

Narrative and identity in the foreign language classroom: Reflections on symbolic competence

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The high rates of both social mobility and impelled migration and the technological changes in communication have led to the formulation of an extremely diverse linguistic and cultural landscape. As far as foreign language teaching and learning is concerned, this change has created the need for a revised pedagogical and didactic approach that better suits speakers and learners in multicultural environments. The paper discusses the weaknesses of the communicative and the intercultural approach to language teaching and supports an ecolinguistic turn towards language use. Based on this stance, the paper focuses on a discourse- rather than a user-oriented competence, namely symbolic competence, that is to be considered as a meta-competence, coined for language users in multilingual and multicultural settings. In order to make the transition from language user to language learner clearer, the paper tries to prove the usefulness of incorporating the notion of symbolic competence as an objective in foreign language teaching practice by introducing two examples of textual and visual stimuli that are analysed on the basis of discursive characteristics, genre, Self- and Other-positioning, complexity and ambiguity of meaning, etc. These examples are selected from teaching of German as a Foreign Language materials and can be used both as teacher training material and as language teaching resources.

KEYWORDS: *symbolic competence, narrative, discursive identity, foreign language teaching, foreign language learning, German as a Foreign Language*



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1. INTRODUCTION: THE NEED FOR AN ECOLOGICAL APPROACH TO FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

The micro-environment of a classroom mirrors the societal dynamics that take place in a certain timeframe. This means that classrooms nowadays are culturally diverse and should thus be considered as a place where multicultural and multilingual capital is being exchanged. This has

resulted in a pedagogical shift towards multicultural approaches to education in general (Banks, 2006; Gollnick & Chinn, 1990; Nieto, 2004), which in turn led to reformed governmental policies, adapted curricula, etc. As far as foreign language teaching is concerned, talk of culture has transformed from awareness of the sociocultural context of language use (Fairclough, 1989) to the intercultural approach to the native and target

culture/language, as distinct entities but also in contact (Byram, 1995; Crozet & Liddicoat, 1999; Fantini, 1997), and lastly to foreign language learning in a multicultural and multilingual context (Kubota, 2004; Dendrinos, 2012; Dendrinos, 2015; Kramsch & Zhu, 2016), or – one would argue – to an intercultural competency in globalisation (Crozet et al., 1999).

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The discussion is based on the principles of symbolic competence formulated by Claire Kramsch of Carnegie Mellon University and compares it to the communicative approach, intercultural approach and ecological approach as language teaching methodologies. Symbolic competence is described, analysed and exemplified in two examples of activities taken from the teaching of German as a foreign language in Greece.

3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 The communicative approach

The communicative approach to language teaching and learning that was introduced in the 1970s (e.g. Halliday, 1975; Candlin, 1976) and established in the 1980s (e.g. Ellis, 1982; Littlewood, 1981; Swan, 1985) serves us as researchers and language teachers and teacher trainers up to this day. Curricula, textbooks and materials still offer methodological ideas and steps on how learners can handle a communicative

situation effectively through the medium of the target language. This presupposes that language users can handle any communicative situation effectively, as long as they possess a common code, a common context for interpreting meaning, a common *Erfahrungshorizont* or *Weltwissen* (buzzwords representing the popularity and importance of the communicative approach regarding German as a Foreign Language), and – most importantly – common communicative intentions, a shared interest in how to effectively handle a situation. Based on the above, communication between language learner and native speaker is now understood as an adaptive process. Language learners must possess the linguistic code of the native speaker, bearing the same linguistic *manieres*, place utterances in the same sociocultural context as the native speaker and interpret the utterances of the native speaker based on cultural affordances one does not personally possess. The implications of this are stark and range from native-speakerism (Holliday, 2006) to linguistic and cultural assimilation. One more comment regarding the pitfalls of the communicative approach that is worth mentioning in the context discussed is the limiting way in which we saw language. Although the communicative approach is code-oriented, foreign language learners were taught that there are correct and incorrect, appropriate and inappropriate ways of using the target language. To be communicatively competent would therefore

mean distinguishing between these ways (Kramersch & Vinall, 2015) and this knowledge was then to be tested through standardised practices, which is still the case regarding formal language assessment. Although limitations in diverse linguistic and cultural settings are obvious, the communicative approach has – seen from a methodological-didactic standpoint – equipped teachers with valuable strategies, such as e.g. the use of authentic materials, the arrangement of the classroom based on the communicative activity, etc., and paved the way for more elaborate methodologies like Scaffolding (Klewitz, 2017), Differentiated Instruction (Tomlinson, 2001) and *Szenariendidaktik* or teaching in situations (e.g. Hölscher et al., 2006).

