

## **Integration of soft skills in the Universities of Morocco : Focus on intercultural pedagogy**

## **Intégration des soft skills dans les Universités au Maroc : Focus sur la pédagogie interculturelle**

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## Abstract

In the age of globalisation and modernity, it is becoming essential for everyone to acquire human, behavioural and social skills, known as soft skills. In this perspective, intercultural pedagogy is at the heart of the teaching of these so-called transversal skills, as they include different competences such as empathy, solidarity, mutual aid and team spirit. In this context, because societies are increasingly multicultural, intercultural pedagogy cannot be neglected or marginalised. Indeed, it contributes not only to the understanding of the Other, but also to its recognition. Therefore, soft skills are increasingly used in intercultural pedagogy in the professional training of students, since it is essentially about the relationship between identity and otherness. Therefore, the integration of soft skills in intercultural pedagogy is necessary in the sense that students themselves must be made aware of this teaching in their professional training. However, this integration of soft skills into intercultural pedagogy is difficult because it is a new concept for the Professors in charge of these modules. The aim of this article is to demonstrate that teachers themselves need to be equipped with soft skills in order to provide better teaching-learning to their students.

**Keywords:** Intercultural pedagogy ; University ; soft skills ; empathy ; identity.

## Résumé

A l'heure de la mondialisation et de la modernité, il devient indispensable pour chacun de se doter de compétences humaines, comportementales et sociales, dites soft skills. Dans cette perspective, la pédagogie interculturelle est au cœur de l'enseignement de ces compétences, dites transversales, car elles incluent différentes compétences telles que l'empathie, la solidarité, l'entraide et l'esprit d'équipe. Dans ce contexte, parce que les sociétés sont de plus en plus multiculturelles, la pédagogie interculturelle ne peut être négligée ou marginalisée. En effet, elle contribue non seulement à la compréhension de l'Autre, mais aussi à sa reconnaissance. Dès lors, les soft skills sont de plus en plus sollicitées pour la pédagogie interculturelle dans la formation professionnalisante des étudiants, puisqu'il s'agit essentiellement du rapport entre identité et altérité. En l'occurrence, l'intégration des soft skills dans la pédagogie interculturelle est nécessaire dans le sens où les étudiants eux-mêmes doivent être sensibilisés à cet enseignement dans leur formation professionnalisante. Cependant, cette intégration des soft skills dans la pédagogie interculturelle s'avère difficile car il s'agit d'un concept nouveau pour les Professeurs en charge de ces modules. L'objectif de cet article est de démontrer que les Professeurs doivent eux-mêmes être dotés des soft skills pour donner un meilleur enseignement-apprentissage à leurs étudiants.

**Mots clés :** Pédagogie interculturelle ; Université ; soft skills ; empathie ; identité.

## Introduction

Soft skills are the transversal, soft, human and behavioral competences that allow students to develop their soft skills during their professional training. This is why they have their place in intercultural pedagogy, which itself calls on these soft skills for a better understanding of the Other.

Thus, in the era of globalization and modernity, it is necessary, even indispensable, to be equipped with the skills of adaptation and open-mindedness in order to integrate into a world that is becoming multicultural, a world in which the "I" cannot exist without the "Other", a world that allows a person to look at a person of a different culture with an open eye, an open mind and a willingness to exchange and share. In other words, today, human contact is present in all areas of life, not only the professional field, and therefore there is always a relationship between identity and otherness.

Furthermore, intercultural pedagogy allows for a fresh and positive look at the Other, which in turn allows for the development of human and behavioral skills such as, among others, empathy, open-mindedness, respect, exchange and sharing.

Moreover, interculturality leads to a recognition of oneself in relation to the Other, because a person can only build his or her own identity through the Other, which is why soft skills are required in the professional training of the student, particularly in intercultural pedagogy, because these so-called soft skills will enable the student to adapt and integrate not only in professional life, but also in life in general.

Nevertheless, the integration of soft skills in intercultural pedagogy is not an easy task because soft skills are new concepts in the Moroccan educational system, so the question is: To what extent are Professors able to teach soft skills in intercultural pedagogy?

