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Third places and the interactive construction of interculturality in the English as foreign/additional language classroom

Gloria Gil

Departamento de Língua e Literatura Estrangeira, Centro de Comunicação e Expressão, Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Prédio B, sala 118, Campus Universitário, Trindade, 88040-900, Florianópolis, Santa Catarina, Brazil. E-mail: glorigil@gmail.com

ABSTRACT. Based on the assumption that the construction of interculturality in third places is essential for foreign/additional language teaching and learning, this paper aims at discussing how these third places are interactively constructed in real classrooms. In order to achieve that objective, I will first review some theoretical studies that have dealt with the construction of third places and interculturality in the classroom. Then, the methodological procedures will be explained. After that, I will contextualize, analyze and compare some real classroom episodes taken from different studies pointing out their different interactional features. The findings show that the episodes investigated present two types, having either an 'essentialist cultural orientation' or an 'intercultural orientation'. In the former orientation, the episodes cannot be considered third places as culture is an object constructed as an entity in its own right (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). On the other hand, in the latter orientation, third places seem to be constructed as teachers and learners are seemingly interactively engaged in the practice of meaning-making by confronting different points of view.

Keywords: English language classroom, interaction, cultural and intercultural orientations, intercultural approach.

Terceiros espaços e a construção interativa da interculturalidade na sala de inglês como língua adicional

RESUMO. Partindo do pressuposto de que a construção da interculturalidade em terceiros lugares é essencial no ensino e na aprendizagem de línguas estrangeiras/adicionais, o presente trabalho tem como objetivo discutir como esses terceiros lugares podem ser construídos de forma interativa em salas de aula reais. Para atingir esse objetivo, vou, primeiramente, revisar alguns estudos teóricos que têm lidado com a construção de terceiros lugares e interculturalidade. Em seguida, os procedimentos metodológicos serão explicados. Depois disso, buscarei contextualizar, analisar e comparar vários episódios de salas de aula reais provenientes de uma gama estudos que apontam para diferentes características de interação. Os resultados mostram que os episódios investigados são de dois tipos, apresentando ou uma 'orientação cultural essencialista' ou uma 'orientação intercultural'. Na orientação cultural essencialista, os episódios não estabelecem terceiros lugares, já que "[...] a cultura é vista como um objeto em si mesma" (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013, p. 48). Por outro lado, na orientação intercultural, terceiros lugares são construídos interativamente pelos professores e alunos envolvidos na negociação de significados por meio do confrontamento de diferentes pontos de vista.

Palavras-chave: sala de aula de inglês, interação, orientação cultural e intercultural, abordagem intercultural.

Introduction

In the last years, the role of culture and its relationship with language in the foreign/additional[1] language classroom has been a widely debated issue in the field of applied linguistics. Several authors, such as Byram (1997), Byram, Gribkoba, and Starkey (2002), Corbett (2003), Crozet and Liddicoat (1999), and Kramsch (1993, 2005, 2013) have proposed that the appropriate way to deal with the culture and language intersection is to adopt an intercultural approach to teaching/learning. That approach, instead of aiming at developing learners' native-like communicative competence, as suggested by the Communicative Approach, aims at helping them in the process of developing intercultural competence. This competence can be defined, based on Byram (1997), as constituted by five capacities, namely, 'savoirs' (knowledge of self and other, of interaction, of individual and

[1] In this paper, although I prefer the term 'additional language', which unlike 'foreign language' is not tainted with the myth of the native speaker supremacy and the prejudice that exists towards those who are not native speakers of a language, I have decided to use 'foreign/additional' because most of the authors cited use the term 'foreign language'.

societies), 'savoir apprendre/faire' (skills to discover and/or interact), 'savoir comprendre' (skills to interpret and relate), 'savoir s'engager' (critical cultural awareness,) and 'savoir être' (attitudes of relativizing the self, decentering and valuing others).

Furthermore, an intercultural approach to language teaching and learning can be considered an attempt to value the students' home culture, helping them acquire strategies for the systematic observation of cultural aspects in their own and the foreign/additional language, that is, helping them to become amateur 'ethnographers'. For Byram et al. (2002), the intercultural dimension in language teaching should make students act as mediators in the intercultural process where stereotypes and prejudices should be avoided. Thus, from an intercultural perspective, the teaching of a foreign/additional language should provide the transformational engagement of the learner by exploring, problematizing, and redrawing the boarders between the self and the other (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013).