3.2 The intercultural approach

On the other hand, the intercultural approach to language use as well as language teaching and learning is based on the *'ethnolinguistic assumption ... that aligns language use and ethnic or cultural group identity in a linear and one-on-one relationship'* (Blommaert et al., 2012, p. 3). As will be discussed below, globalisation has caused discontinuities in communicative norms and practices, as the idea that group identity is culturally homogenous has been called into question. A weakness of the intercultural approach in today's globalised societies lies in the power relations between nations, languages and language users (Hymes, 2003; Nieto, 2017). A culturally

'A weakness of the intercultural approach in today's globalised societies lies in the power relations between nations, languages and language users'

homogenous group identity would mean in practice that a language learner with a specific L1 would have to adapt herself, being communicative and interculturally competent, to the target culture. This directly creates a power relationship. This specific L1 is most probably the language of a minority, either on a sociopolitical or on a population level. In times of globalisation, identity is no longer rooted in culture. Identity is *'constructed and upheld by the stories we tell and the various discourses that give meaning to our lives'* (Kramersch, 2011, p. 356). More precisely, our narratives and the genres in which we choose to formulate them construct our discursive identity and direct the power our discourse loses or gains. One can observe a turn towards identity and therefore towards user-oriented approaches to language. On this basis, and influenced by an ecological approach to language and language use (Fill, 1998; Fill & Mühlhäusler, 2006; Steffensen & Fill, 2014), Kramersch (2011) proposed a symbolic dimension to intercultural competence. *'The self that is engaged in intercultural communication is a symbolic self that is constituted by symbolic*

systems like language as well as by systems of thought and their symbolic power' (Kramersch, 2011, p. 356).

3.3 The ecological approach

Although the ecological approach to language is not a pedagogical approach per se, an adaptation of key concepts to language learning and teaching is compliant with the diversified linguistic environments we live in. In summary, in order to be able to approach human interactions ecolinguistically, one should consider specific parameters, such as the cognitive, psychological, linguistic, interactional, ethnographic, social, historical, cultural, aesthetic, political, virtual, historical, aesthetic, ideological and cognitive (Kramersch & Steffensen, 2008). Both the communicative and the intercultural approach considered some of the above, such as the cultural, the interactional, etc., but without taking into consideration that those parameters interrelate with each other. In this context, the language user is in interrelation with other language users, in the sense that their subjective reality forms the intersubjective (social) realities.

In order to 'effectively communicate', language users in multicultural settings should consider their interlocutor's subjective social reality. An ecological approach to language could therefore be seen as prerequisite of effective communication. The main objective of foreign

language teaching in globalised societies should therefore be to equip learners to reframe linguistic/interactional events and discourses through their own as well as their interlocutor's lived experience. The discursive practices of the language user/learner set the boundaries for the possible meanings that can be attributed to a single event, an utterance, a speech act, etc.

3.4. From culture to discourse

As mentioned above, identity is no longer rooted in culture: '*[...] culture as a membership in a national community with a common history, a common standard language and common imaginings*' (Kramersch, 2011, p. 355) is no longer to be taken for granted. The accelerated shifting of the world's population has had a profound and ongoing effect on the institutions of traditional society, including the environment and mediums of communication. Spurred by technological progress, this resulted in the emergence of cyber-communication, that is, in novel forms of environments that operate on new norms of social interaction. The notion of identity has therefore detached itself from its institutional, nation-oriented value and formed into a more self-oriented concept, where the individual is defined by their discourse(s) and dialectic in order not only to be communicatively effective but to survive. This indicates that an individual must not be integrated in a specific group with a common lived past, common thought patterns, common

rituals and common values and conventions of behaviour, as was the target of the communicative and intercultural competence approaches of the 1990s and 2000s, but to possess adaptive identities, expressed through the adaptive function of their discourse(s). This also affects the positioning of a language user/learner based on the power of their discursive patterns.

