CONSTRUCTING "THE OTHER"

Eva Monica SZEKELY[1]

Abstract

The positive pedagogical significance of the globalization signifies recognizing the expanse of the educational languages, founded on the value of the pluralism, beyond the national frames, in order to establish both some authentic relations of communication between cultures/ nations and to avoid some risks as the xenophobe closing in someone's own culture, the imperialism and the cultural mimesis. Through education is discovering a space and mind continuously opened towards the culture of the other, a space of the otherness, a mixed space at the spiritual meeting point of the own self culture and the foreign culture of the other. It is a space of identity consonance but especially dissonance with different / altered aspects of the multiple linguistic social and verbal consciousness are waited by a Tower of Babel or by a community of different cultures forming a kind of "coalition of players" according to C. L. Strauss – ready not only to live together indifferently and peacefully, but to communicate and learn innovatively together. Our intention is to argue the importance of the strategies of the intercultural languages and of the transfer of conflicts between generations in the field of the culture.

Keywords: difference between cultures, intercultural awareness, self and the otherness.

1. The context of the problem: communication in the postmodern world

Unlike the situation in the United States, where intercultural competence was already being discussed in the 1960s, this topic was only taken up by the profession late in Western Europe, and more later in Eastern Europe. This process of promoting the intercultural approach was accelerated in the 1990s and coincided with the acknowledgment of its relevance not only in the countries of Western Europe that were the most important targets for migration, but also in other parts of Europe, such as the southern countries, themselves confronted with recent migration, or the countries of Central and Eastern Europe where issues of cultural identity and diversity have become very important after the fall of the communist regimes in this area. The Council of Europe played a very important role in better structuring and promoting the concepts such as "intercultural approach", "intercultural education" or intercultural learning". The debate was preceded by a history of chancing theory, involving a whole variety of directions and patterns of interpretation. This is reflected, for example, in the change of paradigm in the educational literature from "education for foreigners" to "intercultural teaching". Significant progress in this sense was made in the 1990s through the project of the Council of Europe called "Democracy, Human Rights, Minorities: educational and cultural aspects" and through the European Campaign against Racism, Xenophobia, Antisemitism and Intolerance, better known by its logo "All different, all equal". As a result, the integration of an intercultural approach in teacher training and youth activities was organised by the Council of Europe.

[1] Assoc. Prof. PhD., *Petru Maior* University, Târgu-Mureş

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In the years 2000, particularly after 11th of September 2001, the issues of intercultural learning, intercultural dialogue and an intercultural approach in education were given again a high profile on the agenda of the Council of Europe, ONU and UNESCO.

Our most important argument over "intercultural languages", "intercultural competence" and "intercultural openness" has brought about another shift, towards a more inward looking point of view, according to the most significant document that was adopted by the Ministers of Education of the member states of the Council of Europe, in November 2003 in Athens, of a Declaration on Intercultural Education:

1. observing the diversity of our societies in terms of ethnicity, culture, languages, religions and education systems;
2. having noted the social conflicts and disagreements that may result from coexistence of different value systems.

The best tool for understanding culture, especially intercultural communication, is an open mind. Bennet (1993) defines intercultural sensitivity in terms of stages of personal growth. His developmental model posits a continuum of increasing sophistication in dealing with cultural difference, moving from ethnocentrism through stages of greater recognition and acceptance of difference, which Bennett calls "ethno relativism". The main underlying concept of Bennett's model is what he calls "differentiation" and how one develops the ability to recognize and live with difference. "Differentiation" needs an open mind and then refers to two phenomena: first, that people view one and the same thing in a variety of ways, and second, that they maintain patterns of differentiation, or world views." This second aspect refers to the fact that in Bennett's view, cultures offer ways how to interpret reality, how one should perceive the world around us. This interpretation of reality, or world-view, is different from one culture to the other. Developing intercultural sensitivity theus means, in essence, to learn to recognize and deal with the fundamental difference between cultures in perceiving the world.

According to this model, we define intercultural educational languages as ways or methods for educate an open mind, ways or methods for developing intercultural awareness and for understanding an ancient proverb states: "What you see in yourself is what you see in the world" (Reynolds, Sana, Valentine, Deborah: 2004: 5). This fact supposes education for communication through which we understand education like sending and receiving information, either verbally or non-verbally. When we add the phrase "intercultural" we refer to the communication that occurs between people who have different cultural backgrounds; such people may come from different countries or from the same country.

