

TOWARDS A THEORY OF CULTURAL IDENTITY FILTERS

by

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Recent globalizing tendencies have amplified the need for repeated cultural self-identification worldwide. Cultural boundaries have been proved not to overlap each other with national boundaries, not with geographical ones either. Growing mobility and cultural blending render the procedure of identification even more problematic. As a result, a holistic approach has been claimed for which can, by involving different fields of research, measure up to the complexity of cultural studies.

The presently developed approach has been designed with a joint terminology of social sciences and studies of arts in order to become capable of coping with all aspects of cultural issues. Subsequently, the theory of Cultural Identity Filters (hereafter *CIF theory*) and its practical application belong primarily to social sciences and within that framework to cultural studies. However its practical side places it in the field of studies in arts and education as well.

The CIF theory assumes that works of art transmit segments of the producing culture to the audience. The aim is, then, to take one more step so as to be able to draw the image of cultures behind works. The procedure consists of three main steps: 1) identification of basic information about the observed work – a short biography of the creator and a brief description of the creative context, if possible; 2) a complex semiotic analysis concerning form, content, use; 3) conclusions about the source culture according to the achieved data.

The first step gives an appropriate setting for the analysis by providing contextual reasons for the birth of the work. The second step identifies the employed language variety, the main theme or themes, the setting of the story and the chain of events, the

symbols used to express cross-referential content. The third step of the analysis normally consists of several sub-steps in a logical sequence; each sub-step draws conclusions based on preceding results, thus gradually enriching the picture of the source culture. It must be noted that, in order to gain sufficient information, it is obligatory to involve a number of works from the same source.

The present paper takes literary works as samples of investigation due to the fact that, because of the very nature of human cognition and verballity, among different works of art, they are best capable of representing the reality of culture in a most comprehensive way. This means that the CIF theory ignores whether a piece of writing directly and deliberately reflects upon a culture or not, and focuses on attributes that provide information about the author's cultural background – in this sense, the sociological aspect of literature plays the main role in the research.

The analytical samples are short stories and pieces of poetry as the limits of content do not spare room for longer works. They are taken from the English corpus of world literature merely because English plays a leading role in contemporary literature, that is, works written in English are addressed to anyone in the world. Furthermore, the samples are taken primarily from various Anglophone minorities from the second half of the 20th century, but for specific purposes some so-called mainstream works are also discussed.

Analyses done seem to prove that the measure of cultural awareness is imbalanced worldwide thus the CIF theory may become an active contributor to cultural studies and education, and to self-identification with both individuals and communities.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

“Having spoken plainly so far, Okoye said the next half a dozen sentences in proverbs. Among the Ibo the art of conversation is regarded highly, and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten. Okoye was a great talker and he spoke for a long time, skirting round the subject and then hitting it finally.”¹

When you read this short quotation from Chinua Achebe’s world famous novel, *Things Fall Apart*, it stirs up all sorts of thoughts of a nation, a culture, and probably much else too, even some features of land and life may as well be brought to the forefront of our imagination; however, most of the world’s population does not have a crystal clear image in mind. In spite of this, one may suppose that there is some truth in what Achebe described here. And no doubt, although the story is known as mainly fictitious, the facts detailed within its literary framework can, to a certain extent, be regarded as real and true. Beyond our first impressions of the novel, the possibility of deeper understanding hides in the gloomy dales of our unconscious, lurking, seeking the chance to reveal herself and seize as much of the message as she can. But she is incapable of manifesting and coming into action without the helping hands of experience, knowledge and intuition. Her weakness becomes compensated as soon as these powers open up all horizons for her; it is that sacred moment when she is set free to wind herself through the intricate web of meanings, up to the heart of all information the novel was built up from – up to the actual cultural context of its creation.

We are all well aware that the world does not provide such simple solutions as the above one – like in a fairy tale; the complexes of cultures cannot be deciphered that easily. Due to the countless subtleties of the ways of living, the differences of the seemingly universal elements and characteristics such as the use of a language for communication, a set of verbal riddles, a hierarchical social structure, the existence of poetry, the control of society, ethics and morals in practice, the development of philosophical thinking, the development of a worldview, the establishment of religious

¹ Achebe (1993 : 10-11)

thinking and practices, the application of metaphorical thinking, the composition of music, the existence of complex clichés and onomatopoeic expressions in language, the practice of teaching measures of behaviour, the concept of property, economy and work, and the fact that culture is a universe,² to mention only a few, each human culture is unique – a unique system. At this point, one could rightly turn towards various types of system analysis, but let us avoid making hasty predictions – a number of preliminary questions have to be settled.

Achebe's description of the traditional way of making speeches among the Ibo people seems similar to a technique of academic writing or speaking, but there are slight differences in the way communicative situations unfold. In the first phase of Ibo presentation, the main point is foreshadowed by the involvement of apparently non-topic-related questions which serve to establish the necessary atmosphere. In scholarly writing, the introduction of the major theme is advised to be preceded by data collection and theoretical grounding – in some cases, the approach may not need both of these techniques – and the study is actually developed from the statement of problems and a couple of assumptions concerning possible solutions. In this aspect, the Ibo tradition is presented as one that is largely different since it involves psychological foundations of topical communication, whereas academic discussions frequently ignore emotional fine-tuning, and begin with the immediate intellectual workout.

Once the adequate conditions have been set, the narrowing of horizons becomes possible. '[S]kirting round' normally proves to be a logical solution of focusing upon the subject matter either in everyday or scholarly ways of communication, however, this ought to be a careful and gradual process. According to Achebe's fiction, speakers of the African tribe in concern raise the tension of the moment by employing proverbs, thus putting great emphasis on what they are actually saying. Scholars seldom, if ever, change forms of expression in their speech or writing as it is not advised since it may result in stylistic discordance; partly because of the general rules of academic argumentation, but also due to the lack of psychological orientations.

² Barna (1980 : 148), Cassirer (1953 : 58), Douglas (1966 : 1-4), Eco (1976 : 180-189), Fónagy-Szépe (1972 : 455), Geertz (1994 : 326), Gurevics (1974 : 185), Ottaway (1968 : 22), Permjakov (1979 : 8, 248-250), Ricoeur (1970 : 400), Service (1973 : 59), among others, and for a detailed fundamental work, consult Benedict (2005).

The comparison of real and fictional – even if not entirely fictional – ways of expression here intends to stand for a thought-provoking introduction. Having encountered with so stimulating a text – at the moment, the reader is kindly asked to imagine an encounter with a complete text –, one may feel authorized to draw certain conclusions about the work like during the application of traditional critical-analytical methods, or more bravely, to make statements about the author or even about the creative context.³

A question has been trying to work its way through the network of the previous train of thoughts: is it possible to outline the ‘source culture’⁴ behind a work of art? Naturally, there is a more fundamental problem in cultural analysis: is it possible to draw the entire picture of a culture by employing various types of investigation? This problem raises a long series of further questions to which the answers can only be given with the help of more fields of science, both theoretical and applied.

A need for more comprehensive analyses of cultures has emerged out of interdisciplinary research. Different fields of science began to cooperate in order to gain better understanding of aspects of being human, being a part of communities, and belonging to cultures. Cultural boundaries have long proved not to overlap one another with national borders, not with geographical ones either. Growing mobility and cultural blending also render the identification of individual cultures even more problematic. Globalization seems to be a double-edged sword that, on the one hand, shapes cultures by forcing them into a relatively controllable framework, suppressing certain characteristics, and, on the other one, lends a helping hand in self-justification by providing each community with rights and opportunities to emphasize other particularities. Intercultural communication has also quickened up, thanks to the rapid technological development of the second half of the 20th century, resulting in faster changes in cultural conventions, relations, and instability of cultural constructs. Due to the questions raised by the

³ The notion of ‘creative context’ refers to the source culture which frames the artist’s creative process. It is going to be discussed in further details in Chapter 3. Studies touching upon the possibility of tracing back the source culture behind written works of art have been carried out by a significant number of scholars; the list includes, for example, Finnegan (1977 : 44-46), Frobenius (1981 : 316), Iser (2004 : 65-78), Kanyó (1971 : 501-509), Lévi-Strauss (2001/2 : 146-197), Okara (1963 : 15-16), Rooth (1992 : 9-11), Said (1994 : xxii).

⁴ The concept of *source culture* is fundamental to our study as it refers to the cultural context in which the artists produce artworks, the context that strictly shapes pieces of art. (Illésfalvi 2008b : 3-4).

multiplying intercultural contacts, a holistic approach has been claimed for which can, by involving different fields of research, measure up to the complexity of cultural studies.

Characteristics of humanity have been observed since the first spark of rational thinking appeared on the horizons of human understanding. Man's cognitive self-realisation⁵ must have occurred within the evolutionary phase called syncretism: a state where Man's activities were not yet detached from one another, lifestyle was shaped by an all-inclusive aspect of actions.⁶ Art and work, myth and ritual, fight and sacrifice, gathering and basket weaving did not divide but were similarly important elements of one major stream, namely, life. No sooner had human communities started to become hierarchically structured than the more talented began to act as leaders by differentiating themselves from those who were less skilled in the act of reasoning. This process might have commenced unconsciously, nonetheless, it soon became the intellectual weapon of distinction in the hands of those of more wit. Supposedly, it was these gifted members of communities who were appointed to act as spiritual leaders, or elsewhere they themselves arbitrarily assigned their roles as the guides or 'shepherds' of their people. The habit of distinction must have come up in two directions in parallel: inwardly, separating members of the same community from one another, and outwardly, forming one of the first cultural universals, the duality of We and They.⁷ During the evolution of societies, hand in hand with the growth of intellectual skills, it is this dividing force that is likely to have caused special segmentation, creating the dimension of depth, and thus social

⁵ Cassirer (1953: 19)

⁶ The first observations concerning human life were probably carried out unconsciously – one could say: instinctively – and resulted in immediate differentiation within both social and existential frameworks. The phase of syncretism is characterized by the strong interdependency of activities and the equality of their functional significance. The organization of work, of social structure, the institutionalization of norms and values are made possible only through rational planning, which presupposes conscious evaluation of individual and group experiences, and also conscious observation. In the history of cultures and also of arts, two phases of syncretism are distinguished: 1) primary syncretism – the phase where there were no specialized fields within the cultural framework due to the lack of institutions and a low level in the development of hierarchical social order, where artistic activity was primarily governed and used for social purposes, thus joining several aspects of human activity; 2) secondary syncretism – the phase where different fields of culture began to be separated on various bases such as aesthetics, social needs, etc. and the thematic variants did not involve so many aspects of human activity. (Szerdahelyi 1992 : 443-444)

⁷ The binary oppositions are fundamental for the evolvement of worldviews. The aspects of dualities have frequently been discussed worldwide, and are going to be studied more exhaustively in Chapter 2; for further information see Douglas (1966 : 4, 7-30), Durkheim (2003 : 44-49), Gurevics (1974 : 12-13), Ivanov (1972 : 117-119; 1984 : 48-66), Kobo (1972 : 291-293), Solomon (1977 : 82-83), Turner (1997 : 166-203).

groups evolved different social layers each of which consisted of individuals who possessed similar capabilities. Accordingly, various strata included similar professions, social roles, values and norms.⁸ Naturally, the segmentation of societies, just as other cultural changes, was, and still is, a slow progress,⁹ and, for its very nature, seldom unrestricted. In a few cases, diverse human groups have evolved so different norm and value systems, hierarchies of roles that what refers to normal everyday form of something in a society may be regarded as abnormality in another;¹⁰ however, there are a limited number of fundamental principles¹¹ for developing institutions that maintain order within the framework of a community. Consequently, for example, the mobility of members within a society is definitely culture-dependent, ranging from the point of complete impossibility to total freedom of change, depending on the intricate web of intracultural relations which are strictly based on conventions.¹²

The previously listed characteristics are only a drop in the ocean in the comprehensive studies of cultures, therefore, for a sufficient amount of data, several fields of science must be involved in the research such as anthropology, ethnology, sociology, folklore, literary criticism, history, philosophy, economy, and so on. Obviously, it is the applied methods that may enable one to successfully examine and interpret the whole of a culture. To put it in a nutshell, Man is so complex a being that his thorough examination claims multiple co-operation and holistic views. For an interdisciplinary type of approach, firstly, the subject matter must be unambiguously defined, the goals of study set, and the stock of analytical tools taken.

Groups of people may be categorised on countless bases, according to, for instance, territorial, linguistic, political, economic, social, philosophical, or ethnic affiliations. It would be almost impossible to list all the aspects of categorisation, due to the extraordinary complexity of humanity. This dissertation intends to limit itself to the

⁸ Strata are now to be understood as groups of people, distinguished on particular bases such as caste, profession, religion, etc. This type of grouping is similar to that invented by Dundes (1978 : 128-158) in the definition of folk. Folk is any group of people sharing at least one distinctive feature.

⁹ Boas (1975 : 16-17)

¹⁰ Voigt (1972a : 153)

¹¹ Benedict (2005)

¹² For a better understanding of fundamental principles governing cultural development and activity, consult publications by the Human Relations Area Files, Inc., founded by Harvard University, the University of Pennsylvania, the University of Oklahoma and the University of Washington, which was designed to develop and distribute information related to human societies and cultures.

aspect of culture and cultural categorisation, which is itself a rather problematic question, though one of the most important ones today, in the cacophony of 21st century globalizing tendencies.

From the dawn of history, human communities have been distinguishing one another by language, territory occupied, or ways of living. On the deepest layer this distinction resulted in a dual picture of the world: ‘we’ and ‘they’.¹³ The motif behind this idea probably roots in Man’s intellectual ascension from among the animate and inanimate creatures in his surroundings. The two sides of the world have been competing ever since, although it is typical of the so-called modern cultures to drastically divide the world into two – Man and the rest – and form an understanding of the world like *Man And Nature*, whereas ‘archaic’ cultures generally regard themselves as parts of their environs – the idea of *Man In Nature*.¹⁴ The major differences between cultures seem to have most often been based on this assumption, in other words, on the idea of superiority. The realisation of intellectual power might have acted in two directions simultaneously: on the one hand, inwards, causing the segmentation of human community in the way depicted above, and on the other hand, outwards, resulting in Man’s relative abandonment of his surroundings. Thus, indeed, it is Reason that differentiates Man and Nature, and, as a matter of fact, Man and Man as well.

The way humans live is undoubtedly conscious, at least, to a certain extent. They not only experience environmental influence, and acquire knowledge through repeated sensations, but are capable of interpreting and systematizing incoming information, in a word, learning. However, this feature of humanity does not make significant difference between cultures, but for the present study it proves to be of prime importance as it is a universal characteristic of Man, and fundamental to the development of cultures. From a socio-psychological perspective, this seems responsible for a number of peculiarities that differentiate peoples and cultures.

The natural way of expressing one’s ideas about and attitude towards others happens through some kinds of communicative systems like languages, sign-languages, and nonverbal forms of communication such as gestures, body positions, frequently

¹³ Ivanov (1984 : 48-66), Ivanov (1972 : 121-128).

¹⁴ Illésfalvi (2004 : 7-19, 35-37)

backed with the help of some parts of the surroundings, for example, a picture, a walking stick, or a piece of stone. Independently of whether it is a verbal or nonverbal form of expression employed within the communicative framework, the study of language is the best tool for accounting for every detail of information transfer. Communication itself is also a universal characteristic of cultures, having its roots in the very core of existence as there is not one element in the known universe, be it material or immaterial, that has never communicated with another. Communication theory has a definite place within the framework of the present study as it conveys a comprehensive interpretation of communicative activities.

From the brief quotation, the original aim of Okoye can hardly, if ever, be explored – obviously, the complete work contains this piece of information; however, thorough analytical investigations may reveal more astounding details. A range of analytical-interpretative approaches to works of art may as well be listed here, in the order of how effectively they are able to parse works, and how far they are able to penetrate into the body of each piece, but they can only provide the spices for the meal we intend to cook. Cultures have been appointed to be the subject matter of this dissertation, and they have also been depicted as complexes – although cultural analyses normally deal with the types of elements and their mutual dependency, for the time being, the most important aspect of cultures is that they can be examined as systems of signs. More precisely, a preliminary definition of the concept of culture may be as follows: it is a hierarchical system of sign systems, and as such, the analysis of this complex system calls for a complex system analyser tool. Accordingly, the full description of traditional Ibo speech making, for example, should unite a range of investigatory aspects. However, the Achebe quotation, as stated above, serves as an introductory text sample used to provide an opportunity to raise the question the present study is attempting to answer: can a culture be analysed through literature? The goal of this dissertation is to outline an approach to cultures that combines interdisciplinary viewpoints and analytical techniques in order to reveal characteristics of the culture that produced each piece – an approach of cultural semiotics.¹⁵

¹⁵ For types of holistic approaches of the kind read the famous narrative of Asdiwal analysed by Claude Lévi-Strauss in the second volume of *Structural Anthropology* (2001/2 : 146-197), and Zoltán Kanyó's

CHAPTER 1: 'SKIRTING ROUND'

"He heard the *ogene* of the town crier
piercing the still night air. *Gome, gome,*
gome, boomed the hollow metal."¹⁶

For the average English-speaking reader of literature, this tiny excerpt might be slightly confusing at first sight, but easily interpretable at the second one. The bilingual lexical set is, no doubt, an obstacle that hinders understanding. The initial question is probably what meaning or meanings the word *ogene* conveys? We know that the *ogene* gives out a sound, a booming sound that is low and sonorous – this fact is supported by a bilingual set of onomatopoeic words.¹⁷ Morpho-syntactically it is the head of a noun phrase which is complemented by a verbal phrase, an indirect object functioning as an agent, and semantically it is an object that gives out a certain sound. Pragmatically it is a linguistic element that is inadequate from an English contextual viewpoint, as normally Anglophone¹⁸ speakers do not use the word because it is not a part of the Standard English register.¹⁹ It is the context that helps us attach a particular meaning to this lexical item – a meaning that is adequate in this context. We know that the *ogene* belongs to the *town crier*²⁰ whose job is primarily to inform people about the news in the area. To sum up all that is known about the *ogene*, it must be some kind of gong. Not surprising, that *ogene* and gong are also onomatopoeic words, and they even seem to signify roughly the same sound quality. The other non-English item of the text that helps our understanding

skeleton of a semiotic analysis of literary works in Hankiss (1971 : 501-509), and consult Voigt-Hoppál (2003)

¹⁶ Achebe (1993 : 13)

¹⁷ Onomatopoeia is a word that indicates the sound it is describing. Onomatopoeic words differ from language to language as they have to conform to the linguistic system they belong to. They are cultural universals, though. Marcel Danesi suggests a semiotic definition by saying "[o]nomatopoeic words (...) are iconic signs that attempt to replicate the sounds that certain things, actions, or movements are perceived to make." Danesi (2000 : 61-62)

¹⁸ The notions *English speaker* from "English-speaking reader" and *Anglophone* are frequently mistaken for each other as if they were interchangeable, but that is not true. Anglophone normally refers to native speakers or something related to native speakers of the English language, such as Anglophone Africa, or 'John is an Anglophone person...', whereas the first term usually refers to both native and non-native speakers of the language or related things. To read more about terms like Anglophone, Angloness along with other derivations and their connotations see Wierzbicka (2006).

¹⁹ There are several pragmatic explanations varying according to viewpoint, but at the moment the linguistic one is the most important.

²⁰ Town crier is an official who makes public announcements.

of the word *ogene* is *gome*, which is another onomatopoeic word. It refers to the sound the instrument gives out, and, supposedly, it has a similar acoustic image in the mind of Ibo speakers to what booming creates in the mind of speakers of English. And, finally, the idea that *gome* is an Ibo word implanted in the English texture can be supported by the fact that it is articulated by the narrator of the story who is a (partly) fictive figure and does not belong to the Anglophone cycle, he is only a speaker of the language.

To widen the horizon of interpretation, you may consider the narrator to be Achebe himself as he is a famous writer, hence the above paraphrase ‘partly fictive’, and when he creates a piece of work he recreates himself as well. Herder stated that man continuously creates and recreates language and this procedure becomes his nature.²¹ In an interview with Geoffrey Hawthorn, Ron Aronson and Juhn Dunn, the post-colonial critic and writer, Gayatri Chakravorti Spivak, gave a similar opinion by suggesting that anyone trying to narrate history is, in fact, trying to narrate himself – in this sense, history is a collection of narratives, and the end of narrativisation is self-narration.²² History perceived as a sequence of narratives goes parallel with the idea of discourse theory, namely, that history can be described as a series of discourses, an interrelated network of communicative events.

In communication, Man establishes a contact with both the outside world and his inner reality, producing and perceiving himself in the same act. Thus, human perception of the world, of existence, is inevitably a process of self-perception as well; accordingly, thought-production and the creation of an individualised image of existence with the help of mental representations brings the self into life – thus, man incessantly creates and recreates himself through his mental activities. Humboldt joined this train of thought by also emphasizing the continuous recreational aspect of linguistic activity, adding to it a characteristic of limitedness by explaining that although the rules of creation are defined, the extent and characteristics of the created are mostly indefinite. He went on to discuss the individuality aspect of language use and concluded that it is only the individual created by speech that is present within the chaotic unity of words and rules, called

²¹ Herder (1983 : 290)

²² Spivak (1994 : 34)

language.²³ Naturally, creation through articulation occurs in other forms of verbal action, for instance, in literature. If so, the narrator, that is Chinua Achebe, might as well speak of his own personal memory of a night in a place where the town crier walked the streets and made his *ogene* boom in the still night. At this point our interpretation starts to be less and less convincing as it lacks factual support, therefore the excerpt must be lengthened. As a possible consequence, further supportive facts may appear in the text to help to draw a more exact picture of Achebe's culture. We could then draw conclusions like that the culture is multilingual, and English is used as lingua franca by different peoples, and that it is common to involve non-English items in the language of intercultural communication to achieve the intended effect on the listener or reader, or to define the target audience, or for some other reasons, and so forth. Thus, by taking a longer quote from the work, more details of Achebe's reality may be revealed, but – and this is of crucial importance in our research – the truth value of our interpretations is always relative.²⁴ Each piece of literature has an end, a textual boundary, yet allows for an unlimited number of interpretations – similarly to language; a piece of writing consists of a finite list of elements the meanings of whose open the door to an indefinite number of explanations. In sum, the more answers we find, the more questions come up – and this fact justifies that there is never one single interpretation possible;²⁵ Wolfgang Iser extended the idea by adding that interpretations are always intended,²⁶ which fact results in what Umberto Eco explained in *The Open Work* as the endlessness of interpretations.²⁷

An interdisciplinary approach necessary for the exploration of source cultures has to be evolved within a reasonable framework, consisting of shared analytical techniques and joint terminology. Interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary research frequently, if not in

²³ Humboldt (1985 : 78-83)

²⁴ Illésfalvi (2008a : 2-3)

²⁵ It seems that the Greek word ἐρμηνεύω (translate, interpret) served as the basis for the development of a set of interpretative approaches in various fields of life. During its history, the Aristotelian idea was greatly broadened so as to include all kinds of texts not only the sacred ones. The main principle of the theory says that it is possible to grasp meaning of an item of communication solely by relating it to the whole of discourse from which it originates. For the verification of findings the so-called 'hermeneutic circle' is referred to, a sequence of actions of relation, either of the part to the whole or of the whole to the part. Such sequence seems to be necessary for the present approach in order to validate its findings. It is inevitably a subjective procedure and as such can result in a number of interpretations of a single item of observation. For further information on the verification of findings see Chapter 2.3.2.

²⁶ Iser (2004 : 20)

²⁷ Eco (1976 : 190)

all cases, deals with some sort of modelling, in terms of system theory; subsequently, it employs a suitable selection of notions from different field of study, and create a modelling system that partially reflect the subject of modelling in the terminology of another phenomenon.²⁸ Each aspect of the observation requires the appropriate set of concepts by which characteristics can be best accounted for. It is, then, common for multidisciplinary approaches to borrow terms from one another in order to be capable of categorising, distinguishing, or explaining features. Basically, the trend of terminological exchange proves to be acceptable if the results of the cooperation of different fields of science confirm their applicability; however, there must be some specifications made in advance.

Borrowed notions normally fit in the new context by changing their own semantic field. Taking the term ‘code’ as an example of borrowings would highlight the dangers of takeovers. Although the word ‘code’ had been used to refer to the encoding of messages (secret code) since 1808,²⁹ it was F. B. Morse in the 1840s who used it in connection with the ‘language’ of message transfer that used a system consisting of one short and one long signal,³⁰ the transfer being a sequence of events in which the sender’s message was first transformed into a set of symbols, and, on reception, transformed back into a message that was similar to the original one. The transformation was somewhat similar to binary, decimal or hexadecimal transformations in the sense that the system of signs entirely lacked sense motivation. None of the elements have connotations in this kind of systems, they simply substitute symbols for a definite length of time. In the context of linguistics, ‘code’ refers to the language of communication the semantic field of which is largely different from that of the term coined by Morse; briefly, in linguistics, the notion of code is used metaphorically.

Interdisciplinary research necessarily employs a joint terminology which is, as explained previously, in more aspects similar to a lingua franca: one of the systems is selected as primary texture and then elements of other systems are inserted for multiple reasons. In a joint terminology it is the same: one study may be based on linguistic aspects, employing the notions of theoretical and applied linguistics (already combined!),

²⁸ Solomon (1977 : 67)

²⁹ Online Etymology Dictionary (URL).

³⁰ The two signals were originally a dot and a dash, and later became vocalized by users as ‘dit’ and ‘dah’.

and projects the nature of verbs, for instance, onto a plane where the total sum of characteristics cannot be explained without the help of chemical notions such as valency.³¹ The valency of verbs have been being studied for almost thirty years now, without difficulties; this borrowing was a successful one, based on one aspect of analogy between two different fields. In chemistry, valency refers to the ability of atoms to take up electrons, that is, their combinatorial capability. In linguistics, valency refers to the number of possible transitions of verbs, that is, their compatibility with other elements of the system. Both uses are quantitative, and are not intended to explain more than this type of compatibility. The notions and practices of linguistics are evaluated, interpreted, internalised by other fields of science, and later they return to linguistics in a reshaped format.³²

1.1. Towards a definition of culture

In this study, the clarification of terminology must be privileged so as to avoid later confusions in interpretation. What, then, is there to interpret? Our subject matter is culture. The concept of culture has been defined in several ways throughout the ages; each definition was derived from attributes most necessary for the given scientific field. Even within individual fields, there were often decisive factors that forced scholars to include or exclude certain attributes in accordance with their research interests. The fragmentation and separation of sciences with the quickening progress of technological development resulted in a multitude of definitions³³ to choose from for different goals; however, further variations are still being created to meet individual research needs. Umberto Eco noted that definitions should be formed by selecting attributes of the kind that imply others which are taken for granted, so definitions can be concise yet clear, brief yet sufficiently comprehensive.³⁴ For an adequate definition in this study two major aspects are to be observed closely: a) to whom culture belongs; b) what elements culture consists of. These factors are in mutual dependency; accordingly, they are to be examined thoroughly in order that an all-inclusive definition can be developed in the end.

³¹ Budai (1997a : 175-191), Budai (1997b)

³² Hymes (1975 : 92)

³³ Kroeber-Kluckhohn (1952)

³⁴ Eco (1986 : 85-86)

1.1.1. Culture and Man

“General philosophical interest in the phenomenon of culture is as old as civilization itself.”³⁵ Humanity has, in one way or another, distinguished itself from its environment, both animate and inanimate, since the beginnings of intellectual growth, of existential self-awareness. Thomas A. Sebeok noted that “[e]very organism (...) reciprocally creates Nature, and each, within its unique totality, imparts its own specific set of meanings to those qualities to which it reacts with its specific innate or learned response system. Each living entity superimposes a taxonomy upon its universe to reduce complexity.”³⁶ The attributes of such a taxonomy vary widely among different forms of existence, and reach utmost intricacy among humans. With the help of the capability of cognition, mankind developed an advanced method of systematic categorisation, and, by doing so, drew an impenetrable veil around itself.

During its development among various peoples, this cultural universal was shaped by different mentalities and attitudes, and finally this diversity resulted in quantitative and qualitative inequalities. Investigations can prove that there has been an evolutionary process which may be mapped as a tree, or more precisely, a group of trees,³⁷ whose trunks stand for proto-cultures or cultural (arche)types preceding the oldest known cultures, and the branches and boughs stand for cultures taking place at the given stages of progress. The proto-types are unknown, and exist only hypothetically, due to the mere fact that they became extinct long ago without any trace, and might be sketched through careful logical assumptions. Undoubtedly, the concept of familial relations among cultures could take effect on the present study; but, theoretically, there are two major

³⁵ Danesi (2004 : 36) In addition to the above observation, a crucial point in discussing terminology is the distinction between culture and civilisation. A number of scholars use the two terms interchangeably, although there must be at least connotative differences, also reflected in word use and collocations. Norbert Elias made a distinction by explaining that civilisation is what is common among peoples, and culture is what is different. (Elias 1987 : 103) This approach is undoubtedly contrastive-comparative, however, Marcel Danesi offers an even more clearcut definition of civilisation as he says that civilisation is a “[c]omplex society, whose institutions are grounded in mainstream culture, but which can encompass more than one culture.” (Danesi 2000b : 51)

³⁶ Sebeok (1986 : 13)

³⁷ It must be noted that the present author shares the belief in the polygenetic origin of both languages and cultures, and considers similarities between completely unrelated languages or cultures to be the by-products of the universal way of cognitive development.

aspects to be mentioned, namely, 1) the concept of dialectic perception, and 2) the idea of hierarchical structuring.

Right before discussing the two aspects, a number of fundamental questions must be observed. To start with, there is the idea that the world is one and every element is in connection with one another,³⁸ also known as the butterfly effect,³⁹ an ancient assumption about the underlying interconnectedness of animate and inanimate, action and state, of everything able to be cognized. Williams James suggests that the world is additive; that the interconnection is structurally formed with the help of the notion of ‘and’; subsequently, anything cognizable is the result of a given amount of additions among elements. It is also known that everything struggles for balance, an optimum, a stable completeness. According to Hume, cause and effect are always in touch through time and space;⁴⁰ but, although this view is very practical, focussing on the ever-changing aspect of existence, and the incessant restructuring and reformulation of the universe, it exaggerates by placing ‘and’ between space and time: the use of an exclusive ‘and’ is incorrect because, in several cases, connections exist only through space or time, just as in the famous explanation of the butterfly effect itself where there is temporal connection between the moving of a butterfly’s wing and the heavy rainfall, but the two are sharply separated in space.

A relatively new conceptualisation of interconnection was created by James Lovelock, who combined the above aspects in a hypothesis known as the Gaia hypothesis,⁴¹ sometimes also called Gaia theory, as if it was really a scientific theory. Lovelock formulated the hypothesis that the totality of the Earth’s biosphere, atmosphere, animate and inanimate constituents, in the form of a complex system, seeks an optimal physical and chemical environment for life. At the suggestion of his friend, William Golding, he named it Gaia, after the Greek primordial goddess. Lovelock’s idea was that Gaia is a superorganism, with her own global control system. The idea was supported by scientific evidence, concerning the composition of the atmosphere, the surface

³⁸ William James, one of the founders of pragmatist philosophy, explained several of his logical assumptions and conclusions with the help of this ancient thought (James 1981 : 195-216).

³⁹ The concept of butterfly effect has been known since the Antiquity, and has been explained in several ways among various cultures, yet keeping the core idea of an all-inclusive interconnection.

⁴⁰ Hume (2006 : 178)

⁴¹ Lovelock (2000a, 2000b, 2006)

temperature of the Earth, or the salinity of oceans – all being constant, maintaining stability. Although the hypothesis focuses mainly on the physical aspects of existence, it inevitably includes spiritual aspects as well.

Instead of listing further alternatives for explaining interconnection it is wise to turn to the question of human perception, the source of reasons for different ways of classification. Clifford Geertz wrote that despite the differences among interpretative systems, everybody has somewhat similar image of the world⁴² – a view that partly explains why there are universals. In fact, this approach provides a fundamental aspect for the present study, as it implicitly expresses that cultures can appropriately be analysed in a contrastive-comparative way in order to achieve valid results. One of the most elemental universals is the binary view of the world. “It is only by exaggerating the difference between within and without, about and below, male and female, with and against, that a semblance of order is created.”⁴³ Although the experience of the world is individual in everybody,⁴⁴ as are the conclusions of experience,⁴⁵ there are basic characteristics universal to everybody. According to Greimas humans perceive differences and establish the image of the world according to them. Difference requires at least two items to exist or be present at the same time, and humans perceive internal relations. Thus the structure of the world consists of items and their relations. Accordingly, one item in isolation does not convey meaning, and the meaning presupposes the existence of a relation.⁴⁶ The cause-effect, stimulus-response dichotomies also reflect a very basic binary pattern on the level of the semiotic classification of the world.⁴⁷ Human perception is, accordingly, a systematic process providing Man with a binary picture of the world. Robert Scholes, in *Structuralism in Literature: An Introduction* (1974), explains how perception begins in the early years of childhood and becomes an inseparable attribute of existence: “It is in the differentiation of the sexes that we learn our earliest and deepest lessons about sameness and differences. Sexual differentiation is the basis, not only of our social systems, but of our

⁴² Geertz (1994 : 326)

⁴³ Douglas (1966 : 4)

⁴⁴ Lévi-Strauss (2001/1 : 26-27)

⁴⁵ Dewey (1930 : 26-42)

⁴⁶ Greimas A. J. (1975 : 219)

⁴⁷ Segal (1974 : 5-6)

logic as well. If there were three sexes, our computers would not have begun to think in terms of binary oppositions.”⁴⁸ The mutual dependency of binary opposites is the result of their ontological inseparability: one side exists because of the existence of the other one.⁴⁹ In his famous book *Orientalism*, Edward Said identifies the East with “one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other,” and concludes that “the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience.”⁵⁰ Thus, the binary structure of human worldview becomes a cultural universal.

A supportive idea for the changing segment of the above duality Jurij Lotman also highlighted is that culture structures itself into the allotted formulae of spatio-temporal relations, and, in fact, cannot exist without such a structuralisation;⁵¹ as it is, he affirmed that relations are essential for the existence of culture. The spatio-temporal continuum is the substratum for the continuity of existence of culture, within which a human continuum is born.⁵² It follows that culture is so intimate that humanity cannot exist without it; every human being belongs to at least one culture, a cover that shapes every aspect of existence.

Culture is primarily a human product, a special ontological substance. The above train of thought squarely points out that the concept of culture cannot be exclusively a term usable only in the discussion of human issues, but may also be applied to such fields of science that deal with other forms of existence, among which relations exist – simply anything humans are capable of thinking of. However, the present paper is intended to observe various manifestations of the cultural phenomenon related solely to humans.

In the human mind, the picture of the world is balanced but at the same time incomplete: questions and answers always extinguish each other, and maintain the continuity of the process of existence. Obviously, it is not only human perception, but also cognition and production that create a specific hierarchy of experiences on the basis of the innate classificatory system. Ruth Benedict, Jerry D. Moore, A. K. C. Ottaway, Marcel Danesi, Max Black, Max Weber and, in fact, several scholars dealing with

⁴⁸ Scholes (1974 : 197)

⁴⁹ Héjjas (1990 : 98)

⁵⁰ Said (1978 : 1-2)

⁵¹ Szitár (2002 : 99)

⁵² Józsa (1978 : 10-11)

cultural issues emphasized the importance of a sequence of patterns that support the structuralisation of culture. There are two types of governing patterns: universal and culture-specific. The former ones are the fundamental structuralising forces that shape the substance of cultures more or less from the outside, providing them with the format one normally calls 'culture', whereas the latter type includes the formatives that develop and control the internal structure of cultures.

Although there are some fundamental universal organizing principles of structuralisation, human experiences are always structured in a culture-specific hierarchy. Lewis Henry Morgan gave an exhausting description of the three stages of our development in *Ancient Society*, saying that humanity has had the same brain since the age of savagery, that is, since the first germs of thought for social organisation appeared.⁵³ Morgan clearly identifies savagery with the first phase of human evolution when the thought of social organisation appeared. In our view, the need for this type of structuring must have been preceded by a conception of inequality. For the formation of a society, people must have an idea of individuality and community, of the dialectic nature of the world. The concept of duality has been accepted as a cultural universal because each culture in the world has developed a picture of the world consisting of two parts. The two layers of the notion are the division of the world into 'humans' and 'nature' (or on a wider scale 'the world') on equal terms, and the division of humanity into 'we' and 'the others.' The second type is a derivative as that division already presupposes a unity or set of beings called humans, unequivocally distinguished from any other forms of existence. Morgan's savages must have realised the otherness of Man in creation, and also become able to tell groups of human beings apart according to various attributes, the major of which being strangeness or foreignness – in other words, they had already completed two steps of the evolutionary stairway. This shows that the need for social organisation cannot have appeared in the first phase of intellectual development, but was a result of primordial cognitive enlightenment. It must be clear that social organisation is only one manifestation of cultural experience, but one of the most fundamental ones as it is the community of humans, a substance of which they are organs.

⁵³ Morgan (1877 : 59-60)

The primordial enlightenment came to being as soon as Man recognised his otherness, which resulted in the human-nature opposition. Thus mankind placed itself above nature clearly through becoming aware of its otherness, through cognition. The second division took place among humans when groups of humans realised the differences among their interests. These differentiations established a hierarchy, a complex of derivatives of the same cognitive process. This type of structuralisation developed in parallel with the cultural evolution of human communities, subsequently, forms of hierarchies are always culture-specific. Structuralisation as such suggests a hierarchical division, a kind of sub- or superordination of which a tangible example is the co-existence of various groups of people in a colony, the meeting of a mainly homogenous and a class society.⁵⁴

Hierarchical division of the world of experiences is a fundamental human universal; a culture-specific way of distinction that every human group develops from the point of their birth. Basically, communities distinguish themselves from any other communities the same way as individuals distinguish themselves from others. This individualising attitude is reflected in the formation of various social-political organisations; it is an interest-based attitude, and as such it inevitably creates a hierarchical order placing the individual to the top and everyone else underneath. Thus the “we” versus “they” division is the fundamental form of subordination, both physical and intellectual. Ivanov explained the existence of binary division with the same structure of the human brain; the asymmetry of the hemispheres reappears in the structure of sign systems,⁵⁵ in the use of symbols, in the binary oppositions of sun-moon, male-female, odd-even, etc. Cultural perception of such dualities has always been crucial to communities, and it has always been strengthened by the ritual unification of the opposites.⁵⁶ Moreover, thematic, formal and other forms of categorisation may result in triadic divisions, but they all relate back to the binary forms, for instance, as 1+2 or 2+1.⁵⁷ As can be seen, most binary opposites consist of a dominant and a subordinated element, their roles always depending on context.

⁵⁴ Ortutay-Voigt (1989 : 15)

⁵⁵ Ivanov (1986 : 159)

⁵⁶ Ivanov (1986 : 124)

⁵⁷ Ivanov (1986 : 153)

Göran Sonesson showed that this binary opposition is so fundamental that it often remains unrecognised, and manifests on the level of instincts – taken for granted: members of any culture will think of themselves as insiders, while persons from other cultures are outsiders. On the inside, life is ordered and meaningful; outside of it, it is chaotic, disorderly and impossible to understand. Also, the inside is normally more highly valued.”⁵⁸ The positive and negative aspects and the related derivatives are, however, culture-dependent, specifically developed, conceived and valued. Notably, there are further developed, more complex forms of binary oppositions, as Samuel P. Huntington’s witty postulation of the clash of civilisations: “Two Europeans, one German and one French, interacting with each other will identify each other as German and French. Two Europeans, one German and one French, interacting with two Arabs, one Saudi and one Egyptian, will define themselves as Europeans and Arabs.”⁵⁹ To further support the inappropriateness of such a distinctive metaphorical categorisation, it is worth quoting Martin W. Lewis and Karen E. Wigen’s *The Myth of Continents*⁶⁰ about the East-West myth that “suggests that the globe is divided into fundamental and ultimately comparable groupings of humanity...this false binarism plays to a sense of European exceptionality, reinforcing the untenable distinction between Europe and Asia while doing nothing to solve the imbalance between the two.” The quotation highlights the problem of scientific responsibility: any scholars dealing with cultural issues must struggle for impartiality throughout analytic and evaluative steps, in order to be unbiased.

Thus the human view upon the world displays hierarchical structuralisation on all levels of existence. Culture-dependency, however, explains why and how individual worldviews differ from one another, and at the same time point to the fact that, in order to make valuable observations about cultures, scholars must find clear definitions to identify human communities to whom culture belongs, otherwise culture itself cannot be clearly defined.

Social sciences offer a number of different terms to describe various groups of humans, each of which, unfortunately, is burdened with loads of connotative attributes, blurring the picture of these groups. At first sight, it seems wise to start out from common

⁵⁸ Sonesson (1998 : 84)

⁵⁹ Huntington (1996 : 67)

⁶⁰ Lewis-Wigen (1997 : 48)

collocations such as national or popular culture, but a closer look will definitely show their drawbacks.

The social organisation is a complex structure consisting of sub-structures – a system of systems. Each sub-system may include further sub-systems or individual members of the group. Thus the definition of the concept of society is a pragmatic problem, and depends on the basic viewpoints of grouping. The term ‘society’ is used in several contexts and conveys different meanings respectively. The concept is dividable into form and content or, in other words, relations and institutions,⁶¹ but each division must be examined on pragmatic level to unfold their absolute meaning. E. R. Service said that every society is an organisation, which idea further supports the need for institutions, and presupposes the existence of a structure, the social structure.⁶² Each field of research developed a list of definitions, some of which share certain attributes, some are completely different, either academic in style or commonplace.⁶³ The problem the question of definitions raise is how to mark off the field of meanings of the term. For example, in historical studies ‘society’ may refer to a nation living inhabiting an area that is politically termed a country – then ‘society’ is a timeless socio-political notion. In the sentence “Looting is a social problem in financial crisis” society ceases to be a timeless notion, moreover, its field of meaning excludes certain members the universal term used to include such as homeless people and parts of the upper social stratum. Society is therefore a layered and segmented complex. Then, the collocation ‘social culture’ must be a poly-semantic expression, definitely context-bound, a pragmatically definable concept. Due to the ever-changing nature of the concept of society, a clear-cut definition of culture cannot be based on it.

Another confusing concept is ‘nation’ with its collocation ‘national culture’. Giuseppe Cocchiara defined nation as an intellectual unity,⁶⁴ emphasising the cognitive aspect of belonging together, whereas other definitions often highlight the political side

⁶¹ Barna (1980 : 69)

⁶² Service (1973 : 9-11)

⁶³ In a witty, rather commonplace style Géza Róheim defined society as a group of authors who do not really care about what others want to say, yet they attend one another’s performances because they hope that the audience will listen to them too when it is their turn. Róheim (2001 : 34) This definition, however, seems to refer more to the modern type of societies, where individuals tend to rely less and less upon one another due to a kind of general estrangement which is caused by the pressures of this fast-moving world.

⁶⁴ Cocchiara (1962 : 167-190)

by saying that a nation has to develop an identity,⁶⁵ most often drawing colonial questions into the picture to support their ideas. Nation may, therefore, be seen as a political term referring to groups of people who are citizens of a country, thus limited by political borders and governmental control. Nation is once again a political term in the sense that it refers to a group of people who share certain attributes such as language, location, religion, etc. as Frantz Fanon explained it " A national culture is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify, and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence..."⁶⁶ To present such a usage, the collocation Navaho Nation is fine as it is a federation of tribes, an ethnic group or minority within the political borders of the USA. National culture is, in the long run, another context-dependent term, and as such, inappropriate for a stable definition of culture.

'Folk' culture, the culture of the folk, may be the third most common collocation, which, let us say frankly, has even less in store for us than society and nation. The folk is frequently described as the lower stratum of society or nation that may possess the same fundamental cognitive forms for knowing the world, but lack the intellectual tools for that.⁶⁷ Folk, folklore are often understood with a pejorative connotation, with a sense of suppression. The lower statuses in the social hierarchies of the so-called western civilisation are regarded as uneducated, unknowing, and this stereotypical view devalues not only the people in concern but the wider society itself too. Another meaning of the term includes the relatives of a person, his or her folks, which meaning undeniably has a better connotation by maintaining the close relationships among members of the same group. Closeness can be based on emotional attraction, cognitive similarity, attitudinal empathy, and many more factors, hence the definition by Alan Dundes, American folklorist, seems best: folk is any group of people that share at least one attribute such as religion, habitation, and so forth.⁶⁸ On account of this, neither folk culture, nor culture can be defined clearly.

⁶⁵ Geertz (1994 : 119-126)

⁶⁶ Fanon (1997 : 155)

⁶⁷ Bausinger (1982 : 51)

⁶⁸ Dundes (1978 : 128-158)

With the help of the above conceptualisation of the term ‘folk’, we can try to define another term, in many ways similar to folk. Community is a group of people who share some interests – religion, intellectual, emotional, etc. In this, the two concepts seem interchangeable; however, it is not true. Interestingly, the semantic fields are different: as an example, there are folk costumes which signify a group of people, most often different from everyday clothing accompanied by a ritualistic attitude, whereas common costumes or rather commonplace costumes are very rare expressions and, if they are used at all, they refer to the type of clothing people wear every time and everywhere. Unfortunately, this difference does not back the case of the word community in the struggle for an acceptable term, because it shares characteristics with folk which make the definition of culture unclear.

Groups of people are often called ‘people’, meaning an all-inclusive unity of ethnicities within political borders, or within narrower limitations such as a family. People, as a countable noun, usually refers to the nation of a country, however, countries like the USA, India or Nigeria do not include one single people as they are rather melting pots of nations, that is, of peoples. Due to the multitude of its meanings, we can conclude that it is another term that may be unsafe to use for defining of culture.

The previous investigations show that culture is a phenomenon that cannot be clearly defined on the basis of its place among humans because of the wide range of connotations attached to it. Nevertheless, there are factors that may be of great help in drawing the final contour of the concept, many of them appears right in the form of common collocations such as work culture, national culture, youth culture or sub-culture.

1.1.2. The building blocks of culture

Culture is a system, more precisely, an integrated systems of systems. It has its roots in needs, and it is a cognitive,⁶⁹ partly sensory-controlled, system; a combination of intellect and sensitivity – the sensual and rational world in humans cooperatively create

⁶⁹ H.M. Johnson, sociologist argued that culture exists cognitively, and the material form is not part of culture, only its cultural aspect is, for instance, a patchwork is a cultural phenomenon as long as it has cultural value. According to Johnson, every cultural phenomenon exists only in the human consciousness. (Johnson 1964 : 82-83) Culture, undoubtedly, exists because human cognition brings it to life; however, its material forms are also (unrestrictively) integrated parts.

culture.⁷⁰ In Wolfgang Iser's view culture is a mixed system that consists of more sub-systems, each of which has its own roles, subsequently, they are role-representations, and culture decides which be dominant at a time.⁷¹ In other words, culture is the collection of material and intellectual assets of a group or people, which serve as a basis for the understanding and explanation of the social and spiritual-intellectual environment – a multi-layered composite, a hierarchical system of sub-systems developed through history, and a phenomenon that shows coherence at a given point in time.⁷²

The above system-theoretical introduction suggests that in the search for a useful definition of culture it is not only the building blocks but their interrelation that must be observed thoroughly. Thus culture must be analysed on both content and form levels, both syntactically and pragmatically. However, a semiotic definition cannot be developed without an exhaustive list of its building blocks and their dependencies.

