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Abstract:

This article outlines a framework for our teaching of interculturality in the French Language and Literature Department at the University of Jijel. We highlight the most important aspects that we consider essential for teaching of interculturality. First, we will explore how intercultural learning takes place at university, and how it can be taught. Next, we will address the question of didacticizing the phenomenon and translating it into practice. Finally, we will show how it is challenging for students to make the transition from theory to practice.

Introduction

The production of this article has enabled us to reconsider our approach to teaching interculturality in the French Language and Literature Department at the university. We will highlight the key points that we think are crucial in the process of teaching interculturality. First, we'll show what intercultural learning looks like at university, and how it can be effectively taught. Next, we'll examine how to didacticize the phenomenon and put it into practice. Finally, we will demonstrate how it is difficult for students to make the transition from theory to practice.

1. The problem

Our aim is to reflect on the few years of teaching interculturality in the French Language and Literature department at Mohammed Seddik Benyahia University in Jijel. Based on our four years of experience teaching interculturality at university, our aim is to propose didactic perspectives for teaching interculturality at university. Based on our thorough understanding of the subject through our scholarly reading and practical classroom application with Master's students in Language Sciences, we were able to develop the following problematic: **What is fundamental to teach students of French Language and Literature about interculturality?**

Like other universities around the world, the Algerian university is keen to raising its educational system to meet international standards by striving to join the ranks of the world's top institutions. To achieve this goal, the Algerian university has worked since some years to increase student mobility within its universities. In doing so, it has become essential for the government to introduce teaching content that addresses the notion of "Interculturality" into certain university disciplines, particularly

those that take the human being as their object of study. However, teaching interculturality is not without challenges, as this field is at the intersection of the political, scientific and ideological domains, engaging with fundamental concepts such as identity and culture. In addition, we would add that, in today's "postmodern" paradigm, the definition of these concepts must be reviewed, as we are now in an era of deconstructing utopias and ideologies, leading us to reconsider the fields linked to intercultural communication and redefine their theories and methods in order to adapt to this new paradigm.

2. Intercultural learning at university/ what is intercultural teaching like at university?

Intercultural learning at university, particularly in the French Language and Literature Department, answers the following questions: What kind of teaching and progression should be offered to foreign-language students? What notions and content should be suggested?

First of all, it should be pointed out that within the current framework for the three years of bachelor's degrees in the LMD system, the modules on Language Cultures and Civilizations (taught for the first two levels) and Civilization Text Study (taught for the third level of bachelor's degrees) modules, which, for the most part, are dealing with history of the relevant country, are gradually evolving to incorporate intercultural issues in the first year of the Literature and Civilization master's degree and in the 1st year of the Language Science master's degree, as well as towards directed research on the subject, in other words, in final year dissertations.

Intercultural learning is not a goal in itself; it is first and foremost a learning process, that is, a process based on the acquisition of knowledge and skills through study, practice or teaching. In practical terms, it requires us to know ourselves and our own culture, before we can get to know others and their cultures. In the university context, intercultural learning has several aims: on the one hand, to promote and develop students' ability to interact and communicate with the world around them, and on the other, to develop in them a critical and analytical mind that will enable them to better apprehend intercultural phenomena.

Based on our experience in teaching interculturality, the concern with intercultural learning lies in the fact that interculturality is not a discipline with a theoretical foundation, so each teacher can put his or her own personal stamp on course design and development. Research on this subject has begun to flourish in an attempt to theorize it and make it didacticizable. However, the difficulties of putting this teaching into practice and evaluating it are even more problematic today.

Indeed, researchers such as Zarate and Byram have emphasized the need to prioritize subjective teaching of interculturality. The shift from objective teaching of interculturality, which reduced the individual to his or her membership of a group with few means and opportunities to engage with the Other, to subjective teaching based on representations of the self and the Other is becoming necessary. To this end, Dumont, a specialist in interculturality in the French-speaking world, presents and describes three complementary, hierarchical approaches to teaching interculturality. Each of these approaches addresses culture in a different way. First, the descriptive approach, in which the teacher describes the social, political, economic and cultural systems. This description may occur simultaneously with or precede the other approaches. Next, the explanatory approach focuses on demographics, population, relational, human and everyday behavior, stereotypes... These first two approaches are part of an "object perspective", as Christian Puren (1998: 9- 37) points out. The final, renewed approach to teaching interculturality is one that takes account of the subjectivity of reality, and is based on the representation of both the self and the other. The learner himself must recognise his own subjectivity and reconsider his own identity by opening up to others.

