

Leitmotiv in perspectives on didactics of languages and cultures

أنماط وجهات النظر حول تعليمية اللغة والثقافة

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Abstract:

Reflection on language often provokes a parallel reflection on culture, and vice versa. In the global context, the French language is not only a tool of communication but also a vector of memory and culture. Any questioning of its role and influence raises the question of its cultural dimension and its links with teaching, where teachers aspire to promote a cultural openness. From a cultural perspective, this article examines language and culture teaching (DLC) as a discipline of intervention. Its objective is to establish and strengthen the link between the French language taught and its culture, considered as a perfect match forming a homogeneous and meaningful whole. To this end, we analyze the theoretical foundations of culture in the didactics of French as a foreign language (D.FFL) and examine the main areas of reflection. Our descriptive analysis addresses the following topics in succession: the position and complexity of DLC, the semantic field of culture and its fundamental concepts, concrete didactic proposals, and the place of culture in language

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teaching methodologies. Finally, the article highlights the new roles assigned to teachers and learners in this context.

Keywords: Communication, Cultural dimension, Didactics of French, Didactics of languages and cultures, Language teaching methodologies, Cultural approach.

Résumé:

La réflexion sur la langue provoque souvent une réflexion parallèle sur la culture et vice-versa. Dans le contexte mondial, la langue française est non seulement un outil de communication, mais aussi un vecteur de mémoire et de culture. Toute interrogation sur son rôle et son rayonnement soulève la question de sa dimension culturelle et de ses liens avec l'enseignement, où les enseignants aspirent à promouvoir une ouverture culturelle.

S'inscrivant dans une perspective culturelle, cet article interroge la didactique des langues et des cultures (DLC) en tant que discipline d'intervention. Son objectif est d'établir et de renforcer le lien entre la langue française enseignée et sa culture, envisagé comme une adéquation parfaite formant une unité homogène et signifiante. À cette fin, nous analysons les soubassements théoriques du culturel dans la didactique du français langue étrangère (D.FLE) et examinons les principaux axes de réflexion. Notre analyse descriptive aborde successivement : la position et la complexité de la (DLC), le champ sémantique de la culture et ses concepts fondamentaux, des propositions didactiques concrètes, et la place de la culture dans les méthodologies d'enseignement des langues. Enfin, l'article met en lumière les nouveaux rôles assignés aux enseignants et apprenants dans ce contexte.

Mots-clés: Communication, Dimension culturelle, Didactique du Français, Didactique des langues et des cultures, Méthodologies d'enseignement des langues, Approche culturelle.

ملخص:

غالبًا ما يؤدي التفكير في اللغة إلى تفكير موازٍ في الثقافة والعكس صحيح. في السياق العالمي، اللغة الفرنسية ليست مجرد أداة للتواصل، بل هي أيضًا ناقل للذاكرة والثقافة. أي تساؤل حول دورها ونفوذها

يثير مسألة بعدها الثقافي وعلاقتها بالتعليم، حيث يسعى المعلمون إلى تعزيز الانفتاح الثقافي. من منظور ثقافي، يتساءل هذا المقال عن تعليم اللغات والثقافات (ت ل ث) كفرع من فروع التدخل. ويهدف إلى إقامة وتعزيز الصلة بين اللغة الفرنسية التي يتم تدريسها وثقافتها، التي يُنظر إليها على أنها توافق تام يشكل وحدة متجانسة وذات مغزى. ولهذه الغاية، نحلل الأسس النظرية للثقافة في تعليم اللغة الفرنسية كلغة أجنبية (ت ل ف)، وندرس المحاور الرئيسية للتفكير. يتناول تحليلنا الوصفي بالتتابع: مكانة وتعقيد (ت ل ث)، والمجال الدلالي للثقافة ومفاهيمها الأساسية، والمقترحات التعليمية المموسة، ومكانة الثقافة في منهجيات تدريس اللغات. أخيرًا، يسلط المقال الضوء على الأدوار الجديدة الموكلة إلى المعلمين والمتعلمين في هذا السياق.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التواصل، البعد الثقافي، تعليمية اللغة الفرنسية، تعليم اللغات والثقافات، منهجيات تدريس اللغات، النهج الثقافي.

Introduction

In the field of language and culture teaching, a paradoxical observation stands out: although there has been consensus for decades on the urgent need to integrate the cultural dimension into language teaching, its implementation often remains limited to a reductive and folkloric view of “civilization.” At the same time, the founding dyad of “language-culture,” inherited from Galisson's thinking (1986) and still central, sees its concrete pedagogical applications continually debated, as Demorgon (1997) noted, emphasizing the intrinsic complexity of cultures. Faced with this persistent gap between the accepted principle and its effective implementation, this article aims to answer the following research question: *to what extent and by what means can the teaching of “other” languages and cultures go beyond superficial linguistic transmission to become an essential component of the learner's general and cultural education ?*

To answer this question, our analysis will focus on four complementary areas: 1/ first, tracing the evolution of this discipline and presenting its key concepts and how they fit together; 2/ second, deciphering the evolution of conceptions of culture in FLE teaching; 3/ then, propose some methodological principles and methods of intervention adapted to the teaching/learning (hereafter T/L) of the target culture; 4/ finally, demonstrate the specific roles of the partners involved in the teaching situation.