One of the initial proponents of the intercultural approach is Kramsch (1993), who fosters a way of teaching/learning language and culture primarily based on the establishment of an intercultural sphere (Kramsch, 1993). In this sphere, called a 'third place', culture should not be seen as an object to be apprehended but as an interpersonal process to understand otherness. Therefore, an intercultural communicator can be understood as someone who has the general ability to understand otherness and to be aware of one's own values and perspectives. Some authors have used the 'third place' metaphor created by Kramsch and speculated about its importance for the development of intercultural competence or awareness. In view of that, this paper has the aim of investigating how interculturality is constructed in third places in real classrooms through the analysis of some episodes from some empirical studies of classroom interaction that have investigated cultural and/or intercultural dimensions.

This paper will have the following organization. After this brief introduction, I will review Kramsch's and some other authors' central concepts and ideas related to the third place and interculturality. Then, I will present some methodological aspects of the research, namely the research questions, the analysis procedures and the contextual characteristics of the studies reviewed. Later on, I will illustrate and analyze some episodes from some empirical studies in order to understand the actual enactment of interculturality and third places. Finally, I will summarize the findings and reflect upon third places and interculturality.

Intercultural dialogue in the classroom: the third place

As already mentioned in the introduction to this paper, Kramsch (1993) introduced the term 'third place' to metaphorically refer to a way of teaching/learning primarily based on the creation of an intercultural sphere (Kramsch, 1993), where culture should not be seen as an object to be understood but as an 'interpersonal process to understand otherness'. Thus, in this space, the presentation/prescription of cultural facts and behaviors is not important per se, but should be included in the teaching of that process of understanding. Furthermore, within this sphere it is necessary to understand 'culture as difference' without reducing culture simply to national traits, such as 'Germans are like this', 'Brazilians are like that', and including other cultural aspects such as age, gender and ethnic background. Central to Kramsch's idea of an intercultural approach is the assumption that the perception of our own culture and the culture of the other is never direct but always tainted by the lenses of our own culture, which eventually may lead us to have a somehow stereotyped view of 'cultures'.

Also, for Kramsch, this third place is considered a hybrid one that combines the culture(s) of the language being taught and the social characteristics of the learner's environment. This idea is based on the premise that, as learners acquire a new language, they will also be acquiring a new culture (or cultural identity). However, this culture is not expected to be the same of the learners' native culture or the culture(s) of the language they are studying. Interestingly, within Byram's (1997) model of intercultural competence, mentioned before, there is one capacity called 'intercultural attitudes' ('savoir être') which closely resembles Kramsch's ideas. For Byram, to have an 'intercultural attitude' means being able to reflect upon one's own values and beliefs and understand that they are not the only 'correct' ones, and also be able to see how these values and beliefs might look from an outsider's point of view, someone who has different values, beliefs and behaviours. In order to have this savoir, it is necessary to have attitudes of openness and curiosity and, when opening up, the learner can start a movement of 'decentering'. This movement is named by Kramsch based on Bakhtin's ideas, 'transgradience', and refers to "[…] the ability of speakers to see themselves from the outside" (Kramsch, 2013, p. 62). Therefore, the 'third place' metaphor highlights two interrelated aspects of the

intercultural approach: the multiplicity of cultural identities to which we belong, thus rejecting the fallacy of 'one nation = one culture' (O'Dowd, 2003), and the (potential) learners' distance from both the home and target cultures.

Kramsch's (2013) suggests in this last respect that language learners apprehend who they are through their encounter with the other and adds that

> Learning about a foreign culture without being aware of one's own discursive practices can lead to an ahistorical or anachronistic understanding of others and to an essentialized and, hence, limited understanding of the Self (Kramsch, 2013, p. 69).

Furthermore, Kramsch (1993, p. 11) adds that, in the foreign language classroom, it is necessary to have a discursive perspective of language, because "[…] between the learner and the language, between the teacher and the learners and among the learners, discourse is the process through which we create, relate, organize and realize meaning". Therefore, every time language learners use the foreign/additional language

> […] they are not only exchanging information with their interlocutors; they are also constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world. They are, in other words, engaged in identity construction and negotiation (Norton, 1997, p. 410).

