

CULTURE IN LANCOOK

By Dolors Masats and Melinda Dooly
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

1. LANGUAGE EDUCATION AND CULTURE

In their introduction to one of the first European-wide guidelines for intercultural teaching in language education, Byram, Gribkova and Starkey (2002) point out that “It has been widely recognised in the language teaching profession that learners need not just knowledge and skill in the grammar of a language but also the ability to use the language in socially and culturally appropriate ways” (p. 7). The authors’ definition fits into the concept of what Sercu, et al., (2005) have called the “cultural turn in language teaching” (p.vii); based on the notion that “language teaching should not only focus on language (and/or literature at later stages), but also include a cultural dimension in a broader sense. Language teaching should demonstrate that there are connections between language and culture” (ibid.). The authors explain that “foreign language education is, by definition, intercultural. Bringing a foreign language to the classroom means connecting learners to a world that is culturally different from their own” (p. 1). Linguists and anthropologists have long recognized that the forms and uses of a given language reflect the cultural values of the society in which the language is spoken but in foreign language teaching, the idea that culture and language should not be taught separately did not really become accepted until the 1980s (Sercu, et al., 2005).

Since then, it has become widely recognized amongst language teachers that linguistic competence alone is not enough and the promotion of teaching culture and language together has culminated in guidelines such as the aforementioned, as well as many journals, associations and special interest groups related to the concept of teaching languages and cultures. Underlying motivations may differ, for instance, the focus may be on the need for socio-pragmatic understanding of the target language, founded on sociocultural and sociolinguistics concepts of language; thus language learners must be exposed to and understand culturally appropriate ways to communicate with different speech communities. Others may promote a more critically reflexive stance, based on the argument that studying other cultures enables learners to decentre from their own world-view, accept relativities and develop multiple identities. To acquire the ability to communicate in a new language is the first step to identifying with other speakers of that language community. (Starkey, 2002, p. 23)

At the same time, many leading authors and researchers in intercultural education contend that, while language and culture are inextricable one from the other, they are value-laden and socially and politically constructed (see Byram & Feng, 2004; Osler & Starkey, 2000). Experts in intercultural education and intercultural communicative competence warn that language teachers should not rely on stereotypes to teach culture as these may promote stereotypes or ‘folkloric’ views of other cultures (Starkey, 2007). Language and culture teaching must strive to help students understand that cultures are not monolithic and that a variety of successful behaviors are possible for any type of interaction in any particular culture. By promoting a hands-on experience in different cultural activities (such as cooking with target language instructions in a digital kitchen) educators can help students learn about and appreciate the values and unique ways of ‘doing things’ in other languages.

2. INTRODUCTION TO THE LANCOOK APPROACH TO TEACHING LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

According to the mission statement of the Council of Europe (see http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Division_en.asp), their language education policies are aimed at promoting:

- a) plurilingualism (mastering various languages, at various levels of expertise),
- b) linguistic diversity (the right to use and learn one's languages),
- c) mutual understanding (opportunities for learning languages others than own and opportunities for developing intercultural communication),
- d) democratic citizenship (plurilingual competences of individuals favour socialisation and democratic processes in multilingual societies), and
- e) social cohesion (equal opportunities for all individuals).

LanCook, as a European language project, is sensitive and adheres to the principles and values put forward by the Council of Europe. As a consequence, the team members participating in the development of the European Digital Kitchen, the core of the **LanCook** project, are developing materials for language learning and cultural sensitivity. Each participating University is responsible for developing and implementing materials in one of the languages spoken in their territories but may also implement materials design by another project partner in any of the other languages. As a team, **LanCook** partners work in favour of promoting plurilingualism because they are helping non native speakers learn various languages: Catalan, English, Finnish, French, German, Italian and Spanish. Ideally, the European digital kitchen should speak in as many languages as possible but for organisation purposes and given the limited numbers of participating countries (5) the actual project had to narrow down the presence of languages and is limited to 7. Respect towards linguistic diversity, though, has guided the selection of languages this explains, for example, why the team in Barcelona is developing materials in two languages (Catalan and Spanish) or why French is also present when none of the partners are from a French-speaking territory.