Our analysis will draw on the seminal work of Robert Galisson, a pillar of the discipline, as well as that of Jean-Claude Beacco (2000), Florence Windmüller (2011, 2015) and Christian Puren (1988, 1994 and 2002), in order to shed light on the challenges and prospects of this language-culture integration.

1. Theoretical and epistemological framework

The field of DLC is characterized by the richness of its models, such as the comparative, interdisciplinary (sociology, anthropology, and semiology), cultural, and intercultural approaches. Our article focuses on the “cultural approach,” a theoretical framework particularly suited to promoting culture and developing learners' cultural competence. Its proponents call for an update of the “language-culture-civilization” dichotomy and attribute a value to this competence similar to that of communication and language skills (Windmüller, 2011, p. 106).

Our descriptive study, positioned at the intersection of DLC and D.FFL, is guided by an epistemological perspective drawn from the complexity paradigm. This paradigm invites us to transcend the frameworks of strict logic and let thought guide analysis (Morin, 1990, p. 21). In other words, Morin advocates for thinking that excels in logic, rather than prioritizing logic over thinking.

2. Didactics of Languages-Cultures, an interventionist discipline

A fundamental question arises: what does didactics of languages-cultures mean? In order to answer this question, and before proposing an enlightened definition, we need to retrace its evolution in order to better define its current status and envisage the prospects for its future.

First, in his 1994 publication, Puren characterizes “language-culture teaching” as both a descriptive and prescriptive discipline. Focusing on the observation and action of the simultaneous teaching/learning (T/L) process, it also addresses cognitive processes and creativity. This vision reveals the breadth, complexity, and eclectic nature of its field of study. While this conception is modern, the term “didactics” itself has a long history, as Gabriel

Compayré notes when he says that "*foreign educators [...] called it didactics or the art of teaching*" (Compayré, 1897, p. 251, our translation).

Indeed, the history of the discipline is punctuated by major changes that have determined distinct phases: first "pedagogy," then "applied linguistics" (AL), and finally "Didactics/Didactology of Languages and Cultures" or (D/DLC). This conceptual advance attests to the paramount importance of culture within (D.FFL). In this regard, Daniel Coste (Coste, 1976, p. 56) emphasizes the ambition of didactics to claim "solidity or scientific construction," which he describes as a structured discourse oriented toward application. The author specifies that this scientific construction is based on the use of existing theories through the application, popularization, or borrowing of concepts, which implies a shift in models in which didactics acts as an intermediary or user.

During the 1980s, a new generation of researchers, including Jean-Claude Chevalier (2001), Daniel Coste (2000), Henri Besse (1998), Sophie Moirand (1980), among others, drove the transition from (A.L) to (DLC) in the field of (D.FFL).

Secondly, Robert Galisson (1990) positions (A.L) as a branch of foreign language didactics (FLD), alongside methodology. His thinking unfolds in two distinct phases. Initially, he conceived (FLD) as an all-encompassing discipline, which embraces both methodology and (A.L). Later, he advocates for the autonomy of didactics in relation to language sciences.

Under the aegis of Galisson (1986) and with the support of Christian Puren, a movement advocated the establishment of a unifying discipline: (DLC), intended to meet the demands of its time. This discipline is structured around three key components: "deontology," "programmatology," and "methodology." In 1998, Galisson associated his discipline with "pragmatist epistemology." The following year, he strongly criticized A.L. and (FLD). He accused them of having placed excessive importance on methods and methodologies for several decades, to the detriment of a more holistic approach. He described this approach as particularistic and argued for its opposite. In 2001, this affable master presented himself as a generalist specialist in this teaching and adopted an internal point of view and positioned himself on the side of practitioners. By incorporating the (D.FFL) within the (FLD), Galisson

anchored the (DLC) in a process of conceptualization and action and thus aligned it more with the notion of "**action research**." It is therefore a "**praxeological**" discipline, in permanent interaction with the sciences of education and the sciences of language. Here, we understand "praxeology" as a theorization of practice, which, in return, is subject to validation by this same practice.

Furthermore, in *La formation en question*, Galisson and Puren present "**Didactics of Languages-Cultures**" as an "**interventionist discipline**" and a primarily practical field, primarily intended for practitioners in the field (Galisson & Puren, 1999, pp. 118-119). Its aim is to improve the way in which knowledge and skills are transmitted in the field of language and culture education. Its main area of expertise is therefore the design and reflection on pedagogical missions and devices, focusing on the intentionality, the development, and the evaluation of didactic actions. For his part, Besse identifies three types of discourse that constitute the discipline: discourses with a reflective and methodological vocation, discourses relating to the creation of pedagogical tools and devices, as well as discourses arising from teaching experience.

Innovative in the modern epistemological framework, "**Didactics of Languages-Cultures**" defines itself as an emerging field of intervention while remaining deeply rooted in ancient pedagogical traditions. According to Galisson (1999), its epistemological originality lies in its dual approach: it promotes cultural immersion through lexicon — or lexiculture (defined below) — while conceptualizing the systemic interdependence between language and culture. To circumscribe the multidimensionality of its object of study, this discipline has adopted a rigorously stratified theoretical architecture, which goes beyond strict disciplinary limits.

