INTERCULTURAL/PLURICULTURAL COMMUNICATION CONSTRUCT AND ITS LEVELS

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Abstract. The aim of this article is to explore the intercultural component (IC) in the English language curricula for the secondary and tertiary education in Latvia in the light of the new edition of *Common European Framework of Language Learning, Teaching and Assessment Companion Volume with New Descriptors* (CEFR, 2017) and compare it with the previous intercultural communication competence. The research method is documentary analysis of the three documents as regards their approach to intercultural communication. The analysis found that the documents were compatible, in spite of the difference of terminology, although CEFR (2017) aims at language users' sensitivity and awareness in action, the secondary school proposes tolerance and following the rules, the tertiary education curriculum suggests critical thinking and analysis of the cultural phenomena. The roles of the three documents and their development contexts explain these differences and allow each one of the documents to give their own contribution to IC, as long as the users of the documents understand their differences and shortcomings.

Key words: intercultural communication, cross-cultural communication, socio-cultural competence, pluricultural repertoire, curriculum, language proficiency levels.

INTRODUCTION

The importance of intercultural communication is growing in the time of the expanding role of social and mass media as a result it is increasingly researched and taught at schools and universities, therefore increasingly present in education documents. This has produced a variety of theoretical approaches, different classifications of the intercultural phenomena and different ways of action. As a result, the teachers and the lecturers responsible for the development of documents are often at a loss at the variety of terminology and approaches. Therefore this article firstly compares the terms used to research the different kinds of intercultural communication in different contexts, secondly it compares the curricula of the secondary and tertiary education in language teaching and intercultural communication in Latvia to the levels of plurilingual repertoire as described in *Common European Framework of Language Learning, Teaching and Assessment Companion Volume with New Descriptors* (CEFR, 2017).

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Intercultural communication has long been part of the foreign language curriculum. One of the authors of the intercultural component of the framework, Byram, sees the role of intercultural competence as integral part of language teaching:

> language teaching with an intercultural dimension continues to help learners to acquire the linguistic competence needed to communicate in speaking or writing, to formulate what they want to say/write in correct and appropriate ways. But it also develops their intercultural competence, that is their ability to ensure a shared understanding by people of different social identities, and their ability to interact with people as complex human beings with multiple identities and their own individuality. (Byram et al., 2002)

The European Language Portfolio (ELP, 2001b) also contains the intercultural framework, which proposes the steps how intercultural competence is to be acquired: ELP should stimulate learners to think about cultural differences, reflecting on their experiences in terms of location and intensity. The location factors are: work, study and travel (whether experienced at first hand or mediated through other people and/or the media); intensity factors have to do with frequency, duration, degree of involvement and significance for one's life history and identity. ELP pages designed to record and encourage reflection on intercultural experiences should take account of the following:

1) Where, with whom and in what context did the experience take place?
2) What kind of experience was it in terms of the intensity factors listed above?
3) What was my response? Did I merely reflect on the experience, or
4) Did it prompt me to some kind of action?
5) Why did I respond in the way I did? (2001b)

As we can see from the above, the presumption behind these questions is that it is the learner of the language who has to observe, record and analyse their experiences in the new cultural context, thus intercultural dimension of the ELP is explicitly associated with 'respect for diversity of cultures and ways of life' (2001b) while travelling abroad for study or work purposes and observing the cultures from outside.

Now that the reality has changed and there are many exchange students at schools and universities, it is not enough to observe and respect other cultures, it is necessary to work together with people of different cultures. The latest CEFR (2001a) project of the Council of Europe that Latvian experts were involved in, which was headed by Brian North elaborated the version of the descriptors for mediation in plurilingual and pluricultural environment.

This framework presents the language learner as an active participant of the situation, who not only participates in interaction, but also mediates IC situations for others. Mediation activities that were used as the basis for the new companion volume of CEFR (2017) by North and Panthier (2016: 21) were as follows:

1. *Relational mediation:* establishing a positive atmosphere, creating pluricultural space, facilitating collaborative interaction, managing interaction, resolving delicate situations and disputes,

2. *Cognitive mediation: Constructing meaning: c*ollaborating to construct meaning, generating conceptual talk,

3. *Cognitive mediation: Conveying received meaning (spoken):* relaying specific information, explaining data (e.g. in graphs, diagrams, charts etc.), processing text, interpreting, spoken translation of written text (Sight translation),

4. *Cognitive mediation: Conveying received meaning (written):* relaying specific information, explaining data (e.g. in graphs, diagrams, charts etc.), processing text, translating, streamlining text, breaking down complicated information, visually representing information, adjusting language.

