

Designing a semiotic-based approach to intercultural training

Roger Parent¹, Stanley Varnhagen²

¹ Campus Saint-Jean, University of Alberta
8406-91st Street; Edmonton, Alberta; Canada T6C 3T4
e-mail: roger.parent@ualberta.ca

² Faculty of Extension, University of Alberta
1-024 Enterprise Square; 10230 Jasper Avenue; Edmonton, Alberta; Canada T5J 4P6
e-mail: stanley.varnhagen@ualberta.ca

Abstract. This exploratory enquiry seeks to examine the largely unexplored potential of semiotics for intercultural training and education. The proposed three-part discussion describes the process by which semiotic theoretical principles were selected and progressively refined into an applied model which was then piloted through a 2007 research initiative entitled *Tools for Cultural Development*. The case study involved six groups of French and Australian trainees from both the academic and professional sectors, in collaboration with university, government and community partners. The first part of the article summarizes a review of the literature on approaches to cultural competence training. The study then outlines the transcoding process by which the stated objectives of intercultural education were reformulated in semiotic terms, particularly in reference to cultural semiotics on which the theoretical core of the applied model was subsequently based. Relevant principles from other semiotic schools as well as similar theoretical and methodological stances in the social sciences reinforced the established body of theory for the training design. The third part of the study discusses the process by which semiotic principles were further defined as skill-based outcomes and goals for workshop implementation. This pragmatic defining process facilitated development of questionnaires and surveys, thereby allowing participants to evaluate the training experience by examining their perceptions about the workshop outcomes at the beginning and end of the sessions. This article presents the quantitative results of the evaluation and, in discussing the gains and limits of data obtained, provides the context for a follow-up article on the qualitative findings of the study.

The growing and urgent challenges of cultural diversity and a global economy have generated growing attention to interculturality as a promising approach for training individuals in establishing effective dialogue and exchange in pluralistic societies. Whereas multiculturalism generally designates the broad issue of a culturally diversified society, interculturality refers more specifically to education and targets the creation of optimal learning environments by which to foster effective intercultural communication in specific settings (Lasonen 2005). Abdallah-Preteuille (2006: 482) describes interculturality as an “emerging coherence” that seeks to “offer a theoretical framework which allows for thinking about diversity and plurality”. This shift in educational thought has extended out into the political and social arenas. In its White Paper on intercultural dialogue, the Council of Europe referred to multiculturalism as an “inadequate” concept for achieving inclusive, democratic societies. However, this document also expressed “genuine uncertainty as to what intercultural dialogue meant in practice”¹ (p. 5). Among its policy approaches for promoting such dialogue, the White Paper targeted the strategic role of higher education and research in light of the university’s “great potential to engender ‘intercultural intellectuals’ who can play an active role in the public sphere” (p. 31).

Overviews of current approaches to intercultural training and education in both academic and professional settings further suggest that the pressing challenges of cultural diversity offer fertile ground for applied research initiatives that can bridge existing gaps between theory and practice in preparing individuals and communities to deal with cultural issues (Milhouse 1996). These training models emphasize theoretical understanding of culture as well as practical skills in working with people from different cultures. Based on the current view of culture as a social construction, as an ongoing and evolving process of negotiated signification and exchange, approaches to intercultural education and training emphasize culturally appropriate and

¹ Council of Europe 2008. *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue. Living Together as Equals in Dignity*. www.coe.int/dialogue.

effective solutions as opposed to pre-determined abstract knowledge. These approaches target development of intercultural problem solving aptitudes so that learners may “be able to apply that learning in creative ways to new environments, acquiring new frames of reference with which to continue enquiry” (Bennett 1986: 118). This emphasis on performance, that is, on the individual’s creative capacity to innovate in different cultural environments contrasts with preceding modes of training that categorized cultures according to predefined typologies, thereby incurring the danger of “reducing the individual to his/ her cultural membership” (Abdallah-Pretceille 2006: 476).

In response to these changing perspectives regarding culture and education, as well as to the need for applied research initiatives on approaches for fostering collaboration and dialogue between different cultural communities, this article describes an exploratory enquiry into the application of semiotics to intercultural training. This research initiative was entitled *Tools for Cultural Development*. Undertaken in 2007, the study endeavoured to examine how semiotic theory might serve as an effective foundation for designing an applied training model that could be used in multiple professional, academic and cultural contexts. As a starting point in the design of this applied model, the research initiative looked to cultural semiotics, in reference mainly to principles outlined in *Thesis for the Semiotic Analysis of Cultures* (Ivanov *et al.* 1974). However, a stated limitation of a semiotics was to be found in Abdallah-Pretceille’s (2006: 480) affirmation that cultural meaning could not be ascertained by a “mere recourse to a semiotic repertoire”. This study addressed this limitation as a reductionist view of the discipline, especially in respect to the flexible analytical processes developed in cultural semiotics and the rich body of theoretical works on which these principles were based (see Torop 2002, 1999). When considered in light of existing classifications of semiotics as “a structuralist project” (Denzin, Lincoln 2005: 27). Abdallah-Pretceille’s summary dismissal of this field of study seemed to further reinforce the need to examine the applied value of semiotic theory for fostering and enhancing intercultural skill development.

The theoretical base of the applied model also integrated contributions from other semiotic schools of thought in as much as these principles strengthened the general foundations and assumptions of the emerging training design. These borrowings, both within the discipline and in relation to significant findings in other academic fields, formed the basis of the training design. However, before the effectiveness of the applied model could be examined, it was necessary that the training delivered remain true to the model's objectives. This study thus examines how the workshop experience relates back to the intended finality of intercultural education: enhancing the learners' capacity for dialogue, exchange and innovation with individuals from different cultural origins. The course content was refined into an applied training model and then offered through the six workshop sessions of the *Tools for Cultural Development* project. Paper-based and audiovisual learning materials complemented the training process that sought to transmit the learning objectives in the form of specific skills and goals. The study then documented, on a voluntary basis, the perception of participants as to whether the training experience had met, or not, the outcomes and goals of the applied model. In this way, this self-reporting process provided the study with the first step in studying the potential value of applied semiotics for intercultural training as well as for possibly facilitating the cross-fertilization of findings in other academic fields in relation to the challenges of cultural diversity.

This paper firstly presents the findings of a literature review on semiotic approaches to cultural competence training. This literature review suggested the form and function of the semiotic-based training design. Next, this paper presents a summary of the applied model for an 18 or 36 hour training format, based on existing course materials developed by the first author. The final section of the article examines an initial formative evaluation of the training workshops and discusses how the evaluation materials and processes were developed to track learning outcomes. Workshop participants were from widely diverse linguistic, cultural, academic and professional backgrounds in France and Australia. Quantitative data pertaining to the preliminary evaluation

of the workshop outcomes will conclude the third part of the study. Closing discussion examines the strengths and limitations of the literature review and of the theoretical model developed in light of the applied workshop and of the findings obtained in the quantitative data obtained. The proposed evaluation process aimed at providing participants with the opportunity to give feedback on their understanding of the goals targeted by the workshop. Through an understanding of participants' feedback, it is hoped that this process will help refine and improve the learning process. In essence, this paper examines the development and conducting of a series of workshops that, within an encompassing case study, seek to foster better understanding as to how the semiotic model and methods developed could be improved. In this way, more effective applications of the training design would provide a learning process for building stronger collaborative relationships between individuals from different cultures.

1. Literature review on semiotic approaches to cultural competence training

A literature review on semiotic approaches to cultural competence training was undertaken in 2007–2008. Although these approaches featured multiple disciplinary perspectives, very few studies were found that addressed cultural semiotics as an approach to cultural competence training in research literatures. None of the studies identified were from semiotic journals. It consequently appeared that there was little semiotics literature concerning its potential for cultural competence training. Further examination of the literature was undertaken with three objectives in mind. The review aimed firstly at obtaining a better comprehension as to how interdisciplinary approaches to cultural competence training had evolved over time. Secondly, based on this historical perspective, analysis then endeavored to identify shared traits between current cultural competence training models

and emerging approaches to intercultural education. The third review objective was to select certain theoretical principles from these models so as to further refine and integrate them into the design of an applied, semiotic based approach to intercultural training.

