In this paper, we explore ways in which the results of our studies on emotion communication across cultures (on which we report in the other paper we present at this symposium) can be used as a starting point for material and activity design, within a language socialization approach, and with a view to develop learners’ intercultural competence. Starting from theoretical and pedagogical considerations, we illustrate our rationale for material design, demonstrate some sample activities and suggest implementation strategies, as well as methods for evaluation.

**Background**

Crozet and Liddicoat (2000) identified four main approaches to culture teaching in language courses, which correspond to four different interpretations of “culture”, as:

- High culture, identified mainly with traditional literary studies
- Area studies, or “culture and civilisation”, ie history, geography, and so forth;
- Societal norms, which concern “typical practices and values” observed in the target group and
- Practice, or the actual behaviours and practices enacted by individuals belonging to the target group.

Some of these approaches, and especially the first two, are based on an idea of culture as a static body of factual knowledge that needs to be acquired by students. However, this type of knowledge can only marginally contribute to developing learners’ intercultural...
competence. The distinction between the last two points is also important, because it emphasises the potential mismatch between what is considered a cultural norm, on the one hand, and variability in individual behaviour due to differing degrees with which members of a group conform to societal norms, on the other. Hofstede (1980), for example, identifies three types of “software of the mind”, which regulate human behaviour: universal, collective and individual, where the latter accounts for individual variability and personality traits within a collectivity, or social group.

Even when viewing culture as societal norms, it is fundamental to remember that cultures change, not only across groups, but also diachronically, within the same group and even within one’s individual experience (Kramsch, 1993). Consequently, learners should develop an open attitude and a flexible approach to the study of foreign cultures, by becoming ethnographers (Roberts et al., 2001), and engaging in participant observation, hypothesis generation and testing, while being willing to re-adjust their hypotheses in light of new observations.

Within the language socialization paradigm, learning a second language and culture is viewed as a process of socialisation into a community of speakers of the target language. The target language is thus a medium, a tool to access socioculturally situated meaning, as well as an end, in that “becoming a competent member of society” (Schiefflin & Ochs, 1986:168) involves being able to use linguistic means appropriately in every context. From this perspective, the last two categories of the list outlined above, that is, societal norms and practices, appear as the most interesting interpretations of “culture”, and this is what our study focuses on.

Our aim is to develop a dynamic approach to culture teaching and learning within the language curriculum, in which learners “actively engage with the practices of a cultural group” (Liddicoat, forthcoming). This requires a reshaping of learners’ own culture, which progresses through the stages of awareness of cross-cultural differences, knowledge of the target group’s norms, values and practices, and actual practice to develop intercultural communication skills (Hofstede 1991). The ultimate goal is the development of intercultural competence, which involves not only acceptance of but also appreciation for cultural differences, and an ability to function within both one’s own and the target cultural group.

According to Byram (2000), intercultural competence can be described as a construct including five main elements:
- *attitudes*, and especially being open to new cultures and willing to explore new ways of responding to events;

- *knowledge* of social processes, of cultural products and practices in both one’s and the target culture;

- *skills of interpreting and relating*; interpreting events in the target culture and relating them to one’s own;

- *skills of discovery and interaction*; these involve the ability to build knowledge of the target culture and to “operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction” (2000, n.p.);

- *critical cultural awareness / political education*; being open to other cultures does not necessarily mean embracing every aspect of them. Learners should be able to engage in critical evaluation of both their own and the target culture’s values and practices (see also Kramsch, 1993).

As Byram puts it:

> In short, someone with some degree of intercultural competence is someone who is able to see relationships between different cultures – both internal and external to a society – and is able to mediate, that is interpret each in terms of the other, either for themselves or for other people. It is also someone who has a critical or analytical understanding of (parts of) their own and other cultures – someone who is conscious of their own perspective, of the way in which their thinking is culturally determined, rather than believing that their understanding and perspective is natural (2000, n.p.).

How this is achieved, however, is not always clear. In recent years, several publications have appeared that focus on culture teaching and learning within language programmes, and that depart from the traditional interpretation of culture as artifacts (e.g. Lo Bianco & Crozet, 2003; Moran, 2001, Kramsch, 1993). In particular, an interesting area of research has developed that investigates patterns of pragmatic development in a second language (e.g. Rose & Kasper, 2001; Kasper & Rose, 2002), given that this is where many learners, even at advanced levels of linguistic competence, encounter difficulties.