Ruth Benedict thought about culture and the life of culture as something that is created by needs and is structured according to the intensity and orientation of needs, and the whole structuring is governed by selection as a primary tool.⁷³ Cultures select a limited number of patterns to live by from the enormous variety of patterns, and structure themselves around that selected core, thus designing an individual appearance. Examples of cultural patterns are the religious practices, ways of child upbringing, methods of doing business and trade, ways of eating and drinking, and ideals of life.⁷⁴ The development of such patterns are mostly governed by behaviour, as Benedict and most behaviourist theorists also suggested, certain behavioural patterns, and the products of those patterns are, for instance, buildings and artworks as material substances, or beliefs, attitudes, values and aims as mental/intellectual manifestations of culture. A decade after Benedict, psychologist Ralph Linton also referred to culture as “the configuration of learned behaviour, and the results of behaviour, whose component elements are shared and transmitted by the members of a particular society.”⁷⁵ Accordingly, the group of people sharing similar cultural experience most probably share similar behavioural

⁷⁰ Kámán (2002 : 148-156)

⁷¹ Iser (2004 : 117)

⁷² Verebélyi (2005 : 7-9)

⁷³ Benedict (2005 : 23-24)

⁷⁴ Ottaway (1968 : 22)

⁷⁵ Linton (1947 : 21)

patterns – the cultural aspect of behaviour is therefore one of the most fundamental aspects of cultural existence. Norbert Elias approached this question from the point of sociology, and arrived at a similar conclusion: the social structure requires and develops the level of control over affects, behavioural patterns.⁷⁶ The sociological approach is undoubtedly necessary for the analysis of cultures because it examines mankind, the producer and user of the cultural phenomenon. The production is basically carried out by humans; however, there are phenomena, to which humans attach significant cultural value, and are parts of the environment. Vilmos Voigt made a distinction between the elements that make up the style of culture: culturally developed ones are, for example, the statues, buildings, etc. whereas culturally independent, or in other words, unfinished or undeveloped ones are the natural phenomena.⁷⁷ These elements are distinguished on the basis of human intervention, but the explanation gives way to an approach to an all-inclusive interpretation of culture: anything to which cultural meaning is attached.

Culture is a universe created by humans, a unique representation of the world. Ernst Cassirer wrote in *Language and Myth*, that “[a]s our intellectual development progresses, our relation towards the outer world changes proportionately from a passive to an active attitude. Man ceases to be a mere shuttlecock as the mercy of outward impressions and influences; he exercises his own will to direct the course of events according to his needs and wishes.”⁷⁸ Man thus establishes institutions, piles up and organises knowledge, and, in fact, recreates the world. The way humans do so is culture-specific, as can be seen in the comparative analysis of modern and archaic cultures: it is enough to see how different cultures relate themselves to their surroundings, to Nature.⁷⁹

The recreation of the world is the interpretative process by which humans give meaning to their existence, and mark their place in the world. The creation of the universe of culture is the activity, which is a prerequisite of any other cultural activity. In

⁷⁶ Elias (1987 : 365)

⁷⁷ Voigt (2002 : 71-76)

⁷⁸ Cassirer (1953 : 19)

⁷⁹ Because of the culture-specificity of Man-Nature binary opposition, it is not necessarily an inimical opposition: in most archaic cultures, Nature is conceived as an organism of which Man is a part. Obviously, the Man-Nature opposition is perceived differently among various cultures, for instance, the French perceive it as an opposition between Man and Culture, and so on and so forth.

fact, it is active adaptation to the world.⁸⁰ Adaptation is the ability to get continually retuned to the environment on the principle of feedback.⁸¹

No matter to what extent humans believe they are capable of designing the circles of life, actually, they simply adapt themselves to the given circumstances. Throughout the adaptive process, humans create cultural phenomena on various levels of complexity and structuralisation, and establish an intricate web of interrelations. The intricacy of relations creates the possibility of a hierarchy among elements, and culture, due to its continuous development, ensures the roles and role-changes in order to maintain internal balance.

What types of elements or building block make up culture? As there is almost an endless variety of definitions of culture, the list of elements also varies according to the needs of the field of science that need it. Most often there is a distinction between material and immaterial, between physical and intellectual as the major branches of cultural phenomena. Interestingly, there are triadic distinctions as well such as provided by Vitányi, who, as a sociologist, distinguished intellectual, material and social culture and cultural phenomena.⁸² Although he added the activity to this sort of network as the ‘dynamic’ constituent that keeps the ‘static’ nodes within the web on the move, maintaining the system’s perpetual change, he failed to recognise that social relations are either intellectual or material, but do not belong to a third category: social phenomenon like marriage or friendship are basically spiritual-intellectual, whereas schools or playgrounds are material ones.

As a matter of fact, most if not every building block of culture can be divided into intellectual and material elements. To be clear, building blocks are the sub-systems that make up culture as a whole – they are the smallest elements that are worth dealing with if one aims to analyse culture as a whole, further details could not be handled.

The building blocks are organised into a structure that consists of universal and culture-specific items, each of which is typical of the system. For a general concept of culture, the definition should focus on the universals, the elements and attributes that can be found in every culture worldwide. Obviously, these items differ in quantity and quality according to the interests of the members of each particular culture, but for a general

⁸⁰ Józsa (1978 : 10-11)

⁸¹ Markarjan (1987 : 72)

⁸² Vitányi (1981 : 81-85)

definition it is only the existence of universals that is important. The following discussion follows the method of an earlier publication that dealt with the building blocks of culture, grouping various manifestations of culture under the most general headings possible.⁸³

Language

In Julia Kristeva's words language is the foundation of culture.⁸⁴ Her idea was undoubtedly an evolutionary one as it was explained by the concept of sublimation, the mode of cultural development, the way culture becomes nobler and more sophisticated – all this happens through language, language change. Language is being incessantly reborn, and it results in self-creation and self-recreation. In this sense language is a modality of culture, a perceptible, mediating modality. Subsequently, probably the first and most important element of culture is language or the use of language, and, due to its complexity, it is also the most difficult one to describe. Since the ontological sphere of existence (the world of things) and the sphere of logic (the world of thoughts and, consequently, language) are tuned to each other based on mutual apposition and adaptation, from the structure of language, one can draw conclusions about the structure of reality.⁸⁵ Lotman, on the contrary, said that there is not an ideal language that expresses the world.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, the two arguments may not be perceived as contradictory, as thorough observation points out that the latter one seems to complete the former thought by adding the impossibility of perfect expression. The explanation for this can be the fact that languages differ in surface and underlying structures, consequently, in the way they reflect existence.⁸⁷ One could truly say that there is not a science capable of doing so either; however, this kind of argumentation endeavours to explain the imperfection of human self-expression. The present study considers language as the most fundamental building block of culture that is capable of expressing reality, yet the quality and quantity of expression is not an issue at the point of defining the concept of culture.

⁸³ Illésfalvi (2008b : 2-8)

⁸⁴ Kristeva (homepage, URL)

⁸⁵ Csikós (2000 : 144)

⁸⁶ Lotman (2001 : 7)

⁸⁷ Ivanov (1996 : 58-59)

Undoubtedly, language is the basis of all types of communication, the basis of culture itself.⁸⁸ As culture is a universe, the interpreter of the world around us, social and spiritual life manifests in it and also in language.⁸⁹ Ludwig Wittgenstein wrote that “[t]he boundaries of my language are the boundaries of my world.”⁹⁰ Again in Lotman’s view, everything, that is the tool of communication, is a language;⁹¹ subsequently, culture itself is a complex language. Language is, then, a tool of communication, and so is culture, and they limit and shape human experience of the world.

Language does not only present a picture of contemporary reality, but the complete and entire history manifests in it.⁹² The Saussurean synchronic and diachronic aspects are thus unquestionably valid and fundamental to the understanding and evaluation of language, and, due to their strong mutual dependency, of culture. Language is always the heritage of the preceding era,⁹³ and, because of the temporal change of human experience, it is an ever-changing phenomenon, following or bringing about other changes in the world. Edward Sapir further emphasizes the significance of language in the interpretation of culture by adding that culture changes more easily than language because language is conservative.⁹⁴ The conservative aspect plays an important role in linguistic analyses, and, because of the analogy between language and culture, more precisely, because of their being intricately interwoven, this role bears similar importance in cultural analyses, too.

The reason for the difficulties of the description of languages roots in the mere fact that no matter what field of research deals with language, it inescapably has to progress within a linguistic framework, as language works as the meta-language of the given science. “All the theoretical cognition takes its departure from a world already preformed by language; the scientist, the historian, and even the philosopher, lives with his objects only as language presents them to him.”⁹⁵ Ernst Cassirer rightly called language the fundament on which every form of interpretation of experience is built, and

⁸⁸ Jakobson (1963 : 28)

⁸⁹ Elias (1987 : 245)

⁹⁰ Wittgenstein (1953 : 160-161)

⁹¹ Lotman (1973 : 13)

⁹² Barthes (1996 : 8)

⁹³ Saussure (1967 : 97, 118)

⁹⁴ Sapir (1971 : 110-111)

⁹⁵ Cassirer (1953 : 28)

went on by saying language presents the objects to us. Human understanding is based on the conceptualised picture of the world, moreover, as David Hume wrote, our mind not only creates every idea from existing things, but in a deductive process, creates also the non-existent according to existent ones, simply because our brain is capable of replacing the lack of impression by ideas.⁹⁶ This deductive characteristic of language, on a wider scale, is revealed in the phenomenon that language is always the heritage of the preceding era,⁹⁷ in other words, the complete and entire history manifests in language.⁹⁸ According to Aleksandr Potebnya self-exploration is impossible without the *word*, a substance that objectifies our thoughts as its audio format gains a referential aspect and becomes the sign of past thought. Potebnya believed that self-exploration presupposes the primordial activity that our constantly flowing self leaves perceivable traits in isolated sounds.⁹⁹ Obviously, perceptive schemas are subjected to dynamic development within a cycle of perception; they “develop with experience. (...) Only through perceptual learning do we become able to perceive progressively more subtle aspects of the environment. The schema that exists at any given moment is the product of a particular history as well as the ongoing cycle itself.”¹⁰⁰ So to say, linguistic elements are condensed forms of previous experience, carrying a load of memories – this explains the need for both synchronic and diachronic analyses.

Our experience comes from the outer world and also from our mental struggles to interpret what we perceive through the senses. Language emerges out of the need for communicating experience with the world, with the other. There is not an element, either existent or non-existent, in the known universe that has never communicated with others.¹⁰¹ Communication guides Man’s way through the course of life on Earth, ensures his existence, and widens the horizons of learning by providing the opportunity to share

⁹⁶ Hume (2006 : 25, 79-81)

⁹⁷ Saussure (1967 : 97)

⁹⁸ Barthes (1996 : 8)

⁹⁹ Potebnya (2002 : 153)

¹⁰⁰ Neisser (1976 : 64) He argued that the historical aspect originates from the following process: humans make the perceived information conscious as they interpret it, and the schemata built from the newly gained information becomes detached and stored for other future purposes. (Neisser 1976 : 130)

¹⁰¹ According to Winfried Nöth “Any primitive biological organism already interacts semiotically with its environment when it *selects* or *avoids* energetic or material objects in its environment for the *purpose* of its own *survival*.” (Nöth 1998 : 338) That is, material and immaterial segments of existence are communicative entities by their very nature.

experience. The Australian writer, Bruce Chatwin, in his famous book on the philosophy of the Aborigines, *The Songlines*, quotes that “[t]he ancient Egyptians believed the seat of the soul was in the tongue: the tongue was a rudder or steering-oar with which a man steered his course through the world.”¹⁰² In this sense, language is a tool for giving and receiving information, for communication. It is still an unanswered question what the origins of languages might have been, whether imitation or conscious formation, as there is scientific evidence for both,¹⁰³ but the fact that languages exist and communicate, and are also used for information transfer, ensures our interest in them.

Languages draw a magic circle around the people to whom they belong, and there is no escape from there, except by stepping out of the circle into another one. Now, one may question what language really is, why the thing we call language is called a language. Jurij Lotman stated that every tool of communication is language such as art, for example – a system of signs.¹⁰⁴ In this, he agreed on a dictionary-like definition which more extensively goes as follows: language is system of “signs, symbols, gestures, etc. used for indicating ideas or feelings”,¹⁰⁵ or “a way of expressing meaning or giving information through sounds, signs, movements, etc.”¹⁰⁶

On more philosophical grounds, language is the most secure transmitter of the way of thinking, feeling and behaviour.¹⁰⁷ It is, indeed, in very close relation with brainwork, with cognitive experience, with perception and expression. According to Zoltán Gombocz, the world of imagination is reflected in language and the richness of vocabulary equals to the richness of imagination.¹⁰⁸ His opinion, of course, should be understood as one referring not only to verbal, but any other forms of language, as “[v]erbal language is only a part of the way we usually get meaning from contexts.”¹⁰⁹ In

¹⁰² Chatwin (1987 : 302)

¹⁰³ As for the imitation theory, it has often been criticised, due to the huge amount of scientific evidence that prove the cognitive basis for both formation and use of languages. However, Ernst Cassirer provides examples of the Eve language where there are adverbs which describe only one activity of condition, and there are further examples in some of the Eve-related languages. (Cassirer 1975 : 127). These are undoubtedly based on imitation such as onomatopoeic words and expressions which seem to be universal characteristics of languages.

¹⁰⁴ Lotman (1973 : 13)

¹⁰⁵ Crowther (1998 : 662)

¹⁰⁶ Summers (1995 : 793)

¹⁰⁷ Eliot (2003 : 62)

¹⁰⁸ Gombocz (1997 : 12)

¹⁰⁹ Wright (1989 : 2)

fact, language gives a model of reality which can be modified according to the level of experience,¹¹⁰ because to every linguistic community, every individual, language exists as a complete wholeness, but this comprehensive code represents an interconnected creative system; every language contains various models at a time, each of which is characterised by various functions,¹¹¹ and users choose the models that are appropriate in the given context. This Canaan of choices is accessible to users only to a certain extent, either because of physiognomic and intellectual limitations or linguistic conventions. Jacques Derrida emphasised that to know a language and to master it is quite different. In his view, the variety of possibilities establishes the situation when one may have one language and it is not his – this means the lack of mastery. This thought is further explained by the seemingly contradictory statement that we always speak one language and we never speak one language.¹¹² Language lives only in context; the one language we speak, let say, is English, but we do not speak merely the English language if the contextual conditions of communication are taken into account. By saying “I’m in the bathtub” when the phone rings, does not mean that I am a rude person, but I ask my girlfriend in an informal way to answer the phone. I could as well say “Answer it, please” or “Could you, please, answer it?”, which would be acceptable utterances among others, but the first version conveys the meaning closest to what appears in my mind in this case. Interestingly, examples like the above may not meet the intentions of the speaker because what sounds polite in our ears might be unpleasant to others.¹¹³ Humans are thought to communicate rather with content than with form, but these examples restore balance by proving that form and content are interdependent. However, the multiplicity of choices explains that we do not speak one language; only one form of it is applied at a time.

The problem of language as a system used for the transmission of experience is even more difficult if we think of such communicative situations in which more systems are involved such as in the case of colonisation. Although it may seem an extreme illustration, there is no doubt that on colonies where English is spoken as official and first language, so to say, a lingua franca, it is neither the English of colonisers nor that of the

¹¹⁰ Schmidt (1975 : 481)

¹¹¹ Jakobson (1972 : 451)

¹¹² Derrida (1997 : 9-17)

¹¹³ Tannen (2001 : 74-84)

colonised any more because, on the one hand, colonisers are to express new experience in it, on the other one, the colonised encounter a double experience of which one is a new language into which their culture is to be translated, and the other is a similar new experience of contact. Not to mention more, by the age of the colonisation of North America or Australia, the English language had already become a lingua franca, a composition of fragments taken from various languages and cultures. Practically speaking, the transmission of experience encounters the same problem in every context where languages and cultures meet.

Culture, observed even without an abstract definition, is a complex system that has a given form, meaning, and is used in a specified context; in semiotic terms, it possesses syntactic, semantic and pragmatic aspects. Language is a system that is capable of expressing these aspects; consequently, it is a central element of culture, probably, the most important one, because it can be the meta-language of any other elements whereas they cannot play this kind of role.

Communicative behaviour combines verbal and non-verbal forms, both of which can be understood only in the communicative context.¹¹⁴ Forms of non-verbal communication are often neglected in scientific studies, although they are culture-specific similarly to the verbal ones; therefore, they are equally significant. Proxemics, for instance, may reveal extreme differences among cultures, as the rules of establishment and keeping of distance between participants of communication is culture-dependent.¹¹⁵ Non-verbals can complete or substitute verbals, they can fulfil semantic functions,¹¹⁶ just as in the case of nodding which can signal ‘yes’ or ‘no’, or a grimace that may convey the meaning of disgust. For a more detailed illustration, let us take an excerpt from J. M. Coetzee’s famous book, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, a novel about the negative effects of cultural oppression:

‘What did they do to him?’ I whisper to the guard, the same young man as last night.

‘A knife’ he whispers back. ‘Just a little knife.’ He spreads thumb and forefinger. Gripping his little knife of air he makes a curt thrust into the

¹¹⁴ Hoppál (2004 : 157) It must be noted that only those non-verbals should be called gestures which we use for communication. These are mostly symbolic, and do not serve physical needs. (Ruesch-Kees 1956 : 37)

¹¹⁵ Morain (1992 : 64-76)

¹¹⁶ Martinkó (2001 : 121)

sleeping boy's body and turns the knife delicately, like a key, first left, then right. Then he withdraws it, his hand returns to his side, he stands waiting.¹¹⁷

Although the description seems universally understandable, it cannot be comprehended without certain previous knowledge. Even more complex is the case as it is a verbal description of a series of non-verbal actions; however, it is undeniable that the perceptive process of the reader is, in the long run, similar to that of the witness, the guard. In the analytical procedure the question is to what extent the tools of communication are cross-culturally recognisable, in other words, to what extent their fields of meanings are similar.

Scholars have long been cherishing the idea that there is a universal grammar that consists of the fundamental elements without which linguistic communication would be impossible. There have been attempts made to find a list of lexical elements too which could be called a set of universal vocabulary.¹¹⁸ The aim of both quests was to establish a linguistic core which would allow further research to identify differences in cognition. The problem understandably crosses scientific boundaries: neither of the levels – syntactic, semantic, pragmatic – can be examined without contextual references, subsequently, for valuable findings the application of a semiotic method is necessary. Likewise, one would rightly say that languages do not have a common core due to tremendous dissimilarities in conceptualisation among various peoples of the world.

Concept formation is empirically limited and, in a large part, based on abstraction: notions like 'higher entity', 'bonds' and even simpler ones often seem universal, yet they are culturally shaped substances of the cognition. The formation of general concepts presupposes definite attributes for each, otherwise, without fixed characteristics by which things may be recognised as similar or different, objects cannot be collected into classes. The intellectual work by which our mind carries out the process of formation is aimed at the detachment of temporal relations, isolating the objects from time, and of their actual occurrence, trying to place them into a system. As a consequence, the difference between languages derives from the diversity of conceptualisation. A significant contribution to this train of thought is that when there are a variety of different languages, then any

¹¹⁷ Coetzee (2004 : 10-11)

¹¹⁸ For further study see investigations carried out by Anna Wierzbicka and Cliff Goddard, and also consult works that deal with the question of monogenesis and universals – some significant works have been mentioned above.

language finds meaning only in its relation to other languages;¹¹⁹ the context becomes more important than languages themselves, thus, breaking through linguistic boundaries. For instance, there are languages in which dancing and working are similar concepts as they are both means of livelihood – undoubtedly, they are rare examples of intra-lingual activity, whereas in most cases extra-lingual forces shape linguistic products.¹²⁰

Clifford Geertz characterised Man as a symbolising, conceptualising and semanticising animal,¹²¹ and it follows from this that, because of the immense diversity of humans, techniques of conceptualisation are different among different peoples. Even today, more and more variations appear as cultures are getting in closer contact with one another, and cultural borrowing and blending are growing out of all proportions. Consequently, terminologies are to be revised and updated regularly; to stick to our present subject, multilingual contexts more and more often present scholars with the phenomenon how semantic fields change under given conditions: for instance, the concept of semantic conflation¹²² seems to acquire a major role in the study of meaning owing to linguistic and cultural overlaps.

To sum up all that has been said about language, it seems that cultural analyses should greatly rely on linguistic findings, and be carried out with deep concern about all aspects languages may have within the specified analytical framework, that is to say, on the spot.

Language and thought

Human cultures, as discussed above, are systems of sign systems, more precisely, primary and secondary modelling systems. Each modelling system is organised with the help of conceptualisation, structured into optimal schemes and patterns, and an intricate

¹¹⁹ Bakhtin (1990 : 431)

¹²⁰ Cassirer (1953 : 24-41)

¹²¹ Geertz (1994 : 23)

¹²² Semantic conflation means the fusion of meanings, that is, a process in which a word from one language acquires an additional sense of an item from another language. Examples of this process are English words in Irish context that inherit the Irish scope of meaning. It is a kind of symbiotic relation. (Stalmaszczyk 2007 : 38)

web of interconnections¹²³ is established with marked hierarchies. The schematic conceptual systems formed in the unconscious of communities consist of mental models that shape existential perception and affect the way people express aspects of their experience. Walter Kintsch wrote that “[p]erception, comprehension, and problem solving generate mental models of the environmental objects and events, and operate on these models. The cognitive system transforms the original structures, merging the current environment with the organism’s previous experience of it. The mental models generated in this way are isomorphic to the environmental structures and hence provide a basis for the interaction of an organism with the environment.”¹²⁴ These mental models are the smallest elements of culture that weave more complex elements together, such as language, rituals, social institutions and mythology. A thorough analysis of these models requires morphological parsing similar to that applied by structuralist linguistics: the biggest unity is language itself and the smallest constituents are elements that cannot be divided any further without the complete loss of meaning. Examples of such fundamental elements of cultures are the beliefs and convictions of a people, upon which norm and value systems are built. They are mental models that are actually experiential constants within the community framework, conveying the same generalised meaning for every single member of the group. These constants are the refined and interpreted derivatives of positive and negative experiences – emotions, thoughts, impressions. By way of example, you can think of the well-known observation of art history, namely, that there are significant differences between perception of space in the so-called Western and Far Eastern cultures: whereas those brought up within western cultures mainly perceive objects, representatives of the Far East perceive the space between objects (as well), and they can also illustrate it. Thus the smallest cultural elements, organised into systems, create the basis of norm and value systems that primarily shape the orientation of a community’s lifestyle.

The next level of building blocks involves the questions of norm and value systems, of the cultural phenomena that primarily control everyday life, behaviour and

¹²³ Kintsch argued that “[t]he adult human mind is a hybrid system that relies on all types of mental models simultaneously,” (Kintsch 2003 : 42) therefore it is very difficult to parse human activities because they are controlled by a number of schemas that govern human brain work.

¹²⁴ Kintsch (2003 : 14)

attitude towards other group members and the rest of the world. Organisation into forms of norm and value systems is the midway step of institutionalisation: the group of people builds up principles of orientation from common experience. The concepts in the background of proverbs, elements of rites, phases of regular activities (ritual, economical, political, and social, etc.) are this sort of principles. The Yoruba proverbs analysed by Alan Dundes, the anthropologist and folklorist, in *Analytic Essays in Folklore*, provide excellent examples for the mapping of conceptual models of the community. Dundes says, in accordance with the results of several other paremiological researches, that proverbs carry the ancient wisdom of social groups such as the following one: *'Do not be like me; a thief's child takes after its parents.'* This proverb teaches us that children always take after their parents, and positive and negative characteristics are both inherited.¹²⁵ Wisdom piled up in the language of communities is an active part of the system of norms and values, but the system does not only have verbally transmittable elements: Dundes discusses several proverbs that are transmitted nonverbally, using drums as vehicles of information transfer. All in all, the expression of messages happens according to given norms.

The elements of culture are organised into institutionalised systems in religion and the series of laws. Naturally, these systems often break through the borders of the source culture, and through adaptation they may spread even worldwide – as the great religions like Buddhism, Christianity or the Islam did, but the general human rights also form a legalised ideological system accepted in nearly every corner of the world. However, universalisation pulls on – at least partial – re-evaluation, and these interpretations may be rather unique among different cultural groups. Subsequently, particularities must be treated as prime aspects in the analysis of cultures.

As a matter of fact, all levels of mental work create the above cultural products: ideas, values, deeds and emotions, all of which is shaped by our intentions and capabilities. Obviously, our capacity to live to answer cultural expectations is itself a cultural product, too, and this is how cultures create human plasticity by which Man becomes a cultural artwork.¹²⁶ Thus Man employs the systems of mental models for

¹²⁵ Dundes (1979 : 40-41)

¹²⁶ Iser (2004 : 99)

orientation, self-identification and the definition of His place in the world – identifies Himself through symbolic communication. The process of creation consists of three phases: 1) many people choose the same solution to satisfy their needs, most probably because human brainwork truly has universal characteristics, yet the selection is commonly carried out unconsciously; 2) they attach belief to the chosen models in order to validate their choice – in this phase conscience begins to work;¹²⁷ 3) after recognition, humans evaluate and re-evaluate these models, and when they are accepted and in general use, they become the institutionalised forms.¹²⁸ Subsequently, humans are dependent on systems of the above models so much as this dependency determines their capability of living.¹²⁹ As Géza Róheim put it “the measure of all human products is Man, so every institution ought to be viewed through human nature. He also added the diachronic aspect: institutions are the fossilized aspirations of past generations.¹³⁰ The inheritance of mental models through language supports regular re-evaluation, thus providing humans with a reliable and constant evaluative basis. The Indian theoretician, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, argued that there are two different arenas of human activity: A) the public sector that includes the political, social, economic and intellectual activities; B) and the private sector that includes the emotional, sexual and domestic activities. She added that there are significant overlaps among various types of human practices,¹³¹ and by saying so she inevitably gave way to a Universalist point of view, an understanding of human practices as governed by general rules.

Teun A. van Dijk in *Analyzing Racism Through Discourse Analysis – Some Methodological Reflections* wrote that socially shared mental representations “include (a) general knowledge about the rules of language, discourse, and communication; (b) other world knowledge, such as scripts of stereotypical episodes (e.g., going to the movies or participating in a demonstration); (c) general opinion schemata or attitudes (e.g., about immigration or affirmative action); and (d) more fundamental ideological systems that construe and organize these attitudes, such as in terms of basic norms, values, interests, or

¹²⁷ Sumner (1978 : 22-25)

¹²⁸ Sumner (1978 : 71-72)

¹²⁹ Geertz (1994 : 75)

¹³⁰ Róheim (1984 : 634)

¹³¹ Spivak (1988 : 103)

goals of groups (e.g., sexism, xenophobia).”¹³² In his view these models are personal and unique mental representations of events or situations one personally experienced. Such models are subjective representations of the relevant structures of the events (setting, participants, action), and may include personal evaluation (opinion) about the events. The fact that humans are able to share their experiences follows from that they recall and update relevant old models on similar events or build new models based on previous experiences.¹³³ Thus humans share attitudes about fragments or whole events of preceding experience.¹³⁴ Another significant fact about “all cultural work, be it technical or purely intellectual,” is that “proceeds by the gradual shift from the direct relation between man and his environment to an indirect relation.”¹³⁵ Thus cultural products call forth common experience, and by gradual re-evaluation, they may become institutionalised models. Marcel Danesi also discussed cultural practices in *Semiotics in Language Education*, and concluded that they are perceived as elements of various cognitive networks, within the framework of which they “are interconnected meaningfully through associative thinking.” There are links to separate network domains that allow “people to extract historically-based and socially-relevant meanings.”¹³⁶

Human cultures, then, include modelling systems that provide guidelines for community members in order that they will be able to orientate themselves through various courses of life. Mental capabilities support the procedures of orientation and give basis for interpreting and evaluating experience. The interdependency of language and thought, thus, establishes a fundamental layer of culture, one of its most significant building blocks.

¹³² Van Dijk (1993 : 98)

¹³³ Van Dijk (1993 : 99)

¹³⁴ Kintsch argued that “[w]e can take for granted that several different types of mental representation play a role in behaviour and cognition and that some representations are embedded in others.” (Kintsch 2003 : 32) He added that “[t]he adult human mind is a hybrid system that relies on all types of mental models simultaneously.” (Kintsch 2003 : 42) It is obvious, then, that there are common mental representations, and there are overlaps as well, thus the analysis of mental representations should be comprehensive.

¹³⁵ Cassirer (1953 : 58)

¹³⁶ Danesi (2000 : 43-57)

Verbal forms of expression

A fundamental function of every semiotic system is to model the world – they are world modelling systems.¹³⁷ Ivanov's statement touches the spot: the systems of mental representations provide a picture of the world, and, with the help of language, enables humans to share their experiences. It is again language that contributes to the establishment of the fundamentals for the development of another significant building block of culture, namely, verbal art, including legends, stories, myths, and even jokes. These cultural products are most often developed with the help of symbolic systems characteristic of the given culture; however, scholars are inclined to believe that there are certain characteristics that can be found worldwide, irrespectively of the location, age and other determining features of cultures. V. J. Propp examined structural universals of Russian fairy tales in *The Morphology of Folk-Tales*;¹³⁸ he called them the motifs that build up fairy tales. What Propp drew up concerning tales, may be applied to legends and myths as well, to a certain extent; these works carry the general characteristics of the genres in their structure, content and style, but the era and place of origin may as well be described with the information.¹³⁹ The discussed forms of verbal art, similarly to fairy tales, include certain universals around which the storylines are structured. Yeleazar Meletinsky wrote about myths of creation in *The Poetics of Myths* that there are three fundamental roles in mythological creation: the thing to be created, the source material, and the creator itself. These are accompanied by concepts of time and space, and further elements that are considered necessary by the source culture.¹⁴⁰

Apparently, the mental models employed by cultures can be identified during the analysis of works, thus the fundamental formatives of community experience can be traced back. As discussed above, not only works of art, but every product created by humans is built up from symbolic forms of experience that are constituents of complex systems. One of the aims of system analysis must, therefore, be the exploration of the reference points of relations, both internal and external,¹⁴¹ so that we can meaningfully

¹³⁷ Ivanov (1984 : 356)

¹³⁸ Propp (2005)

¹³⁹ This idea will be important to the development of the theory of cultural identity filters, as the approach presumes that it is possible to trace back the source culture beyond texts.

¹⁴⁰ Meletyinskij (1985 : 248-254)

¹⁴¹ Csúri (1987 : 213-220)

parse each cultural product and retrieve all possible information. In such analyses three viewpoints should be combined: syntactic, semantic and pragmatic.¹⁴² The very existence of structure within systems brings all these aspects into life, and demands for a multi-aspectual approach. The three viewpoints are mutually dependent because they can be analysed only in context,¹⁴³ subsequently, any type of approach to complex systems of mental models, or any kinds of systems must involve all of them.

Any form of verbal expression is itself a complex system of symbolic meanings as it is made up of smaller elements, each of which interprets a particular mental representation of human experience. Consequently, verbal expressions are multi-layered cultural artworks that must be approached as integrated unities, unified textual contexts, frameworks apt for the transmission of experience. The stories, legends or myths belonging to a culture always have characters placed in given a setting, and a storyline, all of which is shaped by cultural norms. Jokes, saying and proverbs, and other shorter forms of verbal expression are also shaped by similar mentality typical of the given culture; the only things to remember when analysing verbal expressions is that all these genres also bear universal characteristics, owing to which they cannot be called culture-specific. Beyond the general characteristics, a more culture-related layer can be found, which is in fact the one to seek out, the goal of analysis.

Artists are influenced by cultural context, and, accordingly, they may show two types of creativity: rule-governed and rule-changing creativity. The former refers to an act of sign use completely controlled by conventional rules of use that employs existing sign-functions, whereas the latter means the act of inventing new sign-functions.¹⁴⁴ Naturally, no art forms are created by individuals but by communities, thus in the process of creation existence and cognition are inseparable, as cognition is represented in existence.¹⁴⁵ The influence of culture upon verbal forms is further explained by cultural theorist and literary critic, Frantz Fanon, who suggested that universally-accepted genres

¹⁴² Wunderlich (1988 : 33)

¹⁴³ Horányi (2006 : 24), Kiefer (1983 : 51-55), Marcus (1977 : 140).

¹⁴⁴ Eco (1976 : 188)

¹⁴⁵ Voigt (1972b : 15)

become culturally loaded through certain phases that are oriented by the very directives of the applying culture.¹⁴⁶

Society

The social institutions and all the statuses and roles included in it together make up another significant building block of culture, since further cultural characteristics may be identified within them, and the principles of organization are to be deduced from mental models again. Mental representations form a hierarchy of abstractness and increasing independence from the environment. Moving towards the more complex ones, “the degree of environmental control weakens” and “the degree of consciousness increases.”¹⁴⁷ This means that Man becomes detached from His natural environment, and begins to establish a new world order and within that Man begins a life controlled by His own rules. Social and spiritual life manifest in language¹⁴⁸ and, accordingly, the detached creature, by the activity of the brain, divides the world into His sphere (body) and everything else. Humans, thus, establish a duality, and on their side create commonly accepted and institutionalised rules of behaviour. Their mental representations, as stated above, form the basis of behavioural norms, and, by doing so, indirectly create statuses, a hierarchical construct consisting of the human race. These statuses control belonging to families, groups, communities and other forms humans gather into. Normally, there are various rights, duties and obligations attached to the social statuses¹⁴⁹ that mark the right place of each status within the network of humanity.

Since culture is the common interpretation of the system of meanings, attitudes and values, and the expressive symbolic forms that carry them,¹⁵⁰ the human race can be divided according to similarities in any of the above factors. Human communities, to use a most acceptable and impartial way of naming, may as well be categorised according to relationships such as blood relation, spatial relation, spiritual relation or accordance relation;¹⁵¹ each being quite determining in defining the concept of ‘society’, and only

¹⁴⁶ Fanon (1967 : 168-169)

¹⁴⁷ Kintsch (2003 : 16)

¹⁴⁸ Elias (1987 : 245)

¹⁴⁹ Sumner (1978 : 107-109)

¹⁵⁰ Burke (1991 : 11)

¹⁵¹ Tönnies (1983 : 15-56)

one unrelated to the question of mental representation (blood relation). In contemporary societies blood relations add up to a relatively low percent of populations, as human mobility and the blending of social groups are gradually becoming faster, partly due to globalising tendencies, and partly against them, in other words, due to the wish for survival. Even smaller groups linked by blood tend to blend because of their tradition in order to refresh their genetic composition; thus we can conclude that the most significant factor to shape social organisations worldwide is still the question of mental representation.

Supposing that any social group ‘belongs to’ a form of culture, its members definitely share similar attitudes about the issues of the world. The culture of a community is, therefore, a unity of common experience, and immaterial or material products are built up because of that experiential load, that is, they contain the society’s own interpretations.¹⁵² Humans share certain universal ways of interpretation, but different social groups regularly develop different solutions to similar problems. Ruth Benedict mentions such universal phenomenon in the *Patterns of Culture*, saying that concerning the choice of mate for marriage, “the relatives to whom the prohibition refers differ utterly among different peoples, but all human societies are alike in placing a restriction.”¹⁵³ For this reason, according to semiotician, Marcel Danesi, cultures are both restrictive and liberating, as they thrust an already-fixed system of interpretative formulae upon their members, but they also provide “resources by which individuals can seek new meanings on their own.” For a better understanding, it is worth quoting Danesi’s ideas about how individuals perceive the aspects of belonging in various social contexts:

“In complex city-societies, where various cultures, subcultures, countercultures, and parallel cultures exist in constant competition with each other, where the shared territory is so large that it constitutes a mere abstraction, the tendency for individuals to relate to tribal-type groupings that exist within the larger societal context manifests itself regularly. People continue to perceive their membership in smaller groups as more directly meaningful to their lives than allegiance to the larger society and/or nation.”¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² Geertz (1994 : 169)

¹⁵³ Benedict (2005 : 32-33)

¹⁵⁴ Danesi (2004 : 39)

The above quotation suggests that there must be some sort of cohesion among group members both in smaller and in complex human communities, which is, in fact, that they share certain considerations about the world. The intensity of togetherness largely depends upon how deeply all the members of a community are involved in sharing experience. J. Lotman noted that a person always consists of his name and himself, but also the person as himself and as a member of a community.¹⁵⁵ Accordingly, only a perceived membership can complete the self of the individual, and without belonging, without organic participation, individuals become outcasts, extra-cultural and out-of-community entities.¹⁵⁶

The major question at this point is the relationship between the ‘elements’ of the social structure, their mobility and variability. The famous sociologist, Émile Durkheim, called social cohesion ‘solidarity’ in *The Division of Labour in Society*, differentiating the apparently mechanical solidarity of archaic societies from the rather organic solidarity of modern societies – the two were differentiated by the idea that in the mechanical form the unity of a community is founded on analogy, whereas the organic form presupposes certain differences between individuals, turning from the community towards the individual, but in a way that it explains the strength of cohesion by the interdependency of community and its members. However, the question is not this sort of differentiation, but the mechanism of the development of community cohesion, of the community as a whole. The place and quantity of system constituents is marked out by system needs, which process may be called rough adjustment, and norms and values carry out the fine tuning, that is, formulate roles and statuses.

For a system to come into existence certain fundamental conditions must be fulfilled – these are system needs. Prerequisites for a system are that it must have constituents, and there must be relationships among the elements. The former condition creates a set, and the relations form the plasma that holds the system together, ensures the possibility of constituent mobility, role change and role shift. As soon as these conditions

¹⁵⁵ Lotman (2001 : 50)

¹⁵⁶ Another related topic would be the question of those, who have never been members of any human communities, such as Kaspar Hauser and other documented feral children appearing during the last millenium, but this question would divert the track of our analysis, so it is skipped here. For further information on Kaspar Hauser see Martin Kitchen’s *Kaspar Hauser* (2001), and for a wider view see *Savage Girls and Wild Boys: A History of Feral Children* by Michael Newton (2004).

are fulfilled, norms and value viewpoints get down to business, mark off the exact place of single elements, and crystallize their functions, thus strengthening the structure's cohesion. Subsequently, the social structure should not only be observed as a whole, but also as the sum of parts; each structural segment or area, the quality of the interdependency of constituents, and the constant and variant parameters should all be carefully studied in order that the observer can get a full picture of the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic horizons.

Human activities

In the description of the structure of a human community, the observation of activities is unavoidable. Basically, there are two types of activities: those that directly influence community life and those that indirectly contribute to human experience. "Anthropologists divide the main spheres (i.e. of culture - Illésfalvi) into *primary* – kinship and religious – and *secondary* – political, legal, economic, and educational. Primary spheres are characterized by face-to-face modes of communication and interaction and by a feeling of solidarity. Secondary spheres, on the other hand, are based on more conventionalized and impersonal forms of communication and interaction. The latter took on greater importance in the first super-tribal collectivities, where consensual patterns of interaction would have been impossible on the basis of the primary spheres alone."¹⁵⁷ The anthropological division does not coincide with the formerly suggested one, yet it greatly contributes to the understanding of how significant role various activities play within the cultural framework, and of how they operate among individuals and groups. In other words the activities are thus classified as of primary and secondary role based on their contribution to the maintenance of culture as a whole. This division exists in every culture, as it is a cultural universal, but their balance is different from culture to culture. The differences can be either quantitative or qualitative, resulting in a culture-specific configuration of activity network. However, in general, the complexity, conditioning, openness, flexibility and interrelatedness of activities are the crucial characteristics that reveal the underlying mental models of communities.

¹⁵⁷ Danesi-Perron (1999 : 29)

Meletinsky wrote that “[t]he measure of organization of a system is proportionate to the amount of information.”¹⁵⁸ The network of cultural activity is, then, made complex by the intercourse and merging of various operational objectives. The anthropological division says that kinship and religious activities belong to the primary sphere; the reason for this is most probably that both types are strictly governed by blood relation or subjectivity, that is, familial relationship or individual conviction, in other word, belief. The former one cannot be changed as it is the most natural form of human relationships, and the latter is one that cannot be consciously changed due to the very nature of believing.¹⁵⁹ The secondary sphere includes areas of human activity that operate within institutionalised frameworks, and which are developed into universally accepted formations of human mentality. Both spheres draw on the vortex of intellectual and emotional experience, and as such both contribute to the development of the individual self and the knowledge and consciousness of communities. No matter how complex each sphere is, due to the manifold overlaps and incessant intercourse among diverse areas of cultural activity, the organisation of the system of culture is inevitably elaborate because each type of action involves lots of information, either retrieved as new or regained. Accordingly, activity analysis must take all aspects into consideration and observe each analytical subject in context.

Information contained and expressed in various types of activity are key to the understanding of the cultural machine, its structural development and operational principles. Information retrieval, thus, must proceed in a backward direction: researchers must rip the experiential surface, the given amount of immediate cultural data, and delve into the depths of the observed entity in order to find out the most about its evolution, about its roots and the factors that shaped it. Let us now take rituals as examples that unquestionably “reveal the deepest layers of values in a culture. People use rites to express what moves them most. During rites community values are revealed because the forms of expression are conventional.”¹⁶⁰ Not only in language, but also in physical activities is cultural history expressed, subsequently, most actions carry loads of

¹⁵⁸ Meletyinszkij (1985 : 449)

¹⁵⁹ Believing begins right when the human mind is convinced by emotions and experiential pressure to consider something to be worth adhering to, a moment of satisfaction, of intellectual and emotional relaxation, of a feeling of safety.

¹⁶⁰ Wilson (1954 : 241)

information about human behaviour, attitudes and habits. Sociologist Edwards Shils stated that traditions are always handed over from generation to generation and as such it remains the same but it also gets modified as well.¹⁶¹ The double aspect of traditions is, in this sense, a miniature version of culture, because cultures also maintain existing governing principles in order not lose central characteristics, but give way to alteration within observable frames. In other words, cultures are always extrovert; by their very nature they are open to receive information from the outer world otherwise they would not be able to develop.

Within the cultural melting pot, activities make up a surface structure that covers several layers of information, and express ways of information storage and treatment. Leopold Schmidt, in *Le Théâtre Populaire Européen*,¹⁶² collected and analysed plays of the European folk theatre, and categorized them according to various themes such as plays about battles, progression, dispute, death, resurrection, turning points, and so on. Although undeliberately, his categories let the reader conclude that there are direct links between thematic variants (i.e. mental constructions) and universal or occasional cultural events (i.e. ceremonies, rituals, festivities). Obviously, it is not only various festivities and rites that carry cultural information, but any kind of human contact and communication. Actually, all human activities are manifestations of mind work, and as such, mental models.

Arts

In the analysis of human activities, a special place must be spared for the mainstream of intellectual work, a peculiar form of self-expression, namely, art. Works of art are products of the system of mental models, shaped by currently activated factors such as the emotional and physical conditions of the artist, impacts coming from his or her immediate environs, stable cultural and also extra-cultural influence. Art can only be subject to scientific observation if it is observed in close historical relation with other social fields as a function of existence of a society.¹⁶³ In Vygotsky's view, analyses must involve synchronic and diachronic aspects, as the close historical context, the situation in

¹⁶¹ Shils (1987 : 31-32)

¹⁶² Schmidt (1965)

¹⁶³ Vigotskij (1968 : 29)

which artistic creation takes place, can only be observed with attention paid to circumstances that led to the given situative conditions.

With the development and customization of cultures, self-expression goes through a process of renewal and reformation, and ascends to a level which fits better into the current cross-cultural context. “Each culture has its own new possibilities of self-expression which arise, ripen, decay and die to never return. There is not one sculpture, one painting, one mathematics, one physics, but many, each in its deepest essence different from the others, each limited in duration and self-contained, just as each species of plant has its peculiar blossom or fruit, its special type of growth and decline.”¹⁶⁴ The newer possibilities are brought about by the development of various areas of life, and are active as long as cultures can take advantage of them. This multiplicity of cultural products, discussed by Oswald Spengler in *The Decline of the West*, explains why and how cultures differentiate themselves from others, and it leads the reader to the conclusion that cultural products are of the same value on a general level, yet unique in their distinctive features.

Arts are systems of signification. T. A. Sebeok explained that humans, like any other life forms, have the capacity “to reproduce, produce and understand signs.”¹⁶⁵ Every artwork draws on experiential data, on what artists perceive and what makes peculiar impressions. “The transformation of the world of objects into the world of signs is founded on the ontological presupposition that it is possible to make replicas: the reflected image of a thing is cut off from its natural practical associations (space, context, intention, and so on), and can therefore be easily included in the modelling associations of the human consciousness.”¹⁶⁶ The productive process works, definitely, with the help of the mental models within the human mind. However, “when we represent an object or event we never represent all its features but only ever represent it partially, precisely in relation to our interest at the moment of representation in the phenomenon.”¹⁶⁷ On the other hand, we can illustrate reality only perspectively as we are limited,¹⁶⁸ but in all cases artistic representation is a technique of providing information. Actually, products of

¹⁶⁴ Spengler (1997 : 100)

¹⁶⁵ Sebeok (1994a : 3)

¹⁶⁶ Lotman (2001b : 54)

¹⁶⁷ Kress (2001 : 74)

¹⁶⁸ Hall (2008 : 64)

artistic activity are intended to replace experience in a form that makes impressions in the observer and provides new information. The effect of ‘newness’ is key to successful and productive reception; information retrieval and treatment is guided by mental models, and data storage is solved in a schematic-thematic network.

Artistic styles (arts) are communicative systems¹⁶⁹ by which individuals or groups express themselves. They are secondary modelling systems, like the logical, behavioural, religious and ideological ones.¹⁷⁰ Hans-Georg Gadamer argued that the expressions (phrases, idioms, proverbs) of a community are the heritage of community life.¹⁷¹ So are artworks, as they are shaped by the same factors, under similar conditions. Every form of art is socially, ideologically and aesthetically determined,¹⁷² although symbols are oriented abstractions¹⁷³ of individuals or communities, they are produced similarly worldwide due to the similarities of human conceptualisation. The meaning and value of images, symbols and archetypes is culture-specific, and the cultural styles are shaped by the varied actualisations.¹⁷⁴ Therefore, one may conclude that artworks can be culture-specific, which idea is central to the present research, and each communicative activity draws on the values and norms of a community.

Most artistic products are complex signs in the sense that they involve several symbols employed within the cultural context and they also consist of a number of relations to several different sources. In linguistic terms, within complex signs, the constituents act as roots and affixes,¹⁷⁵ and their roles are determined by the context they are used in. For instance, the universal ‘stop sign’ is a complex sign, in which the colour red is an affix.¹⁷⁶ The context involves various relations to system elements, and these associative relations are most often culture-specific such as in the example of the word ‘bee’: in the Eurocentric view bee is connected with honey, whereas in some Australian tribes’ view bee is in connection with sand.¹⁷⁷ The complexity of signs is, then, a

¹⁶⁹ Voigt (2002 : 71-76)

¹⁷⁰ Voigt (1981 : 274)

¹⁷¹ Gadamer (1976 : 72)

¹⁷² Bodrogi (1981 : 37)

¹⁷³ Iser (2004 : 102)

¹⁷⁴ Eliade (1997 : 222)

¹⁷⁵ Lekomceva (1972 : 317-319)

¹⁷⁶ In the case of complex signs, the word ‘affixation’ should be used because, due to their being multi-dimensional, signs can hardly be identified as pre- in- or suffixes. The neutral form

¹⁷⁷ Lekomceva (1972 : 325)

universal feature, and each sign must be carefully observed in order to get their contextual meaning.