With respect to the first objective, understanding interdisciplinary approaches to skill development in working with cultures, the literature review revealed that the field comprised multiple disciplinary influences since its early beginnings in the second half of the twentieth century. These initial approaches were, for the most part, strongly influenced by anthropology (Kluckhohn 1949; Hall 1966). Research as to the effectiveness of these models appears to have led to three distinct phases of development. In an initial “experiential” phase, approaches to cross-cultural training aimed primarily at preparing expatriates for work abroad (Brislin, Pedersen 1976). Scholars considered the academic or “university” model as inadequate for affective and behavioural learning in culture-specific situations because of its theoretical and cognitive thrust (Harrison, Hopkins 1967). As a result, methodology centered on practical, short term training sessions that were based on learning packages called “culture assimilators”. These resources and training modes centered on delivering experiential training related to the norms and values of a particular culture (Fiedler, Mitchell, Triandis 1971).

As studies began demonstrating the gains and limits of this empirical approach (Adler 1975, 1976; Brislin 1981; Bochner 1982), research across the disciplines gave rise to a subsequent phase of multifaceted development and experimentation that, between 1970–1990, was “characterized by a plethora of theories, research methodologies, and training and education models” (Milhouse 1996: 69). Once again, anthropology contributed new theoretical insight into these rapidly emerging approaches by proposing a semiotic, interpretive approach to culture (Geertz 1973). This significant breakthrough also coincided with the development of cultural semiotics through the writings of Juri Lotman and his colleagues of the Tartu-Moscow School (Ivanov *et al.* 1974; Broms, Kaufmann 1988). In this transition period, academics

played a seminal role in pointing out, not only the limited range of culture-specific and discipline-specific approaches to cultural competence training, but also their wider implications and pitfalls. Poststructuralists (see Derrida 1988; Bourdieu 1977, 1986; Ricoeur, 1983; Foucault 1970; de Certeau 1984; and Lyotard 1988) were exploring the key questions of otherness and of intersubjective understanding as opposed to the study of culture founded on labels and descriptive categories. At the same time, studies in cross-cultural communication (Ting-Toomey 1999), cross-cultural psychology (Smith, Bond 1999) and international management (Thomas 2002) repeatedly demonstrated the shortcomings of value-based, culture-specific knowledge (Loewenstein *et al.* 2003). This research pointed to the fact that such knowledge could not be automatically transferred to other cultural contexts without the costly creation of learning materials specific to the new host environment. This mode of training did not adequately prepare learners to work with multiple cultures at the same time. Furthermore, the use of cultural typologies for training carried the risk of collective stereotyping. Cultural values were consequently seen as an insufficient and arbitrary base from which to foster cultural understanding because of their relativity and of their differing context-specific definitions.

From this body of work arose, across the disciplines, a growing awareness of the need for a common theoretical framework by which to work with culture (Bhawuk 1998; Black, Mendenhall 1990: 115). The search for a theory of culture on which to effectively base intercultural course design and evaluation led to a third phase of development. Studies attempted to offer a synthesis of the lessons learned from the previous two stages by advocating interdisciplinary and interpretive approaches to culture-based issues and education. In this wider perspective, scholars began to see the potential of semiotics as an interdisciplinary bridge between the humanities and the social sciences, especially in regards to the study of how cultural meaning was created, communicated and interpreted through the action of signs (see Eco 1976; Lotman 1990; Danesi, Perron 1999; van Heusden 2004). Applied studies in semiotics also mirrored movement in other disciplines towards a phenomenological

study of culture. In cultural psychology, researchers envisioned semiotics, not only as a study of the interplay of signs, but more expansively as “a conceptual system” for dealing with evolutive systems (Lang 1997: 391). Culture became no longer perceived as a timeless, essential reality but rather as a “dynamic, shifting, contested terrain” (Ferguson 1988: 491). Research in organizational culture further emphasized the changing view of interculturality as “negotiated meaning” and capacity for exchange (Barley 1983; Appadurai 1986).

This theoretical focus on cultural meaning and exchange impacted on the long-standing distinction between intercultural education and training, between cognitive and experiential modes of learning, between classroom theory and fieldwork experience. Analysis of these “two distinct perspectives” and the “sharp contrast between education and training methodologies” (Milhouse 1996: 70) gave rise to what was labelled as the “university” or “intellectual model” versus the “area training” or “simulation model”. Using either one or the other of these approaches led to unidimensional course designs. For some, the “university model” was viewed as ineffective because of its emphasis on cognitive as opposed to affective learning. Consequently, it “fails to teach the trainees ‘how to learn’ about culture” (Bennett 1986: 123). Intercultural communication training became seen as a distinct discipline from education. These training-oriented approaches promoted learner-centered, hermeneutic (self-discovery) methods so as to better prepare individuals to function effectively in different cultural environments (Kolb 1984).

In reaction to this dichotomy, advocates of intercultural education further distinguished a third approach often referred to as the “self-awareness” or “human relations model”. This model assumed that “the individual who understands himself better will understand his culture better and will, consequently, be more effective abroad” (Gudykunst, Hammer 1977: 101). The innovative value of the “self-awareness” approach to interculturality stemmed from its emphasis on how “understanding of other people requires that one work on oneself in order to avoid lapsing into projection” (Abdallah-Pretceille 2006: 477).

However, this option built off of previously acquired and internalized knowledge. Scholars argued that trainees did not have a conceptual framework to face unknown situations in the future and to decode another culture's world view (Bennett 1986: 127). To better meet this need, a fourth approach called the "cultural awareness" model sought to develop insight into the structuring effect of cultures on human interaction. As well, this "cultural awareness" approach endeavoured to foster appropriate problem solving skills that could work on multiple levels: cognitive, affective and behavioural. The fostering of cultural awareness in the learning situation reiterated, as did the "area training" approach, the increasing importance of metacognition and of "learning to learn about culture" as a major objective in intercultural education and training.

In light of these four major options, intercultural training and education course designs, both in academic and professional settings, were also characterized by a move towards multidimensional designs (Milhouse 1996: 72). By combining the "academic", "area training", "self-awareness" and "cultural awareness" models, course delivery could better adapt to specific needs of students and communities. These multidimensional course designs integrated both academic and experiential approaches to culture. Course content provided for a theoretical component so as to foster metacognitive skill acquisition. As well, teaching and learning strategies included fieldwork activities conducive to affective and behavioural learning.

In this way, intercultural training and education could be both culture-general and culture-specific. In combining these perspectives, multidimensional models allowed the practitioner to cover the who, what, when, where, how and why of intercultural learning. "The overreaching goal is to integrate the so-called 'ivory tower' academic approach with 'real life' situations" (Milhouse 1996: 72-73). Based on the historical and current perspectives provided by the literature review, the choice of a multidimensional approach consequently seemed the most promising option for the designing of a semiotic-based approach to intercultural training.

This semiotic model would target, as its major outcome, performance-oriented problem solving skills so that learners would “be able to apply that learning in creative ways to new environments, acquiring new frames of reference with which to continue enquiry” (Bennett 1986: 118). However, the literature review also suggested an important gap across the disciplines in relation to evaluation of these multidimensional course designs in terms of achieved learning outcomes (Crandall *et al.* 2003: 590). Applying semiotics, and especially cultural semiotics, to the challenge of developing such a design for intercultural training thus called for the development of methods, materials and evaluative processes by which to track learning outcomes in the *Tools for Cultural Development* initiative. This evaluation would allow examination of the workshops’ capacity to attain the outcomes established on the basis of the theoretical model proposed.

2. Designing a semiotic-based course in intercultural training: From competency to performance

From a semiotic perspective, the educational shift seen in the literature review towards exchange and intercultural problem solving implied a change in emphasis from competence, such as knowing the “do’s and don’ts” of a culture, to the capacity of learners to effectively perform and to create new “messages” with other individuals within the host environment. In other words, complying to predetermined rules was no longer deemed sufficient. Interculturality brought home the importance of teaching individuals to effectively engage in modes of interaction that would result in the creation or renewal of collective meaning through specific initiatives in, what Milhouse referred to as, “real-life situations”. The signifying elements involved in the articulation of such initiatives did not depend on so-called universal principles, such as those expressed through pre-existing cultural typologies. Rather such signifying elements implied highly contextualized messages

that were conditioned by the space, the time and the needs of the communicative situation in which the individuals were involved. In this respect, the finality of intercultural education could be described as the pedagogy of exchange (Abdallah-Preteuille, Porcher 1996: 4). Intercultural education therefore called for processes by which to assist learners in working with different social constructs and world views (values and beliefs) so as to resolve, at least partially, often complex and urgent issues, through processes and products for exchange.

