

SELF-LEARNING AND META-COGNITION: A PROFESSIONAL VALUES
APPROACH FOR EDUCATING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATORS IN
CUBAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT:

This paper proposes the concept of self-learning and metacognition, not merely as regulatory cognitive strategies, but also as professional values indicators for holistic intercultural communication in Higher Education curricular practice. The holistic view presented presupposes a new approach to the domain of value-oriented Higher Education -one that surpasses the moral and aesthetic interpretation limit traditionally given to value-oriented education, as well as the hitherto existing separation between cognitive and affective aspects during the interactive learning process. Particular relevance is given to the proposed approach within the context of Communications Technology and Computer Assisted-Education. The theoretical foundations of this conception are supported with the author's pedagogical experiences and curriculum-based doctoral research results at the BA. Degree Program in English as a Foreign Language, University of Matanzas (1996-2004).

INTRODUCTION:

This paper presents an analysis of intercultural communication as a social and human interaction process, from the point of view of cognitive science as well as from the necessary affective dimension in self-learning processes, as associated to value education at the university level.

The first statement then to be made is recognising the uncommon though certainly possible association the paper presents between aspects such as metacognition and self-learning on the one hand, and values education and holistic intercultural communication on the other. The reason why this is precisely the theme of the present analysis is the hitherto unsatisfactory nature of the either uniquely sociocultural or psychological perspectives to the problems of intercultural interaction. This paper also results from the author's PhD dissertation in Pedagogical Sciences as linked to Multicultural and Intercultural Education at the University of Havana, 2000. Since then, a number of applications of these results have been observed at UNIVERSE-NEW MILLENIUM, the University of Matanzas (UMCC) now hard striving *Program for Multicultural and Intercultural Education in the Process of Universalization and Internationalisation of Cuban Higher Education*. The author is also thankful to his Canadian counterparts in the common approach of some of these issues, in his capacity as a member of the International Board of the Canadian Centre for Multicultural Development and Documentation, CMDD and President of the Division for Canadian Studies at UMCC.

OVERVIEW:

One major problem is presently affecting Pedagogy and Didactics studies world-wide: that is the still essentially insufficient link between the cognitive sciences approach and the sociocultural approach to the core problem of holistic intercultural communication processes. On the one hand cognitivists focus on the mental organisation and functioning of the individual schemata, while working out a given discourse content, on the abilities and disabilities in mastering a given foreign language properly, as well as on their capacity for decoding and encoding linguistic messages, etc. On the other hand, educational sociologists as well as cultural and educational anthropologists prefer to focus on the cultural and environmental conditioning of interaction as such.

Still today the followers of cognitivism and of the historical-cultural approach (Vigotsky, 1934), respectively, in education studies show certain reluctance to finding ways of establishing bi-directional and multidirectional communication vessels for a better completion of their respective theoretical frameworks,- even in those areas where these communication vessels are quite possible, and for the most part, convenient.. Seemingly, too, both scientific approaches resent against an eventual eclecticism in case they mixed too much with each other. But again, in real practice methodological boundaries are more rigid in human minds than they can really be in practice.

Such was the case with the 4-year curriculum-based experimental research leading to the completion of this author's PhD dissertation on intercultural communication and education in 2000. The experiment was carried out with a population of 30 average Cuban university students majoring in English Language and Literatures, as well as with 30 Multicultural students (from different African, Asian and West Indian backgrounds) from the Preparatory Program in Spanish during the period 1996-2000, and has been reedited in the period 2001-2004 with other two pairs of groups with similar characteristics. The essence of this work is thus summarised in the following paper.

The theme this paper discusses first requires the definition of the four concepts being worked out in what follows, namely:

Holistic intercultural communication and education

Self-learning

Metacognition

Professional values education

As a first step to the approach of the problem, basic definitions for the proposed new concepts are given, as follows:

Holistic Intercultural communication: it is the interaction process between individuals, either in micro-context (Morell, 2000; Belismelis, 2003.) , that is, coming from the same or similar linguistic, social and cultural-anthropological backgrounds, or in macro-context: that is the kind of communication that takes place among individuals from diverse or asymmetrical linguistic, social and cultural-

anthropological backgrounds. According to this perspective, education in every situation is one of the ideal forms of intercultural communication, since it is a process of negotiation of knowledge, experiences, and background perspectives.

Self-learning: it is a process of self-acquisition, monitoring, re-adjusting and evaluation of knowledge, abilities, capacities, competencies and values, in which the individual assumes a particularly and emphatically conscious and active role.

Metacognition: it has been defined (Eggen and Kauchak, 1994) as

“...the knowledge and control the subject itself has about one’s own cognitive process in particular. Such knowledge, therefore, implies an assessment and transformation of the object from the standpoint of self-evaluation and self-regulation of the personal behaviour of the cognitive subject as such. That will enable this subject to further correct and tune in with her/his own cognitive process on the bases of the knowledge already possessed on the information necessary to take actions, as well as on the behavioural strategies needed for each particular case. (Anderson 1990 & Best, 1992) propose the existence of two basic components within metacognitive processes: declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge. Declarative knowledge is the knowledge about facts, definitions, generalisations and rules. On the other hand, procedural knowledge is the precise knowledge about how to perform and how to develop activities. (...) It is important to know how to distinguish between declarative and procedural knowledge, since the conditions for acquiring one and the other are not exactly the same. Conditions for the acquisition of declarative knowledge (accumulation of information by our intellect) are mainly associated to reception, mental processing, storage and memorisation of concepts and verbalised information. However, conditions for the acquisition and development of procedural knowledge manifest themselves in problem-solving situations or during the fulfilment of tasks requiring the operational application of the essentials of the concepts stored in the mid and long term memories.” (1)