Similar universal feature is, for example, style, which is the unity of similar elements as norms in a given context that establishes artistic regions, stylistic provinces.¹⁷⁸ Subsequently, cultural and sub-cultural boundaries may be outlined by careful and comprehensive analysis, and if done, the results may be employed as basis within several fields of research. To return to our train of thought, a crucial point is there to be discussed: the aesthetics of a people, the aesthetic taste derives from the nature of man. It exists as a possibility, and it is man's environment that brings it to life, the environmental conditions shape it.¹⁷⁹ Naturally, there are universal messages and concepts such as the sound of the cock, for example, but the relation between the form and the content is culture-specific because the measures are changeable things and they are shaped by era, culture, space and time.¹⁸⁰

Another exciting question is what the significance of art within a culture is, as with the answer the tendency of culturalisation may be identified as functional or aesthetic. If art is more valuable in a culture than everyday needs, then the process can be called aesthetic culturalisation, and if not, then functional culturalisation.¹⁸¹ The choice is controlled by the difference in conceptualisation, which may present extremes when distant cultures are compared. Such extraordinary case is that of the Bororo Indians in South America, who cannot list all the characteristics all the parrots have, but can count up to 38 by using only the two numbers "one" and "two".¹⁸² The idea that the world is divided into banned and non-banned things is another universal,¹⁸³ yet the restrictions connected to this division are different in various cultures. The extent to which art is significant in a culture is determined by contextual factors, and to diagnose which form of culturalisation took place, all the characteristics of artistic activity should be observed. It is also important to define whether fundamental, deducted or accidental characteristics¹⁸⁴ are identified during the analysis, because

¹⁷⁸ Bodrogi (1981 : 44)

¹⁷⁹ Plehanov (1962 : 13)

¹⁸⁰ Eco (1976 : 202, 271-273)

¹⁸¹ Boas (1975 : 86-130)

¹⁸² Hoijer (1954 : 8)

¹⁸³ Douglas (1966 : 7-10)

¹⁸⁴ Vojsvillo (1978 : 241)

the amount and sphere of action of these particularities is essential to the location of art within the cultural framework and of culture itself.

„The whole sphere of art – of artistic impulse and performance (...) – is clearly one significant part of human culture; and within this, literature is one broad domain.”¹⁸⁵ The significance of literature and all forms of verbal art in the construct of culture is inevitable, due to the fact that they are the most direct expressions of mental representations, ideological and spiritual conceptions. Verbal products are also regarded as being of great importance to culture because it is verbal communication that plays the biggest role in self-identification and intercultural connections. Literature and other forms of art are, in general, communicative events based on indirect connections to mental representations, and they are secondary modelling systems. Literature is most often based on natural language, the system of oral cultural heritage, and texts cannot escape drawing on fossilized linguistic structures such as proverbs and idioms, which are the crystallized forms of collective views that cannot be examined in isolation.¹⁸⁶ By collective views we mean norms and values, customs and rules, and the morals developed by the producing culture.¹⁸⁷ The verbal products also reflect a people’s attitude about the world, about other peoples, and are naturally based upon certain presuppositions and distinctions made in the distant past. Imola Küllös collected and analysed a number of mockeries, observing their nature and structural particularities, and pointed out that mockeries are based on the duality of *we* and *they*.¹⁸⁸ More generally speaking, every artistic product that is built up from language elements carries traits and conventions of the producing people, accordingly, the importance of these works is very high to the exploration of the cultural background.

Marcel Danesi pointed out that “[t]here is no culture without some form of visual signification. All cultures have the equivalent of what we call diagrams, maps, drawings, paintings, sculptures, and so on.”¹⁸⁹ As it is a universal characteristic, no matter what type of visualisation artists may choose to express a bunch of thoughts, the artworks may be examined not only as products of artistic activity, but also as the documentation of

¹⁸⁵ Finnegan (1977 : 89)

¹⁸⁶ Kuusi (1985 : 7-8)

¹⁸⁷ Permjakov (1981 : 39-109)

¹⁸⁸ Küllös (2004 : 168-258)

¹⁸⁹ Danesi (2004 : 92)

customs, proverbial expressions, and concepts.¹⁹⁰ Obviously, any cultural product can only be interpreted with the help of language, but language is also an integral part of production. Hjelmslev argued that different languages reflect differences in conceptualisation;¹⁹¹ accordingly, the interpretation of perceptual input is also governed by linguistic orientation. He provided examples of how conceptual differences manifest in Welsh and English: green is gwyrd or glas, blue is glas, grey is glas or llwyd, brown is llwyd. Both languages have the same colours, but there are shifts in the range of perception. Marcel Danesi explained this phenomenon as follows:

“Although people with different languages may see the same *rainbow* in the same way, the number and range of the rainbow’s hues they can name will depend on how many color terms have been coded by their language.”¹⁹²

He added that the problem of colour conceptualisation is not solved by learning new semantic items, but by conceptual reorganisation, the reorganisation of the already existing knowledge in new, culturally appropriate ways.¹⁹³ Colours are crucial in visual arts because they convey “mood, feelings, atmosphere. This is why we speak of ‘warm’, ‘soft’, ‘cold’, ‘harsh’ colors. Connotatively, color often has culture-specific symbolic value. In other words, (...) the connotations of concepts are constrained by culture.”¹⁹⁴ Thus colours present a double problem to the observer: 1) the spectrum of colours may not only be different in various cultures, but there may be colour systems that lack certain colours and hues that other systems have;¹⁹⁵ 2) the culture-specific connotations of colours are even more difficult to analyse.

In the *Elements of Semiology*,¹⁹⁶ Roland Barthes discussed several aspects of the use of signs, and highlighted that the Saussurean differentiation in language use may be applied to sign analysis, but as systems are complex, the redistributed and more formal division of Hjelmslev might be more useful. He provided examples of cultural products from various areas of life such as clothing, food, films, writings, etc., and explained that connotative meanings are related to the field of language used to talk about the given

¹⁹⁰ Rooth (1992 : 9-11)

¹⁹¹ Hjelmslev (1975 : 198)

¹⁹² Danesi (2000a : 21)

¹⁹³ Danesi (2000a : 39)

¹⁹⁴ Danesi (2000b : 206)

¹⁹⁵ As a good example of the phenomenon in question is the colour system of the Navaho Indians that is said not to make a distinction between blue and green, but has two types of black. (Hoijer 1954 : 96)

¹⁹⁶ Barthes (1968)

topic. The langue-parole distinction comes up when cultural products are described within the related context and are mentioned in general, but as soon as individual items are in focus, it is parole and not language any more. The triple division offered by Hjelmslev, applied to the analysis of artworks, can make a distinction between the theory of art (schema), the system of artworks (norm), and the possible variations – both individual and community (usage). Accordingly, each particular creation can and should, then, be examined as one single entity possessing unique and normalised characteristics, as a piece of work that belongs to an artistic trend, and, from the third point of view, as an instance of creative activity that may be classified as a member of some sort of theoretical category. From this type of division it is obvious that individual works of art may be compared to other, but at the moment that the above problematic issues are touched upon and the connotative aspect is involved, the appraisal of artistic activity and the evaluation of the product may turn out to be invalid. The value of works and the labour invested in them depend greatly upon their setting within the cultural and intercultural network.¹⁹⁷

All in all, arts are so complex sign systems that require analytical approaches to be comprehensive, contrastive and evaluative at the same time, with much attention paid to every aspect of their presence.

Housing, clothing, eating habits

Other fields of human activity are also to be considered to be signifying systems, as the use of various signs and symbols is not limited to arts, but they are present in everyday life. Practically speaking, the activities of a community may be classified as two types: A) those that are considered artistic within a culture's domain; and B) those that are not. It is always a culture's competency to define the distinctive features by which classification can be developed, because the whole process is driven by principles that are strictly intra-cultural. Subsequently, the existence of the phenomenon people call 'art' is universal, but the domain of the notion itself is always culture-specifically allocated. However, all the activities which fall beyond the scope of what a culture

¹⁹⁷ Some cultural systems or sub-systems are limited by their nature; consequently, individualism is poor, ensuring that the analytical data are rather valid, compared to the norms and values of the system. Arts are not this kind of complex systems, since they give way to individual ambitions.

considers artistic belongs to the other sphere of human operations, and as such, make up another building block of culture.

The conditions that shape and limit human lifestyle are decisive in the way a people establish their whole environment, found their dwelling-place, decorate their homes, join or separate each building, isolate the community from the rest of the world, and also the way they produce and choose their clothes, honor particular occasions by special vestimentary regulations and expectations, moreover, the way they seek optimality in nutrition and create taboos on consuming food and drink during the cycle of life. The three sub-systems are so fundamental to living that they together make up one building block of a people's culture. Naturally, they should be examined separately but they take their place on similar levels of importance, and it urges the observer to take all into account when exploring peculiarities of a culture.

To start with, it is wise to recall the ideas of Mary Douglas about techniques of housing among tribal communities in Africa. She observed that the way tribes found their villages always happens according to certain rules and traditions, and the location of buildings, the distances in-between, the size of each house and garden are all strictly conditioned. Her conclusion was, however, not only that there exist some fundamental regulations on where and how edifices can or are to be built, but that the underlying directives for all types of institutionalized formatives root in the dual nature of humanity, namely, the male-female distinction.¹⁹⁸ Subsequently, the structure of settlements should be observed from the social point of view as well, otherwise essential correspondences may remain undiscovered.

The relations between and the social roles of male and female members of a community tend to determine the way of they get dressed. Items of clothing reflect social status and the related functions and, as signs, signal various aspects of life.¹⁹⁹ The bipolar relationship of men and women takes the role of an operator: in a community it often holds possession of norms and values related to the choice of garment, prescribing, or at least suggesting, what to wear for particular occasions, that is, it guides towards appropriateness in clothing.

¹⁹⁸ Douglas (1966 : 141)

¹⁹⁹ Bogatyrev (1982 : 87-105)

As the norm and value systems touch upon every segment of social life, the third fundamental sub-system cannot escape their influence either. The rules and regulations existing in a community may govern nutrition to a large extent, both in quality and in quantity. Differences among various cultures are the results of a series of decisions and agreements made by community members; however, their consensus is necessitated by conditions provided by the environment, including geographical and climatic factors, and the availability of resources within the flora and fauna. These decisions result in both physical and spiritual variability, and, as proven in human evolution, extreme conditions bring about extremities in nutrition as well, therefore, an almost inestimable variety of culinary orientation exists on Earth, and is accompanied by a lot of culture-specific assumptions and regulations.

Obviously, there are universal solutions for food and drink consumption due to the very nature and stamina of the human body; subsequently, the dietary analysis can reveal universal types of ingredients and even nutriment types, but the assumptions concerning victuals and ways of consumption are specific in most cultures, because a community's ideological and belief system creates hardly comparable connotations attached to them. "Eating events are so crucial to the establishment and maintenance of social relations and harmony that there exists virtually no culture that does not assign an area of the domestic abode to them. All cultures, moreover, have a discrete set of table rituals and manners that are inculcated into the members of the culture from birth."²⁰⁰ Thus, we can conclude that the observation of nutrition should always involve aspects of the related philosophical and spiritual views.

The analysis of this sphere of culture, of the three sub-systems, must inevitably treat interconnections among various building blocks, and its results must be evaluated in relation to other research results. In other words, to gain understanding of the cultural role and significance of dietetic customs and habits, of regulations and free-choice in clothing, and of the ways of settling down, an interdisciplinary approach must be applied that is capable of exploring in what ways these signifying systems express general and culture-specific norms and values.

²⁰⁰ Danesi (2000b : 95)

Science and technology

A most significant factor in the evolution of cultures is the development of science and technology, which together can be regarded as an umbrella term that joins internal developmental trends and methods of adoption of external technological phenomena. The sphere of technological inventions and takeovers, their adaptation to current cultural needs, their evolution and devolution throughout history, are all subjects to cultural observation.

During the history of Man a technical breakthrough seem to have been present at each milestone – no wonder that several historical periods were named after these, such as Stone Age, Bronze Age, etc. Most technological developments are facilitated by the development of Reason, the establishment of norm and value systems on the basis of experiential data and mental representations. Every culture develops to the extent by which they meet their needs, and the speed of development also follows that of needs, if they develop in isolation, but as soon as they get in touch with other cultures, due to their nature, they tend to employ borrowings that can be both advantageous and disadvantageous. Positive tendency is achieved in the case of borrowings that move a culture towards a healthy level of development, and, obviously, every other type of loans diverts it from the familiar line of conduct. It is culture-dependent whether the alteration turns out to have positive or negative effects, but the recognition of consequences always comes at a time when the adopted phenomena are involved in everyday practices, by a significant part of the community. After recognizing the effects, a culture begins to react hurriedly and produces counter-effects if the borrowing operates negatively, and this action results in leaps, a quickened and unplanned form of development that may violently distort cultural norms and values, in a word, self-perception. On the other hand, following the adoption of borrowings with positive effects, cultures might as well experience a developmental leap, but in this case the acceleration of processes is fruitful for the future of the community and consequences greatly contribute to the healthy reception and internalization of novelties.

As for the question of human knowledge, it does not seem to be confusing to take the development of science together with the development of technology, because, fundamentally, they are interrelated, especially when we think of therapeutics and logic.

The connection between the two spheres roots in the activity of the mind, the operations of mental models, which are always shaped with the help of logic.

Humans analyse experiential data internally, that is, individually, and it is logic, a quasi-universal phenomenon, that functions as the key to this kind of processing. As soon as they understand the cause-and-result relationships of impulses, they are ready to decide whether the retrieved information is useful or not. This empirical model of data collection used to be one of the most significant tools of our predecessors, and is still operative today. Although, in most communities, the processes of gaining knowledge are controlled from early childhood, the empirical method cannot be ruled out, as it is instinctive.

Naturally, then, humans retrieve and treat information about the world with the help of logical analysis. This kind of logic is different among various cultures as it is shaped by mental models, because there is mutual dependency between the development of mental models and logical assumptions, but, as suggested above, there are universal characteristics of creating mental models; consequently, there are universal logical assumptions as well.

A culture's attitudes about scientific and technological development are instinctive and often culture-dependent, yet they are not always culture-specific. As a matter of fact, science and technology are interconnected in the form of theory and practice: the shared mental models of a community bring about a way of thinking about its own development, about its actual state including intellectual, spiritual and physical assets, and urge the community to change if necessary. Actually, there is no stagnant state because what seems stable and unchanging on the surface covers incessant action within, and that constant maintains the development of cultures.

The level of technological development of a culture is, thus, a collective of various phenomena that contributes to the balance among different spheres of culture. As it is crucial to the exploration and identification of cultural characteristics, both scientific and technological achievements and operations must be studied in parallel with other spheres, and can be accurately and effectively parsed by digging down to the depths of the community's mentality – obviously, with the help of language.

1.1.3. What, then, is culture?

Cultural theorist, Stuart Hall, stated that culture deals with the creation and transmission of meanings.²⁰¹ Undoubtedly, it is not only a semantic approach to culture, but, apparently, a semiotic one, touching upon meaning relations, the pragmatic aspect of culture. Umberto Eco emphasized that there is “a system of attraction and repulsion” among system constituents, and the possibilities of interrelation, the rules, make up the code.²⁰² By ‘code’, he understood the intra-systemic set of rules which shape and govern system activity, the allocation of constituents and also prescribes their functions. Eco explained that “the codes themselves gather together various systems, some strong and stable (like the phonological one, which lasts unchanged for centuries), others weak and transient (such as a lot of semantic fields and axes).”²⁰³ In a broader sense, cultural sub-systems may be strong and stable such as family relations, or weak and transient such as social roles. These systems include the knowledge of the world, communication, social relations, and the meaning of the elements of the relational praxis.²⁰⁴

Culture as a complex system expresses in what ways communities perceive existence and interpret their experience. “As an illustration of how culture mediates worldview, consider the concept of health. What is considered to be healthy in one culture may not coincide with views of health in another. Health cannot be defined ahistorically, aculturally, or in purely absolute terms. (...) All organisms have a species-specific bodily warning system that alerts them to dangerous changes in bodily states. But in the human species such states are also representable and thus interpretable in culture-specific ways.”²⁰⁵ Accordingly, culture is perceived as a specialising form of mediation.²⁰⁶ Regardless of the amount of external impact, the two types of code are culture-specific hence typical of the employing system, providing special solutions for the transmission of meanings.

²⁰¹ Hall (1997 : 6)

²⁰² Eco (1976a : 124)

²⁰³ Eco (1976a : 125-126)

²⁰⁴ Józsa (1978 : 53-55)

²⁰⁵ Danesi (2000b : 71)

²⁰⁶ Santaella (2007 : 99)

The present study endeavours to explore what spheres of culture may be identified as its building blocks, and has summed up some of the major assumptions about the nature of constituents and also of culture itself. However, a question emerges out of the vortex of assumptions and conclusions, namely, what sort of all-inclusive definition can be attached to the phenomenon called culture. The answer is, plausible: the interests of the present study demand a conceptualisation that is apt for representing all necessary aspects of the subject, a semiotic definition.

As discussed above, there are several spheres that may, and often should, be studied separately, yet they are interdependent in the sense that a large number of fundamental factors establish an intricate web of relations among the various spheres. Subsequently, in cultural analysis, research results gained in separate fields must be compared and contrasted in order to provide feedback on and to validate findings. The observation must take into account that there are culture-specific characteristics that make it incredibly difficult to compare similar characteristics within other cultures' frameworks because each cultural phenomenon has a given value in the system it belongs to and parallels drawn between phenomena taking similar positions in different cultures may be misleading. The multi-layered overlaps between various spheres of culture further complicate relations and strengthen apparent incomparability. Accordingly, cultural analysis must, in all cases, involve the examination of syntactic, semantic and pragmatic aspects of each of the studied phenomena; that is, the approach to and a definition of culture must be semiotic in nature.

According to the *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Semiotics, Media, and Communication*, "[i]n strictly semiotic terms, culture is defined as a synthetic system of different types of signs that cohere into codes which individuals and groups can utilize to construct texts in order to make meanings or exchange messages in various contexts."²⁰⁷ Each sign system has its specific role within the framework of culture and their interrelatedness establishes a systematic order among them. There is overall balance within the framework, a stability of culture, more precisely, the stable development of culture, and that balance maintains the order of the distinctive features of culture. The sub-systems have their specific roles in the development of the culture as a whole and the

²⁰⁷ Danesi (2000b : 70)

overall balance is established and maintained by the constant and necessary imbalance in the role of constituents. Imbalance is the product of the system's need for development and as the system cannot stagnate, otherwise it loses its capability to keep pace with its surroundings, the imbalance is constant. Once the balance in the system is broken the whole system loses its stability that can result in system failure, the collapse of culture. Balance is, however, maintained automatically because the nature of sub-systems ensures perpetual renewal and reorganisation on sub-levels in order to keep their position and value within the system. The different extents of role significance, in fact, represent attitudinal imbalance which is the result of different attitudes. The imbalance generates the hierarchy of sub-systems, and initiates changes to meet the new needs.

Apart from the question of balance, culture is a phenomenon to be studied from various points of view, each converging to end up as a semiotic approach. Danesi concludes that "culture is seen by semioticians generally as a communal system of meanings that provides the means for human beings to translate their instincts, urges, needs, and other propensities into representational and communicative structures. The primary goal of semiotic analysis is to document and investigate these structures."²⁰⁸ The present study strongly agrees with this belief in the sense that the examination of cultures must reach the point of recognition and understanding these fundamental structures.

²⁰⁸ Danesi-Perron (1999 : 14)

CHAPTER 2: CULTURAL IDENTITY FILTERS

“‘You told us with your own mouth that there was only one god. Now you talk about his son. He must have a wife, then.’ The crowd agreed.

‘I did not say He had a wife,’ said the interpreter, somewhat lamely.

‘You buttocks said he had a son,’ said the joker. ‘So he must have a wife and all of them must have buttocks.’

The missionary ignored him and went on to talk about the holy Trinity. At the end of it Okonkwo was convinced that the man was mad.”²⁰⁹

The above excerpt presents a crucial point of cultural encounter, revealing the deepest layers of human thinking, explaining why different peoples often misunderstand one another and struggle to clarify their identity in order that peaceful co-existence could be achieved. Okonkwo, the medicine man of the clan, and his fellows are learning about Christianity from the mouth of a white man and his interpreter, and recognise immediately that the newcomers have something to share with them that cannot be matched to their own knowledge of the world, of how natural processes operate.

The chapter tells the reader about the arrival of the missionaries in the village of Umuofia, and what ways they begin to introduce the new religion, another belief system. In this case, the problem of cultural encounter roots in the differences in conceptualisation, the interpretation of experience. The clash of beliefs reflects the clash of norms and values, of what is perceived as logical and univocal. For Okonkwo’s tribe it is obvious that life forms can only have descendants through mating, which must involve a male and a female being; this is the way things have always been working in their environment, and it is perceived as the natural order of events. The interpretation of relationships among beings, both divine and human (and probably also non-human), provides the tribe with security, and it completes their views about living; subsequently, there are no questions and uncertainty concerning fundamental social relations. On the contrary, the missionary ignores the joker’s comment, most probably because at the point of getting to know each other, the Christian person does not feel confident enough to start a heated and exhaustive conversation or debate about the problem of reproductive

²⁰⁹ Achebe (1993 : 136-137)

processes and beliefs. The concept of duality emerges out of the depths of the clash, the logical division of the world into pairs of complements that together make up a unity on a higher level of existence.

Homi K. Bhabha, one of the most important initiators in contemporary post-colonial studies, presented an example of how difficult it can be to interpret differences in beliefs in *The Location of Culture*: the Hindus asked how the Bible can be a European book if it is God's gift to the Hindus, and they also questioned how the Word of God can come from the flesh-eating mouths of the English.²¹⁰ The Hindus understood that the English people are different in terms of cultural behaviour and beliefs, and found it difficult to cope with such problematic question as the concept of God and the related issues due to the mere fact that the whole network of concepts is presented in a format that does not match their system of beliefs. For non-Christians, certain concepts of the new religion are unacceptable, and this incompatibility results in keeping distance. It is common with religious takeovers to make changes in the network in order to transform it to meet fundamental needs and to make it adoptable. This transformation is possible because deep in every system of belief and cult there are a limited number of fundamental conceptions with similar functions.²¹¹

As a matter of fact, the process of transformation is actually translation, more precisely, interpretation.²¹² According to Roman Jakobson, there are three types of translation: 1) rephrasing – it is 'translation' within one language; 2) interlingual changing – what is really called translation; 3) transformation – 'translation' between semiotic systems. Interlingual translation means the transfer of the same message in different codes, an analogy in difference. What cannot be translated grammatically must be translated lexically.²¹³ Although not defined, Bart and Klaudy suggest that translation is basically semantic in nature. If so, translation works by substitution, both grammatical and lexical, and as the process is actually information transfer, can be rightly called mediation. The more language-specific the formation of the message, the more likely it can only be mediated by substitution. Formations that demand for substitutive mediating

²¹⁰ Bhabha (1995 : 116)

²¹¹ Durkheim (2003 : 16)

²¹² Bloom (1980 : 85)

²¹³ Bart-Klaudy (1986 : 16-18)

are idioms, metaphors, proverbs. Man communicates content not form, thus the semantic layer has to find a way to manifest in the other language in order to properly mediate between language- and culture-specific intentions and goals. Theoreticians of translation, A. Popovič, Otto Kade, Katharina Reiss, J. C. Catford,²¹⁴ although drawing up different approaches to the question, seem to agree that translation is basically a substitutive process, and the extent of grammatical transformation and lexico-semantic modulation depends on the message.

Mediation is communication between semantic fields, connotations, in other words, co-texts and contexts. Sign systems can be transformed into other sign systems by substitution,²¹⁵ for example, suprasegmentals may be substituted by lexical elements.²¹⁶ However, there are untranslatable elements because there are incompatible practices;²¹⁷ moreover, the linguistic images of the world are mostly untranslatable. While, for example, for an Indian time is cyclical and Man is in nature, for someone in the so-called Western world time is mainly linear and Man is above nature. An even more extreme problem of translation is the question of silence: it is completely untranslatable. Associations (i.e. connotative meanings) may shift between the negative and positive end-points according to the assumptions of the given culture.²¹⁸ Another example of untranslatable concepts is that of the hero, the belief in the individual who is different from his fellows – a concept that is almost totally alien to African life.²¹⁹

Every member of a community lives in a culture, in its daily practice, and by acquiring a language he or she acquires a so-called belief system and the related ‘mythology’ as well.²²⁰ Belief is an unconscious state that incites one to act without questioning its being true²²¹ as religious activity expresses the shared norms and values of a community. Religion, the system of beliefs and related practices, is born through the abstraction of the images of natural forces, through an abstraction carried out by

²¹⁴ Bart-Klaudy (1986)

²¹⁵ Lévi-Strauss (2001/2 : 23)

²¹⁶ Benczik (2006 : 226)

²¹⁷ Sapir (1971 : 37)

²¹⁸ Bańcerowski (2004 : 9-12)

²¹⁹ Larson (1997 : 62-65)

²²⁰ Hoppál (1978 : 69-75)

²²¹ Hajnal-Hoppál (1980 : 68)

language.²²² Consequently, religious systems are difficult to match to other systems of beliefs, due to the incompatibility brought about by differences in conceptualisation, in abstraction. Thus, the problem of Okonkwo and his tribe derives from the discrepancies in beliefs, and their objection to the new religion is the product of deep conviction.

Intercultural encounters always include a series of events that demand for the comparison of characteristics and the necessary interpretation of peculiarities for both sides. As there is no completely isolated culture, such encounters happen regularly, almost from day to day. Cultural analyses are, then, of very high importance today due to the increasing mobility of people and the rapid development of technologies. Since cultures are complex systems consisting of similarly complex sub-systems, which all can be regarded as signifying systems, for a good understanding of how cultural constructs work a semiotic approach is required.

2.1. Foundations of the theory

The theory developed in the present study is intended to be an approach of the kind. Interdisciplinary studies break through individual disciplinary boundaries and gather the most relevant and adequate techniques from various fields under one roof, commonly known as an approach.²²³ The techniques are then set free from the original hierarchical constraints and are given the way to apply their abilities to the part of investigations they are most competent in. By nature, it must be a multidimensional approach in order to match the nature of culture itself.²²⁴ In cultural analysis fundamental building blocks are to be analysed individually and in relation to one another. The approach is designed to be concerned primarily with textual analysis in the sense that

²²² Durkheim (2003 : 78)

²²³ Wolfgang Iser explains why an approach is called so by saying that it is possible to reconstruct original meaning only by digging in the past, because we do have all the necessary data, but then it is only an approximation, an approach. (Iser 2004 : 65-78)

²²⁴ Various products of culture are possess different number of dimensions: language operates in one dimension, but, as Roland Barthes stated, writings (literary texts) are multidimensional as they are webs of quotations that turn up from the thousand sources of culture (Barthes 1996 : 53), not to mention that paintings replace real space with two dimensions and may provide an illusion of the loss time (Gurevics 1974 : 9-10) and the unnatural organisation of space, or it is enough to have a look at games (Dundes 1979 : 80-81) or other activities that are also multidimensional. Gunther Kress called this phenomenon multimodality, “the idea that communication and representation always draw on a multiplicity of semiotic modes of which language may be one.” (Kress 2001 : 67-68)

“each particular work of cultural activity is regarded as a text generated by one or more systems” within “the totality of the signifying systems by means of which mankind, or a particular human group, maintains its cohesiveness (its values and identity and its interaction with the world.)” These systems are modelling systems “by which man cognizes, explains, and attempts to influence the world about him” and also “by which man processes, exchanges, and stores information about the world.”²²⁵ In the hierarchy of these systems language is referred to as the primary modelling system and others as secondary ones. Moreover, from the semiotic point of view, verbal art, for instance, is a secondary symbolic system, whereas visual art is a secondary iconic system. Culture is, then, an integrated system of systems, in other words, a superior texture of texts. As each culture is distinctive in the way it assigns meanings to phenomena,²²⁶ in the way of information retrieval and treatment, an analytical approach to culture must be able to investigate all levels of the hierarchy equally, every sub-systemic constituent separately, and the network of dependencies respectively. The complexity of analytical needs requires the approach to be multidimensional, with a capacity to be holistic or selective, exclusive or comparative, and synchronic or diachronic, according to the objectives of investigation.

The intellectual and material products and tools of culture become signs only in the communicative process, as part of human interaction,²²⁷ the context-dependent exchange of information, regulated by pragmatic rules. It is this pragmatic framework that determines the actual nature of signs, their functions within the current and general systemic context. The Peircean trichotomy of indices, icons and symbols is, thus, function-dependent, pragmatically determined, contextually orientated. The syntactic, semantic and pragmatic functions of signs are, by nature, inter- and context-dependent.

As an interdisciplinary approach, it involves various tools and aspects of semiotics, linguistics, literary criticism, cultural anthropology, psychology, sociology, stylistics and aesthetics. Naturally, several other fields of study should be involved as well depending on particular objectives, but the above list counts the most important ones.

²²⁵ Sebeok (1994b : 166)

²²⁶ Boas (1896 : 901-08)

²²⁷ Schaff (1967 : 123-133)

2.1.1. Hypothesis

Culture is a socio-economic formation, the style of which is a system made up from developed and undeveloped elements. Culturally developed elements are, for instance, statues and buildings, and those that are not developed by culture or are unfinished are, for example, natural phenomena.²²⁸ Because every cultural phenomenon is socially and historically conditioned, cultural examinations must belong to a social science that works with historical methods.²²⁹ In this sense the theory of cultural identity filters must be developed as one that is apt for historical observations within the social framework. Data collection and processing unquestionably deal with historical issues, since cultural products always carry culture-specific traits; consequently, a thorough analysis of cultural work will reveal remnants of the past,²³⁰ examples of the ways of thinking, of norms and values. Effective examples of the above statement are the proverbs and idioms of a community as they include norms and value, customs and rules, morals of the producing people.²³¹ The historical aspect is emphasized by Árpád Kovács, professor of literary studies, who concluded that a word is a meaning-condensation, the historical summation of meanings in a figure of speech which takes part in thought formation.²³²

The reinforcement of the role of language is not at all surprising in our research because the theory being developed presently is intended to be based on linguistic principles joined by a sum of aspects borrowed from related fields of research. Cultural products can only be examined and interpreted within scientific frames with the help of language, although other media are most probably involved regularly. By way of example, the observation of figures or paintings may expose historical data about climatic changes, even back to the last ice age as Leo Frobenius, famous German ethnologist and archaeologist, once pointed out.²³³ The referential aspect is least of all restricted to the sphere of language and linguistic phenomena, but is present in other particularities such as style or other formatives. As an instance, “style generally signals contextual constraints such as group membership, social distance, formality, or friendliness,

²²⁸ Voigt (2002 : 71-76)

²²⁹ Voigt (1972a : 17)

²³⁰ Strobach (1988 : 203-216)

²³¹ Permjakov (1981 : 39-109)

²³² Kovács (2004 : 49)

²³³ Frobenius (1981 : 316)

among others, or positive or negative opinions about others talked to, or talked about.”²³⁴ Van Dijk’s linguistic approach to style may as well be applied outside the realm of language and is likely to retrieve information of the same importance about other cultural substances such as buildings, clothes, group activities, etc.

At the 10th World Congress of Semiotics in La Coruña, September 2009, the British-Indian novelist and author, Salman Rushdie gave a plenary speech on literature, its significance and value at the present time. He argued that “[the] world has become fictional” because so strange things happen that people normally perceive the world as fictional, according to the theoretical approach to fiction; that is, everything is fictional and seems to have no perceivable relationship with the experienced reality. But, he reversed the argument by saying that “[the] unreal reveals the real” in his understanding and reality can be traced back within literature. His exclusive view seems adaptable to a more comprehensive form of observation, to an approach to culture. The beliefs and convictions of a people are shaped by the same fictionalising tendencies, and as a consequence, they reflect somewhat similar characteristics and incite similar reception. This view, applied to the cultural sphere in general, draws the conclusion that, in their various modes and different versions, cultural products express not only a variety of universal human needs and attitudes but also a living diversity of epochs, nationalities, landscapes, social strata, and personalities²³⁵ – all of them carrying traits of reality; consequently, the observer when looking for the truth conditions upon which the real world can be created must search for them within the products of culture. Thus the world of each product can be transformed into a possible world on the basis of a hypothetical rule system,²³⁶ and the search results validated with the help of the findings of other scientific fields can themselves validate the apparent rule system of the product’s world.

Every cultural phenomenon selects their tools of expression, and intensifies and concentrates primary experience. Cultural products create meaning, convey sense, and stress significance by rendering phenomena sensuous. Actually, they generalise by shaping and reshaping immediate impressions, by forcing them into some kind of common frame.²³⁷ The process of production involves the optimal amount and variety of resources in order that the most appropriate format is created under the surveillance of the norms of relevant fields. The exploration of the creative context, and the source culture,

²³⁴ Van Dijk (1993 : 118)

²³⁵ Lüthi (1986 : 125)

²³⁶ Csúri (1987 : 195-198)

²³⁷ Egri (1993 : 31-35)

must, then be a recursive procedure,²³⁸ starting out from the cultural phenomenon and reaching the circumstances of production.

Max Black argued that writing is a linguistic transaction that leads to the writer's unarticulated conventions, to the patterns that rule the linguistic community.²³⁹ In other words, in the case of written works, the underlying regularities are explorable through motivated examination. The procedure aims to unravel the productive process taking all possible variations into account on the basis of logical correlations. At this point abduction gets into the picture, a hypothetical inference, namely, retroduction. Peirce introduced the notion of abduction,²⁴⁰ a procedure that consists in studying facts and devising a theory to explain them.²⁴¹ It is an instinctive procedure that relies upon the subconscious connections of sensation, a hypothesizing action²⁴² – a process that leads from the fact to the theory. In a semiotic analysis of the essence of culture, scholars often have to work with hypotheses and assumptions.²⁴³ Thomas A. Sebeok explained that the best hypothesis is the simplest and most natural one, which is the easiest and the cheapest to supervise, and which subserves the understanding of the widest scope of facts.²⁴⁴

Every theory is hypothetic in nature, abstract and contains general conditions. The general principle of founding a theory: uncontradictoriness, the completeness of studied relationships, the empirical validability of findings, the relative simplicity and applicability of theory and practice, etc.²⁴⁵ – these criteria must be in focus in the development of a semiotic approach to culture.

²³⁸ Kovács (2004 : 16)

²³⁹ Black (1998 : 21)

²⁴⁰ “A mass of facts is before us. We go through them. We examine them. We find them a confused snarl, an impenetrable jungle. We are unable to hold them in our minds. We endeavor to set them down upon paper; but they seem so multiplex intricate that we can neither satisfy ourselves that what we have set down represents the facts, nor can we get any clear idea of what it is that we have set down. But suddenly, while we are poring over our digest of the facts and are endeavoring to set them into order, it occurs to us that if we were to assume something to be true that we do not know to be true, these facts would arrange themselves luminously. That is abduction.” (Turrissi 1997 : 282)

²⁴¹ Hartshorne-Weiss (1935 : 145)

²⁴² According to Eco, hypothesis is a perceptual judgement, the conclusion drawn according to perceived data. (Eco 1999 : 81-82) In other words, it is an immediate, and partly unconscious, interpretation of impressions.

²⁴³ Lotman (1973 : 267-268)

²⁴⁴ Sebeok – Umiker-Sebeok (1990 : 29-43)

²⁴⁵ Kanyó (1981 : 315)

For a holistic analysis of culture, parallelism, the collective use of viewpoints²⁴⁶ is indispensable because of the complexity of the system. The intricate web of interconnections among constituents and their constant interaction force the observer to interlace aspects on more levels: the nodes of the web must be identified and analysed and their relationships with other nodes, the cohesive force must also be measured so that the findings together will make up an image of culture. As culture itself is a human product, it mirrors human unpredictability, which roots in the collective operation of the intellect, the spirit and the body; subsequently, the approach must be ready to view these elements as an integrated substance, and the cultural construct as the unity of efforts made for the sake of self-identification and autopoiesis.

The zero hypothesis of the present paper says that it is possible to explore characteristics of the source culture beyond cultural products with the help of an approach of the semiotic kind. The above information suggest that such an approach must have similar characteristics to those of the subject of observation, that is, culture: it must be complex, comprehensive, flexible, and based on natural (or innate) logic.

2.1.2. Weaving of aspects

A semiotic approach to culture must be designed to be able to explore, identify and interpret data retrieved in the analytical processes. For such a complex approximation a holistic view is to be applied, with great attention to every detail in order to avoid misinterpretation. Moreover, the observer must struggle to remain as objective as possible by putting personal interests and prejudice aside so as not to falsify findings. Nevertheless, Max Weber stated that “[t]here is no absolutely ‘objective’ scientific analysis of culture” because the social phenomena “are selected, analysed and organized for expository purposes. The reasons for this lie in the character of the cognitive goal of all research in social science which seeks to transcend the purely formal treatment of the legal or conventional norms regulating social life.”²⁴⁷ According to this view, any semiotic approach to culture and its manifestations may as well turn out to be subjective,

²⁴⁶ Uszpenskij (1984 : 269)

²⁴⁷ Weber (1949 : 72)

because the cognitive goals orientate and influence the flow of analytical thought. However, it seems possible to reduce subjectivity by involving as many aspects in the interpretative process as possible.²⁴⁸ The fight against subjectivity can employ two major types of tools: A) a comparative approach is efficient in the sense that it provides data about the same target but from different sources; B) co-operation of more observers may reduce subjectivity through discussion and interpersonal comparison.

It is also important that the observation focus on contextual relations again in order not falsify data, and to achieve accuracy and appropriacy in analysis one should regard samples as culture-specific up to the point of finding parallels in other cultures. Yuri Stepanov gave the example of body positions as, from the ethnosemiotic point of view, specific manifestations of cultural content.²⁴⁹ The contents of body positions can be analysed as culture-related human contents and their analysis is a semiotic one if one regards these contents as signs, and consider their relations to the elements of other cultural sign systems or sub-systems of different nature.

Another form of cultural content is obtainable in the way group members develop and keep themselves to the rules of social distance. There are developmental limens called various types of distances to be observed when analyzing societies such as physical (same home – same street, same settlement – elsewhere), family (family member – household member – friend – acquaintance), age (newborn – child – adolescent – adult – elderly), hierarchical (shepherd – man of cattle – smith – vicar and doctor), and role (grown-up – maid/servant – married/widow(er) – parents/grandparents – unmarried people) distance.²⁵⁰ Social distances are, in most cases, culturally determined and the meaning and ‘punishment’ of rule-breaking has also different consequences in various cultures. Similar significance is attached to social institutions, their roles, their forms and functions – and, obviously, it is the same case with other constituents of a community’s culture. It is not the nature of these formations that has to be analysed but the way a community employs them,²⁵¹ in other words, not theory but practice – the pragmatic aspect that provides explanation to the syntactic and semantic aspects.

²⁴⁸ Iser (2004 : 185)

²⁴⁹ Sztyepanov (1976 : 44-45)

²⁵⁰ Imhof (1985 : 46)

²⁵¹ Benedict (2005 : 25)

Fundamentally, it is the way of thinking that has to be explored in every analysis as the rules of thought-formation among community members serve as the basis for every kind of functional development, for the maintenance of the cultural framework. According to Michel Foucault, thought-analysis is basically asking the question '*What did one say by saying that?*'²⁵² which, in a broader sense, should be reformulated as follows: '*What does one think by thinking that?*' The generalized question tries to unravel the underlying thought-patterns with the help of which every sort of cultural activity is expressed. Foucault explained that the analysis of thought is always allegorical in relation to the discourse that it employs. In the analysis, one must grasp the statement in the exact specificity of its occurrence, determine its conditions of existence, fix at least its limits, establish its correlations with other statements that may be connected to it, and show what other forms of statement it excludes.²⁵³ From the point of view of the present study, Foucault's idea is to be extended in order to cover other formations beside the linguistic ones, and it also needs a little reformulation as well: in the analysis, one must grasp the given elements of culture in the exact specificity of its occurrence, determine its conditions of existence, fix at least its limits, establish its correlations with other elements that may be connected to it. The exact occurrence is significant because the context reveals the pragmatic aspect, and it can also highlight existential conditions because the current conditions are always shaped by previously active factors. The limits of an element must be fixed; otherwise the field of meaning it conveys cannot be mapped, thus leading to misinterpretation. Once the above conditions are fulfilled, the correlations with other connected elements can be established, and, finally, the observed sample can be placed within the network of elements, the relevant sub-system and the complex system of culture.

The location and interpretation of elements require further attitudinal clarification, namely, that every form of stereotypisation must be avoided. Dell Hymes noted about stereotypes that communication is almost impossible without them, but on the other hand, they impoverish and schematize language.²⁵⁴ Considering every communicative tool a language, the statement can be interpreted as a neutral item of human communication,

²⁵² Foucault (2001 : 39)

²⁵³ Foucault (2001 : 30-31)

²⁵⁴ Hymes (1975 : 135)

regardless of what type of code is employed. Stereotypes must be expelled from approaches to social matter because they are fixated forms of subjects which facilitate social relations. In extreme cases, these relations set up a discursive form of racial and cultural opposition²⁵⁵ such as in the case of the Navaho Indians that brought about negative discrimination, prejudice concerning the whole nation.²⁵⁶ For a valid interpretation of findings, then, the observer should ignore stereotypical attitudes, and attitudes toward stereotypes.

Comparativity and contrastivity are also significant in cultural analyses because similarities and differences must be identified in order to map correspondences among various elements as clearly as possible. Comparative analyses do not limit themselves to the identification of similarities and differences, but penetrates this surface to find out the measure of differences in each case.²⁵⁷ For instance, the interpretation of the 'sacred' and the 'profane' in certain cultural contexts manifests in the way mythical reality is part of a living history,²⁵⁸ whereas in others it is regarded as a part of cultural heritage. Meletinsky explained that African writers recall mythology because it is still alive, but it is not the same as the language of the 20th century mythologism, as the latter combines several mythologies.²⁵⁹ Subsequently, the analysis of cultural phenomena must, in general, try to explore to what extent surface similarities differ in their underlying constituents. Theoretically, there are two aspects of the question, namely, that analytical samples must be comparable, and the tools of the approach itself must be capable of comparing samples; that is, each sample should be of the kind whose characteristics can easily be identified in relation to others, and analytical tools must have options for comparison, a set of measurement standards and evaluative factors.

It seems obvious that comparison raises further questions about the identification of cultures and cultural cycles. As there is no complete isolation, every observable culture must be treated with care:

²⁵⁵ Bhabha (1995 : 78)

²⁵⁶ It is a true story about how the corruption of one of the former chiefs gave way to stereotypisation: anyone can become rich in the USA, even an Indian, and Indian leaders are confirmed as corrupt and despotic. (Bozi-Mester 1998 : 114)

²⁵⁷ Đurišin (1977 : 147-150)

²⁵⁸ Bharucha (1993 : 17)

²⁵⁹ Meletyinszkij (1985 : 474)

A) they unavoidably belong to a particular cultural cycle, subsequently, they share a range of experience, a certain amount of knowledge, and, occasionally, a number of norms, values and the related scripts;

B) they are surrounded by other, non-related cultures and their – either forced, intended or accidental – contact results in partial cultural overlaps as (cultural) communication is always bilateral.

Cultural characteristics, therefore, can root in 1) being human on the widest scale – these can be called universals; 2) belonging to a cultural cycle – at this level, characteristics are common within the framework of the cycle, and they can be called ‘cross-cultural’; 3) being a member of one particular cultural unit – the characteristics are definitely restricted to the given culture, however, they can be further divided into two major types: 3.1) inherited characteristics that derive from past cultural experience and wisdom and 3.2) borrowed characteristics that are taken over and adjusted to the borrowers’ cultural rules.

This type of classification brings about further questions such as what to do with and how to evaluate phenomena when there are cultural overlaps, or what to do with the products of community members with abo ovo multicultural background. Jacques Derrida examined the case of linguistic cultural contact as one that often fundamentally changes culture-relatedness. The situation is that on colonies white people allow the indigenous of local languages to be taught so that they can rule the natives by using their own language. This way White Man may be able to use the native language in politics, commerce and so on; subsequently, as they speak the language, they also change it so that later on it does not belong to the natives any more.²⁶⁰ Moreover, the same happens to the language of the colonisers when it is spoken by the natives: its lexical and grammatical sets become modified and, as time goes by, it ceases to belong to the colonisers.²⁶¹ As a result, in intercultural speech modes, cultures do not remain unchanged, they mutually shape and reshape one another: borrowing is a two-way

²⁶⁰ Derrida (1997 : 58-59, 79-80)

²⁶¹ Braj B. Kachru, the Indian linguist who coined the term *World English* and also introduced the idea of three concentric circles of the language, suggested that a distinction must be made between English as a medium and English as a repertoire of cultural pluralism: form versus content/function. (Kachru 1995 : 1) This differentiation may reveal what orientation a language, and through language the employing culture, has, and it can help predict even probable future changes.

modification, a sort of alienation or estrangement, with the help of which new referential frameworks are born,²⁶² and grammatical restructuralisation entails modification in intra-cultural pragmatics, too. The mutual influence of societies, thus, affects the ways of cultural perception and production²⁶³ so much that the analysis of a multicultural community's ways may be extremely complex because either the grammar or the lexicon or both are quite unclear or abstract.²⁶⁴

Concerning linguistic mapping, an even more confusing factor in cultural studies is that there may be more languages in one place: the language of literature and the everyday language.²⁶⁵ Moreover, every language has its variables among groups of native speakers; therefore, the above distinction needs further clarification, depending on research objectives. Sub-cultures, cultures, cultural cycles and their relationships²⁶⁶ may, thus, be identified on a linguistic basis; however, such identification itself is not enough. Beside language, all the rest of cultural building blocks must be observed in order to get a clear picture of the given culture. Languages are significant because of their leading role in any form of communication, and also because they carry the utmost cultural load: in any language, past and present are interwoven, and oriented towards the future, and they together produce a notable percentage of cultural phenomena.²⁶⁷

In every culture, the modern practices of life are made a part of the framework of the old tradition, the inherited culture, and this process results in a rivalry between spiritual value guaranteed by the already practiced philosophical tradition and the conclusions of scientific knowledge. Obviously, the clash happens most peacefully when the development of the two sides does not produce significant differences. This type of rivalry is most visible on colonies where cross-cultural contexts meet. Many in the Western tradition, which has taken a leading role in scientific discourses worldwide, have tended and still tend to ignore such cross-cultural contexts, although the Eurocentric encounter with intellectual and technological revolutions is hardly anything like the drastic encounters experienced on colonies or similarly complex multicultural relations of

²⁶² Iser (2004 : 179-181)

²⁶³ Finnegan (1977 : 47-48)

²⁶⁴ Zumthor (1990 : 102)

²⁶⁵ Saussure (1967 : 240-243)

²⁶⁶ Cocchiara (1962 : 449-461)

²⁶⁷ Ortutay-Voigt (1989 : 15)

the globalizing world. The quest for certainty (of knowledge) within the Eurocentric worldview has always been supported by carefully and properly designed intellectual tools, but the gradual development of such tools and the ways of development themselves have not been prepared for extreme or unusual encounters, and the existing tools frequently failed. The occasional weaknesses of the Eurocentric system have often caused violent external actions and malfunctioning systemic activity due to the extreme incompatibility of experience and knowledge. The need for new ways of information processing, together with the ‘natural’ progress of intellect and technology, have resulted in a multiplicity of philosophical trends that aimed to provide explication to the disorders revealed by intersystemic (i.e. intercultural) encounters. The present approach is designed to be of that kind, to be apt for examining and treating such problematic questions, and, most importantly, widening horizons of expectations in order that the observer can open up to the complex world as it really is.

For such an approach the clarification of aspectual questions is indispensable, otherwise the proper interpretation of research findings can easily fail. “In an age of rampant globalization, as corporate influences and the dominance of free market forces link peoples around the world, indigenous societies find themselves torn between the localizing power of their cultures and the unifying forces of the contemporary world.”²⁶⁸ The number of intact or relatively isolated communities is gradually decreasing in parallel with the significance of their roles in the global clockwork. The rapid growth of the number of intercultural discourses work in two directions: on one hand, through frequent interactions, it helps cultural development, but on the other hand, it occasionally creates exclusion by latent ignorance of communities that lag behind in some aspects. What is more, there are two active mechanisms in cultures: one works for the adoption of novelties and the other works on maintaining the stability of culture, to keep the system’s particular face.²⁶⁹ Subsequently, the former direction that supports overall cultural development through intercultural communication is apparently in favour of adopting novelties so that cultural stability can be maintained, whereas the other direction remains relatively conservative and result in the regular refusal of anything new and unusual. The

²⁶⁸ Coates (2004 : 15)

²⁶⁹ Hoppál (1998 : 31)

seemingly free flow of information²⁷⁰ is what globalisation inevitably appreciates, regardless of what consequences may occur, although there are some cultures that might experience mainly its drawbacks. In general, cultures are introvert in the sense that they divide the world into a duality of humans, yet extroversion manifests in intercultural communication. The problem called forth by globalising tendencies roots in the fact that certain cultures are more introvert and conservative than others, keeping more to their heritage of the past, whereas others are more flexible and take over phenomena more easily. As a consequence, cultural analyses must be able to measure the flexibility of a culture by examining its perceptive and productive orientation and plasticity.