Here, North and Panthier use the term *plurilingualism*, which is defined by Coste et al. (2009: 11) as follows:

> Plurilingual and pluricultural competences refer to the ability to use languages for the purposes of communication and to take part in intercultural interaction, where a person, viewed as a social actor has proficiency, of varying degrees, in several languages and experience of several cultures. This is not seen as the superposition or juxtaposition of distinct competences, but rather as the existence of a complex or even composite competence on which the social actor may draw.

This definition implies that pluricultural competence is used in intercultural interaction.

Sociocultural elements have also been part of the intercultural construct and as such it has been considered important for language learning, see, for example, Coste, Moore and Zarate (2009: 51):

> For L2 particular emphasis could be placed on the sociocultural and sociolinguistic elements as perceived through increasing familiarity with the media (the popular press, radio and television) and possibly linked with the native language course and benefiting from what has been covered in L1.

Just as the foreign language studies, the social sciences seem to have given up on essentialism (the belief that we can study culture by understanding the essence of the groups of people), and supplanted the research of large groups of people

with studying the critical role of the individual in the world, see, for example, the concept of cosmopolitanism in Delanty (2012: 38):

> cosmopolitanism suggests a critical attitude which can be contrasted to an interpretive or descriptive approach to the social world and which is also more than normative critique. The notion of critical cosmopolitanism that I argue for aims to retain the notion of normative critique, but to extend it in the direction of a deeper notion of critique as world disclosure.

Delanty's distinction between critical versus descriptive approach could be useful for this study as it suggests a hypothesis that the distinction between the secondary and tertiary education lies not in the types of topics to be studied, but in the descriptive versus critical approach to the topics aiming at the 'world disclosure'.

Holliday (2016: 4) uses the term 'cultural grammar' as consisting of threads (personal and professional experience; national profile: the upbringing, the food, clothing, cultural resources; small culture development, fluidity and conventions) and blocks of global position and cultural discourses

> that are potentially quite destructive. Global position and politics – the way in which we set ourselves against other societies, people, 'races', civilizations, 'big cultures' and so on – also come from the ways in which we are brought up in our respective national structures, through the historical narratives that often underpin our sense of nationhood, and the ideologies that go with them, fed by our national media, and perhaps by the big 'C' icons of civilization.

The way round these blocks can be found in Rehbein's (2006) Cultural apparatus (see Figure 1), where he argues that the misunderstandings are a sign of a gap of cultural knowledge, the filling of which depends on our cultural apparatus with
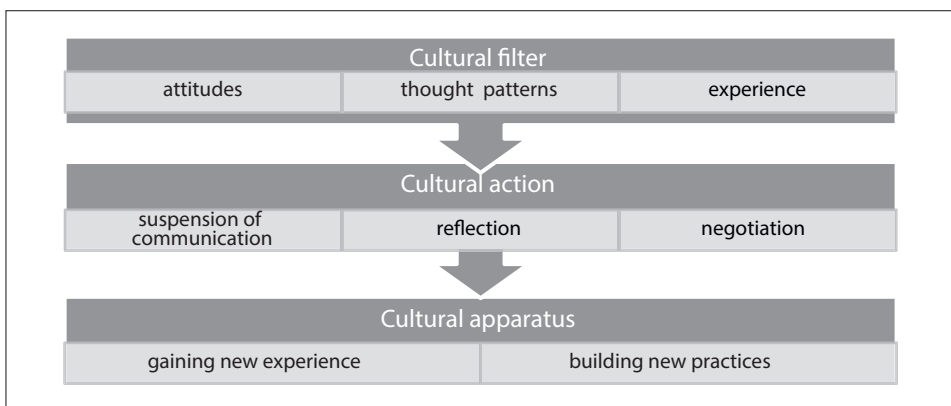

Figure 1. **Rehbein's (2006: 51–53) Cultural apparatus**

the help of which we observe misunderstandings and conflicts, hypothesise the reasons for problems and experiment with the solutions, thus developing new meanings, using repairs, redraftings; we can also react to a misunderstanding as a failure, which means that we stop and build a block in the form of a new stereotype, or enhance our old stereotypes, develop discourses (in the forms of rules and restrictions) that otherize (or 'reduce individuals to simplified exotic references' (Holliday 2016: 9)) whole groups of people and separate them with the help of cultural actions and regulations.