Therefore, considering that identities are constructed and maintained through the interplay of language and culture, additional language classrooms can be considered potential environments for the construction of third places where the negotiation of the learners' identities takes place. In that sense, I might suggest that teachers and learners interacting in the classroom have an essential role in the construction of culture representations because "[…] identity negotiation as the full realization of the cultural content ultimately depends on them" (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999, p. 210). Risager (2007) suggests that the inclusion of cultural content in language education necessarily involves the creation of 'cultural representations', which "[…] convey images or narratives of culture and society in particular contexts" (Risager, 2007, p. 180).

According to Cortazzi and Jin (1999, p. 210), then, culture learning in classrooms might also be seen as a 'process of dialogue' "[…] in which students negotiate meaning and identity […]" with the other (the teacher, the other students and author of the textbook and other materials and their cultural content). Cortazzi and Jin (1999, p. 210, our underline) also suggest that this negotiation is:

> […] mediated in the classroom with 'a teacher' who manages the way in which the students see the culture mirrored in the textbook. Teachers may not only mediate textbook content for students, but also the ways in which students see themselves.

Now, even though Cortazzi and Jin (1999), like Byran et al (2002), attribute to the teacher a central role in the mediation, Kramsch (1993) offers a slightly different interpretation, because, for her,

> […] even though in classrooms through this dialogical approach teachers and learners may construct an understanding of the differences in values celebrated by different cultures, teachers cannot teach directly how to resolve the conflict among them, and explicitly states that we [teachers] can teach the boundary, but we cannot teach the bridge (Kramsch, 1993, p. 228).

Therefore, learners are the ones who should locate themselves in these 'boundaries' along the 'faultlines' which "[…] grow in the interstices between the cultures the learner grew up with and new cultures he or she is being introduced to" (Kramsch, 1993, p. 236).

Menard-Warwick (2009), who like Kramsch (1993) and Cortazzi and Jin (1999), holds the assumption that culture representations are discursively constructed in classrooms by teachers and students, borrows Kramsch's metaphor of 'discursive faultlines' (Kramsch, 1993) in her study. For Menard-Warwick (2009) these 'faultlines' can be considered areas of cultural difference or misunderstanding that become manifest in classroom talk when teachers and/or students contest each other's culture representations.

Unfortunately, with a few exceptions (such as Menard-Warwick (2009), who analyses actual teacher and learners' interactions), most of the debate on third places and interculturality remains mainly at a theoretical level without relating it to what actually happens in real classrooms with real teachers and learners. The amount of theoretical studies on the language and culture relationship in EF/AL pedagogy and intercultural language teaching and learning (among which are the theoretical studies mentioned in the introduction and in this section) greatly surpasses the amount of the empirical studies investigating it with real people and in real classrooms.

Methodology

The main objective of this paper, as previously stated, is to contribute to the field of Applied Linguistics by bringing some light on the actual construction of interculturality in third places in real

classrooms. In order to do that, I will review and discuss some data and insights from some of the few empirical studies that investigate the discursive construction of culture representations in teacher/students' interactions.

This paper aims specifically at answering the following questions:

- When is a cultural representation constructed in the classrooms?
- Are there culturally-oriented moments which do not enact third places?
- What characterizes a third place moment interactively constructed?

The methodology, thus, will comprise the analysis of some real samples of classroom interaction taken from some of the few (to my knowledge) studies of culture representations constructed in additional language classroom interaction, namely, Sarmento (2004), França (2007), Menard-Warwick (2009) and Volpato (2014). The transcripts of classroom interaction are reproduced here exactly as they appear in the original texts, with most of the interactions constructed in English and with some occurrences of Portuguese-English code-switching.

Those studies were chosen due to the fact that they take place in a similar kind of context: the foreign/additional language classroom. That context can be defined as an educational environment where learners guided by a teacher are instructed to learn a language which is not widely used by the members of the community, although some of the learners can use the language in virtual (internet) communities such as communities of video game players. Moreover, most of the students belong to more or less similar cultural groups both linguistic and ethnically. Among the several reasons why the students attend these language classrooms, the most important can be that the classes are a compulsory general education requirement. Also, in some cases, some students may have decided to participate in these classrooms for some other reasons, such as to study or travel abroad, to get a better job, to become an English teacher, or just for the sake of knowing a different language.

