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## New intercultural readings at the Algerian university

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### Summary

It is a question of reflecting on the literary interpretation of some Maghrebian novels of French expression. Learners will have to carry out a discourse analysis considering sociocultural parameters. They call upon their intercultural competence to analyze the discourse and operate intercultural readings.

We have presented several examples of novels and writers, such as Assia Djebbar Mouloud Mammeri, Kateb Yacine, etc., to interpret and understand cultural models in mother tongue and foreign language.

**Keywords:** intercultural readings, intercultural competence, discourse analysis.

Maghrebi literature in French constitutes a corpus of considerable richness at the Algerian university and in the curriculum of French degrees. This observation can provide us with a reflection on the possibility of calling upon intercultural competence to detect sociocultural codes and ways of seeing the world through diversified, rich, and significant Maghrebi literature.

The Maghreb authors certainly made significant theoretical contributions to learners. However, this literary training needs to be improved due to the changes in teaching foreign languages. Interculturality is perceived as teaching a foreign or local culture and a network of exchanges between two or more civilizations. In this regard, it is necessary to argue by the fact that:

“The use of the word “intercultural” necessarily implies, if we give the prefix “inter” its full meaning, interaction, exchange, elimination of barriers, reciprocity, and true solidarity. If in the term “culture” we recognize all those values, ways of life, and symbolic presentations to which human beings, both individuals and societies, refer in relationships and the conception of the world.<sup>1</sup>”

How is intercultural knowledge constructed on this literature, presented as anthological and theoretical knowledge? Thus, it is necessary, even urgent, to opt for communicative and actional knowledge to demystify “the meaning of cultures” in French and Francophone literature. The knowledge taught has long neglected these sociocultural codes in the literary text.

Through this article, we want to present classic French authors like Victor Hugo and Emile Zola.

It also seemed interesting to us to work with the students on the corpora of Algerian literature called “emergency literature,” in this case, Rachid Boudjedra and Assia Djebbar and those of today like Nina Bouraoui, Malika Mokkadem. Through their texts, it is possible to bring readings of society, customs, socioeconomic conditions, identity crises, etc. The learner would perceive the plurality of cultural meaning as an additional interpretation, a new reading of a Berber, Muslim Arab, and French-speaking society but described in French. The latest reading is, therefore, intercultural. Abdallah-Pretceille<sup>2</sup> (1996) states that:

“the subject as an individual is not reducible to his culture of belonging; the Object - foreign culture has no reality except when actualized in “the social and the communicative” that is to say, it only exists in the relationship lived between two subjects; intercultural discovery is exclusively a matter of the personal experience of the learning subject; culture is a set of signs that the subject has himself objectified and that he can consciously manipulate as he does with linguistic signs.”

Through this article, we want to develop a work plan on intercultural readings in French teaching courses at the higher level. Diversify purely cultural interpretations: all feelings, descriptions, and impressions that will be

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<sup>1</sup>Gohard Radenkovic, 2004, p.54

<sup>2</sup>This quote is taken from the site [francparler.org](http://francparler.org)

made in a foreign language in French go towards this unknown other, even if the authors are Algerian; nevertheless, they write in French. Literature is taught in all French degree courses. We have noticed that learners are attentive to the manifestation of the cultural act through the texts presented. The program begins with classic authors such as Mohamed Dib, Mouloud Mammeri, and Kateb Yacine.

We wondered about this “back and forth between cultures” in the presentation of texts in class. Indeed, there is a significant dynamism, testifying to many questions about rites, symbols, and traditions because the author does not limit himself to evoking his society. Still, he goes to another place foreign to the students, even if he is an Algerian author. From this perspective, we see the notion of intercultural resurface:

“It is the result of a dynamic between cultural or social groups and individuals in the sense of these groups in a permanent redefinition of “territorial and symbolic” spaces; of the names of self and the other, of the power relations which characterize their relationship at a given moment.”<sup>3</sup>

Literature opens up to the world by nature, introducing mythical and sometimes real characters in the learners’ cultural environment.

Our study focuses on presenting cultural facts first, then describing them by the learners, or, in other words, answering their questions. At the beginning of the experience, total incomprehension reigns in class; several text readings are possible, and the translation erupts in language class.

In our approach, we began by getting in touch with the texts; these did not have a plural reading in the module entitled “Introduction to Literary Texts.” the students are used to working on autobiographies but not on discourse analysis.

The first reading was by Mohamed Dib, an author known in Algerian school textbooks, especially for his novel “The Big House.”

In this context, what we have proposed is entirely different from what is usually known about this author; we have presented symbolic poems, which can provoke reactions in the learners.