Although the theoretical overview of the field has discovered a plethora of terms, this article will use the term 'intercultural communication' to cover general aspects of human interaction taking place in various cultural contexts.

METHOD OF RESEARCH

The three documents chosen for the analysis of the role of intercultural elements and levels in language education are taken from three different contexts: international, national and academic contexts, they represent three different levels of education: secondary, tertiary and adult education, thus the documents themselves represent different cultures. The uniting element here is the fact that all the three belong to the same text type: all three are documents, therefore, the method of research here will be documentary analysis.

Bowen (2009: 27) advocates documentary analysis for the following reasons:

> documents provide background and context, additional questions to be asked, supplementary data, a means of tracking change and development, and verification of findings from other data sources.

Powell (2013) suggests a framework for the analysis of the documents describing their creation, availability and use (see Table 1 below) which will be used to compare the three documents of a very different size, context and status.

As we can see Powell's (2013) framework clearly reveals the different status of the documents, CEFR Companion (2017) has been developed collectively, adopted by an international organisation (the Council of Europe), the Secondary school curriculum has been developed by a state legislative organisation and implemented by the whole country while the third is developed by an individual, and adopted for implementation by one organisation (university). Nevertheless, they are part of the process, as the developers of the state and the university curriculum were also involved in the development of the Council of Europe documents. The students who study at the secondary level will study at the university, therefore it is important to ensure a systemic approach and common understanding of the study process, whose first step is comparison of the documents.

Table 1 **Comparison of the documents defining the aims of intercultural education**

Powell (2013)	CEFR Companion volume with new descriptors (2017)	Curriculum of the foreign languages for the secondary schools of Latvia (2014)	University of Latvia Intercultural communication course description
1. What type of document is it?	This is a follow-up to CEFR (2001a), prepared by Education Policy Division Education Department Council of Europe.	The documents is part of the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers.	The document is prescriptive and binding to all lecturers teaching and students taking the course.
2. What are the physical characteristics of the document?	The document is published online in the Council of Europe website.	The document is published online on the website reserved for the rules and laws of the country.	The document is published online on the inner MOODLE platform of the University of Latvia.
3. Who was the author or creator of the document?	Brian North and Tim Goodier (Eurocentres Foundation) and Enrica Piccardo (University of Toronto / Université Grenoble-Alpes.	Specially appointed expert groups from every foreign language worked 2008–2012.	The course description was created by the lecturers of English and French and vetted by the Study Council of the programme.
4. For what purpose was the record created?	To highlight innovative areas of the CEFR, e.g. mediation and plurilingual / pluricultural competence.	The aim of the state curriculum is to regulate the subject matter taught at the schools of Latvia.	The aim of the course description is to provide a framework for the subject matter taught in the BA programme.
5. When was the record created?	The descriptors have been collected, calibrated and pretested since 2014, its provisional edition published in 2017.	The document was created over several years, the latest version was signed by the Minister of Education in 2013.	The course curriculum was approved in the English studies departmental meeting in 2012.
6. How has the document or record series been maintained?	The document is available to anyone interested in the subject.	The document is available to anyone interested in the subject.	The document is available only to the lecturers teaching the subject and the students studying the subject.
7. Were there other individuals involved?	The list of contributors from across the globe is available in the document (see CEFR Companion volume, 2017: 12–20).	The layout of the document was converted from table to text without consulting the authors, as a result the document is very difficult to read.	All the course descriptions have to be approved by a specially appointed academic committee of experts of the University of Latvia.