The multidimensional design for a semiotic-based training model subsequently began with the hypothesis that the semiotics of culture might further assist in defining how meaningful initiatives could be created and communicated through the process of exchange. A vast field of study in itself, cultural semiotics was implicitly present in Saussure's view of what a science of signs could encompass, as Nöth has appropriately pointed out: "In fact, every means of expression used in society is based, in principle, on collective behaviour or — what amounts to the same thing — on convention" (Saussure 1986: 68). Among the many contributions to the study of this branch of semiotics, the theories elaborated by what became known as the Tartu School² in Estonia around the writings of Juri Lotman and his colleagues (see Torop 1999; Broms, Kaufmann 1988), seemed to provide promising theoretical and methodological principles by which to better recognize, understand and interpret these cultural conventions at work. Drawing from this rich theoretical corpus, and its historical grounding in Russian Formalism and in the works of the Prague Linguistic Circle, attention centered on the seminal *Theses on the Semiotic Study of Cultures* (Ivanov *et al.* 1974) and sought to examine the operational value of a semiotic approach to intercultural training and exchange based on the concepts of text, function and system.

Tartu cultural semiotics viewed the concept of "text" as the "basic unit of the cultural system" (Lotman, Piatigorskij 1969: 209). Compatible with the emerging and previously-mentioned view of culture as negotiated meaning, the Tartu school adopted a relational definition

² Previously referred to as the Moscow-Tartu School.

of cultural signification. In this view, cultural meaning did not refer as much to concepts or ideas as to the relationships between signs and the conventions that governed their use in respect to users in specific contexts and to other signs (Nöth 1995: 93). These modes of collective meaning could be further tracked through Tartu semiotics' view of cultural functions and systems (Ivanov *et al.* 1974: 125). The concepts of text, function and system were consequently selected as the armature for the semiotic design so as to further explore and evaluate their potential for a practical application to intercultural training. The design of the proposed approach also built off the theoretical discussion on applied cultural semiotics presented in *Résoudre des conflits de culture* (Parent 2009). This established theoretical base was further informed by previous development and piloting of learning strategies and resources (documentaries³ and workbooks⁴) that, over a ten year time period, had arrived at a point where they could be refined into an applied model.

These preceding initiatives also brought to light important points of convergence with other semiotic approaches, in particular those developed by Greimas (Greimas, Courtés 1979) and Peirce (Hausman 1993). In turn, this semiotic “common ground” seemed to crosscut with studies in communication and metacommunication as developed at Palo Alto (Watzlawick *et al.* 1972) and with the competence/performance debate in the field of performance studies (Carlson 1996). These recurring and complementary principles echoed similar culture related principles and methods in other disciplines, such as those formulated on communication and cultural change in anthropology by Hall (1984, 1966), on narrative and cultural interpretation in oral history and sociology (Chase 2005) and, in cognitive psychology, on

³ The five-part series of documentaries, entitled *Cultures in Conflict*, were developed through the Curriculum Redevelopment Fund of the University of Alberta, in collaboration with the Government of Alberta, ACCESS Television and a consortium of international partners.

⁴ Financial support from the Paris-based *Institut de Gestion Sociale* facilitated the piloting of the five workbooks that were created to accompany the documentary series.

the relationship between culture and creativity (Feldman *et al.* 1994). However, the conceptual unity guiding this expansion of the hybrid training design from the selected principles of Tartu cultural semiotics to semiotics in general and then outward again into the social sciences remained the fundamental issue of semiosis: the creation and communication of meaning. The basic assumption underpinning the design was that training in applied cultural semiotics could provide concepts and methods for working with collective semiosis. This assumption was confirmed by studies that signalled the effectiveness of semiotics for developing perceptive and cognitive faculties conducive to developing intercultural skills (see Baur, Grzybeck 1989; Cunningham 1986: 367–378).

With exchange being the finality of intercultural education, then an effective training design would have to be structured in a way as to develop the capacity of learners for praxis through skill development in building scenarios for collective social action. In addition, such implementation would necessitate the related challenge of negotiating acceptance by community representatives of the proposed innovation. The communal acceptance granted such a scenario would be meaningful or significant in as much as the proposed initiative could transcend individual cultural references and integrate collective expectations and references. The project for exchange would thereby constitute a cultural “text”, as defined by Tartu cultural semiotics: a basic cultural unit of meaning collectively recognized and accepted by a particular group (Ivanov *et al.* 1974: 130). This concept could apply to any collectively recognized signification support system: rituals, ceremonies, art forms, scenarios, etc. Thus defined, a semiotic design for intercultural training in the process of exchange could focus on the capacity of learners to create, in dialogue with a host community, new cultural “texts” that, whatever their means of signification and disciplinary discourse, could attract interest, support and resources from allies within the host environment.

This acceptance would depend on the cultural significance attributed to the proposed exchange. In advancing a meaningful initiative,

the project would be seen as carrying value in terms of its capacity to contribute to the development or evolution of the chosen cultural microcosm. This close relationship between value and meaning, including financial, could be established through Tartu semiotics' relational approach to defining and recognizing cultural meaning. In this view, meaning could be interpreted through the relationship between the cultural sign and its function in the cultural system. In proposing the three cultural functions of collective memory, action plan and sign creation, Tartu cultural semiotics seemed to provide an invaluable methodological principle for relating individual signs to a holistic view of the cultural system (Ivanov *et al.* 1974: 141, 144, 155).

When combined with other concepts related to inner and outer borders as well as to cultural hierarchies, such as that of "non-culture" (Ivanov *et al.* 1974: 126), Tartu semiotics allowed the training design to integrate effective methodological principles for the all-important task of cultural analysis as the cornerstone to understanding cultural meaning (Abdallah-Preteille, Porcher 1996: 72). As the three cultural functions also revealed the manner in which a culture communicated its past, present and anticipated future through its "texts", they could facilitate a better understanding of the dynamics affecting change and evolution within that environment. The learner could then use analysis to identify a collective or cultural need and subsequently design an appropriate scenario for exchange and innovative action to address that issue.

At this point, the design armature was examined in relation to the semiotics of Greimas and Peirce so as to strengthen and enrich its basic assumptions. The Gremassian School had also signalled the strategic importance of exchange in cultural evolution, defining it as one of two fundamental metanarratives or story paradigms for depicting human relations, as exemplified in Rousseau's concept of the social contract (Courtés 1976: 11). In this view, a manifestation of the opposing meta-narrative, that of confrontation could be seen in Marx's theory on the struggle of the classes. Further defining exchange as a performative act (*faire performatif*), this capacity established "a give and take

relationship between the subjects⁵” (Greimas, Courtés 1979: 114). This additional semiotic perspective enriched the training design by strengthening the hypothesis that exchange, as a scenario for social action, could be communicated and represented through narrative.

To this end, Greimas’ theory of modalities also provided an accessible and effective semiotic principle for recognizing and interpreting the cultural norms, values and beliefs influencing a culture’s evolution in the analytical process (Greimas, Courtés 1979: 230–231). By paying close attention to the implicit and explicit use of modal auxiliaries in a culture’s oral and written modes of discourse (in particular “must”, “want”, “can”, the observer could recognize signs of obligation (norms), of desire (values) and of perceived capacity (can). In turn, these expressed collective attitudes to social action, when nested within the cultural functions, could further facilitate the recognition of systemic patterns characteristic of a community’s worldview. In-depth examination of these modalities with the assistance of cultural interpreters or informants in the data-gathering process would thus foster cultural insight into the “do’s” and “don’ts” of a given milieu, as well as into its underlying axiological and belief systems. As a result, these modalities could then inform with respect to the collective norms, values and beliefs governing negotiation in the exchange process.