3.5. On symbolic competence

In the context we are discussing, Kramersch (2006, 2011) and Kramersch & Whiteside (2008) introduced the notion of symbolic competence as *'the ability not only to approximate or appropriate for oneself someone else's language, but to shape the very context in which language is learned and used'* (Kramersch & Whiteside, 2008, p. 664). They complemented this with the *'ability to play with various linguistic codes and with the various spatial and temporal resonances of these codes'* (Kramersch & Whiteside, 2008, p. 664). In a later, discourse-oriented definition, Kramersch (2011) categorised discourse as symbolic representation, discourse as symbolic action and discourse as symbolic power. Discourse as symbolic representation indicates that the lexical and grammatical structures that a language user employs denote and connote their (subjective) reality. Discourse as symbolic action points to the performative dimension of one's linguistic choices and discourse as symbolic power refers foremost to the intertextual relationship with other

discourses and to the dynamics and/or friction this relationship may create on a micro and macro level.

Kramersch (2011) points to specific questions that prove the ability of the inter-/multiculturally competent speaker and are therefore evidence of their symbolic competence. These questions relate to the heterogeneity of discourse(s), genre, authorship, framing of communicative events and their relationship to context, etc. For example: *'[...] whose words are those? Whose discourse? Whose interests are being served by this text? [...] How does the speaker position him/herself? How does he/she frame the events talked about? What prior discourse does he/she draw on?'* (Kramersch, 2011, p. 360). The above brings the poststructuralist notions of intertextuality, interdiscursive personogenesis (Vovou, 2018), indexicality, subject positioning as well as narrative identity and authority to the foreground and introduces them as classroom resources that may be used for the development of an *'awareness of the ... cross-cultural context in which language unfolds'* (Kramersch, 2011, p. 360).

Although symbolic competence was not especially coined as a notion for foreign language literacy and pedagogy, the above questions can be used as resources for teaching practice. This paper tries to illustrate this on concrete examples based on the teaching of German as a Foreign Language.

‘Discourse as symbolic action points to the performative dimension of one’s linguistic choices and discourse as symbolic power refers foremost to the intertextual relationship with other discourses and to the dynamics and/or friction this relationship may create on a micro and macro level’

4. STUDY AND RESULTS

4.1 German as a Foreign Language in Greece

In order to prove the usefulness of the incorporation of symbolic competence in foreign language curricula and smoothen the transition between theory and practice, I will briefly recapitulate the aforementioned theoretical framework on the example of foreign language teaching and learning in a more concrete way, drawing upon the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the Teaching of German as a Foreign Language.

The courses of German as a Foreign Language – *Deutsch als Fremdsprache*, or *DaF* – in Greece are taught according to syllabi, textbooks and materials calibrated to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). This means that teachers follow the

communicative model of language use, teaching and learning and organise their classroom activities based on the descriptive scheme of the CEFR (North, 2006): reception, interaction, production and mediation, in both the spoken and written medium. Some key pillars of communicative teaching of DaF in Greece are e.g. introduction of authentic materials, group organisation, teacher-learner and learner-learner interaction, comprehension of and appropriate responding to a communicative intention, consideration of social context. The development of intercultural competence is also a goal, so consideration of nuances of the target culture and adaptation to them are parts of the teaching of DaF, but only as far as specific domains of language use that are embedded in the curricula and adapted by textbooks are concerned.

4.2 Two examples based on the teaching of German as a Foreign Language

Drawing upon the research conducted so far in regards to symbolic competence and foreign language teaching and learning, I propose two examples, on the basis of which teachers can directly train the reading, writing and speaking skills of learners at B2-C2 level, or teachers can be trained into how to choose appropriate materials and work towards the development of symbolic competence. The examples constitute of textual and visual stimuli – two written texts and an accompanying visual narrative – and are chosen

according to the following criteria: the texts (i) reflect an autobiographical narrative, (ii) reflect distinct and not so distinct discourses, (iii) possess linguistic choices in lexicogrammar, structure, etc. that are distinct for specific genres, (iv) initiate questions around authorship and author positioning, (v) allow for discussions around Self- and Other-positioning, (vi) reflect a narrative that renders them relatable to learners with migrant backgrounds, (vii) can be seen in their whole as a meaning-making tool in a social context, (viii) reflect an emotional aspect, either of their author or of a protagonist. The presentation of the chosen examples in the paper focuses more on teacher training and is structured in such a way that it could help teachers understand why and how to choose textual, visual and other resources, in order to promote the symbolic competence of their learners. The *why* can be explained on the basis of the above criteria, while the *how* will be explained hands on. The next step of the teacher training activity is to align the objective(s) of symbolic competence to communicative activities.

