



Principles of Intercultural Learning – for better knowledge of the LIFE concept

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Introduction

The following article translated by Friedrich Kratochwil, is an introduction to the “international curriculum for intercultural learning” which exemplifies and operationalizes the principles of the LIFE concept. This article appears in LIFE: Ideas and Materials for Intercultural Learning (Munich: BMW Group, 1997).

In this article Hans Hunfeld defines intercultural learning as an understandable response to the fact that foreigners in the neighborhood have become a part of everyday life in modern society. As a result, formerly customary definitions of the foreigner must be examined, and our behavior towards him must change. The foreigner should no longer be dependent on our respective abilities to understand, he should no longer be understood in terms of, and thus have imposed upon him, our perception; he must above all be allowed to speak for himself more clearly than ever before. Intercultural learning educates us in how to deal with the normalcy of encountering foreigners among us.

Every statement concerning intercultural learning is nowadays necessarily fragmentary. Intercultural learning, however, has in the meantime developed a tradition of its own. This tradition shows that the unreflected presentation of proposals, models or approaches for teaching is naïve when it is assumed that they are neutral and objective instead of being embedded in certain cultural contexts. Precisely because of the multitude of practical and theoretical efforts in different areas and disciplines, fitting a particular contribution within a general conceptual framework and assessing its comparative value have become difficult tasks.¹

The risk is great of inadvertently repeating something which has already been said and of proposing an alternative that has already been tried. But in order to keep the discussion on intercultural learning open and to continue with this task, we have to run this risk in order to counteract special interests and narrow disciplinary understandings that dominate particular fields. What was always demanded from intercultural learning as an approach must also be demanded from those who want to practice it, in whatever form: there has to be a readiness to engage in a dialogue. The principles (originally elements of a curriculum), which are discussed below, were formulated in this spirit and with this understanding in mind.

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The normalcy of the foreigner

1 Basics

1.1 Taking intercultural learning seriously (for granted)

Intercultural learning is not an arbitrary but rather a normal reaction to an obvious social problem. The foreigner is no longer somebody far away but s/he is among us and has thus become part of the “normalcy” of modern societies, even if he or she still is treated often as an anomaly or something exceptional.²

The often explicit refusal to deal in an enlightened, tolerant, and democratic fashion with the varieties of cultural and linguistic forms one encounters in everyday life makes special educational efforts necessary, if a community³ wants to build its future on integration rather than on confrontation. The apparent contradiction between the factual changes in our societies on the one hand and the refusal to come to terms with them conceptually on the other suggests that we have to change the traditional practices and modes of thinking by (un)learning. Another alternative simply does not exist. To that extent intercultural learning is the obvious mean of adjusting to these new circumstances so that living together peacefully becomes possible while mutually recognizing and accepting differences.

1.2 The curriculum as an appeal

The fundamental principle of intercultural learning is to engage in a dialogue.⁴ Intercultural learning opens up one’s own understandings and unreflected assumptions to other points of view. It is this principle which informs the more particular goals and methods of the curriculum. To that extent it is not a simple prescription but rather an appeal.⁵

Because the curriculum is (still) based on the perspective of one country, it has the character of a preliminary proposal that invites other experiences and perspectives to contribute to this dialogue. Such openness, however, does not entail an attitude of “anything goes” (noncommittalism). Rather, the differences in intercultural learning resulting from particular cultural traditions are subordinate to common fundamental convictions, which are: tolerance for differences, the realization of a mutual give and take in all cultures, and recognition of the variety of expressions of a common humanity, which provide opportunities for mutual enrichment by complementing and enhancing one’s own tradition.

The recognition that these assumptions have not been accepted in practice buttresses the appeal character of this curriculum in a variety of ways: intercultural learning, that up to now has taken place in a rather uncoordinated fashion, has to be coordinated internationally, its principles and guidelines have to be examined and be made operational, appropriate methodological and didactic approaches have to be formulated. This process of critical examination commences with the questioning of traditional concepts such as “the stranger” (foreigner), “understanding”, or “tolerance”⁶, all of which have to be freed from their largely ritualistic use as slogans. Instead, they have to be examined for their potential for contributing to our understanding in the face of fundamental changes in social reality.

