



The intercultural dimension between the application methods and the content of the 3rd YSS manual in Algeria

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Abstract

In this article, the focus will be on the integration of intercultural skills in FFL classes. Several questions arise regarding the application: What actions should be promoted in an intercultural perspective in FFL classes? What skills do we want to develop in the learner? What are the theoretical principles that should guide the choices and support the teacher's decisions? Nowadays, with globalization, it is obvious that an intercultural dimension in language classes is essential, so it is necessary to have solid infrastructures. This article also includes the most appropriate approaches to promote its development in learners. We conclude with a general overview of intercultural content in the FFL textbook of 3rd YSS in Algeria.

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1. INTRODUCTION

With the advent of new technology and instantaneous communication, concepts such as "intercultural communication," "multicultural individuals," "multicultural countries," and "transcultural education" are becoming increasingly commonplace. In an era where globalization is highly valued, these expressions are particularly captivating and add an international dimension to our discourse. However, do we truly believe that everyone understands them? The adjective "cultural" encompasses similar yet distinct realities through its various prefixes, highlighting the need for a revision of terms related to intercultural communication. Such clarification is essential for fostering a deeper understanding of these concepts in our interconnected world.

2. A few ideas

2.1. The culture

Grasping the concept of culture can be quite challenging. Any attempt at definition will inevitably be partial, as it is impossible to encompass the entirety of human endeavors and the various domains of social action. Different facets of culture are emphasized depending on the approach taken be it pedagogical, psychological, anthropological, or otherwise. Therefore, it is essential to establish a foundational definition to

achieve the objectives of this work. A precise understanding of the concept of culture will facilitate the decision-making

process for educators when adopting an intercultural approach in language classes.

"In its ethnographic sense, culture is this complex ensemble that includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morality, law, moeurs, and all other abilities and habits that humans acquire as members of a society." (Page 34 of DE CARLO, 1998) This definition is comprehensive, characterized by its depth, simplicity, and richness. It encompasses not only institutions such as law and the arts but also behaviors, including customs and beliefs. Thus, the term "culture" refers to everything that is acquired and created within a society.

2.2. The Pluricultural Approach

The concept of addition has been integrated into pluralism. A person who is proficient in multiple cultures is referred to as a pluricultural individual. This phenomenon often affects those belonging to ethnic minorities or children from mixed-race relationships. These individuals cultivate a unique cultural identity that necessitates the ability to communicate in at least two different languages.

"Pluriculturalism entails identifying with some of the values, beliefs, and/or customs of at least two cultures as well as gaining the skills required to actively participate in their lives." People who possess linguistic, behavioral, and dispositional knowledge, skills, and dispositions that need social actors operating in at least

two cultures are known as pluricultural individuals (BYRAM, 2009, p. 9).

This idea is closely linked to the concept of plurilingualism. From this perspective, individuals who speak French proficiently—whether for professional or personal reasons—and who have fully or partially embraced French culture are also regarded as pluricultural individuals.

2.3. Multiculturalism

The term "multiculturalism" was first used in the United States to refer to the coexistence of several cultures and ethnic groups within the same society, as stated by Carlo in 1998.

Although multiculturalism is regarded as a descriptive term used to describe a lived and tangible reality, it currently has a rather negative connotation because it conjures up images of a divided society where interactions and exchanges between the various groups that would live there would be extremely limited. However, this is a first step toward acknowledging ethnic minorities and their right to exist and live without facing any prejudice.

It is crucial to emphasize that states are political and cultural units; over the centuries, various groups of people have been imposed on others due to their superiority in technology or their military might. Homogeneity is simply an activity that prevents minoritized cultures from being oppressed.

The foundation and standard of any society is heterogeneity.

2.4. Interculturality

The term "interculturality," which encompasses all relationships between different cultures, is quite specific. Its objectives include respecting and preserving cultural identities while facilitating communication, encouraging exchange, and promoting the integration of these diverse cultures within a given society.

In language classes, the desire to understand the language and culture of the "Autre" must be accompanied by the development of intercultural competency. This approach also emphasizes the unique contributions of each culture represented in the classroom. Within the context of one's maternal culture, it involves negotiating and developing a new set of interpretations and meanings for various cases and situations.