In this study, we will first define what communication through soft skills is; then we will look at soft skills in intercultural pedagogy: between identity and otherness; and finally, in the third part, we will study the future for soft skills in intercultural pedagogy.

### 1. Intercultural communication through soft skills: Awareness raising

Literally considered as soft skills, behavioral skills, or human skills, soft skills are transversal and intrinsic skills that a person has in him or her, they are skills that are linked to his or her own personality, character, and temperament, such as his or her decision-making ability, empathy, or stress management. Nevertheless, the inclusion of soft skills in professional

training courses is becoming increasingly important. Indeed, recruiters often ask candidates to give three of their faults and three of their qualities during their presentation, which is very similar to taking into account the personality, and therefore the soft skills, of the candidate before hiring.

Thus, soft skills are personal behavioral competencies that encompass various other competencies that distinguish one person from another. For example, a person who is confident in himself or herself and in his or her skills will be more likely to be social, and thus allow interaction between him or herself and others; or a person who is able to manage his or her time and be organized will be more methodical and motivated to work.

During a student's professional training, it is important that he or she combines the technical skills that he or she acquires throughout his or her training, which are the hard skills, with the soft and personal skills that are at the service of know-how, but above all of interpersonal skills, which are the soft skills. Thus, companies expect future employees to be energetic, to have confidence in themselves and in their team, to be able to manage stress and to deal with unexpected situations, but also to have team spirit, interpersonal skills, an understanding of others, and the ability to exchange and share.

### **1.1. Intercultural interaction and team spirit**

Soft skills are an integral part of interculturality because they are soft skills that cannot be neglected in a world where contemporary and professional societies are becoming increasingly multicultural. In this perspective, « Nations are being built on the mixing and cohabitation of populations. Companies are expanding into international markets, adapting to the needs and expectations of foreign consumers. At work, it is no longer possible to meet only completely homogeneous groups, without exchanges or links with other cultures. » (Errafiq, 2021).

Intercultural communication is all the more important as companies and enterprises are no longer homogeneous. Employees come from different backgrounds and cultures, customers can also be customers from different backgrounds and cultures, and sometimes even customers from foreign countries. It is therefore essential for any student, during his or her professional training, to acquire soft skills, human and behavioural competences that teach respect for the culture, traditions and customs of people of different origins. In this sense, "the interest of the intercultural approach is therefore that it is accompanied by an awareness of oneself, often linked to a questioning of oneself. (Séoud, 1997). Thus, self-questioning gives

the student the ability to be tolerant and open to knowledge of the Other, which allows him or her to have an open-mindedness that can only be beneficial when integrating into the professional world, but also in his or her daily life.

Moreover, knowledge of others allows us to form an idea and to evaluate people who are different from ourselves according to the elements and clues they give us about them. Thus, in order for a person to be open to others and have the will and desire to get to know them, he or she must have a sense of sociability. Therefore, by knowing the Other, he/she is able to anticipate his/her reactions, and therefore to act according to him/her, which is why intercultural pedagogy is necessary in a professional training. In other words, knowledge of the Other and of human nature has become one of the main skills to be acquired because in any professional field, there is always contact with different people, whether they are colleagues, superiors, clients or partners.

Furthermore, the professional field is developing at such a speed that artificial intelligence is taking over from humans, and means that the technical work that a person can do can also be done by the machine, hence the importance of having students acquire, during their training, the soft and non-technical skills that the machine cannot have. In this perspective, it can be told that, "the evolution of the world of work, especially with robotization, automation and artificial intelligence, forces us to bet on human capital, thus soft skills." (Bouret, & al., 2014). Therefore, the contribution of communication competence is very important in intercultural pedagogy because this soft skill is one of the most valued and requested transversal competences in the professional world because it calls upon various social competences that allow interaction between different people in different contexts or environments. In this sense, interaction is often interaction between people of different backgrounds or ethnicities as the field of work includes many employees from different cultures.