1.3 The normalcy of the foreign other

What was foreign was never “normal”. Instead, it was always treated as “deviant” in terms of the taken-for-granted norm. The foreigner traditionally used to be a singular and extraordinary phenomenon and s/he was usually far away. S/he was stylized (the exotic), transfigured

(idealized) diminished (lesser breed), used (exploited), fought in war (enemy), and subjected (colonized). His/her characteristics were ascribed to him/her from the perspective of one's own familiar culture. In a way, even his or her existence was the result of his discovery by those who named him/her on the basis of their own world view and tradition. He or she was seldom allowed to speak since those who defined themselves through their technical progress and cultural superiority did most of the talking for him/her. The taken-for-granted dominance of the familiar facilitated such ascriptions and the relationship between normalcy and the "foreign other" was thereby unilaterally determined and regulated.⁷

The reality of for example Europe or of the US today has, on the other hand, established the normalcy of the foreigner. This fact forces us to reconsider our conceptual gambits: the "foreign other" is no longer an extraordinary but rather a quite ordinary phenomenon. Indeed, the experience of the "other", the foreigner, has become the normal. The living together of various ethnic groups can no longer be mastered by the self-assuredness of distance, which has disappeared not only in its spatial dimension. The "foreign other" speaks for himself, he or she no longer subordinates himself/herself to speeches made on his/her behalf, but instead wants to be heard. Since language functions not only as a mean of transmitting information but also as a constitutive element of our "world", the ordinary presence of the "foreigner" also changes our traditional conceptual frameworks. Normalcy and otherness (foreignness) become mutually constituted distinctions, which are, however, no longer unilaterally determined. Intercultural learning alerts us to these facts of life and changes our traditional ways of conceiving of the world.⁸

1.4 The limits of understanding

The existence of the foreigner among us does not depend upon individual capacity for understanding⁹.

To conceive of understanding as a subsumption of the "other" under one's own interest or life-plans is ruled out by the recognition that "otherness" and foreignness are ascriptions and not essential characteristics of persons and groups. The great variety of cultural and linguistic "others" limits our capacity for understanding. However, difference is legitimate even if it is not always "understood" by others. This lack of understanding does not relieve us from efforts to understand the other, and it does not legitimate our indifference towards it. Rather, it demands tolerance when the coexistence of people who experience each other as strangers has to be secured and when the acceptance of "otherness" cannot be based on an understanding of its character. Intercultural learning means therefore the reflective experience of the normalcy of the "foreign other" as a type of normalcy which is different and transcends one's own capacity for understanding, but which is neither better nor worse than the familiar normalcy.¹⁰

1.5 The flexibility of "culture"

The variety of cultural expressions is paralleled by attempts to classify them.¹¹ However, the syncretistic character of contemporary cultures, their mutual influences and impacts, calls static definitions into question. Intercultural dialogues and influence attempts are normal and ordinary phenomena; what is one's "own" can hardly be determined with precision. Culture in modern societies consists rather in the simultaneous action of different modes of perception, traditions and customs which are changing all the time. Their boundaries are frequently rather diffuse. The contemporaneity of regional and global cultural phenomena, of understandings based on status and generational contexts, can no longer be subsumed under one single homogeneous concept of "culture". Every culture of one's "own" is also dependent upon and develops within this overall process. Intercultural learning is therefore the lifelong realization of the mutual constitution and dependence of one's own on the "foreign other".