In summary, Robert Galisson presents *Language and Culture Didactics* (DLC) in *Didactologies et Idéologies* (No. 60, 1985, p. 8) as a "cross-disciplinary field" rooted in the humanities and social sciences. Structured by an integrative and dynamic approach, it conceives of "language-culture" as a transcultural instrumental dyad. Going beyond traditional methodologies, this discipline re-enchant learning and establishes educational

communication as a constructive experience. Driven by a philosophy of action, it provides a framework for educational intervention.

3. Revisit the basics

The founding concepts of “D.FFL” — “language,” “civilization,” and “culture” — are constantly being redefined, marked by significant epistemological and methodological challenges. Long conceptualized following Saussure as a closed normative system (language vs. speech), language is now understood as a dynamic social phenomenon, both an instrument of communication and a space for the expression of identities, inseparable from culture. This theoretical evolution invalidates the idea of a universal linguistic code and places culture at the heart of this field. At the same time, the teaching of “culture-civilization” (Zarate, 1986; Beacco, 2000 ; Argaud, 2021) is now seen as inseparable from language learning. This paradigm shift, which began in the 1980s, has been consolidated thanks to the contribution of related disciplines: literature, linguistics, sociolinguistics, sociology, and anthropology. A multidisciplinary approach is therefore necessary to understand these shifting and interdependent concepts.

3.1. What is meant by “culture”?

The concept of “**culture**,” a primarily interdisciplinary subject of study, is highly polysemic. It is this polysemy that explains why questions such as “How can we characterize culture?” or “Where does a culture begin and end?” remain without clear answers. In reality, mobilizing this concept often amounts to essentializing groups, attributing to them an illusory homogeneity, while these boundaries are themselves the product of symbolic and political constructions. This “totalizing” concept of culture has also been widely rejected by anthropology, particularly following the crisis of representation and the emergence of various interpretations to understand the world (Bensa, 2008, p. 326). Should we then abandon the concept? Despite criticisms of its semantic imprecision, culture remains omnipresent in the (FLD).

An alternative to this concept is the concept of “**culturality**” proposed by Martine Abdallah-Pretceille, which is considered more functional than that of “culture,” as it emphasizes contextual practices rather than a fixed cultural essence. It challenges the traditional conception of culture and stresses that the individual must open up to otherness by relying on ethics rather than locking himself into cultural specificities (Abdallah-Pretceille, 2005, p. 40).

Etymologically, the term *culture*, of Roman origin, has its roots in agricultural vocabulary, where it meant “the cultivation of the land.” In his “*Tusculan Disputations*,” Marcus Tullius Cicero suggests a semantic duality: *colere* (“the act of tilling the earth”) was in opposition to *cultus* (“the worship of the sacred”) (Cicero, 45 before Jesus Christ, book II, 12-13). He draws an analogy between the human mind and fertile soil: just as the earth requires cultivation to produce fruit, the mind requires rigorous instruction to achieve its full development.

Culture, beyond its classical conception, gains complexity through modern linguistics, which incorporates extralinguistic factors (gestures, social codes) to rethink its relationship with language. Defined as a “**network**” of symbolically meaningful practices transmitted historically (Geertz, 1973, p. 89), it is illustrated by two complementary perspectives: that of Zellig S. Harris (1969, p. 9), who emphasizes the interdependence between communicative practices and cultural aspects, and that of Peter F. Strawson (1970, p. 32), who stresses the role of context and communication goals. This complexity is reflected in the duality between “**classical culture**”¹ with a capital C (scholarly, humanistic), centered on a canonical heritage (intellectual works, technical knowledge, generational memory); and “**anthropological culture**”², which is broader and more dynamic. The former, often perceived as universal, presents an ethnocentric risk by marginalizing other value systems (Beacco, 2000, p. 119), while the latter encompasses constantly reworked symbolic meanings. Historically, culture in the 16th century was limited to a “**cultivated culture**” (Windmüller, 2011, p. 19), intended to be refined (Demorgon, 2009, p. 19); the contemporary conception of culture, on the other hand, now includes the study of social and territorial impacts (Besse, 1993, p. 42). However, it presents an ethnocentric risk: by posing

as universal, it tends to render marginalized cultural manifestations and multiple value systems invisible (Beacco, 2000, p. 119).

In contrast, this conception is opposed to "mass" or "ordinary" culture. It is described as a set of practices shared collectively within a community, acquired informally, and transmitted between generations (Besse, 2004, p. 42).

Humanist and popular cultures, although interdependent and characteristic of a society, do not exhaust its complexity. The concept of "shared culture" (Galisson, 1988, pp. 325-341) enriches this duality by conceiving it as a fundamental element of the social body and a dynamic system of knowledge circulating between generations. Scholarly culture and shared culture are distinguished by their mode of acquisition: **explicit** for the former, **implicit** for the latter. They manifest themselves through dimensions that are sometimes observable (traditions, habits, techniques) and sometimes symbolic and underlying (values, beliefs). Although distinct, these dimensions intertwine to form the very essence of a community.

In the field of (FLD), culture, with its multiple meanings, is an essential component of language learning (Beacco, 2000, p. 22). It allows us to analyze human experience through structuring dichotomies, such as "culture/civilization" vs. "nature," "universal civilization" vs. "national cultures," "national cultures" vs. "group cultures," and "traditional cultures" vs. "modern/post-industrial cultures."