In this case, social interaction involves team spirit, openness and sharing, among other things. Thus, team spirit is an important contribution because in order to work as a team and achieve a positive result, the people working together must work as a group and not separately. This team spirit allows for mutual support between employees and, above all, the establishment of trust between the individuals working together. This trust is based on confidence in the skills of others and not on confidence based solely on their person, and to be able to trust another person, one must be open-minded. Indeed, working in a group allows you to move forward,

but each person must carry out his or her own tasks and not encroach on the work of his or her colleagues, i.e. each person must respect the other's field of work. Being a team player also allows you to help someone who is in difficulty, and therefore to put your own person after the work you are doing, which is not always easy. Thus, being able to work in a team allows one to be positive, which leads to greater productivity and team dynamics because the fact of working in a positive, and therefore healthy, environment motivates employees to make more effort without feeling oppressed, and therefore to perform better because team spirit allows one to have a sense of solidarity between colleagues, and thus to carry out work that is not separated from others, but is collective and collaborative, and above all, recognition of the quality of the work and the efforts made by others.

Also, mutual aid is a main element of soft skills because it makes it possible to create links with others, to develop skills such as patience, reflection, diplomacy, pedagogy and exchange. Consequently, curiosity allows for the development of abilities such as information seeking and critical thinking skills. Thus, social skills allow for a better integration in a team, this integration being not only professional, but also human.

Moreover, team spirit also allows for the acquisition of social skills in the workplace, as there is contact with others. In this sense, it is becoming more and more necessary for many employers to recruit candidates who have this spirit of solidarity. In other words, having social skills is a major asset for a candidate to be recruited because these skills give him/her an added value that can make the difference with another candidate.

## **1.2. From Other to Me: empathy and self-esteem**

Empathy is a behavioural and human skill that leads a person to have a better communication because this soft skill is the ability to understand others, to understand what they feel, and even to feel themselves what they feel. In this sense, empathy is very useful in intercultural pedagogy because it allows one to better adapt to the context in which one finds oneself and the people with whom one is in contact. Thus, empathy gives the possibility to create links with others.

Furthermore, the human skill of empathy allows a person to demonstrate an understanding of a situation in which they find themselves and the feelings and emotions of colleagues, but also to show humanity in both the successes and failures of others. Therefore, a person who shows empathy is a person who is relational and social because he/she reacts with respect and sensitivity to the various situations that his/her colleagues face, and tries to help them as much

as possible. In this light, "to put oneself in the place of others is to adopt an empathetic attitude, to put oneself in the shoes of the Other in order to experience his or her feelings and to be able to put things into perspective." (Errafiq, 2021). Thus, empathy is a supportive and empowering skill, as it allows a person to also have a sense of understanding, and is important because it has a direct impact on the relationship between people or colleagues who are under pressure due to competition, and thus encourages them to perform better.

Furthermore, the contribution of the transversal competence of empathy is even more important as it takes into account different aspects of a person's character. Indeed, in order to be empathetic, it is essential to have a sense of humility because being humble implies controlling one's ego and not feeling superior to others in any way. In other words, humility allows a person to take into account and consider the potential of others as well as their work because work in a company is a team effort.

Moreover, remaining humble allows one to acquire new knowledge, and thus to learn new things, and thus to create a climate of professional curiosity, because curiosity is necessary, even essential, especially when a person is new to the world of work. Curiosity allows one to learn more and to always be on the lookout for new knowledge, but also to always be informed about new developments in the professional field in which one works.

In this case, curiosity is considered a transversal competence because it calls for the will to integrate into a group with all the necessary knowledge of the professional field in order to prove oneself, but also to show the degree of motivation that the person has, and thus to succeed with greater performance and efficiency in the tasks entrusted to them. However, this willingness and thirst for knowledge must be carried out with enthusiasm, because only by doing things with heart, conviction and enthusiasm can a person be successful, because in this sense he or she can only be endowed with a positive state of mind. In other words, a person's integration in the professional field depends on his or her empathy, among other things, which allows him or her to be humble, and to develop a professional curiosity that pushes him or her to have a positive state of mind in all situations, whether they are simple or complicated, expected or unexpected. In this case, it is more pleasant for colleagues to work with a positive and friendly person than a negative and apathetic one.