Again, in their mission statement, the European Council states that, among others, plurilingual education promotes “an aware of how one learns languages (...), the value of languages and varieties irrespective of their perceived status in society, a respect for the cultures embodies in languages (...) (and) an ability to perceive (...) the relationships which exist among languages and cultures.” As the **LanCook** project is concerned with plurilingual education as defined above, apart from the decisions we mentioned with regards to language selection, other issues were discussed when designing the materials for the European Digital Kitchen, especially on how to tackle cultural issues.

3. CULTURE IN LANCOOK MATERIALS AND ITS CORRELATION WITH CARAP DESCRIPTORS

Cooking is *per se* a culturally-bound human activity (Montanari, 2004); therefore designing language learning materials which revolve around cooking tasks must cater for cultural differences or differences in how cultured is regarded to. When designing the cooking language tasks, we had in mind the levels, descriptors and guidelines provided by the Common European Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. In addition, when dealing on how culture was going to be integrated into the materials we looked at the CARAP (see <http://carap.ecml.at/>) descriptors, as, according to the

European Centre of Modern Languages (ECML) –who promoted the initiative-, constitute a “step towards implementing the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, in particular its rationale on plurilingual and intercultural competence”.

Cultural issues in **LanCook** were dealt with at three different stages: During the selection of the recipes, while choosing the cooking utensils to be used and in the process of producing videos on culture to accompany the cooking tasks. Below we will discuss in the detail which issues were taken into account and why. If relevant, we will provide the particular competence we aimed users of the European Digital Kitchen to attain. CARAP descriptors group competences in three categories, namely knowledge (K), skills (S), and attitudes (A). Whenever we make reference to a component of the plurilingual and pluricultural competence, we will name it using the letters and numbers provided in the list of CARAP descriptors.


We are conscious that Cuisine is only a small component of peoples’ culture, yet we think that it is not alien to it and therefore the kind of tasks designed and the decisions taken to implement the European Digital Kitchen may well fit some of the CARAP descriptors.

- **The selection of recipes.**

The European Digital Kitchen speaks seven languages: Catalan, English, French, German, Italian, Finish and Spanish. We designed two recipes per language, except for the English kitchen which has two targeted at adult learners and one targeted at young children. The recipes chosen were closely related to a particular territory in which each language is spoken but cultural sensitivity concerns with broadening the concept of cultural identity within that territory. It is important to notice that we were sensible to what is typical in each culture. For example, Spaghetti Bolognese is worldwide regarded as a typical Italian dish when in fact it is not. So this recipe is not present in the Italian cuisine.

The concept of culture was expanded to consider a particular age group. Thus the third recipe in the English cuisine is not typical from any territory in which English is spoken but appeals young children as it is a dessert (cake) created without the need of using hotplates, takes the shape of an animal and is made of chocolate and a variety of sweets. This means that some recipes can be considered as “typical” from the cuisine of a given state, others “typical” from a particular region within a state, others resulting from the natural mixture of cultures of multilingual and multicultural societies or other appeal to the identity of a specific age group.

Including these varied ranges of origins of the different recipes allows us to confront learners with the type of knowledge necessary to broaden their scope on identity issues. This is expressed in the CARAP descriptors as follows:

K 14.1	 Knows that identity is constructed on different levels {social, national, supranational ...}
--------	--

The table below lists the different recipes in the European Digital Kitchen and provides its origin as a means to illustrate how **LanCook** has dealt with cultural sensitive in the selection of recipes.