It is unquestionable that cultures change faster and in a hardly predictable fashion within 'Modernity', as modernisation quickens up development, seemingly in an unnatural way, and century-long activities that normally develop at a slow pace²⁷¹ may suffer notable injuries. Like the monster of Frankenstein, humanity is not prepared emotionally for certain developmental leaps, and the imbalance of material and intellectual development results in socio-cultural decentralisation and instability in several cases. The acceleration of evolutionary steps is, in this sense, generated by the increased number of communicative events among various cultures that cause imbalance between the rules to maintain stability and the rules that ensure the chance of change.²⁷² These guiding principles are different among communities and their functioning sometimes gives the observer the impression that there are cultures that do not wish to develop and there are those that are incapable of doing so whereas other cultures develop rapidly.²⁷³ The observer should, then, be careful with identifying the underlying principles of a culture in order not to draw false conclusions.

A question touched upon above is of cultural overlaps, the cases when the background is fundamentally multicultural. The problem must be observed through the lens of the notion of liminality, a concept first discussed by Arnold van Gennep, French ethnographer and folklorist, who profusely studied the rites of passage, of *marge*, the marginal position that manifests in the form of integrated exclusion. The state is actually

²⁷⁰ Finnegan (1977 : 260)

²⁷¹ Sztoljar (1972 : 47-52)

²⁷² Cuisinier (1980 : 185-219)

²⁷³ Boas (1975 : 16-17)

the result of certain intra-systemic activities and the operation of the underlying rules that initiate a process of exclusion. To be more precise, van Gennep identified three stages within the rites: 1) *preliminal* – the beginning of separation when the community's norm and value systems cease to have ordinary effects; 2) *liminal* – the status of complete isolation from the community and the controlling systems; 3) *postliminal* – the stage of reunion when things return to their normal states.²⁷⁴ His follower, Victor Turner, cultural anthropologist, refined the idea of liminality by explaining that the liminal status is regarded as inferior because those in concern pass “through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state,”²⁷⁵ and due to their incompatibility with or disobedience to the community's rules system they become virtually outcast.

As a matter of fact, the question of liminality renders cultural analysis relatively difficult because the status of people in marginality is undefinable.²⁷⁶ It is even more so, if you consider that the terms “*center* and *margin* are continuously shifting”²⁷⁷ because of the shifting of aspects of observation such as in the case of women in several communities where they are under doubled oppression as they are part of a minority and are also subordinated to their husbands²⁷⁸ – in this case, being the members of a group of relatively marginal state pushes women closer to the core of their excluded community, closer to the ambit of internal rules, whereas their being women thrusts them outwards, further from that scope. In general, those who are not significantly influenced by any of the value systems due to the above reasons all live in value vacuum.²⁷⁹ Value vacuum, the loss of values, or value rejection produce intersystemic imbalance by forcing members into an incompatible position. “The relationship between margin and center is intricate and interanimating”²⁸⁰ and, as noted above, their relative mobility can result in cases when core and periphery change places. Besides the fact that at the periphery the intensity of cultural effects is much higher than in the centre due to the turnover of

²⁷⁴ Gennep (2007 : 48-55)

²⁷⁵ Turner (1997 : 94)

²⁷⁶ Douglas (1966 : 95-111)

²⁷⁷ Gikandi (1996 : 36)

²⁷⁸ Parry (1997 : 36-44)

²⁷⁹ Kapitány-Kapitány (1983 : 225-226)

²⁸⁰ Spivak (1988 : 109)

relations, a further confusing factor is the occasional multi-centeredness of the system that may result in the multiplication of poles.²⁸¹

“The problem of the cultural emerges only at the signifiatory boundaries of cultures, where meanings and values are (mis)read or signs are misappropriated...” There is a third space where the meanings and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity.²⁸² Homi K. Bhabha raises a crucial question by explaining how serious imbalance of values and how great loss of referential points hybridization may cause: where do we draw the line between languages, cultures, disciplines, or people if it is difficult even to determine psychic or territorial boundaries in some cases?²⁸³ The question is not restricted to colonies, although colonisation creates the widest gap in the evolutionary process, the deepest recess that is similar to that in Frankenstein’s monster.

The other concept introduced by colonial and post-colonial critics is hybridism that is most frequently used to refer to both the process of becoming part of and the state of belonging to more cultures at the same time.²⁸⁴ Originally, the term comes from the merging of characteristics thus producing newer types, better, worse or similar in quality,²⁸⁵ but it is to be understood as a form of independence of the fundamental rules that might produce new states, new boundaries and also produce people who cannot belong.²⁸⁶ The apparent contradiction becomes settled when you think of the two-way orientation of the cultural system, namely, that it adheres to existing habits and gives way to changes at the same time. In multicultural societies, for example, hybridisation may manifest as literacy, a phenomenon that means being converted to Christianity,²⁸⁷ thus diverting literate members away from the flock of those with traditional beliefs. Subsequently, those who can read and write are incompatible with some of the rules established by the community because they can act in a way that does not fit in the system, and, as a result, they become ‘outcasts’. Actually, the process of hybridisation creates the state of liminality which is to be perceived as either a state within the

²⁸¹ Szitár (2002 : 106-108)

²⁸² Bhabha (1997 : 206)

²⁸³ Bhabha (1995 : 59)

²⁸⁴ Hybridisation as a characteristic is most often present from birth as in the case of multicultural families, but posterior factors can also generate it.

²⁸⁵ Gamio-Vasconcelos (1926 : 85)

²⁸⁶ Said (1994 : 332)

²⁸⁷ Gikandi (1996 : 34)

framework of a single culture or a state of in-between two or more cultures – depending on the operating contextual orientations.

An approach to culture must have double orientation: A) it must pay attention to influential factors among and concerning the samples; B) it must develop an appropriate set of tools for carrying out meaningful and valuable work. As for the selection and analysis of samples, cultural contents and their relations must be mapped by listing as many characteristics as possible in order to clarify the samples' place within a culture's framework and among cross-cultural phenomena; with this end in view, super-cultural factors such as globalizing tendencies, basically multicultural situations, coral and peripheral states must also be taken into account, otherwise the evaluation of exemplary cases would be improper and pointless. Subsequently, an approach of the kind should integrate several different aspects of scientific research and combine a large number of techniques and aspects from various fields of study so as to avoid the misinterpretation of findings due to the presence and intervention of subjectivity, imprecision, stereotypisation, and inconstant measures.

2.1.3. Objectives

In *Rituals of kinship among the Nyakyusa*, anthropologist Monica Wilson wrote that the analysis that does not aim to translate (interpret) symbols (i.e. signs) used by a community may raise doubts.²⁸⁸ Normally, any approach to cultural phenomena aims to do so, however, it must be noted that interpretative explanation of findings in the analysis of cultures means to explore what something means to those it belongs to.²⁸⁹ If done, one can draw conclusions about what place the particular phenomenon takes within the cultural framework, and what type of relationship it has with elements it is in contact with. Thus, the context can be mapped.

Max Weber emphasized that presuppositions are important in the investigation of empirical data as they give meaning to the research itself. Without presuppositions our investigations would result only in a chaos of judgements about the phenomena. Weber

²⁸⁸ Wilson (1957 : 6)

²⁸⁹ Geertz (1994 : 271)

also highlighted that the knowledge of universal laws and patterns is essential for the proper understanding and explanation of the retrieved data after individual analysis is completed.²⁹⁰ That knowledge, accompanied by individual experience, provides the observer with presuppositions that must, however, be refined with the help of various scientific filters in order to reduce subjectivity to a minimum.

The evaluation of findings must always be carried out in relation to a referential framework.²⁹¹ On the observer's part, the referential framework consists of the sample material that is being examined and his or her conclusions about it, and there is some kind of presupposition implied, and frequently reflected, in anything said (and done) such as in the case of the the word (or status) 'bachelor': there are several related presuppositions such as male, adult, human being.²⁹² On the creator's part, presuppositions contribute to the productive process, shape phenomena and endow it with characteristics that establish individuality. In fact, in most cases humans communicate with presuppositions on both the sender's and the addressee's part²⁹³ and they not only help but basically make communication possible. Horányi appointed that the scheme of the evaluation of findings is consists of the following steps: decoding > concluding > generalisation > evaluation.²⁹⁴ In a successful evaluative process productive presuppositions are found and identified and with the help of those ideas the act of creation can be traced back.

Normally, the exploration of characteristics works as a series of forward-backward movements between part and whole that exposes the obscure, strengthens contextuality, and reveals meanings that never stand alone but are related to other meanings.²⁹⁵ Meanings, as in linguistics strings, depend upon the coordinated and coherent functions of linked phenomena, and individual meanings become enriched by contextual additional, thus creating contextual meaning.²⁹⁶ In semiotic terms this means that the meaning of a sign within a system is not restricted to the sign but it can be found in other signs as well, and the sign is waiting for other signs from the same context to

²⁹⁰ Weber (1949 : 78)

²⁹¹ Horányi (2006 : 96-97)

²⁹² Kiefer (1983 : 95)

²⁹³ Kiefer (1975 : 197-222)

²⁹⁴ Horányi (2006 : 96-97)

²⁹⁵ Iser (2004 : 60-63)

²⁹⁶ Black (1998 : 112, 165)

provide modifications.²⁹⁷ Accordingly, analyses must seek contextual dependencies by repeatedly widening and tightening focus on individual signs, single cultural phenomena and their surroundings.

The network of cultural activities and products is a network of discourses, and, on a deeper level, a network of ideas. In communication theory, every single act is considered to be a discourse and the sequences or networks of acts join discourses and produce higher discursive formations. In this sense, cultures and cultural communication are on the highest level in the hierarchy of communicative activities. The mere existence of cultures is itself a communicative event, and all kinds of phenomena within the cultural framework are subsidiaries that enhance meaning. As stated above, contextual meaning must be sought in order to become capable of mapping the underlying system of meanings, the culture-specific network of characteristics and relations. Signs employed by a culture often have inherent content that can be recognised out of conventional context such as the 'stop' or the 'turn' signals – these are examples of what you can call universals. These samples, however, show that there is a major difference: whereas the 'stop' signal is understandable everywhere at any time, the meaning of the 'turn to ...' signal with this extension is necessarily context-dependent, it needs additional meanings such as 'left' or 'right'.²⁹⁸ As can be seen, contextuality plays a crucial role in all forms of communication, and the intricate network of signs is to be perceived as a network of contexts. "In semiotics the term (i.e. context) is used both broadly and loosely to encompass preceding messages (anaphoric presuppositions), and probably succeeding messages (cataphoric implicatures), environmental and semantic noise, all filtered by short- and long-term memory, genetic and cultural."²⁹⁹ It is from the above train of thought that the concept of discourse seems analogous to context, but they are not at all interchangeable: discourse is built up from active or passive participation in communicative events, whereas context is a framework within which communicative activity takes place. Nevertheless, the activity and the shaping factors are mutually dependent, and any act of exploration must focus on their co-operation in order to

²⁹⁷ Derrida (1978 : 25)

²⁹⁸ Eco (1976a : 186)

²⁹⁹ Sebeok (1994a : 32)

retrieve accurate and measurable information about the system within which both of them appear.

In search for cultural phenomena, the meaning of discourse segments is crucial to identify. The study of discourses shows how its various segments may express experiential and intentional biases of the participants of communication. Teun van Dijk views discourse analysis as having a double aim: to give “a systematic theoretical and descriptive account of (a) the structures and strategies, at various levels, of written and spoken discourse, seen both as a textual object and as a form of sociocultural practice and interaction, and (b) the relationships of these properties of text and talk with the relevant structures of their cognitive, cultural, and historical contexts.”³⁰⁰ Accordingly, cultural products (discursive events) should be analysed from both the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic points of view in order to explore the relationships between the structural constituents of discourse.³⁰¹

Arnold van Gennep argued that in order to understand the mechanism of the entire social life you must start from the individual and not from the community because the latter is only an abstraction.³⁰² Cultural analysis looks for common characteristics because cultural is what is common and the individual is a variant, and may not be relevant to the essence of the given culture; therefore, an accurate approach to culture must be a quantitative way of finding attributes, which means that the examination must involve as many samples of the same source as possible so as not to end up in drawing erroneous conclusions.

The present study has, thus, set the following objectives: an approach to culture must consist of a sequence of steps that aim to map contextual characteristics, and it must be quantitative in nature to be both the least subjective and the most accurate. Such an approach must establish a logical order of analytical steps with great attention paid to the characteristics of interrelatedness among the constituents of the observed material, regardless of whether the entire culture or some of its segments are in concern.

³⁰⁰ Van Dijk (1993 : 93, 96)

³⁰¹ Uszpenszkij (1984 : 211-214)

³⁰² Van Gennep (1978 : 88)

2.2. 'Identity filters'

The theory of cultural identity filters assumes that culture can be mapped through the analysis of cultural phenomena. The basic questions are what we are looking for and how it can be found. The target of our inquiries is the cultural background that serves as basis for the existence of any cultural phenomena, each of which has its particular characteristics that make it unique. Individuality is always the result of a certain deviation from what is accepted as normal or standard, and is also the end-point of a process that is controlled by the norm and value systems of the existential context. The presence of individuality is an essence of cultures, a landmark that must be sought in cultural analyses so as to find out about how the given culture operates. Actually, the search for the individual is a contrastive procedure that is aimed at identifying distinctive features that establish the entity commonly called identity. The notion of identity is crucial for every approach to social formations because, once you get acquainted with it, the deviation from standards is revealed. Similarly to humans, cultures have characteristics that differentiate them from the others, that ensure recognisability as unique entities; that is, cultures also have identities.

“Our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as ‘one people’, with unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history. (...) Cultural identity (...) is a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of ‘being’. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in a mere ‘recovery’ of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past. (...) It is always constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth. Cultural identities are the points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are

made, within the discourses of history and culture. Not an essence but a *positioning*.”³⁰³ As a matter of fact, identity is the synthesis of incoming experiences, the information that has become stored in the mind, fit into the current understanding of the self and the world in which humans live.³⁰⁴

Identity is a complex of attributes such as social status, language use, mental models, beliefs and habits, attitudes and activities. Cultural identity is also a complex of attributes such as the above ones, together with eating habits, ways of housing and clothing, science and technology, liminality or centrality, etc. it is an integrated projection of individual entities, carrying only shared features. Man in being human is a social product.³⁰⁵ The whole of culture makes us who or what we are, and its elements may be examined but the results must always be projected back to the whole as feedback.

Cultures are basically introvert, looking inwards, and have no aims out of themselves. As cultures communicate, they influence one another in their communication, they exchange information, and by doing so they are continuously recreating themselves. Identity is, then, the expression and interpretation of the position of the individual, be it a single person or a cultural construct as a whole, within a given spatio-temporal context, and as such, is always transitory, never completed or permanent.³⁰⁶

Self-identification is an activity practised by every single human being, and also by groups of people, all across the world.³⁰⁷ The self, instead of being a unitary entity, is really a bundle of perceptions that we pull together to form the idea of a continuing self.³⁰⁸ Cultures, by their very nature as being human products, carry similar traits; that is, form the above idea and experience being unique entities. The existence of the concept provides humans with a feeling of certainty and safety, which is essential to survival. Spatial and temporal organisation establishes the basis of knowledge, and if deprived of these definitions, the sense of belonging and security gets lost.³⁰⁹ Spatial and temporal definitions are not only grammatically different in various languages but also in terms of

³⁰³ Hall (1993 : 223-226)

³⁰⁴ Cross (1991 : 198-199)

³⁰⁵ Schaff (1967 : 144)

³⁰⁶ Malinák (2008 : 80)

³⁰⁷ Said (1994 : 37)

³⁰⁸ Hume (1975 : 162)

³⁰⁹ Lévi-Strauss (1973 : 240)

conceptualisation, of the underlying conceptual system.³¹⁰ Language returns to focus because it is the mother tongue through which self-awareness and identity is acquired. The establishment of identity presupposes a dialogue, a process of self-identification and social-identification.³¹¹

The question of cultural identity reveals a problematic point, namely, that individuals never represent their culture honestly,³¹² because different members represent the culture in a different way. It is true that individuals gain identity through their own revision of cultural knowledge, yet cultural identity is formed from shared experience, and as such it becomes a filtered version of being human. Paul Ricoeur called cultural discourse and experiential discourse narratives, around which communities are organised.³¹³ From the semiotic point of view, identity is determined by the relationships created within the signifying system; subsequently, cultural identity is a bundle of relations, each of which is shaped by the expression of individual experience, and those expressions make up to a total of cultural experience. As a consequence, the approach to cultural identity must be quantitative in the sense that as many samples must be involved as possible.

Identity and difference are not absolute concepts as they involve an abstraction and need a reference point. Cultures, similarly to individuals, can be identified through a sequence of observations aimed to explore distinctive features. Their self-concept is a multi-dimensional construct that refers to the perception of the self in relation to any other selves. Cultural self or identity is a collective formation of the sense of belonging, of the perception and interpretation of social coherence. As an abstraction, it refers to the mentality of a people and its reference points are the members of the community.

According to the idea that cultural communication is the transmission of shared meanings, the modes of cultural behaviour are semantic systems. Dance, music and other forms of art, clothing, social structures and so forth are all bearers of meaning within the framework of culture.³¹⁴ Any type of cultural activity expresses the underlying conceptual system, and reveals similarities and differences among cultures. Language-

³¹⁰ Malinowski (2003 : 4)

³¹¹ Hoppál (2006 : 184-185)

³¹² Eliot (2003 : 70-71)

³¹³ Ricoeur (1992 : 113-168)

³¹⁴ Halliday-Hasan (1986 : 4)

and culture-specific concepts generally convey meanings that other languages or cultures do not pay (enough) attention, thus do not create words to express them.³¹⁵ The social function of linguistic differences is to maintain the seclusiveness of a community,³¹⁶ thus allowing the development of societies to form their unique image. Communication is fundamental in the development of communities, and in it the collective precedes the individual.³¹⁷

The quest for analysing cultural identity requires the observation of communicative events, of the ways communities share experience, because the whole of culture manifests in the communicative process: the spreading, adapting, and survival of the elements of culture are themselves communication.³¹⁸ “Communication between human beings is also the basis and process of evolving culture. In doing similar kinds of things and actions over and over again under similar circumstances, similar even in their mutability, certain patterns, moves, rhythms, habits, attitudes, experiences and knowledge emerge. Those experiences are handed over to the next generation and become the inherited basis for their further actions on nature and on themselves. There is a gradual accumulation of values which in time become almost self-evident truths governing their conception of what is right and wrong, good and bad, beautiful and ugly, courageous and cowardly, generous and mean in their internal and external relations. Over a time this becomes a way of life distinguishable from other ways of life. They develop a distinctive culture and history. Culture embodies those moral, ethical and aesthetic values, the set of spiritual eyeglasses, through which they come to view themselves and their place in the universe. Values are the basis of a people’s identity, their sense of particularity as members of the human race.”³¹⁹ In sum, communities are created through communication, and those who do not know the traditions and linguistic patterns that control a community’s discourses remain outsiders.³²⁰

Actually, any act of communication has got an aim, which is perceived as the orientation of communicative activity. The aim is generally to share information, to

³¹⁵ Danesi (1999 : 73-74)

³¹⁶ Gumperz (1975 : 163)

³¹⁷ Jaroszewski (1974 : 249)

³¹⁸ Voigt (1980 : 268)

³¹⁹ Ngugi (1997 : 289-290)

³²⁰ Kondiah (1995 : xxxi)

initiate reaction on the receiver's part. Cultural communication is not different in this sense from any other forms of keeping contact. The present study, however, requires the clarification of how communicative events are brought about within and among cultures in order to find out about the ways cultural identity is expressed.

The Shannon-Weaver model of communication shows what constituents take part in the transmission of information: the information source, the message, the transmitter, the signal, the noise source, the received signal, the receiver and the message destination.³²¹ It is a slightly extended version of what Roman Jakobson set up consisting of the sender, the context, the message, the contact, the code and the receiver.³²² In an approach to culture, the model demands further extensions so as to cover every segment of the communicative situation. The extension includes communicative functions (emotive, conative, referential, poetic, phatic and metalingual) in order to explain why and how constituents are related. A cultural phenomenon (the message), created by a community member (the addresser) who initiates communication with someone (the addressee) who is the intended receiver of the message, manifests through a certain channel /mainly physical/ to be perceived, thus establishing contact, within the framework of a given situation (the context) that permits the addressee to recognise what the message refers to, in a language (the code) that provides the signs and structural patterns necessary for constructing and deciphering the message. These constituents determine different communicative functions: the *emotive* function allows the addresser to convey emotions, attitudes, social status, etc. in the message; the *conative* function produces an effect on the addressee in order to necessitate a response; the *referential* function conveys information by linking experiences and knowledge to the message; the *poetic* function³²³ delivers meanings effectively through devices that colour the phenomenon; the *phatic* function establishes social contact between addresser and addressee; and the *metalingual* function refers to the code used. The constituent-function pairs are, then, as follows: addresser-emotive, addressee-conative, message-poetic, context-referential, contact-phatic, code-metalingual.

³²¹ Shannon-Weaver (1986 : 164)

³²² Jakobson (1969 : 216-224)

³²³ "[M]ost of human discourse is laden with connotative and metaphorical meanings, and thus highly *poetic* in function." (Danesi 2000a : 92)

However, an exemplary situation will reveal certain attributes that must also be involved in the model of communication due to the complex nature of cultural phenomena.

The situation:

Everyman goes to the city market early in the morning and catches a momentary glimpse of a young girl wearing a fiery red coat and spectacular silver accessories that together provide her with a showy appearance.

The model of communication:

The worn things together are *the message* fulfilling the *poetic function* expressed by the style of composition. The young girl is *the addresser* whose *emotive function* allows her to show her current attitudes in wearing the type of clothing. Everyman is *the addressee* who is given an impression by the view of the girl, thus fulfilling *the conative function*. *The context* consists only of spatial coordinates: the marketplace and *the referential function* of it manifests as the deviation or extraordinariness of clothing at the market. The girl and Everyman do not know each other but Everyman can see the girl so *the contact* is present because the message is received, and *the phatic function* is fulfilled by an unperceivable response on Everyman's part, most probably a momentary halt or a simple transient thought. The language or *code* of the situation is that of clothing, and *the metalingual function* of the red coat and the accessories is expressed by their being unusual.

The example is, on the one hand, insufficient in the sense that there is little information to be retrieved; yet, on the other hand, it is clear that the above model of communication must be further extended with additional factors. The addresser establishes contact with the addressee by wearing the given piece of clothing, but her intentions are unclear, and she most probably chose the coat and jewellery to fulfil her needs, not to stand out of line; therefore, the addressee identified preceedingly is not the primary addressee as it is the girl herself. Thus, in a communicative model, primary and secondary receivers should be distinguished as targeted and accidental. More significant factors are those that allow the girl to act as she does. Her behaviour is unquestionably shaped by cultural norms and values, and the flexibility of rules seems to allow community members free choice. This phenomenon requires the analysis of cultural

communication to include as much of the cultural context as possible, otherwise the quality of deviation remains unidentifiable. In the above situation, Everyman considers the appearance flashy because his knowledge of cultural norms and values forces him to recognise it as some kind of deviation, an unusual instance. The situation does not provide information about the cultural background of participants and this lack results in apparent incompleteness and in that the case cannot be fully analysed.

Figure 1.

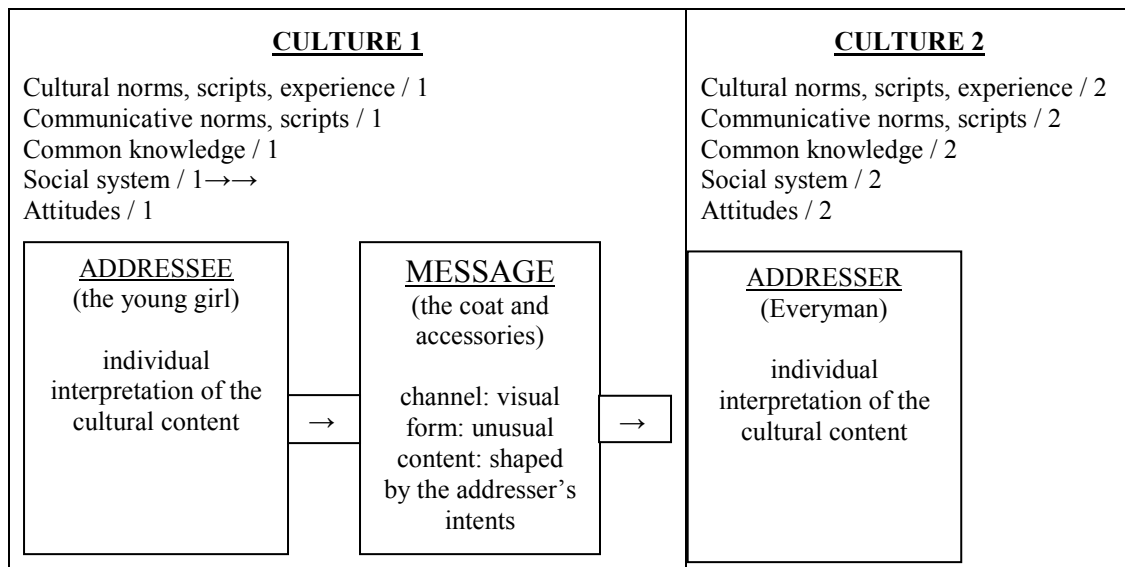


Figure 1 presents a draft of the extended model of communication based on questions raised by the exemplary situation, including cultural aspects that shape and complete the communicative event. The interpretation of roles is as follows:

There are two cultures marked: that of the addresser and that of the addressee. The situation is not clear at this point so the observer cannot know whether they share the same culture or not. Accordingly, the cultural contents may as well differ. The outer fields of each culture include the sum of intellectual qualities shared by the culture as a whole, the set from which community members get acquainted with only a limited quantity. The quality of the acquired data is determined by the individual's interpretative approach to the cultural content; this factor further narrows cultural horizons. The knowledge and interpretation of cultural content provides the individual with a personalised cultural identity, the reduced and individualised version of the identity of the

culture as a whole. In this sense, the individual acts as a filter of cultural content, a cultural identity filter.

The message is a segment of the young girl's cultural experience, the expression of currently important attitudes. The temporal aspect of selection further reduces the quantity of the content; however, the extraordinariness of form and content indicates that the message is important. The message, then, acts as another filter that decreases the amount of cultural content by sampling out the topically most significant elements. Subsequently, the message can be regarded as another cultural identity filter.

The coat and the jewellery and the fact that they are worn together form a cultural phenomenon, a product created by the particular member of a community. The young girl partly consciously and partly unconsciously interprets her culture, which process is controlled by her intellectual capabilities. The process of creation is also limited by her cognition, which fact further reduces the amount of transmittable information. In this sense, every act of human creativity is a double cultural identity filter.

Figure 2.

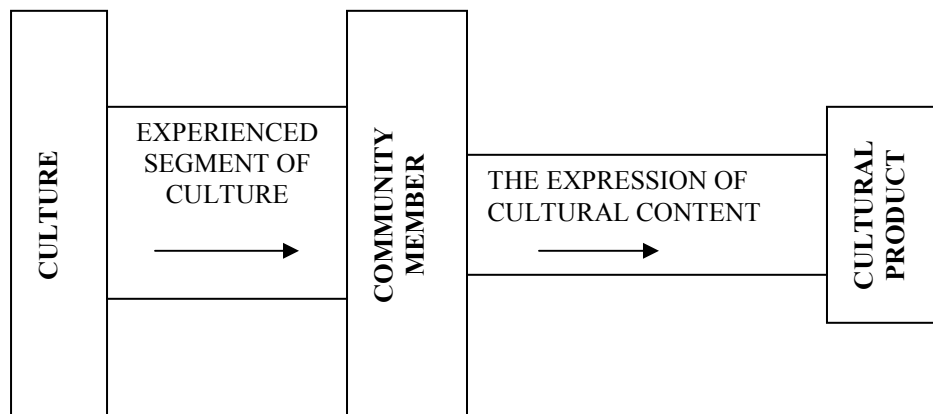


Figure 2 shows how the operation of cultural identity filters reduces transmitted cultural content. However, it is time to have a look at the nature of filtering.

In nature, the process of filtering is basically an unconsciously designed activity that produces accidental results. It is enough to think of how the leaves in a dense crown of a tree randomly let raindrops through: the selection of water molecules to leak is governed by the physics of nature. It is obviously an unintentional process, similar to the selection of items in the acquisition of cultural content: the human brain is designed by

nature so its capabilities are unintentionally designed. The point at which intentionality enters the stage is when conscious interpretative procedures get at work. The human filter's work can, thus, be considered as a mixture of unconscious and conscious acts, a sequence of contingencies and decisions that contribute to the creative process in co-operation. Any product of human creativity is, however, mostly intentionally designed, and contingency plays a relatively insignificant role in the productive process.

If you broaden the framework that embraces the creative activities and the agents, culture, as it is, and its human interpretation, the cultural identity, are then filtered through human activity; in this sense the very existence of humans bear active aspects as well. It follows from this that dynamic and static aspects of existence are equal within the process of filtering, and the same attention must be paid to them in any sort of cultural analysis.

2.2.1. Human filter

The theory of cultural identity filters is aimed at mapping the source culture beyond cultural products. The objective presupposes that there is an uninterrupted chain of clues by which the exploration in a reverse order is possible. Due to the limits of human cognition and the remarkable intricacy of the system of culture, no one possesses a total image of their own culture, and the limits on the brain further reduce the amount of information one can provide. However, most members of a community can provide a vast amount of data about their culture because the underlying rules the community lives by are most often acquired during childhood, mainly unconsciously. Moreover, conscious acquisition is largely governed by behaviour of cultural surroundings, and is enriched, in normal case, by a great deal of inputs from several sources such as family members, relatives, friends, acquaintances and by experience gained through occasional encounters with other members sharing the same cultural context.

The discussion of human cognition must start out with the observation of the process of perception. Humans perceive the world through their senses, each of which are uniquely programmed by nature, and can, therefore, be improved in a unique way, mainly conditioned by personal biological and intellectual capabilities. As a consequence,

perception is individual; yet there is a set of characteristics common in everyone. “Perceptual differences arise as cognitive figures of otherness against a ground of unperceived sameness. Differences presuppose a change against the background of static sameness. Mere sameness without difference remains unperceived, but so does mere difference without sameness, which is perceived as chaos.”³²⁴ The above thick description suggests that perception is based on the recognition of differences among various inputs. This general characteristic is, however, interpreted differently due to the diversity of encoding techniques developed by the brain. The dissimilarities in data processing result in dissimilar conceptualisation, but due to certain common characteristics of the natural development of the brain and its operative solutions, the formulation of general concepts is possible. This is indispensable for the communication of experience, because without universal reference points the transmission of information would miss its target. Cassirer explained that “[t]he formulation of a general concept presupposes *definite* properties; only if there are fixed characteristics by virtue of which things may be recognized as similar or dissimilar, coinciding or not coinciding, it is possible to collect objects which resemble each other into a class. (...) All the intellectual labor whereby the mind forms general concepts out of specific impressions is directed toward breaking the isolation of the datum, wresting it from ‘here and now’ of its actual occurrence, relating it to other things and gathering it and them into some inclusive order, into the unity of a ‘system’.”³²⁵ This systematic organisation of experiences serves as basis for any kind of communication, ensuring the existence of reference points, through the denuding of individual impressions.

Cassirer added that the formation of primary concepts is often guided by language, the most essential vehicle of communication, such as in the case of an Indian language which classifies ‘butterfly’ as ‘bird’ because of its characteristic element ‘flight’.³²⁶ The differences of conceptualisation are largely determined by ways of linguistic encoding: „[t]he more distant the relation between the languages, the greater the conceptual differences between them.”³²⁷ In addition, the structural difference

³²⁴ Nöth (1994 : 39)

³²⁵ Cassirer (1953 : 24-25)

³²⁶ Cassirer (1953 : 96)

³²⁷ Danesi (2000a : 21)

between language and reality can cause interferences: humans believe the existence of certain things because there are words for them. Not to mention, that humans only understand sub-systems of the world, and are familiar only with a definite segment of their culture.³²⁸ And even within that considerably limited experience, due to the flexibility of conceptual rules, they create an infinite number of concepts, each of which is embraced by contextually determined associations. General concepts such as *gate* are formally the same to everyone, but depending on context, it can convey a range of different meanings.³²⁹

Marcel Danesi, in *Semiotics in Language Education*, discussed conceptual structures to show why and how languages differ from one another, and stated that fossilized expressions such as sayings and proverbs often have no counterpart in other languages, or have, at best, close expressions.³³⁰ It has often been shown that, besides these fossilized expressions, there are both grammatical and lexical elements in every language having no counterpart in other languages, and this can be explained by cultural dependencies. The presence of such items in natural languages is not unique as a list of examples can be found in other signifying systems as well: those elements are present not only because of the operation of the human intellect but also because there are various influential external factors such as geographical, environmental or other conditions that force humans to create them. The culture-specificity of conceptualisation results in specific orientations in cultural acquisition, and, as in a vicious circle, any form of learning something new implies, unavoidably, learning a new way of conceptualisation.³³¹

Similarly to languages, cultures relativise “through a critical sense of incongruous contrast between the actual and the desirable, the disharmonious and the harmonious, the apparent and the real, the real and the true, the irrational and the rational, the ephemeral and the essential, the relative and the absolute.”³³² Fundamental oppositions are, therefore, not universal, but culture-specific because of dissimilarities in conceptualisation. As an example, the notion of time is conceptualised through the

³²⁸ Héjjas (1990 : 136)

³²⁹ Petőfi (1994 : 50)

³³⁰ Danesi (2000a : 42-76)

³³¹ Danesi (2000a : 70)

³³² Egri (1993 : 189)

notions of movement and space³³³ that themselves are culture-specifically defined. Boris Uspenskij, in his plenary session at the 10th World Congress of Semiotics, stated that there are two fundamental principles in the action of naming: A) the metaphoric principle refers to relations in time and is based on similarity; B) the metonymic principle refers to relations in space and is based on contiguity.³³⁴ Cultural space is defined by central points, marginal statuses, expansions, permeability and definiteness,³³⁵ and even “[t]he basic metaphor of core-periphery is in origin and etymology a spatial metaphor.”³³⁶ On the whole, metaphors and metonymies can be universal or culture-specific, depending on their extension (semantic field), elaboration (variants), and the emphasis put on them. Due to the differences in conceptualisation, some cultures metaphorise concepts, whereas other metonymise them.³³⁷ Another significant fact about the metaphorical aspect of human thinking is that “metaphors set up not only similarities but also oppositions. A cup and a shield are alike in their *form* (round and conclave), but opposite in their *function* (peace vs. war).”³³⁸ The formative principles of metaphors and metonymies, as shown above, are based on spatial and temporal relations, and there may be an oppositional relation between form and function.

The acquisition of culture, as in any other case of acquisition, is supported by memory that is, because of the universal structuralisation operation of the human brain, semantic in nature. Moreover, conceptual and sensory memories work on the same basis: first emphasis is put on the matter, then a particular schema is produced in the mind, and finally a stereotype of the matter is formed.³³⁹ Walter Kintsch wrote that remembering sentences and texts is basically semantic in nature: meanings in the form of propositions are recalled.³⁴⁰ Propositions normally consist of predicates (verbs) and arguments (nouns), and complex systems of propositions such as texts consist of sequences of

³³³ Kövecses (2005 : 48)

³³⁴ Uspenskij (2009)

³³⁵ Imhof (1985 : 68)

³³⁶ Wallerstein (1995 : 239)

³³⁷ Kövecses (2005 : 187-190)

³³⁸ Eco (1986 : 113)

³³⁹ Hoppál (2002 : 118-129)

³⁴⁰ Kintsch (1974)

propositions.³⁴¹ As any form of signifying system transformed into a linguistic format, the characteristics and relations of system constituents can be stored in the memory in the form of propositions.³⁴²

Culture is a complex system of systems, an intricate web of interconnected elements, an infinite number of relations. The human mind is incapable of grasping every aspect of the operation of such a construct; therefore it acquires a specific set of cultural knowledge. Cultures frequently set up certain restriction that may also limit acquisition, and the social environment can provide the individual with the full image of culture either. These factors make up a significant obstacle in the way community members get acquainted with their culture, and greatly contribute to the development of the individual's cultural knowledge and identity.

Each member of a community can report on various aspects of their culture, either by consciously recalling experiences or by unconsciously giving away them. Deliberate recalling may provide a more exhaustive description, but unpremeditated reports may be much more authentic because of their being less subjective due to the lack of re-evaluation of experiences. Repeated evaluative activity during the internalisation of and participation in culture create a personal interpretation of culture as a whole, and the final conclusions are complex enough to satisfy individual needs. The constant change of the cultural construct thrusts heavy load on the mind and engages the intellect enough not to ask further questions; all this ends up in a complete worldview where everything fits in an appropriate and acceptable order.

Humans as cultural identity filters are responsible for the information they provide about their background, and the appropriacy of transmission and the composition of expressions is not only consciously but also unconsciously controlled by the mere fact that, as the spoken words always return to the speaker³⁴³ so you live through the act of

³⁴¹ It must be noted that there may be cases in any natural language where the predicate or the argument is not present, only implied, but that does not make much difference in semantic memorisation. In this kind of structures, nominalisation and verbalisation serve as condensers of speech, and they can be used with various purposes.

³⁴² Anna Wierzbicka has long been studying cultural and linguistic universals, and has, with the help of theoretical and applied linguistics, pointed out, for instance, emotional universals are frequently accompanied by culture-specific associations, and they can be interpreted by propositions in natural languages. For further information, see, for example, Wierzbicka (1992, 1999), Wierzbicka – Harkins (2001).

³⁴³ Humboldt (1985 : 98)

understanding in speech, for instance,³⁴⁴ any form of cultural production returns to the agent through the senses, and by doing so, ensures that the agent is subject, object and receiver at the same time.³⁴⁵ This fact ensures objectivity in subjectivity, and the human filter is, then, a rich source of cultural information.

2.2.2. Cultural product as filter

Any cultural activity is a creative process in itself; the use of language, the making of a straw hat, the debate with fellows, and any other type of action, but also apparently static cases such as xenophobia or emotional imbalance among upper class citizens are all manifestations of cultural activity, particular expressions of attitudes and interests. Each of the above phenomena carries cultural load, even if not typical of the cultural context, yet their very existence provides an interpretation of cultural characteristics. The creative processes are, in fact, re-creative in the sense that they reshape, restructure and reinterpret cultural content.

The perceptive and productive processes of the members of a community are unquestionably limited by biological and physical factors and controlled by cultural restrictions, and the attitude about the particular cultural content to be transmitted is context-dependent, so the message of every single phenomenon is very specific. Despite all these hindrances, cultural phenomena are definitely laden with a perceivable amount of information about the culture.

Usually, it is not the primary aim of cultural production to depict culture as a whole; moreover, at most, the aim is to depict certain cultural phenomena or some significant characteristics typical of the culture. Humans' selection of tools in expressing their needs is basically deliberate but underlying cultural ways are always shape these choices. As a consequence, products of a culture must be viewed as instances that carry significant cultural load deep within.

³⁴⁴ Schaff (1967 : 202)

³⁴⁵ Kovács (2004 : 30)

2.3. Literature as filtering device

The endless horizon of cultural phenomena cannot be observed at once, not even during a series of visits, due to the amount and variety of information that fills human existence, so the focus of the observation must be narrowed to a treatable and transparent level. However, in order to achieve meaningful results, from among the building blocks of culture, it would be wise to choose a language-based one because the natural language is the closest and most honest representation of the conceptual system – language is also the metalanguage of any other cultural sub-system.

Literature, poetry, mythology, and arts in general are the semiotic systems that most comprehensively describe the world model.³⁴⁶ For the present study, it is literature that provides the most accurate information concerning culture as “[t]he spoken/written language is ‘more privileged’ than other languages of art (musical, pictorial) because mostly it is the medium of their interaction and the questions concerning most of art are drawn in this language.”³⁴⁷ In literature, the multimodality of human cognition manifests: human cognition is primarily pictorial and secondarily lexical as our memory is basically semantic in nature and we remember images of sounds, smells, and so forth.³⁴⁸ Literary texts are polyfunctional and permit reference to several extratextual contexts;³⁴⁹ thus establishing an intricate web of connections among various fields of human experience. In other words, literature ‘maintains its communicative potential also outside of its pragmatic context: in the literary text an *introjection* of contextual referents occurs, so that the reader can derive these from the text itself.’³⁵⁰ The science of literature, therefore, must work interdisciplinarily;³⁵¹ literature is the mediation of a people’s experiences, the reassurance of the past-present continuum through the symbolic art of language, and so literature is an organic part of cultural identity since it is shaped by the surrounding social characteristics. The French translation theorist, André Lefevere, wrote that ‘a literature ... can be described as a system, embedded in the environment of

³⁴⁶ Zólkiewski (1975 : 393)

³⁴⁷ Harcos (1999 : 59)

³⁴⁸ Benczik (2001 : 245-247)

³⁴⁹ Nöth (1995 : 350)

³⁵⁰ Segre (1979 : 39)

³⁵¹ Schmidt (1975 : 467)

a civilization/culture/society, (...) not primarily demarcated by a language, or an ethnic group, or a nation, but by a poetics, a collection of devices available for use by writers at a certain moment in time.”³⁵² This idea highlights the question of Goethe’s concept of Weltliteratur – the concept that has long been discussed and received almost as many definitions as many scholars there are. The present paper returns to the original concept: in Goethe’s view, Weltliteratur includes every nation on an equal basis³⁵³ as it refers to a melting pot of nations as the source of literary pieces, and in this sense, every nation is involved and equal in terms of significance.³⁵⁴ Wolfgang Iser added further explanation to the concept by discussing the notion of canonization: it is a selection of certain texts that exclude others later on. According to Iser, the literary canon is open, and new authors are always welcome.³⁵⁵ In fact, the concept of world literature must not limit itself to canonized works, and literary analyses should be carried out on the levels of the components of a piece of work, of single works, of genres, of modes, of national literatures, of the body of international literature – these together make up the body of world literature this sort of extension allows for an understanding of the concept of Weltliteratur as an open body of literary pieces, including all kinds of canonized and non-canonized works.³⁵⁶

This train of thought allows for the recognition of literature as a medium of communicating human experience in fundamentally similar forms of expression worldwide. Moreover, the concept of literature must be further extended in order to include both oral and written forms of literature. This is significant from the point of view that either one way or the other literature roots in a rich orality even in societies where literacy has long been dominant. Walter J. Ong, professor of English literature and also cultural and religious historian, argued that the term ‘literature’ is quite unable “to include oral tradition and performance without subtly but irremediably reducing these somehow to variants of writing” because oral and written forms produce different senses and thus both the perceptive and productive processes are different experiences.³⁵⁷ The

³⁵² Lefevere (1995 : 465)

³⁵³ Goethe (2000 : 11-13)

³⁵⁴ Pók (1985 : 260-263)

³⁵⁵ Iser (2004 : 27, 41-42)

³⁵⁶ Đurišin (1977 : 200)

³⁵⁷ Ong (2002 : 11-12)

above idea must, however, be completed due to the fact that it conveys a meaning of literature that focuses mainly on the reader/listener, more precisely, it deals with reception theory; yet it apparently ignores that both forms integrate aspects of subjectivity and the influential power of the underlying conceptual system. Literature is, then, to be recognised as an umbrella term referring to a collection of lingual artistic products that are shaped by individual and collective factors such as personal and general attitudes and modes of expression. The reason for this is that the shift from orality to writing meant a deep philosophical-metaphysical revolution.³⁵⁸ However, you cannot regard the archaic mythological-pictorial imagination as inferior to the abstract, conceptualising cognition, although the development of the latter was, undoubtedly, a crucial point in the intellectual evolution of humanity. In general, any form of perception and production depends largely upon human cognition; accordingly, literary creation is always shaped by current contextual influence as the author is, actually, not a creator, but has to follow the articulated modes of expression to keep the magic effect.³⁵⁹ Roland Barthes wrote that it is the pressure of history and tradition that calls into life the possible modes of an author's writing. In this sense, the author is the past of the work, the person who writes while language creates.³⁶⁰

From the semiotic point of view, oral literature is information that manifests in semiotic systems that work with audible signifiers, whereas written literature is the same with visible signifiers.³⁶¹ However, literary texts must always be perceived in the interaction of the semiotic systems that define them.³⁶² Semiotics emphasizes that the primary meaning a text carries is the pragmatic one, and that texts are defined by the interaction of syntactic, semantic and pragmatic elements.³⁶³ From this point of view, each text must be observed with great attention paid to the context. As stated above, the exploration of the creative process, of the contextual factors that influence production, is

³⁵⁸ Fehér (2008 : 25-27)

³⁵⁹ Service (1973 : 94)

³⁶⁰ Barthes (1996 : 12, 52)

³⁶¹ Gyula Ortutay wrote that written and oral literature has mutually influenced each other ever since the appearance of writing. (Ortutay 1981 : 12) Their constant interaction is still perceivable, and the cultural heritage carried in works of literature prove that, regardless of how long literacy has been dominant within a culture, the influence of orality is still strong.

³⁶² Kanyó (1981 : 317)

³⁶³ Kanyó (1971 : 508)

a recursive procedure, and is possible with the help of the constant synthesizing of findings. Regardless of the type of channel information is transmitted through, the conceptual system that shapes the form of expression is the same, the maximum extent of differences is brought about by the very nature of channels.

Literature is the most optimal mode of expression due to another factor as well, namely, that actually it is authors and poets who are the most competent in providing the most vivid image of the source culture. As the American literary critic, Meyer Howard Abrams quotes Percy Bysshe Shelley in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* “[p]oets, according to the circumstances of the age and nation in which they appeared, were called in the earlier epochs of the world legislators, or prophets: a poet essentially comprises and unites both these characters. For he not only beholds intensely the present as it is, and discovers those laws according to which present things ought to be ordered, but he beholds the future in the present, and his thoughts are the germs of the flower.”³⁶⁴ Shelley pointed out that the poets, and most probably all man of letters, are the most sensitive members of a community, as they combine the world of intellect with that of emotions, forming an image of the world that is most honest in expressing human experience. Lévi-Strauss explained that “we all admit that words are signs, but poets are the last among us who still know that words used to be values too,”³⁶⁵ thus repeating that the sensitive aspect is as important in making a full personality as the intellectual one.

Every culture maintains a specific space for the author, and attributes to that given space a specific set of functions. The language, style, authoritative modes of the poet/author, the local theory of poetry, the type of practice and the attitudes of reception all have influence on the works of poetic genius as poets do not work in vacuum.³⁶⁶ In literary speech, the semantic redistribution establishes the poetic modality, and is determined by the artists’ competence in expression, which is based on their affinity for cultural experience. It is obvious that “there exists a structure of the Human Mind or a sort of ontological system of Essences, on which signification and communication rely,”³⁶⁷ a system shaped by cultural conventions and out-of-culture factors (i.e. bio-

³⁶⁴ Abrams (1979 : 784)

³⁶⁵ Lévi-Strauss (2001/1 : 58)

³⁶⁶ Finnegan (1977 : 188-200)

³⁶⁷ Eco (1976a : 126)

physical and other factors.) the individual, therefore, experiences the world and social reality with the help of concepts, images and modes of thinking employed by his or her surroundings.³⁶⁸ Rustom Bharucha argued that, although there is a universal unifying tendency, the individuality of cultures do not and, in fact, cannot fully adopt it clearly because of their cross-culturally incompatible peculiarities, both in the perception of and reaction to the world around.³⁶⁹ This is explained by the fundamental differences of human conceptualisation: humans perceive subjects and predicates in one, in a single semantic unit, but can express them only when divided into elements,³⁷⁰ and the semantic distribution establishes individuality in cultural and linguistic conceptualisation. There is a multidimensional approach to the role and function of the author in every society, which is shaped by the underlying system of concepts employed by the community, and view concerning authors and authoritative work are also particularized.