Now, I would like to present some contextual characteristics of the studies being reviewed. One of them, Sarmento (2004), investigated the beliefs on culture teaching of seven teachers and their classroom interactions with students from an English school in a big city in Brazil. In another study, Volpato (2014) investigated the beliefs of two teachers of English from a language school regarding interculturality and the interaction of these teachers with their students also in a big city of Brazil. In addition, the empirical study on culture in the foreign language classroom carried out by França (2007), aims at identifying the kind of cultural approach two foreign language teachers used in class. The study was carried out in a public English School in Brasilia, the capital city of Brazil, with two non-native teachers. Finally, Menard-Warwick (2009) investigated the classes of some Chilean university EFL teachers to see how 'culture' is discursively represented. In other words, she meant to understand how "[…] images of culture […]" were co-constructed by teachers and student-teachers through a variety of classroom activities, most of which were focused on language skills rather than cultural knowledge (Menard-Warwick, 2009, p. 30).

Analysis and interpretation: the interactive co-construction of culture representations

In this section, I will analyze and interpret some excerpts, which will be called episodes, from the empirical studies carried by Sarmento (2004), França (2007), Menard-Warwick (2009) and Volpato (2014) aiming at understanding how culture is interactively constructed in additional language classrooms. Now, regarding the first research question, from the analysis of the samples of classroom interaction from those studies, I can conclude that a cultural representation is discursively/interactively constructed to become a topic in the classroom each time that teachers and learners refer to situations related to understandings and practices that are shared by some group of people. One example of a representation of culture from Sarmento (2004) shows one teacher (Paul) talking to his students about a habit that he believes is not shared by Brazilians, namely 'taking the cat out'. Thus, Episode 1 below refers to an interactive moment where it is put under consideration whether taking the cat out is a custom that Brazilians usually have. That topic seems to have come from an activity from the coursebook or some printed material:

Episode 1

1. Paul – Hélio, what do you have for 'the cat'?
2. S – Take the cat out.
3. Paul – Yeah! It's possible. You can see that in the picture, Take the cat out. But do you, here in Brazil, do you take the cat out for a walk? Do people do it?
4. S – When people are crazy. [The students and the teachers laugh]
5. Paul – Ok. Let's move on to the next verb.

(Sarmento, 2004, p. 243)

In the episode above, the situation 'about a cat' is not contextualized and the short exchange only leads

to the co-construction of an essentialized cultural representation. In other words, in the exchange Brazilians as a cultural group are implicitly represented as homogenous and static. This essentialism is constructed in the short conversation and triggered by the teacher's question in turn 3 and further constructed when one of the students comments, in turn 4, that taking out the cat is done 'When people are crazy'. As that answer is not further problematized either by the teacher or the other students, this also re-affirms the essentialist nature of the conversation. This is then, one example from some studies that have shown (Sarmento, 2004; Volpato, 2014) that mainly visible and isolated cultural aspects as fixed entities are usually constructed in the language classroom.

In another study, Volpato (2014) also shows that in many moments the teachers participating in her study, like the teachers investigated by Sarmento (2004), also construct fixed cultural representations with their students by transmitting culture as information, as habits and as language. Volpato (2014) also provides examples where teachers and students stereotype and/or essentialize people by reducing complex human beings to someone who is a mere representative of a country or community (Byram et al., 2002). Furthermore, the findings from research on classroom interaction from Sarmento (2004) and partly (as we will see below) from Volpato (2014) show that cultural representations that are constructed either from the book contents or from the participants' comments in the interaction are not usually problematized by the participants.

For example, the dialogue below is inside a larger conversation about how a person should behave in a country that has different customs from Brazil. The teacher is talking to her students about customs related to some other countries and about how they would be dealt by Brazilians. In the dialogue below, the teacher and the students are dealing with one sentence brought by the book, namely, 'In Germany you are expected to be on time'.

Episode 2

1. T: What else are you expected to do?
2. Ss: Arrive on time.
3. T: Arrive on time, not early and not late, on time.
4. S1: If you are gonna be more than thirty minutes later …
5. T: You should call.
6. S1: Call and tell them.
7. T: Here in Brazil to be fifteen minutes late is okay? If you are expecting someone for dinner, the person is fifteen minutes late it's kind of expected, no?
8. T: If you tell someone, be at my house at 8:00 and the person arrives at 8:20.
9. S2: It's common.
10. S3: It's like on time.