Course design then linked Tartu’s poststructuralist view of the dialogical nature of communication as expressed through cultural “texts” to Peircean phenomenological sign theory. In this way, the training would reflect the importance given by both semiotic schools to communication as a two way dialogical and interpretive process between individuals. Peirce’s view of semiosis as dependent on the action of the individual interpreting the sign as a sign echoed the importance given by Tartu semiotics to communicative and autocommunicative processes within a culture. In turn, this dialogical perspective allowed the course design to account for similar perspectives in communication studies, particularly with respect to the development of metacommunicative

⁵ Author’s translation.

processes in recognizing and confirming cultural identity (Watzlawick *et al.* 1972: 84–88)

Having established exchange as the finality of intercultural education, and having determined cultural analysis and intercultural communication as major steps in achieving that goal, the capacity to establish communicative, metacommunicative relationships with individuals within the host culture could be consequently viewed as a promising and possibly indispensable starting point for the training process. Through metacommunication, learners could establish feedback processes for effective intercultural communication. As a result of this dialogue with members of the host community, individuals would be able to progressively verify the hypotheses formulated through their on-going analysis of the host community. Using Peirce's triadic model of the sign, learners could also recognize the influencing element of the referent, the object referred to by the sign. By including the referent in the interpretation of signs, cultural analysis could further specify its interpretive stance. Cultural meaning or signification was seen as specific to the interpretation of the individuals involved in the communicative situation, in relation to their specific contexts. As a result, cultural signification could be viewed as a progressive, ever growing, self-defining and creative process.

Phenomenological Peircean semiotics provided a process by which to track this on-going, cumulative creation of meaning between subjects through its three descriptive categories of Firstness, Secondness and Thirdness. These categories proceed from a three part progressive understanding of phenomena, from their felt sensation (Firstness) as phenomena to their existence in concrete fact (Secondness) to their cognitive understanding (Thirdness) (Fisette 1990: 7; Hausman 1993: 11–12). These categories allowed the emerging training design to account for physical, intuitive and emotional signals (Firstness) in the communicative situation (Secondness) as a promising starting point for assisting learners in developing metacommunicative relationships and then, based on these interpersonal ties, in uncovering culturally relevant data and further analysis for future exchange

(Thirdness). Peirce's philosophical model of the sign consequently provided a basis for the study of both verbal and nonverbal signs and tied into research on biosemiotics as well as to semiotic studies in proxemics and kinesics. The training model thereby mirrored the shift occurring in the other disciplines from functionalist and systemic approaches to cultural study to more phenomenological or "define-as-you-go", contextualized perspectives (Grieves 2000: 369–370). As a result, the combination of Tartu cultural semiotics and of Peircean sign theory facilitated the creation of a theoretical design that could integrate both culture-general and culture-specific data and situations. It could also target multi-levelled learning on the cognitive, affective and behavioural levels. In addition, the application of Peircean sign theory to Tartu cultural semiotics provided important understanding as to the workings of culture as a communicative system and provided a theoretical framework conducive to metacognition: learning to learn about culture.

The hybrid training model created by the *bricolage* of semiotic principles taken from Tartu semiotics, Greimas and Peirce suggested a fundamental unity underlying the different branches of discipline. In basing the course design around the innovative action of exchange, attention shifted from semiotics' recognized value for analysis to its creative potential, both individually and collectively (Hénault 2002; Rudowicz 2003; Taborsky 2004; Kaufman, Sternberg 2006). All three semiotic models mentioned had a strong, but often neglected creative focus. Tartu's emphasis on cultural creativity and the generation of new meaning (Torop 2005: 169) provided an analytical methodology for study of the semiotic creativity of cultures through their diversity, internal divisions, conflicts and transcoding processes (Chernov 1988: 14–15). With respect to Peirce, scholars were giving increasing recognition of the discipline's potential to move beyond existing modes of signification and to act as "a source of imagination rather than as a routinely applied analytical grid"⁶ (Fisette 1990: 6). Similar opinions were being voiced regarding "the importance given by Saussure to the

⁶ Author's translation.

capacity of the individuals to free themselves so as to create new ideas”⁷ (Feldman 2002: 223) and justified the call for rediscovery of the founding thought of semiotics’ main pioneers (Hénault 2002).

The creative thrust of the training model mirrored, in semiotic terms, the changing perspectives in intercultural education towards problem solving and performance. In adopting Greimas’ semiotic definition of exchange as a performative act, the training design expanded its theoretical footings in relation to Performance Studies. Again here, the concept of competency and of its implied conformity to pre-existing signifying systems and rules was being intensively questioned (Carlson 1996: 56). As Carlson’s analysis perceptively demonstrated, Chomsky’s linguistic theory defined competency as knowledge of the language system whereas performance designated individual communication in specific situations (Chomsky 1965). This dichotomy appeared to accentuate preservation of an existing system over its capacity to evolve through usage. Individual speech and performance could thus be seen as subordinate to competence. To move from cultural analysis and communication into the performance of exchange, an intermediary step regarding culture and creativity had to be included in the emerging course design that now comprised five major themes: metacommunication, cultural analysis, intercultural communication, creativity and intercultural exchange.

From performance studies, course design sought to develop creative processes conducive to the articulation of new meaning through social action and to the subsequent enhancing of the capacity of individuals and communities to break out of predetermined attitudes and mindsets. By defining the nature of performance semiotically through the modalities of exchange, training in creativity could thus avoid arbitrary individualism or simply “doing one’s own thing”. Learners could then develop scenarios that worked off the culturally coded and recognizable patterns of behaviour inherent to intercultural communication (Bauman 1989) and establish reciprocity and shared codes between themselves and their stakeholder groups. It is precisely because of these existing codes,

⁷ Author’s translation.

that community partners could then evaluate the merits of the proposed exchange and, through their acceptance, create a cultural “text”.

The exchange paradigm thus facilitated integration of the three major definitions of performance highlighted in Carlson’s timely analysis of research in the field of performance studies (Carlson 1996). The defining of intercultural performance from a social perspective, as evoked by the title of Goffman’s book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), accentuated the capacity of the classroom environment to transcend the limits of the academic model, as previously indicated by Bennett, for example, and to provide skills that would allow learners to interact successfully in a host culture (Bennett 1986: 123). Looked at in terms of Carlson’s second definition, that of “virtuosity”, the performance of exchange implied development of the learner’s capacity for specialized behaviour and intercultural problem solving related to a discipline, professional field or particular issue. This principle consequently opened the door to an interdisciplinary perspective that could twin a semiotic *top down* theoretical framework with empirical *bottom up* research methods in the social sciences (van Heusden 2004). However, performance studies did not view virtuosity as an end in itself but as a means to reach a wider public through integrity and excellence (Alter 1990). Although this third definition referred specifically to artistic performance, it was believed that the interdisciplinary nature of creativity made possible the application of this principle to creative initiatives in all fields, the fundamental objective being honing the learner’s intercultural ability to create more inclusive communities, at home or abroad. This perspective led directly into Carlson’s final definition of performance: the use of art for community building. Again, course design applied this view of performance to the elaboration of narratives or scenarios for intercultural exchange by which communities could “discover and make connections between a culturally and spiritually dissociated past and [...] present social and political realities” (Carlson 1996: 164).

In turn, the integration of this view of performance into the course design reflected the basic learning objectives or outcomes targeted by

other multi-levelled approaches to intercultural training in other disciplines. For example, in the field of economics and organizational culture, the “Cultural Intelligence” approach (Earley, Peterson 2004; Thomas, Inkson 2004), was emphasizing development of the adaptive capacity of individuals to successfully solve problems in an intercultural environment and “to provide the metacognitive skills needed to learn in new situations and cultures” (Earley, Peterson 2004: 104). “Cultural Intelligence” was defined in a progressive, step-by-step process which began with an individual’s ability to identify with and to analyze a target culture (mindfulness/cognitive mapping), to establish effective working networks within a specific community (social communication) and to perform according to practices, norms, values and beliefs of a particular discipline (specialized behaviour).