Authors and poets, the most sensitive points of a community, are this way distinguished and take the role of ‘cultural star reporters’ in the sense that their works provide the observer with the truest image of cultural identity. The language of authors is basically the language of any other member of the community, yet it is different in terms of its richness in the semantic aspect. You may as well conclude that literary language is the manifestation of the over-semanticized conceptualisation of the world of experiences, and the culture-specificity of the conceptual system results in significant differences in linguistic expression. The Japanese psychoanalyst, Takeo Doi, examined the nature of the word *amae* and showed up its partial untranslatability to other languages due to its being culture-specific. The web of attached meanings interferes with attempts to translate the word and requires restructuring of the conceptual system.³⁷¹ Jean Harkins and Anna Wierzbicka also made thorough examinations about the question of the conceptualisation of emotions, and found that “[m]ost words in any language are specific to this particular language or to a group of languages, and are not universal. (...) At the same time, there is evidence that all languages have words with meanings corresponding exactly to the meanings of the English words good and bad or know and want. This suggests that the

³⁶⁸ Józsa (1978 : 49)

³⁶⁹ Bharucha (2005 : 1-2)

³⁷⁰ Vigotskij (1967 : 388-389)

³⁷¹ Doi (1981)

concepts of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ (or ‘know’ and ‘want’) are universal (...).” The problem of the culture-specific emerges when, for instance, “[e]motion words’ such as anger reflect, and pass on, certain cultural models; and these models, in turn, reflect and pass on values, preoccupations and frames of reference of the society (or speech community) within which they have evolved (...). Naturally, it is not only the lexicon that provides clues to the ‘emotional universe of a culture.’ Grammar does so too, as do phraseology, discourse structure, gestures, intonation, interjections, swearwords, forms of address, culture-specific facial expressions and bodily postures, and so on. (...) Even the non-verbal facial and bodily signals of emotional feeling are (...) given linguistic representations – and these too have their distinctive interpretations in each language and culture (...).”³⁷² Literary men and women are not only aware of these interpretations but they are also capable of employing them in order to convey the most of meaning.

The richness of linguistic register authors work with honestly reflects the richness of imagination and the flexibility of lingual expression. Multiple meanings of words and expressions derive from the fact that there are more concepts than words,³⁷³ and authors skilfully employ this multiplicity in their work in order to express both intellectual and emotional perspectives. As a consequence, literature is wrapped up in various levels of dimensionality and mediality: oral literature is monomedial (audible, transmitted through the air) and is monodimensional (transmitted through sounds, it is straightforward and immediate in time), whereas written literature is bimodal (visual, transmitted through graphic form) and is bi- or rather tri-dimensional (writing is bidimensional, but the possible distance in time brings about the third dimension). The aspects of dimensionality and mediality, accompanied by the strict conditioning of the varied aspects of contextuality, together establish a very complex network of lingual, conceptual and emotional network by which authors can work. Gerard Genette summed up and extended the understanding of various aspects of textuality by explaining different relationships within and among texts and providing a terminological overview of possible variations. Accordingly, authors combine paratextual, intertextual, metatextual, architextual and

³⁷² Harkins-Wierzbicka (2001 : 11, 17-18)

³⁷³ Gombocz (1997 : 12)

hypertextual connections³⁷⁴ in a joint effort to express personal experience; they obey and play with the rules of genres, of lingual expression, of referencing and alluding. Such a complex system of textual coherence becomes even more complex in multilingual context, to which Marcel Danesi's idea of intercodality refers – the idea of the interconnectedness of codes (languages), an idea based on the concept of intertextuality.³⁷⁵ Multilingual authors tend to open up the horizon of more cultures at the same time by involving items of the register of different languages. It must be noted, that the involvement does not only mean the presence of unrelated languages within the framework of a single text, but it also includes the presence of borrowing, regardless of whether they have already been internalized by the other language or they have only been loaned in order to express culture-specific content in a particular way but have not been, and might never be internalized.

Having observed both creators and creatures as operating elements of culture, both authors and literary works can be regarded as filters of cultural identity as the experience of authors is filtered through their personality, both as members of the community and as authors, and through the written forms that are shaped by cultural norms and attitudes. Works of literature carry cultural contents that have been chosen by writers and poets to be transmitted to the audience, either in written or in oral form. Because there is no person independent of cultural conditioning, there is no human product without a given amount of cultural load.

2.3.1. Literary narration and cultural narration

Every culture develops its philosophy and art to meet their level of needs, not further. Some communities do not ask questions, for instance, about afterlife, because there is no need for it. As Bruce Chatwin quoted an interesting example of the lack of thoughts about post-mortem existence in *The Songlines*: “[t]he Bushmen, who walk immense distances across the Kalahari, have no idea of the soul's survival in another world. ‘When we die, we die,’ they say. ‘The wind blows away our footprints, and that’s

³⁷⁴ Genette (1997 : 1-9)

³⁷⁵ Danesi (2000a : 40)

the end of us.”³⁷⁶ This type of limitedness, however, presents the completeness of worldview and of the self-concept of the community. Subsequently, no matter to what extent cultures are developed, their worldview is complete, and, with the help of a semiotic approach, the interrelatedness of the building blocks can be mapped.

Literature is, in general, sociological, and local literatures build solidarity and self-cognition. The hypothesis is that literature expresses culture as the authors are offsprings of the given culture, and cannot completely detach themselves from its influence.³⁷⁷ However, literature reflects indirectly and selectively; signification indirectly connects the subject of depiction and the sign system, through a symbolic interpretation of subject characteristics and its relations, and authors consciously select a list of features and factors to be present according to their objectives set up before starting production.

The present study requires the reassessment of the concept of narration so as to broaden it to involve written or spoken discourse, in other words, literature. Basically, the Latin word *narratio*, deriving from the verb *narrare*, means to tell, to relate, to explain, or in literal translation, to make acquainted with. In classical rhetoric, narration was a part of an argument in which a speaker or writer provides a narrative account of what has happened and explains the nature of the case. Both approaches to the concept show that there is no narration without description because narration provides the skeleton for the account of happenings but it is the descriptive segments that make up the flesh. Together they make up the sequence of utterances as pieces of literature.

“The transformation of an event into a text involves, first, narrating it in the system of a particular language, i.e. subjecting it to a given structural organization.”³⁷⁸ The rules of organisation are either universal, thus making the genre recognisable, or culture-specific, providing works with characteristics typical of the employing culture. “At their simplest, all narratives are the movement from a beginning point to a finishing

³⁷⁶ Chatwin (1987 : 256)

³⁷⁷ This idea is not to be mistaken for any of the interpretations of the so-called reflection theory (Plato, Aristotle, Marx, Hegel, Chadwick or Griswold), as the theory supposes that cultural products and activities reflect culture (Griswold 2008 : 25-28), but the present study understands the meaning of cultural phenomena as expressions of cultural content, thus assigning a transmitter function, instead of a mirroring one.

³⁷⁸ Lotman (2001 : 221)

point. Narrative is just a sequence which starts and moves inexorably to its end.”³⁷⁹ Cobley’s idea refers to the general feature of narratives that are present independently of any cultural impact.

In semiotic terms, narratives involve the syntactic, the semantic and the pragmatic aspects: the order of events expresses a particular content and the relations among parts show how they are pragmatically connected. “Actually, by their very nature, narratives may be said to establish a causality between people and their actions.”³⁸⁰ However, for communication, the semantic aspect is of primary importance as humans communicate with meanings, which fact is reassured by the most common semantic requirement of narration, namely, that there must be at least one person and one event, a person who accounts for some kind of happening.³⁸¹ Actually, narratives are a form of communication, and as such, they presuppose the existence of the dichotomy of ‘you’ and ‘I’,³⁸² even if not temporally or spatially connected.

Narratives are action discourses pragmatically constrained to appear in a certain context, for a certain purpose, naturally in written or oral form. Moreover, they are rationally connected so as to convey a particular meaning. Actually, narratives, consist of a sequence of summaries, for instance: ‘the sky was blue’, ‘it happened long ago’, ‘it happened in a certain place’ – ‘on a bright day in London twenty years ago...’; and summarising is governed by a number of rules such as deletion, substitution, integration, implication, and so on.³⁸³

The narrative form appears in the mind as an illusion created by linguistic means to express relations between events. Harold Pinter’s *Betrayal*,³⁸⁴ as written in reverse chronological order, points out that temporal orientation is of secondary importance in narration, and it is the internal (causality) relations that make up the real meaning of a

³⁷⁹ Cobley (2003 : 9)

³⁸⁰ Danesi (2000b : 155)

³⁸¹ Van Dijk (1988 : 325)

³⁸² Barthes (1988 : 378-397)

³⁸³ Van Dijk (1976 : 554-557, 564-565) It must be noted that, as a matter of fact, signifying systems are capable of forming narratives by ordering elements into a syntactically appropriate sequence, with a given meaning, and for a particular purpose. It is enough to think of various forms of self-expression such as painting, architecture or dancing.

³⁸⁴ Pinter (1978)

story. Thus the sequence of actions is reborn in the mind, and exists in the form of an individual interpretation, an interpretation of a sum of interrelated signs.

Narratives are human products as they exist only because humans perceive them as narratives. In addition, narrative worlds are parasitic worlds: it is self-evident that characteristics of the real world apply to them, simply because human cognition is incapable of creating characteristics beyond its logical and perceptually available limits, thus there is no need for mentioning alternative possibilities.³⁸⁵ Accordingly, the existence of any human product can be regarded as the result of narration. In Daniel Dennett's views, the self is a narrative construction. Dennett has done extensive work on multiple personality disorder and argued that humans normally narrate ourselves whereas people with the disorder fail to narrate themselves and thus construe multiple selves.³⁸⁶ With this in mind, you may conclude that collectives such as civilizations and all other cultural identities are also narrated into existence. As an instance of narrative or discursive creation, the Western description of the Orient is a damaging discourse, and it works from the Eurocentric perspective. In this sense, the discourse of Orientalism serves to create the West as well it creates the East.³⁸⁷ In fact, "narration created humanity."³⁸⁸ Narration not only brings about existence as a performative conception, but also maintains it by continuous re-narration.

Narrative texts and texts in general are not only generators of new meanings, but also condensers of cultural memory, capable of reminding of previous contexts.³⁸⁹ Cultural memory is significant in the development of the self-concept because the Self is actually the result of past discourses woven into one substance at present. Jurij Lotman explained that "[t]he interrelationship between cultural memory and its self-reflection is like a constant dialogue: texts from chronologically earlier periods are brought into culture, and, interacting with contemporary mechanisms, generate an *image* of the historical past, which culture transfers into the past and which like an equal partner in a dialogue, affects the present. But as it transforms the present, the past too changes its shape. This process does not take place in vacuum: both partners in the dialogue are

³⁸⁵ Eco (1999 : 405)

³⁸⁶ Dennett (1991 : 103-115)

³⁸⁷ Bertens (2001 : 203-205)

³⁸⁸ Janet (1928 : 261)

³⁸⁹ Sztár (2002 : 32)

partners too in other confrontations, both are open to the intrusion of new texts from outside, and the texts (...) always contain in themselves the potentiality for new interpretations.” Accordingly, “[j]ust as different prognoses of the future make up an inevitable part of the universum of culture, so culture cannot do without ‘prognoses of the past’.”³⁹⁰ Narratives take an important role in the development of the individual self and of the collective selves through the co-operation of memory and activities. Cultural identity can thus be regarded as a narrativized or discursive formation of cognition, which manifests in human action and production.

Any forms of narration are, then, the products of human cognition, largely relying upon the cultural memory of human experience. Narratives, however, can be classified according to their content: A) cultural narratives – all kinds of narrative texts, due to the nature of the process of narration; B) narratives about the culture – pieces of literature deliberately depicting a culture. The former type of works carry the cultural load, naturally embedded through the creative process, whereas the latter type also carries an amount of cultural load of the above kind, but there is consciously selected cultural content as well, and it may not coincide with the unconsciously included content, thus establishing significant obstacles for analyses.

2.3.2. Truth value, validity and authenticity

Scholars of literary criticism “analyse literary works in order to better understand what they mean and how they come to mean what they do (...)” but “[a]nalysis is not an end in itself.”³⁹¹ It is undoubtedly true if you consider that every successful form owns the endlessness of interpretations.³⁹² As a matter of fact, interpretation is always intended, carried out for a given purpose, therefore there cannot be one single interpretation, and as the process is the turning of something into something, it inevitably points beyond references and is never complete but always remains partial.³⁹³ Moreover, “all written texts are themselves interpretations, just as all readings of texts are also interpretations.

³⁹⁰ Lotman (2001 : 272)

³⁹¹ DiYanni (2003 : 1683)

³⁹² Eco (1976a : 190)

³⁹³ Iser (2004 : 20, 65)

Language is not reality; words are not interchangeable with objects. The science of linguistics teaches us that, and thus we have come to realise that all written objects require interpretation, that is, the need to decipher a text's meaning so as to make clear the writer's intention. But about this there can be consensus but not absolute unanimity since every interpretation depends on the skill, circumstances and perspectives of the interpreter."³⁹⁴ Subsequently, the process of interpretation of texts, or any form of discursive formations, cannot be fulfilled with the aim of achieving the utmost and single meaning, and in fact, the process cannot be completed.

Literary speech involves an increased number of linguistic devices such as metaphors, synecdoches, allusions, euphemisms, antiphrasis that do not actually refer to language itself but to idiolect,³⁹⁵ and accordingly their interpretations must be done with great care, taking individual characteristics into account. As a consequence of all the above obstructive factors, interpretation is a flexible and plastic process, and practically there is not (moreover, there cannot be) a universally accepted definition of the interpretation of meanings.³⁹⁶ As Péter Egri, literary historian and critic wrote about music "precisely because form is the embodiment of value and values keep changing, the meaning of formal procedures is never a dictionary-like relationship. The modification of key from minor to major has varying connotations from work to work, from age to age, from trend to trend."³⁹⁷ Egri's statement can easily be extended to cover other fields of art, and generalized to include discourse as well. The main point is that any form of interpretation involves subjectivizations through the attachment of connotative meanings, and by doing so, individualizes the interpretative process and its results. Nevertheless, findings can and should be compared to generalised standards in order to validate them, yet their face value is most often estimated according to personal standards, and, even in scientific discourses within the framework of human studies, findings may turn out to be subjective and unacceptable due to their very being out of standardized limitations.

The above problematic questions concerning interpretation turn attention to the concepts of truth value and validity, which are extremely important to the present study

³⁹⁴ Said (1999)

³⁹⁵ Ricoeur (1970 : 400)

³⁹⁶ Petőfi (1994 : 13)

³⁹⁷ Egri (1993 : 90)

because they concern both the subject of observations and the applied techniques. By way of introduction, the two concepts must be distinguished on the basis of what aspects they are related to: 1) truth value is an attribute of human cognition, and as such is related to the subject matter whereas 2) validity is an attribute of findings and refers to their acceptability, applicability and, basically, to the value of the retrieved data. Such distinction demands for a clarification of the concepts and the exploration of their relationship within the analytical framework.

Truth value is an attribute that has two aspects: on the one hand, it is an attribute of the subject matter itself that conveys meaning and provides the observer with information about how it has been created; and on the other hand, it is an attribute of each segment of the subject matter that cannot be brought under one single roof of meaning because the probable unrelatedness of meanings does not allow for doing that. Nevertheless, in both cases, truth value obeys certain rules of cognition, and is shaped by the underlying patterns and principles of human existence. The apparent generalisation, however, gives way to culture-specific and also to individual interpretations of the question, precisely because even the liveliest thought cannot grow up to the slightest emotion,³⁹⁸ as thoughts are formed through an interpretative and evaluative process and that activity of the mind creates individualized experience with the help of individual momentary knowledge.³⁹⁹ The internalisation of experience is in all cases culture-specific due to the fact that the search to attach meaning is always biased by cultural forces.⁴⁰⁰ Actually, every type of experiential input is filtered culturally, as attested by the lack of words for certain forms of experience or conditions in some cultures,⁴⁰¹ and that is the reason for connotative incompatibility among languages and cultures.⁴⁰²

Umberto Eco wrote in *On literature* that we feel “that there is a deep sense concealed everywhere, that every discourse uses the symbolic mode, that every utterance is constructed along the isotopy of the unsaid, even when it is as simple as, ‘It’s raining today.’ This is today’s deconstructionist heresy, which seems to assume that a divinity or malign subconscious made us talk always and only with a second meaning, and that

³⁹⁸ Hume (1995 : 17)

³⁹⁹ Hoppál (2002 : 118-129)

⁴⁰⁰ Bressler (1999 : 244)

⁴⁰¹ Danesi (1999 : 30)

⁴⁰² Bloomfield (1933 : 151-157)

everything we say is inessential because the essence of our discourse lies elsewhere, in a symbolic realm we are often unaware of.”⁴⁰³ The second meaning of our utterances emerges from that the internalisation and externalisation of experience is intensely subjective; moreover, in the transmission of thoughts, senders pay primary attention to the message as it appears in their mind, while receivers concentrate mainly on the underlying message, which appears in their mind. You cannot say what you have to say because what is honest in your style is not in others’. Most people tend to believe more in underlying message than the message itself. One of the goals of communication is to say much by saying only a little, but there is the danger of confusion in this tendency.⁴⁰⁴ Literature emphasizes this thought by employing only the most appropriate words to convey meaning; the selection, both in oral and written forms, is greatest among verbal expressions.

Edward Said, in discussing aspects of literature, declared that “[a]nyone who mistakes literature for reality, thereby treating it literally, has a severely deranged view of things; remember that one of the first and greatest novels ever written, Cervantes’s *Don Quixote*, is about a man who makes precisely that mistake and is therefore considered to be crazy.”⁴⁰⁵ Said was right in the sense that pieces of literature should never be interpreted on a word-for-word basis, more precisely, literally, because of their being complex networks of attached meanings, but on the other hand, the aim of literature, similarly to every other forms of art, is the acquisition of reality,⁴⁰⁶ the building of a bridge between human experience and human activity, and the collection of information about existence.

The next urging question now is that of the relationship between reality and fiction, a distinction based on informational reliability. Basically, every work of literature is fictional,⁴⁰⁷ as they are interpretations of the authors’ experiences about reality and ideas that are born based on these experiences. Propp explored the connections between reality and tales through the elements of tales and pointed out that prohibitions, initiations, beliefs about death, social relations, connections with the other world,

⁴⁰³ Eco (2006 : 157)

⁴⁰⁴ Tannen (2001 : 130, 74-84)

⁴⁰⁵ Said (1999)

⁴⁰⁶ Voigt (1972a : 18)

⁴⁰⁷ Voigt (1999 : 107-134)

unworldly relations, hygiene, purity and impurity, technological development, tools and devices, sexuality, the dream of a better world, ethics, the value system are all present in the body of tales such as in the case when a hero chooses a wife and by doing so establishes certain social relations controlled by the rules of marrying and the modes of power inheritance – and the analysis of the hero's status reveals reflections of the real ways of living.⁴⁰⁸ Lotman also emphasized that a piece of work is a model of the world in an artistic language;⁴⁰⁹ that is, literature normally provides the audience with reflections of and upon reality. The content of works, from the point of textual semantics, establishes a double orientation of text meanings, namely, one towards the theme of the works and the other towards reality.⁴¹⁰

C. K. Ogden, British writer, philosopher and linguist, co-author of *The Meaning of Meaning*,⁴¹¹ discussed the question of fictionality and concluded that an entity is fictional whose grammatical form in speech may allow us to assign existence, but in fact we do not mean it is necessary to assign existence in reality.⁴¹² His idea suggests that fictionality is context-dependent and, although it is not stated, most probably both grammatical forms and elements of register may work the same way because of their being laden with cultural content. Comparing fiction and reality, it is logical to conclude that fiction is not entirely fictional as segments of its content are taken from reality, and, as Salman Rushdie pointed out in his plenary, reality is somewhat fictionalised because representation involves fictionalisation as well.

The semantic system, or system of meanings, includes several functions that relate it to reality and slightly take away from fiction: as language is about something there is the content function, and as it is used in any form of communication, and it is doing something, language has a participatory function as well, and finally language is in relation with its environment so it has a contextual component with second a pragmatic function. The semantics, that is, the content of language is in a vivid relationship with existence, and establishes a bridge between reality and cognitive activity. Texts or discourses are linguistic forms of social interaction, the “continuous progression of

⁴⁰⁸ Propp (2005 : 18-31)

⁴⁰⁹ Lotman (1973 : 53)

⁴¹⁰ Voigt (1999 : 107-134)

⁴¹¹ Ogden-Richards (1923)

⁴¹² Ogden (1932 : 12)

meanings, coming both simultaneously and in succession.” The meanings are selected by the language user, in the case of literature by the author, from the options “that constitute the meaning potential” and therefore texts are the actualisations of the meaning potential, of the process of semantic choice.⁴¹³ The semantic aspect of language use is always demands for pragmatic constraints otherwise the lack of context will empty the elements of communicative sequence.

Halliday pointed out that “[t]ext is meaning, a semantic unit, a product and a process”⁴¹⁴ at the same time, and his idea reiterates the need for context, for the pragmatic aspect. All in all, literature provides a series of contexts as it is downright a network of contexts such as cultural context (the source culture), cultural experiential context (the part of the source culture that authors have every experienced), specific or occasional experiential context (the context in which authors get their experience they write about), and the creative context (the context within which the author produces the given piece of writing).⁴¹⁵ The present theory endeavours to explore the cultural context through the exploration of the other contexts and their relations. Cultural context is the source of general norms and values to live by. The cultural experiential context provides a particular configuration of norms and values that are acquired or learned from birth on and greatly influence physical, intellectual and spiritual development. The specific or occasional experiential context provides the reason for the author to write and a writing to be born. Finally, the creative context is the umbrella term for the immediate factors that have influence upon the birth of the text. Halliday’s idea reveals how the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic aspects are interwoven in a unity of contexts, each of which is a signifying system in the author’s life, with specific functions, an interrelated system within the framework of the context highest in the hierarchy (i.e. culture).⁴¹⁶

⁴¹³ Halliday (2003 : 27-28, 38)

⁴¹⁴ Halliday (1986 : 10)

⁴¹⁵ Contexts are to be viewed as unities of intellectual and emotional, material and immaterial instances that imply every ontological aspect.

⁴¹⁶ One may as well set up a chronological order of contextual encounters that lead to the birth of a piece of literature: by birth, authors encounter the cultural context; during the acquisition of norms and values they, due to the very nature of human perception and production, acquire only a segment of the set of available information that make up the experiential cultural context; each of the experiences authors decide to include in their works come to them within a specific or occasional context; and finally authors get down to work by transforming experiences into other sign systems and works are born within the actual creative context.

The interconnectedness of contexts ensures that in any of the pieces of literature that are ever created there exists a fusion of reality and fiction, thus attributing to each writing an inseparable truth value. For a better understanding, the notions of truth and value and their relationship must also be revised.

Ideologies, thoughts and judgements are values, and values of cognition are truth values. The values of social behaviour are the values of the good, for instance, and the values of aesthetic behaviour are the values of beauty.⁴¹⁷ In this sense values are created through cognitive activity, through the internalisation of experience, and if so, values are inevitably exposed to subjectivity. However, values are always thought of as collective essences that lack subjective evaluation and interpretation. The apparent contradiction becomes resolved immediately when the focus moves precisely onto the concept of collectivity as it outright excludes the possibility of the individual by joining only the attributes that have been accepted by every member of a group such as in the case of folkways that are always considered to be true and proper based on rationality and usefulness⁴¹⁸ as the whole group of people recognise them as equal from every point of view. Folkways are evaluated by community members, and, in fact, the process of evaluation turns them into values. Subsequently, values are context-dependent instances that change with the change of context: the evaluative measures are context-specific and their differences bring about a change in values, similarly to a word whose meaning is changes as the word is transposed from one evaluative context to another.⁴¹⁹

John Dewey suggested that truth is human as it is based on human experience and shaped by human operations.⁴²⁰ "... after all, what we call truth is only the hypothesis which is found to work best."⁴²¹ Frazer's idea reveals the mighty power of possibility in human understanding, which is unquestionably one of the roots of uncertainty, an instance that humans can hardly ever overcome or avoid in their lives. Self has been proved to be the core of existence and as such it is also the foundation of certainty as certainty starts from within as it is subjective, and only when it leaves the individual and becomes a shared instance, does it have the possibility to become a value for the

⁴¹⁷ Vitányi (1981 : 193, 204)

⁴¹⁸ Sumner (1978 : 58-60)

⁴¹⁹ Volosinov (2003 : 56)

⁴²⁰ Dewey (1981 : 570-584)

⁴²¹ Frazer (2002 : 264)

commons. Obviously, a similar process takes place in an individual and in a community that is based on that when people believe (in) something it incites them to act without questioning its being true; subsequently, the unconscious state of believing means holding something for true.⁴²² In general, religions, the systems of belief and related practices, are born through abstraction carried out by language,⁴²³ yet they are not language-dependent as their truth stand above the boundaries of language. Language only helps truth be born as every cognitive activity is somehow controlled by language and the process of considering something true is undoubtedly a cognitive process consisting of the phases of assumption, belief and knowledge.⁴²⁴ As a consequence of being a human product, truth is never interpreted the same way among different people because its interpretation is under the pressure of cultural influence. This is how, for example, stereotypes are created: they are categories of exaggeration of certain attributes with a task to justify or rationalise categorical behaviour.⁴²⁵ Stereotypisation is a sequence of misinterpretations in which generalisation is a failure because less apparent, yet influential characteristics become neglected, and the interpretative conclusions are therefore inappropriate. In scientific discourse, similar misinterpretations are the use of certain terms to refer to something on the basis of misinterpretation such as the use of the word ‘universal’ in African context as it is a false stereotypisation.⁴²⁶

Context-dependency applies to the concept of value as well, as it is also a product of human cognition, its content changing with the changes in contextual measures. Thus, truth value itself cannot avoid being a context-dependent concept that is present whenever there exists a possible course of events.⁴²⁷ Van Dijk, as linguist, rightly pointed out that whenever there is no possible course of events in which a proposition could be true, it has no truth value. Truth manifests in some grammatical structures such as addition, selection, contrast, equivalence or implication that form connections between elements of utterances, and, on a wider scale, between contextual constituents. As an example, the additive function within the framework of a culture manifests in the form of

⁴²² Hajnal-Hoppál (1980 : 68)

⁴²³ Durkheim (2003 : 78)

⁴²⁴ Kant (1981 : 491-497)

⁴²⁵ Allport (1999 : 242-260)

⁴²⁶ Achebe (1997 : 61)

⁴²⁷ Van Dijk (1975 : 282)

constraints and permissions as formatives of social behaviour: every member of a community has to obey certain rules but they also have the freedom of choice in other cases, which means that constraints and permissions accepted by the community as norms of behaviour together control the freedom of action, and it is only through a certain balance that they are capable of operating, and that balance is always culture-specific. It is supposed that grammatical structures reveal values of truth as dependency-laden instances – dependency of language, of culture, and often of some other contexts. Accordingly, truth can never be absolute or universal, except for the instance when it is capable of stripping such dependencies away from itself without losing means of existence.

According to classical logic, truth values are the true and the false, in terms of literary theory, one would rightly call them fictional and non-fictional (real). Truth value is a value indicating the relation of a proposition to truth. During the ages, scholars have become divided into a group that says the fictional has no truth value because fictional propositions have no relation to reality, and, contrarily, another group who argued that, with a presupposition that there are existing or real segments within a fictional proposition, the fictional proposition has truth value because the presupposition can give the statement a certain truth value. While Winfried Nöth wrote that “[f]rom the point of view of logical semantics, the referential relation of literary statements has been characterized as lacking truth value and the possibility of empirical verification,”⁴²⁸ from the semiotic point of view, even fictional statements can have truth value such as in the case of the sentence: *Dams are built by beavers*. The sentence is grammatically correct but semantic inappropriacy is present, as the sentence tells us that the only builders of dams are beavers, which is, without doubt, a thought that cannot be experientially verified. As soon as the passive sentence is turned into an active one, it becomes experientially verifiable. The active form ‘*Beavers build dams*’ tells us that it is general with beavers that they build dams as it is their normal activity. The syntactic change results in semantic difference due to pragmatic factors: the meaning of the active and passive forms can be distinguished by their content in relation to extra-sentential

⁴²⁸ Nöth (1995 : 350)

contents. Both statements have truth value in the sense that they include constituents that refer to reality, regardless of whether the combination of constituents is true or false.

The distinction between true and false is also present and it seems unresolvable in situations such as with the colour green, which is regarded as pleasant, but if a painting is green, it may not unconditionally be pleasant.⁴²⁹ Contextual factors define truth value in this case by adding extra attributes and slightly changing core meaning. Possibility is a model factor here, brought about by addition or modification. Undoubtedly, if possibility had infinite degrees, as it actually has in real life situations, it would result in an infinite-valued system. For instance, utterances referring to the future are neither false nor true unless additional modality markers are present, and today such markers may not be present.⁴³⁰

By discussing questions concerning the subject matter, the need for such clarification concerning the approach itself arises. Truth value has been identified as an attribute that refers to or belongs to human cognition and is related to the subject matter, whereas validity is an attribute of findings and is related to the approach itself. Basically, “[v]alidity is the extent to which a theory is ‘true’, but there are three aspects to understand, namely, that the “[f]irst form of validity is the *correspondence* between the theory’s claims and observations, (...) the second form of validity is *generalizability*,” and the third one can refer to the utility or usefulness of a theory.”⁴³¹ Theoretical objectives must be clearly defined in advance and they must have presuppositions about possible ways to achieve goals otherwise the practical side of the theory would fail. A theory that remains a theory is incapable of contributing to general knowledge. The second requirement of validity refers to the quality of findings, to the set of attributes that enable the observer to draw general conclusions afterwards. Unless there are general attributes, findings cannot be compared to any other findings. As soon as research findings are comparable and can be evaluated by general measures their applicability is revealed, and this practical aspect serves as the basis for the evaluation of the theory itself.

⁴²⁹ Hegel (1957 : 291-291)

⁴³⁰ Offenberger (1995 : 63-65)

⁴³¹ Littlejohn-Foss (2009 : 364)

It has been shown that literature in general as a set of vehicles of cultural identity undoubtedly has truth value and an approach to culture that works with literature must develop measures by which analytical findings can be evaluated on a comparative basis – all in order to fulfil the requirements of scientific validity. By a common phrase, facts do not lie, thus the differences between theoretical and experiential data point out the flaws of theories, consequently, theoretical formulae must consistently be improved.⁴³² A typical mistake in cultural studies is false stereotyping on the basis of the misinterpretation of findings such as with indigenous peoples whom the western tradition often forces into certain frames, thus distorting their images, and confusing indigenous harmony.⁴³³ Such an aspectual mistake can break down the whole of an approach thus ending in a pointless quest for finding out about cultural characteristics. A theory or approach must at all costs be capable of assimilation, of changing whenever it is necessary, because the world is the progressive validating field of reason and intellectual comprehensibility, and total acclimatization is not advised on the level of intellectual processes.⁴³⁴ A theory is valid insofar as it satisfies a need to provide a coherent form of the subject matter, so as to allow researchers to deal coherently with it.⁴³⁵

The validity of an approach derives from its applicability to the analysis of the targeted subject matter, to the experiential aspect, which is an inward validity, and from the applicability of research results to a wider scope of studies, which is an outbound validity. Despite the differences in orientation, both types demand for authenticity, the theoretical originality of samples. Authenticity is, then, an essential concept in both literary analyses and approaches to culture.

Literary authenticity manifests in texts in a very complex way as every piece of writing is in one sense *fictional* and in another sense *real*. The concept of authenticity refers to the honesty of content, a parallel between content and reality, and also a parallel between form and reality. Fictionality as an obstacle in the interpretative process has been ruled out, and this fact gives way to an understanding of artistic creation as authentic in the sense that it cannot avoid involving the personal interpretation of certain segments of

⁴³² Héjjas (1990 : 122)

⁴³³ Blixen (1998 : 68)

⁴³⁴ Eco (1976b : 171)

⁴³⁵ A slightly alternated idea about what Umberto Eco wrote about in a discussion of the nature of philosophy in *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*. (Eco 1986 : 11)

cultural identity. Accordingly, every piece of literature can be regarded as authentic from the point of formative honesty, but as for the honesty of content, due to the presence of fictional attributes, works must be view as partially or less authentic. However, there is no doubt that authenticity greatly depends on context, as in the case of stereotypes, for instance, where popular depictions of groups of people are modified for the public and are accepted as authentic. A good example of this falsified concept of the authentic is shaped by contextual factors: indigenous minorities' nationalist insistence on the combination of the folk and the modern is frequently Europeanized and it means they are misinterpreted due to the specific orientation of attribute selection.⁴³⁶ It is clear that community members live by cultural norms and values and their activity not only mirrors but also directly expresses some of these fundamentals, ending up in an authentic image of the experiential context.

The question of authenticity is very often accompanied by the question of translation or more precisely mediation that involves culture-specific substitution. In most monolingual communities, literature normally remains monolingual and the need for cross-cultural mediation is absent. However, the body of world literature includes innumerable pieces that involve more languages and, by doing so, present a melting pot of cross-cultural experiences. Language "limits the poetic work to the members of a given linguistic community. The poetic work does not exist for people who do not know its language, and it is only imperfectly and completely accessible even to those who know its language but not as their mother tongue. That is to say, they do not command the entire wealth of associations connecting the words and forms of the given language together and to reality. The more the linguistic aspect asserts itself in a poetic work, the more strongly it is bound to a given national language. Hence the difficulty in the translation and even the untranslatability of certain poetic works, especially lyric works."⁴³⁷ The linguistic expression of cultural content is a form of mediation, a process of substitution between semiotic systems. "It is possible to describe culture as an infinite process of *total translation*",⁴³⁸ but as it is, there is great asymmetry in intersemiotic translation as there is no precise correspondence between sign systems and subsequently

⁴³⁶ Hedrick (2003 : 174-178)

⁴³⁷ Mukařovský (1976 : 14-15)

⁴³⁸ Torop (2003 : 271-272)

interpretations.⁴³⁹ “Migration, translation and transformation of meanings show that culture as a dynamic system is permanently in the state of total translation.”⁴⁴⁰ In cross-cultural situations the case is even more complicated because sign systems are forced to change in order to meet current needs as with the English language on colonial territories where the language undergoes significant changes so as to be able to carry the weight of indigenous experience and becomes a new English, an altered form to suit the new surroundings,⁴⁴¹ to acquire or develop certain functional markers originally absent from the language.⁴⁴² The helping hand in this apparently unresolvable research situation is lent by the fact that regardless of what the historical context and style of a piece of intellectual work is like, the work is inevitably based on some kind of archetype,⁴⁴³ and the archetypes that appear in works help the audience recognise the major pillars of the content, and natural intuition and personal knowledge also greatly contribute to the interpretative process.

Every piece of work is the translation of cultural experience into a written or oral form and as such they are authentic. Authenticity guarantees that, theoretically, the selection of samples is never limited to a certain sort of works or groups of writings, and, as a consequence, every item of the selection has truth value. The two criteria fulfilled, the analysis of works provides valid findings that are apt for generalisation and comparative evaluation. The approach to culture also becomes valid due to the very fact that its results show to what extent it is applicable to cultural analysis, to the identification of cultural identity filters.

2.4. Drawbacks and merits

Research methods, both theoretical and experiential, must be capable of improving so as to keep pace with the development of science and technology and also to meet renewing and changing needs emerging from the changes of subject matter. Approaches to culture must also be capable of doing that mainly because the subject is

⁴³⁹ Lotman (2001b : 14)

⁴⁴⁰ Torop (2003 : 276)

⁴⁴¹ Achebe (1975 : 62)

⁴⁴² Kachru (1997 : 291-295)

⁴⁴³ Eliade (1997 : 224)

continuously changing, but phenomena commonly regarded as universal and constant are also changing due to their relatedness to other system constituents. Accordingly, the theory of cultural identity filters must be a flexible and adaptive approach to culture.

As every scientific approach or method, the present theory also has drawbacks and merits that can be predicted through the thorough analysis of objectives. First of all, the theory is not designed to replace or substitute any other approaches but to contribute to the field of cultural studies by providing A) modified and innovative research techniques to revitalize certain aspects of cultural analysis; B) reviving educational perspectives that contribute to the development of frequently ignored or less emphasized skills and competences such as the skill of synthetisation of information or the semiotic competence that enables students to not only integrate their knowledge of various fields of study but also to improve their acquisition by changing and combining viewpoint more easily. Advantages and disadvantages are both necessary for the development of such a theory, like a trial-and-error sequence they strengthen and weaken each other and help the approach become one that is capable of dealing with the changes occurring within and in relation to the subject.

The objectives of the present study are to develop a sequence of analytical steps that aim to identify cultural phenomena and their relationships with other elements of culture in a most objective and accurate way. Normally, an approach of the kind must establish a logical sequence of analytical steps first in order to provide the observer with a constant framework to work within. Supposing that it is possible to explore the source culture through available cultural phenomena, the approach needs to have techniques that are capable of such identification: flexible and comprehensive tools, based on natural logic. To match the nature of the subject matter, such an approach must be multidimensional, and it must recognise to what extent syntactic, semantic and pragmatic aspects are interwoven. An interdisciplinary approach needs to have the capacity to adapt itself to current needs and conditions.

The possible drawbacks of such a theory are therefore the pitfalls brought about by the nature of the subject matter. The building blocks of culture are themselves complex systems and, depending on research objectives, there may be too many details to be dealt with at the same time. Within the framework of culture and also of each sub-

system, the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic functions of elements are inter- and context-dependent, which demands for the regular change of analytical focus from wide to narrow in order to identify individual characteristics and place them back into context to see their relationships and to justify their place within the system. The interrelatedness manifests of spherical level as various building blocks co-operate or occasionally substitute one another and the occurring contextual changes may have significant impact on the characteristics of both constituents and relations. Moreover, as the field of inquiry in the present theory is literature,⁴⁴⁴ the subject matter presents the transmutation of multidimensional cultural content into bi-dimensional graphic form, and may as well be regarded as the dishonest representation of culture. The required approach is an interdisciplinary one that involves a joint terminology that may reveal occasional incompatibilities due to the fact that the connotations of field-related terms and concepts may undergo great changes when applied to other fields of study. As an interdisciplinary approach, the theory of cultural identity filters involves various tools and aspects of semiotics, linguistics, literary criticism, cultural anthropology, psychology, sociology, stylistics, aesthetics and philosophy, and other fields of study should be involved as well when particular objectives require so.

The interrelatedness of cultures requires identification through a comparative analysis of a multitude of analytical samples taken from the same source, otherwise the validation of findings will fail. Observations might as well be shared among more participants in the way that each of them carries out the same type of analysis focussing on the same samples so as to further exclude subjectivity, yet this joint work can demand for exhaustive organisation and take a longer time to be completed. Concerning the measure of objectivity, however, the number of participants is in inverse proportion to the number of necessary samples involved. Interrelatedness has another aspect that forces the approach to involve as many samples as possible, namely, that connections not only among different cultures but also among intra-systemic elements are to be explored so as to identify universal, shared and culture-specific phenomena. With the help of such distinction the peculiarities typical of the culture in concern can be isolated and kept in

⁴⁴⁴ Literature has been chosen to be the target of inquiry as the representative of cultural experience and activity that provides the most comprehensive report on culture.

focus for further research and also for drawing conclusions about the source culture. Cultures and cultural cycles show an innumerable variety of contacts that render the identification of phenomena very difficult because cultural communication calls forth the sharing and borrowing of certain system constituents. As a consequence, cultural characteristics must be treated with care and observed from the most possible aspects within their context so that they will be categorised as seen above. Cultural contacts and peripheral statuses present the situation when and where norms and values work less, but culture-specific characteristics are intensified by contextual factors. This third space must be kept in focus during analytical procedures to provide a boundary that isolates culture-specific from culture-specific.

The problem of double filtering also necessitates the increase of the number of analytical samples, and, obviously, it can also be resolved by the co-operation of observers. There are cognitive and physical obstacles that can hinder analyses: the limits of perception and interpretative possibilities can interfere with the process of identification and evaluation, and also the mere lack of analytical samples can detain the observation. These possible limits may also necessitate the application of more types of analysis than initially intended, that is, the approach must be really flexible and adaptive.

The theory, as stated above, does not aim to substitute or replace any other approaches of cultural analysis, but merely to contribute to fields of study. Despite the numerous drawbacks, the present approach is capable of widening analytical horizons by presenting freshening observational aspects. From the point of scientific fields involved, the approach primarily shows how interdisciplinarity can work on literary texts, but gives hints about its possible application to the analysis of other forms of cultural phenomena. The techniques employed can work well within the framework of general cultural studies with an aim to explore the nature and relations of cultural phenomena, of culture as a system and of various sub-systems. As cultural studies are in close relationship with social studies, the applicability of the approach is without doubt. Concerning literary analyses, the approach can provide new techniques of interpretation and evaluation, both in terms of form and content. However, one of the most significant contributions the theory can make takes place within the scope of education: the techniques help the development of various skills and competences, contribute to the development of the

fundamental skills of analytical and synthetic observation, strengthen interpretative skills, and deepen general understanding.

2.5. Types of analysis

The theory of cultural identity filters is primarily concerned with the ways cultural phenomena produced by community members transmit cultural content. Naturally, it is an analytical approach to the subject matter, to the textual formations of culture, aimed at exploring and interpreting meanings transmitted in verbal forms. The intricate web of meanings present within the framework of a piece of writing, of the author's thinking, of culture, consists of two basic constituents: nodes and links, similar to a cobweb, that represent meanings and their relations.

As every natural phenomenon is mutually dependent on one another, the complete and perfect description of any of them would only be possible if all the other phenomena in direct contact were completely and perfectly described, but that is, obviously, a hopeless task. Thus, in the scope of sciences approaches can mostly be used, approximating theories.⁴⁴⁵ Approximating culture means to get to know it as much as possible, to explore and interpret as many of its characteristics as possible. The source culture as a whole can only be mapped with the help of the maximum amount of information retrieved from its own manifestations. However, in many cases, research objectives demand for the exploration of a single phenomenon for a specific purpose. Accordingly, two ways are at hand: A) select one single phenomenon and try to define its distinctive features as accurately as analytical limits allow by detecting its relations to the surroundings; B) select the highest number of phenomena possible as subject matter and try to define them separately and within the web of relations. This type of distinction refers to the number of cultural phenomena to be examined, and the types are called *selective* and *holistic*.

Another aspect of cultural analysis focuses on intercultural relations, to what extent and in what quality and quantity various cultural phenomena are present in different cultures or cultural cycles. The above distinction also applies to this type of

⁴⁴⁵ Héjjas (1990 : 97)

differentiation, but the axis takes place in another dimension. The interrelatedness of cultures can, thus, be analysed through the comparison of similar phenomena, and the qualitative and quantitative differences may reveal universal, shared and culture-specific aspects. This type of distinction refers to the number of cultures to be involved, and the types are called *exclusive* and *comparative*. The exclusive type refers to the analysis that involves only one culture and aims to map various phenomena solely within its framework, whereas the comparative type involves more cultures and focuses on similarities and differences.

The possible variation of analytical types moves along a third axis, which represents time. Ferdinand de Saussure invented the concept of synchronic and diachronic approach that focus on a particular linguistic phenomenon either in its contemporary status or its historical framework. Such a distinction may be applied to the examination of cultural phenomena as well, with the aim of characterising its changes through time. Subsequently, the third pair of analytical types consists of a *synchronic* and *diachronic* type. A significant addition to this type of distinction is that the historical aspects of any phenomenon can only be described when the phenomenon itself has already been described thoroughly.⁴⁴⁶

The above distinctions⁴⁴⁷ make up a three-dimensional co-ordinate system consisting of three axes (Figure 3.) each of which may be dominant in the process of observation.

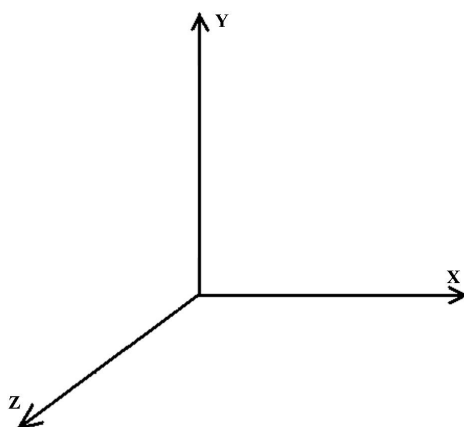


Figure 3.

Axis Y represents the number of phenomena examined

Axis X represents the number of cultures involved

Axis Z represents time

⁴⁴⁶ Dundes (1979 : 61-70), Lévi-Strauss (2001/2 : 100)

⁴⁴⁷ Illésfalvi in Filkó-Kőhalmy-Smid (2010 : 308-309)

The coordinate system combines the three analytical dimensions and allows for a number of possible variations so as to meet research needs. The temporal aspect determines the way of representation in the coordinate system: any synchronic type of analysis are to be illustrated by a dot as the three dimensions do not change within the analytical framework, whereas the diachronic types concern a constant number of phenomena and cultures their changes are observed through a particular span of time and can only be illustrated by straight lines with end-points showing the beginning and ending of the tract of time observed.

The combination of dimensional pairs makes up a set of possible basic types, but there are some analytical factors that make difference in their application. Some types are easy to apply whereas others are quite difficult: for instance, the amount of analytical samples and research objectives may demand for an immeasurable amount of time to complete the analysis. Subsequently, the types may be distinguished as possible and logical types, with respect to their applicability. The comparative analysis of more cultures that involves a wide selection of cultural phenomena demands incredible effort and time and may require the co-operation of more researchers and this may render the whole procedure almost impossible to complete. A diachronic comparative analysis that involves dozens of similar phenomena from different cultures is also very difficult, if not pointless. Consequently, the possible-logical distinction is to be kept in mind when setting up objectives.

2.6. Suggested steps

However, every scientific research consists of four stages: 1) science is not present; 2) mapping, data collection; 3) speculative stage, hypothesis; 4) application of experimental data.⁴⁴⁸ However, there is no valid optimal order of analytical steps that can be applied to every text.⁴⁴⁹ According to the given research objectives, there is a necessitated hierarchy of the types of analysis applied, and within each type there is a logical order of steps. The order highly depends upon individual attitudes about the

⁴⁴⁸ Dewey (1981 : 404-405)

⁴⁴⁹ Petőfi-Benkes (1998 : 120)

analytical samples and the personal ways of interpretation. However, the theory of cultural identity filters suggests a three-step order that apparently works well regardless of the personality of observers.⁴⁵⁰ The suggested steps are initial data collection, first reading, second reading and, finally, drawing of conclusions about the source culture.⁴⁵¹ All the readings are strictly critical readings with the goals of identifying various layers of elements and connections, and at the same time evaluating the intermediate data and questioning underlying assumptions – all in order to explore the utmost referential system of the work.

Initial data collection

The first step of the analytical procedure focuses on available background information A) about the work itself, its creation and reception; B) about the author, his or her personality and cultural status; C) and about the source culture. The apparent confusion derives from the fact that the main objective of the theory is to explore the source culture by parsing writings, and any information about the source culture would significantly influence the validity of findings. Moreover, any knowledge about the author may also have influence upon the interpretation of the work.⁴⁵² Yet there a minimum amount of information must be collected, otherwise the findings cannot be connected to anywhere. From this point of view, the most significant piece of information is in which culture the work in concern was born: if the culture remains unnamed, the findings also remain groundless and the lack of framework deprives them from being valid and reality-bound. The author's name definitely has impact on the interpretation of writings, but the present approach to culture needs several samples to retrieve valid information about the culture and the amount of samples and sources are likely to strip the author's impact away from works; consequently, the name may as well included in the analysis. Information concerning the creation and reception of the work examined is,

⁴⁵⁰ See Chapter 5.

