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What do we mean by teaching and learning? Considerations from an intercultural perspective.

Doris Fetscher

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Objet: Problem mit französischer Methodik/Mentalität

Hello Mr. P,

The first courses and projects have now started in L., and it is already apparent that my usual methodology/mentality does not necessarily match the expected approach. During school, the bachelor's program and also at work, I was always required to look at every task critically - the wording, the parties involved, the overall social context, etc. However, in the group work that is now beginning, I am increasingly being told that my contributions are 'too broad' and cannot really be incorporated into our work. I've heard the well-intentioned advice 'ne te prends pas la tête (,pense moins)' more than once, but I have to admit that I don't really know what is expected of me instead. You know both systems, French and German. Do you have any advice for me on how I can adapt my way of thinking and working for L.?

Yours sincerely, Sabine M.

Three levels of analysis in social sciences and intercultural communication

- **Micro-level** of interpersonal communication (face-to-face or computer mediated)
- **Meso-level** of institutional communication (e.g. organisation and type of exams, time tables, tools for information)
- **Macro-level** of political communication (e.g. national or european education policies, laws, decrees, political ideologies that contain a certain image of humanity)

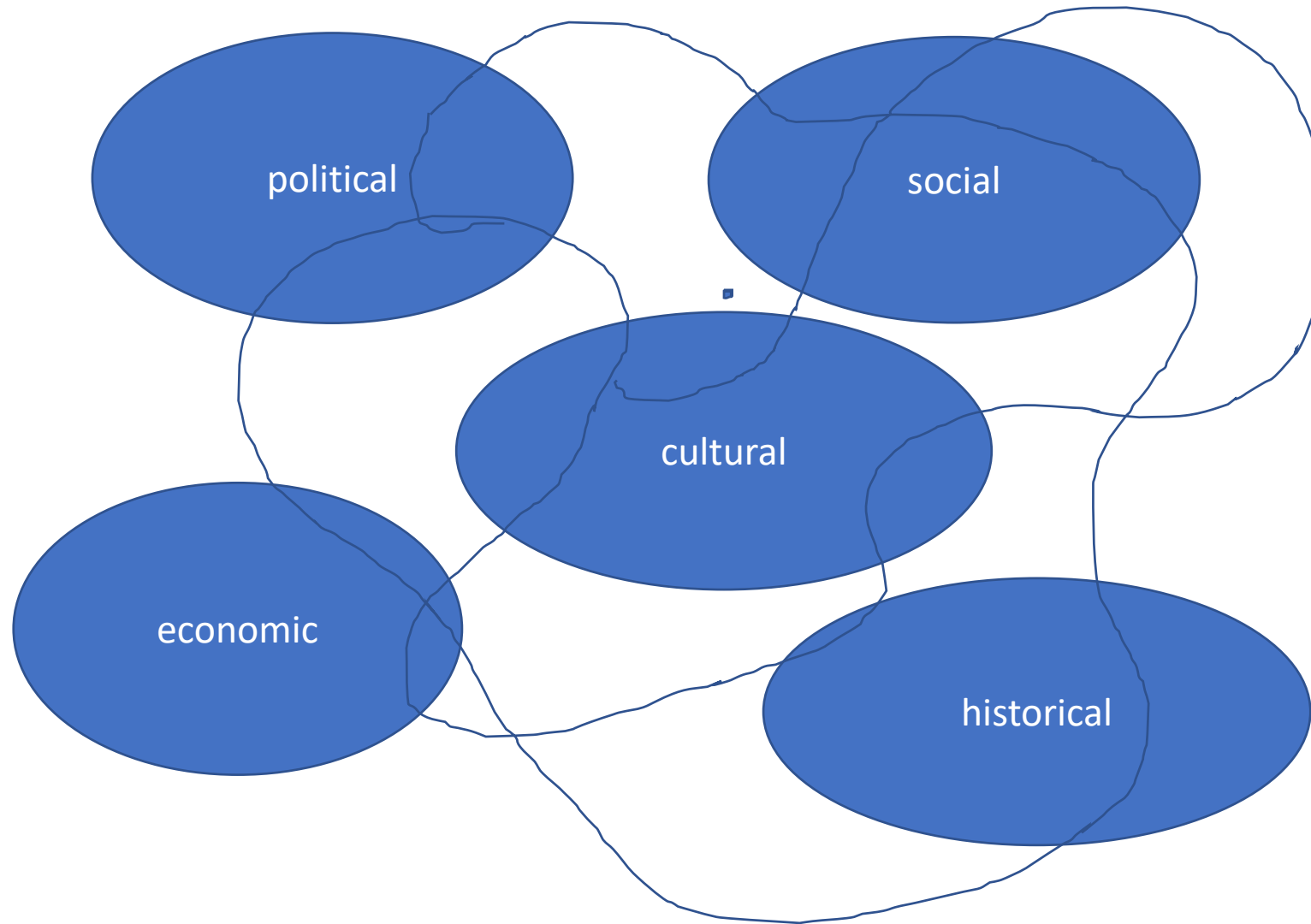
Cf. Schubert, Klaus/Martina Klein: Das Politiklexikon. 7., aktual. u. erw. Aufl. Bonn: Dietz 2020.
Lizenzausgabe Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung.