The contemporary man is exposed to the promotion of a semi pathological way of communication, which excludes Face to Face meeting, honest desire to know the other persona, emotional and responsible engagement in the faith of the Other.

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2. Constructing the Other and the model of "coalitions of players"

The increased number of human contacts has as a result the superficiality of the encounter: survival in the space of the big city is conditioned by the ability to establish ephemeral relationships, to "participate" while your mind is somewhere else, to learn "avoiding techniques". The encounter is most of the times a "false encounter", a "sterile accident" in the life of the parties. (Bauman, Z: 2000:33). The postmodern world must return to authentic communication, and school ought to be a part of this complex process of recuperation. Intercultural education languages lead to and maintain *authentic communication*, having effects on both sides; form the perspective of the future, the authentic encounter becomes a meaningful meeting: *cause that opens towards a row of effects* in the lives of the characters.

Education has a historical character as well as a social appearance, thus to the problems such as the alert rhythm and globalization of history, crisis of resources, ecological and demographical crisis, economical gaps, peace and interethnical/ religious war issues obviously we can add the crisis of communication and contemporary moral discourse problems. Regarding the latter A. MacIntyre (1998) finds that its main characteristic is that it is used to express endless disagreements which give the impression that we live in a culture in which there is no rational way to achieve moral agreement.

The fundamental issue raised by globalization is according to J. Delors is: How could we live in the "global village" if we haven't been able to learn so far how to live next to each other in the local communities we are part of? The report of the International Commission on Education to UNESCO in the 21st century refers to a possible edifying answer: by placing emphasis on intercultural and moral dimension of which we shall make use, too (Delors: 2000: 34-35)

The authors of the report consider that education today has an important role to play not only in human development, but also in "overcoming concentration on own identity in favour of understanding the other on the basis of respect for diversity" (J. Delors: 2000:36). Unity in diversity and solidarity suppose a pluralist education and bringing upfront of the importance of languages and intercultural educational forms:

- teaching people to become conscious of their own cultural roots;
- teaching them to pay attention to the preserving of diversity (which is the most eloquent expression of the richness of the human spirit);
- teaching them how to communicate interculturally through different means: rediscovery of universal body languages, through word and image at the same time;
- teaching them active tolerance which means not only acceptance of the other but also collaboration

In order to be able to respond to the need of integration and respect for difference at the same time, authors consider that the principle of cultural pluralism should be made a part of contemporary school politics. Modern states were established

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on the principle of ethnic homogeneity or in reality very few contemporary states are monoethnic (ibidem: 201). To be short one of the tasks of education is to teach people how to communicate in an authentic way, to understand alterity, get rid of stereotypes in judging the other, tolerate "the foreigner" acknowledged as another face of his own, or as his shadow, which is what we set out for ourselves through the present work.

After a brief outline of the cultural diversity landscape in Central / Eastern Europe, with specific comments focusing on Romania's case, we will present the way intercultural learning and its theoretical background have been adopted and adapted in Romanian Language and Literature Applied Didactics classes of Romanian students from Faculty of Sciences and Letters/ Targu Mures. These students will became teachers of Romanian language and literature in Mures area / Targu Mures town and its proximity. The main element characterizing cultural diversity in all countries of Central and Eastern Europe and, in the same time, all regions of Romania - Transilvania, Muntenia and Moldova - is the presence of national minority communities with a cultural specific, linguistic, religious and ethnic identity, in most cases associated with the national identity of another state of region. Unlike the immigrants in Eastern Europe, these communities live in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, sometimes concentrated, and sometimes dispersed among the majority population, for a long time. In many cases their presence is the result of the policies of the three main empires that dominated the region until the First World War: the Habsburg/ Austrian - Hungarian, the German, the Turkish and the Russian Tsarist Empires. For instance, in the case of Romania, there are around twenty minority groups that benefit from various kinds of support measures from the state. Mures district is a part of Transilvanyan region where important minority communities are living which are associated with a Western neighbouring country, Hungary, part of formal Austrian-Hungarian Empire that was historically dominantly represented in Romania by the Hungarian minority. This community became the main target of the communist assimilation policies and instilled fear among members of the majority. We want to show by these details that the presence of national minorities was always at conflict with the national building process of the majority population and represents a major source of social and political tension in some cases. The interethnic and inter religious tensions associated with the presence of national minorities emerged strongly on the public agenda in most countries of the region in early 1990. The first half of 1990, the 15 March, was also the time when the Hungarian minority and the Romanian majority was fighting on the streets of Targu Mures town. They accused each other: minority as nationalist groups of plotting against the state or the interest of the majority and sometimes of secessionist intentions, and majority was accused of discrimination and xenofobia. And a similar situation it's possible to became reality in today's time.