Abdallah-Preteille uses the term "culturalism" to refer to teaching that focuses primarily on the description of cultural facts, reducing the individual to his or her membership of a group. It would be necessary, for example, to carry out personal, critical observation in class, enabling learners to construct their own interpretation of intercultural phenomena.

Zarate suggests focusing intercultural teaching should focus on analysing perceptions of the self and the other, taking care not to underestimate both cultures, the culture of origin and the target culture. The aim would be to objectify socio-cultural representations and offer activities designed to capture learners' perceptions, in order to deconstruct stereotypes.

Language learners are thus encouraged to step back from cultural facts to avoid the pitfalls of "decentralization" (Porcher, 2003). According to the author, "decentering" does not mean forgetting one's own centring in order to adopt that of the other, but rather being able to open up to the centring of the foreigner, i.e. to his or her points of view and behaviours, while retaining one's own centring.

3. How intercultural teaching takes shape: a question of didactization

The most widely followed model of intercultural competence is that of Byram and Zarate (1997), which, despite its complexity, is a good starting point for an intercultural trainer. It sets out a system of

knowledge, know-how, interpersonal skills, understanding and commitment, which can be presented as follows:

- Knowledge: knowledge of one's own culture and that of the Other, and of how social interactions function in both societies;
- savoir-comprendre: the ability to interpret an event or document and relate it to the two cultures;
- savoir-faire: the ability to acquire new knowledge about cultural practices during verbal interaction;
- savoir-être: curiosity, open-mindedness and the ability to decentralize one's beliefs and those of others;
- savoir-s'engager: the ability to adopt a critical attitude towards these practices.

These different types of knowledge can help to define the objectives of learning intercultural competence, which in turn can inform the design of teaching. Dervin (2004), Professor of Multicultural and Intercultural Education at the University of Helsinki, referring to the work of Porcher and Abdallah- Pretceille (1999) and Byram (1997), proposes to delineate the principles of intercultural competence as :

1. Openness to otherness (Porcher in Abdallah-Pretceille and Porcher 1999: 226) and the development of intercultural capital;
2. Self-knowledge "Questioning one's identity in relation to others is an integral part of the intercultural approach" (Abdallah-Pretceille 2003: 10);
3. A negotiation of the relationship between one's own beliefs, attitudes and meanings and those of the Other (Byram 1997: 12), putting an end to ethnocentrism;
4. Competence in interaction and analysis. In other words, it's more a question of "understanding" than "knowing" about the Other (Dervin, 2004: 5).

In designing our interculturality course, we were largely inspired by the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages), which sets out three directions that the teacher can follow to put interculturality into practice.

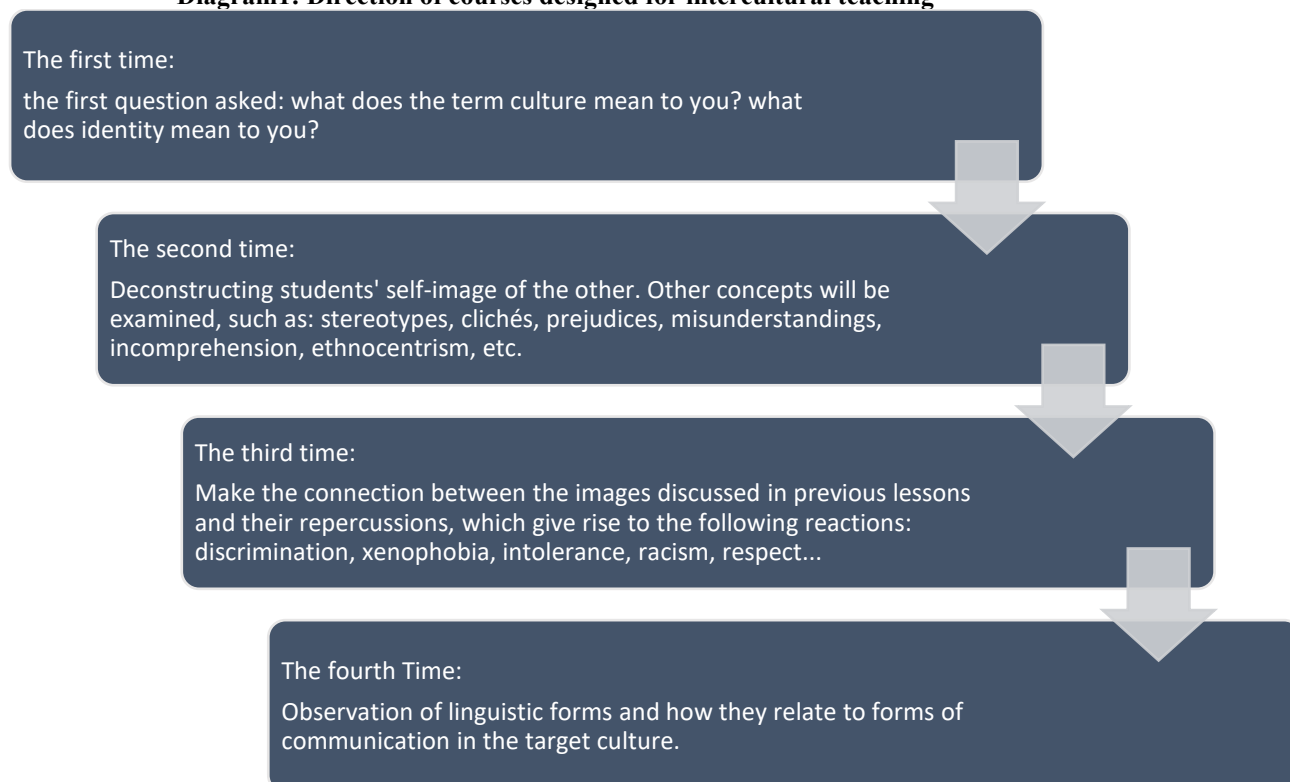
In the first direction, the trainer is advised to ask the learner to "look back on himself", on his own culture, his own self-representations. Here, it's a question of situating the student exclusively in the cultural dimension and putting him outside linguistic competence.

