves as part of the wider tradition of culture pedagogy, have developed approaches to literature pedagogy, and more generally text pedagogy, in which the emphasis is on the development of intercultural understanding, by some referred to as *Fremdverstehen* (understanding of the foreign). Among the publications in the field are Bredella/Delanoy 1999, Bredella/Christ 2007, Bredella 2010, Burwitz-Melzer 2001; 2003, Altmayer 2004, and Kramersch 2006.

Eva Burwitz-Melzer 2003, for example, works within English and has carried out a large-scale empirical project on the use of fictional texts with children in various types of schools in Germany at *Sekundarstufe 1* level, i.e. students aged between 10 and 17. It is the first major empirically based investigation of the foreign language area to focus on literature pedagogy as culture pedagogy, and the investigation is also special in that it looks at relatively young pupils whose foreign-language skills are typically not all that developed.

The overall aim of the project is to study what is needed for the students to undergo an intercultural learning process, i.e. first and foremost that they are able to carry out shifts of perspective and relate the various perspectives to their own experiential world. The centre of focus in the teaching is a fictional text (short story, poem, youth novel, comic strip) that the class works with in various ways (role-play activities, letters to the main characters, poems, etc.) and talk to each other about afterwards.

In the project, Burwitz-Melzer examined 14 different teaching sequences at various class levels. In each case, she chose the text and prepared the teaching along with the teacher and observed and videoed the actual teaching. In addition, she gave the teacher a questionnaire. She subsequently did retrospective interviews with the teacher and with a selected group of students. All the data was ordered according to a comprehensive categorisation table that gives a good picture of the many facets of intercultural learning.

The project resulted in a task typology of literature pedagogy that has five phases: 1. *The student and the foreign cultures*: Preparation, warm-up, with the aid of such activities as talking about objects, visual stimuli, book covers, etc. 2. *The student and the original text*: Reading, conversations and tasks such as text puzzles, characterisations, etc. (preparing shifts of perspective) 3. *The student*

and the student text: The students produce various types of plays, parodies, poems, etc. on the basis of the original text (perspective taking) 4. *The student, student texts and the other students*: Class conversations about various possible perspectives, e.g. from inside and outside (shifts of perspective and coordination of perspectives, e.g. comparison of perspectives) 5. *Reflection*: Class conversation about the teaching content and about intercultural learning – meta-discussion of stereotypes and the significance of attempts to change perspectives. This sequence of tasks thus provides teachers with a thorough guideline for fostering intercultural learning through the use of literature.

Ethnographic Approaches

With the growing possibilities of pupil exchange and study abroad, especially in Europe, culture educationalists have looked to ethnography in order to get inspiration for the development of field methods in foreign language learning. Among the people who have been active here are the above-mentioned Byram, and the collective of authors behind Roberts *et al.* 2001.

This book has been written by an interdisciplinary team of sociolinguists, culture educationalists and anthropologists (Celia Roberts, Michael Byram, Ana Barro, Shirley Jordan and Brian Street) and is the first major monograph that describes the ethnographical method in language subjects. It is based on a development project for university students and contains both a theoretical introduction and a detailed description of the project, including the education of language teachers in ethnographic field work, the development of a course in anthropology and ethnography for the language students, examples of the students' own field work (at home and abroad) and project writing.

The most important aim of this project has been to help university foreign language students develop that part of their intercultural competence that has to do with accessing information for themselves and with creating their own insight into the life of the countries where their target language is the first language. The authors wanted to educate them as a kind of ethnographer who had the most necessary tools for carrying out fairly short-term ethnographic field work, make (participant) observations, do interviews, etc., as well as gather all this together and write a cohesive, focused and reflective report on the target language when they came back to the university. So the students (and their teachers) were to be prepared for this via courses in basic anthropological concepts and in ethnographic field work, completing the course by carrying out a 'home ethnography' where they do a small-scale piece of field work in their own location. All of this is to prepare the students for acquiring some integrated linguistic and cultural experiences during their stay abroad: they use the language and at the same time develop their cultural practice and cultural awareness.

Critical Citizenship

A number of culture educationalists have been especially interested in developing the more politically oriented dimensions of intercultural learning, with special reference to intercultural and critical citizenship. Among them, beside Byram 1997 and 2008, one can mention Guilherme 2002, and also – already in the 1960s – Doyé 1966, as well as Starkey 1996, who emphasizes the possibility of drawing on human rights education in foreign languages.