Values education: it is the type of education consciously planned and directly involved in the development of the individual’s ethical, technically professional and human interaction values. (See Chart with Values Classification, p.6) From the educational and communicational point of view, we understand as values:

“The transcendental and positive significance of knowledge, processes, phenomena, both material and spiritual, from three interrelated planes: objective, subjective and societal/ institutional” (Fabelo, 2002) (2)

So a key aspect in this analysis is the fact that scales of values not only have to do with the moral and the ethical field of the human dimension, but also with all those strategic aspects which prove to be transcendental for the acquisition of

professional knowledge, abilities, capacities and other associated values a university graduate is supposed to have internalised as part of one's own professional performance.. Therefore, learning and metacognitive strategies may well also acquire a values dimension, an affective implication, and not merely a cognitive side, if properly understood, written about and taught from the more integral and full fledged point of view of their humanist transcendence in individual as well as in social activity. The following is a chart representation of the above – mentioned humanistic and professional-value perspective, as conceived by the author for the syllabuses of the Social Sciences and the Humanities during the development of the related pedagogical experience:

| IDENTITY-BOUND VALUES | AESTHETIC VALUES | REFERENTIAL VALUES |
|---|--|--|
| Self-acceptance Fidelity Respect/tolerance Inter-culturalism Multiculturalism | Expressiveness Plasticity Sonority | Cognitive-affective memory Evocation tact and will |
| AFFECTIVE Appreciation | VOLITIVE Motivation | COMMUNICATIVE Pertinence |
| Empathy | Perseverance Criticism Self-criticism Courage | Accuracy Flexibility Originality Responsibility |

Self-learning, metacognition and value-oriented holistic intercultural communication:

Metacognition, implying self-planning, organisation, monitoring, evaluation and decision-making, should necessarily be viewed as a matter of professional values education at the university level for all fields of knowledge and professional activity. This is a true path to be followed, for instance, if we expect to obtain good results from such contemporary educational developments as self-learning strategies and communications technology-assisted distance education. In all of them, interpersonal, inter-group, inter-sector, inter-know-how, international and, thus, holistic inter-cultural relations in the broadest sense, are an omnipresent feature or a common core problem to deal with.

Another key issue unifying these three apparently unconnected or not directly connected aspects is the necessity to picture out a model of the mental process of intercultural communication in its broadest sense, as we have assumed in this paper. Therefore, the needed model need not only be descriptive of what might be occurring, but also prescriptive of what the individual should consciously target on and achieve through a well-calibrated and organised strategy for action during the self-learning and metacognition processes.

In this same connection, as higher education moves more and more integrally into the field of distance education, self-learning and metacognition can no longer be treated as merely located within the field of cognition, but they also extend into the realm of something that could be termed as a professional and know-how axiology for knowledge treatment behaviour. That is, self-learning and metacognition acquire a new transcendental significance (thus turning into behavioural values needed to cope with the requirements of the so-called “knowledge society” in our contemporary world, for the present and the future.)