EUROPEAN DIGITAL KITCHEN	RECIPE	ORIGIN
Catalan Digital Kitchen	Bunyols de vent	Popular all across the Catalan territory during Easter. There exists a variety of local recipes for this desert. The recipe used originated in Empordà (country sited in the province of Girona, in the north of Catalonia)
	Crema catalana	Popular all across the Catalan territory and one of the most widely known Catalan deserts.
English Digital Kitchen	Cat cake	Not linked to any particular territory, this dessert was designed to be attractive to young children. A sponge cake is stuffed with strawberry jam, covered with chocolate cream and decorated with sweets to imitate the face of a smiling cat.
	Chicken Methi Malai	This Indian-English fusion dish is popular all across Great Britain and India. Of all the spices added to the dish it is dried fenugreek leaves (Urdu/Hindi: Methi) that makes the greatest contribution to the characteristic flavour of the dish. The dish is representative of Indian/English fusion cooking where Indian dishes have become popular in the UK and have been amended to suit the British taste buds.
	English Scones	Served in various regions in Great Britain. There exists a variety of local recipes for type of pastry. The cultural origin of Scones is unclear as historically, they are associated with Scotland, Wales, Ireland and England. Scones are linked to the ancient Welsh tradition of cooking small round yeast cakes (leavened breads) on bakestones, and later on griddles. Linguistic origins of scones have been linked to the 'Stone (scone) of Destiny', a stone upon which Scottish kings once sat when they were crowned, the Gaelic "sgonn" (rhymes with gone), a shapeless mass or large mouthful; the Dutch "schoonbrot," fine white bread; and the closely-related German "sconbrot," fine or beautiful bread. The Oxford English Dictionary identifies the latter two. Scones used to be made with oats, shaped into a large round, scored into four or six wedges (triangles) and griddle-baked over an open fire (later, a stovetop). Oven baking meant that the round of dough was cut into wedges and the scones could be baked individually. Traditional English scones may include raisins or currants, but are often plain, relying on jam, preserves for added flavour with a touch of clotted cream. In the U.K., plain or currant scones are traditionally served with afternoon

		tea. First, the scones are spread with jam then topped with clotted cream. This is known as cream tea or Devonshire tea.
French Digital Kitchen	Clafouti aux Poires	Clafouti aux Poires is a cake made with pears in batter. Traditionally, it is a native dessert Limousin whose name comes from the Occitan clafotís, clafir verb meaning "complete" or 'all in one'. There are variations on the dish. Pears can be replaced with prunes, apples, cherries, blackberries, peaches, plums, apricots or other fruits.
	Le gâteau au chocolat	This is one of the many adaptations of the traditional Tarte Bourdaloue created at a pastry shop in Bourdaloue Street, Paris in the late nineteenth century at a time when great desserts were invented. The recipe for the pie as known today was published for the first time in <i>Le Grand Livre de la cuisine</i> , published by Prosper Montagné in 1929, but it was then made with apricots instead of pears.
Finnish Digital Kitchen	Kalakeitto (Fish soup)	Popular recipe across Finland; the fish used in the recipe can vary depending on whether people fish in the sea (live by the coast) or in a lake (live inland)
	Marjakiisseli (Berry pudding)	Traditional Finnish dessert; includes wild berries and reflects the lively berry-picking culture in Finland
German Digital Kitchen	Kartoffelsalat	Kartoffelsalat is most often eaten as a side dish usually served with fish, meat, or sausages. This potato salad is popular all over Germany and German-speaking countries such as Austria. It is a traditional dish, and often recipes are handed over from generation to generation. Ingredients differ regionally, and various names can be found in different regions (such as "Erdapfelsalat" in Bavaria and Austria). Many families eat Kartoffelsalat with sausages on Christmas Eve.
	Milchreis	Milchreis is often served as a main dish but is also popular as an in-between meal or dessert. It can be eaten as a warm or cold dish and is also popular in other countries.
Italian Digital Kitchen	Involtini alla contadina	Popular across Italy, it is contained in the famous recipe book by Pellegrino Artusi, "La scienza in cucina e l'arte di mangiare bene" (The Science of Cooking and the Art of Fine dining), a perennial bestseller which contributed to Italy's cooking and linguistic unity.
	Pasta alla Napoletana (pasta olive e capperi)	Popular all across Italy and world-wide, it originated in Napoli (Campania), South of Italy.

Spanish Digital Kitchen	Tortilla de patatas	Popular all across the Spanish territory and one of the most widely known Spanish dish, specially as “tapas”.
	Salmorejo	Created in the province Córdoba, in the south of Spain is now popular, with variations, all across the region of Andalusia.