In summary, the refining of the theoretical foundations of the course design into an applied model for subsequent application to intercultural workshop training gave rise to a five-step progression. Each step targeted a specific performance or action: (1) metacommunication, (2) cultural analysis, (3) intercultural communication, (4) creative action, and (5) exchange. This linear progression then allowed the systematic integration of related theory and methodology from social psychology, anthropology and cognitive psychology. These interdisciplinary borrowings took the form of secondary themes or principles that served to flesh out and enrich the five step design. Since the application of the model targeted training in workshop situations in order to build opportunities for exchange within small, manageable cultural microcosms, particular emphasis was given to the potentially vital role that organizational cultures could play in supporting such initiatives. In this respect, multiple overlaps were to be found between Tartu cultural semiotics and systemic/ functionalist approaches to organizational cultures, particularly the one developed by Edgar Schein in social psychology (Schein 1999, 1985). As well, Schein’s approach to data gathering in organisational cultures made extensive use of life story and narrative, as developed in oral history and sociology (Bertaux 1997). This model also recognized the dynamics between culture and performance and

provided practical field-tested techniques for the analysis of cultural modalities (norms, values and beliefs). Interdisciplinary borrowings from anthropology and Hall's theory of cultural change resulted in the formulation of subthemes in relation to communication and technology (Hall 1984: 79–110). In cognitive psychology, Csikszentmihalyi's model of creativity as a culturally conditioned and communicative phenomenon (Feldman *et al.* 1994) consolidated the culture/ performance dichotomy of the training. As well, this model provided guidelines for ensuring that necessary resources and mentoring processes could be identified in order to ensure the success of the learner's cultural development initiative. Through this refinement process, the applied design had now condensed its base of semiotic theory into five main themes or partial performances that led up to the final performance of exchange. As well, the design offered subthemes and field-tested practices from other disciplines that could assist in attaining the target performance. These subthemes could be used for specific skill development, according to the needs of the workshop situation.

3. Training design and quantitative evaluation

The five step structure allowed development of the applied model and its resulting implementation in specific cultural environments. To this end, each workshop proposed the same five module course content. This content, and related learning strategies, aimed at facilitating the progressive acquisition of specific skills related to the principles of (1) metacommunication, (2) cultural analysis, (3) intercultural communication, (4) creative process, and (5) the metanarrative of exchange. This refinement process applied to both the main and the secondary theoretical principles retained. As a result, the principle of metacommunication specified into "the learner's capacity to communicate respect for a person's identity". Or again, cultural analysis gave rise to the skill of being able "to establish relationships between the cultural signs observed in a culture and the function or role they fulfill in the

cultural system". Consequently, the set of skills defined could be used as the criteria by which to evaluate the workshop's perceived success in the participants' learning of the theoretical principles that the workshop had endeavoured to communicate through its multidimensional course design.

Evaluation research tools (Weiss 1998) aided in determining expression of the specific skills or practices to be examined as criteria for workshop training received. This approach seemed appropriate to the needs of the study because of evaluation research's focus on concrete outcomes: "what the program actually *does*" (Weiss 1998: 9). As well, evaluation research aimed at practicality and started "with *use* in mind" (*ibid.*, 15). In other words, the approach provided processes by which to formulate the skills that could be called upon to achieve the global outcome of the training design: developing opportunities for exchange. As well, principles for evaluation research were learner centered and oriented towards performance. Focus on the training and the evaluation centered on what participants were actually doing as opposed to their simply knowing about a culture. The relevance of these actions was defined in terms of the needs of the participants: "Evaluation takes place in an action setting, where the most important thing that is going on is the program. The program is serving people" (*ibid.*, 15). At the same time, the methods used were flexible and non-prescriptive: "There is no cut-and-dried formula to offer [...] the 'best' or most suitable way of pursuing their studies" (*ibid.*, 18). Of particular importance with this approach was using the theory of a training program to formulate target skills in terms of outcomes and goals: "The goal has to be specific. It must be able to be translated into operational terms and made visible" (*ibid.*, 121). As a result, the outcome of cultural analysis translated into several skill-based goals, one of which was, for example, "the capacity to be able to identify important needs in a culture". In the same way, the finality of intercultural exchange gave rise to the goal of "designing an effective project or action plan to meet the cultural needs identified". This outcome also led to the formulation of other observable goals pertaining to communication, such as the skill "to successfully communicate a project to meet a cultural need to key people in the culture".

Furthermore, these goals and outcomes could be expressed in the form of questions for subsequent evaluation of the workshop both quantitatively through surveys and qualitatively through group interviews: “The key is the kind of questions raised and therefore the kind of evidence needed to provide answers” (Weiss 1998: 87). The existing workbooks served as additional reference material for articulating the specific outcomes and expressing them in terms of concrete goals and related questions for workshop evaluation. In this way, the key theoretical principles underpinning the five module structure were deconstructed into main outcomes, core skills and specific skills. This structure closely resembled that of other culture related training models which evaluated course outcomes based on a small number of fundamental performance objectives which in turn further specified into secondary outcomes (Crandall *et al.* 2003: 590; Hughes, Hood 2007: 59; Gibson, Zhong 2005: 625–626; Paige *et al.* 2003: 474). In all, 26 outcomes were formulated for a 36 hour multidimensional university course design. For an 18 hour version used in the workshops, the number of goals was reduced by half and comprised four main outcomes, six core skills and three specific skills. However, in the case study *Tools for Cultural Development*, one of the specific skills was eliminated from the analysis of course results due to a discrepancy in wording⁸, giving rise to the following 12 target outcomes (Table 1).

To further measure the learner’s perceived level of improvement with respect to the goal in both cognitive and experiential learning, the resulting questionnaire examined each outcome in terms of three indicators: knowledge, experience and confidence. A measurement scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high) with respect to each of these variables allowed further quantification of the perceived skill acquisition by the participants (Table 2).

Tools for Cultural Development was undertaken in collaboration with Queensland Health, the Center for Rural and Remote Mental

⁸ This skill pertained to: “the use of story and narrative (oral tradition) to obtain needed information about the culture and to verify and modify, (if necessary) how the host culture worked in terms of identity, values and beliefs”.

Table 1. Outcomes for quantitative evaluation of the eighteen hour training session

<p>MAIN OUTCOMES</p> <p>Identify important needs in a culture (modules 1 & 2). Design an effective project or action plan to meet the cultural needs (module 4). Successfully communicate my project to meet a cultural need to key people in the culture (module 5). Bring about needed changes in a culture.</p> <p>CORE SKILLS</p> <p>Recognize signs of cultural identity (module 1). Communicate respect for a person’s cultural identity (module 1). Identify a culture’s actions (strategies and objectives) to survive (module 2). Identify some on the rules, often unwritten, that determine how people in the culture communicate (module 1). Understand how exchange contributes to the evolution of cultural systems (modules 4 & 5).</p> <p>SPECIFIC SKILLS</p> <p>Formulate a personal hypothesis as to my target culture’s value system (<i>its way if defining what is “desirable” and “undesirable”</i>) (module 1). Collaborate with cultural interpreter in gaining access to privileged information within the culture (module 3).</p>
--

Table 2. Survey: Example of questions and indicators

	Knowledge					Experience					Confidence				
	low		high			low		high			low		high		
Identify important needs in a culture	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

Health Queensland, the University of Avignon and the American Business School in Paris between August and December, 2007. In all, six 18 hour training sessions were delivered to approximately 75 participants from a wide array of cultures and backgrounds. Despite this individual diversity, each training session was characterized by a certain homogeneity within each of the three groups. This homogeneity related to education, cultural origins and professional orientation. In Cairns, Australia, the three workshops facilitated through Queensland Health addressed specific clienteles. The first targeted professionals from the health sector as well as from business and media. The second workshop was given in the nearby community of Yarrabah and involved mainly Aboriginal health workers from its Suicide Prevention Team as well as community representatives and a non-Aboriginal television producer. The third workshop focused on the academic community and attracted university professors, researchers as well as senior health administrators and doctors. In the same way, the three training sessions given in France all involved participants from a wide spectrum of cultural backgrounds and languages, including French, English, Spanish and Arabic. In all, two of the workshops were delivered in French and four in English.

