



Digital teaching of Nora Aceval's tales: Towards raising awareness of universal values
L'enseignement numérique des contes de Nora Aceval : vers la sensibilisation aux valeurs universelles

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Abstract .

The study aims to reflect on the way in which digital tools contribute to intercultural awareness and the training of skills of decentering and openness to the "Other", in the field of French language teaching. Considering that fact, we tried to create intercultural dynamics, by encouraging university learners to think about cultural diversity through the study of stories. Nora Aceval's online stories were primarily used to encourage students to identify various universal values and explore the plural identity of the Spanish-Algerian storyteller. The results of the experiment underscore the effectiveness

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1. Introduction

This article aims to explore the implications of using digital technology in teaching and learning the French language. The focus will be on online stories, which are designed to encourage learners to respect universal values and develop their intercultural skills. First, we will reflect on intercultural awareness strategies. Then, we will examine the use of information and communication technologies in university-level teaching, specifically in relation to intercultural dimensions. Finally, we will study the plural identity of Nora Aceval through her online tales

This article reflects on whether and under what conditions digital tools can be integrated to raise intercultural awareness in the language classroom. Our objective is to explore the possibility of incorporating the intercultural dimension into university-level French as a Foreign Language (FLE) courses through Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). We view the language classroom as an environment conducive to communication, exchange between learners, and the facilitation of interactions. (Barbot, 2010, p14).

In an intercultural approach, the latter should no longer be considered as representatives of their own cultures, but as individuals who are both singular and universal, carrying diverse experiences. We used Nora Aceval's online stories to encourage learners to detect the various universal values but also to study the plural identity of the storyteller of Spanish-Algerian origins.

2. Intercultural Awareness in a Foreign Language Class

Each language teacher encounters the diverse origins, profiles, experiences, and expectations of their learners. This diversity can be leveraged to discover otherness and promote decentering and the co-construction of plural identity through the exchange of different perspectives. These different positions often stem from various implicit representations that the learner has not actively considered. Sharing these representations (such as those of the other or the foreign language) can foster debates and initiate verbal interactions, through which learners realize the differing perspectives among their peers. Consequently, they may be encouraged to modify their own representations and gradually develop intercultural competence so as A. Cain points out (1995:24):

«Observation of student production, oral or written, in classroom practice reveals both the tenacious existence of preconceived ideas and the absence of relevant

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knowledge concerning the countries whose language students are learning». It is important to update representations, to raise awareness of them, with the dual aim of, on the one hand, removing their evidentiary value and deconstructing them in order to put them in their rightful place, and on the other hand, to relativize and introduce other ways of understanding the world which are part of a rational approach. This is to enable the most accurate construction of knowledge possible.

On a didactic level, the acquisition of intercultural competence is based on the development of capacities for understanding (of the other and indirectly of oneself), reflection, decentering and relativization. In this respect, the language teacher should take into consideration that «all the work of socializing an individual in his community leads him to ignore that» what goes without saying" is, in fact, an arbitrary construction of the world, a coherent but not universal whole" (Zarate, 1986, p 24). In other words, an individual's beliefs are generally considered self-evident by him; it would be difficult for him to believe that they are not so obvious to someone else. Hence the need for decentering works likely to allow the individual to open up to other visions of the world.

As a didactician in the field of intercultural training, raising learners' awareness of universal values has always been a central axis of our research. We carried out action research by choosing as an audience fifty students from El Tarf University in preparation for a Degree in FLE teaching and which resulted in the production of astonishment journals, in response to a reflection on the other and its "various diversities" (Dervin, 2008, p 96) and situations of cultural discomfort (Byram & Zarate, 1998) caused by the exploitation of authentic documents so-called "triggers". This work, which is part of action research, poses the problem of knowing how to encourage these learners to consider individuals as both singular and universal? (Abdallah-Preteille, 2003, p 21), to decenter themselves and to be aware of the filters, that influence and hinder their relationship with others. In this article, we present our motivations regarding the use of online stories and their contributions to the process of teaching the French language.