Thus, the term "intercultural" refers to the relationships formed between individuals from different cultures, aiming to foster acceptance and prevent rejection. It is essential to value and appreciate the unique values and ways of life of each group to encourage effective cross-cultural communication.

3. Intercultural or cultural competency?

For many years, the objective of general education has been to equip students with a diverse array of skills, enabling them to act and participate effectively in various real-world tasks. The primary focus is on the connection between knowledge and practical application, aiming to provide students with the tools and resources necessary to respond effectively to

sociocultural contexts that require their engagement.

To leverage their cognitive and personal abilities, teachers assign tasks that mirror the actions students encounter in their daily lives. These tasks are designed with a degree of complexity that gradually increases, supporting skill development over time.

A similar approach is applied in cross-cultural contexts. Educators must create authentic cross-cultural communication scenarios, allowing students to recognize the diverse situations they may face as users of the target language. The goal of intercultural education is to provide students with a high-quality learning experience, enabling them to navigate cross-cultural communication effectively. This type of training encompasses not only skills and knowledge but also affective and attitudinal factors.

However, significant methodological challenges arise in this approach to intercultural communication. What criteria should be used to define assignments and intercultural content appropriately? How can these elements be successfully integrated with other competencies? And how do we evaluate their effectiveness?

In this context, it is particularly relevant to utilize the taxonomy of cultural competency components presented by didacticians (PUREN, 2008), as it offers a deeper understanding of the issues at hand. Puren critiques the tendency to view intercultural competency as a distinct cultural element that has been emphasized

in FFL courses for many years. He argues that intercultural competency should not be considered a component of a broader competency than cultural competency (PUREN, 2008). The latter encompasses the following five components:

A- Intercultural composer: she is concerned with the level of representations. It involves the ability to pinpoint the causes of cultural misunderstandings and misinterpretations that arise during first encounters with people from different backgrounds.

B- Pluri-cultural composer: it includes attitudes and behaviors that encourage people from different cultures to live together peacefully within the same society.

C- Meta-cultural composer: it involves a collection of knowledge gained by observing the target culture through the manipulation of authentic documents. These insights may make it easier to reFFLct on and compare the source and target cultures.

D- Transcultural composer: she works to acknowledge universal values, including those found in traditional texts. This component assumes a shared love for humanity despite cultural differences.

E. Co-cultural composer: she can be found in concepts. Its development has made it possible for people who are culturally diverse to work together and operate as a cohesive unit in a long-lasting and effective manner. It is evident that the two elements of co-culture and inter-

culture are in direct opposition to one another: the former envisions the growth of a "culture of action shared," while the latter assumes initial and ongoing interactions. (PUREN C., 2011)

Furthermore, every component has historically shaped the cultural competency supported by the many teaching methodologies that have been adopted.

- Grammar-traduction methodology → transcultural component;
- Direct methodology → meta-cultural component;
- Communicative approach → intercultural component;
- Intercultural approach → pluri-cultural component
- Action-oriented perspective → co-cultural component

It is clear that the cultural component emphasized by the intercultural approach pertains more to pluricultural rather than intercultural elements, as the latter focuses on the ability to mediate and negotiate across different cultures. However, it can be difficult to envision a learner as multicultural without having acquired or internalized knowledge about other cultures, without reflecting on their own cultural preferences and differences, and without making comparisons between their native culture and the language they are learning.

For this reason, we believe that the five elements that constitute cultural

competency form a cohesive whole, with each element establishing interdependent relationships.

Due to its relevance and clarity, this study will utilize the classification proposed by Puren's didacticians. Nevertheless, the term "intercultural competency" will continue to be used to describe the overarching competence composed of the five elements that make up cultural competency.

From this perspective, it is essential to pose a critical question: Has the intercultural approach been sidelined in the age of action? Is it necessary to forgo teaching the other components (pluricultural, transcultural, intercultural, and metacultural) in favor of concentrating solely on the co-cultural component of the action-oriented perspective?

An ambitious endeavor that lasts the entirety of a person's life, whether they are learning a second or foreign language, is the development of intercultural competency. It frequently happens that linguistic and intercultural skills are not developed simultaneously; in fact, linguistic skills may be far more developed than intercultural ones.

