LANGUAGE EDUCATION AS THE ENTRY TO INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE (ICC)

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ABSTRACT

Language education enters a new era as current research considers education as the entry to (inter)culture, and socialization into cultural ways of knowing, doing and being. More and more, schools are viewed as institutions that must foster social cohesiveness, promote values and attitudes that will be accepted by diverse communities, and bring students of different ethnic groups to develop positive awareness of other cultures, based on mutual respect and even empathy. In this perspective, challenges extend beyond linguistic competencies. It has become essential to integrate ICC to language competence with coherence. It takes more than the addition of new knowledge or classroom practices to respond to such epistemological considerations. Therefore, it is important to view language teaching and learning as integrally linked to the development of (inter)cultural representations and our vision of the world. We all are social actors as well as educators. (Inter)cultural awareness is a first step to transcultural competence.

INTRODUCTION: ISSUES IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Language education enters a new era as current research considers education as the entry to (inter)culture, and socialization into cultural ways of knowing, doing and being. More and more, schools are viewed as institutions that must foster social cohesiveness, promote values and attitudes that will be accepted by diverse communities, and bring students of different ethnic groups to develop positive awareness of other cultures, based on mutual respect and even empathy. In this perspective, challenges extend beyond linguistic competencies. Models based on grammatical, discursive, sociolinguistic and strategic competences (Canale and Swain, 1980; Canale, 1982) or adapted to integrate Bachman's pragmatic competence (Council of Europe, 2001) need to be updated to new realities.

In Canada, a country well known for its leadership in language and culture education, such concerns have been a major issue for a few decades. Programs such as Heritage Language Teaching were introduced in 1978 to promote cultural pluriculturalism (Quebec Ministry of Education, 1978). In 1983, The Council of Higher Education stated new orientations in order to take into considerations the multiethnic realities. It proposed openness to alterity, acceptance of differences, and education on human rights. A few years later, a special program of 'welcoming classes' for immigrant students with learning difficulties was developed to help these students integrate regular classes (D'Anglejan, Lussier et Dagenais,1990-1993). These classes were based on the development of literacy and the appropriation of the 'culture of writing' to facilitate the transfer from one language to another. More recently, Canadian research has developed a conceptual framework of 'Intercultural Communicative Competence' (Lussier, 1997), which was validated by more than 1500 young adults (Lussier, Auger, Lebrun & Clément, 2000-2008; Lussier, 2001; Lussier, 2009a, 2009b).

Such frameworks are crucial to language education if we are to establish a clear common understanding of the phenomenon and backgrounds to pedagogy in the classroom. They lead educators to employ more useful and effective language, and allow more valid and reliable evaluation of such competence. At this stage, it becomes essential to integrate ICC to language competence with coherence. It takes more than the addition of new knowledge or classroom practices to respond to such epistemological considerations. Therefore, it is important to view language teaching and learning as integrally linked to the development of (inter) cultural representations and our vision of the world.

PART ONE: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE ON INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE (Adaptation of Lussier, 1997; JAL, 2009)

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment, provides a common framework of reference for 'intercultural communicative competence' (ICC) (Lussier, 1997, 2009b). Other studies, such as *Representations of others and other cultures in the context of the pre-service and ongoing training of teachers* in European contexts (Lussier, Auger, Urbanica & al., 2003) and research on *Guidelines for the Assessment of Intercultural Communicative Competence* (Lussier, Golubina, Ivanus & al. 2007), published by the European Centre for Modern Languages and the Council of Europe, were based on this conceptual framework.

The conceptual framework takes into account existing theories and models (Lussier, 2009a), and the three modes of learning as presented by Rumelhart (1980) in the child's internalizing schemata of knowledge: *accretion*, the first common mode, when information is laid down in memory; *tuning*, which involves the modification of existing schema after different experiences; and *restructuring*, which is the creation of new schemata, by either analogy or by induction. It includes three domains of reference: intercultural cognitive competence based on knowledge; intercultural procedural competence based on skills (know-how); and intercultural existential competence (being) in reference to affective and psychological factors.