Every culture, a complex and evolving structure, exists within a context characterized by a multitude of subcultures. It shapes the "way of life" and "way of doing things" of a society through the norms, values, and behaviors of its members (Porcher, 1995, p. 66). This cultural complexity, influenced by a long and rich history, evolves through interactions between humans, nature, and society, forming a world of subjective meanings co-constructed by social relations (Sapir, 1967, p. 96).

On the other hand, recent research in sociology and anthropology rejects the term "culture," which is considered exclusive rather than inclusive (Bayart, cited in Argaud, 2021,

p. 30). The didactics of diversity responds to this with a “humanism of diversity,” structured around the mosaic variation model (Abdallah-Pretceille, 1999, p. 18). This model places cultural diversity within a logic of dynamic complementarity rather than difference, representing societies as evolving “cultural continuums” and invalidating static conceptions.

In summary, the concept of culture, once central to the humanities, is now becoming a challenge due to its very success. It now embodies issues of identity, climate, economics, and politics, and extends to all aspects of society. This expansion makes it a global phenomenon incorporating diverse interpretations, mirroring theories of human activity. Its plasticity transforms it into a **“catch-all”**³ term, sometimes a tool for analysis, sometimes a subject of controversy.

3.2. What is meant by “language”?

Ferdinand de Saussure (1995) defined **“language”** as an autonomous system governed by its own internal rules. He made it a closed order whose components interact structurally. This immanent conception posits the validity of language through its intrinsic signifying structure, independent of practices. Le Petit Robert emphasizes the pragmatic dimension of language and presents it as a conventional system of signs that guarantees the coordination of meanings within a community.

Furthermore, language is a central element of (FLD) as well as of (DLC). Its study goes beyond the strict framework of linguistics: it is enriched by the contributions of the sociology of languages (Bourdieu, 1971), which analyzes the symbolic power relations inscribed in language practices, and of sociolinguistics (Labov, 1976), attentive to dialectal variations and identity dynamics. These complementary disciplines encourage us to transcend a simplistic conception of language as a neutral instrument and to understand it as a simultaneously structured and dynamic phenomenon shaped by historical, social, and cultural challenges.

In language teaching (LT), language is an abstract semiotic structure of signs (Cuq & Gruca, 2003, p. 78). Its units (phonemes, morphemes, lexemes) can be analyzed individually

or globally, forming the basis for the diversity of subfields — phonetics, syntax, semantics — each of which explores a specific dimension of the system. Language teaching conceives of language simultaneously as an object of teaching and a synthesis of a culturally rooted idiom (Cuq, 2003, p. 148), revealing its inherent duality (ibid., p. 24):

- **“Individual”**: because each speaker builds his or her own language through expressive choices (registers, style, neologisms), thus shaping his or her linguistic identity;
- **“Social”**: because language is built on the basis of collective norms that make it a tool for mediation and a support for social cohesion.

This friction between individual expression and collective restrictions highlights the central function of language: to mediate the relationship between the individual and the community.

Secondly, Defays and Deltour (2003, pp. 23-25) identify six major roles: the communicative role (conveying information), the social role (creating and maintaining relationships), the heuristic role (discovering and understanding the world and oneself), the symbolic role (formulating abstract ideas and stimulating creativity), the aesthetic-ludic role (appreciating the beauty of language and playing with words), and the cultural role (developed below).

3.2.1. The cultural facet of language

Languages, Languages, which Pierre-Henri Tavoillot describes as “places of memory,” are essential vectors of history and identity in societies. They preserve culture, values, and human essence, and act as reservoirs of knowledge and meaning (Henri Lefebvre, 1966). Neglecting foreign language learning is therefore tantamount to a form of linguistic, cultural, and moral Alzheimer's. Consequently, language can also be viewed from two perspectives :

- **Subjectively**, language offers the individual access to culture, acting as a reflection of identity and a cultural revealer (Korkut, 2004, p. 7);

- **Objectively**, it organizes social reality and orients our vision of the world. This connotative structure of language makes culture palpable and experienced in common (Michaud & Marc, 1981, p. 146).

Language, both a product and a shaper of culture (Porcher, 1995, p. 53), embodies a “way of life” and channels collective memory. This heritage, in constant adaptation, forms the basis of generational cohesion and historical continuity. Language acts as a tool for cultural action, the ultimate goal of which is cultural mastery (Galisson & Puren, 1999, p. 31), making immersion in its cultural dimensions essential for any language learning.

3.3. What do we mean by “civilization”?

The term “**civilization**” comes from the Latin *civilis* (“relating to civil affairs”). Initially synonymous with refinement, its semantic evolution is disputed: introduced in 1734, it was first used to describe the elitist practices of the French aristocracy, who associated the concept of “civilization” with the adjectives ‘polite’ and “cultured “. This concept was structured around the opposition between the “*progress of the Enlightenment*” and “barbarism” (Michaud & Marc, 1981, p. 19). France, setting itself up as the leader of this “civilizing mission,” imposed its language, norms, and values on colonized territories, following the example of European empires (Kok-Escalé, 1998, p. 174). This hierarchical vision legitimized a division between “advanced” societies and “backward” peoples (De Carlo, 1998, pp. 13-14).