Manuela Guilherme works within the subject English in Portugal and has carried out a major empirical investigation of Portuguese language teachers' understanding of the concept critical cultural awareness. In connection with this project, she has carried out a discussion of the concept of citizenship from a social scientific and pedagogical point of view. The book contains a number of proposals as to how it is possible to develop an interdisciplinary approach to promoting critical citizenship in an intercultural world. Such teaching must constantly seek to provide students with resources for reflection, wondering, criticism and hope, and awaken their commitment to transformative action and border crossing. The teacher is invited to gain on-going inspiration from human rights education and education for democratic citizenship.

This book is one of the very rare examples of more comprehensive treatments of culture pedagogy from a critical perspective. It points to a general lack of awareness of power relations and conflict in the field of foreign language teaching and learning, resulting in a general underemphasis of issues of culturalism, ethnicism, racism, exclusion and hierarchization, both within states and between states (colonial and postcolonial relations, geopolitical conditions, etc.).

Culture in Language

Claire Kramersch emphasizes in her book from 1993 that language, and especially language in discourse, is culture in itself. So when one teaches language in discourse, one in fact teaches culture. This also means that Kramersch would not distinguish between language and culture nor between language teaching and culture teaching. Among those who have written about the cultural nature of language (as related to language teaching), are – beside Kramersch in several publications – Risager 2006 and 2007, who develops the concept of languaculture (or linguaculture), and Crozet & Liddicoat 2000, who discuss the introduction of culture-in-language in language teaching.

I analyse the concept of languaculture (*Kultur in der Sprache*) in three interconnected dimensions: the semantic-pragmatic dimension, the poetic dimension, and the identity dimension – all representing well-established, but separate, academic fields. The semantic-pragmatic dimension has to do with connotations of words and utterances in use, and it links to linguistic anthropology, as well as to cross-cultural semantics and intercultural pragmatics. The poetic dimension has to do with the aesthetic uses of language in play, ritual and art, and it links to studies of literature. The identity dimension of language has to do with the social and cultural significance of the choice of language or

variety of language, and it links to sociolinguistics, especially to studies of social meaning and relations between language and identity. Thus the languaculture concept is used as an umbrella term for the multiple cultural dimensions of language, including the personal aspects of language use developed as an integral part of the life history of the individual. Furthermore it should be noted that when one learns a foreign language, one necessarily draws on (one's personal version of) the languaculture of the first language (mother tongue). For a longer or shorter period, the learner tends to combine the form side of the foreign language with the languaculture of his/her first language.

In this perspective language teaching is languaculture teaching to the extent that it is sensitive to the cultural dimensions of language, both the foreign language and the first language.

Transnational Perspectives

In Risager (2006; 2007) I introduce a transnational perspective in language and culture teaching. The point of departure is that languages are not only spoken in the target language countries. In fact all languages, except the very small and isolated, are spoken all over the world as a result of people on the move: labour migration, tourism of all kinds, business collaboration, relocation in transnational companies, military operations, international sports arrangements, development aid, etc. English is the most widespread language by now, but a language like for example Danish is also spoken all over the world, and it is taught in more than 25 countries at more than 100 universities and institutes. The fact that a language has been spread to many different countries, does not mean that it is culturally neutral. It still has a languaculture – its ever-changing cultural dimensions. This goes for English as for any other language. The constant flow of languages worldwide creates local language diversity and language hierarchies in most countries, especially in the big cities.

Taking the transnational flow of languages into account, culture pedagogy does not need to limit itself to an exclusive focus on the national culture and society of target language countries. It can be more flexible and open to the needs and interests of learners and teachers. It can combine languaculture teaching with the teaching of any topic, including national identities if this is deemed relevant. The aim might be to try to further an awareness of multilingual and multicultural (or transcultural) societies, and to try to develop a sense of world citizenship.

5. Conclusion

Teachers, course developers and textbook authors face a complex problem when they have to make decisions in the field of culture pedagogy and the raising of cultural awareness in the teaching of English: What is the view of language and culture and of the relationship between the two? Do we base ourselves on a national paradigm presenting a homogeneous conception of culture or a more

transnational/transcultural and global paradigm? What is our view of society? Do we focus only on the national majority, the part of the population that speaks the target language as a first language, or do we see the target country as a multilingual and multicultural (multiethnic, multireligious, etc.) society, in which the target language is used both as a first, second and foreign language, and exists in a diverse and changing linguistic and cultural landscape?

Referring to Byram's model of intercultural competence we might ask: Do we emphasize knowledge, whether in the form of facts or deeper insight? Do we favour attitudes and emotions in the cultural encounter? Do we focus on intercultural understanding via the reading of texts? Do we want to offer opportunities of personal intercultural experience and personal cultural encounters? Do we draw on the internet and new social media for intercultural learning? Are we interested in education for citizenship? Are we thinking of national, European, global citizenship, or a cosmopolitan identity? Intercultural learning can have many different objectives and can take many roads indeed.

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