1.6 Preserving the foreign other

The seemingly familiar robs the “other” of its own character and deprives the intercultural dialogue of its partner. Even well-meaning efforts of unilateral empathy reduce the other to an object by their very naïveté of trying to understand it. Such efforts prevent what they attempt to bring about: an equal and mutually valued recognition of the other through a process of mutually getting to know each other. What one assumes to know already can no longer disclose itself.¹²

Consequently, intercultural learning does not intend to open up the “other” by a complete and comprehensive understanding – despite all of its efforts in this respect – but aims at leaving for it a space for development, for its contradictions and perhaps even for its enigmatic character, to which it is entitled, as is the “own” and the familiar.

1.7 Recognizing the value of difference

Differences, which are consciously perceived and accepted help us understand what we call our “own”. Foreign cultures and languages attain their importance for one’s own speech and actions because of their significant differences. They mark the distinctiveness of one’s own language and culture and enable us to see the mutual constitution of the “foreign” and the familiar. After all, individuality bases its identity on the relation to what is different. This insight, already formulated by Humboldt¹³, contradicts the presently popular opinion that one has first to be secure in one’s own identity before one can engage the “foreign other”. However, it is also clear that those “foreign others” have to be appreciated for themselves and must not be misused as counter-projections or foils for the construction of one’s own identity. It is the interest in the character of what is our “own” that leads to our curiosity in encountering the “foreigner” as an authentic, concrete and complete “other”, whose difference gives meaning to the boundaries of what we call our “own”. Intercultural learning therefore takes the acceptance of the foreign other as an opportunity for the student to gain insight and self-knowledge.

1.8 The immediacy of the “foreigner”

The foreigner who is presented to students through instructional materials can speak only indirectly to them. The selection of materials, influenced by notions of what is one’s “own”, always runs the risk of transmitting an interpretation that is in accordance with some particular instructional goal. To that extent, this type of learning can only be the preparation for the actual contact with foreigners. It goes without saying that it can do so only imperfectly and cannot substitute for the actual experience. This problem points to instructional necessities and possibilities different from those of the past. The authentic character of the “foreign” is best articulated when it is given room and when its presence is accepted. To that extent multilingual education will become more common, it will start earlier and will be pursued more intensively, relying on modern communication technologies that have been underutilized until now. Intercultural learning is a didactic principle¹⁴ that transcends traditional disciplines and it cannot be sequestered to a particular field of instruction. It initiates and requires the expansion of modes of instruction and of learning. Both were based in the past on the monolingual experience that allowed only indirectly for some contact with authentic “others”.

1.9 Intercultural learning as a focus

If the “foreign” or otherness is allowed to remain the “different” despite the fact that its nearness is accepted, then attempts at a comprehensive “understanding” are no longer necessary. In that case it is not the effort of comprehending the “foreign other” quantitatively

but rather the qualitative change in the perception of the other that determines the conditions for success or failure of the dialogue one engages in. Traditional anthropology, area and cultural studies, which usually focus on typical universally observable phenomena, in a way contradict the goals of intercultural learning, which aims at understanding the foreign other as an individual instead of reducing him or her to a stand-in for his or her respective culture. Through contacts with the concrete foreigner, his or her individuality becomes central instead of the representative character, or the common stereotypes of a foreign nation, state, or culture. This personal encounter provides a richer engagement with a reality that is particular and concrete rather than general.

The intercultural dialogue, which is the goal as well as the mean of learning, does not want to enlighten by a seemingly “objective” analysis of the different contexts of the respective interlocutors but focuses on the exchange of their personal experiences in such different contexts. The distance between different “life-worlds” is reflected by the personal conditions of the partners in the dialogue, not by the abstract nature of different cultural codes.

1.10 Interferences with experiencing one's own.

Intercultural learning is impeded by pressures to conform, by the reduction of the individual to a role, by the manipulation of processes of learning and instruction, by pressures of public opinion, by the expansion of cultural uniformity¹⁵ throughout the world, and by the suggestive impact of visual media based on the passive reception of images. However, such impediments to effective communication should no longer be taken as a drawback but rather as an opportunity and trigger for learning.