In addition, the concept refers to a cultural reality that encompasses both material aspects (techniques, artifacts) and immaterial aspects (representations, values). From 1830 onwards, its use in the plural became widespread to refer to historical societies (e.g., Greek, Roman) or contemporary societies (e.g., Indian). In short, civilization is defined as a synthesis of shared traits — religious, moral, aesthetic, scientific, and technological — whose analysis requires an interdisciplinary approach (Le Petit Robert, 2004).

3.3.1. Civilization and culture: clarifying conceptual ambiguities

While numerous studies (Coste, 1984; Beacco, 1990; Galisson, 1987-1989) deal with the history of teaching French as a foreign language, the cultural dimension often remains marginalized. However, Vincent (2007, pp. 26-27) highlights the existence of major works dedicated to French civilization, such as Jean-Pierre Fichou's *L'enseignement des civilisations* (1979) and André Reboullet's *L'enseignement de la civilisation française* (1973). In (D.FFL), the concepts of “civilization” and “culture” refer to distinct teaching content. François Pérusse (2010) and Guy Rocher (1992) establish a distinction based on geographical scope and temporal dimension: “civilization” refers to vast historical and geographical entities (e.g., Eastern, Roman), while “culture” refers to ways of life linked to a limited space (e.g., Berber, local). While civilization encompasses culture, its all-encompassing nature makes it a polymorphic and complex concept.

4. The cultural approach in FLE reference methodologies

The importance of culture in language learning (FLE) goes beyond pedagogical issues to touch on ideology: is language simply a tool for communication or a vehicle for cultural understanding?

Furthermore, history reveals enduring tensions in the teaching of languages and literature, which oscillate between opposing poles: authenticity vs. fabrication, integration vs. exclusion, acceptance vs. resistance.

Methodological advances and the validation of a (DLC) now enable us to design a curriculum based on the cultural approach in (D.FFL) more effectively (Windmüller, 2015, p. 48). Our analysis of this development is based on research by Christian Puren (1988), enriched by contributions from Castellotti and Debono (2018).

4.1. Classical methodology: language as a vehicle for cultural transmission

The “**traditional methodology**” (T.M), inspired by the teaching of Latin and Greek, focuses on grammar and translation, aiming both at language acquisition and the dissemination of a universal, intellectual, and moral culture. Literary texts dominate, and the cultural approach permeates methods, curricula, and teacher training.

Since the 18th century, the French language, associated with a “civilizing mission,” has promoted its culture mainly through its national literature (Porcher, 1986, p. 47). From the middle of that century onwards, language teaching shifted towards practical objectives with “traditional courses with practical objectives” (TCPO). However, the “Grammar-Translation” method, although effective for training translators, was criticized by H. Besse for its weaknesses, notably the use of artificial sentences and limited grammatical skills.

At the end of the 19th century, the (TCPO) competed with the (T.M) and François Gouin's series method. By adopting a direct methodology, these courses gradually reduced the central place of literature in language teaching.

4.2. 4.2. Direct methodology: primacy of language or literature?

At the end of the 19th century, the “**Direct Method**” (DM) broke new ground by prioritizing oral skills and student-centered teaching, which meant writing was just seen as a way to write down what was said.

In fact, educators feared that studying literature would weaken students' written expression and comprehension, compromising the acquisition of sufficient language skills. Official guidelines therefore recommended separating language and literature. The teaching of civilization, introduced relatively late, aimed to transmit a “cultural repertoire” (Benadava, 1982, p. 34), focusing on the history, geography, art, and daily life of native speakers. Today, it is divided into two parts: the material and spiritual production of a nation, and the mindset that should be transmitted.

In 1902, the (T.M.F.L) became an economic, political, and strategic issue. Teacher training improved, specialized journals emerged, and FLE teaching was born. Although the (D.M) never supplanted the traditional method, its principles — especially oral ones — inspired the “active methodology.” Its decline can be explained by internal and external factors.

4.3. Active methodology: the aesthetics of raw material

The impact of World War I fostered a return to traditional values, including in the (T.M.F.L) Between 1925 and 1969, the “**Active Methodology**” (A.M) — also known as eclectic, mixed, or oral — was introduced. Rejecting any single approach, it skillfully combined traditional techniques and the fundamental principles of the D.M. Its promoters attributed a threefold objective to it — cultural, educational, and practical — with a marked priority given to “oral expression.”

Alongside the adoption of the active methodology, the 1925 guidelines emphasized the importance of literary language, leading to textbooks focused on cultural objectives. Pedagogically innovative, this method aimed to make students active participants in their own learning by stimulating their intrinsic motivation, collaborative work, and self-assessment. Teachers were no longer simply transmitters of knowledge, but facilitators between learners and knowledge.

From 1920 to 1960, language teaching in France followed a mixed approach: vocabulary in the first cycle, cultural documents in the second. The model, made official by the directive of December 1, 1950, also marked its end.

4.4. Audio-oral methodology: cultural exclusion

Introduced in the United States in 1940 and then in Europe in the 1960s, “**Audio-Oral Methods**” (A.O.M) marked the advent of applied linguistics as an autonomous discipline. Born out of military needs during World War II — notably through Bloomfield's “army method”— they combined linguistic structuralism and behavioral psychology. The emphasis was on intensive repetition in the laboratory, at the expense of meaning, in order to assimilate grammatical structures through model dialogues. Oral communication and syntactic systematization became priorities. Many teachers persist with old methods, such as Mauger's scholarly literary textbook (1957).