“While the German educational concept emphasises ‘self-maturation’, in which the individual develops in a self-determined way (Büttner 2002), the French concept is characterised more by heteronomy. An interesting aspect is that French educational institutions from primary school to the Grandes Ecoles are still influenced in their principles by the Jesuit colleges of the 17th and 18th centuries. These include teacher-centred teaching, competition among students, ‘aemulation’ (competition), the development of the intellect and training in systematic, logical written work and rhetorical brilliance (Bourdieu 1979, Götze 1993, Große/ Lüger 2000, Zettelmeier 2005). The German system of studying primary sources, discussing problems and developing opinions tends to be influenced by Protestantism, which is associated with attributes such as duty, diligence, perseverance, self-discipline and self-directed development of the individual (Pateau 1998a, Todd 1996, Weber 1905).” (Barmeyer 2013 :272)

[translated with DeepL]

Barmeyer, Christoph (2013). Kulturvergleichende und kulturspezifische Perspektiven auf Führung und Organisation in deutschen und französischen Kooperationen. Eine Anwendung des Passauer Drei-Ebenen-Modells. In Wawra, Daniela (ed.). European Studies – Interkulturelle Kommunikation und Kulturvergleich. Peter Lang. p. 255-282

The political, historical, economic, social, cultural dimensions of analysis



The socio-economic dimension

Intrinsic or extrinsic motivation?

- Choice of the university and the field of study
- Financing your studies
- 'Eating skills rice'

“At least for our generation, when we were in middle school and university, we were told by our parents and teachers to study hard, get good marks, be good, and make a living by *eating skills rice* [...] in the future.

The pidginised translation of the saying [...] means that hard skills are long term guarantee of bringing rice onto the dining table. Since the job market in China is highly competitive, eating skills rice has always been valued by parents and teachers alike. [...] Jim’s remarks reveal the fact that Chinese people believe in education and that middle-class parents have a habitus that predisposes them to invest in their children’s education. Jim’s words also signify that informants educational experiences and their ability to learn new technologies are the result of that investment - a kind embodied cultural capital that they acquired in China and can capitalise on to compete in the Canadian job market.”

(Zhang 2022: 14)

Zhang, Fan (2022). Well-educated, middle-class Chinese immigrants in Canada. In: *Language and Intercultural Communication*. Vo.22, Number 1, p.9-20

The socio-economic dimension

Intrinsic or extrinsic motivation?

- Choice of the university and the field of study
- Financing your studies
- 'Eating skills rice'
- Teachers' salaries

The intercultural perspective

The intercultural perspective focusses on what happens when we are in interpersonal contact with people with different backgrounds at the micro level of communication and then negotiate these differences.

From a conversation analysis perspective, negotiation does not automatically mean that we talk about differences explicitly on a meta-level, as Sabine did, but that differences are also implicitly made relevant.

