

Linguistic and cultural diversity as a bond of hospitality



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The evolution of migratory movements, and the resulting schooling of first-time allophone pupils, once again raises these questions that the school regularly asks itself: how to welcome newcomers? how to achieve school inclusion? how to involve parents? how best to integrate newly arrived pupils into learning processes? how to develop the conditions for an authentic common school life? how to promote education for interculturality and a common culture of hospitality?

Good will is always there, with teachers fully engaged in their work. However, innovative and adapted professional tools and mechanisms to promote the integration of allophone children are lacking. Especially as the distance or cultural ignorance between the countries of departure and the countries of arrival is increasing. The whole pedagogical and humanistic challenge of the *Migratory Musics* project has been to work to reduce this distance and this mutual ignorance through the enhancement of each other's cultural identities and the proposal of new tools to enable intercultural exchange.

Usually, the difficulty is not so much that of the principle of school enrolment in the sense of schooling, since contemporary democracies take the rights of the child, and in particular the universal right to education, as a fundamental achievement. But the difficulty is that of *welcoming well*, or rather of *welcoming well*, so much so that it is a process to be built over time: the one by which the child, most often traumatized by the uprooting from his country of origin, will succeed in enrolling himself in the best possible way in a school environment that is by nature common, that precedes him and that he will gradually have to *appropriate it singularly and live in*. *Migratory Musics* immerses us in the heart of these complex issues of welcoming allophone children and offers the educational community, in the broadest cooperative sense, tools that are highly effective and immediately reusable.

Relearning to welcome again

The aim of this project is indeed to collectively relearn how to welcome these newcomer children, who experience being foreigners not simply because of their origin, but above all because of the difficulties associated with *arriving elsewhere*: what is foreign to them, so unfamiliar is first of all this new form of local life in which those who already live in a given country, educational system, city or school find themselves. What is an open school, which welcomes, if not a school that is entirely open to the other, and which allows these strange (re)tees reciprocal (that of "newcomers" for "residents", but also that of "residents" for "newcomers") to coexist? How can we make these strange reciprocal (re)ties a collective challenge of valorisation shared by and for all of the diversity of cultural identities?

This is the whole gamble of a project based on a premise that may seem so obvious that it is most often neglected in ordinary educational practices: the mother tongue is the most natural and spontaneous way for the newly arrived child to communicate. Before the exchange in the common language of the host country took place through learning, the challenge was to use this primary means of communication in the newly arrived child to generate an intercultural exchange where the reception is not experienced as a solitary entry into an unknown universe, but as an immanent and immediate sharing where everyone, already resident or new resident, can contribute what they are, and in particular a part of their linguistic and cultural heritage.

The primary role of the school

For teachers, the classroom situations that arise as the implementation of inclusion develops reflect a strong plurality of possible forms of school life. The reception of allophone newcomer pupils is part of this broader problem, and testifies to the major difficulties that teachers face when they have to receive a pupil (and a family) whose language they do not share. The spontaneous institutional response most often revolves around the need for rapid learning of the host country's language and the need to set aside the mother tongue (which remains spoken at home). It is then a question of bridging the distance as quickly as possible to learn to communicate through the linguistic vector that will later become common. But entering this language learning process can be a major initial blockage and a major difficulty to overcome (both for the anxious child and for his worried parents). How could a child who has just experienced the trauma of exile be sensitive overnight to a language, culture and mores, which he or she may later adopt, but which are not the ones in which he or she has been educated so far? This is probably humanly impossible without increasing the initial trauma and making the child experience the violence of an imposition.