In conclusions, we understand a pedagogy of "constructing the Other" like a variety of intercultural competences having as a main goal to support an intercultural

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dialogue as mechanism for conflict prevention and another one in the intercultural challenges of teaching religion.

To the incoherence of moral language the divorce between the attitudes and experiences of the contemporary man has added. On one hand each and very one of us is taught to consider him or herself ad an autonomous moral subject, on the other hand each of us engaged in manipulative relationships with others (MacIntyre: 1998: 93) The consequence of this double bind on contemporary human morality is that "it shows itself to us in an uncomfortable way like a theatre if illusions "(ibidem: 100). Giving credit to the positive way of thinking, Maria-Tereza Pirău considers that "globalization can be seen as walking towards and educational fortress capable of integrating different cultures" which places us in a situation that reminds of C.L. Strauss's "coalitions of players". We can easily imagine together with Strauss, the author continues, "what would happen if the players at the roulette in a casino formed a "coalition", placing into common all the numbers that each of them obtains on their own: each player would reach in short time the combination that is winner. Intercultural educational language innovations resembles very much this imaginary situation, they (he languages) mean the new and ingenious combination of values that were thought of separately before. In an analogous way to the casino example the globalized space of the contemporary civilization creates very difficulty the premises of a perfect space, but it is compatible with an open space: a heterotopy. M Foucault defines the heterotopies through the contrast to utopias which are more mimetic. While "utopias are placements that lack a real place /…/ which have a general direct or reversed analogic relationship to the real space of society", heterotopies are "*sort of actually accomplished utopias in which the real placements to be found inside the culture are at the same time represented, contested and inversed, some kind of places that are outside any kind of place, even if they can be actually localised/…/"* and, Foucault continues, "I believe that it is undoubtedly possible that between utopias and these placements that are completely different, these heterotopies, *there is a sort of common experience which shall be the mirror*"(Foucault: 2002:47-48).

We consider that the space of these experiences is an intercultural one. Otherwise said, through teaching of intercultural languages a positive context is created for placing in common the different cultural values and offers the students a chance for unimaginable progress in foregoing societies. This is possible if entire groups of people form the same country or different countries, belonging to different cultures/ mentalities will be willing to "play together" in what we called the heterodoxy (Szekely: 2006: 139-142). In other words, we are talking about specifically human needs: to establish authentic communication relationships, on one hand, and to avoid risks, like xenophobic enclosure in our own culture, prejudices and stereotypes, to avoid imperialism and cultural mimetism, on the other hand.

In the end, here is the interweaving between interculturality and morality with which we will operate in the following applications, thus motivating, on one hand our preference towards intercultural educational languages, on the other hand placing face to

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face the ideas of C.G. Jung and of the postmodern moralists, A. MacIntyre and Z. Bauman (2000:93): morality means more placing "shoulder to shoulder", together, dissolved in a collective "we", morality means "being" for the Other, who I have in front of me, without being interested in reciprocity meaning his movements toward me; morality does not exist beyond the proximity of relationship, beyond that state of perception of the Other as different and at the same time "as alike close physically and psychologically".

In this way, learning takes place on three different, inter-related levels: on a cognitive, an emotional and a behavioural level. Real learning involves all three levels and intercultural languages are ways to accomplish complete education.

3. **Looking at constructing "the other" according to Milton J. Bennett's developmental model of intercultural sensitivity**.

Learning takes place on three different, interrelated levels: on a cognitive, an emotional and a behavioural level. Real learning involves all three levels and inter cultural languages are ways for realize that complete education, that implies the awakening of intercultural sensitivity. Milton J. Bennett, a specialist on multiculturality, states: "Intercultural sensitivity is not natural. It is not cross-cultural past, nor has it characterized most of human history. Cross-cultural contact often has been accompanied by bloodshed, oppression or genocide. Clearly this pattern cannot continue" (Bennet: 1993: 11)

Cognitive learning is the acquirement of knowledge or beliefs: knowing that this model is based on the passing from the ethnocentric stages (when the individual assumes that his/ her view of the world is essentially central to reality) at the ethno-relative stage (the assumption that cultures can only be understood relative to one another and that particular behaviour can only be understood within a cultural context).