Individuality in appearance and expression provides the opportunity for distancing oneself from this pressure to conformity in thought and action, if such individuality is not taken again as an occasion for voicing disapproval or for exerting pressure to conform. All in all, what is one's “own” provides for variety, even before an explicit opening for an intercultural exchange has occurred. It is this existing variety that modifies the homogeneity and determinacy of expressions which are supposedly intrinsic to one's sense of “ownness”. For example, literature and art support such a distancing and differentiation even in one's own culture, particularly when they contradict the taken-for-granted interpretation of the world and when they are not “normalized” by means of tradited schools of thought.

This openness to new experiences, so crucially important for intercultural learning, can therefore be trained in the encounters with one's own culture by treating mistakes, deviations from the norm and its own contradictions, not as blockages but rather as opportunities for helping the learning process along. After all, these mistakes and deviations alert us to the relativity of all simplistic understandings of normalcy.

1.11 Presuppositions of intercultural learning

Intercultural learning needs certain presuppositions and conditions if it is to succeed. It cannot develop as long as the established systems of learning and instruction are self-righteously preserved, when the common national approaches are egotistically practiced, and powerpolitical and economic interests are the main pursuits. Even if a pedagogical utopia does not simply settle for the possibilities achievable under given circumstances but relies on its own capacity to transform thought and action, it nevertheless needs a modicum of help for its development. This help is forthcoming only when the political will of accepting the changing realities and of molding the future together does not remain a mere declamation in and out of school.

1.12 Responsibilities of intercultural learning

The daily encounter with the contrast between social and material security and care on the one hand, and of poverty and homelessness on the other hand, demonstrates the one-sidedness of traditional conceptions of culture and of learning, which are possible only if prosperity, safety, and shelter are guaranteed. The growing economic and psycho-social crisis we perceive in our midst as well as afar makes it impossible to deal with these problems eclectically or to act as if everything were 'all right'. Intercultural learning recognizes that there is a common transcultural responsibility for narrowing the gap between the two global cultures: that of prosperity on the one hand, and poverty, exploitation and being at somebody else's mercy on the other hand.¹⁶

2 Corollaries

The normalcy of the foreign other and intercultural learning as an attempt to change the attitudes towards this normalcy have certain corollaries which are apparent but which are not always readily understood.

2.1 Teaching attitude

It is hardly realistic or achievable to expect a dramatic distancing from traditional teaching attitudes or methods and role conceptions that have been internalized. A self-righteous attitude of enlightenment, presumably based on special dedication, extensive experience with foreigners, or on superior teaching ability, is counterproductive for the dialogical character of intercultural teaching. This teaching style can only be learned from the experience of transcending the limits and calling into question what was up to this point considered the only thing normal and appropriate. An authoritarian approach to teachers' education and further training and the unilateral direction of change prevent exchange, interaction, and openness but, above all, inhibit the readiness to risk something, to engage with something in one's teaching that one needs still to appropriate for oneself.

2.2 Questions and answers

To ask a didactic question usually implies a not-so-hidden instruction to the student to reproduce the content of previous instructions. To question in this fashion, however, the up-to-this-point still "foreign" is impossible since such a procedure subverts its own *raison d'être*. An interculturally inspired question does not know the answer in advance. Practically, this means that the teacher has to fade into the background whenever the intercultural dialogue is being practiced, particularly in classes in which a variety of cultures are represented.

2.3 Efforts at understanding

Stereotypes, misunderstandings, and mistakes are all normal parts of learning.¹⁷ If one tries to preemptively harmonize intercultural dialogues, one prevents them from achieving their goals, i. e. to provide insights into the necessary efforts for, and the latent dangers of mutual understanding. Intercultural training is not conflict-free and cannot succeed without some tensions. To get accustomed to the sound of a new language, to familiarize oneself with the articulations of another artform or literature, or to accept other lifestyles and worldviews as a normal phenomenon is a challenge which cannot be easily met, not to speak of ever being completely mastered.