Domain of 'intercultural knowledge competence'

Intercultural knowledge competence is associated with cognitive factors and the acquisition of information. It implies three approaches: the humanistic, the sociocultural and the anthropological approaches, each of them having the same relevance in teaching. *The humanistic approach* refers to knowledge of the world linked to collective memory. This dimension includes the acquisition of formal and explicit knowledge, such as high culture or artistic culture with capital "C." It refers to culture as the expression of civilization. *The sociocultural approach* refers to knowledge linked to the socio-cultural context. It considers culture as a social phenomenon. It is based on factual information that each individual should learn about a given culture in order to adjust to diverse cultural contexts. It includes knowledge of the target societies; the interpersonal relations between classes, sexes, generations, races; political and religious groupings or institutions; as well as major values, beliefs and attitudes regarding regional cultures, national identities and minorities. Such factual information is the reference to any real and impartial comparison with other societies. *The anthropological approach* refers to knowledge linked to the diversity in ways of living and thinking. It is centered on human beings and their ways of coping with different situations in different contexts. This type of knowledge refers to the daily life or to culture with a small "c." It is part of the "external" culture and implies mostly beliefs and behavior explicitly learned (Weaver, 1986). It is a level of accretion because information is laid down in memory and not necessarily transferred to real life situations.

Domain of intercultural skills

Skills refer to the use of knowledge in real life situations. It is the process of acquiring the 'know-how' or 'savoir-faire' when developing ICC. Three dimensions have to be considered. The first level, *to function in the target language, 'linguistically' speaking,* is considered in terms of different scales of performance as the level just beyond the survival level. Krashen (1981) identifies such context as "language learning" in the classroom in opposition to "language acquisition" which takes place mostly in a natural environment and reflects real authentic situations and interaction. The second level, *to adjust to and interact*

TABLE 1: Intercultural knowledge competence

DOMAIN	DIMENSIONS	SUB-DIMENSIONS
Intercultural cognitive knowledge (Savoirs)	*The humanistic approach* Knowledge of the world linked to: **- collective memory** *The sociological approach* Knowledge linked to: **- sociocultural context** *The anthropological approach* Knowledge linked to: **- diversity in ways of living**	*Formal knowledge – Culture «C»* • History and geography of other cultures • Civilization (arts, literature, music, painting, etc.) *Facts on:* • Interpersonal relations • The target society, culture and identity (values, beliefs, attitudes, etc.) *Daily life – Culture - «c»* • Similarities and differences (habits, customs, institutions, etc.) • Stereotypes, artefacts, folklore, etc. • Paralinguistic features (gestures, facial expressions, stance and movement, etc.) • Products, etc.

TABLE 2: Intercultural skills competence

DOMAIN	DIMENSIONS	SUB-DIMENSIONS
Know-how Competence (Language Behaviours)	***FUNCTIONING*** *in the target language* ***ADJUSTING*** *language to social and cultural environment and* ***INTERACTING*** ***INTEGRATING*** *the target language and culture and* ***NEGOTIATING***	• Implementing knowledge and acquired language in different contexts as learned in the classroom • Experiencing plurilingual and pluricultural situations in the target language and culture • Taking into account other contexts of ways of living traditions, behaviors, customs and values • Merging language and (inter)culture competence as a natural process • Interpret language to negotiate situations with conflict or misunderstanding

with social and cultural environments, involves explicit and implicit competences. Learners need to experience language out of the classroom through plurilingual and pluricultural practices in various cultural and social environments. They need to adapt cognitive knowledge and language skills to real life situations in order to develop intercultural skills, not only language skills. Finally, *to integrate and to negotiate the target language and culture* into social and (inter)cultural environments and complex situations means that learners are able to take into account other contexts of ways of living, traditions, behaviours, customs and values when interacting socially with people from other cultures. It even brings the learner to a meta-analysis of language, which leads to a reflective stage of discourse and the capacity of intercultural argumentation and interpretation. They are able to negotiate conflicts and situations of misunderstandings.

Domain of 'existential competence'

'Existential competence' focuses on the development of attitudes and cultural representations that shape our vision of the world and the development of values while constructing self-identity. It is described as the mentalist level of cultural representations. It refers more specifically to the psychological and affective dimensions of learning. It underlies the intrinsic concept of xenophilia (openness to others and other cultures) and xenophobia (rejection of others and other cultures). It draws upon three dimensions: cultural awareness, critical appropriation, and trans-cultural competence.