In each case, the academic setting in which the training was delivered and the discipline under study again provided each group with a certain homogeneity. Delivery of the course at the University of Avignon addressed two groups of graduate students, one in journalism and the other in cross-cultural education. Previous collaboration with the *Institut de Gestion Sociale* in Paris facilitated involvement of students in the masters program at the American Business School in Paris. In general, the French participants were younger than their Australian counter-parts. The university students in France were in the process of completing their academic studies while the participants in Australia were approaching the training as continued professional development in regards to their respective educational backgrounds and work related challenges. The Australian workshops carried a strong community and Aboriginal health focus and dealt with culture-specific

and professional concerns in fieldwork whereas the French university students tended to be more preoccupied by theoretical issues. These distinctions of age, academic discipline, profession and community/cultural engagement all contributed to defining the homogeneity within each of the groups involved.

The design of the evaluation aimed at measuring the short-term outcomes of the workshops. For the quantitative evaluation, paper based precourse and postcourse surveys were distributed immediately before and after the training sessions. These surveys were administered on a voluntary basis as an optional component of the workshop and sought to obtain information as to the learners' attitudes and opinions prior to and immediately following delivery of the course. It was assumed that this tracking process would provide preliminary indication as to how well delivery of the model in culture-specific contexts had met, or not, the proposed workshop goals. Such feedback would allow examination of changes resulting from the workshop experience and would aid in improving course content and learning strategies. As the training addressed a wide diversity of cultures and professional backgrounds within each of the six distinct participating groups, standards for comparison were established by using the precourse survey as a baseline from which to measure the degree of perceived improvement.

In all, voluntary participation resulted in reception of 70 precourse surveys and of 39 postcourse surveys. Logistical factors such as conflicting course schedules, previous professional commitments and irregular attendance during the training accounted for the difference in numbers between both surveys. Analysis of data reveals that statistically significant improvement was achieved with respect to eleven of the twelve target skills under study. These results were obtained based on independent t-tests using ($p < .05$) to indicate statistical significance of the pretest and posttest means. All the results included in the table were of statistical significance. Each t-test was tested for Levene's test for equality of variance (1960: 278–292). The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Test values from the precourse and postcourse Surveys. “T” represents the t-test value, “df” represents degrees of freedom; K=knowledge, E=experience, and C=confidence. * indicates that a modified t-test for unequal variance has been used.

Question	Category	Unequal variance used	T	df	Mean difference	Std. error difference
1. Identify important needs in a culture.	K	*	-8.15	108	-1.25	0.15
	E		-2.92	107	-0.60	0.21
	C	*	-5.69	102	-0.98	0.17
2. Design an effective project or action plan to meet the cultural needs I identify.	K	*	-8.36	107	-1.45	0.17
	E	*	-3.26	90	-0.69	0.21
	C		-5.46	105	-1.05	0.19
3. Successfully communicate my project to meet a cultural need to key people in the culture.	K	*	-8.18	107	-1.31	0.16
	E		-3.84	105	-0.83	0.22
	C		-4.32	106	-0.88	0.21
4. Bring about needed changes in a culture.	K	*	-6.97	103	-1.32	0.19
	E		-3.89	107	-0.90	0.23
	C		-2.40	107	-0.53	0.22
5. Recognize signs of cultural identity.	K		-5.11	105	-0.88	0.17
	E	*	-5.11	95	-0.86	0.17
	C	*	-4.46	97	-0.74	0.17
6. Communicate respect for a person's cultural identity.	K		-2.03	106	-0.35	0.17
7. Identify a culture's actions (strategies and objectives) to survive.	K	*	-6.55	107	-1.13	0.17
	E		-4.62	107	-0.96	0.21
	C	*	-5.90	103	-1.04	0.18

Question	Category	Unequal variance used	T	df	Mean difference	Std. error difference
8. Establish relationships between the cultural signs observed in a culture and the function or role they fulfill in the cultural system.	K	*	-4.82	107	-0.88	0.18
	E		-2.54	107	-0.56	0.22
	C		-3.68	105	-0.72	0.20
9. Formulate a personal hypothesis as to my target culture's value system (its way of defining what is "desirable" and "undesirable").	K	*	-5.31	104	-1.01	0.19
	E		-3.61	107	-0.83	0.23
	C	*	-6.52	103	-1.26	0.19
10. Collaborate with a cultural interpreter in gaining access to privileged information within the culture.	K	*	-5.75	106	-1.10	0.19
	E		-5.12	102	-1.04	0.20
	C	*	-5.94	105	-1.05	0.18
11. Identify some of the rules, often unwritten, that determine how people in the culture communicate.	K		-3.07	108	-0.64	0.21
	E		-2.71	106	-0.57	0.21
	C		-2.65	106	-0.57	0.21
12. Understand how exchange contributes to the evolution of cultural systems.	K	*	-4.81	101	-0.91	0.19
	E		-3.01	106	-0.68	0.23
	C		-4.31	93	-0.95	0.22

As almost all of the pre and post comparisons in the surveys were significant, there were clearly differences between the two surveys. With the exception of skill six (*communicating respect for a person's cultural identity*), this improvement registered in the three indicators of knowledge, experience and confidence. Overall, this data provided evidence

that learning took place on both a cognitive and an experiential level. The gain with respect to the confidence factor could further suggest an enhanced capacity to implement the target skills in concrete situations. The differences documented were limited to attitudinal change. The six groups were too small to allow for separate evaluation and comparison of each workshop, so results have been combined. As in any study of this type, there could be reasons other than the workshop sessions that caused these differences.

Discussion

This pilot application of semiotics to an intercultural training initiative was framed by examining a vast body of work on issues such as cross-cultural education and intercultural sensitivity training. Although far from being exhaustive, this overview did provide insight as to a recurring cleavage in the approaches developed and to a deep and long-standing distinction advocated by some models between intercultural education and training. However, in response to this dichotomy, the multidimensional course designs aimed at integrating both options in order to answer the widespread need for better relating academic theory to intercultural practice. There was also agreement by scholars on both sides that the major outcome targeted was that of the enhanced capacity on the part of learners to foster opportunities for exchange in fieldwork situations. The central question in this process remained the search for theoretical models of culture on which to base the design of the course. The challenges related to course design then subsequently raised the secondary question of processes and materials by which to undertake evaluation of the learning outcomes achieved. Two important gaps were identified in the literature: the underrepresentation of semiotics in the field of intercultural training and education and the need for more studies that examine achieved outcomes and that relate these findings back to theory.

This paper examined how cultural semiotics might provide effective theoretical elements that could be used for designing and developing a semiotic approach to training in specific cultural contexts. To this end, the concept of “text” provided a working principle that further specified the dialogical communicative processes inherent to the process of exchange. Principles for cultural analysis based on system and function allowed integration into the design of a methodology by which learners could interpret a specific culture’s evolution over time and identify needs that could be addressed through a project for exchange. Compatibility of these principles with those of other semiotic schools, especially Greimas (Greimas, Courtés 1979; Courtés 1976), informed as to how intercultural exchange could be communicated and expressed as a narrative, in relation to the modalities governing that particular performative act. And Peircean sign theory further specified how cultural semiotics’ interpretive and dialogical approach to cultural analysis constituted a phenomenological construct or creation on the part of the individuals involved in building an opportunity for exchange (Fisette 1990; Hausman 1993). This design process brought to light cultural semiotics’ emphasis on cultural creativity and resilience. It also illustrated how the recurrent theme of creativity and innovation through exchange allowed confirmation of the theoretical design by references to similar stances and approaches in other disciplines: performance studies, cognitive psychology, social psychology and anthropology, etc. It could be argued that the hybrid design model resulting from these interdisciplinary borrowings stemmed from the fact that all approaches to intercultural training and education were dealing with the same problem, that of collective semiosis or the interpretation of cultural meaning.

The study also showed that through evaluation research processes, useful tools could be developed for determining whether the training program had met the objectives of the semiotic principles retained through the development and examination of observable, action-based outcomes and goals. These goals served as a basis for formulating questions that were then incorporated into a survey. The semiotic

theoretical base thus facilitated the development of skill-oriented questions that the workshop evaluation subsequently examined. At this initial stage of development, the evaluative component sought to provide participants with an opportunity for self-reporting and feedback as to the perceived utility of the training process in relation to these proposed goals and outcomes. The results of the quantitative data indicated improvement through the workshop experience and through training in applied semiotics. This improvement was manifest in the three indicators proposed: knowledge, experience and confidence. In terms of the scope of the study, the evaluation results only looked at the immediate impact of the workshops. Documentation and analysis of the longer term effects of training would be worth examining in future research, especially with respect to behavioral changes resulting from the semiotic-based training received. In addition to a wider time frame, it would be advantageous for subsequent enquiry to address a larger number of participants across different cultural contexts.