(Volpato, 2014, p. 37).

It is possible to observe on turns (3) and (7) that both the teacher and the students are making gross generalizations by considering that everybody in Germany behaves in one way and everybody in Brazil behaves in another way. In other words, they construct the representations that Germans are always on time, and Brazilians are never on time. Such generalizations can contribute to the reinforcement of stereotypes where culture is represented as fixed attributes of national groups. Since there are no further contributions by the learners and there is no problematization by the teacher or the learners, therefore, here cultural aspects seem to be just functioning as an excuse for using the language. Therefore, this, like the previous episode, is not a piece of interaction where a third space is being constructed, and where even though a cultural representation is constructed in difference, namely, Germans vs Brazilians, the learners' capacity of decentering is not fostered. In other words, the learners are not encouraged to reflect upon their own values and beliefs and this prevents, thus, their cultural identity transformation.

Answering the second research question, then, it can be suggested, that, as in the previous example from Sarmento, some types of culture representations constructed may lead, many times, to the emergence or maintenance of stereotypes, and, thus, prevent the construction of third places. I have called these moments, in which the teacher and the learners construct essentialized and essentializing culture representations, 'essentializing cultural episodes' (ECEs).

On the other hand, some studies have shown the culture is sometimes constructed in a different way. For instance, Volpato (2014) suggests that, sometimes, the same teachers who had been constructing essentialist cultural representations, in other moments, engage in dialogic encounters where the students are encouraged to reflect upon themselves, i.e., on their own essentialist comments on language and culture. This, in turn, may help students to become aware of linguistic and cultural prejudices and stereotypes. In other words, the researched teachers seemed to be somehow creating third places with the students, who, in this way, can enter the process of decentering described above. Therefore, and like some of the pieces of interaction provided by Menard-Warwick (2007), Volpato shows and illustrates the possibility for teachers to

provide spaces for their students to discuss diverse cultural issues. I have called those moments, 'intercultural episodes' (IEs). The following episode is of that kind as the teacher tries to encourage their students to reflect about their own culture and the culture of the other, instigating them not to take cultural representations for granted. The classroom takes place in a touristic city in the south of Brazil which is a very common tourism destination of Argentinian people. The episode begins when Student 1 (S1) comments on something that happened to him while riding on a bus to Canasvieiras, a beach neighbourhood usually visited by Argentinians.

Episode 3

1. S1: Recently I broke my earphone, so when I am in the bus I have to listen to other ones' stories. So I was going to Canasvieiras and we have like this couple of Argentinos (sic), oh it's so boring, the voice, the tone of the voice, the fast they speak. It's, it's, make me uncomfortable, but I'll not tell them that. I was like, oh my God.
2. T: But they were speaking in Spanish?
3. S1: Yeah.
4. T: In the bus?
5. S1: Yes.
6. S2: I think that's wrong.
7. T: Wrong?
8. S2: Only if they don't know to speak Portuguese, but they know.
9. T: Yeah, but they were in a group of (interrupted).
10. S1: Couple, two.
11. T: They are probably friends.
12. S1: Yeah, probably.
13. T: That's why they were speaking.
14. S1: Oh, they were screaming.
15. T: So you didn't like because they were loud?
16. S1: Too (laughs).
17. S3: It seems that their voice, it's kind of annoying.
18. S1: Yes.
19. S3: The sounds it's annoying, it seems there (inaudible).
20. T: And do you think that they think Brazilians can be annoying too?
21. S1: I think everything is possible.
22. T: Everything is possible? Because sometimes we say people from other places are annoying but we never thought that might be, they might think that we are also annoying, right?

(Volpato, 2014, p. 52).