So, a person who is professionally curious has a strong desire to discover new experiences, and to learn unknown things, so that he/she is ready to face any unexpected situation in his/her work. She is stimulated by what she does not know and does not rest on her



achievements. However, it is necessary to stress that this curiosity must remain a professional curiosity, and not an unhealthy curiosity that makes a person interested in the private life of his colleagues or that seeks to know everything about the company or the enterprise in which he works with the sole aim of having information that could, for example, be necessary in case of a dispute. In this sense, intercultural pedagogy encourages a person to have a healthy curiosity, which only leads to the knowledge of the Other and his or her context, without judgement or criticism. Thus, a healthy curiosity allows one to be motivated and to encourage people to go further and further into their depths in order to develop their knowledge, their experiences, but also and above all their personality traits.

Furthermore, in order to have a sense of empathy and humility, the student must be made to have self-esteem because only by valuing themselves will they be able to have empathy and humility for others, and thus show them esteem because self-esteem is: "a stream of positive feelings about oneself." (Bellenger, 2017). In other words, when a person has a positive view of themselves, they are self-respecting, and are therefore able to show respect to their colleagues, giving importance to their work, for example, or speaking to them with courtesy, kindness and thoughtfulness, even when the person may not have done the job as originally required.

Also, self-esteem can even be considered a basic need, ranking after physiological, safety and social needs. (Maslow, 1954).

### **1.3. Motivation and willingness to discover the Other**

Motivation is one of the soft skills that most represents interculturality because it is this desire to do that drives a person to seek to understand and know things or people. Thus, motivation is "a dynamic process based on interactions between the environment and oneself" (Barbot, 2001). This notion of motivation therefore represents one of the different skills to be acquired that allows one to be interested in and understand foreign cultures, and even to appropriate them to one's own culture.

Furthermore, there are different types of motivation such as: extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation which are different one from each other. Indeed, "extrinsic motivation refers to any process that leads the individual to question the cultural fabric that [...] is the result of interactions between the self and the external environment. [Intrinsic motivation, [...]] represents everything that is inside the learner; [...] his or her deep desire to learn about a culture and civilization from which he or she is a total stranger, and the willingness or even



the determination to overcome the fear of being able to access a cultural system different from one's own. All these motives will represent the core of an intrinsic motivation, the latter being cognitive and forming a much stronger entity than the former." (Mousa, 2012).

In other words, motivation in a vocational training course gives a student the possibility to act and adopt a certain behavior in certain situations by will, but above all to enjoy learning, to acquire new knowledge, and to develop his or her personality in an introspective and retrospective sense, which allows him or her to want to discover cultures that are different from his or her own.

Furthermore, soft skills are very important in intercultural pedagogy, because they allow a person to see that the world is not as he or she sees it or as he or she imagines it, but that it can be seen from different angles depending, among other things, on his or her personality, education, environment, origin, and culture. In this sense, "everyone believes that the world is as it is because everyone believes that the world is as they see it." (Demorgon & Lipiansky, 1999). Thus, learners, during their training, must be led to question their own cultural system in order to understand other cultural systems that differ from their own, and thus, during their exploration of new cultures, they are led to discover that these foreign cultures can prove to be an asset for their own culture.

## **2. Soft skills in intercultural education: between identity and otherness**

The link between otherness and identity is such that a person cannot exist without the Other. In other words, self-identity is only constructed from the Other because the Other allows one to develop one's own culture in relation to another culture, but also to question oneself and one's own identity, the impact that this has on others, but also the impact that other cultures have on oneself because "culture is not fixed, but dynamic and active. It is not a fixed thing outside the person, but is internal and linked to one's journey and encounters." (Tijjini, 2019).

### **2.1 Construction of one's own identity through the Other**

Soft skills, in cultural pedagogy, allow social interaction, essentially through communication, and thus mobilize different character traits and behaviors that a person already has in him or her, and which make him or her have his or her own personality, such as respect for others, ethics, or the ability to listen, and which also make it possible for him or her to succeed in an interaction with people who are originally and culturally different from him or her.