Unlike the etymology of *infants* - who do not speak - this project nevertheless reverses our ordinary projections to propose to the allophone child to speak, not in the framework that will later be necessary for the development of his learning, but precisely in the framework that is most natural to him: his mother tongue. The involvement of parents, and in particular mothers, is then encouraged because it becomes possible for the same reasons that the child no longer faces the obstacle of arriving in a world where everything, including language, is foreign to him. In this respect, the welcome guide is a very high-quality tool for anticipating a kind reception of families and their children: it is the result of a collective construction carried out by professionals, particularly professionals from the French Ministry of Education (primary and secondary school teachers, inspectors) who have had to face these difficulties (welcoming without having the tools to translate the most ordinary school terms into the language of the newcomer). Speaking in the familiar words and expressions of your mother tongue to discover the school is an immediately operational solution thanks to this very easy to use and understand guide for everyone (because of the translation but also the pictograms) to overcome the difficulty of the first day's welcome.

The other proposal developed by the project to enhance the language and culture of allophone students is to share the nursery rhymes and lullabies of childhood through song. This is not only a magnificent idea in that it reverses the stigma of the strange (re)té by making it the very driving force behind the exchange, but it is also highly effective in terms of teaching. This makes it possible both to enhance the child's cultural identity of origin so that he or she can be proud to be able to share it and perpetuate its memory even in the host country while coming into more serene contact with the cultural framework of the host country, and at the same time to show that entering school is not the moment of a simple downward reception of what will be learned, even less a place where the stigmatization of differences is lived, but on the contrary a space of sharing, possibly horizontal, insofar as each one, because of the singular part of humanity that is his own, is able to bring to others something to enrich them intellectually, culturally, and even artistically.

Artistic and cultural sharing

Artistic and cultural education based on creative workshops (theatre, music, singing) highlighting the mother tongue and culture of newly arrived children was tested during the 24 months of the project. The resulting production is a CD book of nursery rhymes and lullabies in mother tongues that combines everything that is sought to emerge in this type of project: collective popular education in the arts, the enhancement of cultural identities, creative originality, the mixing of cultures and the emotional and affective sharing that an art workshop can bring to life.

We owe this intercultural artistic communion that emerges from the CD book and the videos on the site to several elements that intertwine harmoniously here: the original inspiration of Aurelia Coulaty, an artist who has been carrying out this socio-artistic process for several years in the Bordeaux metropolis and whose project has pursued the first experiences on an international scale; the continuous dynamism of the students from the 3 cities who participated in the workshops (Menemeni School in Thessaloniki, Marcel Sembat & Ferdinand Buisson in Bègles, Athénée Royale in Brussels 2); the ability of teachers, social educators and artistic mediators to play the game by being in the *game*, and in particular by testing each workshop to anticipate the best way to offer them to children afterwards; and finally the collective and sustained desire to value the cultures present and to discover them through artistic expression.

Sharing the arts, wealth of differences; wealth of the arts, sharing of differences; it is not enough to brandish these principles as a standard, but it is also necessary to test them, and for that to find concrete ways to implement them. Artistic creation workshops promoting the expression of mother tongues and cultures are an example of a great operability that does not only implement them: it brews and embraces all the actors of the project: children, parents, artists, educators, mediators, etc. in a pedagogical and creative impulse that carries with it and surpasses all the ordinary obstacles (reticence, timidity, fear, etc.). The realization of this fundamental production of the project (a CD book that involves an artistic part, but also a technical part with studio recording) proves one thing: interculturality is nothing if it remains only a word, and even less an injunction; on the contrary it only exists if it is lived collectively, because it is above all, and in school more than anywhere else, a form of life.

Keep records, cooperate, disseminate the project

Strong relationships have gradually been established between the project's stakeholders, thanks to the experience of the Laba and its partners in this field, to networking (educational, social and cultural actors from different countries and types of structures, gathered around issues that make sense to all) and to the intensity and stimulation, particularly emotional, that the central place of artistic creation in action and experienced in the project makes possible, the organization of regular transnational meetings and training moments in each country having allowed a real exchange of good practices. Until the internal evaluation, and the precise consideration of the things to be improved if such a project had to be repeated, or even until the possibility of renewing this type of adventure thanks to all the innovative choices that have been made to communicate and disseminate the methods and results of the project (website, podcast, MOOC and didactic tutorials, all very self-learning online traces that allow a team, which would like to reproduce a project of this type, to immediately immerse itself in a rich toolbox that is faithful to the issues encountered), everything contributes to making intercultural and

transnational exchanges more fluid, to promoting effective and not artificial benevolence between participants, because it is based on a shared and assumed sense of solidarity.