More specifically, both examples employ an art text analysis, so that teachers may recognise the discussed characteristics that are indicative or instigate instances of symbolic representation, action, and power, and are reflected in the above criteria. Parallel to reading the excerpt (Appendices A and C) and engaging in text analysis, teachers can be given the corresponding

worksheet (Appendices B and D). In order to exemplify the didactic approach to symbolic competence proposed in the paper, the worksheets are completed. The worksheets are divided into three columns. In the left-hand column, the participants can describe the act behind the discourse, genre, narrative, event, their lived experience, ambiguities of meaning, etc. (see criteria), that they recognise in the given literary text. In the middle column teachers can write down a task formulation that mirrors the specific act. The proposed task formulations often involve indexicalities as well as stylistic characteristics, particularly regarding the Self- and Other-positioning, the change in perspective and the genre. In the right-hand column, teachers can describe the communicative activity that best suits the task formulation that they have chosen for the specific act.

4.3 First example – *Am Ende Bleiben Die Zedern*

The first example is an excerpt from the book *Am Ende Bleiben die Zedern (In the End, the Cedars Remain)* by the Lebanese-German author Pierre Jarawan (2016a) (see Appendix A), accompanied by a visual narrative (Jarawan, 2016b). The use of the visual narrative allows both teachers and later learners to gain more insights into the different perspectives of the author's autobiographical *Ich*-Perspective as narrated Self and the author's perspective as narrating Self. The visual narrative complements the textual by revealing to the

learner the perspective of the narrated Self that is not visible in the textual stimulus, but only imagined. This switching between perspectives means switching between different social realities, which in turn means different indexicalities that can be used as teaching objectives (see Task formulation, Appendices B and D). If learners are then taught to interpret indexicalities, whether lexicogrammatical or otherwise, and on this basis distinguish between perspectives and different social realities, they will develop an awareness of the symbolic representations of linguistic choices as well as towards the symbolic power that these linguistic choices might generate regarding a different social, cultural, chronotopical, historical, etc. reality.

Literary texts, such as this one, are useful for demonstrating to learners the genre of storytelling and its narrative properties. Again, coming in contact with narratives means that the learners adapt their reasoning to diverse perspectives, to relations between characters but also between author and reader, to various discourses within the same excerpt (depending on the positioning of each character), to the author's subtle – and not so subtle – intent and, most importantly, to ambiguity. Storytelling, and narrative forms in general, welcome ambiguity, and this can be a fruitful ground for learners, because of the high semantic complexity and the – sometimes – low contextual support. Moreover, dialogical narratives, such as

the first example, provide a feeling of orality, of greater tensions and negotiations of greater linguistic and cultural capital. This too is useful to incorporate into teaching, because it is similar to real-time dynamic interactions outside of the classroom. The above points are considered both in the depiction of the act and in formulating a relevant task (Appendix B).

4.4 Second example – *Kaffeekränzchen*

The second text (Appendix C) is quoted in Hinnenkamp (2003) and is used in order to explain intercultural competence. The main purpose for choosing this example is to illustrate the differences between an intercultural and an ecolinguistic approach to foreign language teaching. Hinnenkamp (2003, p. 2-3) may ask similar questions regarding the cultural discrepancies that are depicted in the text and in doing so he reveals those discrepancies and makes them available for the learners to grasp and assimilate but does not provide a meta-framework that covers the field of linguistic choices from a micro-level (representation) to a meso-level (action) and to a macro-level (power) of language use, as symbolic competence does. As in the first example, positioning, genre and reflection by the learner are the main objectives (Appendix D). From an intercultural standpoint, the text is an interesting choice exactly because Greek learners of German can relate to the Greek character in the text and divert attention from the German