Therefore, in order to successfully establish a relationship with others, there is a whole process to be respected in order to establish an optimal mutual understanding. For this, it is important not to have prejudices about others, and therefore to avoid all stereotypes and representations before getting to know a person, to be open-minded and to behave appropriately towards the Other, because representation is "a set of attitudes, behaviors and ideas which sometimes become stereotypes, and which the individual conveys unconsciously during any interaction between himself and the other." (Thomas, 1990).

Furthermore, open-mindedness allows for self-awareness, which is not necessarily obvious, as many people have several traits that they may not be aware of. Thus, self-awareness allows one to be more open to one's own culture, and thus to better understand and know it, and thus to feel that one belongs to one's own community which has its own specificities and singularities, and this is what allows one to then be interested in other cultures. Indeed, "one enters into a positive relationship with the Other when one masters its indigeneity, its emblems. This positive relationship is achieved by mastering one's original identity, while integrating the other as a constituent element of the latter. The objective would therefore be to establish a relationship of exchange, sharing, respect and equality with the other." (Abdallah-Pretceille & Porcher, 2001).

In this case, it is necessary to establish in the learner, during his or her professional training, mainly in intercultural pedagogy, that his or her own culture is not universal, and that other cultures are as valuable as his or her own. In other words, a person can only develop his or her personality and inner self by being open to other cultures that can contribute to the development of his or her own. Therefore, by considering one's own culture as universal and superior to other cultures, an individual becomes egocentric and ethnocentric, and closes in on himself by rejecting everything that is different from him. In other words, ethnocentrism leads an individual to refer only to the group to which he or she belongs, thus demonstrating a closed-mindedness that runs counter to the discovery of other cultures and the Other. Soft skills are the competences that allow one to avoid this closed-mindedness and thus to give as much value to the culture of others as to one's own culture, thus avoiding a withdrawal into oneself and the setting up of psychological barriers, which cause the individual to deny everything that is different from him or her, because "intercultural conceals a cultural dynamic, it also reflects the interaction between cultures, exchange, communication, sharing,

complementarity, recognition of the culture of the other outside of a reductive ethnocentrism." (Serghini, 2011).

Moreover, intercultural competence cannot be neglected in a professional training because it includes intercultural communication which allows a student to build an identity of his own through a whole process. In other words, "identity cannot be reduced to a label, but rather is a dynamic process that surfaces in a situation of intercultural exchange and contact where the interactants develop strategies to defend their respective identities. These strategies may be language, ethnic or territorial". (Errafiq, 2021).

In this case, intercultural pedagogy allows a person to construct an identity, which is constructed through the Other because it cannot exist without the Other because an identity is only constructed from the Other and is inseparable from it. As a matter of fact, "it is the Other as Other, that is, as me, a subject (responsible and absolutely singular, incomparable) it is both different from me and identical to me in dignity. Otherness is the concept that covers all others, also considered as egos (alter ego) and of which I am also the alter ego, with rights and duties. In order to be me, I need the others (otherness) to exist. Every subject presupposes intersubjectivity and at the same time always experiences the temptation to reduce the other to an object, a great danger against which one must constantly fight in oneself for human relations" (Cuq, 2003).

## **2.2 Self-confidence and exchange**

Self-confidence is one of the soft skills that has a great contribution in intercultural pedagogy because it allows a person to know exactly what he or she is worth and to express himself or herself with ease without being overwhelmed by negativity. In other words, a self-confident person is positive and assertive, and is therefore not afraid to speak up or take on new challenges. However, too much self-confidence can be detrimental in a business or company because the person may disregard the opinions of colleagues or other team members and think that only his or her opinion is the right one. In this case, he or she may be overzealous, which will have the opposite effect of what is expected of him or her, and thus aggravate a problem instead of solving it, which ultimately leads to the loss of self-confidence. In this perspective, "overconfidence results in a kind of blindness and deafness to events outside the internal sensations. There is a decrease in vigilance and attention but also an escape, a dodging of effort at the preparation stage. " (Bellenger, 2017). In this case, self-confidence calls for other skills that have a beneficial contribution to intercultural pedagogy, such as self-reflection.