Far from being superficial in the approach to human relations, and precisely with a view to forging solid links that are essential for the effective implementation of a transnational, cross-sectoral and transcultural project of this magnitude, the actors have not only learned to cooperate together, often going beyond their initial professional prism, but even further have made the progressive establishment of these links the very heart of their approach. The website and the numerous podcasts detail in detail the generosity of the formal and informal exchanges, the pleasure taken together in the pedagogical, artistic and educational activities. The importance of truly shared, even festive moments, in particular by the movement of all project members from one city to another (Bègles, Brussels, Thessaloniki) is in the evaluator's view an essential part of the project's success because it led all participants to leave their comfort zone to experience the problems experienced by the other in their own context. If the question of reception is a common one, understanding migrant issues and the stakes of reception implies experiencing for oneself the realities as they are and not as one imagines them in the distorting habits that generate between oneself. In this project, everything happens *with others in the* most literal, emotional and effective sense of the term, that is, in the very place, space and temporality that the other lives in everyday life.

The effort to inhabit humanity together

The human being is at the centre of the project and this is what makes the whole link of shared generosity that we find there. Moreover, as mentioned above, the notion of hospitality is said in Greek *philoxenia*, which refers to the major common element that must be recognized in order to learn to receive foreigners and better welcome their difference. Sharing the essentials, humans enrich themselves by welcoming these differences: the stranger thus teaches us a lot about himself, but also about us.

The project's strong humanistic values are expressed in several of its productions. This is probably even the dimension that stands out most from the website. This allows us to underline how much the affirmation of strong values allows the success of a project with such an ambition. Beyond its real impact, what is demonstrated in this project is the mimetic power of the example when it is based on solid values that are not ready to be sacrificed for any utilitarian reason whatsoever.

However, this project was particularly well adapted to the urban environment. The question arises as to what such an intercultural and transnational approach would achieve in rural areas. Perhaps this could be an extension of *Migratory Musics*? In addition, the question of the transition from the issue of reception to that of the stay itself remains to be more precisely addressed. How can we ensure that it is not simply the first words, the first acts, the first projects that demonstrate a desire for intercultural hospitality (which is already essential), but in a continuous and long-term way all the pedagogical and educational acts carried out in the classroom, the school, the commune? This would perhaps require even more in-depth work, at the heart of the educational systems and territories themselves, of which art workshops are a convincing first step. There can be no doubt that on the basis of such collective success, future projects will emerge to continue the work begun.

Continue the collective adventure of school hospitality

Eirick Prairat defines school hospitality as an "art of presence", which he understands in three ways: presence to others (benevolent attention), presence to the world ("here and now, in the immediate relevance of what is happening. To be available in short"), and the presence in the sense of the present that we offer). The *Migratory Musics* project makes it possible to illustrate concretely the 3 dimensions of this hospitality-presence, not only for teachers, but for all the actors of this project, starting with children. The resulting enrichment for each of the participants is undoubtedly extraordinary in the sense that it is unusual: as one of the speakers said in the podcast devoted to the project's values, these various meetings during the workshops are hopeful, because we have seen "children from different origins building something together without really caring about the problems of origin". At that time, the question of origin is no longer intended to mark a discriminating difference, but on the contrary to highlight a new wealth to be shared.

To live in the world, the city, the school, as soon as they define themselves as open spaces, is it not always to develop this momentum towards the other, which consists in sharing cultural wealth? In any case, this is the condition for any newcomer to become a new resident, a new inhabitant, a new pupil, and for the stay to really begin for those who are no longer migrants but *cohabitants*. There was indeed this dynamic in favour of a shared humanity in the songs, exchanges and vibrations experienced, heard and reproduced in Bègles, Brussels and Thessaloniki.

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