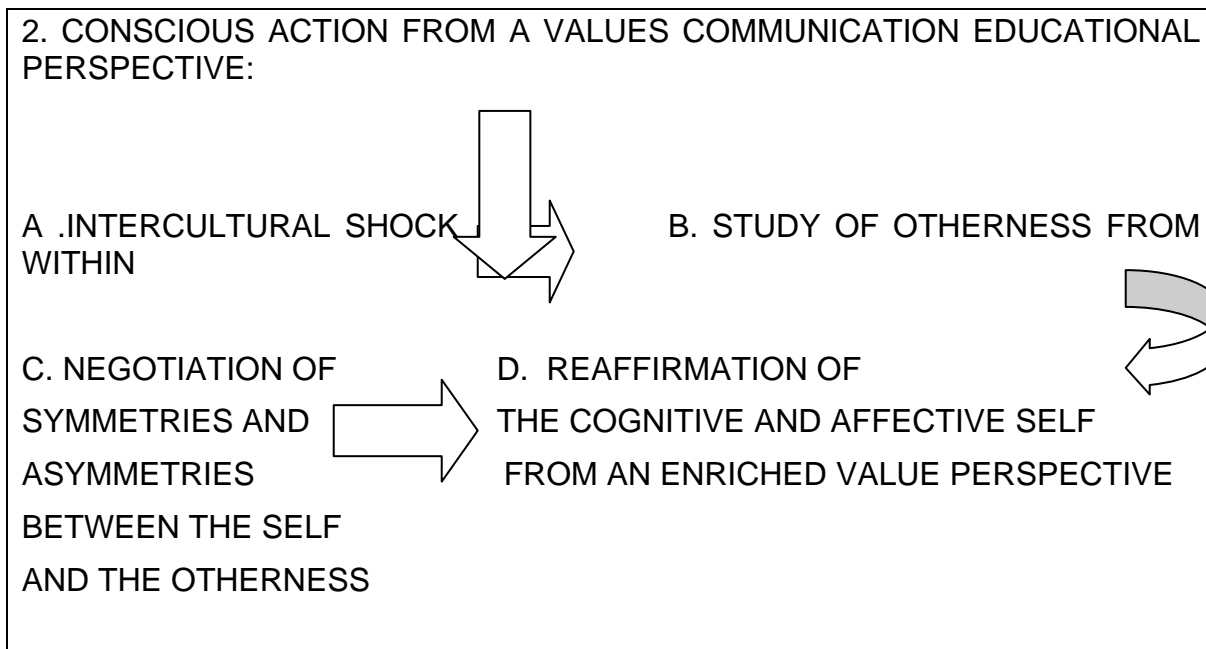
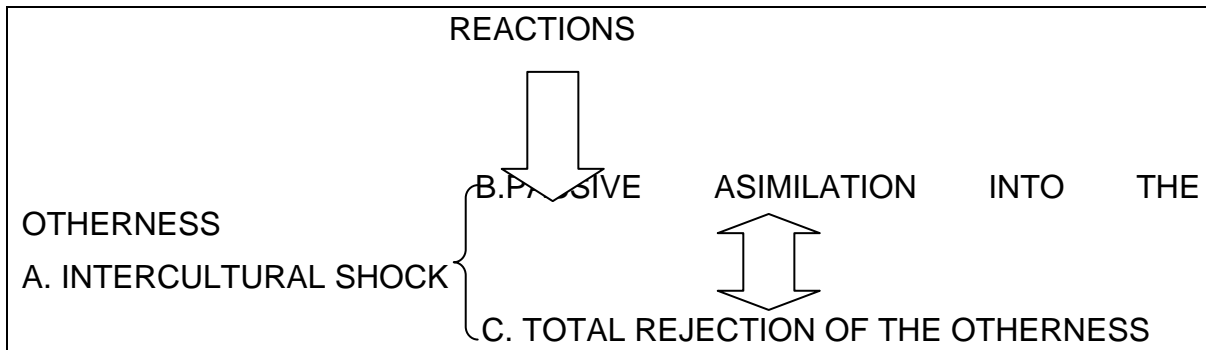
The educational perspective to the above-mentioned problem should focus on the socially transcendental impact, not only of a profession seen as a whole or at a macro-perception, but also of every single technical operation, action and activity its progressive professional training and education comprises - something that, unfortunately, is often left aside as “a matter of concern only for philosophers ”. However, a further problematisation of the above may well lead us to picture out that the necessarily practical or procedural side of every technical training does not imply understanding the “technical” as “coldly pragmatic” or void from a spiritual perspective. Instead it should be designed at a curricular level as a praxis historically resulting from the human endeavour to better serve human and community building through a variety of perspectives and styles of praxis.

If this is so, then the process of building human abilities and capacities at a professional level also passes through the understanding of a diversity for such practices which calls for a whole scale of negotiation, tolerance, giving, receiving and mainstreaming through every phase of the higher educational process. This is mostly so, if we are to come to terms with the reality that university students are at the threshold of joining an every time more complex, multifaceted and interrelated professional market at the sector, local, regional, national and international level within the framework of a mounting globalisation process.

Therefore, intercultural communication and multicultural theory already demands an expansion of their understanding quite beyond the inter-ethnic, racial or religious field, as it has traditionally been encrypted in social and educational theory. It is a process of human interaction at every sphere and in every situation. And if there is a growing consensus nowadays that education should move from the field of doctoral lecturing to that of furthering self-learning through the picturing of what is taking place within the student’s mind, then the “outer curriculum” should be balanced with that other “inner curriculum” of which the learner is many times a humble but to a passive depository at all.

Even closer to the core of the above mentioned problem is the understanding that the new value education quality needed for these approaches can only be properly grasped if one analyses the different stages that make up the herein proposed scheme of the mental process of intercultural communication, namely:

| | |
|----|-------------------------|
| 1. | POSSIBLE SPONTANEOUS |
|----|-------------------------|



As the understanding of the above phases prove to be vital for any contemporary cognition process, the author of the present paper decided to develop a pedagogical experiment as referred above. The experiment was centred on the self-learning and self-control process of university students majoring in English-Spanish Translation and Bilingual Interpreting Studies in three Cuban universities: the University of Havana, the University of Matanzas and the University of Holguín, during the four-year period of time already indicated.

The selection of these particular professional activities was based on their status as models of professional forms of intercultural communication *par excellence*, thus having the central role of discourse associated to other cultural expressions as their main object of study. The visible performance of professional bilingual translation and interpreting, at the same time, frequently hides its real nature: while it seems to be a mechanical inter-lingual process, it is in fact a complex verbal operation on knowledge supported on highly trained intercultural communication abilities, capacities and values. It is perhaps the most humble and

modest of professions world-wide demanding, however, the most learned qualifications within encyclopaedically oriented mental and discourse processes.