3. Use of digital tools for intercultural teaching of French

As part of the teaching of French as a foreign language (FLE), to promote the intercultural dimension, traditional use is made of the school textbook which, to the extent that its design is carried out from an intercultural angle, allows access to

sociological and very particular anthropological ones. But, given that in the Algerian university setting, teachers do not use manuals or educational booklets, we have chosen the use of authentic documents to raise students' awareness of the notion of otherness and lead them to think about the complexity of human relationships and intercultural communication.

The latter are defined by several didacticians as being written, audio or audiovisual documents initially intended for native speakers but which the teacher collects to use in activities that he or she will offer in class. For our part, we take the definition proposed by Jean-Pierre Cuq (2003, p 29) who considers that the term authentic document “applies to any message developed by French speakers for French speakers for the purposes of real communication: it designates therefore everything that is not originally designed for the classroom. This document is said to be authentic because it was not designed for educational purposes but for communicative purposes. It is offered to learners, as it is, that is to say in its original state.

The authentic document refers to an abundance of well-defined genres and a very diverse set of communication situations: written, oral, iconic and audiovisual texts, which cover the entire range of productions of daily life, administrative, media, cultural, professional, etc. (Cuq and Gruca, 2005). These are therefore newspaper articles, advertising slogans, videos or other documents of daily life. According to Mangenot and Louveau (2006, p 53) authentic materials must be used in such a way that the communicative character of the document is not altered: “The authentic document only has meaning when inserted into the framework of a precise and coherent program and if it is exploited in its intrinsic qualities.”

In language classes, learners are often confronted with a standardized language, with correct French and sometimes even with a sustained language level. However, French is also used spontaneously, non-formally; French speakers can also speak hesitantly, by taking pauses, by abbreviating, by resorting to unnecessary repetitions, by paraphrases, by using different language registers. As a result, and as in all languages, French is a language that is not completely homogeneous but variable, which authentic documents present very well when it comes to oral and/or visual documents.

Since the advent of the communicative approach, emphasis has been placed on the use of authentic texts and on the speech acts which characterize everyday communication. This advantage given to speech acts goes hand in hand with the selection of sociocultural themes linked to the everyday life experiences of ordinary people. Based on the principle that teaching to communicate in a foreign language amounts to teaching said language in its social dimension, language teachers work to

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help their learners develop an ability to interpret another environment in which this language is practiced.

Language teaching focuses not on the accumulation of purely linguistic knowledge, but rather on the acquisition of skills for an effective use of a foreign language in real situations. Hence, the authentic documents used feature characters that use various registers of language and embody very varied social roles.

Furthermore, in the activities and exercises offered in language classes, it is no longer a matter of acquiring mechanically a set of given forms but rather studying statements to which a meaning can be associated. Finally, giving priority to meaning implies that we integrate complex phenomena into a teaching program, such as the implicit, for example, present in any language. Linguistic knowledge and cultural elements are therefore integrated in the language teaching/learning process.

By allowing language learners to share the same cultural objects as native speakers, authentic documents therefore add realism and a dynamic vision of the culture of the target country. :

“The foreign learner is confronted with the same cultural objects as the native French speaker, whatever their origin; similarly, the educational support, by including non-academic products, implies a staging of cultural facts which increases veracity and credibility” (Zarate, 1986, p 76)

The use of the Internet seems very judicious because this tool is an inexhaustible source of varied authentic documents, accessible throughout the world: it offers both authentic audio and written documents. We, for our part, tried to diversify our choice, by not limiting ourselves to texts, but also by using sound and audio-visual documents downloaded from the internet. In what follows, we present the nature of the selected documents, firstly to highlight their relevance as well as their diversity. We will return, in a second step, to the use of stories in class.

We used authentic written documents, videos and audio tapes. The aim was to work, beyond the intercultural objective, on the four skills, namely oral comprehension/production and written comprehension/production.

3.1. Video in language class

Many Algerian FLE teachers have undoubtedly confronted video in their classes at some point in their career with a variable level of mastery and by experimenting through various trials and errors, thus causing strong motivation or, on the contrary, discouragement. But if some remain rather reluctant to use it, it is nevertheless becoming more and more difficult to ignore it in current educational practices, in environments where it is present daily in the source culture. Indeed, it is an integral

part of culture for extremely diverse purposes (informing, entertaining, transmitting knowledge, etc.).