We believe that every element plays a crucial role in the development of cross-cultural skills, and current trends in language didactics have yet to transcend any boundaries. The presence of these elements, particularly in the context of FFL, largely depends on the characteristics of the group, the teacher's

objectives, and the specific teaching moment.

4. The application of the intercultural approach

After providing this brief overview of some theoretical aspects of the intercultural approach, it is now time to explore how these ideas can be effectively translated into instructional activities within the classroom.

The passage lacks clarity, particularly regarding the practical implementation of intercultural communication, which is often absent from the studies and literature dedicated to the topic.

While several factors contribute to these challenges, experts most commonly highlight the following:

- 1- Teacher preparation in interculturality;
- 2- Integration issues with other knowledge;
- 3- Selection criteria for cultural content;
- 4- Evaluation issues. These factors limit the development of intercultural competency and hinder the presence of interculturality in FFL courses.

However, when one fully understands the reasons behind students' choice to learn French, it often stems from a strong desire to engage with the culture that shapes their identity—whether through traveling to francophone countries, studying abroad, or reading literary works in their original language.

This presents a notable contradiction: if students' desire to engage with and connect to the culture is their primary motivation, why not integrate them into core cultural activities instead of relegating these experiences to a secondary or supplementary role?

5. The meaning of objectives

Setting objectives for the class in line with theoretical principles is essential for effectively implementing the intercultural approach. Simply listing the benefits of interculturality or sharing personal anecdotes often results in limited impact.

It is through collaborative activities—whether in small groups or larger ones—that participants can truly begin to understand the concept. These experiences encourage learners to reflect and draw their own conclusions based on their interactions within the classroom community.

As with any teaching practice, a clear understanding of what is fair (the goals) is key to determining how to achieve it (the methods). Intercultural competence is no exception.

In most teaching practices, cultural objectives are not clearly defined; therefore, it is essential to establish clear and specific goals to support informed educational decisions. However, before proceeding, an important methodological question arises: What kind of cultural competency do we aim to cultivate in our learners, and where do we want to guide them through this process?

The CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) offers several ways to address this question, stating that:

Gaining proficiency in a second or foreign language—and its associated culture—does not replace one's mastery of their native language and culture. Moreover, the new competencies are not entirely separate from the original ones. The learner does not develop two completely distinct ways of speaking and communicating, but rather builds a dynamic, interconnected linguistic and cultural repertoire. The learner becomes multilingual and learns to navigate intercultural contexts. Knowledge of another language enriches and reshapes the linguistic and cultural skills associated with each language, fostering greater intercultural awareness, understanding, and competence.

These skills enhance an individual's ability to learn foreign languages, embrace new cultural experiences, and cultivate a richer, more multifaceted personality. They also empower learners to act as mediators between speakers of different languages who cannot communicate directly, through interpretation and translation. CEFR (2001)

Learning a foreign language provides learners with numerous benefits, including a deeper understanding of our increasingly complex world and the skills necessary to stay connected while embracing new communication experiences. At a more advanced level, language users can serve as mediators between speakers, helping to navigate and resolve potential cultural

misunderstandings.

Furthermore, the analysis of the CEFR reference provides us with a better understanding of the current position given to the development of intercultural competency. This document presents the "Socioculturel" category for each degree and competency. They have a chance to succeed in society if they absorb the knowledge and skills that the referentiel has given them. Their attitudes and behaviors will be completely FFL xible to meet their needs and effectively understand how the desired culture operates. Maternal culture significantly shapes the linguistic environment and cultural context in which children learn languages, impacting their intercultural competency. By integrating elements of their own culture into language learning, mothers can enhance children's understanding and appreciation of diverse cultural perspectives.

To gain a deeper understanding of intercultural communication and the establishment of cultural goals, the work of Denise (2007) is considered highly significant. This intercultural approach categorizes desired competencies into three key areas: knowledge, savoir-faire, and savoir-être, based on general competencies. By outlining the profile for each level, it empowers teachers to make informed choices and decisions when setting cultural goals for their classes. Many educators ask whether the intercultural approach is appropriate for the lowest levels. Is it feasible or required to discuss intercultural issues with a beginner's audience? It seemed to us that the answer was obvious.