Much research in interlanguage, or developmental pragmatics, has focused on the development of learners’ ability to recognise and perform specific speech acts, such as
complaints or requests (e.g. Cohen & Ishihara, 2005), or to apply appropriate principles of politeness, for example by selecting address forms (e.g. Liddicoat & Crozet, 2001). While developing intercultural pragmatic knowledge and skills is fundamental to avoid misunderstandings and potential interpersonal clashes (see Thomas, 1983 for further discussion), Kramsch has observed that teaching pragmatics in the form of some formulaic expressions is a gross limitation as it overlooks the importance and influence of the context. Rather than providing learners with pre-fabricated forms to achieve pragmatic goals (which may not be effective due to the high variability determined by contextual factors), we should develop our students’ intercultural pragmatic knowledge “through observation and analysis and a feel for the whole social context” (Kramsch, 1993:92).

While the available literature on language and culture teaching and learning has focused on providing suggestions on how culture can be taught in the language classroom, effectiveness research in this area has been rather scarce. Furthermore, very little attention has been given to emotion communication, especially through non-verbal means, though with some exceptions (e.g. Dewaele & Pavlenko, 2002; Rintell, 1984). This is an important consideration, given that one of the fundamental skills that novices should acquire through language socialization is an ability to recognise cues to emotion communication in their interlocutors’ behavior, as well as to express their own feelings in ways that are considered appropriate by members of the target group (Schiefflin & Ochs, 1986).

Given our research interests in the communication of emotions across cultures, we are especially concerned with these issues. We believe that it is necessary to provide learners with opportunities to observe native speakers’ behaviour in naturalistic contexts, and to identify and understand the norms and values that relate to emotion communication, but also the individual practices, that we previously listed as part of the concept of culture.

Therefore, our aim is to integrate our research data into the language and culture curriculum, to encourage our learners to become ethnographers, to be open to hypotheses on other people’s behaviour, and to develop flexibility in their approach. Such flexibility would allow them to re-adjust their hypotheses if needed, rather than taking a monolithic, stereotype-based approach to the study of culture. Opportunities for
practice must also be provided, so that learners can test their hypotheses and refine their inter-cultural communication skills in a non-threatening environment.

**Material design & implementation**

Within a language socialization paradigm, interaction is both a means and an end: language students acquire knowledge and skills through exposure to a variety of “meaningful, challenging, and cohesive interactional activities” (Kasper & Rose, 2002). Instructional materials and activities to be developed for this project should provide learners with opportunities to recognize and interpret cues to emotion communication (ie assign meaning to specific events in specific contexts, with guidance from others), engage in meaningful interaction, and practice means to express own feelings and respond to interlocutors in ways that are considered appropriate by members of the target group.

We expect that this will be done through learners’ exposure to a selection of video segments showing authentic or semi-authentic interactions between native speakers of the target language. Subsequently, learners will be guided through analyses of the speakers’ verbal and non-verbal behaviour to identify communication strategies employed and the consequences of such behaviour on the exchange.

This first stage mainly involves the phases of observation, hypothesis generation and discussion. Students could be asked to:

1) Make predictions on people’s behaviour given a certain scenario and contextual information. For example: “Location: Northern Italy, a small town north of Milan. A gardener (in his late twenties or early thirties) who has been employed as part of a drug rehabilitation programme is mowing the lawn outside an office. He inadvertently cuts some flowers that a woman (in her late forties) working inside the office has recently planted. The woman realizes what is happening and confronts the gardener. How do you expect the conversation to unfold?”

2) Watch a film sequence from which the scenario has been extracted and analyse spoken discourse and non-verbal behaviour.

3) Discuss differences between the predictions and the actual behaviour observed.

4) Discuss their perceptions of the characters’ personalities, based on behaviour in the scene.
5) Access perceptions of the same characters’ personalities as produced by individuals of the target group (in this case, Italian native speakers, who have had little contact with “foreign” cultures, i.e., they have never lived abroad, have travelled only occasionally. Possibly, compare with perceptions by Italians who have spent years living in Australia) and identify differences (if any).

6) Try to explain observed differences (make hypotheses and discuss). What are the underlying norms and values at play? Would all individuals from the target group behave the same way (also based on perception of their behaviour as appropriate / inappropriate by other individuals of the same group)?

7) Discuss how the same scene could be enacted in one’s own culture (e.g., “Anglo-Australian”): Would the characters behave differently to convey the same meaning?

These activities provide opportunities for learners to engage in meaningful interaction, develop or refine analysis skills (what Byram refers to as interpreting, relating and discovery skills, as mentioned previously), as well as practise interactional skills in the target language. As Kramsch observes, “by having students externalize their interpreting process and confronting them with others in the group, and by having them commit themselves to one interpretation among the many considered … dialogue can be used to both enact and reflect upon the construction of meaning as social practice” (p. 103).