Indeed, reflecting on oneself and one's actions allows one to evaluate one's own work with a critical eye, even if one makes mistakes, instead of letting oneself down, one faces up to these blunders and learns from one's mistakes because self-reflection also allows one to evaluate oneself. Therefore, a person who reflects effectively is a person who learns faster and develops his or her skills because he or she knows what he or she can and is capable of doing and what he or she cannot or is incapable of doing because he or she is a reflective person who does not overestimate himself or herself, and thus avoids causing harm to his or her team, colleagues and the company itself.

Furthermore, a person who gains self-confidence is a person who knows how to self-discipline. Indeed, control of oneself and one's behavior allows one to react with awareness and confidence when unexpected tasks arise, because a self-disciplined person is one who is able to control his or her emotions and concentrate, and this allows him or her to remain focused on the same task for as long as it takes to complete it. In this perspective, it can be said that this behavioural competence is an asset for intercultural pedagogy because it allows a student to acquire self-control, and only by being able to control oneself can one learn not to be distracted by egocentric or even selfish thoughts.

On the other hand, a person who is self-confident is a person who can only be motivated because he or she is willing to act efficiently, to carry out his or her various tasks and to achieve his or her goals. However, it is important to point out that the goals set must be achievable and attainable goals, but also to emphasize that the sources of motivation are different from one person to another, that is to say one employee, for example, might be motivated by a financial promotion or a change in his or her job, while another might be motivated by recognition from his or her superiors or a sense of pride in himself or herself.

Finally, self-confidence allows a person to move away, or even out of their comfort zone, and to use the different resources and skills they possess for relational purposes, which is why they are usually committed people. Indeed, they are full of energy, and are invested in getting to know others. Therefore, an engaged person can only have a positive impact on his or her colleagues and team, which is why engagement is one of the main soft skills required in a business or company, which is the basis of trust.

### **3. A future for soft skills in intercultural pedagogy**

Professors are the main actors in professional development because they teach subjects for which they have been trained. However, soft skills are a newly adopted discipline in the

Moroccan education system, so it is important that teachers have the necessary skills to teach them, and thus the transversal skills that represent not only practice, but also being. Indeed, in order to integrate soft skills into intercultural pedagogy, the teacher must himself be equipped with some of these skills in order to provide a better training to his learners.

### **3.1. Establishing an intercultural dialogue**

"The socio-cultural fabric of our societies and global interconnectedness require specific attitudes, behaviors, knowledge, skills and abilities to adapt to the new cultural, media and emotional landscape, as existing systems have proven to be unable to embrace diversity." (UNESCO, 2013). In this case, the acquisition of intercultural competences allows a better approach to the Other, thus facilitating the rapprochement and the relationship between people of different morals, cultures and customs. Intercultural dialogue enables a person to take an interest in another person, to review his or her prejudices and representations, stereotypes and preconceptions.

However, in order to be able to inculcate this cultural dialogue in students during their professional training, the Professor himself/herself must be able to know it, to have the skills that go with it, such as having a more open mind, even if it may be critical, and to form his/her own opinion, and not follow that of others. In other words, it is necessary that the Professor himself/herself has been trained not only in the theoretical knowledge of what intercultural pedagogy is and the skills related to it, but that he/she is equipped with these soft, human and behavioral skills, in order to teach them in a practical way, and not only in a theoretical way, to his/her learners, because "indeed, cultures are the engines of sustainable development and harmonious coexistence, as they link meanings conducive to self-knowledge and mutual understanding as well as to the contestation or acceptance of differences." (UNESCO, 2013).

Professor training must be based on the essential understanding that interculturality is a space of sharing, knowledge and recognition of otherness, a transmission of knowledge and understanding of the Other that is passed on from one country to another, from one people to another, and from generation to generation. Intercultural dialogue has issues in different areas but all have the same objective: to recognize the Other.