The second direction is de facto a reflection on the Other, on "foreign" cultural facts, stereotypes and representations. The aim is to combat stereotypes and provoke positive reactions to culture. Once again, the focus is on the real world, not on language.

The third direction is more oriented towards the facts of language, towards the observation of linguistic forms. This involves recognizing the rules to be followed in different communication situations, such as the expression of greetings in the target language culture.

The interculturality courses we have designed during the years of teaching interculturality follow this same logic. The following diagram illustrates the path taken by the courses and seminars devoted to the notion. We'd just like to point out that we've added a fourth phase focusing on the language facts of the target culture.

Diagram1: Direction of courses designed for intercultural teaching



These four sections present the chapters devoted to teaching interculturality. In the first part, we look at “culture” and “identity”, two key notions of interculturality, and all the other related notions such as: multicultural, transcultural, culturalism, pluriculturalism, alterity, acculturation, assimilation, intercomprehension and misunderstanding...

In the second stage, students are encouraged to deconstruct their self-image of the culture of the other. Conceptions such as stereotypes, clichés, prejudice, misunderstanding, incomprehension and ethnocentrism are analyzed through examples given during the course and exercises at the end of the session.

It is also possible, for example, to ask several students to give their opinions about another group. Their speeches can then be interpreted through their understanding of the notion of ethnocentrism. The aim is to demonstrate “on the one hand that both negative and positive judgments about societies are ethnocentric, and on the other that the path to understanding the other involves questioning ethnocentrism” (Gay and Laffranchini, 2018, 187).

In the third stage, the aim is to link the images discussed in previous lessons, and their repercussions, which can lead to the following reactions: discrimination, xenophobia, intolerance, racism, respect... For example, to deconstruct the concept of race by addressing phenotypic differences, we can propose the results of biological studies that have fundamentally called into question these criteria for classifying characteristics belonging to individuals, such as epidermis, hair color, face shape, morphology... One of the best-known examples, “Whites are more intelligent than blacks”, could therefore be deconstructed to show just how arbitrary these criteria are. The aim of this type of exercise is to acknowledge human diversity by accepting the Other, but also to better understand power relationships.

In the fourth stage, as the course is aimed at Language Science students, where the fact of language is as important as the fact of culture, it is essential to get students to observe linguistic forms and their link to the forms of communication of the target culture.

4. Difficulties in moving from theory to practice

In the courses and seminars we organized, we preferred to begin the theoretical study with the presentation of a certain number of notions such as culture, identity, otherness... and this, with the aim of teaching students the need to accept themselves, to open up to the world and also to show them the importance of social cohesion independent of the cultural and social origins of the members of the class. Kabyles, Arabs or even Malians, all were invited to question themselves and others.