As regards the value perspective of metacognition, the study was based on the contributions advanced by Herminia Fernández, (1989) mathematical and educational researcher from the *Centro de Estudios y Perfeccionamiento Educacional (CEPES)*, at the University of Havana concerning her proposed mental actions of the self-control process:

Previewing

Monitoring

Assessing

Decision-making

As part of the theoretical contribution of the research results here presented, an operational rationale was added to these mental actions. Such rationale also implied in itself an affective and axiological (values based) essence, as follows:

| ACTIONS: | OPERATIONS |
|--|----------------------------------|
| (Hernández Fernández, 1998, p.3) (3) (4) | (Rodríguez Morell, 2000, p. 64) |
| Previewing..... | memorising-associating- |
| predicting | |
| Monitoring..... | tracking-recognising-registering |
| Assessing..... | quantifying-qualifying |
| Decision-making..... | discriminating-selecting- |
| performing- | regulating |

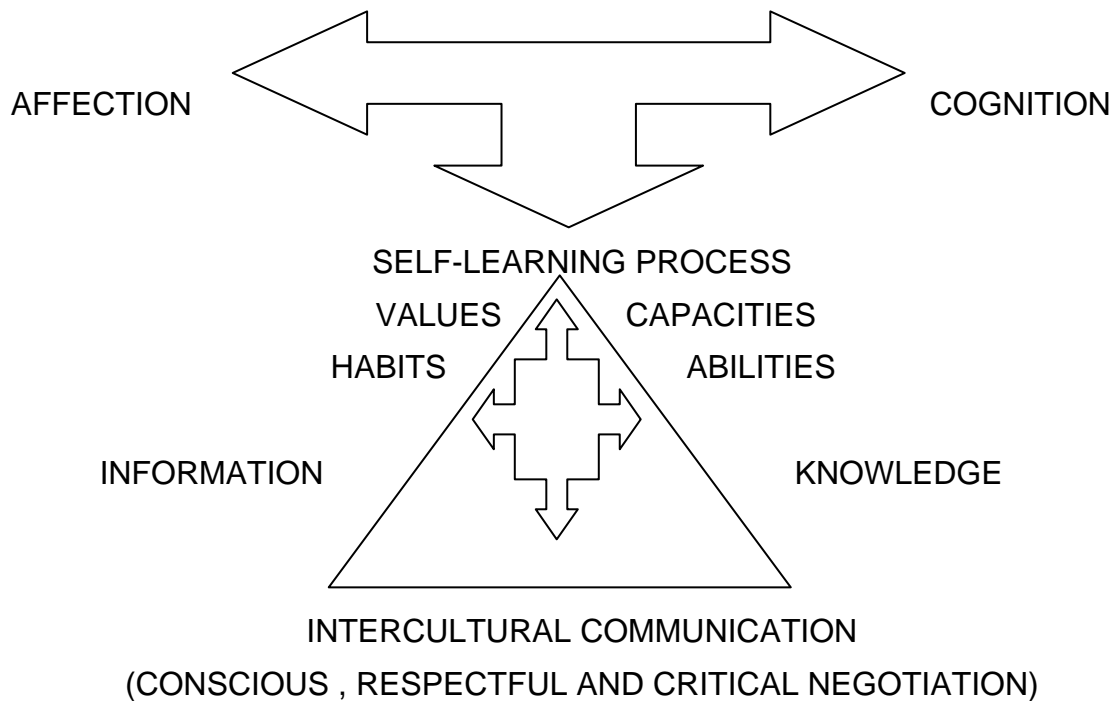
It is really not difficult to observe an axiological scale in the relationship between the mental actions and operations related above as associated to the process of holistic intercultural communication. Interactive or communicative values such as: self-recognition, recognition of the otherness, tolerance, negotiation, flexibility and honesty are either directly or indirectly present in every one of these phases and steps. So in the process of self-learning, when the individual is to undergo the cognitive process by oneself, the observance of such values is paramount so that instruction and full-fledged education can be achieved hand in hand as part of the integral process of the advanced development of the individual's personality.

It would be a limited perspective to assume that the axiological scale in education can only be developed within the field of ethics (that is, general or universal moral or human values). It is paramount to understand that, amidst the new expanding conditions of self-learning through distance education, the field of value education is extended to the metacognitive or self-regulating field of interaction with knowledge. It also implies that it is extended to the field of communication with interlocutors who are based in quite different and distant

cognitive and cultural contexts. So here we are talking about cognitive values, metacognitive values, communicative or interactive values and professional values associated to study abilities as well as to the capacity of using knowledge for well-balanced and purposeful aims within the decision-making process.

So we are entering in a new age of technological humanism, which inevitably also takes us to link cognition with the affective and principled behaviour of individuals as expressed within the cognitive process itself, not merely as a complementary ornament or lip service practice.

The process of interactive value development through interpersonal (thus essentially intercultural) communication associated to areas of professional knowledge, abilities, capacities and social performance as such, - as mediated or non-mediated- by the presence of communications technology, could be then perceived as follows:



The pedagogical experience:

Two of the sample groups selected in every one of the campuses involved were subjected to work in conditions of traditional learning (classroom-located with the permanent presence of the professor). The other two were administered exactly the same English/Spanish- Spanish/ English Bilingual Translation and Interpreting program, but through a blended-learning modality.

Each of the groups was subject to the insertion of the proposed contents on self-learning and meta-cognition: a professional values approach for holistic intercultural communication in higher education and so they were progressively assigned to carry out professional translation and interpreting tasks from either of

the above-mentioned two languages into the other one by incorporating the theory and self-regulatory practices derived, while deepening and expanding in their own set of professional values and their axiological platforms for evaluating self and other performances- thus learning to avoid derogatory or unconsciously discriminatory biases. For example each of the groups was able to observe that both translation and interpreting are complex intercultural communication tasks in which not only linguistic but also field-cognitive, anthropological and other cultural aspects are dynamically involved through discoursed utterance, comprehension, reformulation and re-expression (Casado, 1992). At the same time, each of the groups was able to sense through personal experience the not always justified bias and incomprehension this profession has universally suffered, in the form of stereotypes such as the old Italian saying *traduttore, traditore* (“every translator is, *per se*, a traitor”).):

The purpose of the experience was to diagnose (first, at the initial stage and then, after the development of the strategy for developing intercultural self-control had been concluded) to what extent had the students developed metacognitive and metacultural (thus, necessarily intercultural) strategies and professional values of their own. These were supposed to be linked to the process of translating and interpreting with certain degree of complexity, thus having to overcome difficulties through creative strategies of their own.