⁴⁵¹ Illésfalvi (2010 : 309-310) First reading and second reading are concepts that refer to reading techniques applied within the field of foreign language teaching, both aimed to get to know the text. Within the present framework, their semantic content is slightly altered: first reading refers to the activity in which readers obtain a general understanding of the subject, and second reading is used to extract specific information. (Bárdos 2000 : 138-139; Grellet 1981 : 4)

⁴⁵² Hall (2008 : 150-152)

in fact, completely unnecessary for the analysis because it has hardly any influence on findings. The amount of necessary information, however, always depends on the personal needs of observers, the only suggestion is to search for as much information as is enough for a starting point and as little as is enough not to interfere with observations.

First reading

The first reading provides the reader with a general understanding of the work and a view on its content and form. It is an introductory phase, which, although it literally involves only one reading, may consist of repeated readings of the whole work and some of its passages. This first encounter opens the work for the reader and exposes an overall picture of the main theme and of the major constituents of the text such as characters, setting and events. The first reading gives the fundamental impressions upon which the whole interpretative process is based later on, and, in fact, it serves as an introduction.

Major questions occurring during the first reading phase help the reader identify who or what appear in the work, under what circumstances the depicted events occur, and they also provide some clues about the main theme of the work, thus establishing the horizon of expectations. With these basic information in mind, the reader can work out a particular trial and error approach to the identification and interpretation of findings, which process consist of a sequence of re-readings during the second phase of the analysis.

Second reading

The sequence of repeated readings extends and sharpens the image that has appeared in the reader's mind during the first reading. In this phase, the reader really enters the work itself, explores the layers of meanings and, by doing so, grounds the last analytical step.

The repeated readings involve and combine syntactic, semantic and pragmatic observations, mixed in the way they will reveal the qualities of textual components and their relationships in order to explore the network of meanings. The co-operation of the three major branches of semiotics may be broken only when current objectives require so, for example, in a semantics-based analytical phase.

Greimas suggested that there are sequences of expression, each joined by a common 'semantic denominator', and these sequences identify text themes. Synonyms and co-referential expressions and members of a semantic set are related, the latter either based on analogy or contrast. When interpreting texts, to find the relevant semantic commonalities, readers have to move up and down on a so-called abstraction ladder. Thematic analysis usually begins with an attempt to collect expressions that constitute such sequences, either by co-reference or common set membership. Supposedly, when all relevant themes have been identified, the inter-thematic links will ultimately constitute the global message of texts.⁴⁵³

The exploration of the global message of texts must be accompanied by the exploration of extra-textual references so that texts can be placed within the broad cultural context. The process of intra-textual linking presupposes that every single constituent is interrelated in one way or another and that extra-textual references can be traced back with the help of a sequence of logical conclusions. Text-building constituents carry in themselves connectives that open up the work to show the way to the creative context and, through the creative context, to the cultural experiential context.

Drawing conclusions

The identification of characteristics provides us with information on their place within the culture or cultural cycle as a system, their syntactic roles and functions; however, their semantic and pragmatic roles and functions are unclear at this point because of the lack of contextual positioning. Let us have smiling as an example of universality the meaning of which, of course, is always context-dependent: you can smile at someone the way it means you are sharing the same attitude⁴⁵⁴ towards something – an empathic gesture; whereas you can express that someone is despicable in your eyes – in a way, the opposite of the former attitude. To get a clearer picture of the use of smile, you

⁴⁵³ Greimas (1984 : 78)

⁴⁵⁴ Attitude is a certain way of relating to someone or something, a phenomenon that exists between at least two constituents, and is normally in parallel with an opposite attitude. Attitudinal balance is a quantitative or qualitative equality on each constituent's part, the state of optimality that every system struggles for to achieve. As there are always at least two attitudes at the end of relational links, attitudinal variations can be identified as the end-points of those links.

have to take the variability of orientation into account: who or what the attitude targeted upon in various cases clarifies the meaning. Taking Laurel and Hardy's comedies as examples, the audience's attitude seems to be firmly focussed on the screen without any diverting factors. The audience loves the characters and anything they do, so that the overall impact on the spectators is achieved without any difficulties. However, there are occasions when the character does not deserve to be loved at all, yet the spectators may find themselves in a situation when they are forced to laugh by the despicable character despite their revulsion. Thus, the attitudinal difference is obvious and results in difference in the interpretation because it divides viewpoints by temporal modification of audience-character relationship.

In every single situation the interpretative procedure encounters relational webs in which each node must be analysed from more directions; attitudinal orientations of one node include the relations of the node to its general context, the texture in which it is embedded, and to the nodes it is in contact with. Moreover, a node necessarily has a specific attitude towards itself in terms of its own existence. Attitudinal orientation is vital in system analysis, thus in the analysis of culture as the system of mutually dependent sign systems.

The last phase of the analytical process consists of a summary of intermediate findings and of making up a system of references. The network of identified connections is transformed into a network that represents the source culture, a hypothetical framework of interrelated meanings and their manifestations. Initially, conclusions are drawn about the cultural phenomena that appear in the text and then the phenomena are placed in a coherent system.

The end-point?

The three-step analytical procedure results in a system of hypotheses made about the source culture, but, as discussed above, the analysis of a single piece of writing is never an end in itself. The findings must be compared and contrasted to other findings of similar analyses and the evaluation of work-related findings on the basis of correspondences will finally present the observer with a list of valid characteristics of the source culture.

For such a complex analytical sequence there must be a minimal set of samples but the amount depends strongly upon the amount of information available in each work. Subsequently, to validate findings, a series of analyses must be carried out “on works from the same culture, advisedly, on pieces by the same author first so that his or her perception of the cultural context can be clarified, and also on texts by other members of the same community in order to evade a single author’s subjectivity.”⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵⁵ Illésfalvi (2010 : 310)

CHAPTER 3: THEORY AT WORK

The present chapter is dedicated to the introduction of how the theory works in practice by providing exemplary analyses. The texts have all been taken from the field of literature written in English, intentionally chosen from various ages and cultures. It is significant to consider products of verbal art that are normally excluded from anthologies and literary collections such as proverbs and sayings as essential sources of information because they are also carrying the cultural load that language itself carries, and must be considered as contributors to the heritage included in verbal art, in Weltliteratur.

3.1. *The Sick Rose*

William Blake: *The Sick Rose*

O Rose, thou art sick!
The invisible worm,
That flies in the night,
In the howling storm,

Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy;
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy.⁴⁵⁶

As every piece of literature, Blake's famous poem is also open to a host of interpretations. The followings include three of them in order to show how textual constituents are interrelated and how they make up a global textual meaning together. The major point of this presentation is, however, to show that not every piece of writing includes relevant culture-specific information, subsequently, not every single piece can contribute to the mapping of source cultures.

The language of the poem seems archaic: the use of *thou*, *thy* and *art* for second person singular is characteristic of early modern English. The aesthetic beauty is important in this poem and is provided by complex symbolism. The *rose* is the conventional symbol of love in the Western cultural cycle, while the *worm*, an earthbound creature is the symbol of death. The *sickness* of the rose is truly the sickness

⁴⁵⁶ Blake (1996 : 59)

of love, where the rose does not know anything about her own death yet, because the sickness is now *invisible*, a secret illness without symptoms. The *bed* symbolises both the natural flowerbed and the lover's bed, referring to secrecy and privacy, whereas *crimson joy* is the symbol of sexuality, a concept that stands for the liveliness and heat of love but also for the general social attitude about love-related activities.

Other connotations may lead to an interpretation of the poem as a situation of cheating, where the *rose* symbolises a woman, a wife, the *worm* a lover, and the *bed of crimson joy* is the marital bed. The *secrecy of love* is, then, obvious and it ruins the relationship between the woman and her man.

A third sample of interpretation tells us about a different story about a woman, where the *worm* represents someone or something that causes her unexpected pain by entering her life in a violent way, in the form of a *howling storm*. This is an interpretation where the storm has negative connotation, unlike in the previous cases where it referred rather to the heat of love. In addition, this interpretation of the poem suggests that the woman is suffering from some kind of painful effect, whereas the above ones suggest only the agony of love and relations.

The above examples show that there are several possible interpretations of the poem but the text does not contain a single piece of relevant culture-specific information. The things to be concluded are that neither the language of the poem, nor the symbols and tropes convey culture-specific meaning. The theme and the sub-themes are also free of specific cultural load as they are more or less universal themes. The most you can conclude about Blake's culture is that emotions and related activities such as love, cheating, love triangle, or negative phenomena such as sickness, hurting were all most probably present but nothing more can be said about their status than has been concluded in the interpretations. Subsequently, it is clear that every piece of literature can be regarded as a cultural identity-filter but in every culture there are universal themes that may only differ in quality or quantity among various cultures.

3.2. English-French cultural connections

The French linguist, Louis-Jean Calvet provided a special saying in *Linguistique et colonialisme*: “*Jack wold be a gentilman if he coude speke frencshe.*”⁴⁵⁷ The saying comes from 11th-13th century Britain and is highly loaded with culture-specific content.

First of all, the saying is in English, more precisely in Middle English, the form of the language spoken during the time of the French colonisation of the Isles. The only character in it is Jack, whose name provides an interesting etymological problem: the name is a diminutive form of John, which has its origins in Ioannos (Greek: ιωαννης), Johannes, and it is remarkable that the name is not the diminutive of James, which roots from Jacobus, Jacque. The point is interesting as Jacque is associated with the French, whereas John is associated with the English, and custom associated Jack with the English.⁴⁵⁸ Proverbs, sayings and, as can be seen, names carry essential cultural information: the name Jack, that, hand in hand with John, is used to refer to *the common fellow*, the generalised English person, and their associations such as the *Union Jack*, *Jack Frost*, *John Doe* are still common among the English speaking peoples. From this point of view, the sentence can be re-written as ‘*Anyone would be a gentleman if they could speak French.*’ Supposedly, if the generalisation is valid, another aspect of analysis would show that gender discrimination, namely, male dominance was also present in the Middle Ages in Britain. The saying includes a generalised form of humans, Jack, and the pronoun *he* referring to the agent of the sentence, which suggests that the language already had a discriminative aspect: *the common fellow* was masculine.

The question of languages points out a most significant distinction between the peoples inhabiting Mediaeval Britain: the French language is connected to being a gentleman, in other words, belonging to the upper layer of society, the layer of colonisers. Accordingly, the saying refers to a dual social division in society, and the fact that French is attributed to the nobility suggests that English is attributed to the subordinated part of

⁴⁵⁷ Calvet (1979 : 189)

⁴⁵⁸ Bailey (1675 : Letter J), Lemon (1783 : Letter J), Skeat (1993 : 223-224), Online Etymology Dictionary (URL). Etymological sources prove that the name Jack first appeared in the early decades of the 13th century, accordingly, Calvet’s temporal approximation can be narrowed to the 13th century.

the population. The duality of colonial Britain is, then, presented by the saying, and it definitely has negative connotations from the British point of view.

It is also interesting that the word gentleman, a derivative of *gentle* or *gentile*, has its roots in the Latin *genus* and the Greek *γενος*, which both mean *kin* or *race*. Most probably, the Anglophone population was not aware of this genealogy, yet the distinction is somewhat similar to present day xenophobic or at least discriminative attitudes. Nevertheless, the saying gives much to know about social attitudes in the age of French colonisation.

3.3. Heroic epic – cultural narrative⁴⁵⁹

The piece examined is Beowulf, taken from the Anglo-Saxon cultural cycle, from between the 8th-11th centuries; it is supposed to have been produced during the 8th century in oral form, possibly by more ‘authors’, and later probably written down by monks in West-Saxon dialect, in the 11th century. It is based on the myths or legends of the culture that produced it. However, we have to admit that the production was probably influenced by the literary and political trends of the age; and also by some heroic epics of the antiquity.

Fantasy and reality are interwoven within the framework of Beowulf. Fantasy is a legend- and myth-producing tool employed by all the cultures of the world, consequently, the identification and classification of fictional elements may reveal cultural characteristics as well as the examination of items taken from reality.

Having the cultural-historical context introduced, the next step of the analysis is to narrow our perspective as long as we find culture-specific elements. Beowulf is a poem, which means that it is, concerning form, a universal element in the Anglo-Saxon cultural cycle since poetry appears in every culture. The genre Beowulf belongs to is epic poetry which probably exists in every culture; therefore, it may be called a universal element of culture again. Heroic epic poetry as a subgenre is also common in many cultures; however it cannot be called a universal. Among heroic epic poems Beowulf is the only

⁴⁵⁹ Illésfalvi (2008a)

one that bears this title, a name related only to the Anglo-Saxon cultural cycle; consequently, it can be called a cultural identity marker⁴⁶⁰ or filter.

The title sets the scene for further steps of the analysis: we have arrived at the level of the text where register and grammar can be examined in order to find unique characteristics of the Anglo-Saxon culture. The name of Beowulf has its roots in the Old-English *beo* ‘bee’ and *wulf* ‘wolf’, supposedly, conveying the meaning of ‘bear’,⁴⁶¹ the animal that, according to the common belief, attacks bees for their honey. That he is a huge man, strong as a bear supports this idea. Beowulf, the legendary hero, the great warrior, the defender of the weak; these are synonymous features of the main character whose story carries a great number of old Anglo-Saxon cultural markers. The poem becomes a cultural narrative by crossing the border of textual analysis into the scope of discourse analysis – the semantic field of the term is now different from that attached by linguists, extended to cover all aspects of culture; that is, the poem is considered as a part of cultural discourse.

Within the framework of Beowulf several contemporary cultures are represented: the Danes, the Geats, and the Swedes. Basically, it is the recollection of certain former and current events, incidents of cultural contact by which these nations are present in the poem; however, from the rather subjective viewpoint of the author, they are distinguished on the basis of their historical achievements, the value of their deeds and, last but not least, according to geographical location. All in all, there is a colourful description of the era and of the Anglo-Saxon cultural cycle in the poem, thus the present analysis could gain sufficient results from it.

Throughout the poem, there are Nordic names of persons, peoples and places mentioned; whether fictional or real, from our point of view, it is unimportant. Right at the beginning of events, in Chapter 1 – if it is possible to distinguish sections as chapters - *eotenas* ‘ettins’, *ylfe* ‘elves’, *orcneas* ‘evil spirits’ are mentioned in line 112: characters well-known from Nordic mythologies. Although today they appear in a greater variety of modern mythologies and cultural cycles, there is no doubt they belong to the old Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian traditions. King *Hroðgar* himself may be called a cultural

⁴⁶⁰ Illésfalvi (2006)

⁴⁶¹ Staver (2005 : 142, 202)

identity marker: he is the king of *Scyldinga* ‘Scyldings’ or in Old Norse *Skjöldungar*, meaning Shielding in both languages, a name that refers to a legendary royal family of the Danes, the Scyld or Skjöld family.⁴⁶² Nevertheless, due to the great variety of versions, this explanation must not be called as the one and only, the true and honest version.

In the lexical analysis of Beowulf, the observation of the so-called *kennings*⁴⁶³ is unavoidable. The use of kennings is a typical characteristic feature of Anglo-Saxon poetry. Kennings are used to metaphorically to describe things: they normally stand for a concept or a thing. They may be compounds or peculiar structures – usually genitive phrases – instead of single words or simple statements, for example *beaga bryttan* ‘the breaker of rings’ in line 35, or *onband beadurune* ‘unbound the battle runes’ in line 501. The former phrase refers to the rewarding habit of kings when they break rings from their golden pieces of jewellery and give them to those who deserve them, and the latter example means that the character began the fight. Not only are kennings characteristics of old Anglo-Saxon poetry, but runes as well, consequently, they together may be identified as cultural markers. Although either one or both of them can be found in other cultural cycles, their collective presence affirm their being cultural identity markers. Note that due to its length and poetic complexity, the poem’s full analysis would require a complete book or a large volume of essays.

Beowulf is not at all lacking in describing relations in the contemporary societies and cultures, complex dependencies, feebleness and power, the court and the folk, foreigners and local people. It is also a rich thesaurus of war-related concepts and things, activities and events. A great many of the vocabulary describing the above listed characteristics may be called cultural identity markers as they describe unique instances of human activities and habits.

The third analytical step is the identification and evaluation of results so that conclusions about the culture in concern can be drawn. At this step some of the markers may be turn out to be ‘useless’ or ‘invalid’ according to their being universal or shared among similar cultures. Note that this study is focussing on a cultural cycle and not a

⁴⁶² Parker (2008 : 76)

⁴⁶³ Brodeur (1959 : 17-19), Fabb (1997 : 268), Nordal (2001 : 281-308), Wolf (2004: 55-56)

single culture, thus the markers identified may be related to more cultures that share certain characteristics.

The poem Beowulf depicts a melting pot of cultures and it may be a true mirror of the contemporary social network of the Nordic peoples. Seemingly, they shared a range of values and norms, and all of them are thought also to have had a warlike attitude – presumably, because of the continuous exploration and conquest of new territories. The following chart takes random samples of Beowulf’s vocabulary, understandably, without the claim of completeness, and categorises them thematically.

Theme	Old English	Modern English
Shipping and water	hringedstefna hronrade hyðe swanrade sælþende sæwudu	ring-dight vessel the whale-path roadstead swan-road seamen, sailors sea-wood
War and weaponry	sceaþena billum byrnum magodriht cempa scyldas	squadroned breastplate blade band of warriors, comrades warrior shields
Social hierarchy	þeodcyninga beaga bryttan weoroda ræswan þegna mægenes þeoden	people-kings breaker-of-rings the chieftain of clansmen thanes, henchmen earls monarch
Christian elements	Cain Abel æelmihtiga liffrea wuldres wealdend dæda demend	Cain Abel Almighty Lord (of life) Wielder of Wonder Doomsman of Deeds

The poem is based on pagan mythical and Christian elements. The latter ones might have become organic parts of the work during its first noting down by Christian monks. However, Christianity was not at all unfamiliar to the Nordic peoples at the time of Beowulf’s – oral – production in the 8th century. It is obviously not only the names that

prove Christian influence upon the work but also the thematic connection with the Bible, the topic of the flood, for instance.⁴⁶⁴

The historical context full of conflicts and competitions, explorations and defence of properties explains the wide range of war-related vocabulary in the register of old Anglo-Saxon peoples, and also accounts for the great number of water-related words. The social hierarchy reflected in the poem is likely to be a true image of the contemporary social structure: a nation is led by a king, who employs warriors to defend the land and the folk.

The formerly discussed characteristic of Anglo-Saxon poetry, namely, the use of kennings can also be traced back even in this tiny chart: *swanrade* and *hronrade* stand for 'sea', *beaga bryttan* for 'the breaker-of-rings', or *sæwudu* for 'ship'. The metaphorical aspects of language is proven to be consciously applied in these expressions, and it means that elaborate thinking, a well-planned way of creating art, at least in oral forms, must have existed at that time, consequently, the barbarian stereotype of the Nordic peoples, such as the Vikings for instance, must be corrected and up-dated. Further support is received from historical linguistics, which has already explored and described ancient Germanic and other languages, and mapped whole language families with only minor gaps left to be filled in. This branch of linguistics has revealed the complexity of old languages and their occasional simplification during the centuries, and has shown them to be very elaborate both in their vocabulary and grammar, which presupposes a highly developed intellect, not barbaric at all.

The structure of society is, though not really complex at first sight, most likely to be shaped by an old and highly-respected system of values and norms, and it seems to be a tradition-based construct. The nation is normally guided by a ruler, an emperor, a king. There are thanes, earls and chiefs of clans and tribes who are responsible for the land and the members of their own community. They are the second highest in rank in the social hierarchy. It is interesting to note that despite the frequent allusions to the Christian God, there are no priests mentioned in the poem. This fact seems to be the reason for thanes being the second in the hierarchy. The third layer of society consists of the folk itself. Basically, this is how the society can be divided, but there may be further divisions made

⁴⁶⁴ The part of the work where flood is mentioned

as long as the significance of various occupations is concerned. For example, sailors are likely to be more respected for their work than other ‘workers’ because shipping trade is the most important branch of commerce. Similar to this may be the position of warriors maintained by the continuous warfare. In sum, the society is basically a feudal type construct consisting of three major layers.

The vocabulary of weaponry and shipping clearly depicts the level of Anglo-Saxon technical development: the tools and the equipment mentioned are possibly the most modern of the era if we consider that these nations were warrior-type shipping trader peoples. Their success in each field of life were determined by their technical achievements – although it must be noted that some of the equipment had much earlier been invented by other nations, and the Anglo-Saxon tradesmen and military only borrowed or, more precisely, adapted them.

In conclusion, the findings of a holistic observation may expose the culture chosen to be examined through the poem. Despite the shortness of the present analysis a valuable amount of material has been piled up and analysed. Various characteristics of the Anglo-Saxon cultural cycle have been revealed and explained; however, for a better view upon these peoples the most possible sources should be studied as further observations of the kind – not only in the field of literature – would most probably reveal cultural characteristics so far hidden or less validated.

3.4. Two African short stories⁴⁶⁵

In multilingual societies the birth of multilingual literature is inevitable. It is the artistic expression of a plural social self-image, and also the mirror of generalities and peculiarities of the social structure. In this section two short stories are going to be analysed jointly: *Lukong and the Leopard* and *The White Man of Cattle*;⁴⁶⁶ both written by Kenjo Jumbam. The author is from Cameroon, which is a melting pot of nations and languages: several local languages are spoken throughout the country but English and

⁴⁶⁵ Illésfalvi (2008c)

⁴⁶⁶ Jumbam (1975)

French are the official languages.⁴⁶⁷ Jumbam wrote his works in English, but wondrously illustrated various differences among languages and cultures. The analysis starts from the general characteristics of the work, moves on to a detailed analysis of segments and their relations and ends up with drawing conclusions about the author's culture.

The task now to solve is nothing else but the analysis of Kenjo Jumbam's works so as to reveal the linguistic aspects of peculiarities of the author's source culture.

The three steps of our analysis:

- examination of linguistic peculiarities appearing in the narrative of the novels,
- examination of linguistic peculiarities of characters,
- the possible examination of certain characteristics of the source culture.

The above order seems logical as the narrative of the short stories is the texture which provides the setting – time, space, characters, events – and the dialogues make them more vivid by adding extra information. Accordingly, the dialogues, the embedded plus, must be analysed secondly, right after that the major characteristics of the short stories have been identified. The analysis of narratives is an overall type of observation whereas the analysis of characters through communicative situations moves us closer to personalities. Normally, the context is more important to be outlined first so that we can place our findings about characters in it and get better understanding of why certain human characteristics are present in the work. In sum, the approach from context to personality seems best to explore a world beyond a piece of writing.

The two stories are written in English. In the mouth of Kenjo Jumbam the English language does not only open a view on world literature but also on the cultures of the indigenous peoples of Cameroon. Both works are bilingual, but both expose different linguistic clashes and points of encounter. The story of Lukong is bilingual in the sense that words and expressions, proper and geographical names from local languages are embedded in the English texture – often without explanation and this lack makes difficult to understand the full meaning of the text. This first short story discusses the encounter of local languages and cultures, but only in English. The case of the second story is slightly

⁴⁶⁷ English and French as the official languages on a colony mean the exclusion of the local languages and, by doing so, of the native inhabitants from administration. The official language is thus an exclusive language because the exclusion of a language means the exclusion of a people. Linguistic relationships can mark cultural relationships. (Calvet 1979 : 65)

more difficult as the encounter of local languages is accompanied by the White Man's English and this enriches the linguistic aspects of the text. The narration and the interaction of the local inhabitants are depicted in English and reach the level of word borrowings in the story of Lukong, but during the communication with the European person the natives speak Pidgin English.

The linguistic phenomena reveal culture-specific characteristics, thus providing the reader with information about Indigenous folkways among the peoples of north western Cameroon, more precisely the Bansa community and their interaction with the white people. In this sense, the two short stories can be regarded as cultural identity filters.

The initial data to be familiar with are that the author is from Cameroon, a member of a Bansa community inhabiting the north western territory of the country. He graduated as a teacher of the English language in the United Kingdom in 1967, and is currently teaching in the Francophone territory of Cameroon. His profession makes him a respected member of the society. He is multilingual: supposedly, beside English and his mother tongue Bansa, he speaks French and, as an educated person and teacher, he is likely to have a profound knowledge of more local languages and dialects.

The examination of linguistic peculiarities in the narrative of the novels must be the first step of the overall analysis because the narrative serves as the main texture in which dialogues are embedded, thus it provides the basis to which other segments can be compared. The discussion of various phenomena consists of one or more examples and their consecutive explanation, each section seeking the most adequate information, often without totalizing the analysis. This is necessary because the identification of every possible cultural characteristic in advance may end up in misunderstanding and misinterpretation. In the analytical process, it is only the most obvious features that must be sought out in each section, and the gained information will serve as basis for further conclusions in later phases. Most obvious means the information that can be found first and foremost without the need for further logical conclusions.

Example No. 1.:

„He folded his *saro* and put in a bag. A *saro* was too big to wear on a long journey.” (p7)

Explanation:

The narrator inserts a tribal, probably Bansa, word into the text but explains it much later (p14), by translation. The word *saro* is then substituted by the English *gown*, of which speakers of English have a clear picture in mind: what it looks like, how to wear it, and so on. Accordingly, a more or less clear image of the given piece of clothing appears in the reader's mind, which fits in the semantic network he or she builds up while reading. Seemingly, Jumbam employs the word *saro*, probably, to maintain its cultural significance, which will be discussed later. For the time being, it is enough to identify a *saro* as a piece of clothing, similar to a gown, inappropriate for a long journey.

Example No. 2.:

„He had married one of the Fon's (King's) wives” (p18)

Explanation:

Here the reader receives an immediate explanation of the meaning of the non-English insertion, moreover, certain characteristics of the author's culture may be noticed: the word signifying the leader of the community is started with a capital letter, and the formation of social relations may greatly differ from the forms normally accepted in the so-called Western cultural cycle.

The narrative texture has proven to be one that inevitably carries cultural load: it consists of an English texture with foreign insertions and, as a whole, it reveals culture-specific features and also intercultural relations. The above examples include further cultural peculiarities but, in order to avoid misinterpretation of findings by drawing conclusions hastily, it is advisable to examine the texts on a midway level to widen the horizons of information.

This section of the study consists of the examination of the linguistic peculiarities of characters appearing in the two short stories. The author uses certain formulae in various communicative situations which are different from the standard linguistic texture, and this fact reveals his profound knowledge of local languages and dialects. The aim of this analytical step is to raise questions of multilingualism to which the narrative text itself does not or only partly pays attention.

Example No. 1.:

„*But why do you put on a white saro for the market in the dry-season?*” (p9)

Explanation:

The word *saro*, discussed previously, is used by the characters as well, in a similar way, embedded in the basic texture, in English context. In this example two indigenous persons are talking to each other: it is clear that Kenjo Jumbam employs the same linguistic solution as in the narrative to illustrate the conversation of speakers of the same language. Again, culture-specific aspects of the inserted word are obvious, and its semantic field seems to widen due to further connotations: the colour of the *saro* is significant in Bansa cultural context.

Example No. 2.:

„*The Fon! Ah, that's the native name for the Chief.*” (p66)

Explanation:

In this situation a native and an Anglo-Saxon person are talking. The situation briefly: the natives are in a hurry heading for the chief's house because he is dying, and the Anglo-Saxon character is asking one of them about the problem. In the answer the word *Fon* is mentioned, the meaning of which becomes clear to him with the help of the context. The first step of analysis provided one meaning for the non-English word (Example No. 2.), and in this example its semantic field is extended by another translation. A general characteristic of languages known from comparative studies, namely, there are hardly any exact correspondences among lexical elements, is present here: the Bansa word 'Fon' can be translated both as 'King' and as 'Chief'. It is interesting to note that in the first example you could draw the conclusion that natives of Cameroon probably start the name or rank of their leader with a capital letter, but in this second example of leadership it is the white man who puts a capital letter at the beginning. Obviously, in a more philosophical explanation one could even state that it is the author of the story who writes capital 'C' in the word chief, and finally reach ontological planes concerning the birth of the text; however, it is not necessary to wind yourselves that deep into philosophy. At this step of the analysis, the recognition of a widened semantic field is the goal.

Example No. 3.:

„*the big white man called Govna*” (p58)

Explanation:

This linguistic structure is uttered by an indigenous character while talking to one of his tribesmen. It is a good example of pidginization (Governor > Govna), a type of change made on English loan words by indigenous speakers.⁴⁶⁸ As a linguistic phenomenon, pidginization is a process that emerges in every corner of the world where two or more languages are forced to be used together. The process influences all linguistic fields from phonology to pragmatics. The written distortion of an English word (note: starting again with a capital letter) stands for a phonological change: the omission of the word-final consonant and the opening of the word-final ‘schwa’ together mark the Bansa pronunciation.

This example also carries great cultural content, but that is going to be analysed in the next step. An interesting question is why the governor is described as big and not powerful: there may not be a correspondent lexical element for the latter in the local language.⁴⁶⁹ If so, this word choice reveals important linguistic differences among cultures.

Example No. 4.:

„*Massa! Massa! Na road dis. You done wrong road. Massa! Massa! Go for woman-hand. No go for man-hand.*” (p46)

Explanation:

According to the explanation given in the work, the speaker of these words addresses the Anglo-Saxon character in Pidgin English. The previously discussed distortion of ranks and addresses is similarly obvious here. It is interesting to note that during the story the name of the English person, Major Walters, is used as Maja Watta. Although it is not a full example here, you can see that, similarly to the previous examples (Fon, King and Chief), the rank ‘Major’ is also capitalised. The address in the example is another brilliant

⁴⁶⁸ In pidgin languages the morphological changes are much more extreme than within monolingual contexts. Even dialects of a language provide extreme examples of deviation from the so-called standards; Standard British English: himself – Cockney: hisself – Yorkshire: hissen. Multilingual communities make more visible and unusual changes to a shared language. (Bierwisch 1981 : 56)

⁴⁶⁹ Big Man may be an unofficial leader who founds himself on prestige instead of belonging. (Bolgár-Papp 2007 : 254)

example of pidginization: 'Master' becomes 'Massa' due to rules similar to those discussed in the case of 'Govna'.

The observation of the present Pidgin English structures is really significant: supposedly, it is the structures of the tribal language that manifest in them in literal translation, as most plausible solution. Such generalising activity is an organic part on lower levels of language acquisition, which can be found worldwide, in every age group, moreover, frequently during the acquisition of the mother tongue and also in the learning of foreign languages. The grammatical inappropriateness of Pidgin English is, on every account, the result of the deficiencies of linguistic competence. On the level of phonology, the major changes can be observed in the words 'Massa' instead of 'Master' 'na' instead of 'no' or 'not', and 'dis' instead of 'this'. The syntax of the sentence 'Na road dis.' is filled with distortions: above phonology, the word order and the lack of the substantive verb express linguistic incompetence on the part of the character, which is, according to the explanation in the story, partly the result of his lack of mastery of the English language, and partly the way pidginization can distort the language.

Now it is time to focus on the deeper cultural content of linguistic features studied in the first two steps by drawing further conclusion based on the knowledge gained beforehand.

1)

*„- Your saro is good – Fonki remarked. - But why do you put on a white saro for the market in the dry-season?
- What's wrong with that? - Lukong asked.
- The dust - Fonki replied.” (p9)*

The meaning of *saro* has been explained as a piece of clothing that is worn wrapped around the body. The author may use the word gown (p14) to explain the meaning of *saro*, to make its shape and mood of wearing tangible to an extent. When examining the source culture, the broader context must be taken into account, that is, to have a look at pragmatic aspects. For this reason, the second quotation includes more of the original text, a longer section of the conversation of Lukong and Fonki. Now it seems that more types of *saro* are worn, depending on occasion, seasonal aspects. As Lukong is leaving for the market (the market of another settlement, which fact involves another significant aspect), his *saro* is qualified as adequate clothing for the occasion, except for

its colour because that does not fit the season. It is quite interesting whether in the rainy season it would be more prosperous to wear a white *saro* as then it is not only the whirling dust but the splashing mud as well that may spoil the piece of clothing, causing similar stains. Apart from this, it can be stated that among the Banson, inhabiting the north western territory of Cameroon, among whom the story takes place, members of the community consider it significant to dress up for occasions, not only among theirs, but also when meeting others. This idea is well known among the so-called Euro-centric peoples as well, even if it is not motivated by the same goal. In sum, the *saro* is a type of smart clothes which is criticized and about which opinions are given if necessary. The cultural significance of the word, and the piece of clothing is expressed by the author as he is consciously employing the Banson word despite there is an English word that could substitute it if necessary; to put it in another way: the English *gown* is not a Banson *saro*.

2)

„the big white man called Govna” (p58)

„He had married one of the Fon's (King's) wives” (p18)

„The Fon! Ah, that's the native name for the Chief.” (p66)

These quotations prove that the social hierarchy in the Anglo-Saxon, or in a broader sense European, cultural cycle, and among the peoples of Cameroon is different, not only in formal distribution, but concerning the included roles and functions as well. The white man called Govna does not fit in the social-political structure of the tribe; consequently, they do not attach a term to it which exists in their culture, but simply use the word signifying a cultural-political function like a name or address depending on the context. In a similar way, the rank Major becomes something like a proper name in the name of Major Walters, always used together with his surname, not only when addressing him, but at any time he is mentioned. It is common worldwide that a person of a given political status may be addressed with the word signifying his or her status, but when majorities and minorities interact the status-word seems to become a part of the name. The social difference between natives and colonisers in these short stories is highlighted by the adjective ‘big’ which is likely to have a broader semantic field including the meanings ‘powerful’ and ‘mighty’. These connotations reveal the feeling of political subordination in the heart and mind of the Banson people, which is, in fact, amplified by real social-political pressure, common in every colonial territory.

The problem of the word *Fon* is another crucial point, because it is used by the author in two senses: here king, there chief. The semantic fields of the two (three) words hardly overlap each other. The king and the chief are different in function, in social and cultural aspects, subsequently, their connotations are completely different, and the interpretative process is even more difficult when we try to compare and contrast the detailed analysis of the semantic fields. It seems obvious then, that, by giving two translations, the author tries to express the lack of a word for king and a word for chief in his own culture, but he cannot find one term in the English language which would cover the semantic field of *Fon*, consequently, he uses two words. The similarity among the meaning of these words is that they signify a person who is above the others in the community, holding the status of the leader who is primarily responsible for maintaining social-political order within the community and for representing the community when meeting others. A leader is most often supported by group members by sharing duties, lessening the burden of responsibilities, yet the leader is always distinguished from the rest of the community by certain rights of way.

The contrast between a king and a chief becomes clear when we observe their semantic fields: whereas the word ‘chief’ is linguistically not restricted to gender, ‘king’ is as there is the feminine form ‘queen’ which can refer to the monarch or his wife respectively. In several societies the status of the chief may be inherited whereas in others a chief is chosen by the members of the community. The status of the king is mostly inherited, albeit a king can be dethroned. According to the shared characteristics, the best English word to substitute ‘Fon’ seems to be ‘leader’: a person, who is responsible for the community, both respected and relied upon.⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁷⁰ No matter how hard one tries to internalize a foreign language the the network of semantic fields already present in the mind will stand in the way of the process and the obstacle consists not only of the system of meanings but also of the emotional experience. James Joyce, in *A portrait of the artist as a young man*, gives an example of how much cultural experience may influence language acquisition, even in the case of the mother tongue.

“He [Stephen] thought:

- The language in which we are speaking is his before it is mine. How different are the words *home, Christ, ale, master* on his lips and on mine! I cannot speak or write these words without unrest of spirit. His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an acquired speech.” (Joyce 1965 : 205)

3)

„Massa! Massa! Na road dis. You done wrong road. Massa! Massa! Go for woman-hand. No go for man-hand.” (p46)

The analysis has only touched upon the surface of the linguistic characteristics of Pidgin English appearing in the text, recognising a type of distortions that the lower level of acquisition of a foreign language and the strong influence of the mother tongue can cause. Beyond this boundary, deeper cultural contents can be found, and the plural in this case is not accidental.

Right beneath the surface there is the address Massa, the distorted form of Master, which clearly shows the social difference between natives and foreigners, the constrained sub- and superordination. It is worth mentioning that Major Walters does not appear in dialogues of the work as the learner of the local language, although he is mentioned to be taught by the natives. Despite the author sketches up events when Major Walters pronounces the names of locals with a strong accent, he does not go any further in the description of how English influences sounding,⁴⁷¹ and a probable reason for this is the general experience of long centuries that colonisers, settlers, foreigners prefer employing an interpreter who speaks their language to learning the language of the tribe. This ignorance towards the local language suggests further aspects of social discrimination: the major channel of human interaction is through language, and if it is ignored, social relations are likely to be ignored or repressed as well, which means that in the case depicted in the story of *‘The White Man of Cattle’* the white man does not wish to join the group who share their land with him, and remains an outsider, an observer. This way or that, the white man is discriminated in the story as a superior person, and from this point of view probably a stereotype.

The expressions of direction carry even more serious content. The phrases ‘man-hand’ and ‘woman-hand’ sound strange to the English ear – according to native Britons and Americans neither of the expressions exists in English, subsequently, they must be literal translations from the local language. In the translation by Paul Nkad Mbangwana, a linguist studying English dialects in Cameroon, ‘woman-hand’ means ‘left’ and ‘man-

⁴⁷¹ The sound form is a constitutive and guiding principle of the differences of languages (Humboldt 1985 : 93-94) and, as a consequence, of the differences of cultures.

hand' means 'right'.⁴⁷² Compared to the widely accepted idea of the Western culture, that is, women are subordinated to men, there is similarity; however, if you observe the question more closely, you can see that in the Western culture the subordinated woman is placed to the right of her man, detached from the sinister left side and negative features. This way the balance is somehow restored, counteracting the negative effects of sub- and superordination. From the Western point of view, partnerships in the given community in Cameroon seem to lack this re-balancing solution. The Western mind can regard this lack as the reinforcement of female subordination.

The findings show that the two short stories as filters of cultural identity provide the observer with loads of information about the source culture, thanks to the rich linguistic manifestation of cultural phenomena. Obviously, it is not only language that opens the horizons of culture but also the theme and the setting.

3.5. *Analysing attitude relations*

The analysis of an artwork draws attention to a large number of attitudinal relations, consequently, requiring the observer to constantly change viewpoint in order to be capable of full understanding of causes and effects. In literary analysis there are four major nodes in the exemplary web: the author as creator, the experience of the author that is expressed in a particular piece of writing, the work as the physical manifestation of experience, and the original context the experience took place in. Subsequently, there are the following primary relations:

1) author - experience; 2) author – experiential context; 3) author – artwork; 4) author – author's self; 5) experience – experiential context; 6) experience – artwork; 7) experience – the experience itself; 8) experiential context – artwork; 9) experiential context – context itself; 10) artwork – artwork itself. In most dualities, each of these relations produces two viewpoints, one at each node, which means that this network of relations provides approximately 20 viewpoints.

The following example provides a detailed explanation of attitudinal relations in the analysis of the Aboriginal Australian poet, Les Russell's poem 'Red':

⁴⁷² Echu-Obeng (2004 : 42)

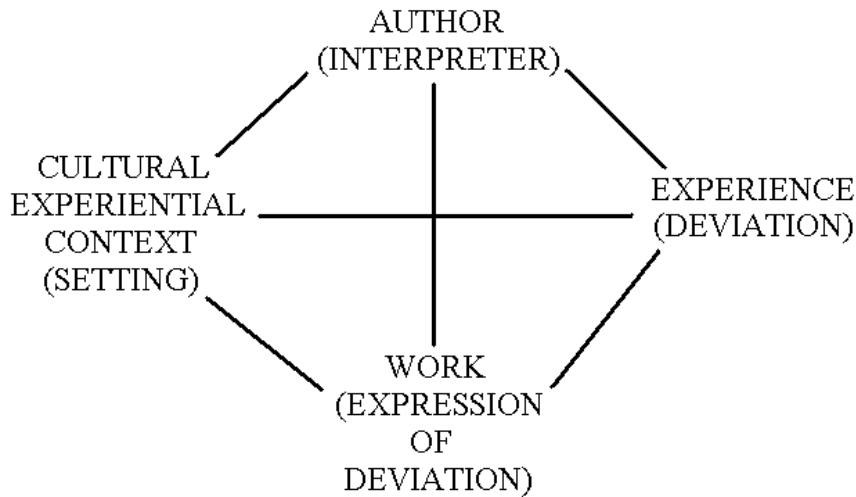
Red is the colour
of my Blood;
of the earth,
of which I am a part;
of the sun as it rises, or sets,
of which I am a part;
of the blood
of the animals,
of which I am a part;
of the flowers, like the waratah,
of the twining pea,
of which I am a part;
of the blood of the tree
of which I am a part.
For all things are a part of me,
and I am a part of them.

The four constituents of this micro-system are the poet, the poet's experience, the poem, and the creative context. Russell's attitude towards his experience is obvious as he decided to write a poem about it. His attitude towards the poem is revealed by its very existence as the most suitable form of expression. The experiential context must have had a great impact on Russell as it incited him to write the poem. Although Russell himself opted for the poetic format as the optimal one for self-expression, it has inevitably got something to do with the experiential context. As a matter of fact, every constituent of the system is in contact with one another, even though the orientation of influence along the links is mainly determined by temporality. Thus you can see that the four constituents have specific roles in the system. Figure 4. presents the web of connections with the four nodes and the six links that together make up the micro-system.

The *nodes* in the web represent the author who interprets a given experience, the experience itself that is recognised as a particular deviation, the cultural experiential context that serves as a framework for experiencing, and the work, the interpretation of the experience in a graphic form.

Figure 4.

The relational web among the four constituents.



There are six *relational links* connecting the nodes:

- cultural experiential context – experience: contextual factors provide the experience with characteristics that make it special;
- cultural experiential context – author: contextual factors make the author recognise experience as special;
- cultural experiential context – work: the setting is not necessarily present in the poem, but if it is present, it is filtered through the authors evaluative interpretation;
- experience – author: the experience gives a valuable impression that incites the author to reflect on it;
- experience – work: the assessed and interpreted form of the experience is present in the work;
- author – work: the author opts for a tool of expression, chooses the most suitable vehicle for information transmission.

The four constituents can be put in a temporal order according to the sequence in which they begin to act. The order is the following: *Experiential context -> experience -> author -> work*. Normally, the sequence of action starts with the setting that provides contextual factors with the help of which the experience appears as deviation from the texture. The experience makes an impression that the author finds as valuable to share and this incites him or her to act upon the impression. The author assesses/interprets the

deviation and seeks out the best format to transmit the information to the audience. The work conveys the meanings the author attaches to the deviation assessed on the basis of acquired norms and values, and most often the author separates the experience from its original setting, at least in terms of authenticity.

Supposing that the above sequence worked in the case of the poem in concern, following a reverse order of stages the creative and the cultural experiential contexts can be exposed and finally, through generalization, the source culture can be touched upon.

Moving backward from the poem to the cultural experiential context, the analysis aims to explore first the connection between the work and the artist. Russell chose the poem form as the most suitable vehicle of self-expression on the one hand because he himself is a poet and on the other hand literature as a form of art is very close at hand for everyone, and is easily available, sharable and recitable. Verbal art has great reputation in most cultures, and is likely to be highly respected among the Aborigines as well.

The next step is the analysis of the connection between poet and his experience. The poet-filter interprets the experience, modifies and generalises it to a certain extent so as to achieve similarly deep impression upon future audience as the experience made upon him. The experience primarily appeared for the poet as a deviation in terms of extraordinariness: the poet's cultural conditioning, the internalised norms and values, his personal beliefs together make him recognise the experience as unusual, and the recognition makes such a deep impression that the poet cannot help writing about it so as to share it in his own words with an audience.

As a matter of fact, the last step has already been touched upon as the cultural conditioning of the poet has been mentioned and that causes the recognition of the experience as some kind of deviation from the ordinary. It is, however, a complicated question because deviations may be considered positive or negative on equal equally. The secondary analysis is going to extend upon this question...

The poem is basically written in English, the only word that is not part of the conventional register of English is *waratah*, a loan word from a native Australian language that refers to the Native Tulip Tree, a type of shrub with narrow dark green

leaves and large clusters of crimson flowers, the floral emblem of New South Wales.⁴⁷³ The text is full of words referring to the natural environment, some of them highly typical of Australia (waratah, twining pea). The nature-related vocabulary is mostly generalised as there are hardly any references to specific types of plants and animals, but rather umbrella terms connecting bigger parts of the flora and the fauna together. The waratah and the twining pea are exception from this point of view, but the explanation for this is that they are common symbols for nature; consequently, they are also umbrella terms. Sun and earth are also collective words referring to the whole scope of nature and the endlessly fluctuating light of days and nights. The word blood appears three times: for the first time capitalized because then it refers to life, the very existence of the poet, and through the poet, the existence of his people, and the second and third time it directly refers to the life force of nature, of the animals and plants. The specification of the word tree by using it with a definite article again refers to the strongest and tallest plant, a common symbol of upright position, of the standing human being. It is, moreover, a symbol of the connection between Man and Nature that, together with the final lines, complete the overall meaning of the poem: the unbroken unity of animate beings, the sense of equal belonging, the concept of Man in Nature. The theme is somewhat similar the well-known 'back to Nature' concept, however, its connotations are largely different from the Rousseauesque thought – placing man outside every tie of society – which pervaded the latter part of the eighteenth century and subsequent European thinking. For indigenous peoples, Nature is the animate and inanimate phenomena comprising Man's environment, of which the spiritual source is an integral part. Thus naturalism gains new meaning with the help of indigenous poetry, and further on conveys the meaning of being in Nature instead of living within her. The connection between soul and body is the gate through which we can transcend into the world of the spirit. Once both worlds are reached, we understand that we are inevitably parts of Nature, and we would no longer be isolated from her creatures, regardless of their being animate or inanimate.⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷³ Nixon (1987 : 11) The flower's Latin name is *Telopea speciosissima*, sceptre flower. Warada or waratah are parts of the core vocabulary of New South Wales Pidgin English, and are most probably very early borrowings. (Troy 2005 : 47)

⁴⁷⁴ Illésfalvi (2004 : 35)

The theme made so deep impression upon the poet that he felt compelled to express the image in his mind with a contour provided by his feelings about the issue. The inclination to share ideas forced the poet to seek out the most suitable form of self-expression: a poem. The theme is vested into a free verse, the closest form to natural speech. Freedom from rhyme gives greater freedom of expression. When building up certain rhyme schemes, the poet has to force a particular shape upon his poem and thus on the very thought itself. Obviously, it is the content that makes connection between Man and Nature, yet the text itself is clearly natural speech thus form also contributes to the establishment of the connection.⁴⁷⁵ The structure of the poem is governed by the repetition of the possessive 'of', the structure 'of which I am a part', and the word 'blood'. The repetition strengthens the unity of thoughts and through that coherence the union of animate beings. Free verses are generally dominated by rhythm not rhyme, and the present poem is not an exception; the rhythm of thoughts serves as the spine of the poem, the major pillar of the unity concept.

The experience is, then, the strong sense of belonging. It is very unlikely that the poet would have written about, especially in first person singular narrative, without having experienced it. The logical connection between the experience and the cultural experiential context is obviously direct contact, depicted by the traditional symbols of Aborigines, and strengthened by the purity of form common among Indigenous poets.⁴⁷⁶ However, the factors that make the experience recognised as some kind of deviation are yet to be explored. The poet's impressions derive from his recognition of the strong belief in the Man-in-Nature concept, the main theme of the poem, which forces him recall and write about it. The problematic point is that, based on the poem's analysis, two different conclusions can be drawn: A) the poet recalled the string belief because nowadays it is not present among his people and he intended to make them realize that absence; B) the belief is present in the community's mind, and its overwhelming power incited him to write a poem about it. The duality of reasons can only be dissolved through a comparative analysis of more relevant pieces from the same source culture; thus, now this is the end-point of the present analysis.