2.4 Finding the “foreign” in what is one’s own

The foreign has first of all to be (re-)discovered in the familiar. That one’s own language has been formed by “foreign” elements is demonstrated not only by foreign words but also in those parts of the language whose foreign origin is covered up as these elements have become part of one’s own culture (names, terms, conventions). Such discoveries show the naïveté of those modes of understanding which rely – due to their lack of knowledge – on what is one’s “own” (as the authentic yardstick). The ease with which e.g. the youth culture appropriates the “foreign” (anglicisms, use of English) shows the normalcy of foreign influences.

2.5 Expectations and attitudes

The authentic expression of the foreign other can contradict one’s own wellintentioned expectations. Thus, folks songs, myths and fairy tales might conserve certain images and interpretations which no longer correspond to the reality of the contemporary foreign culture. The intercultural dialogue is likely to be impeded by such a mode of engagement with a foreign culture. The example of the tourist who perceives abroad, above all, the exotic, and not the complexity and contradictory reality of a foreign culture, serves as a warning to all, particularly to those who teach, to be alert to their own prejudices. This caution is further enhanced by the paradoxical experience that travelers from highly industrialized nations blame the very cultures in foreign lands for the disappearance of the exotic idyl, while at the same time loudly bemoaning the lack of progress in these societies. Similar attitudes are expressed vis-à-vis the foreigner among us, e.g. when he or she is expected to behave in a fashion which is derived from some stereotype of the foreigner and not from the engagement with him or her as a person.

2.6 Perspectives

Intercultural learning makes transparent – whatever the themes, questions, or phenomena might be which give rise to it – above everything else the perspectival character of the world. It protects us from the homogenization of these differences and their absorption into the seemingly similar. Elemental forms and conditions of human existence (earth, fire, water, air), perceptual categorizations (time, space, directions) and their particular employment in different cultural contexts are the first occasions and triggers for learning. For example, rain, heat, or frost are, even within Europe, differently perceived and have different levels of importance. Similarly, East and West have culturespecific connotations, and “left” and “right” are (again) fraught with specific cultural meanings. The clearer these elementary distinctions are brought out and the more explicit their farreaching implications are made, the more our insight concerning the normalcy of differences as well as the relativity of one’s own normalcy is enhanced. Familiar meanings of colors when confronted with other strange interpretations provide further examples and thus an opportunity (of course not the only one) for making this point. For an effective intercultural dialogue it is crucially important that such different interpretations can be genuinely discussed and that they are listened to with an open mind and with curiosity.

2.7 The “third culture”

It cannot be the goal of intercultural learning to give up one’s own culture, to exchange it for the “foreign other”, or to get lost in a diffuse and uncritical multiculturalism. Intercultural learning leads, however, from the elemental step of distancing oneself from what is one’s own, via approaching the “foreign other” through understanding, to a characteristic position “in between” which has been called the “third culture”.¹⁸ Taking this position lets us

experience what is familiar from the perspective of the “foreign other” without giving up what is our own or copying the foreign. Such a position of “in between” is manifest in a wide variety of degrees and forms in multicultural classes. It offers itself as a yardstick that should be utilized again and again.

2.8 The threats of difference

A careful and practical approach to cultural differences that exists in a given context for teaching and learning must not exclude the transcendence of this context and of its own presuppositions: the worldwide threat to these differences from a dominant western consumer culture¹⁹ that is expressed in economic power and which manifests itself in the paradigmatic character that is to be emulated. Modern communication technologies which, on the one hand, could enhance our understanding, are on the other hand also able to dictate and manipulate the aims of this process of getting to know the “other”. Intercultural approaches to learning utilize these technologies but critically reflect on the fact that the rapidity and frictionless character of modern communications can also serve interests which do not amount to a conversation or dialogue but to persuasion (or even seduction).