Meta-cognitive and meta-cultural-axiological tasks within the professional learning experience:

The questionnaire and instructions given to the students for their preparation, follow-up and self-control activity pertaining to the written translation tasks included the following:

1. Assigning a relatively medium-high (and progressively growing) complexity task for translating into their mother tongue (Spanish). The following is an example of selected text for this purpose:

MODEL TEXT SERIES FOR THE ASSIGNED TRANSLATION TASK:

The Cultural Initiatives Program at Canadian Heritage: a Renewed Program to Better Serve the Artistic Community

by Michel Lemay, Canadian Heritage (5)

The Cultural Initiatives Program (CIP) is aimed at Canadian non-profit, professional arts and heritage organizations that demonstrate a clear pan-Canadian dimension by involving artists and reaching audiences from more than one province or territory. The Program helps them to undertake arts and heritage activities that will ensure a wider distribution of works and facilitate the circulation of artists and artistic achievements in Canada.

The CIP had a facelift this year: its major objectives, its three components, its eligibility criteria and its evaluation criteria were all reviewed. Even the application form was reworked. In future, the CIP will focus on projects likely to encourage the circulation of professional artists among the various regions of the country and to increase the Canadian public's access to the best in Canadian art.

One thing hasn't changed in the past three years: only the Festivals and Special Arts Events has a budget envelope. The other two components, Strategic Development Assistance and Capital Assistance, still exist, but without allocated financial resources.

The Festivals and Special Arts Events component provides opportunities for the Canadian public to see and appreciate Canadian professional artistic achievements from other provinces and territories through festivals or special arts events of pan-Canadian scope.

This year, the CIP will support some 160 projects. Of that number, more than a dozen will contribute directly to the development and vitality of the Francophone minority culture. Four other projects have the same objective for the Anglophone minority in Quebec. It is worth mentioning the priority being given to consolidating the activities of the Coup de Coeur network and to the initiative designed to offer Francophone minority artists a special showcase at the latest edition of the RIDEAU conference.

First the memorandum of understanding on theatre, and now one on publishing

by Doris Boivin, Canadian Heritage (6)

Following the trail blazed by the theatrical community, French-Canadian publishing houses were hoping that the federal organizations working in the publishing sector would develop a coordination mechanism that would allow them to focus their efforts more effectively. And now they have! Last June, the Canada Council for the Arts, the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, in partnership with the Fédération culturelle canadienne-française, signed a memorandum of understanding committing them to supporting the French-Canadian minority publishing houses.

The main objective of the three signatory federal institutions is to sustain, by means of specific, adapted measures, the development of publishing within the Francophone communities and to ensure the complementarity and consistency of their involvement with the publishing houses. This objective is similar to the one that the federal government gave itself in section 41 of the Official Languages Act, to support the development and enhance the vitality of Canada's official-language minority communities.

The signing of the memorandum was announced on June 6, 1998, at the Forum of the Institut franco-ontarien that was held in Sudbury. On that occasion, the Fédération culturelle canadienne-française once again hailed the spirit of cooperation and understanding demonstrated by the federal institutions that signed the agreement.

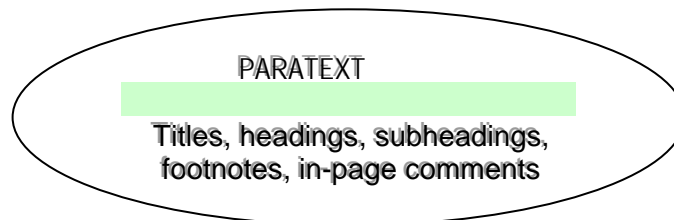
Copies of the memorandum of understanding on French-Canadian minority publishing, and of the memorandum of understanding on professional theatre companies working in the Francophone minority communities, are available from the Interdepartmental Coordination Directorate, Department of Canadian Heritage, at (819) 994-3733.