However, it is important to stress that it is all about education. Indeed, education is above all: learning to know, learning to do and learning to be. It is therefore: knowledge, know-how and interpersonal skills. All this knowledge contributes to a way of life that allows for openness to

the Other, recognition of one's own faults and limits, and acceptance of what is different from oneself. What is different from oneself can only be beneficial because it allows the person to undergo a certain transformation, to evolve and therefore not to stagnate.

Intercultural dialogue comes from intercultural competences that enable people to live together, and for this to happen, each person must understand what is at stake in this cohabitation and what benefits he or she can gain from it.

Moreover, Professors cannot be able to teach soft skills to their students during their professional training if they themselves have not been prepared for this teaching, which is a novelty in the Moroccan educational world. Indeed, we have established that soft skills are above all human and behavioral competences, which legitimizes their difficulty in being taught without understanding what they really represent. The mistake that could be made is to think that anyone can teach soft skills because each of us is endowed with competencies specific to his or her personality. Soft skills in intercultural pedagogy are very important because they are necessary to establish basic concepts to better approach and assimilate it. It can be established that various competences are necessary for the Professor to be able to teach soft skills in intercultural pedagogy: respect, including valuing the Other; self-awareness, and thus one's own identity; the ability to see things differently from different angles; listening, which allows for exchange and interaction, notably by participating in an authentic intercultural dialogue; empathy, which allows a person to feel what the Other feels; Adaptation, which ensures that a person does not feel overwhelmed by the unfamiliar, and therefore is open-minded; Relationship-building, which encourages people to establish intercultural links that can last over time; and Humility, which allows people to question themselves and avoid egocentricity.

In addition, it is becoming essential to integrate intercultural competence into different disciplines such as languages, psychology, literature, sociology, communication, linguistics, and religious studies, among others.

### **3.2. Perspectives of integrating soft skills in intercultural pedagogy: Pragmatic approach and intercultural approach**

The previous study demonstrated the importance of integrating soft skills into intercultural pedagogy because culture is not the primary principle to be studied in training, but rather how culture is used in interaction, as this is what allows for intercultural dialogue. In this perspective, the most important thing is not to focus on how "culture determines behavior, but

to analyze the way in which the individual uses cultural traits to say and to say themselves, to express themselves verbally, corporally, socially personally. " (Abdallah-Preteuille, 2003). In other words, culture is not the main thing in a training course, but interculturality, because it is interculturality, through interaction, that allows contact between people of different cultures, knowledge of the Other, and thus the construction of one's own identity through the culture of the Other and one's own culture. Nevertheless, the intercultural approach in intercultural pedagogy cannot be easy because it presupposes a specific posture which involves various behavioral as well as human competences because "the intercultural approach is achieved both by adopting an 'intellectual posture' - a certain way of seeing things - and by implementing methodological principles in the didactic and pedagogical intervention - a certain way of experiencing things. " (Blanchet, 2004).

Moreover, the intercultural approach calls for a multidisciplinary approach because interculturality cannot be isolated from other disciplines. Indeed, "it analyses cultural traits as moving entities, whereas the operation by discipline is applicable to static situations. [...] Thus, the intercultural approach calls upon the knowledge of other disciplines such as sociology and anthropology and privileges understanding over description [...]." (Pedro, 2018). In other words, understanding the culture of the Other allows one to understand and be open-minded, and leads to acceptance of the Other as he or she is, whereas otherwise a person will tend to categorize the Other in his or her own way, taking into account only the stereotypes and representations he or she has of people who have a different culture from his or her own.

Moreover, knowledge of the Other contributes to knowledge of oneself, and it is only through interaction that one can discover different cultures, and enrich one's own. In other words, identity represents the construction of an Ego in relation to an Other. It refers the subject to what is unique about him or her, but within the shared values of the same community. In this sense, "Identity constitutes a kind of indissoluble loop between similarity and difference" (Morin, 1980). In this sense, it turns out that it is also through the transmission of culture that the identity of the Self and that of the Other can and will be constructed. The identity of the translating subject cannot remain fixed in time, because it takes into account the capacity of its adaptation to the Other.