- **The selection of cooking utensils.**

In order to guarantee uniformity across all materials, partners agreed on those kitchen utensils which were common for all recipes and even purchased them from the same warehouse. Yet, the fact that particular cooking action may reveal cultural differences in the use of a particular cooking utensil or another was not ignored. Just to cite an example, potatoes in the Spanish recipe (tortilla de patatas) are peeled with a knife and not with a peeler as in the German (Kartoffelsalat) or Finnish (Kalakeitto) recipes. By doing so, we are providing the users of the European Digital Kitchen opportunities for experimenting alternative ways of performing a given action, which in turn, allows them to acquire the following type of intercultural knowledge as described by CARAP.

K 8.7.2



Is familiar with some specificities of one's own culture in relation to certain social practices / customs from other cultures

- **The design of the documents on culture.**

Except for the cake for children in the English cuisine and one of the French deserts all recipes are accompanied by some sort of culture document. In the Finnish recipes, users are presented with an audio introduction to the recipe which serves to contextualise it culturally. In the other recipes, learners are presented with a built-in video document which serves the same purpose. Such materials, though, can also be used independently, for example, the two videos for the Italian cuisine (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6kVDg6bp1JE>; <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JdXT-gAX6pA>) and one of the videos for the English cuisine (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GRWSBIP0Tbo>) are also available to the worldwide teaching community via Youtube.

When built in the system, the range of pedagogical uses of the audio/audiovisual documents may vary from one recipe to another. Thus, users of the European Digital Kitchen may watch those videos as a comprehension task carried out (a) before the cooking session (as in the case of recipes like Spanish Salmorejo, Italian Involtini alla Contadina, Finnish Kalakeitto and Marjakiisseli, French Clafouti aux Poires and Chicken Mehti Malai), (b) during the cooking session (as in the case of recipes like Tortilla de patatas, Crema catalana, Chicken Mehti Malai or Pasta alla Napoletana) or (c) after the cooking session (as in the case of recipes like Bunyols de vent). The moment in which the video is viewed is determined by pedagogical issues only and not by any sort of cultural implication. In some cases, it has been considered that cultural insights into a particular dish are better to be provided prior the cooking session and others afterwards. Only in those cases in which a cooking action takes some time (e.g. cooking potatoes), the videos are watched while the recipe is being prepared so that learners are not left with no task at hand. This does not mean, though, that the videos do not have a pedagogical use.

Broadly speaking, the pedagogical purpose of the various audio/audiovisual documents on culture could fit into one (or more) of these categories:

- a) Provide information about a cultural festivity related to the elaboration of a particular dish. Examples: Bunyols de vent.
- b) Present the etymological origin of the words used to name the ingredients of a recipe as a means to raise awareness of how crosscultural relationships are necessary for the development of local cultures. Examples: Pasta alla Napoletana and Tortilla de patatas.
- c) Exemplify social practices related to the social activity of eating a particular dish (Examples: Tortilla de patatas, Scones and Pasta alla Napoletana) or purchasing the ingredients to prepare the recipe. Example: Chicken Methi Malai.
- d) Discuss local or transnational variations of the same recipes to illustrate cultural differences. Examples: Salmorejo, Crema catalana, Milchreis, Kartoffelsalat, Clafouti aux Poires, Pasta alla Napoletana and Involtini alla contadina.
- e) Present recipes that illustrate specific cultural-bound characteristics appreciated in a given country. For example, in Finland the close link between human and nature is extremely important and the ingredients necessary for the recipes presented in the Finnish cuisine (fish in the case of Kalakeitto and berries in the case of Marjakiisseli) can be easily obtained by people who perform to typical outdoors activities in the country: fishing and berry-picking in the forest.
- f) Provide names of relevant cooking books or famous cooks as a means to provide brief insights into the history of a particular territory. Examples: Involtini alla contadina and Crema Catalana.
- g) Introduce literature by presenting a poem related to a particular dish. Examples: Bunyols de vent and Tortilla de patatas.

Except for the last pedagogical objective (g) -which relates to literature as culture-, and its preceding one (f) –which relates history as culture-, the other objectives correlate with a few of the CARAP descriptors. Below we are going to list those descriptors and provide a brief outline of the contents of the videos designed to deal with the kind of knowledge or skill linked to each of them. Again, the same video may cater for the development of more than one descriptor.