Interestingly at the beginning of Example 3, S1 and S2 bring strong essentialist representation of the cultural group 'Argentinos' (sic) and show to have a strong language discriminatory attitude. In turn 1, for instance, S1 makes a generalization about the way (all) Argentinians speak: they are boring (meaning annoying) due to their tone (probably loud) and their fast speed of delivery. The teacher, on the other hand, seems to be taken aback by this straightforward generalization and asks if the Argentinians on the bus were speaking in Spanish. After S1 having confirmed that, another student, S2, enters the conversation and puts forward another generalization, namely, that those Argentinians should not be speaking in Spanish, but in Portuguese (probably meaning that in Brazil everybody should speak Portuguese). S2, thus, reveals a strong representation related to the importance he seems to be attributing to monolingualism. In the conversation, turn (1), turn (6) and turn (8) show that both students have no tolerance for the habits (culture) of the other, in this case of the Argentinians, and, thus, the students seemed to be constructing prejudiced representations of that national group. The teacher, on the other hand, questions in a subtle way what the students are saying, for instance, in turn 9, and tries to suggest that when foreigners are in groups they usually use their own language to communicate among themselves. Also, later on, when the teacher says, in turn (20) 'T: And do you think that they think Brazilians can be annoying too?', and in turn (22) 'T: Everything is possible? Because sometimes we say people from other places are annoying but we never thought that might be, they might think that we are also annoying, right?', she calls the students' attention to the fact that we all have pre-conceived ideas about how the other should be or behave. What the teacher is doing in those turns, then, can be considered an example of 'discursive faultlines' (Kramsch, 1993), because she is contesting the students' essentialist cultural representations. For Menard-Warwick (2013, p. 30), that can be deemed "[…] pedagogically valuable because they index the cultural areas that need to be explored in order to work toward interculturality". The teacher, thus, by co-creating a third place with the students, seems to be trying to help them develop what Kramsch (2005) calls 'transgradience', which is, as already suggested before, the ability to occupy a position where they can see themselves both from the inside and from the outside.

Another study that also provides an example of an intercultural moment is França (2007), when one of the teachers investigated (T1) and the learners seem to be constructing a third space moment. This can be seen in the following episode:

Episode 4

1. T1: What do you think about Hollywood movies?
2. S1: I like them.
3. T1: What about you 'A2'?

4. S2: Most of them are stupid, but some of them are good.
5. S3: I think they are stupid.
6. T1: Do you think so? Millions of people watch them I don't know why
   1. ((laughs)) it's just like Big Brother on TV Globo.
7. S3: Because it's just idiot for us. And we sometimes need to watch it because
   2. just have Hollywood movies.(sic)
8. T1: OK, you mean that, there isn't anything else to see but Hollywood
   3. movies, right?
9. S3: Yes.
10. T1: How do you feel about Hollywood movies?
11. S4: There are good movies and there are also bad movies.
12. T1: …OK. All of them are good or bad in your opinion?
13. S4: Generally, it's bad because in the movies they only talk about American
    4. reality, but it's their history. Most movies recreate their reality.
14. T1: OK. How about you? What do you think about Hollywood movies?
15. A5: I like some of them.
16. T1: So, you like some of them; don't you like action movies?
17. S5: I watch, but they are not my favorite kind of movie.
18. T1: How about you?
19. S6: I don't like them; I think they show just their reality. They show that
    5. only they are winners… their history.
20. T1: They show people what they believe about themselves, right?
21. S6: Yes.
22. T1: What do you think about Brazilian soap operas? What about *Páginas da Vida*? What do you think? Do they show Brazilian's reality?
23. S6: I think that sometimes they try to reflect the reality but not all.
24. T1: They show the reality of the Brazilian way of life, do you believe so?
25. S6: When you see *Vidas Opostas* on Record, I think sometimes they try to reflect the problems, but not all, it's not possible.
26. T1: I've never seen *Vidas Opostas*, it's a soap opera, right?
27. Ss: Yes.
28. T1: Do they try to show Brazil's reality like violence, crime, etc?
29. Ss: Yes.
30. T1: Do you think it's really real? Are they doing a good job?
31. S6: I really don't know, sometimes I think they exaggerate.

(França, 2007, p. 141).

In the episode above, the teacher encourages from the very beginning learners to develop views on both the other, embodied in the Hollywood (American) movies and on the native, embodied in the Brazilian soap operas. For that the teacher instigates the students to give their own opinions (lines 1, 10 and 14), first on Hollywood films, and after that on Brazilian soap operas (line 22, 28, 30). Interestingly, regarding Hollywood films, even though students pose different opinions on them, some liking and some disliking them, the cultural representation interactively constructed is that Hollywood films 'recreate American reality', a point on which some of the students and the teacher seem to agree. The teacher, then, summarizes this representation in line 20, when he states that 'They [films] show people [from the USA] what they believe about themselves, right?'. Immediately, the teacher in line 22, departing from that representation, asks students whether Brazilian soap operas are faithful representations of Brazilians or not. The students' answers seem to point that Brazilian soap operas only partially represent Brazilian reality as they present a caricaturesque version of it, as when S 6 in line 31 suggests that 'I really don't know, sometimes I think they exaggerate'.