character. Although this falls within the same scope as the previously discussed L1,2/C1,2 duality, it is interesting to apply the same example in multicultural classrooms, where the dynamics are totally different to an all-Greek homogenous classroom. If we introduce this text into a multicultural classroom, where for example 50% are Greek learners of German, 30% are Albanian, 10% African and 10% former SSRS (Soviet Socialist Republic States), the dynamics of Self- and Other-positioning as well as the different discourses of homeland and of stereotypes will be very far from being the same. From a symbolic standpoint, the negotiation of cultural capital in such a classroom working on this specific textual stimulus will be intense and thus will contribute to the framing of new social realities and discourses.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Why is symbolic competence useful for our foreign language teaching practice?

The above examples accurately demonstrate the need for a new approach to language use in relation to foreign language teaching and thus a reason for introducing symbolic competence as a goal for language teachers in multicultural classrooms. The first point to consider is that teaching towards achieving intercultural competence is often limited to conditioning language learners to adapt their use of the target language – or the hybrid language formed by cross-linguistic interferences for that matter – to

the behavioural patterns, values, lived experiences of the target culture. This duality of L1,2/C1,2 (Blommaert, 2005) proved to be helpful to a certain degree in the late 1990s and early 2000s, when the term ‘intercultural competence’ gained popularity among researchers, because it allowed us to make a step towards inter-national understanding (UNESCO, 1989). However, if we consider the power dynamics between nations, the adaptation of language learners to a target culture practically leads to linguistic and cultural assimilation of the minority (Bastardas-Boada, 2014). In a world where power relations between nation-states are ever-changing due to the complexities of globalisation, adaptation or integration no longer serve their purpose. Symbolic competence is compliant with this in flux-condition: compared to an interculturally competent speaker, a symbolically competent speaker has the *‘capacity to recognise the historical context of utterances and their intertextualities, to question established [conceptual] categories and place them in their historical and subjective contexts. But it is also the ability to resignify them, reframe them, re- and transcontextualise them and to play with the tension between text and context’* (Kramsch, 2011, p. 359). Rather than merely adapting to the nuances of the target culture, the symbolically competent language user/learner will be able to frame and re-frame events, intentions and actions at a macro-, meso- and micro-level (Coupland,

‘In a world where power relations between nation-states are ever-changing due to the complexities of globalisation, adaptation or integration no longer serve their purpose’

2006); this means, recognising their social, cultural, chronotopical, historical, aesthetical, etc. dimensions, to position themselves in relation to those dimensions by drawing upon resonating indexicalities and to resignify them in order to give them new relatable meaning.

The second point that speaks for the development of symbolic competence in foreign language learners is, as described above, that foreign language curricula often present a limited number of domains of language usage in comparison to the domains that learners/speakers are confronted with in life outside of the classroom. The CEFR contextualises language activities in four domains: the public, personal, educational and occupational, stating that *‘these may themselves be very diverse, but for most practical purposes in relation to language learning they may be broadly classified as fourfold’* (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 14). The vast majority of language-learning textbooks – giving the example of DaF textbooks in Greece – adapt their content strictly to those four domains, again probably for reasons of

practicality. If one examines textbooks, especially regarding lower levels of competence (A1-B1), the subdomains of usage are more or less the same: family, school life, living, daily routine, studying, working, use of technology, etc. The domain *Landeskunde* (culture), firstly introduced to foreign language curricula during the intercultural turn, is still very much visible in both German-lead research (e.g. Rösler, 2012) and textbooks, which in itself reflects the limited domains as described above and the persistence of foreign language teaching to the L1,2/C1,2 duality. The same thematic divisions of content can be observed in higher competence levels (B2-C2), although the cognitive complexity of the presented content is higher, which in turn may affect how the (sub)domains are presented but not their boundaries. When it comes to ‘usage of technology/media’, the subdomain is presented to learners more from an outside-looking-in-view: learners are asked to discuss the theme but not to engage with the diversified forms of communication that the usage of technology entails. The Age of Information has created new environments of communication, where anonymity, and therefore concealment of (cultural) identity and intent, is the standard. The only way we can relate with the interlocutor is their discourse and vice versa. On these grounds, language teachers should prepare learners for discourse-specific and not user-specific communication. This *‘[...] calls for an approach [...]*

to teaching that is discourse-based, historically grounded, aesthetically sensitive, and takes into account the actual, the imagined and the virtual worlds in which we live' (Kramersch, 2011, p. 366).