⁴⁷⁵ Illésfalvi (2004 : 28)

⁴⁷⁶ Illésfalvi (2007 : 4-5)

3.6. Loss of a culture

This section is dedicated to the analysis of a poem by Julie Watson Nungarrayi, an Australian poetess and translator whose poetry is famous for being published primarily in her native tongue and later in English as an act of refusal to the preference of English over her language.⁴⁷⁷ The research objective is to identify and interpret identity markers.

Julie Watson Nungarrayi: *Sorry*

I crawled in.
It was low and dark.
The rocks hung down like teeth.
Teeth that tried to bite.
Teeth that tried to keep the paintings safe.

I lay on my back.
It was too low to sit up.
Marlu jumped across the roof,
Snakes slithered,
Goanna ran,
Emu strutted.

I thought who put these here?
Who painted them with brush of chewn stick,
Some red, some white, some brown, some black?
Long ago they put them here...
Those old Nyiyapali men.
Long ago, now this is all that's left.

Gone are those proud hunters, the women digging mata.
Their language, their dance and song.
All that is left of a people now
Tiny painted animals.⁴⁷⁸

The type of the poem is free verse and its main theme is the loss of a culture. In a broader sense, today the Aborigines have only the remnants of the past. To support this idea, it is wise to begin the analysis with the identification of cultural markers. The poem is basically bilingual as there are several loan words from the poetess's native language which, however, are not parts of the register of English. Marlu, goanna, emu are typical animals in Australia, mata is a type of food plant and Nyiyapali is the name of a group of people. Whereas the name of goanna, a type of reptile, and the name of the emu bird are already parts of the register of the English language, marlu (red kangaroo or plains

⁴⁷⁷ Brennan (2002 : 108)

⁴⁷⁸ Gilbert (1988 : 19)

kangaroo) and mata (bush potato) are only included in Standard Aboriginal English, a dialect widely spoken throughout the Northern Territory. All these words are markers of Aboriginal cultural identity, the symbols of native Australia, moreover, the symbols of the land and of nature, and the animals are also symbols of freedom. Through the painting past emerges and becomes a part of the present as the narrator character relives the past. The Nyiyapali people are described as having become extinct, only their memory lives on, for instance, in the painting. The society depicted is hunter-gatherer, the traditional form of Aboriginal survival. The fact that the only remnant of those old people is a group of tiny painted animals suggests their close relationship with nature; the sadness of the narrator upon the loss shows her affection for the past, for what past meant and means to her. Accordingly, the narrator's present is poor in the sense that the pride of people is broken or lost, and what they consider valuable is gone with the changes of life. The poem's relationship with reality comes from the mere fact that a poet would never write about a theme that is not important to him or her; subsequently, the theme of the poem plays an essential role in the poetess's cultural experience, and as it is a generalised form of experience, the community's attitude towards common experience is most probably the same as that of the poetess. Aboriginal life is apparently marked by the sadness upon their lost values and that emotion seems to root in a feeling of helplessness and powerlessness. In social terms it means incompetence caused by negative, discriminative social-political conditions.

Apparently, there is no further information to be retrieved from the poem, thus the analysis have reached its end-point. However, the last section of the present chapter endeavours to show how an exclusive holistic type of analysis might work, to what extent it may be holistic and how findings may be validated.

3.7. Lajamanu culture

The Lajamanu people are a Warlpiri community, located on the top of the Tanami Desert in the mid-west region of the Northern Territory, Australia. The population is approximately 600, and most of them are bilingual, speaking English and Lajamanu Warlpiri. The following section intends to observe the culture of the Lajamanu

community through the poems of six members: Pansy Rose Napaljarri, Rhonda Samuel Napurrurla, Irene James Napurrurla, Valerie Patterson Napanagka, Julie Watson Nungarrayi and Jennie Hargraves Nampijinpa. Kevin Gilbert included sixteen of their poems in his anthology *Inside Black Australia*,⁴⁷⁹ providing a relatively rich collection from a single community, compared to others included in the book.

The sixteen poems are actually all bilingual pairs, that is, there are only eight poems in both Warlpiri and English versions (Table 1).⁴⁸⁰ All poetesses are literacy teachers in the community who write in both languages so as to help children acquire the Language and to open their experience for a wider (non-speaker) audience. They also collect stories from the Old People and make books for the children that either the kids can read by themselves or the teachers read them out in class.⁴⁸¹

Table 1 includes the list of bilingual pairs.

The Kangaroo	Marlu-Kurlu
The Water	Ngapa-Kurlu ⁴⁸²
The Rain	Ngapa-Kurlu
The Horse	Nantuwu-Kurlu
Sorry	Yapa Kujalpalu Nyinaja Nyurruwiyi
Child, leave the tape recorder	Yuntalpa-Ku
Two women sit in the shade away from the hot sun	Muturna-Jarra-Kurlu Kujalpa-Pala Wangkaja
The Two Mothers	Ngati-Nyanu-Jarra-Kurlu

The comparison of translations proved that the English versions very honestly follow the original ways of expression, yet some generalizing tendencies can be seen

⁴⁷⁹ Gilbert (1988 : 8-22)

⁴⁸⁰ For a comprehensive analysis of culture both available pieces must have been analysed and it required the involvement of several sources on the Warlpiri language, its lexical and grammatical aspects, such as Angelo (2008); Bavin (1992); Bowern-Koch (2004); Hale (2001); Kroeger (2004); Napaljarri-Cataldi (2003); Nicholls (2000); O'Shannessy (2009); Riemer (2005); Roca (1992); Simpson (1983, 1991); Walsh-Yallop (1993); Woolford (2006). Most of these sources have provided useful hints and clues for the identification of Warlpiri structures and have contributed to the comparison of the original and the translated versions so as to explore the ways of content transmission to the other language.

⁴⁸¹ Gilbert (1988 : 8)

⁴⁸² The lexical construct 'ngapa-kurlu' refers to a semantic field that includes 'water' as the liquid material and 'rain' as the liquid material that falls from clouds; subsequently, the construct may refer to the aggregate state or a concept related to weather, depending on context.

such as in the case of *Sorry* whose original title in Warlpiri is *Our people who were here long ago*, or *Child, leave the tape recorder* that has only been slightly changed *To the daughter*, or *Two women sit in the shade away from the hot sun*, which relates indirectly to an activity as linked to a given location whereas the Warlpiri title, *Two (older) mothers talk*, is in direct connection with a social activity. The English versions are slightly different so as to impersonalize the theme thus making it more easily accessible for a non-Warlpiri audience.

The former analysis (*Sorry*) was intended to serve as an introduction to the culture of the Lajamanu community because it combines the most themes within its framework. The rest of the poems can be attached to it on the basis of thematic linkage: the linking points are the sense of belonging in nature, the purpose of education, and the criticism of contemporary lifestyle. Julie Watson Nungarrayi presented the theme of nature in nature-related images and by relating them to the past so as to express loss. The educational purpose is expressed primarily by the main theme itself, the sense of loss values, and also by the poetic form that is easy to read and remember, and is accessible for audience of all age groups. Another aspect of education is thus obvious: children are not only expected to read or listen to such themes but are also expected to work with them, to internalise their content. Some of the poems are highly critical of the ways contemporary people, mainly of younger age, live and act, and how their behaviour reflects cultural changes.

The Kangaroo, *The Horse*, *The Water*, *The Rain* all discuss questions concerning nature and the ways humans and their environment together form a coherent unity. They also point out by some expressions how contemporary humans have already turned away from Mother Nature, how the natural environment has become devalued or humans overvalued. *The Kangaroo* tells about how happy a kangaroo is when not being hunted, and the poems reveals a common activity of men, that is, hunting with spear. *The Horse* is target of cruelty of children as they chase it and hurt its skin; the malignant behaviour of youngsters towards animals violates the system of traditional values and norms, and their attitude reflects the alienating external cultural influence that separates Man from Nature, coming from the surrounding cultural context. *The Water*: the poem strengthens the connection between humans and the environment by placing them on the same level

of existence through personalisation.⁴⁸³ There are typical Australian animals mentioned, signalling geographical location, and the failure of hunters reiterates a common activity of men. *The Rain* conveys the simplest and most straightforward one of all the messages in concern, but it also emphasizes the importance of nature through an all-inclusive image of existence that equalizes the significance of the role of every being.

Another major theme in Lajamanu poetry is the criticism of modernising tendencies as can be seen in *Two women sit in the shade away from the hot sun*, in *The Two Mothers*, and in *Child, leave the tape recorder*. The first two pieces present critical views in the form of a dialogue between women talking about how many things are now different from what they used to be by mentioning the indecent or inappropriate behaviour of community members. Girls who attend and spend time with married men, young people who drive around fast in their cars and men who are regular drinkers and are violent because of it all mean significant threat for the community's norm and value system. If traditions and the cultural heritage are neglected, the culture is doomed and only with incredible effort can it be revived, and even in that case it would never be the same anymore. Further behavioural anomalies are created by the disobeying and riotous girls who go home late at night from meeting with boys and other youngsters where they watch videos and listen to music – all unusual and regarded as harmful for the eyes and the ears. This thought is also mentioned in *Child, leave the tape recorder*, an educating poem in which the speaker tries to persuade the young girl to turn away from the “White man's things”⁴⁸⁴ and return to the traditional life style, attend celebrations, rituals and other community activities. Although the negative critique in the former poems refers indirectly to the destructive effects of colonialism, whereas the reference is direct in the latter work, the common view is obvious.

The third major theme of the poems is, in fact, the sadness upon the loss of respect for values and upon neglect. More and more community members fall for the easiness of modern life, but they ignore traditional behavioural patterns and folkways that the community have long been living by. Neglect and ignorance seem to be the most

⁴⁸³ The act of dressing up animals with human attributes in the Warlpiri context conveys different meaning from the traditional Western concept of personalization by authors and poets humanize non-humans in order to enrich the piece of literature. For the Lajamanu people, the concept apparently opens the gate through which they can rejoin the all-inclusive world of beings.

⁴⁸⁴ Gilbert (1988 : 22)

common behavioural patterns on one side and traditionalism on the other side. The community is divided into two and the alienation in-between seems visible in behavioural differences and attitudinal disagreement.

The poems as artworks and as cultural identity filters express the multilingualism of the community and through that complex a dualistic ideology. The sixteen works prove that the parallel usage of languages, of Lajamanu Warlpiri and Standard Aboriginal English, is intended to strengthen traditional views as it is a dominant part of education by which the youth is expected to acquire ideology and beliefs, the underlying system that shapes Lajamanu cultural identity. Education is, then, conservative and traditionalist and it proposes a peaceful attitude towards conventional norms and values. The dual language use suggests that code-switching is frequent among community members due to the rapid enrichment of cultural experience. Although it is not included in the texts, local languages must have affected the coloniser's English; this is why the Aboriginal variant has developed, a *lingua franca* spoken as standard throughout most of Australia, from New South Wales to the Northern Territory – the impact of indigenous languages is primarily present in the form of loan words such as *emu*, *goanna*, *marlu*, *mata* and *corroboree*. The borrowings show that they either convey meanings that cannot be accurately transplanted into English or they are used within the texture of the other language because the connotations require so within particular context like verbal art. Poetry, a most sophisticated form of verbal art has a socialising function: it is used with educational purposes both in the sense of schoolwork and for other community members. The poems are apparently content-based in order to directly lead attention to the themes discussed; the comparison of translations suggests that the poetesses aimed to work out the simplest and most straightforward way of expression to make understanding as easy as possible even for children. The seemingly naive poetry of the Lajamanu people does not involve a wide range of poetic devices; consequently, it lacks the aesthetic beauty on its surface, further suggesting that, although through the contact with colonisers the artists must have become in contact with what the Western or Euro-centric cultural cycle calls aesthetic values, they do not wish to depart from the traditional ways of artistic verbal expression. This refusal might as well be an expression of cultural resistance, but, as all the poems discussed are written in Warlpiri in the same verse form, this does not seem to

be the primary goal of writing. The works also prove the dualistic division of the community as it is gradually becoming modernised and social relations are changing in parallel with actual ethical issues. The perception of social statuses is also leaving its normal bed and newer statuses are being born, new attributes are attached to them signalling changes and occasionally attitudes such as in the case of the younger generation who, due to their misbehaviour, can be called disobeying youth. The irregular behavioural patterns are, according to the poems, brought about by the contact with another culture, with its fairly different characteristics. The coloniser culture have changed the types of housing so the Aborigines occasionally prefer living in houses and not in camps, although the houses are regarded as places of modernity where people watch videos and listen to loud music all day long that may be harmful to their physical, mental and spiritual health. The houses also present the gate to modern science and technology (cars, radios, tape recorders and TV sets) that the adults explain to the children as unnecessary and they also criticise them among themselves. Moreover, the community's ways of nourishment has also changed: apparently, the conventional form of the community is hunter-gatherer but today they also consume grog and cigarettes, they use cars and electrical devices that can be brought in shops so, as a consequence, the community's source of food and drink and also of entertainment are a mixture of natural raw materials and prepared goods. Upon these changes some adults frequently contemplate and express their sadness but they also try to revitalise their cultural identity both by organising celebrations, rituals and collective activities in order to strengthen community coherence and also teach these values to the younger generations through poetry and storytelling. They wish to enrich cultural experience, deepen the sense of belonging, and revitalise conventional norms and values by either criticising non-Lajamanu phenomena and by recalling the pride of past.

To draw final conclusions about the Lajamanu culture, all the sixteen poems must be placed under one roof, including the formerly analysed poem, *Sorry*, and all the findings must be compared and filtered through one another. First of all, the works would not have been written if the themes had not been important to the poetesses, therefore the connection between the themes and reality is guaranteed. Subsequently, they represent cultural experiences. The topics are shared by more poems by different authors and *Sorry*

includes all of them; accordingly, they must discuss common questions present among the Lajamanu people. As a consequence, in the 1980s⁴⁸⁵ the Lajamanu people must have been divided by extra-cultural factors, namely, by external influence practiced by the white culture. As with most colonial clashes, this encounter must have resulted in negative racial discrimination with the indigenous people pushed to the background, forced into unusual situations and statuses, and as the poems prove the Lajamanu community experienced an internal division caused by these factors, a division between those who remained conservative and respected traditional lifestyle and those who took to the modern ways of living and began to neglect ancient wisdom. The conservative side disapproved of the reformer behaviour and struggled for regaining the *prodigal son* in order to retain collective identity, for strengthening community coherence, and for preserve cultural heritage as long as possible. The Lajamanu culture is, then, neither rigid enough to resist the external attraction, nor not flexible enough to be able to cope with such overwhelming amount of incoming information. The technological development and the scientific knowledge was a mixture of ancient wisdom and modern science, most probably at war, and the maintaining of traditional ways of getting food and drink are combined with shopping, and the education of children is also enriched by topics related to modern ways of living – even if in the form of negative criticism. The society was not only divided by the two attitudes but must have had some major jobs: teachers, hunters and gatherers. Normally, these jobs are of primary importance as the cultivation of knowledge and the maintenance of nourishment are fundamental needs in every community. As they had their own ways of education, pupils could most probably have specialised in other professions as well, but there is no evidence for that in the poems. Apparently, the role of mothers was very important within the community as all the poets included in the anthology are women, and the educational aspects mentioned in the poems are without exception connected to women. Apparently, social roles were divided into male and female roles with the intellectual dominance placed on the feminine side. While men went hunting and women gathered plants to eat and so they equally contributed to the collection of food, further roles of women are emphasized in the poems

⁴⁸⁵ The anthology was published in 1988 and the age of most Lajamanu poets was between 22 and 26. (Gilbert 1988 : 8)

such as the educator, the guard of values, the mother and, in general, the woman. All these factors seem to suggest that the traditional culture of the Lajamanu people was dominated by women as the maintainers of coherence and balance and as the keepers of wisdom.

CHAPTER 4: THEORY IN THE EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

4.1. Theoretical introduction

A theory always takes a long time and a lot of effort to develop, partly due to the complexity of objectives, and partly due to the vast amount of information to deal with. Contemporary academic training can hardly, if ever, measure up to the challenges of training experts without the sufficient fundamental knowledge that should be acquired in secondary education, and it is true to each separate field of science, because the development of a required approach is usually not facilitated. Consequently, it should be started on the level of primary and secondary education by extending the school curricula in order to mark a definite span of time out for forming individual approaches towards information retrieval, procession and usage. Obviously, individualism here means the elicitation of a personalised approach. The educational objective is then to support the mentioned activities by providing options and also opportunities to gain experience and to study theory and practice in reality.

Most scholars, when trying to find the best ways to improve teaching methods, emphasize the importance of students' needs as prerequisite for successful learning and teaching. With the rapid widening of informational horizons, these needs today require even more attention to finding enough support for learners, and, in fact, in the age of long-life learners, everybody. A common experience in education is the lack of synthetic view upon data – not only among students but also teachers. Obviously, students are taught to a certain extent to recognise and understand dependencies, interrelations within single fields of study, and they encounter methods of both the distinction between analysis and synthesis but they are hardly ever capable of carrying out similar activities on their own, not to mention their serious scarcities in recognising and interpreting connections among different fields of study such as geography and literature, or physics and biology. Synthetic approaches, however, are indispensable for valuable scientific study and research, since, on academic level, cross-references and interdependencies are crucial factors for adequate criticism and evaluation. Naturally, most approaches include analytical techniques as well, applied to identifying processes during immediate

constituent analysis⁴⁸⁶, but in an overall assessment the goal is synthesis as it takes contextual factors into account, in other words, pragmatically observes findings and helps classification and ordering.

The present study introduces one specific example of complex analysis applied in foreign language teaching. In academic circles, linguistic competence is a supplementary, yet necessary one, because of several reasons, for example: every single field of science is studied by scholars of different nationality, who report on findings in different languages, and, in general, linguistic incompetence can greatly interfere with cross-cultural communication. Foreign language learning is also vital because it involves both forms of approach, analytical and synthetic, and presents theoretical and practical techniques as well. Furthermore, successful language teaching and learning opens up scientific horizons by working on various topics from seemingly non-related fields of study.

Contemporary approaches to foreign language teaching often stress the importance of using literature in the language classroom, as it provides a wide range of topics for the students. Graded readers are becoming extremely popular with those preparing for state and international language examinations, but also with learners out of the institutional framework – even these works are regarded as authentic.⁴⁸⁷

The theory of cultural identity filters fundamentally works with literature, doing in-depth analyses aimed at tracing back the source culture beyond each piece with the help of information retrieved solely from the text. Although graded readers are undoubtedly useful for this type of approach, they are limited to a finite number of lexical items and a definite level of grammar, and as such, they are capable of transmitting a small number of cultural characteristics. Therefore, the CIF theory prefers unabridged editions that can provide the most apposite texts for thorough analyses, and the retrievable information is the most authentic in them.

J. Thompson gives a definition of culture as “the pattern of meanings embodied in symbolic forms, including actions, utterances and meaningful objects of various kinds, by

⁴⁸⁶ The term is borrowed from theoretical linguistics. It refers to the analysis of the smallest meaningful units of sentences – a technique applied in morphology. In the present context it is an umbrella term with an extended meaning so as to be applicable to scientific fields different from linguistics.

⁴⁸⁷ Illésfalvi (2008 : 1)

virtue of which individuals communicate with one another and share their experiences, conceptions and beliefs.” His definition includes significant constituents: *the pattern*, which is syntax in a broad sense, *meanings*, which studied in semantics, and the *symbolic forms* are signs, the use of which – *communication* – is dealt with by pragmatics; his definition is, therefore, another semiotic definition of culture, a little more detailed, thus applicable to education. According to his viewpoint, it seems that the authenticity of literary works written in English means that the typical Anglophone pattern of meanings is mirrored in the texts. By “Anglophone”, a multicultural, multinational and multilingual vortex is understood here, as the English language is incessantly pushing its boundaries outwards by taking in new grammatical and lexical elements, thus broadening its register and improving its grammatical flexibility or tolerance in order to meet the needs of various cultures employing it as lingua franca.⁴⁸⁸ Its permanent relationship with other languages offers a great variety of unfamiliar items, with unusual characteristics that are welcome or refused by the English language, depending on its relative acceptability on the receiving side.

As for the case of language teaching and learning, the broadening set of devices employed by a language means immeasurable challenge for both teachers and learners, therefore, it is a must to study Claire Kramsch’s observation carefully in order to get a better understanding how languages work and are structured. Kramsch says that “native speakers of a language speak not only with their own individual voices, but through them speak also the established knowledge of their native community and society, the stock of metaphors this community lives by, and the categories they use to represent their experience.”⁴⁸⁹ Non-native speakers, learners of foreign languages usually do not share the above elements, simply because the underlying patterns of their mother tongue, even among members of one language family, differ from those in the target language, and so the structuralisation of information and the art of expression have very little in common, and the acquisition of this kind of linguistic experience requires incredible effort. Obviously, the task of meeting the needs and expectations of the target language

⁴⁸⁸ Illésfalvi (2008 : 1)

⁴⁸⁹ Kramsch (1993 : 43)

community is always very difficult, and for this reason, the use of literature in the language classroom proves to be a considerable contribution to intercultural education.

Foreign language learning is always a process of getting to know another experience of existence, meeting another culture, people, and standards, norms and values of living. The more learners are involved in acquisition, the harder they should fight with the rigidity of their cultural patterns, which are carried mainly by language, otherwise they cannot acquire those of the target culture, carried by the language. Learning a foreign language is, thus a liminal experience which, as Kramsch says, “creates a special time and space at the boundaries between two views of the world”, involving “a sudden grasp of difference and an instantaneous understanding of the relationship between self and other.”⁴⁹⁰ The in-between status of learners is similar to that of community members who are pushed to the periphery: experiencing loss in the validity of social values together with the emerging of new or unknown ones characteristic of being out of society. This liminal state can deprive learners of self-confidence and the feeling of certainty, and mean a great challenge for those who cannot cope with unfamiliarity. Fortunately, language learners most often only simulate lifelike situations and do not have to deal with social consequences.

Successful language learners become aware of their growth both intellectually, emotionally and culturally, of the expansion of their knowledge and understanding of the world – the cross-cultural experience opens them up to find new and re-evaluate their old interpretations of existence. Obviously, this seldom reaches up to abstract philosophical meditations or to absorbed ontological investigations in particular, but this is not at all the aim of learning.

The distance between cultures makes learning difficult as can easily be experienced in the occasional incompatibility of, for instance, the register of the English language and some other languages: basic differences are revealed by contrasting dictionary entries with their meanings and vice versa, when semantic investigations show that the field of meanings beyond a lexical or grammatical item is different in the contrasted languages – although it is natural, learners frequently misunderstand and use them wrongly. More confusing is the case of elements that have no equivalent in the

⁴⁹⁰ Kramsch (1993 : 30)

other language due to certain factors – geographical, social, and so on – as with the word snow which has about forty versions in Eskimo languages and they can hardly ever be translated into English, not even by phrases or whole sentences. Naturally, languages tend to loan words in these cases, assimilate them to their own patterns and use them as their own ones. In fact, it is not only the vocabulary that differentiates between the above opposites on the plane of linguistics but also grammar. Certain grammatical forms in one language are completely untranslatable; consequently, they are substituted by ones existing in the other language. For theoreticians of linguistics and anyone in close contact with languages, the word ‘substitution’ is crucial as it clearly expresses the action that takes place when transmitting information from one language to another.

Having outlined this type of differences among languages, the difficulties of foreign language teaching and learning become clearer, so curriculum design objectives are now easier to set and educational tools can be practically chosen to meet the goals of teaching and learning.

In his essay *How to compare two cultures*, Robert Lado states that “preconceived notions constitute very serious obstacles to the understanding of another culture.”⁴⁹¹ In his explanations, he lists several examples of situations where form and content are different in the mother tongue and the target language, or where they are roughly the same but their distribution makes some difference. In the former case, there are insignificant problems in getting to know and understand the full semantic fields, but in the latter one no acceptable explanation can be found so they have to be studied as irregularities, although not in the traditional sense.⁴⁹² In this context, these differences are intercultural irregularities that root in fundamental differences between languages and cultures. Unlike intralinguistic irregularities, these incompatible features derive from cultural dissimilarities. A good example of the above problem is the question of colours in languages: the colour range of blue in one culture does not cover the range in another but overlaps that of brown or green, for example. It is the difference of semantic distribution that cannot be explained simply by linguistic terms but by cultural ones. All

⁴⁹¹ Lado (1986 : 60)

⁴⁹² In linguistics, the word ‘irregularity’ normally refers to intralingual anomalies, characteristics that are unwilling to fit the rules of the language such as the well-known irregular verbs and nouns in the English language. In many cases these have practical explanation, most of the times, certain evidence in historical linguistics and etymology.

in all, by maintaining differences of the kind, teachers can polarize identities, and so deepen the contours of both the target and the learner's own cultural image.

A peripheral field of communication studies, often ignored, is non-verbal communication. It is interesting to see to what extent non-verbal segments have become neglected during the past centuries, although the meaning of bodily signs and their relationship with mental activities were observed by Greek medical practitioners and thinkers during the Antiquity.⁴⁹³ In communication, nonverbal message transfer is a significant part; therefore it must be studied carefully by language teachers and learners. Moreover, bodily signs are normally accompanied by unconscious instinctive signals which form a significant part of communicative information.⁴⁹⁴ Altogether, “the gestural and verbal modes of signification” are intrinsically interconnected “in the act of message delivery.”⁴⁹⁵ Course books, teachers rarely pay enough attention to it, treat it as extra-curricular, subsidiary, even if its role in foreign language teaching is actually increasing, compared to its role in real life situations (about 70% of information is transmitted through extra-linguistic or non-verbal signs), non-verbals are still neglected. Since language learning is in fact a process of intercultural education, the knowledge of non-verbal communicative forms is a very important contribution – not only – to the development of intercultural competence. “Across cultures, the body signs and the codes that regulate nonverbal behaviors are the result of a perception of the body as something more than physical substance. Winks, hand gestures, facial expressions, postures, and other bodily actions all communicate something culturally relevant in particular social situations.”⁴⁹⁶ Subsequently, “gestures, body language, and other nonverbal dimensions of communication constitute a ‘cultural grammar’ that should be taught in class as explicitly as are the rules of linguistic grammar and rehearsed as regularly as grammar.”⁴⁹⁷

Non-verbal tools can be classified as universal ones, known in most cultures with shared meaning, and culture-specific ones, belonging to one cultural community or

⁴⁹³ For further details on the initial observations on the signalling characteristics of nonverbal and mental activities, see the works of Aristotle (384-322 BC) and Hippocrates (460?-377? BC).

⁴⁹⁴ Danesi (2007 : 34)

⁴⁹⁵ Danesi (2000a : 22)

⁴⁹⁶ Danesi (2004 : 46)

⁴⁹⁷ Danesi (2000a : 23)

group, or one cultural cycle,⁴⁹⁸ with peculiar meaning shared only by community or group members. Non-verbals can complete or substitute and thus fulfil the semantic function.⁴⁹⁹ In the learning process, the culture-specific meanings are the most difficult to comprehend and internalise. Challenging group discussions, general and extreme lifelike situations and various verbal activities are appropriate for the introduction and practice of the use of culture-specific meanings, and even certain writing tasks may provide opportunity for that purpose.

The example in this chapter is a piece of writing from the Anglophone cultural cycle, which is frequently regarded as a melting pot of cultures, nations and languages. Almost any kinds of literary works, both abridged and unabridged, are capable of depicting every aspect of life, provide the reader with information upon the Anglo culture. Teachers should consciously and attentively search for the most appropriate texts for classroom use, or ones that can be recommended home readings for autonomous learning.⁵⁰⁰ According to the author's experiences, the CIF theory is successfully applicable to text search as it views literary works as special filters that represent slices of human experience. In any form of literature, authors, either voluntarily or involuntarily, express their personal experiences weaving individual and community observations into one string, thus the writings represent personal and shared experience filtered through an individual's eyes.⁵⁰¹ Foreign language teachers may as well benefit from the application of the theory to research, curriculum design, or preparation for classroom work, since right after the initial hardships of getting to know something new, they will see how much the approach helps and makes teaching culture-specific peculiarities easier.

Joyce Merrill Valdes, a professor of English and ESL consultant in Houston, brought about the idea of a double-sided way of approaching the teaching procedure that seems a prerequisite for teachers to know and adopt for their success. She distinguished

⁴⁹⁸ The notion of cultural cycle in this context is understood as an umbrella term referring to a number of interrelated cultures such as in the case of the Western Cultural Cycle, the Western Cultures or Western World. In this sense, similar cycles are The Middle East, the Far East, etc. If observed thoroughly, each of them consists of a number of nationalities, even more different ethnic communities having their own culture or smaller cultural cycle, depending on the intricacy of pluricultural existence.

⁴⁹⁹ Martinkó (2001 : 121)

⁵⁰⁰ Autonomous learning has recently been highlighted as a most important form of learning in this fast world, where learners are stuck between piles of books and notes from several fields of study, constrained by deadlines, having no time for balanced schematic organisation of incoming information.

⁵⁰¹ Illésfalvi (2008a : 2)

two types of motivation in language learning, namely, instrumental and integrative motivation. The former type refers to learning a language in order to serve a specific purpose, for instance, finding a job or meeting the needs of tertiary education, briefly, a selective and functionally limited target language is the aim of the learning process. In this case, lexical and grammatical elements are functionally grouped by curriculum designers, either teachers or course book writers, and the cultural aspects of language are highly restricted. The latter form of motivation means to learn a language and also become a part of the culture, that is, the process is cultural language learning.⁵⁰² General course books do deal with cultural issues; however, they are limited due to the lack of editorial time and physical space – it is no use writing a complex series of workbooks filled with the usual lexical and grammatical items necessary for each level covered by the books and highly enriched with cultural issues attached to every section or unit at a rate of, let us say, 3 related characteristics per unit, which is not a high number if we consider the amount of particularities available, for example, in the case of English, German, Spanish or Russian. Supposedly, in a series of four books from elementary to intermediate level, each consisting of 12 units, there would be more than 140 cultural issues, discussed in details, or at least bits and bobs mentioned in order to introduce them, but who would make the incredible effort to collect, study and classify the characteristics, and adapt them to the units, in a way that they suit the linguistic level and the topic covered? There is no need for an answer to this question; the necessary aspect of language teaching is how to motivate students in order to achieve the widest competence possible.

The two types of motivation on the learners' part are both necessary for successful learning as the general purpose of learning, frequently reinforced by various language examination requirements, is to develop communication skills so that the candidate will – considering linguistic awareness – grow up to the expectations of everyday life; but beyond that point, today one is more and more often expected to be able to mediate between cultures, interpret cross-cultural experience for various purposes – this latter task being impossible without the comprehensive knowledge of both the source and the target

⁵⁰² Valdes (1986 : 2)

cultures. Teachers' task is to elicit and maintain these motivations with the help of every necessary tool and technique, and, for this purpose, the CIF theory can be of great use.

Nevertheless, "there are problems in applying semiotics to education – problems of misunderstanding and of inadequate knowledge about semiotics."⁵⁰³ "The fact that semiotics has not yet worked its way into the everyday vocabulary of educational discourse, nor that of social discourse generally, bears witness to the fact that much remains to be done in raising awareness of its potential usefulness."⁵⁰⁴ More precisely, it is not the lack or insufficiency of knowledge about semiotics, but the fact that teacher training does not enable teachers to become well-armed in the professional sense, to become experts who can show learners the way to successful functioning in communication. Accordingly, "[a]s subject matters become more interdisciplinary, teachers will have to be more broadly trained."⁵⁰⁵ They should become aware that to train students to function logically and rationally in real life situations, teachers and tutors "should stress how meaning in each of these situations is created, demonstrate this process by example, and nurture the student's early attempts. The role of teacher is changed from that of dispenser of knowledge to one of role model and coach." Also, emphasis should "be placed on creating appropriate contexts for knowledge making, not upon knowledge transmission for purposes of scoring well on standardized tests," because "[w]hile it is certainly important for our students to remember things, a semiotic view of human capability directs our attention beyond static knowledge, to the process of knowing itself. The real and important skills of learning are those that involve learning *how* to know – how to construct meanings, not merely receive them."⁵⁰⁶

Marcel Danesi explains the need for a change in second/foreign language teaching in order to be able to develop "an overall semiotic competence (...) the ability to interrelate the underlying structure of concepts to the surface grammar and vocabulary that reflects them", a competence that oversteps two other ones that have long been cherished in second or foreign language teaching (SLT/FLT), namely, linguistic and communicative competences, "the control of grammar" and "the functional knowledge of

⁵⁰³ Cunningham (1987: 367-368)

⁵⁰⁴ Danesi (2004 : 24)

⁵⁰⁵ Cunningham (1987 : 374)

⁵⁰⁶ Cunningham (1987 : 371-374)

the uses of the target language.” He argues that learners of foreign languages frequently seem to be unable to detach themselves from classroom discourse.⁵⁰⁷ Rethinking syllabus and course book design may answer to the call, expecting a turn from structural and communicative syllabi, the former teaching a given grammatical item in its logical order within the linear sequence of grammatical elements, and the latter introducing such items whenever they are “required in the given sequence of functions to carry out some communicative task,”⁵⁰⁸ towards a semiotic syllabi, which would enable language learners to successfully communicate in a culturally adequate manner. The semiotic syllabus is supposed to focus on the development of semiotic competence, which establishes an organic connection of competences by interweaving syntactic, semantic and pragmatic aspects, and employing analytical and synthetic approaches as tools of observation. It is the ability to connect verbal and conceptual structures in a culturally adequate way. This enables one to switch between analytical and synthetic aspects both in perception and production and to choose the culturally-determined and socially appropriate meaning relevant to the actual communicative context.⁵⁰⁹ Danesi provides an explanation by summing up the common observation that it seems easier to learn second languages through the immersion in the target cultures than through various amounts of input structures according to stages. He says that “learning a language in its natural cultural context allows the learner to interrelate its forms and uses to the broader *signifying order* to which it is tied.”⁵¹⁰ Subsequently, any approach providing such a framework for exploring foreign languages and cultures would be invaluable for learners.

As a summing up of all that has been discussed so far, the development of intercultural and semiotic competences is a significant point, not only in foreign language teaching, but as a basis for academic development. Basically, it is the ability to behave adequately when confronted with expectation of other cultures, and to mediate and interpret cultural experience. Literature is said to be a very good source of information about cultural behaviour as it is regarded to be a kind of reality mirror – an appropriate tool for classroom activities. The following exemplary worksheet and its assessment are

⁵⁰⁷ Danesi (2004 : 42)

⁵⁰⁸ Danesi (2000a : 68-69)

⁵⁰⁹ Danesi (2000a : 14)

⁵¹⁰ Danesi (2000a : 21)

intended to give proof of how much the CIF theory can simplify the search for and exploitation of materials, and in what ways it can contribute, due to the limits of the present study, to one aspect of the development of intercultural competence, namely, understanding.

4.2. The first CIF survey

The survey was taken in the form of worksheets,⁵¹¹ with guiding questions and propositions. The period of investigations was between September 2008 and June 2009. The target group consisted of 87 learners and students of the English language from Hungary, Germany and Romania. Their knowledge of English ranged from pre-intermediate to proficiency level, and their age was between 15 and 45.

The following assessment discusses the findings of the 87 worksheets, evaluates and sums up the retrieved information and finally compares the results to those found by the author himself. Each item of the worksheet is examined and assessed separately, and conclusions are drawn immediately. Obviously, the results of the final assessment are summarized at the end of this section to give a perspicuous description of the studied culture that can eventually be compared at the end of the chapter. Extremities of interpretation are not discussed separately, as there are as many interpretations of one piece of literature as many interpreters, but some of them are mentioned, depending on its relevance to the subject matter.

The worksheet is designed for classroom use and consists of five major sections: 1) lead-in or warm-up activities that are intended to raise attention and get the students motivated; 2) the poem to be analysed and some room for notes; 3) while-reading tasks to be completed during the first reading(s); 4) post-reading questions to be completed with the help of repeated, selective readings; 5) the most complex final task to draw conclusions about the source culture based on the retrieved information.

The poem is titled *Evolution* and was written by Sherman Alexie. This is the only information given in advance, but from the poem it is clear that the poet is an American Indian by birth.

⁵¹¹ See the worksheet in the Appendix.

Sherman Alexie: Evolution

*Buffalo Bill opens a pawn shop on the reservation
right across the border from the liquor store
and he stays open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week*

*and the Indians come running in with jewelry
television sets, a VCR, a full-length beaded buckskin outfit
it took Inez Muse 12 years to finish. Buffalo Bill*

*takes everything the Indians have to offer, keeps it
all catalogued and filed in a storage room. The Indians
pawn their hands, saving the thumbs for last, they pawn*

*their skeletons, falling endlessly from the skin
and when the last Indian has pawned everything
but his heart, Buffalo Bill takes that for twenty bucks*

*closes up the pawn shop, paints a new sign over the old
calls his venture THE MUSEUM OF NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURES
charges the Indians five bucks a head to enter.*

WHILE-READING TASKS

Task A: collect characters from the poem.

The task is aimed at simple character identification with a secondary aim of providing a basis for further observations.

The percentage of character identification:

Buffalo Bill=86 (98,85%); Inez Muse=77 (88,51%); Indians=74 (85,06%); the last Indian=1 (1,15%). One person of the target group did not complete this task.

Accordingly, the results show that *Buffalo Bill* was easily identified as a major character of the poem, probably in contrast with the rest. Most volunteers identified *Inez Muse* and the *Indians* as of nearly the same importance, and, to understand the received numbers, it must be noted that the total sum of answers recognising Indians as the counterpart of Bill is also 86, but most of the answers divided the Indian part into two. Thus the character analysis shows a duality of humans in the poem.

One respondent parted the last Indian from the rest of the characters, and later on it turns out that the last representative of a nation has an important role in the understanding of the poem.

Task B: collect objects from the poem.

The task is aimed simply at the identification of inanimate characters, things in the poem. The answers show that it played a little trick on the respondents' mind because of the lack of clear explanation of the meaning of the word.

The percentage of object identification:

TV=83 (95,4%); VCR=82 (94,25%); the buckskin outfit=79 (90,8%); jewellery=64 (73,56%); money=20 (22,99%); skeletons=13 (14,94%); skin=10 (11,49%); heart=7 (8,05%); sign=4 (4,6%); hands=4 (4,6%); entrance fee=3 (3,45%); catalogue=2 (2,3%). One person of the target group did not complete this task.

The results provide a wide range of possible interpretations as can be seen from the distribution of objects. Mainly, there are two major groups of objects: one consists of the *TV set*, the *VCR*, the *buckskin outfit* and the *jewellery*, and the other of the rest. The division is based on numbers, and seems to have an explanation in the centrality of the objects. The central role of the TV, VCR, outfit and jewellery is obvious from the context: these are the things the Indians pawn first, they are listed in one single sentence that suggests some kind of close relation, and, although not explained by any of the respondents, probably their symbolism is not as abstract as that of other objects that makes them more easily recognisable.

The second group of objects should be discussed more or less separately as there are mostly non-related objects, with different levels of symbolism. Money received the most attention, the number probably includes both the \$20 and \$5 references; it is not signalled on the worksheets. There are 3 votes for the entrance fee, which is also a concept not worded in the poem, but is distinguished from the price of the heart. The distinction is not explained on the worksheets, but it seems that 3 respondents found it important to attach special meaning to it. Various parts of the body also belong to this group, and the reason for it may be the abstractness of symbolism again.

Two objects are listed with not many votes but they raise an important question whether a painted sign and the concept of a catalogue can be called objects or not. This is a point where the interpretative machinery starts to divert understanding from a common or usual track and leads up to completely personal interpretations. In general, objects are

physical, and it is even true to the new sign as the paint itself is tangible, but not to the catalogue as it is not present in the poem. Things are *catalogued and filed* in the pawn shop: unfortunately, there are not any clues why the catalogue was objectified and the file was not, and there is no further explanation to the objectification itself either.

Task C: collect places/scenes from the poem.

This task tries to explore how much the fundamental spatial orientation is recognised.

The percentage of place identification:

Pawn shop=72 (82,76%); liquor store=69 (79,31%); reservation=67 (77,01%); museum=46 (52,87%); storage room=27 (31,03%); border=4 (4,6%); venture=1 (1,15%).
One person of the target group did not complete this task.

Right at the beginning an interesting question is why the numbers remain below 80, although later questions reveal their significance. Most respondents considered the *pawn shop*, the *liquor store* and the *reservation* to be key places, and also many labelled the *museum* and the *storage room* as well, that also greatly contribute to the meaning of the poem. The word *border* is marked by four respondents, probably because of its semantic relation to the action of limitation similarly to that of the word *reservation*, although the analysis of the full structure '*right across the border from the liquor store*' proves its reference only to closeness in space.

Task D: identify the main theme of the poem.

The task is aimed to discover how much readers understand of the poem after a few readings. The assumption is that the first tasks (A-C) requires at least 3 readings, more precisely, scanning three times, reading for specific information. Normally, language learners are advised to read the whole text before they start working with it in order to see what the text is about. The introductory tasks are intended to improve initial understanding so as to provide the readers with a wider image of the theme.

The percentage of theme identification:

Exploitation=23 (26,44%); Indians sell/lose their culture=9 (10,34%); trade/business/commerce=8 (9,2%); the situation of the Indians=7 (8,05); the importance

of money in the world=7 (8,05%); the Indian culture is dying/dead=7 (8,05%); the Indians are tricked/cheated=5 (5,75%); a form of contact between cultures=4 (4,6%); the oppression of Indians=4 (4,6%); greed=3 (3,45%); poverty=2 (2,3%).

Seven respondents did not complete this task=8 (8,05%)

The number of 'no answers' suggest that the poem is difficult to understand, that is, its symbolism is relatively abstract. It is known that one person of the target group deliberately skipped the four introductory tasks, but seven did not answer without any explanation. Seemingly, the identification of the main theme exceeded their interpretative competence at this point.

At first sight, the answers show dispersion, but a closer look reveals similarities on a deeper level of meaning, and it is the depth of understanding that creates interpretative dissimilarities. There are easily noticeable semantic connections among some of the answers so it seems logical to start off by semantic categorisation.

Answers including primary or secondary references to human contact:

Exploitation=23 (26,44%); Indians sell/lose their culture=9 (10,34%); trade/business/commerce=8 (9,2%); the Indians are tricked/cheated=5 (5,75%); a form of contact between cultures=4 (4,6%); the oppression of Indians=4 (4,6%); greed=3 (3,45%).

Altogether 56 answers (64,38%).

Answers including primary references to Indians:

Indians sell/lose their culture=9 (10,34%); the situation of the Indians=7 (8,05%); the Indian culture is dying/dead=7 (8,05%); the Indians are tricked/cheated=5 (5,75%); the oppression of Indians=4 (4,6%).

Altogether 32 answers (36,78%).

Answers including primary references to negative treatment in human contact:

Exploitation=23 (26,44%); the Indians are tricked/cheated=5 (5,75%); the oppression of Indians=4 (4,6%).

Altogether 32 answers (36,78%).

Answers including primary or secondary references to financial activity or status:

Indians sell/lose their culture=9 (10,34%); trade/business/commerce=8 (9,2%); the importance of money in the world=7 (8,05%); greed=3 (3,45%); poverty=2 (2,3%).

Altogether 29 answers (33,33%).

According to these primary or secondary references, the poem is about a form of human contact, probably a negative one, there are the Indians on one side of the contact, and there is some kind of financial activity.

The semantic relations among the groups of answers, and the ungrouped answers together lead to further conclusions:

It is very likely that the poem is about the contact of Indians and another group of humans (due to the general patterns of schematic relations, most obviously the white men), the latter one treating the Indians negatively /oppression/, and the result is the low financial status of Indians /poverty/. The lack of financial assets leads them to the point when they start trading with the white men /sell, trade, business, commerce/ who take advantage of them /exploitation by tricking, cheating/.

The summary of answers gives an image of the main theme that seems unapt for being any more condensed without the partial losses. Thus, any of the answers prove to be acceptable, since each of them gives an adequate summary of the poem, yet none of them is complete in itself.

POST-READING QUESTIONS

Who can be the target audience?

For a valid interpretation of a piece of art, the major intentions of the artist should also be identified, and one of them is the choice of the target audience, who the artwork is created for. That intention clarifies the meaning of several intra- and intertextual relations, semantic links between the piece of work and the world, between the illustrated world and reality, and it also exposes the artist's actual attitude towards the theme.

The percentage of target audience identification:

Everyone/anyone=36 (41,38%)*; (white) Americans=17 (19,54%); Indians=17 (19,54%)**; those who pawn things=4 (4,6%); those who do not know this type of

situation (exploitation)=4 (4,6%); white people=3 (3,45%); people of the modernity=3 (3,45%). Three respondents did not answer this question. (3,45%)

*everyone but the Indians=2 (2,3%)

**young Indians=2 (2,3%)

The question requires a clear understanding of the poem, and even with a detailed analysis, it is not easy to answer, as there are several factors that may confuse facts, and also, this question is rarely omitted during the teaching of art analysis. Most of the respondents agree with a traditional purpose of art in the sense of *l'art pour l'art*, that is, an attitude towards art that does not restrict the message to a certain group of audience, so the message is addressed to anyone, and this attitude gives way to free interpretations.

However, many seem to feel some kind of orientation within the text, and give answers as *(white) Americans* (17) or *Indians* (17). The answers presume that both types of respondents build their interpretation on the fact that the poem is about the situation of American Indians (Task D), and identify the human group on the other side as Americans, mostly having with racial differentiation in mind. The answer is slightly obscure as there are several different nationalities, ethnic groups, human communities in the North America, and the various Indian tribes and nations make up only one of the major distinct groups, so the answer is exclusive in the sense that it refers to the first historical opposition on the continent – Natives versus Newcomers. The answer '*white people*' also supports this idea by calling the target audience the white people in a direct way.

The distinction between Natives and Whites as target audience reflects different orientation in understanding: those who say that the poem is written for natives consider it important for all the indigenous peoples of America to raise awareness of the negative attitude towards them, of which they most likely to be aware, and those who say that the poem is written for white Americans to raise awareness of negative discriminations, which seems a more likely reason. The former reason may be supported by the idea that Indians' awareness should be raised on every account, most that of '*young Indians*' so that they can consciously counteract in the future. Consequently, both answers are acceptable, but they are undoubtedly exclusive.

In general, the poem describes how pawn shops and usury can overexploit people, how negative effects and consequences there are. Accordingly, the answer '*those who pawn things*' may be an acceptable interpretation for the time being; however, later on it is ruled out by further evidence of a deeper and more complex meaning.

Another seemingly excellent answer is '*those who do not know this type of situation (exploitation)*' as it corresponds with the major theme of the poem but for a really obtrusive effect it may not be advisable to limit the target audience.

'*People of the modernity*' is a neat response. It clarifies that lack of clues to temporal settings both within and outside the poem, filling it up with moral issues to make it interesting and worthy for everyone today. In this sense, the answer further broadens the group that say the poem is for everyone. This answer, however, does not give free way to interpretations but asks for serious consideration and evaluation; moreover, it seems to regard the poem as an artistic call for paying more attention to the situation of Indians, or in a broader sense, to this type of situations. Although untold, it is very likely that many respondents saying '*everyone*' would agree with this train of thought.

The answer '*everyone but the Indians*' is an exclusive one again, but this is understandable because the Indians are most probably aware of their discriminated status and there is no sore need for raising awareness, but the rest of the world may not be aware of the weight of the situation so they are more likely to be targeted.

Can the location of the poem be an existing place?

The question is aimed at finding out how far readers can get in distinguishing the fictional world in the poem and reality or how far they go in identifying the fictional world with the real world, based on analogies.

The percentage of target audience identification:

Yes=74 (85,06%); no=11 (12,64%); maybe=2 (2,3%).