This skill must be cultivated from the very beginning of foreign language learning, as any disparity or imbalance between linguistic and intercultural competencies is likely to exacerbate over time. For beginners, it is evident that cultural reflection and the comparison of various cultural practices will primarily occur in their mother tongue or a common language. It is important to remember that, to achieve cultural goals, selecting words that inspire and motivate listeners to engage actively is crucial.

It is advisable to avoid using phrases such as "fair know," "fair discover," and "fair expliquer," as these imply a reliance on the teacher's assistance rather than fostering learner independence. Instead, it is more effective to use action-oriented verbs like "analyser," "classer," "justifier," "créer," and "présenter."

Many teachers are also preoccupied with other concerns, such as how to select content that holds significance or relevance within the broad concept of culture. In this context, one potential approach to identifying cultural content is:

It is essential to take into account the applicants' profiles and the attributes they possess, such as age, circumstances, and areas of interest. For instance, the themes selected for an older audience will differ significantly from those intended for younger or adolescent audiences.

This approach enables participants to deepen their understanding, broaden their worldview, and foster comparison and analysis within a cultural context with which they are familiar.

Finally, when discussing intercultural communication, it is often noted how challenging it is to evaluate in a classroom setting. This competency is typically underrepresented in evaluation tools and rubrics. In fact, assessments often focus primarily on aspects related to registration and communication rituals. As a result, evaluating cultural competency within the realm of knowledge presents significant challenges.

Therefore, it is believed that it is time to incorporate more culturally relevant criteria into evaluation tools and rubrics. At the beginner level, knowledge could be assessed by posing cultural questions, while at a more advanced level, the approach could shift to engaging in discussions on topics that encompass significant cultural elements.

6. Manual Analysis

To carry out our study, we used an analytical framework based on criteria developed by experts such as Christian Puren.

In this context, the analysis of the textbook aims to highlight the cultural and intercultural elements reflected in its content. The adopted analysis grid focuses on the following aspects: various types of culture, multiculturalism, and interculturality.

6.1. Textual analysis

One or two examples from each group of texts addressing the same theme were selected to identify the intercultural characteristics conveyed by the school textbook, while acknowledging that the topics covered in our corpus vary

according to learning sequences and educational initiatives.

The primary focus of this study is universal culture, which is grounded in a set of global values. These values extend beyond scientific progress and are deeply connected to principles of humanism and shared human experience.

Table N° 1: Universal culture

la culture	Titres des textes	Extraits des textes	du projet	de la page
Culture universelle scientifique	-Main -Brève histoire de l'informatique -Mathématiques et Astronomie -Les OGM en question -Insatiable Google -La recherche d'un vaccin contre le sida: une priorité	« Elle permet à l'aveugle Louis Braille d'inventer l'écriture des non-voyants et parvint à remplacer la parole dans le langage des sourds-muets. La main crea le luth, le clavecin et la harpe. »	1	6
		« quatorze citoyens ont débattu avec les experts de leurs choix de l'utilisation des organismes génétiquement modifiés(OGM) en agriculture et dans l'alimentation. »	Projet 2	83
Culture Universelle Humaniste	-Le racisme explique aux lecteurs du journal le Monde -Pourquoi les guerres ? -Appel du directeur de l'Unesco -Protégeons notre planète -Pour les enfants du monde. - Appel de l'Abbé Pierre -Appel à la paix -Appel à l'instruction	« D'abord, apprendre à respecter. Le respect est essentiel. D'ailleurs, les gens ne réclament pas qu'on les aime mais qu'on les respecte dans leur dignité d'être humain. L'étranger réclame non de l'amour et de l'amitié, mais du respect. »	2	86
		« Ensemble, nous pouvons bâtir une Culture de la Non-violence pour l'être humain, qui donnera de l'espérance à l'humanité toute entière et surtout aux enfants de notre monde »	3	150

This form of culture—universal scientific culture—encourages learners to embrace the unknown and explore new ideas. Such intellectual expansion fosters the development of a broader worldview. In turn, discovering new horizons offers learners the opportunity to actively engage in the process of globalization.