Although statistical analysis did provide some objective feedback on the intercultural training workshops under study, this perceived improvement of target skills tended to portray an “atomist” view of the learning process and did not adequately account for the gestalt or big “picture” of the trainees’ experience. A companion article to the present study will examine the second component of the evaluation process used in the *Tools for Cultural Development* project. This component aimed at gathering qualitative data as formulated through the different perspectives and cultural lenses of the stakeholders involved in the same six workshops. This second evaluative phase followed shortly after completion of the post-course surveys and used focus groups to document how the participants perceived themselves as having benefited directly from the training in terms of their respective expectations and collective needs. These focus groups provided the opportunity for more in-depth evaluation of the training initiative’s capacity to “integrate the so-called ‘ivory tower’ academic approach with ‘real life’ situations (Milhouse 1996: 72–73).

These perspectives further highlight the on-going challenges of adapting culture-general theoretical perspectives to culture-specific

issues and contexts through multidimensional course designs. As well, the importance attributed by these designs to learner-centered training also impact on the manner in which materials and processes are developed to evaluate the learning outcomes achieved, especially in disenfranchised or marginalized communities. The interpretive and dialogical approach to intercultural training and education, as reflected in the semiotic-based applied model developed for the study, brings to light the importance of adopting alternative evaluator roles. These roles or stances can be described as participatory and non-hierarchical, as opposed to the detached stance of more conventional research modes of enquiry. The argument for involving evaluators more closely with program people (and other interested parties) has a philosophical basis in constructivist idea of multiple perspectives and multiple realities. No longer do social scientists believe in the existence of a single truth (Weiss 1998: 100).

This evaluative stance reaffirms the effective positioning of cultural semiotics' holistic approach to cultural analysis as well as its emphasis on the polyphonic nature of the cultural systems. The many cultural perspectives involved in the intercultural learning situation call for the capacity, on the part of both learners and researchers, to cross not only cultural borders but academic and professional ones as well in building effective opportunities for dialogue and exchange.⁹

References

- Abdallah-Pretceille, Martine 2006. Interculturalism as a paradigm for thinking about diversity. *Intercultural Education* 17(5): 475-483.
- Abdallah-Pretceille, Martine; Porcher, Louis 1996. *Éducation et communication interculturelle*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Adler, Peter S. 1975. The transitional experience: An alternative view of culture shock. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 15: 13-23.

⁹ This research was partially supported through a Killam Cornerstone Grant at the University of Alberta. Ms. Diane Conway provided assistance in conducting the review process.

- 1976. Beyond cultural identity: Reflections upon cultural and multicultural man. In: Samovar, Larry A.; Porter, Richard E. (eds.), *Intercultural Communication: A Reader*. Belmont: Wadsworth, 180–362.
- Alter, Jean 1990. *A Sociosemiotic Theory of Theatre*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Appadurai, Arjun (ed.) 1986. *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Barley, Stephen R. 1983. Semiotics and the study of occupational and organizational cultures. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 28: 393–413.
- Bauman, Richard 1989. Performance. In: Barnow E. (ed.), *International Encyclopedia of Communications* 3. New York: Oxford University Press, 262–266.
- Baur, Ruprecht S.; Grzybek, Peter 1989. Language teaching and semiotics. In: Koch, Walter A. (ed.), *Semiotics in the Individual Sciences*. Bochum: Brockmeyer, 178–213.
- Bennett, Janet M. 1986. Modes of cross-cultural training: Conceptualizing cross-cultural training as education. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 10(2): 117–134.
- Bertaux, Daniel 1997. *Les récits de vie*. Paris: Nathan.
- Bhawuk, Dharm P. S. 1998. The role of culture-theory in cross-cultural training: A multi-method study of culture-specific, culture-general and culture theory-based assimilators. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 29(5): 630–655.
- Black, J. Stewart; Mendenhall, Mark 1990. Cross-cultural training effectiveness: A review and a theoretical framework for future research. *Academy of Management Review* 15(1): 113–136.
- Bochner, Stephen 1982. *Cultures in Contact: Studies in Cross-Cultural Interaction*. New York: Pergamon Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 1986. *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brislin, Richard W. 1981. *Cross-Cultural Encounters*. New York: Pergamon Press.
- Brislin, Richard W.; Pedersen, Paul 1976. *Cross-cultural Orientation Programs*. New York: Gardner.
- Broms, Henri; Kaufmann, Rebecca 1988. *Semiotics of Culture*. Helsinki: Arator.
- Carlson, Marvin A. 1996. *Performance: A Critical Introduction*. New York: Routledge.
- Certeau, Michel de 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Chase, Susan E. 2005. Narrative inquiry: Multiple lenses, approaches, voices. In: Denzin, Lincoln 2005: 641–650.
- Chernov, Igor 1988. Historical survey of the Tartu-Moscow Semiotic School. In: Broms, Kaufmann 1988: 7–16.
- Chomsky, Noam 1965. *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

- Courtés, Joseph 1976. *Introduction à la sémiotique narrative et discursive*. Paris: Hachette.
- Crandall, Sonia J.; Geeta, George; Marion, Gail S.; Davis, Steve 2003. Applying theory to the design of cultural competency training for medical students. *Academic Medicine* 78(6): 588–594.
- Cunningham, Donald J. 1986. Semiotics and education. In: Sebeok, Thomas A.; Umiker-Sebeok, Jean (eds.), *The Semiotic Web*. Berlin: Mouton, 367–378.
- Danesi, Marcel; Perron, Paul 1999. *Analyzing Cultures. An Introduction and Handbook*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Denzin, Norman K.; Lincoln, Yvonna S. 2005. Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In: Denzin, Norman K.; Lincoln, Yvonna S. (eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 1–32.
- Derrida, Jacques 1988. *Limited Inc*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Earley, P. Christopher; Peterson, Randall S. 2004. The elusive cultural chameleon: Cultural intelligence as a new approach to intercultural training for the global manager. *Academy of Management Learning and Education* 3(1): 100–115.
- Eco, Umberto 1976. *A Theory of Semiotics*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Feldman, Carol F. 2002. Les genres du discours comme modèles mentaux et culturels: l'interprétation d'une communauté culturelle. In: Rastier, François; Bouquet, Simon (eds.), *Une introduction aux sciences de la culture*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 215–228.
- Feldman, David H.; Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly; Gardner, Howard 1994. *Changing the World: A Framework for the Study of Creativity*, London: Praeger.
- Ferguson, James 1988. Cultural exchange: New developments in the anthropology of commodities. *Cultural Anthropology* 3: 488–513.
- Fiedler, Fred E.; Mitchell, Terence; Triandis, Harry C. 1971. The culture assimilator: An approach to cross-cultural training. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 55: 95–102.
- Fisette, Jean 1990. *Introduction à la sémiotique de C. S. Peirce*. Montréal: XYZ éditeur.
- Foucault, Michel 1970. *The Order of Things*. New York: Pantheon.
- Geertz, Clifford 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gibson, Dewan; Zhong, Mei 2005. Intercultural communication competency in the healthcare context. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 29(5): 621–634.
- Goffman, Erving 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Garden City: Doubleday.
- Greimas, Algirdas J.; Courtés, Joseph 1979. *Sémiotique: Dictionnaire raisonné de la théorie du langage*, vol. 1. Paris: Hachette.
- Grieves, Jim 2000. The emergence of organizational culture and symbolic inter-course. *Journal of Management Development* 19(5): 365–447.
- Gudykunst, William B.; Hammer, Mitchell R. 1983. Basic training design: Approaches to intercultural training. In: Landis, Dan; Brislin, Richard W. (eds.),