A pedagogical turn towards the development of symbolic competence would address the issues described by introducing different discursive practices, different genres and different narratives as foreign language teaching resources, so that learners develop the ability to adopt different perspectives and thus different discursive selves.

5.2 Teaching towards symbolic competence

The notion of symbolic competence has attracted a number of researchers in a number of research fields, including the field of Critical Foreign Language Pedagogy (e.g. Kearney, 2012; Luks, 2013; Crichton & Murray, 2014; Back, 2016; Díaz, 2016; Snell, 2016; Étienne & Vanbaelen, 2017). Luks (2013) proceeded to incorporate symbolic competence as an objective in the textbook for reading and writing in French as a foreign language. In the *Teacher's Guide*, when pointing to tips for creating own material in the vein of *the Literary in the Everyday*, the author emphasises, that teachers should '*incorporate dimensions of cross-cultural or symbolic competence according to Kramersch's recommendations'* (Luks, 2013, p. 18), while quoting these recommendations from Kramersch (2011) and linking them to chapters in the textbook. These include: '*Use communicative activities as food for reflection on the nature of*

language, discourse, communication and mediation. Pay attention to what remains unsaid, or may even be unsayable because it is politically incorrect or disturbing [...]. Bring up every opportunity to show complexity and ambiguity [...]. Engage the student's emotions, not just their cognition' (Kramersch, 2011, p. 364).

The above configures with what was said so far. In order to be symbolically competent language learners should be able to reflect on discursive practices and reframe them, on genre and its connection to discourse, on the verbal, cultural and/or social tensions that a written, oral or visual stimulus can generate in the learners themselves as well as on the cognitive and semantic complexity of a stimulus. As seen above, the ambiguity of an (authentic) stimulus is not something to avoid in the foreign language classroom, but rather something to engage the learners with. This practice draws upon the complex and ambiguous meanings that language users are confronted with in their everyday life, given the immensely diverse linguistic and cultural landscape. It must be noted that ambiguity, not only in form of highly indexicalised, open-ended meanings but also of hidden intents, was something that the CEFR failed to include, which in turn led to the sterility of teaching. The question arises especially as far as higher levels of competence are concerned. How can we expect our pupils to mediate between languages, when the meaning-making of the

‘How can we expect our pupils to mediate between languages, when the meaning-making of the content they are to mediate is bounded to their culture?’

content they are to mediate is bounded to their culture? Can there be mediation of mere information and not of (ambivalent) meaning or (hidden) intent? And if yes, is it useful to present to our pupils only informational content? Ambiguity, metaphorical meaning, hidden intent is what language learner will be confronted with in life, those elements are part of language and of pragmatic competence, as the CEFR defines it. For this reason, Vovou (2018) proposes the development of a framework for evaluating such learning stimuli by mode and index, so that the choice of such stimuli is compliant with the level of competence. Luks (2013) proposes something similar regarding visual stimuli used in language teaching: teachers should *‘match symbolic imagery to a reader’s interpretations’* (Luks, 2013, p. 13).

Díaz (2016) proposes teaching resources that will aid teachers in the selection, adaptation and implementation of interculturally-oriented pedagogical practices: transcultural/translingual migration literature, autobiographies, oral traditions and *mémoires* are to be included in the

authentic teaching materials that all foreign language teachers employ in their teaching. Kearney (2012, p. 61) prompts language teachers to *‘furnish opportunities for analysis of perspective and for perspective-taking to pursue the cultivation of symbolic competence’* and points directly to the cultivation of understanding authorship and identity positioning. Étienne & Vanbaelen (2017) introduce a *Semiotic Gap Activity* in order to examine their pupils meaning-making processes and reflect on symbolic representations and discursive perspective-taking. Lastly, Back (2016) defines *‘symbolic competence in interaction as the performance of cultural memories and history, and demonstrate(s) how even the most elemental level of symbolic competence can come up against resistance in a language learning context’* (Back, 2016, p. 2) and coins the term *symbolic performance* as a correlating, not overlapping, notion. Back (2016, p. 2) does not fail to critique the fact that *‘there is still little research on what symbolic competence looks like in interaction, with most scholars highlighting its relational, reframing potential’*.