COMPANION VOLUME OF THE COMMON EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK

The European Framework of Language Learning, Teaching and Assessment Companion Volume with New Descriptors (2017) was developed by the Education Policy Division (Language Policy Programme) as 'an extended version of the illustrative descriptors that complements the original ones contained in the body of the CEFR text' (Council of Europe, 2017: 22) . The new companion volume of CEFR builds on the earlier version of *Common European Framework of Language Learning, Teaching and Assessment* (Council of Europe 2001a) and keeps the same approach, not only describing the different competences, but also scaling them:

> descriptor scales are provided for mediating a text, for mediating concepts, for mediating communication, as well as for the related mediation strategies and plurilingual/pluricultural competences (Council of Europe, 2017: 22).

This approach makes the different theories used in the development of the document applicable in scaling student performance. Table 2 below presents a short sample from a longer description of pluricultural repertoire levels.

Table 2 **Building on plurilingual repertoire descriptors from CEFR Companion volume** (2017: 143)

C2	Can initiate and control his/her actions and forms of expression according to context, showing awareness of cultural differences and making subtle adjustments in order to prevent and/or repair misunderstandings and cultural incidents.
C1	Can deal with ambiguity in **cross-cultural communication** and express his/her reactions constructively and culturally appropriately in order to bring clarity
B2	Can, in an **intercultural encounter**, recognise that what one normally takes for granted in a particular situation is not necessarily shared by others, and can react and express him/herself appropriately.
B1	Can discuss in simple terms the way in which things that may look 'strange' to him/her in another **sociocultural context** may well be 'normal' for the other people concerned.
A2	Can recognise and apply basic cultural conventions associated with everyday social exchanges (for example different greetings rituals).
A1	Can recognise differing ways of numbering, measuring distance, telling the time, etc. even though he/she may have difficulty applying this in even simple everyday transactions of a concrete type.

As we can see from the extracted descriptors above, the CEFR Companion volume (2017: 143) considers that our pluricultural repertoire is developed in cross-cultural communication during intercultural encounters in sociocultural

context (the words bolded in Table 2, thus within the description of three levels of competence we have three different types of terms.

CURRICULUM OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF LATVIA (2014)

Intercultural secondary education curricula have already been compared by Puzič (2008) by contrasting the curricula of England, Scotland, Austria, Finland and Norway. His main finding was the impact of the context that dictates the content of the intercultural curriculum: the countries with historic, traditional and geographic resemblance are rather similar in their treatment of cultural diversity and demonstrate clear distinction from the 'more distant' countries. He discovered three groups of countries with similar contexts and hence different curricula:

1) the Irish curriculum (Scotland and England are in the same group), treating cultural diversity primarily as an individual right,
2) the Finnish, Swedish and Norwegian curricula emphasise the protection of minority languages and cultures and the multicultural affirmation of diversity,
3) the Austrian and German region Nordrhein-Westfalen curricula incorporating the guidelines of the European Council for intercultural education (the exchange of cultural values between pupils from various cultural groups; intercultural competences for all pupils).

Curriculum of the Foreign Languages for the Secondary Schools of Latvia (*Valsts vispārējās vidējās izglītības mācību priekšmetu standarts*; translated by the author) (*CFLSSL*, n.d.: Online) defines the compulsory content of the foreign language subject to be taught to 16 to 18 year olds across the country. The CFLSSL was adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers, it is compulsory to all secondary schools of Latvia, it states that the main aim of the subject is the development of students' functional and sociocultural competence. The sociocultural competence is seen as

a) language for research and cooperation (e.g. applies the foreign language for acquisition of other subjects),
b) language as a part of culture (e.g. applies to literature and arts for the perception of other cultures, creates literary texts),
c) language for integration and interaction in cultural context (e.g. plans, manages and evaluates projects complying with the norms of cooperation),
d) intercultural communication process (e.g. adheres to the norms of communication in multicultural society),
e) the peculiarities of language use in multilingual discourses (e.g. appreciates the importance of multicultural environment). (CFLSSL, 2016: Online)

As we can see from the above, the multicultural and the intercultural elements are regarded as part of sociocultural competence and not the other way round. On the one hand, it could be interpreted as a misuse of the terms, but on the other hand, it can also be seen as prioritising of the smaller socio-culture over the larger, multicultural and intercultural contexts. It is, however, the socioculture, which Holliday (2016) holds responsible for providing threads of cultural grammar versus the multicultural contexts and political discourses that provide the blocks in the intercultural communication.