Moments of intercultural awakening

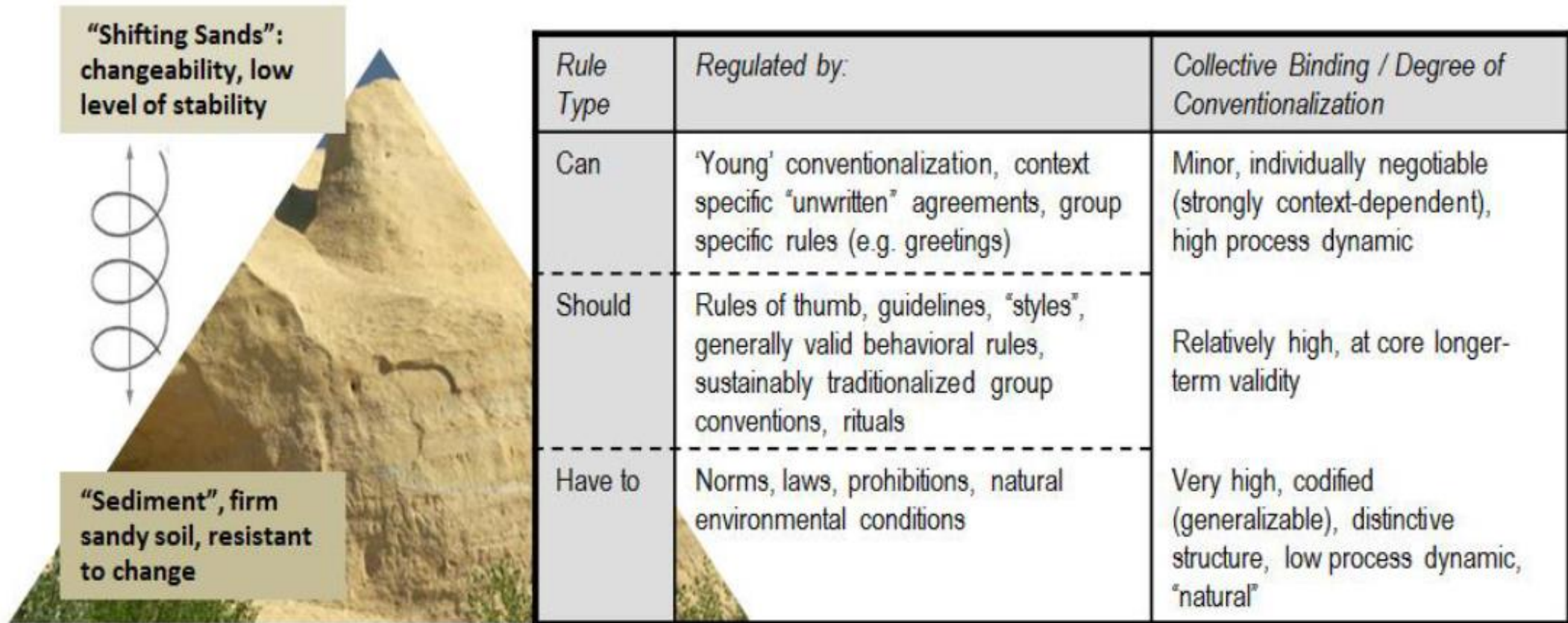
The Danish and the Belarusian student

The roles of teachers and students

Who can talk
about **what**
to **whom**
in **which way**,
in **which situation?**

(inspired by Dell H.Hymes, Ethnography of speaking, 1962)

The Dune Model – or: How to Describe Cultures (Bolten 2014)



Diana

“We didn't have that many in-depth discussions. It was very general and the discussions on didactics were mainly about the Francophone context. We forgot that Malaysia is not a French-speaking country [...] Sometimes, we can't implement activities [learnt during the training in our own teaching context]. When we got back [to Malaysia], we were very motivated, but afterwards we were very disappointed.” (Riget 2014: 105)

[translated by DeepL]

Riget, Patricia (2014), Pertinence de la formation en France et adéquation aux besoins malésiens : entre théorie et pratiques. In: Machart & Fred Dervin, (eds.), Les nouveaux enjeux des mobilités et migrations académiques. L'Harmattan. Logiques Sociales.

Group work and cooperation at the **micro** level



language and co-operation seminar/ Universität Augsburg

Rough transcript Group I (the sequence lasts **20 seconds**)

(The people are named in clockwise order: A, B, C, D. The speaker R is off-screen.)

B: (reading from a piece of paper) Your task is to finish the puzzle as quickly as possible by working together as a group. Decide in advance who among you will be allowed to see the solution briefly.

D: Where is the solution? You have it (to the speaker)

R: Mhm

B: Who should take a quick look at it?(short pause)

B: (laughs) Ok, yes, I'll do it, I'll do it.

R: You?

B: Yes.

The speakers of German as native language (L1)



Rough transcript Group II (sequence lasts **38 seconds**)

(The people are named clockwise from A, B, C, D)

A: (reading from a sheet of paper that B unfolds) Your task is to finish the puzzle as quickly as possible by working together as a group. Decide beforehand, who of you is allowed to see the solution briefly.

(2-second pause)

D: Who?

A: Who has the best memory?

(Everyone laughs)

C: (very quietly, almost inaudibly) Don't know.

(3-second pause)

B: (very quietly) Mm, (louder) yes.

A: Yes what?

D: You? (points to B) What about you? You? (points to A)

A: I can look.

D: Ok.

The speakers of German as a lingua franca from Russia, Poland, Hungary, Uzbekistan



Politeness conventions that have been made relevant

It is impolite to put oneself at the centre

One should wait to be directly asked

It is necessary to negotiate who might be the best for a certain task

It is necessary to negotiate who should be asked first due to his or her age, status or experience

Group work and cooperation at the **micro** level



language and co-operation seminar/ Universität Augsburg

Interculturally sensitive areas

Group work  teacher-centred learning

Class discussions  frontal teaching

Procedural knowledge  declarative knowledge

Self-maturation and responsibility  heteronomy

A possible intercultural attitude

“Interculturality [...] proceeds methodically as follows: it does not privilege any system of concepts from the outset, nor does it treat cultures and philosophies in a stages based theorie. [...] The study of philosophy from an intercultural perspective is located beyond all centrism[s] [...]” (Ram 1995: 2)

“The motto of comparative philosophy is: **the desire to understand and the desire to be understood are inextricably linked and represent two sides of the intercultural hermeneutic medal.**” (Ram 1995: 2)

Ram, Adhar Mall (1995). Philosophie im Vergleich der Kulturen. Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft. Darmstadt.

Thank you for your attention!