Seemingly, most respondents find the location of the poem a place that may as well exist in reality, and their answers are based on the fact that *reservations* do exist even today. There are some who list other reasons such as the existence of *pawn shops* and *liquor stores*, and also the possibility of their existence on reservations. The

analogies between fiction and reality thus make readers accept the given example of fiction as real.

There are some who think the place cannot exist in reality, and their reasons include the impossibility of such a coincidence of names and actions, the fact the Bill does not live anymore or that Inez Muse has never existed. Those who say '*maybe*' explain their uncertainty by similar reasons: the impossibility of such a coincidence and the improbable existence of characters. These explanations prove the permissiveness of the question and the possibility of an infinite number of answers: in fact, there are no restrictions made by the designer of the worksheet, exactly for to see how many different answers and explanations are given. Apart from the impossibilities and improbabilities, respondents giving negative or unsure answers admit the existence of reservations, pawn shops and liquor stores; consequently, they do not deny the possibility of such a location on a symbolic level, under certain circumstances.

How can the characters be grouped? (Alternatives: real-fictional, famous-unknown, cowboys-Indians)

The question is aimed at mapping the possible distinctions between characters, and to see what kind of relationships readers may find. The alternatives are given so as to facilitate mind work. Although they provide exemplary dichotomies, some respondents do not settle for a dual distinction but opt for a trichotomy. Many change the balance by giving information only about one side, but foreshadowing that there may be even more than one sides left undescribed. Due to their wide variety, the answers are classified as Table 2 shows. 30 respondents did not answer this question (34,48%). Some of the respondents misunderstood the task and thought they were asked to find further alternatives as they were not allowed to apply the exemplary ones, and they had difficulties in solving this task, this was why they skipped it.

The basic difference between answers is the division of characters into two or three types. Most respondents opt for a kind of dichotomy; subsequently, it must be a more univocal form of classification. However, the given answers show that within the dualistic framework there are three major types that are different in quality: A) clear oppositions, where, at least, one characteristic is observed on both sides and there is a

relatively stable balance of attitudes;⁵¹² B) obscure oppositions or non-oppositions, where the characteristics, on which the grouping is based, are partially or not antithetical, consequently, there can never be clear attitudinal balance; C) unpaired features, where the answer describes only one participant, and the quality of the given characteristic lets us think that it is also a dualistic grouping, but the attitudinal balance is not measurable. The triplets seem to be the result of a different logic: although there may be a sort of hierarchy between the constituents of dual groups, among triplet constituents, it is a must. The hierarchy is always based on some kind of inequality: on a dualistic level, it is basically the opposition of positive and negative, true or false, yes or no, or the opposition of their variations, whereas on among the constituents of a triplet, the question of differences is much more complex: in a case where the constituents are X, Y and Z, there are 3 different connections (X-Y, X-Z, Y-Z) with 6 attitudinal variations (X→Y, X←Y, X→Z, X←Z, Y→Z, Y←Z). In a dichotomy, there are only 2 possible attitudinal variations, which are easier to deal with, mainly because most binary oppositions presuppose equal polarities such as the *clear oppositions*, otherwise the dichotomy would be unstable or incomplete.⁵¹³ In a triplet, the sum of polarities is not responsible for individual polarities, as each pair of attitudinal variations between pair constituents may be either stable or unstable, and also the relationship between pairs (sub-systems) may be stable or unstable; it is the balance of the overall system itself that must be maintained.

⁵¹² The terms *attitude*, *attitudinal balance*, *attitudinal variation* here refer to qualitative or quantitative relations between constituents of oppositions such as *white-black*, *strong-weak*, *cowboy-Indian*, etc. The attitude between these antonyms is equal, as there is no hierarchical difference, and thus it is called a clear opposition. Obscure oppositions like *modern-Indian* or *greedy-naïve* include constituents that are not antonymous so they are unequal in quality or quantity, which creates a hierarchical difference, that is, attitudinal imbalance, depending on context. The constituent in higher position in the hierarchy is placed there with the help of contextual factors: as an example, ‘*modern*’ has negative overtones in Alexie’s poem due to the theme of the poem (=full context), so the attitude towards it is relatively negative, whereas towards ‘*Indian*’ it is positive. Accordingly, there is attitudinal imbalance to the *Indian*’s profit. Polarities are the end-points or extremes of a balance that are signalled by attitudes: in the case of ‘*good-bad*’, *good* is a positive characteristic and *bad* is a negative one, and they take place at the positive and negative end-points because they are not modified by any external factors (e.g. really good, not very bad), thus they are extremes, and, as they are in clear opposition, there is stable attitudinal balance. Constituents classified according to their attitudinal variations and balances play an important role in the interpretation of the overall meaning.

⁵¹³ Every system struggles for stability so unstable or incomplete systems must be on the way to an optimal state, an attitudinal balance.

This train of thought provides the following alternatives:

Clear oppositions are detected when readers perceive attitudinal balance between constituents, but the oppositions become obscure when readers do not or cannot perceive balance. Clear oppositions let us think that readers consider each constituent equally important from the meaning's point of view, and obscure oppositions seem to prove different measures of importance that may be clarified by further analysis. If so, in the case of *Buffalo Bill* and *Inez Muse*, they are equally important characters in the poem, and any change would cause recesses in or total collapse of the message. Similarly, in the case of *modern* and *Indian*, one is placed higher in the hierarchy, and further analysis will reveal reasons and validate placing.

As for the unpaired features, they seem to be examples of ellipsis as they are all clear characteristics. The most feasible oppositions (clear oppositions) according to the poetic context would be:

modern – traditional/conventional/ancient,

white – Indian/native/indigenous,

newcomer – native/indigenous,

despicable/mean/evil/scrounging - *credulous*.

The closer analysis of dichotomies among clear oppositions gives the following detailed descriptions:

Buffalo Bill: bad, conqueror, superior, exploiter; *Inez Muse*: good, conquered, exploited, subordinate. Buffalo Bill stands for the white men, and Inez Muse stands for the Indians.

Table 2

Dual groups / pairs	Clear oppositions	Buffalo Bill	Inez Muse
		Real	Fictional
		Bad	Good
		Famous	Unknown
		Non-native	Native
		Conqueror	Conquered
		Rich	Poor
		Exploiter	Exploited
		Superior	Subordinate
		Non-Indian	Indian
		White men	Indians
		General figures	Exact figures
		Male	Female
		Buffalo Bill=real famous cowboy	Inez Muse=fictional unknown Indian
		Buffalo Bill, Inez Muse=fictional	Indians=real
		Buffalo Bill=famous, fictional	Inez Muse=famous, real
	Obscure oppositions or non-oppositions	Greedy	Naïve
		Coloniser	The folk / the people
		Evil	Savage / native
		Modern	Indian
		Americans	Indians
		Buffalo Bill	Indians
		General figures	Inez Muse=the chief
		General figures	Inez Muse=uncertain, maybe famous, maybe not
	Unpaired features	Modern	-
		White	-
		Newcomer	-
		-	Credulous

Triplets	1. Buffalo Bill	2. Indians	3. Inez Muse
	Buffalo Bill=a fictional famous cowboy	Inez Muse=a real famous Indian	Indians=real unknown Indians

Obviously, there are allusions to uncertainty: in complex descriptions, Buffalo Bill is agreed upon as someone famous, but his being fictional or real is uncertain; and the case of Inez Muse is even more confused: she is considered either to be real or fictional, famous or unknown. The cause of uncertainty is probably the fact that the name of Buffalo Bill is well-known worldwide, but the information about his life is uncertain,

and this partial knowledge presupposes a similar level of reality of the other character, but leaves readers even more uncertain.

One of the clearer situations is the dichotomy of Buffalo Bill and Inez Muse on one side and the Indians on the other: the first two are considered to be fictional and the nation to be real. Indians do exist today, but people called Buffalo Bill and Inez Muse most probably not. Obviously, it is again the question of reality: once both Bill and Muse might as well have existed together with Indians, even if they do not exist today, and present day Indians are also different from their predecessors. Accordingly, the perception of reality is different because of continuity of Indian existence.

The obscure or non-oppositions reveal relations that seem to struggle for optimality similar to that among the clear oppositions. The indirect semantic relations with a minimal explanation can (re)gain stability. It is important to take the present poetic context into account. The following explanations try to find the clear oppositions for each obscure one.

Greedy people do not necessarily exploit *naïve* people, but try to gain as much from life as they can. But: Buffalo Bill exploits Indians; the Indians pawn everything in order to improve their status, although history brings examples of the opposite result, thus the natives can be called credulous or naïve. The clear opposition is: *exploiter* and *exploited*.

Colonisers normally take over land with everything upon it, animate and inanimate. Territories inhabited and later colonised mean that colonisers meet native inhabitants, and most frequently become superior to them. According to the common view, the subordinate group, the minority, the lower social layer is called *the folk* or *the people*. The possible clear oppositions are: *conqueror* and *conquered*, *superior* and *subordinate*.

The opposition of *evil* and *savage/native*⁵¹⁴ is easily explicable by the ancient theory that humans are innocent by birth. The possible clear oppositions are: *evil* and *innocent*, or, based on the other part, *native* and *non-native*. The opposites of *savage* can be *civilised*, *modern*, *developed*.

⁵¹⁴ In a broader sense: *evil* and *savage* are synonymous as they both have a connotation that refers to a human being aggressive and cruel. Native inhabitants in many places were also considered to be cruel because of their unusual and apparently violent behaviour and activities.

Indians and *modernity* appear to be opposite terms at first sight, but later on it turns out that Indians do belong to modernity, they simply cultivate traditions and try to keep to conventions. Thus the clear opposition is: *modern* and *traditional*.

The distinction between *Americans* and *Indians* are correctly a distinction between *white Americans* and *Indians*.

When *Buffalo Bill* is contrasted with *the Indians*, symbolism must be mentioned: Bill is *the symbol of white Americans*, and its opposite is *the symbol of Indians*.

The non-oppositions of *general figures* and *Inez Muse* are completely unacceptable as oppositions, because they leave out both Buffalo Bill and the Indians: yet they are informative enough to see how uncertain Inez Muse's status is. In the first case, she is directly linked to the buckskin outfit she makes, and is considered to be the chief – not only the creator but also the wearer of the dress. The second case clearly refers to uncertain her existence.

The triplets provide more relevant information about individual interpretations:

A) The ordering of characters (1. Buffalo Bill, 2. Indians, 3. Inez Muse) reveals a special hierarchy among them, placing Buffalo Bill at the top, the Indians midway, and Inez Muse at the bottom. This suggests that the reader thinks of Buffalo Bill as the most important figure in the poem, most probably superior in character that stands above the Indians and also Inez Muse. The character of Buffalo Bill stands for the white men, the people who stand above Indians. Thus there is a duality between white men and Indians. What about Inez Muse? She makes the buckskin outfit; accordingly she is an Indian so she belongs to the subordinate group. She is distinguished from the rest of the Indians that may be the result of her being mentioned separately. The confusing point is why the distinct person is placed at the lowest point of the hierarchy. Unfortunately, there is no further explanation on the worksheets.

B) Buffalo Bill is a fictional famous cowboy; Inez Muse is a real famous Indian; the Indians are real unknown Indians. As for Bill, his name is well-known so he is famous, and he is also known as a white figure of the Wild West so he is a cowboy. He is a symbolic figure in the poem with a reference to the white men, thus the character is fictional. Inez Muse is mentioned separately in the poem, although she belongs to the group of Indians, so she must be a famous Indian, however, there is no information on the

worksheet about her being real. The Indians are obviously considered to be real Indians because Indians still exist, and the reason for their being unknown is probably that they are Indians and also the symbols of their nation, and individually they are unimportant from the poem's point of view.

Who do you think Buffalo Bill and Inez Muse are?

The question of the task is to clarify the description of both characters in order to be able to explain their role in the poetic context. 13 respondents did not answer this question (14,94%). Some reported to have skipped the question because they had collected their ideas about the two characters at the previous item and could not find anything else to say.

Table 3 shows the characteristics collected (without an intention to find clear oppositions):

Buffalo Bill	Inez Muse
American	Indian
Cowboy	A symbol of Indians
White	An Indian tailor
Oppressor	An Indian chief
A very rich man	A fictive figure
Cunning	An Indian chief's wife
A greedy man	A symbol of hard work
Famous figure	A symbol of naïve Indians
Exploiter	Oppressed
An evil man	Diligent
A material person	A native person
A merchant / trader	-
A symbol of Americans	-
A symbol of the exploiters	-
Cowboy or Indian	-
A famous Indian	-
Fictional in the poem	Real in the poem

The characteristics show that there are clear oppositions such as cowboy-Indian, fictional-real, oppressor-oppressed, white-Indian; however, at this point another question is more significant: what is the meaning of the apparently incongruous answers? There are three questions to be answered:

1) Buffalo Bill is once called a famous Indian, although previously there was no answer like that. Why? An extratextual reason: the test group included some students with special needs as well in order to further broaden the variety of readers and it may be

the result of a temporal loss of attention that may as well happen to every kind of readers. Since the worksheets had to be completed anonymously, there is no clue to the identity of the reader, and, according to the previously collected data on the worksheet, the answer seems completely the result of the lack of attention.

2) What makes a reader think of Bill as fictional in the poem and Inez as real in the poem? Buffalo Bill has repeatedly been identified as a symbol of white Americans, whereas in a trichotomy the Indians stand for themselves, so Inez does not have to stand for them, and also Inez is mentioned separately so as to make a distinction between her and the rest of the Indians. The conclusion is, therefore, that Buffalo Bill is only a symbolic figure in the poem, a fictional character, whereas Inez may be a famous or at least known person in real life, consequently, real in the poem as well.

3) Why is it difficult to decide whether Bill is a cowboy or an Indian? The story takes place on a reservation, and none of the names sound like typical Indian names. Another explanation can be that capitalist people exploit even their 'companions', and as Indians struggle for survival, they may adopt this greedy way of treating others. Although further analysis may reveal different characteristics of the Indians in general, Bill may be an exception that emphasises the opposition between the traditional and modern lifestyle of Indians. The uncertainty may also be the result of inappropriate connection of findings; however, this does not seem an appropriate explanation.

What can 'pawn shop' and 'liquor store' symbolize?

The question is aimed collecting the possible meanings of the two institutions as symbols. The respondents chose two ways to solve the problem: one is to give an overall answer to the question without making any difference between the two places, and the other is to make a distinction and analyse each symbol separately. The former technique mainly provides generalisations based on direct and indirect symbolism, whereas the latter reveals functional and attitudinal differences: describes the socio-political functions, semantic connotations – both direct and indirect symbolism. 10 respondents did not answer this question (11,49%). There were no reports.

A) In general, the *pawn shop* and the *liquor store* are symbols of both the negative discrimination from the white men's part and the losses Indians have to suffer from. They

give information on the structure of the multicultural society and the internal relations within that, about the present status of Indians, the trends in economy, the clash of modernisation and traditionalism, and the resulting psychological distortion.

B.1) The *pawn shop* is the symbol of the negative treatment Indians have to suffer, the psychological characteristics on both the side of whites and natives, the status of economy, and the structuralisation of society, and what the shop itself functionally means in the society.

B.2) The *liquor store* is the symbol of the psychological and social status of Indians, the white attitude towards natives, and what the store itself functionally means in the society. The store is the symbol of being trapped between past and present, what results in hopelessness because Indians cannot cope well with civilisation.

Table 4 shows the collected meanings (without an intention of classification):

Pawn shop / liquor store	Pawn shop	Liquor store
Capitalism and moral corruption; the superiority and cruelty of whites; the destruction of natural values; hopelessness; despair; a dead-end situation; exploitation; losing Indianness; poverty; depravation; indecent places; the consumerist society; lost lives; extinction; new world versus old culture; the spread of American culture; alcoholism and marketing; the local government; money, greed.	Possibility; money; selling ourselves; tricking; property loss; poverty; exploitation; falling in debt; greed; the exploiting America; Indian life; being cunning; materialism; oppression; exigency; financial and social status of Indians	Happiness; good mood; pennilessness; the drowning of sorrow; drinking; alcoholism and hopelessness; where the Indians' money goes; escape; oppression; the joy of America; white culture; depravation; western attitude; a place of dirt; the moral status of Indians due to their social conditions

What kind of symbols are 'television sets', 'a VCR'?

The question is aimed at collecting the possible meanings of the two electrical devices as symbols. According to the list of answers, there is no need for further explanation. 9 respondents did not answer this question (10,34%). There were no reports.

They are the symbols of:

modern life; development; being 'cultured'; white influence; the co-existence of modern life and old culture; a certain value; wealth and richness; the loss of culture and soul; useless things; civilisation; the 'education' of people; white culture; alienation from Mother Nature and the traditional values; the civilisation that Indians do not need; cultural blending; globalisation; a changing world.

What kind of symbol is 'a full-length beaded buckskin outfit'? (Help: link it to Inez Muse)

The question is aimed at collecting the possible meanings of the special piece of clothing as a symbol. There are three types of answers: a) reference to symbolism; b) actual meaning; c) reference to the identity of Inez Muse. According to the list of answers, there is no need for further explanation. 10 respondents did not answer this question (11,49%). There were no reports.

The buckskin outfit is the symbol of:

Culture; beauty; being Indian-made; a social status; hard work; poverty; need; Indianness; how long hard work becomes nothing in a second; traditions; roots; identity; giving culture away; power; uniqueness.

The buckskin outfit is:

A Sunday's best; a chief's wear; handmade; made of natural materials.

Inez Muse is a defender of traditions.

Concerning production, what is the difference between a VCR and a buckskin outfit?

The question is aimed at collecting all the differences of production in order to unfold as much of their symbolic layers as possible. 4 respondents did not answer this question (4,6%). There were no reports.

Table 5 shows all the differences without an intention of classification:

VCR	Buckskin outfit
Factory-made, machine-made	Handmade, manmade
Takes short time to finish	Takes a long time to finish
Low quality	High quality
Modern	Traditional
Cheap, it has financial value	Expensive because it has moral value too
Unnecessary, luxurious	Necessary, not luxurious
Produced with developed technology	Produced with not very highly developed technology
Made without human touch	Made with direct human touch
Made by whites	Made by Indians
The production requires trained makers	The production does not need trained makers
Made of non-natural materials	Made of natural materials
Mass product	Unique product
Short durability	Long durability
Must be bought (in shops)	Can be made (at home)
Does not need hard work	Needs hard work
No need for creativity and imagination	Needs creativity and imagination
There are material and functional differences	

Who may be politically advantaged: Indians or White Men? Is there any evidence in the poem?

The questions are aimed at revealing as much about the social structure of the multicultural society as possible. The respondents approached the problem from two viewpoints, unfortunately providing minimal evidence; consequently, the answers are ordered as in a simple case description. 4 respondents did not answer this question (4,6%). There were no reports.

Note: from the pedagogical point of view, this item of the worksheet should serve as a turning-point where the readers' attention would shift a little towards having the white men in focus. This is a kind of warm-up exercise for the last task.

White men are politically advantaged because

they live in civilisation; they know laws; are technically and politically developed; they have more rights; there is negative/racial discrimination; Buffalo Bill is permitted to open a pawn shop; Bill buys the heart for 20 dollars; Indians live on reservations

Subsequently, Indians

are exploited; poor; excluded; defenceless; oppressed; tricked / cheated; discriminated; have to live on reservations; are despised and humiliated (see the \$20 and \$5 sections).

Explain the following expression: 'all catalogued and filed'.

The task is aimed at finding out how far the readers can keep up with their train of thoughts, how deeply they can sink into the well of meanings in order to get a full meaning of the poem with every single part taken into consideration.

The respondents approached the problem from two viewpoints, unfortunately providing minimal evidence. 23 respondents did not answer this question (36,78%). Some reported they had great difficulties in solving this task so they skipped it.

According to the respondents the expression has two types of meanings:

A) (if referring to objects) – recorded; kept account of; neatly organised; treated impersonally; lost uniqueness; monitored; exploited; made use of; observed; taken; divided; precision; traditions and values defined by money although it is impossible.

B) (if referring to humans) – deprived of rights / freedom / humanness; a kind of control.

Final task: draw conclusions about the culture(s) of North American Indians in general.

Possible themes: social statuses; clothing; technical development; cultivation of traditions; legal system, political system; habits; art.

The completion of this task is the main objective of the CIF theory: the question whether it is possible to get an insight to Sherman Alexie's cultural background. The worksheet generalises the target culture, asks the readers to find clues leading to the Indians cultures – without any knowledge about how the CIF theory works, this type of complex analysis can hardly ever reveal facts that would not be relevant to the Indian cultures in general. 17 respondents did not complete this task (19,54%). Some reported that they found it too difficult to complete – they were between 15 and 17 years of age, most probably they did not have enough experience in their studies.

Social status:

Indians are in a lower status, neglected, monitored, oppressed, exploited, disadvantaged, subordinated, they are in an exposed situation and they are poor (*e.: Inez Muse).⁵¹⁵ Lucky Indians are supposedly in a middle status.

⁵¹⁵ *e. means evidence

White people are in a higher status, they are rich (*e.: Buffalo Bill), superior and dominant.

The society is money-based and there is negative discrimination (*e.: reservation).

Clothing:

Traditional and modern types of clothing are present at the same time: traditional pieces of clothing and jewellery are still worn. Modern clothing is worn because the traditional has to be sold, and also because Indians are more civilised. A few valuable pieces are still worn, e.g. the precious beaded buckskin outfit. The traditional way of clothing is becoming extinct; it is made of natural materials (e.g. animals' skin), highly decorated, special, handmade / self-made, considered to be old-fashioned or not fashionable.

Technical development:

Indians follow the level of the white men as they adapt modern technologies and products so their technologies are modern(ised), they use TVs and VCRs, their technical level is of late 20th century / contemporary, because they are interested in modern technologies. Their technical development is slower because they live separately. Modern and traditional technologies are present at the same time: modern electrical gadgets and self-made clothes. Indians depend on the white men's items in order to become modern – modernisation is the result of interest and need.

Cultivation of traditions:

The traditional way of making clothes is significant, so the cultivation of traditions is significant but very difficult to do. Old and new cultures live together, and traditions seem to disappear. The cultivation works mainly on the reservations: the Indians are losing values.

Legal system:

Indians suffer from unequal treatment based on racial discrimination (white versus non-white), so they are disadvantaged. Indians have fewer rights. There is a probable stereotypisation of Indians as the lower/lowest layer of society; they are the guilty ones whenever there are conflicts. The system is bad / weak, not impartial, and taking part in it is mainly restricted to whites (*e.: catalogued, reservation).

Political system:

Respondents gave basically the same description as of the legal system; they did not divide the two, and listed the same words as evidence.

Habits:

The Indians still make and wear traditional clothes and jewellery, using natural materials. As they assimilate to the modern society of the country, they try to keep their habits but it is difficult to do so habits and traditions seem to gradually disappear. They also take up bad habits such as going to pubs and drinking (*e.: buckskin outfit, jewellery).

Art:

Their arts are highly developed. They create handmade clothes and jewellery that are colourful; they use natural materials for art, and their works of art are fines (sophisticated) and decorated. Unfortunately, most of their artworks can be found in museums today (*e.: museum, jewellery, buckskin outfit, beaded).

Further notes:

The title of the poem is Evolution that originally means change, development with a positive connotation, but in this context it means loss and destruction, so it has a negative connotation.

The poem points beyond its details: the Indians culture symbolises all lost values of humanity, accordingly, it depicts the evolution of mankind.

4.3. Summary of worksheet assessment

The test group seems to have completed all the tasks successfully as they managed to draw conclusions about the source culture. Without any introductory explanations, and guiding instruction meanwhile, it was expected to be a difficult but motivating group of exercises. The test group reported that they found the worksheet tasks motivating and interesting and some even asked for further possibilities to do similar practice.

4.4. The same analysis done by the author in August 2008

Characters: Buffalo Bill, Inez Muse, Indians, the last Indian

Objects: jewelry, TV set, VCR, full-length beaded buckskin outfit, hands, thumb, skeletons, skin, heart, sign.

Places/scenes: pawn shop, reservation, liquor store, storage room, museum

Main theme: the main event giving the central theme of the poem describes the exploitation of the Indians, representing the tricks and frauds of the White Man. It is still the old situation: the white men capitalize the valuable by harnessing the living and exploiting the perceptible.

Target audience: either *humanity* to see the status of Indians, or *whites* to understand how bad it is what they do to Indians, or *Indians* to become able to read between the lines. The language of the poem is purely English, there are no loan words from Indian languages, which limits the target audience to those capable of understanding written / spoken English. The poet is a contemporary American Indian.

Location of the poem: fictional in the poem as it is symbolic and generalising, existing in real life as there are reservations, there is discrimination, exclusion. It is important that in '*the land of the free and the brave*' there are still reservations. It is reinforced by giving the time of the poem: the present.

Character grouping:

Buffalo Bill: the symbol of the dominant group of humans; famous, existing name (a figure of the Wild West) with fictional existence within the poem's framework; negative figure; symbol of exploitation, abuse, and meanness

Inez Muse: the symbol of Indians; the symbol of hard work; unknown, generalised name with fictional existence within the poem's framework

Indians: generalised not only through the use of plural; unknown, existing with real existence within the poem's framework; relatively positive figures; symbols of the exploited

The last Indian: the character highlights Bill's (the White Men's) exploiting intention over the edge of reason, the final point of cultural exploitation does not coincide with the final point of financial exploitation.

Buffalo Bill and Inez Muse:

Buffalo Bill is the symbol of White culture, the superior group of humans on the territory, the dominant group that holds power, control in their hands – evidence: opens a pawn shop on the reservation,

Inez Muse is the symbols of Indian culture, the subordinate hard-working group of humans on the territory, the exploited group that is in an exposed position without much possibility to resist white dominance and defend itself

'Pawn shop' and 'liquor store':

Pawn shop: functionally a place where you can leave your property in return of some money, and you can get your stuff back as soon as you pay the required amount of money back. Normally people pawn things when they need money, when they are poor. Thus the pawn shop becomes the symbol of poverty.

Liquor store: it is a place where alcoholic beverages are available. In most cultures, this type of places attracts two types of people: the poor, who tend to spend their time drinking, drowning their sadness into booze, disappointed and, frequently, pushed to the periphery of society. The other type mainly consists of people who visit pubs in order to hang out with friends and acquaintances. According to the given context, the visitors of this liquor store on the reservation are likely to be the Indians who belong to the first type due to the socio-political exclusion controlled by white dominance.

Accordingly, both places are symbols of exclusion and poverty, despair and hopelessness.

TV and VCR: these electronic devices are products of highly developed communities, mostly produced by machines in manufactures. They are mass products, completely lacking unique characteristics, consequently having financial value basically. The fact that Indians pawn them strengthen their value in the world of money, and so TV sets and VCRs bring Indians closer to the modernised world of Whites, a technically more developed sphere. The Indians are unlikely to be excluded from factories where mainly

blue-collar workers are employed, so they take part in the production. However, all the electronic devices symbolise the white culture, the one that induced changes in the Indian lifestyle.

‘A full-length beaded buckskin outfit’: the symbol of Indianness, of the Indian culture. It is made of natural materials and, due to its being handmade, the outfit is unique. The time span of production is very long, suggesting that the maker is tenacious and diligent, who persist in doing his or her job perfectly with full attention. In the so-called pre-modern societies, artworks do not only have aesthetic but also social functions, subsequently, the decorated outfit is probably an item of clothing worn at special occasions or by distinct members of the community. If so, it may be a kind of Sunday’s best, or may be worn by a person belonging to the upper layer of the community.

Production – buckskin outfit and VCR:

A full-length beaded buckskin outfit takes a long time to finish as it is handmade and fully decorated by a single person whereas a VCR is far less time-consuming to make. The way of production ensures the outfit’s being a unique work of art unlike mass produced VCRs. Further difference in production is that the complex electronic devices lack the contribution of the human hand compared to traditional Indian clothes. The designing process also differs as in the case of modern gadgets aesthetics and functionality are separate, but with the buckskin outfit they are completely blended. Due to its complexity, a VCR requires special training for the producers, often special skills for each phase of the procedure. As for a handmade piece of clothing, the expertise of a single person is enough for the whole work. As a final idea, mass produced goods usually have only financial value in the eyes of the producers but concerning self-made things, social and aesthetic values stand well before financial values; moreover, they are generally considered priceless for possessing the former two types of values, which cannot be defined in terms of money.

Politically advantaged:

Buffalo Bill, that is, the White Man is unquestionably in a higher position than Indians. He is permitted to open a shop on the reservation and not only for general

bilateral commercial activity but for usury, which emphasizes his privileged status within the society. Usury is a form of exploitation, and is normally supported by socio-political dominance. Bill's being privileged is further explained by his freedom in transforming the shop into a museum after the complete exploitation of Indian property; the museum enables him to exploit financial assets, the only thing left.

Another aspect of white political dominance is represented by the presence of reservations, places of exclusion and full monitoring. Reservations are tools of territorial limitation used to provide the Indians with a guaranteed measure of land, and also providing white men with the possibility to keep a close eye on Indians. Reservations are transparent prisons in the sense that they provide freedom, apparently free rights of land and local authority, but the freedom of action, be it social, political, legal, or any other form related to social life, is actually limited and controlled – in a word, shaped – by rules and regulations of the national government. Briefly, reservations provide a vision of freedom.

'All catalogued and filed':

The White Man is obsessed with identification of everything around him, partly because of his fear of the unknown, and partly because he frequently wishes for full control, so the expression is again a symbol of the white men's way of doing things. In more details, the past participles express the completed action of keeping account of or bookkeeping of items. Within the present context, the expression primarily refers to all the animate and inanimate entities, every property of Indians that they pawn, but the poetic exaggeration of pawning by listing body parts add up to a generalised image of loss: the way Indians pawn themselves is the symbolic way of pawning their culture, their identity. Putting things in catalogues and files means practical division and re-assembly, de- and reconstruction, which results in definite reformation of pawned items. Going on with the above train of thought, the pawning of a culture inevitably means the loss of it, since a culture is a complex of interrelated segments, and once there are even the smallest splits within that intricate web, the imbalance may result in the collapse of the entire system. Thus the examined expression means sums up the phases of cultural loss: firstly, the culture is divided into unrelated segments by pawning, then, the every form of value

is stripped away from these segments in order to transform them into mere items of financial value.

CONCLUDING IDEAS

Social statuses:

In general, the Indians possess a lower status in the society. They are excluded as can be seen from the facts they live on reservations and have far less rights than the dominant part of the society. Their rights are not only less in amount but also less in efficiency. Subsequently, they are likely to have little opportunity to change their status, because the legal-political system of the county, and obviously the national legislation and domestic policy jointly set up restrictions against it.

Clothing:

The poet mentions only one piece of clothing: the full-length beaded buckskin outfit, but there seem to be several clues to widen the picture. Firstly, the named item with its decoration may belong to someone with a special role, or a female person in community; it must be a distinguished piece, otherwise it would not be mentioned together with the TV and the VCR, which are so typical of the white culture. Accordingly, it may be the outfit of a person in the upper layer, the medicine man, the chief, the most respected sage or warrior, or a woman, probably of a higher status such as the medicine woman, the chief's wife, or the wife of someone from the upper layer. The decoration suggests that it is used on special occasions such as rituals and celebrations. Another idea is brought about by the length of the outfit: it can be a referent to climatic, social, political factors; however, it does not seem to be relevant here.

Apart from the buckskin outfit, concerning technological development and cultural blending in a multinational and multicultural society such as the USA, the Indian community has probably assimilated to a certain level by adapting types of clothing different from their traditional style, therefore the variety of clothes Indians wear consists of a modern and traditional pieces, presumably, chosen to suit to the occasion.

Technical development:

The Indians are proved to be users of modern technology: TV sets and VCRs. The idea of being users does not come from the mere fact that they pawn these gadgets, but from the ideas that Indians may often work for factories that produce electrical equipment, and that they are also part of the modern American nation, no matter how negatively discriminated. Therefore, Indians are at least partly modernised. On the other hand, although it is not mentioned in the poem, they are very likely to continue to make traditional artworks and tools for everyday or special use. The modernisation of Indians is further supported by the use of the present tense that now generalises the theme of exploitation. Obviously, partial assimilation is unavoidable, or rather, necessary. From the technological point of view, modern and traditional co-exist: the cultural loss depicted does not prevent the Indians from using their conventional technologies even when their culture is about to fall apart or disappear. The electronic gadgets taken over from the white culture and the buckskin outfit appear together in the poem, so there is no temporal distinction between them, one does not exist in time when the other does not so. To sum it up briefly, the image of Indian technological development is dualistic.

Cultivation of traditions:

First, it is advisable to collect all the items from the poem that refer to traditions and culture in general such as reservation, jewelry, full-length beaded buckskin outfit, and stanza 3 and 4. The word reservation itself refers to the protection of something or someone, or the maintaining of a period of time or a segment of space for a special purpose, consequently, an Indian reservation may or rather should be apt for establishing culturally necessary temporal and spatial possibilities for the cultivation of traditions. Once the Indians are forced to live on reservations, it would be an understandable solution if they paid more attention to their traditions than elsewhere, saving time for celebrations and rituals when and where they would put on tribal costumes, and revitalize cultural practices.

Due to the lack of direct clues to whether they do so or not, the indirect references ought to be observed next. The pawning of jewelry and the outfit expresses the loss of material culture. As these are listed together with TVs and VCRs, the reader should

identify an intention to protect folklore, the mental and spiritual assets, even through the sacrifice of material values. Unquestionably, in most human communities, people have long recognised or established the hierarchy of values, placing internal values, qualities and, of course, knowledge at the top. The Indians, thus, would rather lose material values than spiritual ones; this may be the reason why the poet lists them firstly. Further evidence is provided in the 3rd and 4th stanzas where parts of the body are mentioned as pawned items. The hands are pawned first that are farthest from the quintessence of the body, located at the end of the limbs, and they are even divided into most and least significant segments as the thumbs are saved for last, the most unique end of the hand. The division is understandable if there is a hierarchy of importance among various particles of the hand, towards the most peculiar one. The pawning of the hand, however, is one of the most significant losses as it is a most apt tool for communication; similarly, one can find a tool of the same importance in the scope of culture, the loss of which would cause damages of the same measure. Another great loss is the skeleton, the central pier of the body, in the present context the centre or quintessence of culture; with the loss of the skeleton, humans do not find their place within the skin as everything become unstable within, and, similarly, without the fundamental element of the holding device every element becomes unstable, imbalanced and uncertain, subsequently, to identify it with cultural loss, humans lose the stable substrate upon which their cultural identity is built. Accordingly, we can conclude that Indians cultivate their traditions in order to preserve their cultural identity.

Legal and political systems:

The two systems are now discussed together because they equally contribute to how the case stands with Indians; the social status of native North Americans, as stated above, is strictly controlled and shaped by the dominant ‘majority’ in the country. Reservations provide evidence for the exclusion of natives, and the existence of the institution itself displays the divided political power: on a reservation local rights and duties control the life of a community, but they are limited by national rules and regulations as in the example of Buffalo Bill who opens a pawn shop there – and the reader must understand at once – not to the Indians’ profit. If it is possible, the Indians have fewer rights than the majority even on the reservation, which is established for

them. In this sense Indians are not only excluded but oppressed, politically disadvantaged. As for national legislation, Indians may be lagging behind again, and, although there is no justified evidence in the poem, it is enough to think of multicultural societies so as to recognize the negative aspects of Indian status. The national legislative body usually mainly consists of members of higher social status, frequently depending on financial assets in the background, and on local level, even if it is a different case, unfortunately, a strong resistance may not be effective owing to its hands being forced. As a consequence, the Indian minority is disadvantaged both legally and politically, as their rights and obligations do not allow of unrestricted initiatives in order to change their status. Probably, this is the reason why communities, otherwise known as wise and inventive, do as explained in the poem, and experienced throughout the history of multinational encounters.

Habits:

The term 'habit' itself is so dim due to its being defined differently in terms of every single field of science that one would find it impossible to draw conclusions about the poet's culture, so it is best to start off with a brief definition that would suffice the present semiotic approach. Habit, habitual and other derivations convey a meaning of repetition and stability, so, considering signs, they involve similarity of sign use, a pragmatic sameness. From the cultural point of view, the pragmatic sameness is manifested through the use of signs in an identical context respectively. The buckskin outfit and the jewellery provide examples of cultural signs; the idea is supported again by their importance as cultural epithets that are landmarks in the process of losing culture. These material values embody traditions, both the way of making and of using of cultural epithets. Even though TV sets and VCRs are contemporary products, it does not seem logical to regard jewellery and the outfit as remnants of old times, having only moral value, because the context depicted justifies their being employed in the present. One of the ideas to support this theory is that obsolete, unused material values may not be worth as much in emphasizing Indianness as active, used values. This points to the fact that jewellery and buckskin outfits are still produced and used, that is, the way of making and using of this type of cultural signs is still active, an active habit of Indian culture. A logical conclusion is to say that material culture is definitely accompanied by folklore

traditions as theory always lurks beyond practice to support it, even if it is unconscious and may be called natural reasoning.

Modernisation also implies changes in culture, irrespectively of the measures of assimilation, and so habits also change or new ones are adopted – it is enough to think of the disfavoured effects of modern technologies such as the increasing use of TVs and VCRs; however, existing habits do survive, traditions are preserved.

Art:

The most obvious example of artistic value in the poem is the full-length beaded buckskin outfit, but surely it is not the only existing form of art among the Indians. Clothing is a secondary model of cultural communication even if it expresses socio-political belonging, and it is one of the possible ways of artistic expression. It is clear that Indians are on the way to assimilation, wearing traditional and modern items of clothing. In a balanced state, various fields of a culture may change to a differing extent but the sum of all changes keeps the balance. It is worth mentioning now that most cultures are imbalanced due to various factors of modernisation, intercultural contact and so on, and the sum of changes turns the balance, subsequently, the culture progresses or regresses in certain ways. Therefore, forms of art may also in progress or regress, concerning the measure of external influence and internal resistance, the battle of traditionalism and modernism. A full-length beaded buckskin outfit, as one of the most significant cultural symbols, suggests that cultural self-expression is important to the Indians in order to preserve their identity; the loss of the outfit equally means the loss of identity. The outfit being made for special occasions, it seems that occasions are important to the community, and it ensures the existence of related items, material and immaterial, including works of art as well. Such items of artistic value may be tools employed on celebrations, other pieces of clothing, temporal or remaining decorations of the body, the tools involved and the place of activity, and also various works of verbal art. The cultivation of traditions lets the observer consider art to be a significant segment of cultural life, a fundamental building block of Indian cultural identity.

The poem is written in free verse form, which highlights the importance of rhythm, and is much closer to normal speech – this latter feature contributes to a better understanding of Indian attitude towards verbal art: the rhythm of speech is more significant than

decorative elements that can make understanding difficult. Based on these facts it seems that in Sherman Alexie's culture verbal art prefers the straightforward way of speaking, and it is rather content-based and not form-centred. These characteristics may as well be typical of the culture itself as well: being straightforward and content-based means the lack of luxury and over-decoration, emphasises the mutual dependency of form and content, the joint functional-aesthetic way of self-expression.

FURTHER CONCLUSIONS

Some sections can back up the above ideas even more forcefully. These are briefly analysed as follows:

Right across the border from the liquor store: the closeness of the two mirrors the modern attitude towards organising things, that is, the simplification of actions in this fast world in order to save time, and also to falsify lending a hand by providing a place where one can forget close enough to the place where one loses.

Opening hours: non-stop to give way to total exploitation

Come running in: wish to better their standard of living, understood it can only be achieved with money

Keep in a storage room: everything becomes worthless

20 bucks for a heart: total loss of values

Evolution: 1) a picture of multicultural evolution from the Indian point of view; 2) an irony of progress; 3) as evolution in the broad sense includes mutations and deformations, the gradually deformed Indian culture is an example of evolutionary misfortune.

1) Sherman Alexie observes the cultural status of Indians, with himself studied impersonally, using generalisations through clear symbolism. In a multicultural context, qualitative changes of the Indian culture may be counteracted on other planes, thus resulting in one of the three possible forms of change: regress, stability or progress of the culture of the multinational anthill politically called the USA.

2) The poem is an ironic image of cultural progress: evolution in the original sense refers to development toward something better, a positive result, whereas the poem

describes a movement in just the opposite direction, shortly, a regressive transformation of culture.

3) It is a scientific approach to cultural evolution dressed in poetic garment. It expresses a wide knowledge of biology, anthropology and sociology. The deformation of culture is caused by exterior factors: the observed Indian culture is a cell in the biological texture of the USA, the living body, and similarly to biological mutations the surrounding dominant organisms may have such negative effects upon the cell that it becomes deformed.

Sherman Alexie is an Indian poet which fact justifies the Indian viewpoint. As a literary man, he uses poetry to express his ideas about the Indians' cultural status, and may as well employ irony to give his thoughts a tone that is more moving. Undoubtedly, he is an educated person; consequently, his train of thoughts may be underpinned by scientific evidence such as the evolutionary aspects of cultural existence discussed above. In this sense, the poem can be interpreted as the alloy of the three approaches: a scientific-artistic image of multicultural evolution in Indian terms. If so, the final concluding ideas about Alexie's culture are as follows: his culture is dying due to socio-political oppression and exclusion, deeply exploited because of negative governmental decisions and regulations; however, traditionalism is still alive, mainly to preserve as much of the cultural assets as possible. The poem is then a dualistic image of traditional and modern, Indian and multicultural, assimilation and resistance.

4.5. Final remarks

The results of the worksheets have met the expectations: the number of non-completed tasks and the reported difficulties show that without theoretical initiation and regular practice the CIF theory is not applicable correctly and with adequate results, but regular practice and a wide variety of analytical materials can make immeasurable progress in cross-cultural understanding and awareness, and can rapidly develop cultural self-awareness.

The future of the CIF theory requires the design of a number of worksheets compiled into a workbook for students, graded to various levels of linguistic competence,

and the compilation of a guide book for teachers with tips on teaching cross-cultural issues, sample copies of analytical tasks, questions and quizzes. Teacher training courses and courses for adults would also be beneficiary, hand in hand with courses for managers, diplomats, tradesmen and people from similar fields of work, in particular.

SUMMARY

“‘This is a great gathering. No clan can boast of greater numbers or greater valor. But are we all here? I ask you: Are all the sons of Umuofia here?’ A deep murmur swept through the crowd.

‘They are not,’ he said. ‘They have broken the clan and gone their several ways. We who are here this morning have remained true to our fathers, but our brothers have deserted us and joined a stranger to soil their fatherland. If we fight the stranger we shall hit our brothers and perhaps shed the blood of a clansman. But we must do it. Our fathers never dreamed of such a thing, they never killed their brothers. But a white man never came to them. So we must do what our father would never have done.’⁵¹⁶

Although the above citation refers to a specific sequence of events within the context of Chinua Achebe’s novel *Things Fall Apart*, it depicts a situation that can easily be generalised by detaching it from its original context and attributing to it several widely-shared or universal characteristics. By doing so, the sequence may be transformed into a simple cultural clash that brings about drastic changes in the root community and its culture and, due to its unexpected effects, results in internal imbalance and emotional insecurity. There is no culture that can handle such considerable impacts without internal shakiness due to the fact that the underlying principles that govern the interpretation of experiences are quite rigid and very slowly change. On a wider scale, however, the quickening of life, the rapid changes worldwide caused by the acceleration of intercultural communication and technological development, and the flexible mobility of people all contribute to the apparent existential confusion and disturbance in the norm and value systems communities live by. The result is an overwhelming passion, a profound need for newer ways of self-recognition and self-justification by which each community might stabilise their place in the vortex of cultures.

The theory of cultural identity filters is designed to be one of the approaches applicable to this type of activity both in the field of scientific research and education and also to private search for understanding. The approach is semiotic in nature as it

⁵¹⁶ Achebe (1993 : 187)

combines the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic aspects in its various types of analysis. It is necessary because its subject matter is culture, perceived as a complex system of signifying systems whose building blocks and smaller constituents cannot be analysed in isolation but in context, in relation to other constituents in order to explore their roles and functions within the cultural construct.

The zero hypothesis of the theory is that the cultural background can be traced back beyond cultural phenomena. The composition of the subject matter requires the involvement of several field of science with a joint terminology and flexible practical applications. The present paper has introduced the theoretical background for such a comprehensive approach and has also exemplified how the observation may be carried out. Due to the immeasurable richness of cultures and their manifestations this study selected literature as the most suitable phenomenon to be examined because literature is the most honest representative of culture as a whole.

The exemplary analyses have been intended to give hints about possible ways of approaching literature and through it culture itself, and have been selected to show that there may be limits to the analysis, and that correspondences are significant for the verification of findings. The exemplary worksheet has primarily been designed to outline how the theory may be applied for educational purposes, to the development of various competences that can contribute to fruitful individual and group activities, but it also shows a possible way of result validation.

The theory has passed the test of applicability and has proved that its practical usage can work both in isolation but also in co-operation with various scopes of cultural studies. The flexibility of application may open up newer fields of cultural analyses and support the development of further approaches that can also help the clarification of cultural identity in the Global Village.

APPENDIX

SHERMAN ALEXIE – EVOLUTION (How to parse a poem in a different way?)

LEAD-IN

Brainstorming:

What do you know about North American Indians (past and present)?

/Key words: *reservation, tribe, cowboy, chief, tomahawk, feathers, western, tradition, culture, Wild West, etc.*/

OR:

Provocative sentences

Today Indians live in small families, in suburbs.

Indian cultures have become extinct.

Indians are deeply involved in the domestic policy of the USA.

Sherman Alexie: Evolution

NOTES

*Buffalo Bill opens a pawn shop on the reservation
right across the border from the liquor store
and he stays open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week*

*and the Indians come running in with jewelry
television sets, a VCR, a full-length beaded buckskin outfit
it took Inez Muse 12 years to finish. Buffalo Bill*

*takes everything the Indians have to offer, keeps it
all catalogued and filed in a storage room. The Indians
pawn their hands, saving the thumbs for last, they pawn*

*their skeletons, falling endlessly from the skin
and when the last Indian has pawned everything
but his heart, Buffalo Bill takes that for twenty bucks*

*closes up the pawn shop, paints a new sign over the old
calls his venture THE MUSEUM OF NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURES
charges the Indians five bucks a head to enter.*

WHILE-READING TASKS

/The teacher divides the students into four groups./

Group A: collect characters from the poem:

Group B: collect objects from the poem:

Group C: collect places/scenes:

Group D: identify the main theme of the poem:

POST-READING QUESTIONS

Who is the poem written for? Who can be the audience?

Can the location of the poem be an existing place? (Why? / Why not?)

How can the characters be grouped? (Alternatives: real-fictional, famous-unknown, cowboys-Indians)

Who do you think Buffalo Bill and Inez Muse are?

What can 'pawn shop' and 'liquor store' symbolize?

What kind of symbols are 'television sets', 'a VCR'?

What kind of symbol is 'a full-length beaded buckskin outfit'? (Help: link it to Inez Muse)

Concerning production, what is the difference between a VCR and a buckskin outfit?

Who may be politically advantaged: Indians or White Men? Is there any evidence in the poem?

Explain the following expression: 'all catalogued and filed'.

Final task: draw conclusions about the culture(s) of North American Indians in general.

Possible themes: social statuses; clothing; technical development; cultivation of traditions; legal system, political system; habits; art, etc.

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Iván Illésfalvi was born April 5, 1976 in Veszprém, Hungary. He received the Master of Arts in English Language and Literature from Veszprém University in 2004, with a specialisation in applied linguistic and translation. He later on specialized in teaching foreign languages to students with special needs and made extensive research on the effects of live music in the language classroom. Both orientations were dominated by a novel attitude to learning and teaching resulting in the need for the development of a semiotic approach to foreign language teaching. He has been serving as language teacher at Öveges József Comprehensive School in Balatonfüzfő for seven years, and has given several talks and workshops on various aspects of the theory and application of the approach both in Hungary and abroad. The theory and some practical applications of the approach are presented in this dissertation.

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