Another observation that can be made is that the language learner is active only in two parameters: that of creating their own literary texts and planning and managing projects, in the other cases they mostly 'perceive', 'understand ', 'comply' and 'appreciate' the cultural resources and activities of others (13 cases in the full text).

There are also three cases of applying the previous knowledge or norms in new situations. If we compare this list to the verbs used in the mediation framework by North and Panthier (2016) discussed above, namely: *establishing, creating, facilitating, managing, resolving, constructing, collaborating, generating conceptual talk*, we can see the difference of the conceptualisation of the person as a passive and compliant perceiver versus the active constructor, creator and resolver of conflicts. Thus our preliminary hypothesis, based on Delanty's distinction between the descriptive versus critical approach seems to hold the ground, even worse, the secondary school curriculum does not require to describe or interpret the norms, it asks the students to comply and appreciate the norms of other cultures instead of providing the tools for developing their own judgement and their own cultural solutions.

ANALYSIS OF THE LEVELS OF LANGUAGE AND SOCIOCULTURAL COMPETENCE AT SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF LATVIA

The Year 12 examination tests the student competence according to the CFLSSL (2016) and CEFR (2001a), not differentiating language competence from sociocultural competence. The integration of the two aspects of students' performance during the state examinations was discussed by Kalnberzina (2015). In the histogram below we can see the distribution of the results of the English language examination in 2017.

The Year 12 English language examination testing the attainment of the secondary school curriculum in 2017 was taken by 11967 students, 1.4 per cent of the students received level C1, 36.69 per cent received level B2, 40.26 per cent received level B1, but 21.58 per cent did not reach any of the levels tested by the secondary school examination and did not receive a CEFR level certificate.
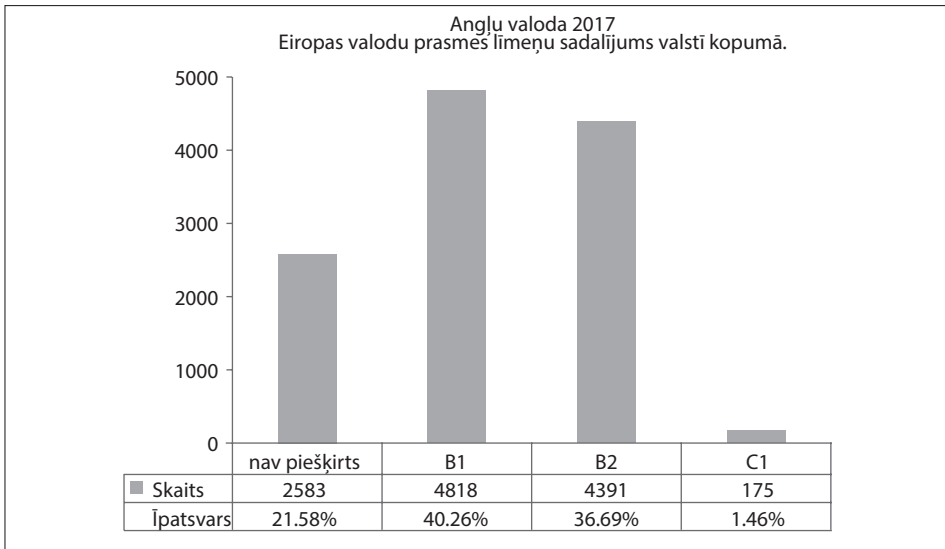
Angļu valoda 2017
Eiropas valodu prasmes līmeņu sadalījums valstī kopumā.

	nav piešķirts	B1	B2	C1
Skaits	2583	4818	4391	175
Īpatsvars	21.58%	40.26%	36.69%	1.46%

Figure 2 **Year 12 examination results for students who have failed the exam, B1, B2 and C1 (2017)**

The levels used in the assessment of Year 12 examination performance are the so called Global proficiency levels in CFLSSL, see the comparison of the official level descriptors used for the examination certificates with the new CEFR (2017) Pluricultural repertoire level descriptors in Table 3.