K 8.7.1



Is familiar with some social practices / customs from neighbouring cultures

Bunyols de Vent: This dish is typically (and only) served at Easter and the video is used as an excuse to reflect upon the fact that many dishes and eating customs in Catalonia are related to religious or pagan festivities.



Chicken Methi Malai: The video shows how a person is buying the ingredients to prepare the recipe. Apart from presenting a typical authentic communicative situation, the learner can learn to recognise Asian spices.

Clafouti aux Poires: The video is a practical cooking demonstration in French of the preparation of the dish. The presenter provides some cooking advice and tips for the preparation of the dish. The film has sub-titles in English.

Pasta alla Napoletana: The video shows how an Italian famous actor is eating spaghetti without any fork.


Scones: As scones are pastries eaten during tea time, the video illustrates the ritual of tea-making and serving in the British Isles.

Tortilla de patatas: The video presents the typical social activity known as “tapeo” or the art of eating “tapas” or “pintxos”.


S 2.3	 Can make use of linguistic evidence to identify [recognise] words of different origin
K 11.3.1	 Knows that cultures can influence each other

Pasta alla Napoletana: It examines the origin of the different ingredients used to prepare this dish and illustrates the etymology of the words used in Italian to name them. By doing so, the video aims at raising learners’ awareness that cultures are nurtured by intercultural contacts.

Tortilla Española: The video provides part of the poem “Oda a la papa” from Chilean poet Pablo Neruda who argues in favour of the use of original word “papa” (from a native language in Chile) instead of the Spanish word “patata” to name “potatoes”. Then it illustrates that the word used to name of this tuberous crop in the various vernacular languages in Europe stem from one of possible four roots, depending on how the plant was introduced in each particular territory. Again, the video presents an opportunity for reflecting upon cultural contacts.

K 13.2	 Knows that there may be resemblances / differences between cultures
--------	---

Crema catalana: The video compares this typical Catalan dish with Crème Brûlée (France) and Trinity Cream (UK), which in turn serves to illustrate that cultures may have common heritages or needs.

K 9.2.1	 Knows some examples of the variation of cultural practices according to social / regional / generational groupings
---------	--

Involtini alla Contadina: The video compares different ways of preparing the same dish and of naming the same ingredients across different regions in Italy.

Salmorejo: The video explains why there are so many variations of this recipe along Andalusia. Here cultural differences are tackled from a more micro perspective (within the same region), which in turn serves to broaden the scope of what culture means and how cultural variations in the recipes relate to how particular groups of people solve their needs of preparing food.

Tortilla de patatas: The video provides an example of how a dish with no cultural variation in the process of its preparation is in fact served differently in different parts of the territory.

The videos in the Catalan and Spanish cuisines are accompanied by three multiple choice questions to check whether by viewing the videos students have, to a certain extent, started to develop specific knowledge or skills related to the CARAP descriptors we have just mentioned (recalling the origin of a word, stating the differences between cultures

with regards to how a dish is prepared, etc.). These questions are built-in the system and students are provided with three boxes (one per each possible answer) that contain one sensor each. Students can answer them by moving the box labelled with the option they consider correct (a, b or c).

4. REFERENCES

- Byram, M., & Feng, A.** (2004). Culture and language learning: Teaching, research and scholarship. *Language Teaching*, 37, 149-168.
- Byram, M., Gribkova, B., & Starkey, H.** (2002). *Developing the intercultural dimension in language teaching. A practical introduction for teachers*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- Montanari, M.** (2004). *Il cibo come cultura*. Roma: Laterza.
- Osler, A., & Starkey, H.** (2000). Intercultural education and foreign language learning: Issues of racism, identity and modernity. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 3(2), 207-221.
- Sercu, L., Bandura, E., Castro, P., Davcheva, L., Laskaridou, C., Lundgren, U., Méndez García, M.C., Ryan, P.** (2005). *Foreign language teachers and intercultural competence*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Starkey, H.** (2002). *Democratic citizenship, languages, diversity and human rights. Guide for the development of language education policies in Europe: From linguistic diversity to Plurilingual education*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- Starkey, H.** (2007). Language education, identities and citizenship: Developing cosmopolitan perspectives. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 56-71.