2.9 Taken-for-granted knowledge

Dialogues aiming at understanding take seriously the unproblematic knowledge possessed by participants but attempt to critically reflect upon it. Previous experiences with the “foreign other”, prejudices etc, are not corrected by relying on a seemingly objective knowledge but by confronting them with experiences and judgements of a different kind. They address thereby the unreflective character of the individual or cultural prejudices while, at the same time, accepting the naïve attitude as a preliminary legitimate mode of experiencing and evaluating the “foreign other”. An intercultural didactic attempt to initiate such a critical dialogue without attempting to determine its course through directives.²¹

2.10 Intercultural enlightenment

Where we have to fight hatred against the “foreign other” we need not necessarily educate people to love the unfamiliar “other”. The (recognition of the) normalcy of the foreign other does not make allowances for stylizing or emphasizing this otherness. It also does not specifically demand some emotional attachment to it. Intercultural enlightenment therefore avoids moral appeals, which are wellmeaning but which reproduce the special character of the “foreign other” by denying its normal character and thus actually prevent the establishment of a normal neighborly attitude towards it. The materials and methods utilized in intercultural instruction and learning take particular care to be attentive to this problem.

Footnotes

1 It is a long time since one could get an overview of even only the relevant German-language publications by public authorities, journalists, academics, and of those publications of a methodological-didactic nature. And this is without reference to the “grey” publications market: various work papers, minutes, conference outcomes and the international output. Already in 1985, Klemm commented critically on this, p. 176: “The expansion (shown in the literature) of a concept is (...) not the result of theoretically cogent derivations or spectacular success in the practical realisation of a concept entitled “intercultural”. On the contrary: the (...) attempts to define what is subsumed under intercultural education are multifarious. The same holds true for descriptions of educational practice in which examples of intercultural work are communicated. “My list of references contains, apart from the cited works, those publications which attempt overviews, or give critical summaries, or classify and refer, or which seem important to me from the standpoint of my interests. At any rate, only a subjectively-determined selection. “For a newer, critical interim stocktaking of intercultural education, see Reich 1994.

2 see Schmid, 1993, p. 200: “Immigration and multiculturalism are the norm in almost all modern societies, but a norm the normality of which involves it being repeatedly perceived as something new, as an exception or even as an anomaly.” The European Parliament states: “The integration of the EU will lead to a further increase in crossborder mobility. It is true that this new mobility in the Community concerns other groups of people than those immigrating to the EU, ie labor which is usually more highlyqualified than most classical labor immigrants. But both trends lead to an increase and intensification of contacts between people of differing cultural, language and geographical origin. The integration of the EU and the globalisation of trade, transport and communications lead to cultural and linguistic diversity becoming the norm in the EU. Many citizens are consequently uncertain and fearful. Hence we cannot permit the integration of migrants to be only a topic for policy makers in special sectors. It has to be fought for in all areas of politics as a social policy issue par excellence. The European societies as a whole need new sustainable forms of integration” (European Parliament, PE 152.62/B, p. 5)

3 see also: “... considering that the increase in intra-EU mobility and the immigration into the Community must not lead to the growth of further differentiation of education systems but on the contrary, challenges member states and with respect to their internal situations and legal systems to find new, specifically European solutions for a democratic discourse with cultural and linguistic diversity.” (European Parliament, PE 163.895, p. 53) and “questions about society’s future are today more than ever societal questions directed at the education and training systems. If there is any one area of policy which can take on a key role in the process of integration, then it is doubtless education policy. It is true that it would be asking too much of education systems to expect them alone to cope with the future, but we cannot gain that future without a farsighted educational policy. What is at stake here is much more than merely qualifying young EU citizens for the labor market. It is just as much an issue of strengthening, implementing and expanding minority protection rights, waking understanding for cultural and linguistic diversity, developing respect for others, fostering tolerance and abolishing discrimination. The main issue is to give the notion of EU citizenship concrete shape and to breathe life into it, especially for young people.” (European Parliament, PE 152.262/B, p. 5)