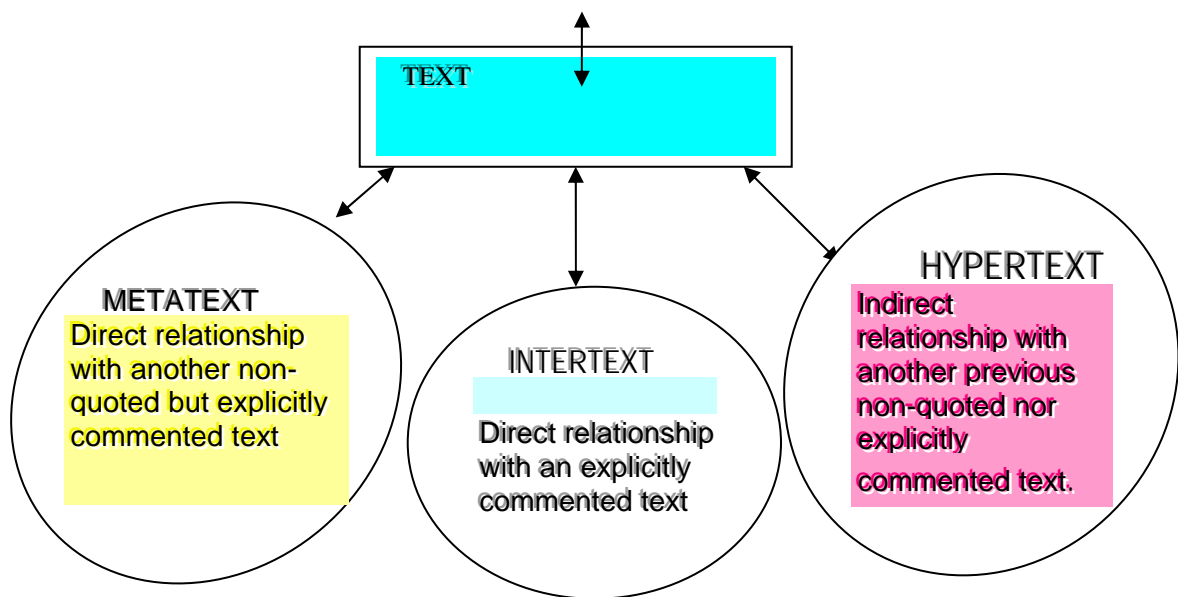
Come visit our web site (http://www.pch.gc.ca/arts/arts_pol/index_e.htm) or contact the regional office of Canadian Heritage closest to you for more details about the changes.

2. Intensive and extensive text analysis:

(First text analysis traditional procedures are completed: skimming and scanning tasks, determining main and supporting ideas, outlining the original text, first summary series, and the like.)

Following is a technique introduced as part of the pedagogical proposal being dealt with and here called as Architextual Hyperlink Chart (ACH). This technique has resulted to be one didactic application of the *architextual* analysis Gerard Genette proposed (Genette, 1986) for the analysis of the transcendental dimension of relatively complex types of texts. Its essence is as shown in the following diagram:





The above chart was a guide to develop in class-activities, either by group or individual assignments, according to which the students were supposed to read the text carefully and display all the array of relations a text- and what is more important, the background reference culture supporting its ideatic and meaningful structure- may have with its similar or closer contemporaries or predecessors, through different kinds of architextual bounds to be revealed, discussed and socialized. Working out this chart in class helped in the meta-cognitive and meta-cultural organization of the student's system of intercultural references for concrete professional action. At the same time, it also provided a useful tool for display a scale of professional axiological perception and evaluation between and among the texts (both their form and contents) being referenced. In the case of the CT-assisted blended-learning groups, the possibility of developing real hypertext chains with the help of the computer was also of great use during the preparation and evaluation phases.

After all the array has been deployed- and thus the original text has been expended or unarticulated into open sources of previous information, the opposite procedure is then conducted by assigning the students a serial chain of summaries, which are supposed to be reduced in size every time more and more without losing the gist of the core information until one single word idea is reached. Other critical evaluation tasks should also be carried out from different perspectives.

3. Assigning the written translation/oral interpreting tasks as supported by a meta-cognitive operating tool (a pre-mental warming up and training, self-assessment, control and correction chart for the whole process) as follows:

1. Translate the given text (or interpret the given chunk of discourse) and:
2. Mark the critical points along the phases of comprehension, reformulation and re-expression.
3. Were you able to overcome the critical points by your own? Please, explain
4. How many of them were you able to overcome and how did you manage to do it by yourself in each case?
5. In your opinion what might be the professional and social consequences of your having solved or not each of the critical points you have been faced with during the process?

Notice the fact that the first of these tasks starts by causing the full immersion of the student in the translation process as such. So what the rest of them concentrate on asking the student is to focus on his/her own self control mechanism over the whole in situ process. Hypothetically, if the students manage to answer all the questions related above, with a minimum of meaningful answers – and no matter what their evidenced difficulties and shortcoming might be, the students would be equally showing a greater or lesser degree of intercultural metacognitive as well as professionally axiological competence for the specific and complex type of activity the student has been entrusted with.

Likewise, the independent variable introduced as a novelty in the work of the experimental groups during the pedagogical experience carried out included, among other aspects, the following metacognitive support for the specific oral bilingual interpreting pre-task preparations well as during the execution and collation stages:

THE STUDENT SELF-LEARNING (METACOGNITIVE/PROFESSIONAL VALUE-ORIENTED) STUDY CARDS:

- I. CONTEXTUALIZED METACOGNITIVE AND PROFESSIONAL VALUE-ORIENTED ASSESMENT WHILE PREDICTING (FOR ORAL BILINGUAL AND INTERCULTURAL INTERPRETING):
- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Who might be the speaker? | 7. Where will the speaker do it? |
| 2. Whom might the speaker address? | 8. By which means will the speaker do it? |
| 3. Why will the speaker address the audience? | 9. What particular features might the utterance have? |
| 4. What will the speaker address the audience for? (language variant, | register, tone of voice.) |
| 5. How will the speaker do it? | |