Unlike in Episode 3, in Episode 4, there are no discursive faultlines as participants do not contest (at least, explicitly) each others' representations. Yet, in the dialogue, by mediating the interaction with the self (Brazilian soap operas) and the other (American films), the teacher and the learners seem to be able to co-construct a third place which may enable learners decenter and see themselves in terms of the other(s).

The following episode comes from Menard-Warwick (2009) and in this lesson, the Chilean teacher, Genaro, conducts a discussion on gender issues after playing a (British) ESL audiotape on gender differences in mathematical performance. In the discussion, the students voice different views on the topic:

Episode 5

1. Marco: Since 10 years ago, I think the situation has changed, maybe. Now men are looking after the children very very well, they are cooking very very well. [...] And *now* women are more con*ser*vative [...]
2. Tania: I disagree. There is an image that men are cooking and cleaning but in spite of the fact they say that, there are *some* of them that take care of children, there are 'some' who like to help in cooking, 'some'. An 'image'. [After several more turns of argument, and considerable laughter, Genaro called on Renate, a woman in her fifties.]
3. Renate: I should say that women, we as women (are blamed for the production of this chauvinism).

Because we raise our boys traditionally in that way. [...] The girls are supposed to help their mother at home and the boys [...] are supposed to... [...] play football, yeah, or take care of the garden. [...] I have tried to change this with my son [...] Because as Marco said, times 'change' today. And... maybe 100 years ago, 50 years ago men were the supporters... [...] of the 'house', you know, and women were supposed to be at home, supporting the children, and do the cooking and do cleaning and everything, but 'now' with just one wage, a family cannot 'live'. [...]They have to work both of them... [...] and that's why 'both' of them 'have' to help in the 'house' and with the children, and that's why we have to change our concept of life now.

4. Genaro: All right. The goals and concepts are changing because society itself has changed a lot

(Menard-Worwick, 2009, p. 36).

Interestingly, in this episode, unlike the previous ones, the cultural groups represented are not defined in terms of nationals (such as Brazilians or Germans) but in terms of gender, and a binary opposition is also constructed: men vs women. Throughout the turns, the student-teachers show different gender representations and in order to do so, they draw on current gender discourses. For example, Marco (turn 1) wants to stress that men have changed and become more involved in housework; Tania (turn 2) suggests that the changing role of men is a mere 'image'; and finally Renate (turn 3) brings about a more complex representation and stresses that, economic changes in society have forced both women and men to change their gendered practices. At the end of the episode, Genaro (turn 4) tries to round off the conversation by saying that 'Society itself has changed a lot', the only point in which the participants seem to have agreed. This episode (like Episode 3) also is an example of the co-construction of discursive faultlines as the student-teachers contest each other views concerning the issue of 'men vs women' roles in society. Therefore, like Episodes 3 and 4, in Episode 5, there is a clear intercultural orientation as the students are engaged with other cultures in a practice which seeks to decenter them and where "[…] the borders between the self and the other can be explored, problematized and redrawn […]" (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013, p. 49).

To conclude this section, regarding the interactional characteristics of both essentializing cultural and intercultural episodes, some tendencies emerge from the analysis. One of them is that in most of the research carried out on construction of culture in the classroom, and also shown in episodes 1-4, there is an emphasis on national cultures, which are "[…] defined by national context in which a national language was spoken by a homogeneous national citizenry" (Kramsch, 2013, p. 64). Interestingly in Episode 3, the national group on focus is not an Anglophone group, but a group of Spanish speakers namely Argentinians. Another characteristic is that both types of episode can be initiated or triggered by the teacher, a learner or learners or by the coursebook. And a characteristic that the findings also show is that in both cultural and intercultural episodes learners express their opinions, i.e., their voices are heard. What is the difference between the two types of episodes in this respect, then? While in the essentializing cultural episodes the students' opinions are superficial and remain uncontested and non-problematized, constructing a more essentialized culture representation, the opposite happens in the intercultural episodes where both teachers and learners engage in deeper cultural explorations. Thus, and answering the third research question, I can suggest that in third place moments interculturally constructed decentering/transgradience may happen and learners' (and sometimes teachers') subject positions are usually contested and/or questioned at the faultlines. In this respect, Kramsch (2013, p. 68) suggests that "[…] in online or face-to-face interactions, students are seen as constructing their own and others […]" subject positions through the questions they ask and the topics they choose to talk about or to avoid. These subject positions constitute over time a discursive practice that we call 'culture'.