Based on this data, we wondered about how to “bring a little French-speaking authenticity” to the language classroom, while seeking to both draw students' attention to the subtlety of human relationships, that the documents are culturally relevant for them, and above all to encourage them to work on their understanding and production both orally and in writing: this is precisely where the video medium comes into play.

If we add to this ambitious program the very easy access to all types of French-speaking videos on the Internet (as well as numerous operating methodologies and other educational sheets), it is indeed no longer possible to pretend too much great difficulty in dealing with the facts of interaction in oral language, accents and prosody, kinesics and proxemics as well as culture-specific behaviors with learners. One of the greatest assets of video documents is undoubtedly their diversity, which corresponds to the variety of activities, image languages specific to each genre but also the variety of speech situations as well as the variety of themes addressed.

3.2. The audio document

As a speaking teacher at the University of El Tarf, we are aware that beyond purely linguistic work, the use of soundtracks and audiovisual recordings also refers to pragmatic objectives. Since Algerian students registered in an LMD system are likely to continue their studies in France or to enroll in French Cultural Centers in Algeria. It seems interesting to us to familiarize them with the procedure for oral comprehension exams and assessments (DELF, DALF, TCF and TEF) which precisely contain authentic audio and audiovisual documents.

We used audio recordings to work on oral comprehension, but this type of document is not used exclusively to assess oral comprehension. It contains a lot of sound clues and factual content that draws on prior knowledge, the imagination, and cultural knowledge. The audio document can serve as a basis for various activities that stimulate creativity, oral and written production (oral expression before listening, note-taking exercise, reproduction after memorization, etc.).

3.3. The Intercultural Workshop

We often hear about writing and/or reading workshop. However, the intercultural workshop does not feature in Algerian university curricula or in official teaching guidelines. However, according to Sourisseau (2009) this type of workshop constitutes a real space-time of intercultural exchange in class which allows you to discover the cultural context of the other, the values and behaviors that result from it,

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and to improve your linguistic competence in the language. Foreign and prepare learners to successfully manage their intercultural communications.

It is interesting to offer this type of workshop, more particularly within the French Department in which we operate because the presence of Arabic-speaking and Berber-speaking students can constitute a favorable environment for linguistic, cultural and even intercultural exchange. In this we agree with Sourisseau's vision who considers the intercultural workshop as a tool with a triple interest (linguistic, cultural and relational) allowing one to open up to others, to overcome prejudices and to be confronted with other worldviews. The teacher can play the role of cultural mediator in this type of activity and encourage learners to establish interpersonal relationships and thus acquire the soft skills necessary for the acquisition of intercultural skills.

To do this, ICT makes it possible, through various supports (soundtracks, videos, blogs and cyber-journals), to consider the teaching/learning of languages as spaces for opening up exchanges and interactions (see the Tandem and Cultura programs).

3.4. Introduction to citizen media practice

Increased interaction between societies, the free flow of information and cultural interdependence are consequences of globalization. Communication across cultural differences constitutes, in this sense, one of the major challenges of the contemporary world. The media therefore constitute a means of mediation to encourage global awareness. The launch of the Dialogue between civilizations in 2001 gave rise to a new paradigm in international exchanges in which the notion of dialogue represents a priority principle in relations between peoples. This leads us to think about common ethical standards to confront the threats to peace and security.

Needless to say, the use of information and communication to allow different societies to have a space to express themselves freely, according to their own rules, is of crucial importance in advancing mutual understanding between peoples and between cultures. Online media can facilitate this intercultural dialogue. By encouraging people to think about preconceived ideas about the many “others” in our world, the media can promote tolerance, acceptance of difference and value diversity as a source of understanding.

However, many stereotypes linked to the image of the Other are now conveyed by the media (Boyer, 2008), both nationally and internationally. This is why it seems important to us to introduce students to the critical and distanced reading of their content and to the knowledge of media forms in order to be able to be sufficiently

informed and develop research, selection and analysis skills, interpretation of information, as well as evaluation of sources and content.