Nevertheless, the (A.O.M) has been criticized for its limited transferability and effectiveness restricted to elementary levels, with its activities becoming monotonous. Chomsky's generative grammar criticized Bloomfieldian structuralism for its focus on surface

phenomena. Although influential since the 1960s, this linguistics had no methodological impact in France, where no audio-oral FLE textbooks were published. "Applied linguistic expression" then became synonymous with language teaching. Ultimately, The methodological change favored pragmatic objectives and spoken language, to the detriment of training and writing. Literary education followed this trend, reflected in the erosion of culture and writing in the SGAV method.

4.5. The SGAV methodology: cultural omission

Developed in the 1950s by Petar Guberina and Paul Rivenc, the "**Global Audio-Visible Structuring Method**" (SGAV) method is based on a structural psycho-pedagogical model that integrates all elements of communication (verbal, nonverbal, individual, and social). Its main objective is the acquisition of practical skills in everyday communication through the simultaneous development of the four language skills.

Audiovisual methodology (AVM) is a linguistics of speech in context, which derives its coherence from the combined use of images and sound (Besse, 1985, p. 43). Teachers used teaching aids (images, songs, recordings) to illustrate civilization without any direct educational intent. Under the influence of structuralism, M.AV favored spoken language and relegated writing and literature to the background, considering them elitist. Culture was absent from the early stages of learning. It was only introduced at advanced levels through literature to explore national history, which widened the gap between language and culture.

The focus on language in the 1960s and 1970s left little room for teaching civilization, although it was implicitly present in methods such as *Voix et Images de France* (1960) and *La France en direct* (1971). Nevertheless, Christine Tagliante (2006, p. 54) criticizes this methodology: students excel at structural exercises but cannot apply them in real-life situations. Despite criticism (Puren, 198; Cuq & Gruca, 2003), SGAV.M was used from 1975 to 1980 before being replaced by the communicative approach, which focused on functionalism, cognitivism, autonomy, and learner-centeredness.

4.6. The communicative approach: culture at the heart of communication

In France in the 1970s, the Functional-Notional Approach evolved into the “**Communicative Approach**” (C.A) in the 1980s. This methodological revolution arose in response to the limitations of structural and situational methods, even as Chomsky's generative grammar dominated in the United States. The (C.A) introduced the pedagogical objective of “**communicative competence**,” which goes beyond mastery of linguistic code. It incorporates psychosocial, sociological, and cultural norms for appropriate language use. This approach, which considers verbal and nonverbal communication to be essential rather than grammatical knowledge alone, emphasizes the practical development of the four skills in context. For cognitivists, learning is a creative process. The teacher acts as a facilitator who uses authentic materials (articles, broadcasts, maps, etc.). These materials offer privileged access to the culture of the target language and, when integrated into a coherent pedagogical approach, enable students to understand the target society.

In the 1980s, anthropology imposed the teaching of foreign civilizations. Galisson (1986) asserted the inseparability of language and culture, leading to the creation of “DLC” (Didactique des Langues et des Cultures, or Language and Culture Teaching). Language is like an “**iceberg**”: the visible part (grammar, vocabulary) hides essential cultural foundations. The educational objective was therefore to focus on mastering communication strategies and cultural data in the classroom, without excluding the mother tongue and translation. Mistakes are considered inevitable.

However, Daniel Coste highlights the shortcomings of radical functionalism, which conceives of an ideal audience and teachers without considering material constraints and restrictive curricula. Educationalists thus favor authentic documents over literary texts, which are considered irrelevant to language practice. Language and literature are interdependent: literature arises from the creative and subjective use of language. Unfortunately, language teaching, which often focuses on universal pragmatic norms, neglects this specificity.

The functional approach, which has been dominant in France since the 1970s, brought about major changes with the launch of the *Sans Frontières* course in 1983 and *Nouveau Sans Frontières I* in 1988. It thus restored the value of writing. Finally, since the

2000s, a new methodological approach has been added to the (C.A), placing greater emphasis on the cultural aspect of language learning.

4.7. The action perspective: acting for co-culture

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, 2001) introduces an **“Actional Perspective”** (A.P) focused on interaction and task completion. It promotes the transition from learner to “social actor,” emphasizing the development of multilingual and multicultural skills. While the (C.A) focuses on the individual learner, the (A.P) emphasizes group collaboration and collective projects. The complexity of teaching/learning lies in the shift from acting on others to acting with others (Puren, 2006, p. 37). The (P.A) offers a comprehensive assessment framework that integrates linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic dimensions. As a result, the CEFR provides a comprehensive basis for assessing oral competence, taking into account linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic dimensions. The (P.A) links language to action, taking into account the cognitive, affective, and volitional skills of the learner (ibid., p. 15). It promotes the creation of a **“co-culture”** for interacting with native and non-native speakers.

Although the CEFR emphasizes the importance of the cultural dimension, it does not provide clear guidelines for its assessment. Literary texts, whose status remains unclear, are a source of pedagogical disagreement. Culture, although reintegrated, remains subordinate to linguistic priorities and the hegemony of communicative competence. While action-oriented and communicative approaches have been innovative, their limitations now call for **“methodological eclecticism”**.