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>6. When will the speaker do it?</p> | <p>10. What listening strategies should I follow to profit the most from the above information during the professional rendering?</p> |
| <p>II. METACOGNITIVE AND PROFESSIONAL VALUE-ORIENTED SELF-ASSESSMENT WHILE MONITORING (FOR ORAL BILINGUAL INTERPRETING):</p> | |
| <p>1. Have I listened?</p> | |
| <p>2. Have I listened properly?</p> | |
| <p>3. Have I understood all the words from the utterance?</p> | |
| <p>4. Have I understood at least all the necessary key words so as to understand the speaker's communicative intention, as well as main and supporting ideas?</p> | |
| <p>5. Have I been able to relate all those key words and phrases with my background knowledge so as to further a better comprehension of ideas?</p> | |
| <p>6. Have I sufficiently and properly activated my long, mid and short- term memory so as to record those key word and phrases?</p> | |
| <p>7. Have I mentally verbalised the equivalent ideas in the target language?</p> | |
| <p>8. Am I conscious enough of all communicative, interpersonal, professional and sociocultural implications of the above as well as of my exact rendering-to-come?</p> | |

Designing the control tools of the experience:

All the above described charts and instruments were used for developing the meta-cognitive/meta-cultural and professionally axiological experience used as grounds for the research involved. However, three of them were basic for the purpose of attaining as objectively as possible a minimum degree of control on everything taking place. They were the following:

1. Experimental questionnaire:

- | |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Translate the given text (or interpret the given chunk of discourse) and: 2. Mark the critical points along the phases of comprehension, reformulation and re-expression. |
|---|

3. Were you able to overcome the critical points by your own? Please, explain
4. How many of them were you able to overcome and how did you manage to do it by yourself in each case?
5. In your opinion what might be the professional and social consequences of your having solved or not each of the critical points you have been faced with during the process?

2. The average Cuban Higher Education (combining quantitative & qualitative) marking system, as follows:

| | |
|---------|------------|
| SYMBOL: | MEANING: |
| 2 | Deficient |
| 3 | Acceptable |
| 4 | Good |
| 5 | Excellent |

3. The comparative chart for the analysis of mean value numerical results:

| STAGE OF THE PROCESS: BILINGUAL TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETING PROCESS | | | | | | |
|--|--|-------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| GROUP | TOTAL STUDENTS 30 | QUESTIONS | | | | |
| | | Translate/ Interpret | Marking critical points | Overcomi ng critical points | Consciou s mentionin g and explaining each | Socio- professiona l and axiological evaluation of consequen ces |
| 1-A, 1-B Experimental | 15 CT- Assisted Self- learning | | | | | |
| | 15 Traditional Learning process | | | | | |

The above chart focuses on the numerical mean value representation of the quality results of a relationship between the indicated meta-cognitive and meta-cultural/professionally axiological tasks (QUESTIONS-Columns) and the type of educational environment each group of students is working with (CT-Assisted self-learning or Traditional Learning processes). This mean value (average value) was

determined by summing up the students marks for the translation or interpreting task and by dividing its total sum among the number of students in each group.

NUMERICAL RESULTS OF THE APPLICATION OF THE EXPERIMENTAL TOOLS:

| INITIAL STAGE: ENGLISH INTO SPANISH / TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETING PROCESS | | | | | | |
|---|--|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| GROUP | TOTAL STUDENTS 30 | QUESTIONS | | | | |
| | | Translate/ Interpret | Marking critical points | Overcoming critical points | Conscious mentioning and explaining each | Socio-professional and axiological evaluation of consequences |
| 1-A, 1-B Experimental | 15 TIC-Assisted Self-learning | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| | 15 Traditional Learning process | 4 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| SPANISH INTO ENGLISH / TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETING PROCESS | | | | | | |
| GROUP | TOTAL STUDENTS 30 | QUESTIONS | | | | |
| | | Translate/ Interpret | Marking critical points | Overcoming critical points | Conscious mentioning and explaining each | Socio-professional and axiological evaluation of consequences |
| 1-A, 1-B Experimental | 15 TIC-Assisted Self-learning | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| | 15 Traditional Learning process | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 |

MIDDLE STAGE:

| ENGLISH INTO SPANISH / TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETING PROCESS | | | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|--|---|
| GROUP | TOTAL STUDENTS | QUESTIONS | | | | |
| | | Translate/ Interpret | Marking critical points | Overcoming critical points | Conscious mentioning and explaining each | Socio-professional and axiological evaluation of consequences |
| 1-A, 1-B Experimental | 15 TIC-Assisted Self-learning | 4 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 |
| | 15 Traditional Learning process | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| SPANISH INTO ENGLISH / TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETING PROCESS | | | | | | |
| GROUP | TOTAL STUDENTS | QUESTIONS | | | | |
| | | Translate/ Interpret | Marking critical points | Overcoming critical points | Conscious mentioning and explaining each | Socio-professional and axiological evaluation of consequences |
| 1-A, 1-B Experimental | 15 TIC-Assisted Self-learning | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 3 |
| | 15 Traditional Learning process | 3 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 |