Table 3 **Comparison of the global proficiency levels of CEFR (2001a) with the Pluricultural repertoire levels in CEFR Companion Volume (2017)**

Level	CEFR Global scale (2001) as used by CFLSS	CEFR pluricultural repertoire (2017: 143)
C1	Can use language **flexibly and effectively** for social, academic and professional purposes.	Can **deal with ambiguity** in cross-cultural communication and express his/her reactions constructively and culturally appropriately in order to bring clarity.
B2	Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible **without strain for either party**.	Can, in an intercultural encounter, recognise that what one normally takes for granted in a particular situation is not necessarily shared by others, and **can react and express him-/herself appropriately.**
B1	Can deal with **most situations** likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken.	Can discuss in simple terms the way in which things that may look 'strange' to him/her in another sociocultural context may well be **'normal'** for the other people concerned.

As it can be seen from the comparison in *Table 3*, although the terminology differs, the descriptors are systematically presenting the same idea: level C1 expects effective language use and flexibility which will be called upon in a cross-cultural communication creating ambiguity in meanings at academic and professional levels (level C1), while level B1 expects the language user to deal with most situations while travelling. This agrees with the *CEFR Companion volume* (2017: 50) statement:

> The scale *Building on pluricultural repertoire* describes the use of pluricultural competences in a communicative situation. Thus, it is skills rather than knowledge or attitudes that are the focus. The scale shows a high degree of coherence with the existing CEFR scale Sociolinguistic appropriateness, although it was developed independently.

The fact that the scales agree does not ensure, however, that the contents of the tasks and the performance agree with the level descriptors; thus, it is necessary to examine the student performance to see if the Curriculum and the tasks of the Year 12 examination contain the skills described in the scales.

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COURSE FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Intercultural Communication course description (2014) meant for the bachelor in Modern languages and business studies programme was chosen to represent the tertiary level curriculum because it is a popular course chosen by many students. The students are 19–21 years of age, coming from different schools of Latvia as well as international students. The course is taught in English, although the language proficiency of the students can vary from B1 to C1. The course consists of 50 per cent lectures and 50 per cent seminars, which suggests that students will not only study theories, but will also work in groups, produce a paper discussing an intercultural communication problem from the theoretical and empirical point of view and present their own solution to the problem. The course description is provided in Table 4.

Table 4 **Intercultural Communication (IC) Course description (2014)**

Course abstract

The aim of the course is to introduce the students to the basic notions of intercultural communication. It envisages offering knowledge and skills in verbal and non-verbal communication with people of another nationality. The course will examine different cultural communication and integration problems as well as look for their solutions using different aspects of text analysis.

Learning outcomes

The course will allow the students to discover the importance of intercultural communication in the modern world, to develop their ability to evaluate intercultural phenomena and problems of intercultural communication. The students will develop the following competences:

1. Intellectual competence: develop new ideas, understand new cultures, do research, adapt to new situations and understand different cultures.
2. Academic competence: analyse information from different sources, resolve intercultural problems and express their own thoughts in English and/or French.
3. Interdisciplinary competences: work in groups, create positive attitude to different cultures, work in intercultural context and develop tolerance to different cultural phenomena.

In the table above we can see that the university level course curriculum asks the students to be analytical and problem solution oriented to develop students' intellectual, academic and interdisciplinary competences. Interestingly enough it does not claim to develop intercultural competence or intercultural mediation competences, although one can see a certain similarity with North and Panthier's (2016: 21) Relational mediation, for example, Facilitating collaborative interaction, Managing interaction, Resolving delicate situations and disputes, in the parameters of interdisciplinary and academic competences, while some elements of Cognitive mediation (Constructing meaning, namely Collaborating to construct meaning and Generating conceptual talk) can be seen in the intellectual competence development, although the word 'understand' is not the same as construct meaning. As to the CEFR Companion (2017) level descriptors, here we will compare the course description with levels B2 to C2, since the students come to the university after the secondary schools with this language level range and should be aiming at increased competence in language and intercultural communication.