5. To take into account extreme complexity

Learning a foreign language and culture confronts learners with the radical otherness of the Other and invites them to explore multiple identities, which requires understanding the complexity of both the concept of “language-culture” and the learner themselves.

5.1. Take into account the complexity of the “language-culture” dyad

The “**language-culture**” dichotomy, which has been central since the 1980s, questions their interdependence in learning: should language be taught through culture, or vice versa? It challenges the purely linguistic view. It is therefore important to clearly define these terms to avoid any confusion:

The idea of a link between language and thought is not new. As early as the 18th century, Wilhelm Von Humboldt argued that each language carries a “worldview” (Weltbild) that shapes the thinking of its speakers. This conception is similar to that of the “genius of language,” a concept from the Enlightenment that is inseparable from the “genius of the nation”.

According to Charaudeau (1990, p. 49), “discourse” and “culture” are closely linked. Culture does not reside in the structure of language, but in its social use (narration, persuasion, etc.), which conveys the values and beliefs of a community. Thus, language and culture are inseparable. This relationship has two key dimensions:

- Practical: Integrating language into its broader sociocultural context broadens the linguistic framework.
- Methodological: Teachers must use the language-culture link as a teaching tool,

A three-dimensional analysis is proposed to better grasp this deeper relationship (Lévi-Strauss, 1958, p. 78):

1. Language is a “**product of everyday culture**”: shaped by society, it reflects its values and traditions;
2. Language is an “**essential component**,” ensuring the transmission of knowledge from generation to generation;
3. Language constitutes an “**indispensable condition**” for culture as such, as it facilitates collective expression and thought.

Galisson (1987, 1991), a pioneer of “**lexiculture**,” defines words with shared cultural connotations as expressions that carry cultural undertones understood by native speakers. Galisson (1987, 1991), a precursor of “lexiculture,” describes words with shared cultural connotations as expressions carrying meanings that are widely understood by native speakers. This innovative discipline integrates culture through the lexicon (Galisson & Puren, 1999, p. 96), examining living culture rather than scholarly culture. By revealing the implicit meanings of a language-culture, these connotations reinforce group solidarity while potentially marginalizing the uninitiated. The “language-culture” pairing illustrates the impossibility of separating these concepts and their epistemological equality. This interdependence underpins all modern language teaching (Abdallah-Pretceille, 1983, p. 40), as language learning intrinsically involves cultural immersion (Byram, 1992, p. 67).

Ultimately, language, beyond its utilitarian role, embodies and transmits the culture that shapes it. This richness, essential and not incidental, constitutes the strength of the Francophonie.

5.2. Take into account the learner's complexity

Active teaching methods place the learner at the heart of their learning through experience and social interaction. Constructivism (Piaget) emphasizes the individual construction of knowledge, while socioconstructivism (Vygotsky) emphasizes the role of social context. Together, they aim to achieve sustainable and motivating learning. Indeed, learning is an interactive and multidimensional process (Bruner, 1996, p. 38), emerging from the interaction of cognitive (e.g., problem solving), affective (e.g., motivation), and social (e.g., collaboration) dimensions. Its success depends less on teaching methods than on the quality of the relational environment (Stevick, 1980, p. 4). These authors jointly emphasize the central role of interpersonal relationships, motivation, and self-esteem in learner engagement. In teaching, the study of cultural interactions is essential (Argaud, 2021, p. 6); indeed, recognizing the learner's culture of origin, which acts as a filter, is crucial for developing mutual understanding (Zarate, 1986, p. 7).

In short, (DLC) creates tension: it mobilizes multiple identities while confronting learners with the otherness of the foreign language. Learners oscillate between attraction and rejection of the “language-culture” conveyed by the school. The challenge is to use the learner's primary culture as a criterion for assessing the relevance of the target culture.

6. Methodological issues in teaching target culture: between theoretical principles and practical challenges

Effective teaching of target culture faces major challenges (methods, content, language/culture integration, assessment). To address these challenges, it must be based on active teaching methods and a solid theoretical framework. The goal is to develop cultural competence, which is inseparable from linguistic and communicative skills for successful communication. Thus, learning a foreign language inherently requires the integrated teaching of culture and language (Beacco, 2000), without superimposing one on the other.

The cultural approach, centered on the human being, and its “cultural competence,” defined as the ability to decipher the codes and networks of meaning of a community (Zarate, 1986, p. 26; Moirand, 1982, p. 20), are at the heart of learning. It integrates linguistic, psychosocial, emotional, and identity dimensions (Holec, 1988). Thus, teaching French as a foreign language from a communicative perspective (Byram, 1992, p. 89) requires cultural immersion in order to achieve authentic communicative competence, as language is inseparable from its socio-cultural codes (Windmüller, 2011, p. 23).

Nevertheless, Methods for learning cultural competence, considered rudimentary due to a lack of effective approaches, are developing late (Porcher, 1988, p. 98). Their teaching, which is underestimated, remains in its infancy. A paradox then emerges: despite methodological eclecticism, the transmission of communicative and cultural skills lacks pedagogical coherence despite its need for specific strategies (Puren, 1993, chapter 1.1.3., pp.15-17). This paradox arises from an excess of abstract rationalism, where strengthening methodological consistency paradoxically hinders the transmission of skills.