Finally, learners could be involved in activities requiring enactment of these strategies, possibly through role-plays. Role-plays provide advantages in that learners’ interactions can take place in a “safe” context, they can be video-taped and then compared to the original video-segment, as well as analysed and discussed with the class, therefore enhancing self-monitoring, meta-pragmatic awareness and analysis skills.

Unlike naturalistic conversation, role-plays constrain learners’ production, so that their choice of communicative means in relation to contextual factors can be observed (Kasper & Rose, 2002). By varying the instructions or scenarios, learners can be led to reflect upon the different ways in which the same meaning can be exchanged by selecting different linguistic means, in keeping with socio-pragmatic norms, and with different outcomes. However, in order for learners to be able to engage in role-plays effectively, they need to have acquired the necessary knowledge and skills to select the communicative means that are appropriate for the given situation. This is why we feel
that role-plays can only be implemented towards the end of a unit of work, only after the phases of observation, hypothesis generation and discussion have been completed.

Material design and the drawing of a plan for implementing teaching activities are to be carried out during Semester 1, 2006. This will involve the selection and coding of film-based extracts to use as resources in teaching activities, together with the design and development of multimedia-based, interactive tasks (possibly delivered on DVD) and a small pilot-test of sample activities with a small group of students, in order to incorporate their input.

At this stage, due to limited time and resources, we are focusing on one emotion only – anger – since this has been the focus of our research so far. However, we would like to extend our project to cover a range of emotions and cross-cultural differences in their communication.

[Other sample activities will be shown during the symposium]

**Evaluation**

In order to evaluate the soundness of our approach and the usefulness of our materials, it is necessary to engage in some form of assessment of learners’ intercultural competence. This raises a number of issues, as the area of assessment of cultural competence is notoriously complex (see Deardorff, 2004 for a useful discussion). This is because of the multifaceted nature of the construct, as previously discussed, as well as of the impossibility to observe some of the expected outcomes directly. Byram notes that “most difficult of all is to assess whether students have changed their attitudes, become more tolerant of differences and the unfamiliar. This is affective and moral development and it can be argued that even if we can assess it, we should not be trying to quantify tolerance” (2000, n.p.).

Attempts have been made to build detailed frameworks, or inventories, for the assessment of intercultural competence. One of these attempts, the “Intercultural Competence Assessment” or INCA project (2004), was developed with support from the EU’s Leonardo da Vinci programme, with a view to complement the existing criteria for the assessment of communicative competence set by the Common European Framework.
Within the INCA inventory, six elements of intercultural competence are assessed across three levels, which range from “basic”, to “intermediate”, to “full”. The six components of intercultural competence assessed are: Tolerance of ambiguity, Behavioural flexibility, Communicative awareness, Knowledge discovery, Respect for otherness, and Empathy. Once again, many of these competencies are not directly observable. However, they can be assessed using qualitative tools, such as portfolios and learners’ journals. The INCA manual suggests that observations by the assessor be compared to self-assessment measures provided by the assessee to arrive at a final result. The instruments used for assessment are questionnaires, scenarios and role-plays. Criteria for the assessment of each element are also provided. More details will be provided during the symposium. For those interested, the INCA assessor manual is available online at: http://www.incaproject.org/en_downloads/21_INCA_Assessor_Manual_eng_final.pdf.

In keeping with the ethnographic nature of the language socialization approach (Kasper & Rose, 2002), we could collect data by recording learners’ interactions during analysis and discussion of the video segments (both film sequences and recorded role-plays). Analyses of these corpora would focus on evidence of those skills and attitudes we previously identified as components of intercultural competence, and especially of a development pattern, therefore adopting a longitudinal point of view (for example, changes in students’ attitudes and skills from the beginning to the end of a unit of work, or from the beginning to the end of a semester).

Students could also be asked to keep a diary or produce a portfolio, in which they reflect upon the process of development of their own intercultural competence through participation in the learning activities. A sample format for the portfolio is available in Byram (2000), which could be combined with elements of the INCA (2004) framework. This methodology would provide opportunities for triangulation, as data obtained through self-report and observation would be combined to strengthen the validity of the study.

Data on learners’ perceptions of and attitudes toward the materials and activities accessed during the study would also be collected, probably through questionnaires, with a view to refine our tools.
It is hoped that, during the symposium, there will be opportunities for us to discuss our views on the next steps that we need to take to advance this project, in terms of material design, implementation, and evaluation. We welcome any feedback and suggestions from the members of the LInC group on these matters.
References