On this basis, Vovou (2018) tried to shed light into how symbolic representations, action and power emerge in interaction, examining if and how those facets of symbolic competence occur in oral foreign language examinations between Greek examinees and DaF learners and examiners with German and Greek L1.

6. CONCLUSION

Research up until now, including the present study, has shown that the notion of symbolic competence, as formulated by Kramersch (2011), can and should be added as a teaching objective in foreign language curricula. The usefulness of orienting the teaching and learning of foreign languages towards discourse and not culture is not only necessary due to the given sociopolitical and technological changes of the early 21st century, but also achievable. This does not mean that the communicative model should be considered obsolete. As discussed in the present study, the teaching objectives that aim to the development of symbolic competence can and should be realised

through communicative activities. A limitation that presented itself during the designing of the Grids for the Development of Symbolic Competence (Appendices B and D) is that the cultivation of awareness of symbolic representation, action and power through concrete teaching objectives can be achieved in learners that have reached a certain level of linguistic competence (B2 and above). That is, because both task formulation (middle column) and the nature of the act itself (left hand column) are cognitively complex for lower level language learners to grasp. In general, the idea can be supported that gearing learners towards symbolic competence will change the scenery in modern language learning in multicultural milieus.

APPENDIX A

Excerpt from *Am Ende Bleiben die Zedern* (Jarawan, 2016)

‘Entschuldigt.’

‘Es wird funktionieren’, murmelte Vater. Er saß auf der Couch rechts, an der Stelle, an der er immer saß. Meine Schwester war auf seinem Schoß eingeschlafen.

‘Was der Libanon braucht, ist eine Aufgabe’, sagte Hakim.

‘Wenn diese Leute nichts zu tun bekommen, werden sie anfangen, ihre Gewehre zu vermissen. Wir müssen wieder das Finanzzentrum werden, das wir waren, damit die Scheichs ihr Geld nicht mehr in den Golfstaaten lassen, sondern bei uns investieren, in Firmen, internationale Schulen, Universitäten, Infrastruktur und Hotels. Dann werden wir wieder ein Land sein, das die Welt gern besucht, ein Land der Begegnung, Konferenzen, Messen ...’

‘Es wird funktionieren’, wiederholte Vater. ‘Es ist gut, dass Hariri gewonnen hat’.

‘Er hat Geld, seine Firmen werden das Land wiederaufbauen, und alles – Straßen, Häuserwände, Plätze – wird glänzen. Aber dann werden die Idioten kommen, die ebenfalls im Parlament gelandet sind, und an die schönen Hauswände pissen ...’

‘Hakim’, fuhr Mutter ihn an.

‘Entschuldigt’, sagte er abermals, dann wandte er sich mir zu: ‘Samir, möchtest du einen Witz hören?’

Ich wollte.

Ein Syrer kommt in ein Elektrogeschäft und fragt den Verkäufer: ‘Entschuldigen Sie, haben Sie auch Farbfernseher?’

Und der Verkäufer antwortet: ‘Ja, wir haben eine große Auswahl an Farbfernsehern’, woraufhin der Syrer sagt: ‘Wie schön! Dann hätte ich gerne einen grünen’.

Ich lachte. Hakim kannte eine Menge Syrer-Witze und

erzählte sie auch gerne mehrfach. Oft war er selbst derjenige, der sich am lautesten über sie amüsierte. Auch diesen hatte ich mindestens schon dreimal gehört, allerdings variierte Hakim immer wieder die Farbe am Schluss. Warum hier

ausgerechnet Syrer die Trottel waren, darüber hatte ich mir nie Gedanken gemacht. Die Deutschen erzählten sich Ostfriesenwitze, die Libanesen erzählten Witze über Syrer. Ich fand das logisch.