- Handbook of Intercultural Training*, vol. 1: *Issues in Theory and Design*. New York: Pergamon Press, 1–35.
- Hall, Edward T. 1966. *The Hidden Dimension*. New York: Doubleday.
- 1984. *Le langage silencieux*. Paris: Seuil.
- Harrison, Roger; Hopkins, Richard L. 1967. The design of cultural training. An alternative to the university model. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 3(4): 431–460.
- Hausman, Carl R. 1993. *Charles S. Peirce's Evolutionary Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hénault, Anne 2002. *Questions de sémiotique*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Hughes, Kathleen H.; Hood, Lucy J. 2007. Teaching methods and an outcome tool for measuring cultural sensitivity in undergraduate nursing students. *Journal of Transcultural Nursing* 18(1): 57–62.
- Ivanov, V. N.; Lotman, J. M.; Ouspenski, B. A.; Piatigorski, A. M.; Toporov, V. N. 1974. Thèses pour l'étude sémiotique des cultures. *Sémiotique* 81–84: 125–156.
- Kaufman, James C.; Sternberg, Robert J. (eds.) 2006. *The International Handbook of Creativity*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Kluckhohn, Clyde 1949. *Mirror for Man*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Kolb, David A. 1984. *Experiential Learning*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.
- Lang, Alfred 1997. Thinking rich as well as simple: Boesch's cultural psychology in a semiotic perspective. *Culture as Psychology* 3(3): 383–394.
- Lasonen, Johanna 2005. Reflections on interculturality in relation to education and work. *Journal of Higher Learning Policy* 18(4): 397–407.
- Levene, Howard 1990. Robust tests for equality of variances. In: Olkin, Ingram; Hotelling, Harold (eds.), *Contributions to Probability and Statistics: Essays in Honor of Harold Hotelling*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 278–292.
- Loewenstein, Jeffrey; Thompson, Leigh; Gentner, Dedre 2003. Analogical learning in negotiation teams: Comparing cases promotes learning and transfer. *Academy of Management Learning & Education* 2(2): 119–127.
- Lotman, Juri M. 1990. *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Lotman, Juri M.; Piatigorskij, Aleksandr M. 1969. Le texte et la fonction. *Semiotica* 1(2): 205–217.
- Liotard, Jean-François 1988. *Le postmodernisme expliqué aux enfants*. Paris: Galilée.
- Milhouse, Virginia H. 1996. Intercultural communication, education and training goals, content and methods. *Intercultural Journal of Intercultural Relations* 20: 69–95.
- Nöth, Winfried 1995. *Handbook of Semiotics*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Paige, Michael R.; Jacobs-Cassuto, Melody; Yershova, Yelena A.; DeJaeghere, Joan 2003. Assessing intercultural sensitivity: An empirical analysis of the Hammer and Bennett Intercultural Development Inventory. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 27(4): 467–486.

- Parent, Roger 2009. *Résoudre des conflits de culture*. Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval.
- Ricœur, Paul 1983. *Temps et récit I*. Paris: Seuil.
- Rudowicz, Elisabeth 2003. Creativity and culture: A two way interaction. *Scandinavian Journal of Education Research* 47: 273–290.
- Saussure, Ferdinand de 1986[1916]. *Cours de linguistique générale*. Paris: Payot.
- Schein, Edgar 1985. *Organizational Culture and Leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- 1999. *The Corporate Culture Survival Guide*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Smith, Peter B.; Bond, Michael H. 1999. *Social Psychology Across Cultures*. Boston: Allyn And Bacon.
- Taborsky, Edwina 2004. The evolution of semiotic dynamics. In: Bax, Marcel; van Heusden, Barend; Wildgen, Wolfgang (eds.), *Semiotic Evolution and the Dynamics of Culture*. Bern: Peter Lang, 53–67.
- Thomas, David C. 2002. *Essentials of International Management: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Thomas, David C.; Inkson, Kerr 2004. *Cultural Intelligence*. San Francisco: Berrett Koehler.
- Ting-Toomey, Stella 1999. *Communication Across Cultures*. New York: Guilford.
- Torop, Peeter 1999. Cultural semiotics and culture. *Sign Systems Studies* 27: 9–23.
- 2002. Introduction: Re-reading of cultural semiotics. *Sign Systems Studies* 30(2): 396–404.
- Torop, Peeter 2005. Semiosphere and/as the research object of semiotics of culture. *Sign Systems Studies* 33(1): 159–173.
- van Heusden, Barend 2004. A bandwidth model of semiotic evolution. In: Bax, Marcel; van Heusden, Barend; Wildgen, Wolfgang (eds.), *Semiotic Evolution and the Dynamics of Culture*. Bern: Peter Lang, 3–33.
- Watzlawick, Paul; Beavin, Janet H.; Jackson, Don D. 1972. *Une logique de la communication*, Paris: Seuil.
- Weiss, Carol H. 1998. *Evaluation*. Upper Saddle River: Prentice-Hall.

Разработка семиотического подхода к межкультурной коммуникации

В данной работе исследуется до сих пор не раскрытый в должной мере потенциал семиотики в обучении межкультурной коммуникации. В статье представлено трехчастное описание процесса выбора и постепенного внедрения семиотических принципов, который позволил получить практическую модель, испытанную в 2007 году в рамках исследовательского проекта *Средства для культурного развития*. В

рамках конкретного метода конкретных ситуаций, поддержанного университетом, правительством и гражданским сообществом; в обучении принимали участие 6 групп, куда входили французы и австралийцы. Первая часть статьи дает обзор имеющейся литературы по выработке и развитию культурных навыков и умений. После этого описывается процесс перекодировки, в ходе которого цели межкультурного образования переформулировались в семиотических понятиях. При этом теоретическое ядро составляет семиотика культуры, дополненная близкими разработками других семиотических школ и социальных наук. Третья часть статьи рассматривает процесс, в ходе которого основные семиотические понятия переосмысляются в качестве основанных на навыках и умениях целей обучения. Такой прагматический процесс определения облегчает составление опросников, позволяя самим участникам обучения оценить свой собственный опыт участия в процессе такого обучения, сравнивая исходные данные с конечными результатами. Статья предлагает количественные результаты эвалюации обучения, обсуждает ценность и границы полученных данных и создает базу для следующей статьи, которая продемонстрирует качественные результаты исследования.

Semiootikapõhise lähenemise kujundamisest kultuuridevahelises kommunikatsioonis

Käesolev uurimus püüab käsitleda semiootika veel suuresti avamata potentsiaali kultuuridevahelise koolituse ja õppe jaoks. Artiklis arendatud kolmeosaline arutluskäik kirjeldab protsessi, kuidas teoreetilisi semiootilisi põhimõtteid välja valiti ning järk-järgult edasi arendati, kuni saadi rakenduslik mudel, mida katsetati 2007. aastal uurimisprojektis *Kultuurilise arenduse vahendid*. Konkreetse juhtumiuuringu raames osales ülikooli, valitsuse ja kogukonnagruppide koostööna koolitusel 6 gruppi prantsuse ja austraalia päritolu inimesi nii akadeemilise kui äritaustaga. Artikli esimene osa annab kokkuvõtliku ülevaate kirjandusest kultuurilise pädevuse koolituste kohta. Seejärel visandatakse ümberkodeerimise protsess, mille abil kultuuridevahelise hariduse eesmärgid semiootilisse mõistestikku ümber formuleeriti. Seejuures tuginetakse eriti kultuurisemiootikale, millel põhineb rakendusliku mudeli keskne teoreetiline tuum. Koolituse kujundamiseks valitud teoreetilist aparatuuri täiustati teiste semiootikakoolkondade samateemaliste seisukohtade ning sotsiaalteaduse sarnaste teoreetiliste ja metodoloogiliste

hoiakutega. Artikli kolmas osa käsitleb protsessi, mille käigus semiootilisi põhimõtteid arendati edasi oskuspõhisteks tulemiteks ja õpieesmärkideks, mida sai kasutada töötoa läbiviimisel. Taoline pragmaatiline määratlusprotsess lihtsustas küsimustike ja küsitluste välja arendamist, võimaldades osalejatel oma koolitusel osalemise kogemust hinnata, võrreldes oma hoiakuid töötoa tulemuste suhtes enne ja pärast iga sessiooni läbimist. Käesolev artikkel esitab koolituse hindamise kvantitatiivsed tulemused, arutleb saadud andemete vooruste ja piiride üle ning loob konteksti käesoleva artikli järjele, mis tutvustab uurimuse kvalitatiivseid tulemusi.