The second form of culture—universal humanist culture—dominates the third project. The content of the book reflects the author's intention to persuade the reader, upon understanding, to transcend national boundaries. This encourages individuals with diverse characteristics to come together and find common ground. In other words, this approach seeks to establish shared values, which Durkheim describes as "the common foundation of humanity."

6.2.1. The Multicultural Approach

After introducing universal culture and its two forms (scientific and humanist), we move on to the second point in the analysis grid: the multicultural approach. This approach is centered on the coexistence of diverse cultures within the same society. To illustrate the various civilizations presented in the third-year secondary textbook, we propose the following tables:

Table N° 2: Western culture

La culture	Intitulé du texte	Extrait du texte	Noms propres et mots
Américaine	Breve histoire de l'informatique	1947. Trois ingénieurs américains des laboratoires Bell, John Bardeen, Walter Brattain et William Schockley présentent leur nouvelle invention : le transistor	Universal Automatic Computer, Windows, football, google, Mc Donald's, Californie, Etats-Unis, sir John Rowell,
Espagnole	Histoire des arabes : l'Islam et les conquêtes	Târik ibn Ziyâd [...] vainquit le roi Rodrigue qui venait de monter sur le trône, puis occupa successivement Séville, Cordoue et Tolède avant de continuer vers le nord.	Le roi Rdrigue, Andalousie, Cordoue, Séville, Tolède.
Allemande	Une décision hasardeuse		Hitler, Hegel, Walpurgis Nacht (une fête européenne), Munich

To conclude this section of the study, we revisit the key elements outlined in the analysis framework.

First, we identified the different types of culture represented in the textbook. This was followed by an examination of the implementation of the multicultural approach. Finally, we addressed the theme of intercultural stereotypes, with particular emphasis on the concept of the stereotype itself.

Overall, the analysis suggests that the third-year secondary textbook effectively integrates intercultural dimensions. This reflects the authors' intent and aligns with the Algerian government's objectives to promote intercultural competence within language education.

7. Training the learner to be aware of similarities and differences from childhood

7.1. L'intégration culturelle

Each learner possesses a unique and rich cultural background shaped over generations. It is therefore essential, first and foremost, to acknowledge the cultural similarities and differences that exist among learners. This initial awareness encourages them to explore and recognize both the commonalities and distinctions they share with individuals from other cultures.

However, this comparative process must be grounded in a fundamental recognition of, and respect for, cultural diversity.

It is important to note that there is no fixed or "pure" culture. Individual culture

evolves both synchronically—through interaction with the current environment—and diachronically—through historical and transgenerational influences.

This ongoing dynamism is what gives each culture its living, evolving nature—deeply intertwined with the complexity of humanity. Cultural assimilation refers to the process by which individuals are compelled to integrate into a new community by adopting the culture and behaviors of the Other, whether voluntarily or involuntarily.

This process represents a fundamental transformation that the individual is expected to accept, often without the possibility of refusal. In contrast, cultural métissage promotes the exploration and integration of other cultures while preserving one's own identity. In truth, the notion of cultural purity holds little relevance.

Human history is marked by interactions, exchanges, and even conquests among populations, all of which have given rise to numerous hybrid cultural forms—shaped by diverse influences and reflecting the inherent intercultural nature of humanity.

To effectively address cultural and intercultural issues, it is essential to recognize the diversity of cultures, as no single, homogeneous culture exists. Equally important is fostering openness toward others to deepen our understanding of the rich cultural variety shared by people across the globe. Rather than excluding those who are different, we should aim to accept, support, welcome,

and engage with them—while respecting their distinct identities.

According to Galisson (1999), the concept of "the whole world" reflects a global vision in which cultures converge, intermingle, and evolve. He argues that educational institutions should promote the integration of diverse cultures and value them as sources of growth and enrichment.

Cultural diversity exists to acknowledge and embrace both the differences and similarities among people from various cultural backgrounds. Each culture is shaped by its own unique circumstances and defined by distinct customs and traditions.

7.2. Individual culture

Lévi (1987) emphasized the importance of recognizing unity within the diversity of human civilizations. Rather than viewing different social groups as isolated or fragmented, each should be seen as possessing its own culture, shaped by shared knowledge and customs. Ultimately, it is the interdependence and interaction among these groups that most significantly influence cultural development and outcomes.