The concept of "cultural awareness" is defined as the promotion and understanding and respect for other cultures, the ability to see all cultures - one's own and foreign - as the historically transmitted result of a community's history, mentality and living conditions (Mennecke, 1993). It implies the development of sensitivity to and consciousness of others and other cultures. It is a transitional stage between the culture of the learner and of other cultures. It builds on individual relations and collective relations from contacts with other cultures. It involves the recognition and understanding of similarities and differences among societies and cultures. It carries the understanding that the opposite - intolerance - 'could bring violence and social instability' (Lussier, 2007). The second level, 'critical appropriation' is concerned with the perception of self-culture and other cultures. It means being able to accept and interpret self-knowledge and self-identity, with respect for values held by other

TABLE 3: Intercultural existential competence - Being

DOMAIN	DIMENSIONS	SUB-DIMENSIONS
Existential Competence (Affective and psychological factors)	*Cultural awareness* Understanding *Critical appropriation* Accepting Interpreting *Trans-cultural competence* Internalizing Being a cultural mediator	• Sensitivity to others and other cultures • Development of others and other cultures • Individual relations and collective relations • Self knowledge/self-identity • Respect of values from others and other cultures • Valorization of Otherness • Integration of new values in the respect of self-identity

cultures and individuals from different beliefs. It concerns the internal culture, the values, thoughts and patterns implicitly learned. It leads to critical pedagogy (Guilherme-Durate (2000: 37) since it refers to the process by which individuals negotiate and produce meaning. The third level refers to 'transcultural competence'. It is defined as the integration and respect of other values which result from the coexistence of diverse ethnic groups and cultures in the same society or distinct societies, while advocating for identity enrichment of each of the cultures in contact for a 'mieux vivre ensemble' (Lussier, 2007).

PART TWO: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

Within the evolution of plurilingual societies, language education needs to address the issue of (inter) cultural communicative competence. It implies changes in curriculum, teaching/learning outcomes and assessment.

a) Curriculum

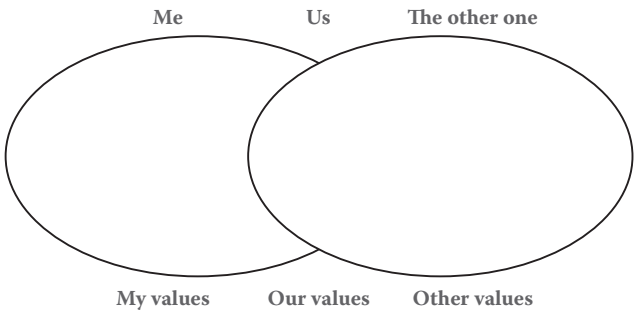
In Canada, the development of new Language Policies tackles questions such as linguistic diversity, the learning of a third language as cultural enrichment, and the integration of immigrant populations (MELS, 1998; Ontario Government, 2009). With regard to curriculum development, two prototypes are available: the Heritage Project as linguistic, cultural and community crossroads from the School Board of Montreal (Lussier & Lebrun, 2009), and the new Curriculum in French as a second language produced by the Ministère de l'Immigration et des communautés culturelles du Québec (MICC, 2009). The following example is an adaptation in English of one of the dimensions of the program based on cognitive competence (knowledge), experiential competence (skills) and the development of behaviours and cultural representations that mould our vision of the world (Lussier, 2009b).

b) Teaching

In terms of teaching, the study published by the European Centre for Modern Languages/Council of Europe *'Developing and assessing intercultural communicative competence: A Guide for Language teachers and teacher educators'* includes guidelines for teaching (Part 1, Lazar & al. 2007) and assessing (Part 2, Lussier, Golubina, Ivanus & al., 2007) intercultural communicative competence based on the Canadian framework of reference. The following example refers to the domain of existential competence.

TABLE 5: Existential competence: Shared values*

Instructions: From the novel that you just read, choose one of the characters that inspired you the most with its values, identical to or different from yours; by its moral qualities or shortcomings; by the effect it had on you. Then, fill in this diagram to reflect on your representations and values.