By enabling students to reflect on their perception of others, they had to be aware of the heterogeneity of their group. It should be emphasized that, in the context of diversity, this heterogeneity should be seen as a resource, helping to understand intercultural phenomena, and not as a problem.

However, especially during the tutorial sessions, we noticed a gap between the intellectual understanding of the concepts taught and their practical application. Some of the exercises we proposed ended up shifting intercultural knowledge into the realm of political and ethical opinions. For example, the notion of “culture”, which has often been associated with a totally subjective “lifestyle” on a scientific or everyday level, does not preclude the classification of people into groups, about which representations circulate. In the following exercise, we asked students to analyze the proposed situation by answering three specific questions:

Text: The scene takes place in Bern. In a buffet-style restaurant, a 75-year-old woman chooses a bowl of soup and sits down at a table.

“Damn!” she says to herself, “I forgot the piece of bread.” She gets up, grabs her bread, returns to her seat...and finds a black man sitting in front of the bowl of soup. And even eating it. Now that, she thinks, is the best. But he's undoubtedly a poor man. I'm not going to say anything to him, but I'm not going to let him get away with it. She grabs a spoon, sits down opposite the black man and, without saying a word, eats the soup. And man and woman dine together, in silence. Then the black man stands up. He fetches a comfortable plate of spaghetti Bolognese and places it in front of the nice lady. With two forks! And they both eat, still in silence. Finally, they say goodbye. “Au revoir”, says the lady peacefully. “Au revoir”, replies the black man, with a gentle gleam in his eyes. He gives the impression of a man who is happy to have helped his fellow man... So he leaves, and the lady follows him with her eyes. At the same time, she sees on the next table...a bowl of soup that seems to have been forgotten.”

Story retold in Pour une pédagogie interculturelle by L. Lafortune and E. Gaudet, p.186-187.

In the first question of the exercise, students were asked to analyze the situation, seeking to understand how each of the two characters perceived the other, and the criteria by which they judged the other. The second question asked which stereotypes influenced the perception of the two characters.

The students' responses were varied. Some referred to the fixed image of Africa given by Europeans, while others questioned the image of black people as poor and lacking in civic-mindedness. Generally speaking, our discussions with students about the exercise revealed a number of difficulties in interpreting the situation. The “stereotypes” object was easier to spot than the “misunderstanding” object. The notion of misunderstanding has also been the subject of special teaching, as we have clearly demonstrated in the theoretical study of these notions that stereotypes can lead to misunderstandings. Its practical application, on the other hand, is prone to confusion. The subject of “respect” was also neglected. The students dismissed the fact that the “black man” in the given situation reacted out of respect for the elderly lady. It's not just a feeling that's intended to please: “He gives the impression of a man who's happy to have helped his fellow man”, but from an intercultural point of view, it's the source of self-esteem and the gift of respect.

In general, the orientation of interculturality teaching from objective to subjective has enabled students to decentralize and adopt a more open attitude towards the various cultural representations they may encounter.

We can also say, from our general observations on the teaching of interculturality, that despite efforts to define the object “culture”, still remains, in our view, an object that is difficult to teach because it is difficult to transpose. Another point to note in connection with the notion of “cultures” is that cultures can change over time, and are not static, as they evolve according to certain conditions.

As such, asking questions about the values and behavioral systems that enable people to make sense of the world around them could elicit common answers when respondents belong to the same culture, or totally or partially different answers when respondents belong to a different culture. For example, asking a question about what is considered good and bad, or what rules govern the consumption of food and drink, or what is considered funny in given situations.

The answers that can be given to these questions could change not only from one group to another but also from one time to another.

On the other hand, at the beginning of the theoretical courses, it is necessary to focus on a clarification of the relationship between language and culture. It is for this reason that we propose to students to take a look back at themselves and allow them to use discourse analysis tools to identify, among other things, culturally marked discourses. One of the main functions of language is to represent these objects that belong to a culture.

Conclusion

To conclude, we would like to emphasize the importance of teaching interculturalism in the university curriculum, particularly for foreign language students. Intercultural training is not based on a fixed curriculum that must be repeated without perpetual modifications. On the contrary, the range of activities that can be

developed is limitless. It is up to the trainer to be creative and to give meaning to the content they propose. Our years of teaching interculturality have primarily allowed us to understand this dynamic.

In short, we can say that, we have answered our initial question: What is fundamental to transmit to students of French language and literature in terms of interculturality? We have come to recognize the importance of integrating intercultural courses and activities in a broader process that aligns the requirements of the moment and the needs of training.

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