The analysis of pedagogical approaches in FFL reveals several structural and practical challenges:

- Insufficient training and inadequate formalization of cultural approaches:
- Lack of clear theoretical orientation and large-scale experimental research;
- Persistent methodological gaps.
- Considerable burden on teachers (searching for authentic materials, designing activities);
- Creative pedagogical practices but poorly disseminated;
- Errors in procedures and evaluation.

In summary, faced with these persistent challenges — stereotypes, fragmented approaches, divergent expectations — a redesign of pedagogical interventions is imperative, which the following section addresses.

7. Define intervention methods and pedagogical objectives

In response to these findings, here are some didactic and pedagogical intervention strategies:

1. **"Contextualization"**: teaching must mobilize learners' knowledge, prioritize authentic interactions and integrate knowledge within its specific context (Jean-Claude Beacco). Galisson (1994) emphasizes the ineffectiveness of context-free methodology;
2. **"Logic of variation"** (Christian Puren, 1993): revise epistemological principles in didactics, move beyond eclecticism to adopt coherent pedagogical strategies;
3. **"Managing complexity"** through a "paradigmatic reform" centered on knowledge articulation (Morin, 1997, p. 6). DLC transcends theory-practice through the notion of "model"⁴;

4. **"Holistic approach"**: integrate culture to overcome educational crises by making education a bridge between tradition and innovation (Bruner, 1996, p. 6);

5. **"Structured pedagogy"** (rigor, culture, authentic and digital supports) with intercultural approaches, because "it is in interaction with the other that identity is forged" (Zarate, 186, cited by Chaves et al., 2013, p. 19).

In brief, optimizing DLC requires the integration of cultural competence and intercultural discovery via a collaborative theoretical-practical approach, where the active involvement of the teacher-learner pair is fundamental.

8. The Teacher-Learner Partnership: Towards Transformed Roles

The classroom becomes a space for dialogue and tolerance, dedicated to mutual exploration of oneself and others (Tardieu, 2001, p. 334). Puren (2005) sees this as a "co-cultural" process that goes beyond the simple discovery of otherness to establish lasting collaborative work. Based on co-construction, this process establishes teachers and learners as partners within a "cultural network" rooted in shared "representations".

Teachers, architects of the "language-culture" duality, play a crucial role as cultural transmitters and intercultural intermediaries. Through their teaching choices, they shape learners' perceptions and cultivate a holistic and authentic understanding of the target culture, which goes beyond stereotypes to inspire a desire to learn.

Finally, the traditional model of the "teacher" has given way to an interactive method where the educator becomes a guide, mediator, and collaborator. Learners, who are tech-savvy actors in their own learning, embrace digital methods and steer their own learning by questioning their relationship to knowledge, authority, and values. Teaching or learning French as a foreign language today means rising to the challenges of a changing world in a spirit of mutual support.

In conclusion

Expressing oneself in French does not in itself guarantee a different view of the world. That is why, in a context of linguistic competition, our role as teachers is to bring a foreign “language-culture” to life. It is a question of going beyond the status of a utilitarian tool and demonstrating that language is an otherness to be explored. It is this ambition that drives us to build a high-quality education system rooted in a reflective cross-disciplinary approach (DLC). This vision is in line with that of experts such as Beaudoin (2006) and Leroux (2005), who affirm the importance of cultural education for any effective education system.

As researchers, our vision of education aligns with that of Bernard Charlot, who describes it in a conference⁵ *EDUCATION AND CULTURES* as a process of humanization, socialization, and singularization through the appropriation of culture. Humanizing through signs, socializing through cultural integration, it brings about singularization by transforming the social into the personal. This is the perspective behind our future research project: “Multimodal culture: traveling with VIDEOCAST and seeing the world differently.” This approach responds to contemporary imperatives and the profile of the tech-savvy learner of the 21st century, an actor evolving in a hybrid ecosystem that is both individualized and collaborative. We plan to develop this idea further in a future publication.

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Notes :

The expression “**civilization**,” present since classical methodology, lasted until the 1970s-¹ 80s (Windmüller, 2011, p. 19). “**Culture (capitalized)** is associated with taste formation, while in language didactics, **culture**” (lower-case) has now supplanted both these notions (Bertocchini & Costanzo, 2008, p. 145).

“Anthropological culture” is characterized by three features: it is *transversal* (shared by the ² majority of a group), *tacit* and *implicit* (acquired unconsciously), and *non-valuing* (its possession does not hierarchize group members) (Gohard Radenkovic, cited by Cuq & Gruca, 2005, p. 87).

The definition of “culture” proposed by Kaplan and Hamers (1972), quoted by Byram ³ (1992, p. 111).

⁴The model developed by Puren (2014, p. 431) over the last ten years or so integrates five fundamental dimensions: theoretical, epistemological, praxeological, ideological, and deontological. The epistemological center of language didactics (DDL) is located in an intermediate space, “modeling,” which privileges the process rather than the opposition between theory and practice.

⁵One of the four keynote addresses at the first World Education Forum in Porto Alegre, it was delivered in Portuguese on October 26, 2001. It was subsequently published in French (V.E.I., n° 129, June 2002), as well as in English, Italian, and Greek.