We can refer, for example, to the work of the members of the GRAAL2 which encourages an understanding of the media, networks and information phenomena in all of their economic, societal, technical and even ethical dimensions and this in different areas such as cinema (Régis Wargnier, Youssef Chahine), the written press (Study of the debate on Maastricht) or photography (The collections of Charcot and Bertillon).

Finally, it seems to us that intercultural training is all the more necessary given current international events characterized by terrorism and ideological extremism, which contributes to the emergence of stereotypes hostile to radical alterity.

We have chosen to make our learners aware of two essential notions in any intercultural training, namely: plural identity and universal values. Our choice therefore fell on a French-speaking storyteller of Spanish-Algerian origins named Nora Aceval who presents an anthology of tales and myths online, which transcend linguistic and cultural borders.

4. The plural identity of Nora Aceval

She is a contemporary storyteller born in 1953, to a father of Spanish origin and an Algerian mother, in the Ouled Sidi Khaled tribe in Tousnina in the western Algerian highlands. A land rich in imagination, where transhumant nomads leave indelible traces of their passages through stories that are passed down from generation to generation. Nora Aceval enjoys a plural identity because her identity is mixed by Spanish and Algerian origins but also by French culture since she has lived for more than twenty-four years in France, where she presented a master's degree in modern literature on the tales of Algerian nomads, and goes back and forth to Algeria. The meeting of these cultural universes, her love of oral tradition, the Arabic words that she subtly mixed with French; all this produces a sublime mixture, a particularly interesting storytelling space for any FLE teacher.

The tales of this modern author steeped in traditions seem to be rich tools that reflect universal values and human morals and can be exploited in the teaching of the French language. As an example, we can cite some published tales: *Les babouches d'Abou Kassem* (Seuil jeunesse, 2007) or *Le Prince Tisserand: An oriental tale* (Editions du Sorbier, 2007), *Le loup et la colombe* (Seuil, 2008) with Michel Galvin or *At the Origins of the World* written as a collection of traditional tales from around the world. These tales offer several potentialities for intercultural exploitation through the discovery of diverse cultures while motivating learners through stories of escape, fantastic imaginations, thrills of small children or crazy legends, etc. The story

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therefore allows us to practice both oral and written comprehension as well as the learning of new visions of the world and popular wisdom.

5. Experimentation: study of the tale in language class “The man who didn't want to die”

In what follows, we propose to explore an example of the educational use of storytelling with an intercultural aim in a language class. To introduce our learners to the practices of universal values in their daily lives and the value of human life, we chose the story “The man who did not want to die” taken from a collection by Nora Aceval entitled *The Tales of the Djebel Love* is composed of around fifteen tales which are part of the imagination of the highlands of south-west Algeria, where ogres and humans, jinns and angels, sultans and nomads, metamorphoses and death are customary.

This last element was studied by our learners to understand the value of human life across different languages-cultures.

This story is presented by Aceval in a digital version in the form of a video on YouTube so learners have easy access to this video even outside the class, which facilitates their independent work. It tells the story of a man in search of a country without a cemetery, who travels the world from one country to another. He looked for the cemetery and as soon as he found it, he fled much further until he came to a country without a cemetery and where death did not exist. He settled there and married his boss's daughter and even had an adorable son with her. Everything was going well until by a curious coincidence the man refusing to die discovered that he lived in a family of cannibals and that was the reason why there was no cemetery.

Horrified, he then decides to run away, to leave this village of monsters, taking what he has most precious: his son. Paradoxically, the man who did not want to die sets out on a quest for cemeteries and normal, even mortal, people. But when he arrives at the edge of a river to recharge his batteries, the little child who was on his father's back cannot help feeling his father's neck to take a bite of him. These cannibalistic impulses panic the man who started running, throwing his cherub into the river. And so, the tale ends, leaving the man who did not want to die to continue his new quest.

The storyteller subtly mixes, in this tale, joy with sadness, love of neighbor with human selfishness, the desire to live indefinitely with the fear of an atrocious death. So many contradictions of human nature are exposed but in a playful way.