Appendix B

First Example: Worksheet. Grid for the Development of Symbolic Competence

ACT	TASK FORMULATION	COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITY
reflect on different discourses: discourse of ethnicity discourse of homeland discourse of political power	Which passages indicate a change in discourse? Which lexical indices echo fragments of ethnicity/ homeland/ political power?	selective reading discussion
reflect on: authorship positioning of the Self positioning of the Other	Which lexical/ grammatical indices echo the characters in the narrative? Which passages show the relationships between characters? Which genre does the author employ in the text and which in the video segment, in order to state his positioning (i) as author (narrating self), (ii) as autobiographical narrator (narrated self), (iii) as an insider regarding the described culture, (iv) as an outsider?	selective reading selective listening
reflect on the specific genre storytelling	What patterns of the genre does the author employ? Which passages in the text echo the characteristics of the genre? What needs does the genre meet? (Need for identity? For sense-making?) Are there lexical indices that point to the role of the author? Are there lexical indices that point to the characteristic of the audience that the author wished to address? How does the order of events serve the genre?	matching task categorisation selective reading
reflect on: migrant experiences lived experience of homeland of the learners	How does the lived experience of the author/ his father/ Hakim resonate with you?	discussion (to allow the 'not said' to reveal itself) writing a journal retelling/rewriting the story incorporating the own experience rewriting the story in turns, incorporating the collective experience
reflect on: ambiguities of meaning	Which witticisms, metaphors, etc. can you recognise? Based on which indices can you recognise them? Why does the author employ them? What is his intent? How would you reframe the witticism, metaphor, etc. based on your experience?	selective reading writing/ adapting the ambiguous structure in the mother language

Appendix C

Kaffeekränzchen (Hinnenkamp, 2003)

Anna aus Griechenland besucht eine Sprachschule in Deutschland. Mit der Lehrerin Brigitte versteht sie sich sehr gut. Eines Tages lädt B. ihre Schülerin zum Kaffee ein. 'Sagen wir vier Uhr', macht Brigitte die Verabredung fest. A. freut sich. Sie kommt um halb fünf. B. meint, sie habe schon lange gewartet. A. ist verdutzt. Der Kaffeetisch ist gedeckt, der Kaffee fertig. A. ist erstaunt. Sie hat selbstgebackenen

griechischen Kuchen mitgebracht.

'Uih, wir sieht der denn aus', bemerkt B. A. findet B. unhöflich. Nach dem Kaffeetrinken zündet sich A. eine Zigarette an. B. bittet sie, auf dem Balkon zu rauchen. A. ist verletzt. Um 6 Uhr bemerkt B., sie habe noch sehr viel zu tun und bittet A. zu gehen.

A. fühlt sich rausgeschmissen. Ihr erstes deutsches Kaffeetrinken – eine einzige Enttäuschung.

Appendix D

Second Example: Worksheet. Grid for the Development of Symbolic Competence

ACT	TASK FORMULATION	COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITY
reflect on stereotypical discourse: cultural stereotypes social stereotypes	What is your understanding of the word <i>Gast</i> ? How would you react to a personal invitation between a teacher and a student? How would you frame such an invitation, if (i) you were the teacher, (ii) if you were the student, (iii) if you and the receiver had the same culture/ language, (iv) if you and the receiver had a different culture/ language?	free association expression of opinion (written or oral), structured writing/ speaking creative writing
reflect on: positioning of the Self positioning of the Other	Which lexical/ grammatical indices echo the characters in the narrative? Which linguistic structures point to the German <i>Alltagskultur</i> ? Which linguistic structures point to cultural gaps? Where does the narrator position herself? How does this affect the genre? How do the name abbreviations reflect the positioning of the author?	selective reading discussion
reflect on: genre linguistic style	What function do the name abbreviations perform regarding the style and the genre of the text? What function do the linear grammatical structures perform? Are unusual linguistic structures present? What do they reveal about the style and the genre of the text? What is the authors intent based on the stylistics of the text? Do the stylistics of the text work in favour of the character in the narrative? If yes, which one?	categorisation selective reading discussion
reflect on: own experiences of cultural misunderstandings in your homeland in the target country abroad	How would you react in a similar situation, if you were (i) the teacher, (ii) the student, (iii) the foreigner, (iv) the native? Tell us of a cultural misunderstanding that you were involved in or witnessed, while remaining faithful to the genre of the text.	discussion (to allow the 'not said' to reveal itself) storytelling retelling/rewriting the story incorporating the own experience rewriting the story in turns, incorporating the collective experience storytelling with emphasis on negative/ positive emotion role play

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