To ensure a strong and effective FFL (French as a Foreign Language) education, it is essential for the teacher to be well-prepared to understand and navigate diverse cultural contexts.

Before embarking on the study of any foreign language, students bring their own cultural backgrounds with them. It is upon this cultural foundation that they will

build their understanding of—and exploration into—another culture, all while maintaining a connection to their own roots and origins.

Each learner develops a unique culture shaped by their life journey, including their preferences, experiences, and personal sensitivities.

« This innate cultural identity, shaped by a variety of factors, serves to nourish and color the exploration of new cultural vistas. She enters into resonance with newly acquired knowledge, in a dynamic of opening, mutual enrichment, and continuous identity creation » (MARTIN, 2023, pages 201-218)

In his works, the French philosopher Derrida (1967) highlights the concept of deconstruction as a method for challenging the assumptions and hierarchies embedded in cultural representations. He argues that educational institutions should cultivate an environment of critical analysis, aimed at deconstructing societal prejudices and stereotypes. This approach would allow for a more expansive and inclusive recognition of diverse perspectives.

7.3. Foreign culture

In Algeria, recognizing learners' maternal identity and cultural heritage plays a key role in fostering their intercultural competence. This approach helps them better understand the relationship between their local culture and the foreign culture they encounter in their studies.

Acquiring new knowledge, particularly cultural knowledge, is built upon the cultural foundations that students have already mastered. Students are generally familiar with pre-existing cultural knowledge, which includes elements from their own civilizations. This familiarity enables them to gradually assimilate and integrate new cultural contributions from external sources.

The continuous comparison between the known and the unknown enhances understanding, making it easier for students to engage with and explore other cultural spheres. Therefore, considering learners' maternal culture is crucial in developing their ability to build bridges to other cultures, fostering a process of reciprocal sharing, exchange, engagement, and enrichment.

Conclusion

In FFL (French as a Foreign Language) classes, many students are naturally drawn to the richness and diversity of Francophone cultures. It is therefore essential to address this interest by integrating cultural content and activities specifically designed to foster intercultural competence within the curriculum. Since the 1980, the communicative approach has recognized the significance of subjective culture and incorporated it into its pedagogical models. This approach primarily aims to ensure that learners' language use is appropriate to real-world social contexts. In the 1990, a significant shift took place in the development and integration of cultural content in educational materials designed for FFL instruction.

Although the concept of intercultural thinking has deep historical roots, it was during this period that the multicultural approach truly began to take shape and influence foreign language teaching. As language classes are increasingly seen as spaces for interaction and engagement with cultural diversity, intercultural education captured the interest of educators seeking practical ways to apply its principles in the classroom.

However, the topic of culture remains complex and challenging to comprehend, and the development of educational tools has not advanced as rapidly as those focused on linguistic characteristics. Indeed, there are numerous obstacles to overcome in the realm of intercultural communication, particularly regarding the methods for implementing FFL in various teaching contexts and evaluating its effectiveness. If we consider that intercultural communication arises from the need to resolve cultural conflicts, we must ask whether it is relevant in situations where the entire group shares a common nationality. It is evident that these students will interact with and encounter different cultures, exposing them to a diverse array of cultural concepts.

Furthermore, intercultural education extends beyond merely preparing for meetings with individuals from other cultures; it also fosters the development of personal resources and behaviors that positively impact relationships and social interactions across various contexts, especially when effective communication is essential.

In the context of the FFL education program in Algeria, many students experience their first encounters with other cultures outside the classroom, particularly during school or tourist trips. In this setting, the intercultural approach that prepares students for their initial interactions with the culture of the Other and fosters their personal development effectively addresses their needs and requirements.

However, cultural competence should not be confined to this scope, as it encompasses additional concepts and components that learners should not be deprived of. If a student can acquire, even partially, specific skills related to the pluricultural and co-cultural components, it will enhance their personal and professional growth, even if they do not establish lasting connections with individuals from different cultures. Therefore, it is crucial to take action as early as possible to familiarize students with interculturality, as each educational level is suitable for addressing different components.

From their very first experiences with the French language and francophone cultures, students have the opportunity to enrich their intercultural encounters to the fullest.

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