Emotional learning is more difficult as a concept to grasp. Perhaps everyone can look back and remember how they have learned to express their feelings, and how these feelings have changed through time. What caused fear twenty years ago might not have the same effect any more, persons we did not like in the past might become our friends etc.

Behavioural learning is what is visible of learning: being able to hammer a nail straight into a pieces of wood, to write with a pen, to welcome somebody in the "right" way, to understood and practice intercultural communication, build on an implicit or explicit idea about culture(s). Culture has been referred to as the "software" wich people use in daily life; it is commonly described as being about basic assumptions, values and norms that people hold. There are many theoretical and practical arguments and discussions about concepts of culture. Is culture necessarily linked to a group of people, or does "individual culture" exist? Can one establish a "cultural map" of the word? Do culture change? Why and how makes the change? How strong is the link between culture

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and actual behaviour of individuals and groups? Can one have several backgrounds - and what does that imply? How flexible is culture, how open for individual interpretation?

The following learning experiences are looking for answers to these questions starting from the idea that very often, looking at culture implies looking at the interaction of cultures. Culture, therefore, cannot thought of simply as "culture", it has to be thought of as "cultures". Consequently, it makes sense to advance in this paper from ideas that are mainly focused on culture in itself to ideas that focus more on the interaction of cultures and nations, on intercultural experiences.

The variety of versions of human rights implies the need for intercultural dialogue and debate over the differences. They also mean that the substance of the indispensable core of human rights has to be defined. In this way, those involved will arrive at a shared understanding of what is a right. The following example of international discourse about shared values and norms is the emergence of policies on anti discrimination and equality as part of European social policy.

We will suggest a packet of problems / questions for intercultural dialogue to combat discrimination in schools during the learning process and on grounds of race or ethnic origin. These examples show that intercultural competence can no longer be concerned solely with the internal actions of a nation - state. The growing trend towards globalization, and the irrelevance of national borders to the activities of global players in the education, economic, cultural, political and social field, influence local informal action in education. However, we - out of excessive enthusiasm -should not glorify the multi- / intercultural world society, but should realize that the process of globalisation produced and will produce, maybe, again contradictions and will be driven counter - movements such as nationalism and racism.

Conclusions

Intercultural values and attitudes are nothing but (a part of) the moral dimension of the formed person towards which all the cognitive and communicational competencies should be oriented (Piaget-Kohlberg line). If the process of development of the cognitive structures has as condition the practice of the ability of moral judgement, it is accomplished through the ethical dilemmas, Kohlberg says (raising the issue, network discussion, debate, case study), young people thus understanding that values are dependent on context, they change according to space, time and culture. These ethical & ethnic dilemmas are narrative actions - of which literary texts and books in general are full - in which a conflict is placed in the scene, an issue that needs solving through personalized decisions - arguments, as a result of communication students have the revelation of prejudices and accepts the challenge of surpassing of stereotypes. Their methodological value consists in the fact that it allows the distribution in stages of the students in a class, which never is homogeneous, so that those who are at a lower level adapt their rationalization integrating arguments that were formulated by the advanced

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and this they evolve. In addition, through the way in which the teacher leads the debate, he/she can help the student in restructuring arguments according to the next superior level's expectations compared to the level where he is, evolution in three steps: experiencing the cognitive dissonance, conscious solving of the dilemma through observation and weighing of more alternatives and responsible choice of the best solution for the given situation.

The stake of these educational languages is to place face to face the intercultural destinies of two writers from two different periods (before and after the Second World War), differently described by their contemporaries, with the intercultural (work)/ biography of students today, from the same locations, or other similar ones (in our case, Târgu Mureş, city in the center of Transylvania, region which was part of the former Habsburg Empire, during the childhood of I. Slavici, where the Romanian majority and Hungarian minority for three centuries has been debating in relation to outnumbering, the effects of the 1990 street riots being felt even today).