The author says:

At the end of femininity, “The woman who advances

The lying sea

The advancing sea

With great reinforcement of the day

When the woman steps back. »<sup>4</sup>

He adds:

“The low flame

Who moves

Idle Lagoon

Who has no

Live island »<sup>5</sup>

In this poem, the poet addresses the theme of women and love; in this extract, he reveals a resemblance between the sea and women,

In this regard, we quote:

“Between the sea and the woman, there is an exchange of roles and identities, but if the woman enters this game of ebb and flow like the sea, is she not as “lying” as the sea? The question remains open.”<sup>6</sup>

The activity requested from the students is to draw up an inventory of all the symbols attributed to women and the sea; this exercise allows them to discover the cultural models and social beliefs related to the representations of women and the sea in the three languages spoken in Algeria; Berber; Arabic and French. Also, the learners established similarities between women and the sea, which created a favourable atmosphere for exchange and interaction in French class.

On the other hand, in the Forgotten Hill of Mouloud-Mammeri, another context presents itself: Algeria’s social, cultural, and historical reality in the 1950s.

This novel is about a village forgotten by the land and men. The students find the historical events of the time; indeed, the Berber family suffered enormously during colonization, the war of liberation, and after independence.

Until today, history has not revealed everything about the suffering of the Algerian people; in this experience, we have noticed resistance from our groups; they have questioned why “write in a language of the colonizer; of the enemy; they have even affirmed that they could not identify with writers who write in this language.

In the eyes of other students, the French language remains an essential means of communication, and writing in French is, above all, a choice,

<sup>3</sup>Op.cit. P.56.

<sup>4</sup>Dib

<sup>5</sup>Dib

<sup>6</sup>R. Soukhal, Algeria, literature, action; number 95-96

Another exciting intercultural encounter with Algerian novels is the novel "Nedjma" by Kateb Yacine.

After reading several excerpts from this novel, the students linked their interpretations of the novel to several varieties of Algerian culture: the theme of women returns but with other interpretations; the class group identifies with the culture of the novel; there is also the historical side; which refers to the places studied; to time and space; in search of an intercultural reading; it is helpful to remember that:

One of the aims of acquiring intercultural competence, an essential aim of language teaching, is to foster the harmonious development of the learner's personality and identity in response to the enriching experience of otherness in terms of language and culture.

About Nedjma: learners discover the homeland woman through a lexical inventory of metaphors linked to this woman, taking the following example:

A Cinderella

An ogress

A gazelle

A mermaid

A frog

A drop of water

A perfume

A vestal virgin

A Salammbô

Students also discover the history of Algeria in the pages of this novel; Rachid said: "I felt like a piece of broken jar, an insignificant ruin detached from a thousand-year-old architecture. I thought of Cirta; I found ancestors there closer than my father with blood spilled at my feet."<sup>7</sup>

Algerian literature did not stop producing at the end of the war of liberation; quite the contrary, we are witnessing a new mode of thinking and writing: the literature of urgency and protest of the 80s and 90s.

Algeria's history was marked by the Black Decade or the rise of religious fundamentalism. Algerian writers have once again used the French language to describe this malaise. The university public discovers Assia Djebbar in her historical writing, social and protest, and Rachid Boudjedra with his spiral writing. Yasmina Khadra and her thrillers on terrorism.

We took the novel *Love, Fantasia* by Assia Djebar. It is about the story of the taking of the regency of Algiers in 1830, and it combines historical facts with fiction.

We emphasize in this regard:

"The historical novel borrows particularly from history a framework and a reconstruction of details which give both information and a change of scenery; the seduction of this genre exerted on the public comes from this weight of truth; through the detour of the novel, the reader understands the past better."

The proposed activity is to find the chronology of historical events from texts studied in class, among which we cite this extract:

"The decor thus deployed accentuates the victims' surprise and dismay. Landscapes that we cross for hours; the story immobilizes, and the men gallop in full charge of dawn. Exacerbated symphony of the attack, trampling in furious bursts, tufts of death rattle tangled up to the foot of the mares... grove lingers on the violence of the colors; the momentum of the fallout fascinates him... Our captain indulges in the illusion of this virile entertainment: to become one with rebellious Africa, and how else if not in the vertigo of rape and murderous surprise."<sup>8</sup>

Interculturalism leads us once again to a reflection on the themes covered in Maghrebi literature of expression, French; one of our fundamental questions is that relating to the cultural models used in French while they reflect a social reality, anthropological, historical, and thematic of a mother tongue; meeting of the two languages around literature; the implementation of an intercultural dynamic implies that to speak to the other, one must first know how to talk about oneself. It may seem quite paradoxical that we propose to students in an FLE class to be interested in what they are in their social and cultural environment rather than exclusively in French culture and society.

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<sup>7</sup>K.Yacine; Nedjma, P.175

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