* From : *Les lettres chinoises,* Ying Chen (1993) par Gagnon et Lussier, 1997

c) Assessment

In the 1990s, the Canadian government developed Language Benchmarks for immigrant adults in English as a Second Language (Norton et al., 1996) to reflect selected competencies in terms of levels of performance. They provide general descriptions and more specific language behaviours as indicators of performance without any reference to any programs of studies. In 1998, Laurier and Lussier developed similar research in French as a Second Language. There are twelve benchmarks divided into three proficiency stages (basic, intermediary and advanced) in reading, written production and oral interaction. By educators' request, these Language Benchmarks were revised in (MICC 2007-2010) to include oral comprehension. In the province of Quebec, the government even integrated

TABLE 4: Development of Intercultural Communicative Competence

DIMENSION	AXIS OF DEVELOPMENT	COMMON VALUES	KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	SAVOIR-ÊTRE
Discovery of the target society	To get acquainted with: relationships between teachers and students	Equality between men and women	• Politeness • Status of professors • Bearings on authority • Linguistic barriers (tu/vous-in French)	• Use of given name • Use of forms of politeness according to the language situations and interlocutors	• To respect the opinions of others • To speak freely but with respect to the rights of others • To work in groups with respect to people in the group • To maintain visual contact with the teacher
Fields Ways of living					

Examples of descriptors and levels of competence-Assessing intercultural attitudes / being

LEVELS	DESCRIPTORS OF ICC COMPETENCE
Low	• Experiences intercultural situations with difficulty and tends to adopt a defensive approach in cultural situations. • Manifests tolerance to some culturally determined behaviour acts. • Demonstrates a degree of cultural awareness but still tends to be influenced by cultural stereotypes due to a passive attitude towards other cultures. • Shows some sensitivity but also shows ethnocentric attitudes and perceptions and expects adaptation from others.
Medium	• Manifests "mixed" attitudes to culturally determined acts of behavior. • Starts to accept intercultural ambiguities as challenging issues. • Demonstrates openness to other cultures, accepting and being sympathetic to other beliefs and values. • Has no profound argumentation of his own position in terms of his own attitude regarding cultural differences.
High	• Enjoys observing, participating, describing, analyzing, and interpreting intercultural elements and situations. • Argues well his own position toward different culturally determined acts of behaviour. • Expresses a sense of alterity, i.e. is able to reflect on what a person from a different culture would really feel like in such a given situation. • Expresses empathy toward representatives of different cultures.

language benchmarks specific to learning outcomes of the new curriculum in Language Arts, Foreign or Second Language Learning and Welcoming Classes at the primary level (Grade 1 to 6) and secondary level (Grade 7 to 12) and at the college level (2008-2010).

With regard to ICC evaluation, it is essential to mention that the domain of existential competence is not to be assessed by traditional methods such as a score from paper and pencil tests. In terms of formative evaluation, methods such as observation of the learning process, self-assessment, use of the portfolio and the individual diary are more efficient. In terms of summative evaluation, there is pressure on educators to reflect behaviours related to ICC in selected competencies under specifically defined performance. Such a proficiency scale based on Lussier's framework of reference (Lussier, 1997) was developed as a two-year project under the Council of Europe and Centre for Modern Languages (Lussier, Golubina, Ivanus et al., 2007).

CONCLUSION

In language education, acquiring language competence has been the primary issue since the 1980s. But, with the mobility of immigrant multicultural and plurilingual populations, we are now confronted with a more complex conception of language education. For example, on the island of Montreal, students speaking a mother tongue other than French or English represented 37.7% of the school population in September 2006. In order to address such a dynamic, the School Board of Montreal introduced a new approach to teaching and also funded new research (Lussier et Lebrun, 2009;41) for the implementation of the *Heritages Project: Linguistic, Cultural and Community Crossroads.* Such a project puts the emphasis on immigrant students' referential language as it allows better transfer from their mother tongue to learning the target language. The new curriculum integrates 'language' and '(inter)culture' as the dominant features and the integral tasks where students engage in interaction. The challenge for school educators is to be able to recognize the pluri-literacy competences of immigrant students in their diversity and to use their plural experience as their linguistic capital (Moore, 2006).

As we all know, many questions still remain. The concept of ICC carries much subjectivity. Despite such a burden, it becomes essential to rely on a conceptual framework of ICC in order to take into consideration the new issues of our modern societies. We all are social actors as well as educators. (Inter)cultural awareness is a first step to transcultural competence. Many language teachers already see such competence as an extension of communicative competence (Lussier, Auger, Urbanicova et al., 2003).

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