FINAL STAGE:

| ENGLISH INTO SPANISH / TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETING PROCESS | | | | | | |
|---|---|-------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| GROUP | TOTAL STUDENTS 30 | QUESTIONS | | | | |
| | | Translate/ Interpret | Marking critical points | Overcomi ng critical points | Consciou s mentionin g and explaining each | Socio- professiona l and axiological evaluation of consequen ces |
| 1-A, 1-B Experimental | 15 TIC- Assisted Self- learning | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 |
| | 15 Traditional Learning process | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 |

| SPANISH INTO ENGLISH / TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETING PROCESS | | | | | | |
|---|---|-------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| GROUP | TOTAL STUDENTS 30 | QUESTIONS | | | | |
| | | Translate/ Interpret | Marking critical points | Overcomi ng critical points | Consciou s mentionin g and explaining each | Socio- professiona l and axiological evaluation of consequen ces |
| 1-A, 1-B Experimental | 15 TIC- Assisted Self- learning | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| | 15 Traditional Learning process | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 |

DISCUSSION:

In the first place, the above numerical presentation (2, 3, 4, 5 mean value) for each group's average performance is expressed here in terms of comparing the results of the initial stage of the experimental groups with their corresponding

intermediate and final stages, both for the TIC-Assisted Self-Learning process and the Traditional Learning Process, and thus between them - and not necessarily by comparing the results obtained between the experimental and the witness groups, respectively. Anyway, the initial, progressive and final behaviour of the witness groups at the University of Holguín and Havana were also analysed for the major study, but other collateral variables made these groups more asymmetrical as compared to the experimental ones and, therefore, were considered to be neglected for the purposes of this article, though not for the whole study.)

Such criteria of analysis are also based on a preferred non-positivist orientation- according to which most pedagogical experiences under control are either consciously or partially unconsciously biased by an unavoidable emphasis on the part of the educator-researcher been put on the quality improvement of its surrounding aspects, no matter if they are not always directly linked to the independent variable of the hypothesis been held as such, thus having a more positive influence on final results. That is why in such cases- i.e. our educational cases for experience- it wouldn't be totally fair or objective to consider that a new pedagogical theory or practice (A) is better, just merely because its internal good quality per se is supposed to be essentially better than another one existing in collateral practices for relatively similar samples (B), in which the type of modification we are newly introducing for (A) has purposefully not been taken care of.

Instead the author of the hitherto referred research and of the present article has preferred to follow a human/ cultural construction-oriented criteria of experimental comparison and data interpretation, according to which the validity of an educational experience is better tested by the quality of process development, human growth and cognitive/affective involvement- sometimes even demanding adjustments, reorientations and reconsideration of the original hypothesis or leading idea.

On the other hand, it is more than clear that choosing a mean value indicator as the one selected to show in this article, only gives a symbolic orientation of perception on the direction of either: 1) *status quo* persistence, 2) backward movement, or 3) progressive advance in terms of cognitive and affective/axiological professional competence. So the necessary high degree of generalization of such mean value for the purpose of the present statistics hides a number of performance shades and individual particular details and complexities that, for the specific case of professional translation/interpreting- and according to the objectives of the study in question-cannot but be neglected.

Taking all this considerations into account, what conclusions can be drawn from the charts presented?

As clearly seen, the initial stages are very common for all the groups under study. Factors such as the progressive adjustment to the meta-cognitive tasks and tools for all groups, as well as to the blended-learning-apparently-more relaxed-but-in-fact-more-self-demanding environment, accounted among the initial reasons for poor quality performance.

However, as the experience went on and it reached the middle and final stages, it is also progressively observable that a grouping of good results (4) in the

different meta-cognitive tasks assigned can be perceived toward questions 3, 4 and 5- that is, the ones dealing with the conscious self-evaluation and regulation of the students' own performance-which also shows a more steady movement toward the conscious acting and effective problem solving stage. Till the end of the experience, an almost stable line of good results are presented for the traditional-learning groups, while the blended learning ones considerably improve in comparison with their own initial stages- in some cases, it is even the same good result as in the *alter* cases. However, the adjustment period already referred seemed to have had a durable impact on their capacity to get to act organically; including every stage of the process (getting accustomed to using computers for learning professionally in such a complex field had first to break with certain culturally internalized barriers). This brought about the very scarce EXCELLENT (5) intermediate and final marks for these groups- although the maximum mark was more present in the traditional learning ones, their visibility being apparently lost in the statistics due to the mean value levelling results. Here, the more accessible 4 (GOOD) always tend to prevail over the more exclusive 5 (EXCELLENT).

The present author, as educator and researcher, is still working on strategies so as try to self-compensate the certain diminished perception on the level of professional value assessment as a real factor involved in the process for the blended-education cases, and apparently so far resulting from the relative lack of direct interaction to dwell with the person-to-person emotional atmosphere, as an important element in Cuban educational culture

CONCLUSIONS:

1. The proposed strategy for the development of a professional value dimension through holistic intercultural communication associated to self-learning and metacognition proved to have a positive mean quantitative and qualitative result for the experimental groups within the sample selected, when comparing the initial, middle and final stages of the experience.
2. The qualitative performance of the students involved in the TIC-assisted self-learning process showed a rather more pragmatic nature than that of those included in the traditional learning milieu – these last ones showing a more clearly defined verbalisation of professional values at the cognitive and affective level. However, the TIC-assisted self-learning groups showed a more sustained and clearly perceived in-built quality of professional values behaviour at the performance level.
3. For the reasons already exposed in this paper, the statistic comparison charts of the results obtained are limited to the results of the experimental groups. The results obtained with the witness groups were slightly inferior in quantity and quality as compared to their counterparts.
4. It is, therefore, suggested that the results obtained herein could eventually be extended to the value-oriented and holistic intercultural communication guidance of the learning process in other university programs and fields.

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