This tale allowed us to exploit the linguistic aspect by studying:

The code switches between French and Arabic used by the storyteller; the opening formulas; narrative voices; the times of the story; the lexical and semantic fields of death; Intonative values.

As for the intercultural aspect, we proceeded in stages:

A-Inference work: we watched the video in class and encouraged the students to formulate meaningful hypotheses. To do this, we interrupted the video at different key moments in the story to ask the students to imagine what happens next, which leads them to do inference work, to share their hypotheses of meaning and their creative spirit. So we got different versions of the same story depending on each person's imagination or sociocultural background. Thus, the students discovered similarities or, on the contrary, different visions and gradually became aware of the richness of their imagination and especially its diversity.

b-A work of identification: Given that the storyteller does not give the first name of her main character, nor any other character, nor pseudonym, nor location. We ask learners to listen to the video several times to detect character identifiers. When asked what clues they were looking for, they said they were looking for: skin color, culinary habits, particular architecture, monuments, etc. Without knowing it or being aware of it at the start of the activity, the students were looking for the constituents of the physical, culinary and then architectural identity profile. We therefore took advantage of their reflections to study with them their plural identities.

The notion of difference is thus studied outside the prism of nationality differences. Indeed, individuals from the same country (Algerians: Arabs and Berbers for example) or from the same language class could simultaneously and continuously live heterogeneous and sometimes contradictory socializing experiences, each is incontestably carrying a plurality of dispositions, ways of seeing, feeling and acting that make him «a plural man».

c- A work of shared reflection: after carrying out the first two activities mentioned above, the learners are invited to reflect on the moral of the story. Each student tells his fellow students what he has learned as a life lesson and then follows a debate on the relationship with death and on the apprehension that each human being would feel, whatever their nationality, culture, religion or ideology in the face of death or the loss of a loved one. Universal values such as respect for others, the value of work, paternal love, solidarity, etc. are thus discussed in class.

The folk tale generally bears the mark of the social group from which it arises. It bears witness to the social and oral life from which it comes in its form and content

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and yet this tale by Nora Aceval can be appropriated by all societies and all cultures because it highlights the value of human life.

6. Conclusion

The use of digital tools in intercultural training becomes inevitable in any process of teaching a language-culture. Thinking of a hypertextual architecture of cultural resources, which makes it possible to juxtapose, in a game of mirrors, the representations associated with the same cultural fact according to different criteria (not only geographical, but also social, generational, etc.), can make it possible to give meaning of intercultural awareness. If, according to Martine Abdallah-Preteille: *«decentering and distancing can be developed by relying on techniques which aim to multiply points of view on the same object»* (2003: 84), it seems today, that in addition to educational techniques, digital tools also provide decentering potential.

Indeed, thanks, among other things, to their immense storage capacity, their distribution span, their ease of hypertextual classification, they can allow divergent points of view to co-exist but united by the same learning perspective of a foreign language and culture.

The results of our experiment lead us to believe that in an intercultural training program, the use of the Internet is based both on its accessibility (wherever connections are possible) and on its function of amplifying exchanges, by the exponential aspect of the representations that can be collected.

Our study highlighted some modalities of use of digital tools through the analysis of an online tale whose author Nora Aceval is cradled by diverse origins which enrich her works on a literary, cultural but also anthropological level. . The plural identity of the storyteller was used to analyze the notion of identity. Being part of a hermeneutic approach to interculturality, we focused, in this first stage of research, on the teaching approach.

The results of the first sharing sessions, which we attended, highlight a greater decentering on the part of the students and a more refined understanding of the notion of otherness, which does not refer only to radical otherness but to the relationship with any other person from the same country. However, it would be wise, as a perspective, to make recordings of the sharing sessions, to be able to measure student feedback and ensure that our intercultural awareness approach is efficient. Through the activities offered to students, we were able to study some universal values, while playing the role of cultural mediator in order to encourage learners to build interpersonal relationships and thus acquire the soft skills necessary for the acquisition of intercultural skills in French class.

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