4 see Roth 1991, p. 38: “In the multicultural society, dialogue’s function as an appeal has gained a fundamentally new currency. Dialogue with other cultures is not an event which occurs only during trips to other countries or in addressing the so-called Third World, but begins in one’s own country: as both opportunity and problem – and at any rate, as a fact which there is no getting around. Hence there is a noticeable increase in “dialogues” in intercultural thinking and work. Here too, this increase ought not to be put prematurely on one side as concept-inflation, but seen as expressing an urgent necessity. And as intercultural education neither can, nor wants to, ignore this concept, it seems obvious to look and see whether “dialogue” can be used to ground the discipline. Because the concepts of dialogue and consciousness which are not foreign to educational thought per se, acquire special meaning in intercultural education for the theoretical justification and legitimation of teaching activity in view of the living conditions of a multicultural society.”

5 One should note: “The question of whether the envisaged learning outcome: improving the capacity for intercultural

communication, can be actually achieved by a corresponding learning program, has to remain unanswered. The rise in racist tendencies in Germany and other parts of Europe and the world in general illustrate what can be the enormous stubbornness of stereotypical attitudes towards everything that seems foreign. This fact alone gives rise to doubt as to whether a sensitivity program can do more than to reach those persons who have already reflected on their basic stance. One has to want to understand and no amount of direction can compel volition. Thus it does not seem appropriate to entertain too much idealism as regards the development of didactic materials for intercultural communication. But particularly given the existing problems, every attempt should be made to assist those willing to learn, as indeed us ourselves, and to question stereotypical thinking.” (Burghart 1994, p. 64)

6 Some fundamental comments here are offered by Wierlacher 1993.

7 Some fundamental comments by: Greenblatt 1994, Kristeva 1990 and Todorov 1982.

8 see Luhmann/Fuchs 1989, p. 7.

9 see Brenner 1989, p. 45: “The foreigner always remains strange: the familiarity which is the basis for understanding cannot occur because lifestyles are always defined by demarcation and not by assimilation. In such demarcation processes, lifestyles do have to reflect on their own particularity by including the Other, but precisely for that reason, it is located as the strange and unfamiliar.” The observable experience of the boundaries of understanding the Other give rise to two alternative ways of thinking and acting: one can see the boundaries as not insuperable and thus try to extend the limited ability to understand; or one can see them largely as insuperable, accepting them as a basic hindrance to understanding the Other, and thinking and acting on that acceptance. Leaving aside armchair talk and street slogans and politicians’ speechifying aimed at mindless acclamation, the current debate on foreigners is indeed oriented towards those alternatives, if I understand it correctly.

10 see here also Kristeva 1990, p. 213: “a paradoxical society is coming into being, a community of foreigners, who accept each other to the degree that they perceive each other as foreigners.”

11 see here Hinnenkamp 1994a, p. 3: “naturally, cultural, social and linguistic sciences offer clearly-defined concepts of culture: hermeneutic, structuralist, semiotic, cognitive, analytic etc. but one thing should be clear: Culture is not a simple quantity per se, nor is it static. It needs no national or societal consensus. Nor is it reducible to an internalised value system or to a habitus tailored for people. Culture is many of (these) facets and modes of expression.”

12 That applies also to the by now established concept: “In the enlightened current consciousness of western societies and in the political and scientific manifestations of that consciousness, the idea of interculturalism has established itself as a value which is hardly ever questioned. Too close are its ties to central political, cultural and ethical ideas for criticism of interculturalism not to run the danger of moral disapprobation. It is doubtless one of the most precious achievements of enlightened thought to have put paid to contempt of the outsider, at least in theory and in the name of humanity. But it is exactly this tradition which has left behind a fund of unresolved issues. An interculturalism in thought and deed, unenlightened as to its own constitutive conditions, threatens to fall victim to these issues.” (Brenner 1989, p. 37)

