

ALDIDAC – CICC EA2529 Research Group

International Conference, 27 to 29 November 2009 At the University of Cergy Pontoise

This conference is steered jointly by:

University of Bath (United Kingdom)
University of Cergy Pontoise (France)
University of Graz (Austria)

Towards a Paradigm of Relatedness Universes of Belief in Foreign Language Teaching Theory

At the crossroads of the progress in applied and fundamental research, language policies and technological advances of the information-based society, language teaching theory must consider new theoretical paradigms in connection with multi-faceted learning environments. It must submit some of its basic notions, particularly communication, representation, action, and memorisation, to criticism informed by the discoveries of the neurosciences, applied in particular to the field of linguistics and to the cognitive and social sciences. The notion of communication is articulated with the problematic of language action, which is raised by the bonds between the self, other people and the environment. Learners develop action schemes and knowledge-in-action through their experiences, in a dynamic relation with the environment. This is what we call **relatedness**.

In a classroom situation, whatever the language interactions which form the basis for language teaching / learning, they are characterised by a lack of symmetry between: teachers and pupils, pupils and native speakers, pupils and texts or pupils between themselves. These actors do not share the same history, the same knowledge or the same values, and they have interiorised different viewpoints concerning the world and social relations. Language is a bearer of these values, or, to quote the expression used by Antoine Culioli (1984), « linguistic markers represent representations »:

- the concepts of spatialisation and temporality, for instance, refer to culturally marked perceptions of time and space which can be pinpointed in linguistic structures;
- the lexicon's semantic and cultural background feeds on unique experiences of social and individual realities;
- the conventions governing language interactions are also connected with values that are part of networks of conventions backed by social beliefs and deeply rooted in cultural habitus.

These statements, which are now familiar to us, remind us that it is no longer possible to teach a linguistic system as an independent logical entity dissociated from the culture and universes of belief of the human group in which language mediates people's relation to reality.

Defining universes of belief

Experiencing the difference of the Other in his/her culture and language means confronting one's imaginary constructs of the strangeness of the stranger with the reality of the encounter. In this confrontation between imagination and reality, the symbolic register is the vector of relatedness. Universes of belief are imaginary spaces that set themselves up as normative value systems. They are part of a symbolic collective identity system which calls into play the wish to belong and the

emotional dimension of interpersonal relationships. Thus, the term “belief” serves as a reminder that intellectual and emotional processes are inseparable; today the cognitive sciences enable us to say that emotions or feelings of efficiency, for instance, are elements that make up our cognitive life and must be acknowledged and taken into account in the language teaching process.

As regards the teaching / learning of cultural and linguistic systems or training in discursive skills, universes of belief constitute not only a background of intentionality (Searle) and knowledge, but also **a flexible, open network of interconnected values. This network structures our intra- and inter-personal representations of the real world and regulates the actions of each individual.**

If Language Teaching processes fail to take into account the cultural worlds inherent in teaching media and situations, linguistic markers refer, by default, to the learners’ universes of belief. **Thus, all meta-processes spring from relatedness to the world, which allows a shared meaning to emerge.**

It is fundamental to develop learning/teaching situations offering common spaces (affordances) in which awareness of differences can arise, and in which new knowledge and skills can emerge. It is also starting from and thanks to a common space that people can learn to stand back from their own points of view. Under such circumstances, « linguistics has a major role to play, and it would be absurd to deny it to Modern language students, those citizens to be ». (Cain)

This conference will deal with the role of universes of belief in the teaching of Modern Languages, and in particular:

- with the conditions and contexts of the implementation of forms of learning that take this relatedness into account;
- with the teaching and learning strategies (mobility, synergy, inter- or trans-disciplinarity, differentiation, language awareness, conceptualisation, interaction, enaction, etc.);
- with the progression of learning (taking into account the stages of maturity, whether identity-related or social and emotional, multiple intelligences, etc.)

The papers will present the results of applied or experimental research in language teaching theory or will offer theoretical viewpoints in fields liable to cast light on these questions (linguistics, social sciences, cognitive sciences or neurosciences)

Abstracts must be sent before 28 February 2009 to j.aden@numericable.com et christiane@hoybel.fr
The scientific committee’s decision will be notified on 29 March 2009