Table 5 **Comparison of CEFR levels with IC course description**

	CEFR Pluricultural repertoire level descriptors	IC course description (2014)
C2	Can initiate and control his/her actions and forms of expression according to the context, showing awareness of cultural differences and making subtle adjustments in order to prevent and/or **repair misunderstanding**s and cultural incidents.	The course will allow the students to discover the importance of intercultural communication in the modern world, develop their ability to evaluate intercultural phenomena and problems of intercultural communication, analyse information from different sources, **resolve intercultural problems,**
C1	Can deal with ambiguity in cross-cultural communication and **express his/her reactions** constructively and culturally appropriately in order to bring clarity.	develop new ideas, understand new cultures, do research, adapt to new situations and understand different cultures, **express their own thoughts** in English and/or French,
B2	Can, in an **intercultural encounter**, recognise that what one normally takes for granted in a particular situation is not necessarily shared by others, and **can react and express him/herself appropriately.**	work in groups, create positive attitude to different cultures, **work in intercultural context and develop tolerance to different cultural phenomena.**

Although the course description does not contain level description, we can see that the different competences in the course description can be related to the phrases from the *CEFR Companion volume* (2017): the misunderstandings that appear in IC course description as Intercultural problems, expression of reactions in CEFR parallel expression of thoughts in the IC course description.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Having described and compared the aims and objectives of the CEFR Companion Volume with CFLSSL and the course curriculum for the *Intercultural Communication* of the university course, one has to conclude that:

1) There are similarities:
   a. All three documents aim at teaching and learning of cultural communication.
   b. All three documents have singled out the elements that form the cultural communication.

2) There are differences:
   a. In terminology: CEFR Companion Volume (2017) prefers using Pluricultural repertoire, although uses also intercultural encounters, sociocultural competences and cross-cultural communication, while

CFLSSL (secondary school curriculum) aims at teaching sociocultural and multicultural competences, but IC course sees it as consisting of intellectual, academic and interactional competences.

b. In the context: the CFLSSL (secondary school) sees intercultural communication as part of language teaching course, while the tertiary school curriculum presupposes as separate course.

c. In the level of impact: CEFR was developed by the institutions across the globe, the secondary school curriculum is compulsory to all students across the country who are studying, which is approximately 12 thousand a year (see the statistics of the Ministry of Education of Latvia at www. visc.gov.lv), while the tertiary school *Intercultural Communication* is taken as a subject of choice for students of one study programme (30 students per year).

d. In the approach: judging by the verbs used in the description of the objectives, the course description of the university proposes a more proactive problem solving and critical approach, while the secondary course curriculum sees the sociocultural, multicultural and intercultural competences as a need to apply the existing knowledge and comply with the pre-established norms.

e. In the levels: the only document that contains explicit IC level descriptors is *CEFR Companion Volume* (2017), although the university course implicitly aims for an intercultural competence level, where students can not only participate in intercultural encounters, but also research the causes of intercultural communication problems/misunderstandings, and repair the misunderstandings.

CONCLUSIONS

The theoretical analysis of the concept of intercultural competence in the theoretical studies discussed seems to be converging on a common view that communication problems and misunderstandings in intercultural communication is just a means of building new understanding, hard as that may be. The analysis of the documents, however, does not provide a clear view of how to reach the understanding: if the CEFR Companion volume (Council of Europe, 2017) advocates for sensibility and awareness and the ability to adapt one's expression to the changing cultural context, the CFLSSL aims at producing a perceptive, adaptable and compliant participant of cultural communication, while the tertiary level course curriculum aims at an intellectual and academic competence development via intercultural situations and problem examination. These could be considered as tools for the development of the intercultural competence, however, neither of the curricula offers a critical cosmopolitan approach that would provide the learners with the capacity to locate the threads

in their personal and professional experiences and navigate the blocks of political discourses (Holliday, 2016). Nevertheless, the university course curriculum does aim to equip the students with analytical thinking and problem solving skills for intercultural contexts, which could suggest that the graduates would be better equipped to take more informed decisions.

One could argue that there is the age difference, the secondary school curriculum is meant for 16 to 18 year olds, but there is also the counterargument that the training of intercultural communication competence the students have obtained in the upper secondary level will remain for many as the only one in their lifetime, where they will have to make important choices in elections, deciding, for example, on the acceptance or rejection of the refugees, therefore we should consider the possibility of including the possibility of changing the secondary school curriculum to include at least mediation skills proposed by the Council of Europe documents.

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