13 “Language embraces more than anything else in people, it embraces the whole human race. It is precisely in its capacity to keep races apart that it unites the variety of the individualisms by means of the mutual comprehension of foreign speech, without doing them harm.” (Humboldt, p. 117)

14 see here the comments cited by Roth 1991, p. 46: “Intercultural education is seen not as a pedagogic task in its own right, which is to be performed in addition to the accustomed things which have been called for to date, but as a general principle, which has to be given due recognition in all areas of our education system” (Hegele, 1986, 158). “We would want intercultural education to become superfluous as a special area in general education, because the multiethnic and multicultural dimension is included in thinking about general education” (Essinger and Kula, 1987, 5) “Intercultural education is not a (new) special type of education, and no new definition of education. But intercultural education will be able to redefine the educational task.” (Borelli, 1986, p. 24)

15 See here Metz 1993, p. 225: "Are we Europeans possibly discovering the value of other cultures, the dignity of the Other's Otherness, in a situation in which there are fewer and fewer of these culturally Other? Is it not the case that all cultures by now are subjects of a profane Europeanisation of the world? Has Europe not spread out over the whole globe by now – via its science and technology and information and communications industries? And does this profane Europeanisation of the world not also change the mentalities of the peoples it encounters?" and Schütze 1994, p. 68: "The foreign falls victim to the hegemony of a modern worldview."

16 see Schütze 1994, p. 74f: "There is no multicultural society – unless one took the conflict over the pros and cons of different ways of using a WC seriously, or fought against discriminating against garlic. There are only two cultures: the socially well-integrated and established part of humanity and the culture of poverty. The vast culture of poverty does not come under ethnic diversity, whose right of self-affirmation is the concern of multiculturalism. The poor, the violent even, are the foreigners who cannot behave as guests – so away with them. Whoever suffers from hunger has an unarticulated foreignness. He has no strength to socialise himself into becoming the Other. And the violence of the suburbs is indeed, as ritualised violence, quite close to the violence of life before its humanisation, but it is at the same time naked violence: it can neither be criminalised nor rehabilitated. There is no hope in the culture of poverty, which dominates a large part of the world. That culture is too far beyond the normal absorption capacity of the system. But the fact that this culture does not generate any differentiation is not enough to insert it into any sort of revolutionary construction. (...) unsentimental incomprehension, which is expressed in nothing but pragmatic indifference, governs attitudes to a poverty which confuses us, to impenetrable violence and to the hunger phenomenon, which will just not go away. They merely disconcert us, because they exceed our emotional capacity."

17 see Burghart 1994, p. 51: "So what is the particular problem underlying intercultural communication? Perhaps one could redefine it as follows: some of the knowledge each interaction partner contributes is not mutually congruent and yet each partner presupposes that the other sees it as self-evident. That need not lead to conflict but it can be assumed that the risk of incomprehension, misunderstanding or complete failure is larger when the normality expectations held by the interaction partners, and developed out of social experience, differ. If misunderstandings occur, they can be addressed and repaired by the discussants. But if they remain unrecognised and if this leads to a total failure of the interaction, the cause is seldom sought in one's own understanding and much more frequently in the behaviour of the other. And this in turn is the source of stereotypes, ie widely-generalising, emotionally-determined judgements frequently directed against groups".

18 see Kramsch 1993

19 Critically, and in extenso: Schütze 1994

20 see Brenner 1989, p. 51: "Unprejudiced understanding of the foreign cannot be achieved and where it is attempted, it leads only to unconscious prejudices succeeding behind the backs of the subjects."

21 see Roth 1991, p.46: "So the educational aim has to be not to devalue foreignness by labelling it "prejudices" but to comprehend it as the prerequisite for all learning processes and thus also for intercultural understanding. But educationalists must not remain at the level of verbalising this sort of notion, usually uttered emotionally: they should aim at raising conscious awareness of alienation experiences as normality, so as to make them accessible to individuals, thereby creating for them the opportunity to deal with such experiences."

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