Final remarks: third places, multiple perspectives and identity

Puntos de vista

Desde el punto de vista del búho, del murciélago, del bohemio y del ladrón, el crepúsculo es la hora del desayuno.

La lluvia es una maldición para el turista y una buena noticia para el campesino.

Desde el punto de vista del nativo, el pintoresco es el turista.

Desde el punto de vista de los indios de las islas del mar Caribe, Cristóbal Colón, con su sombrero de plumas y su capa de terciopelo rojo, era un papagayo de dimensiones jamás vistas[2].

(Eduardo Galeano)

[2] Points of view

From the point of view of the owl, the bat, the bohemian and the thief, sunset is breakfast time.

The rain is a curse for the tourist but good news for the farmer.

From the point of view of the native, the tourist is exotic.

From the point of view of the Caribbean Indians, Christopher Columbus, with his feathered hat and red velvet cape, was a parrot of a size never seen before. (I translated the first line, the others were taken from http://subflaneur.tumblr.com/post/46342055672/points-of-view-puntos-de-vista, access on April 15, 2015).

The findings of this study have shown, as already suggested, that cultural representations can be interactively constructed in the classroom whenever there is a reference to something deemed characteristic of or related to (or not) a specific cultural group. These cultural representations may refer, for example, to visible and invisible aspects, culture as products and as processes and to different types of culture(s) from big groups, such as national ones (such as Argentinians or Brazilians) or gender ones. Also, the analysis of the episodes has shown that there are two orientations regarding the construction of culture representations in the additional language classroom: the essentializing cultural orientation and the intercultural orientation (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). In an essentializing cultural orientation, as in Episodes 1 and 2, "[…] culture is an object studied as an entity in its own right and the development of knowledge about culture focuses on the accumulation of knowledge about the entity identified as a culture" (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013, p. 48). As already hinted in the previous section, in essentializing cultural oriented episodes, different from intercultural ones, the participants construct cultural representations as if groups (national, professional, gender defined) were homogeneous and static.

On the other hand, in the intercultural orientation, the learners are interactively engaged in the practice of meaning-making which results from confronting multiple possible interpretations of their and other's culture(s). Dialogues such as Episodes 3, 4 and 5 bring about opportunities for teachers to try to construct with the learners the 'third place', a place of potential learner identity decentering and transformation. As mentioned before, in that creation of a place between the students' own culture and the other, the students can have an insider/outsider view on cultures. If that happens, the classroom environment becomes 'multivoiced' in the Bakhtinian sense of a dialogic convergence of multiple perspectives and understandings (Bakhtin, 1984). Thus, in the intercultural episodes individual teachers and learners bring different knowledge, experiences, stories, languages, and cultures to the classroom, and interact through them using the learning opportunities afforded to them. The multivoiced classroom realities can be used as a way of developing learning and interpretation through social interactions in which different conceptualizations are brought into relationship to create new understandings (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013), that is, new perspectives. Therefore, in episodes that have an intercultural orientation as there is an interactive engagement in the act of meaning-making which, in turn, may imply an identity change in the learner in the act of learning (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013).

Furthermore, in the excerpts analyzed, the mediating role of the teachers in the intercultural moments is evident and they, as Cortazzi and Jin (1999) suggest, seem to be the catalyzers of potential moments of decentering/transgradience, allowing learners to have new perspectives and question their own fixed and established values and/or perspectives.

To conclude, I would like, you, reader, to turn to the poem by Eduardo Galeano at the beginning of this section, which craftily conveys through its images different points of view, thus, illustrating, very vividly, the human capacity for decentering and therefore, poetically summarizing the main point of this article: that in the third place, interculturality cannot be understood merely as an object to be apprehended, such as groups' customs or products, but as an interpersonal process to understand the self and otherness.

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