Through these intercultural educational languages we plead in didactical communication for the abandon of passive comprehension, which brings nothing new in the comprehension of the discourse, it only doubles it, aiming as a supreme limit towards the complete reproduction of what is already given in the intelligible discourse, without exiting its context and without enriching what "is intelligible". As a result:

- what the student can't learn through own experience about human nature/ ethics can be learned through the means of intercultural experience/ through literary characters, through narration;
- puberty is the best time to study history and human characters through moral fables/ dilemmas;
- in order to achieve the state of generalization that the conscience of alterity supposes, the young person must obtain a repertoire of impressions, representation always associated to an experienced feeling, and not to a perception;
- the emotional state that the subject experiences will be stored in his memory as well as the mental image it accompanies, only through the experienced feeling, which the intellect acknowledges as a significance of representation.

Teachers don't do puberty justice by considering it an age; actually all the difficulties related to education at this have their origin in pedagogical incompetence" (J.J. Rousseau). Thus we are convinced that it is possible that teacher who animates interaction and intercultural and moral communication, a circular communication under the mediating professor "spokesman of the unconscious of the group and of the effects of new meanings that the group sets free", unblocking conflicts. By the above suggestions for intercultural communication we hope to have shown that in order to raise motivation, the teacher can give up being a good "specialist" being more of a generalist who offers starting points, frames or references to those who don't have them and supports them in creating their own imaginary world which appears, up to a point, as "substitute of cultural world". The teacher can be a character who not only wakes up, but

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also "awakens". "We are talking about political awakening to the world and presence of things"; "moral awakening to the other ad to co-presence" (J.R. Resweber: 1988: 98).

Constructing "the Other" through awake intercultural awareness are ways to build an "intercultural society" in the sense that has been given to it by some Council of Europe documents and publications, meaning a society that, not only acknowledges its internal cultural diversity and the inevitable character of mutually influential intercultural interactions and interferences, but it also affirms that cultural diversity and intercultural contacts may have positive consequences at various levels (of the society, individual and group). Among the principles that we had situated at the basis of our work for the promotion of intercultural learning the most important ones are:

- concerns and brings together both majority and minority, young people and adults, brings the student to a better understanding of his/ her own position and to a fruitful analysis of that of others;
- aims at encouraging young people and adults to develop and to affirm a positive cultural identity, but also supports a view of cultural identity as dynamic and possibly multiple, while refusing heteroidentification and stereotyping; in addition, it contributes to an active participation in social and political forming of opinion and decision-making;
- activities effects the whole population, favours and are favoured by direct interaction and cooperation between majority and minority young people and adults; it opens new perspectives and new ways of participating in political and democratic matters;
- intercultural learning is effective only if associated with educational activities aiming at stimulating active citizenship; furthermore it strengthens democratic structures and solidarity as it prevents all forms of racism and cultural arrogance in the long term.

Constructing the Other the school cultivates the intercultural imaginary and dialogue paying equal attention to both / more cultural specificities put in value as space for literary and scientific creativity, has its resources in the ability to wonder of the educated, moral communication being in tight relationship with hermeneutics and contextual interpretation. Thus, wondering incites to poetical reconstruction and speculation, "the power of the imaginary being coextensive to that of the unconscious", it "is nothing else, but the writing of the world at the edge of unconscious". Actually, Resweber says every valid pedagogical strategy consists in opening the ghost of spiritual nourishment towards the imaginary of culture and at the same time taking away the ghost it was carrying at departure" (1988:99). This is also the axis of pedagogical intentionality of our discourse regarding the relationship between education and communication in general, especially intercultural communication.

Having looked at different ideas about learning, culture and intercultural experiences, it may have become more clearly that intercultural learning is a process to grow from ethnocentric stages to the ethno-relative stages. This process demands that the student know himself and where he comes from, before being able to understand

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others. It is a challenging process as it involves very deeply rooted ideas about what is good and bad, about structuring the world and our life. In intercultural learning, what we take for granted and feel is necessary to hold on. Intercultural languages are ways for emotional and behavioural learning, a challenge to one's identity – but it can become a way of living, a way of enriching one's identity at the same time, as Bennet has pointed out. Bennet has also given his model a more political outlook: whereas intercultural learning is an individual process, it is essentially about learning how to live together, learning how to live in diverse world. Intercultural learning seen in this perspective is the starting point of living together peacefully starting from the assumption that cultures - values, attitudes and beliefs – can only be understood relative to one other and that particular behaviour can only be understood within a cultural context.

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