In this case, a culture is not constructed by a single culture, but by two or more different cultures. There is no such thing as a "pure" culture, because everywhere in the world there is a



mixture of populations, and therefore a mixture of languages, customs and traditions. It is these various mixtures that make a person what he or she is. Maalouf, 1998, says of his own situation when he settled in France in 1976: "What makes me myself and not someone else is that I am on the edge of two countries, two or three languages, several cultural traditions. It is precisely this that defines my identity". Thus, the author demonstrates that identity has different components that characterize each being, and that these components such as language, traditions and culture make an identity richer.

In addition, when integrating soft skills into intercultural pedagogy, the communicative approach cannot be neglected because human communication is not limited to the exchange of words or information between two people, nor to "a mechanism for encoding and decoding information circulating through a clear message between two partners who are perfectly on the same wavelength and who totally share a homogeneous code" (Butzbach, and al., 1991). Indeed, communication makes it conceivable to meet and recognize the Other in his or her difference, and thus allows for the acceptance of the Other in that same difference. Thus, intercultural communication makes it possible for people to be or come into contact with others of different origins, to understand each other, to work together, to live together and thus to live together. Communication thus allows the development of society, and on it depends the relationship with others, because communication is not a trivial act.

Moreover, communication is not a scattered act, it requires reflection because the relationship with the Other depends on it; this is why it meets certain standards that everyone must respect because when communication is cut off or blocked, no positive result can come out of it, and this leads to problems that are difficult to solve until communication is re-established, because intercultural communication encompasses "the relationships that are established between people or groups belonging to different cultures. It is the relational fact that interests [...] even if it brings with it a whole background of representations, values, codes, lifestyles, ways of thinking specific to each culture." (Ladmiral & Lipianski, 1989).

It is important to specify that the learner must be trained in both verbal and non-verbal communication, both of which are equally present in all communication.

On the one hand, verbal communication is communication that consists of expressing oneself verbally, that is to say with words, and is essentially based on the use of speech. Thus, verbal communication is expressed through the voice, which is why the voice is so important in communication, and why it is important for the student to learn to control the tone of his or

her voice according to the situation and the audience, This applies not only to the rate of speech, intonation and volume, but also to the way in which the speaker articulates when speaking and to the oral punctuation used, because when this is mastered, it is possible to get a message across more effectively and efficiently.

On the other hand, non-verbal communication is communication that takes place without the use of speech. It is also called gestural communication because it is expressed through gestures, or body communication because it is expressed through the body. In this sense, non-verbal communication consists of expressing oneself, among other things, with gestures, mimes, and grimaces. Non-verbal communication should not be neglected because it is the most representative of a person, since gestures do not deceive, whereas a person has the possibility of omitting certain things when he or she speaks, according to his or her own will and objectives. In this sense, it is important, even indispensable, that the competence of communication is integrated in intercultural pedagogy because it is complex, especially at the level of non-verbal communication.

Therefore, the implementation of intercultural competences is a logical continuation of all that has been said before, with an emphasis on both practice and theory. Thus, a learner will act on all that he or she has learned in front of a person from a different culture and will apply his or her knowledge, know-how, but also and above all his or her interpersonal skills, thanks to various activities and exchanges that could be organized within the vocational training, but also through different organizations.

Furthermore, the strengthening of programs that value intercultural competences should be put forward so that these programs can be integrated into different higher education courses and thus reach a wider public.

Finally, in order to develop intercultural pedagogy by integrating soft skills into it, there is a need for human support, but also material support, so that these intercultural competences can develop and grow because, generally, cultural policies are based on different aspects, as described like this:

- "Theoretical analysis and definition of the cultural field and the general interest in culture with the help of schemes isolating the relevant fields of intervention (for instance, artistic and cultural creativity, cultural heritage, access of the population to cultural goods and services);

- Setting objectives and tasks for public action in the field of culture (for example, through the development of strategies and action plans);
- Implementation by systematically applying a set of methods and instruments to achieve the previously defined objectives and tasks." (UNESCO, 2009)

## Conclusion

Belonging to a certain culture means adhering to the norms and values of that culture, which is why each of us must master our own culture in order to define it well, and master the culture of the Other in order to better understand it, in order to more clearly identify certain attitudes, certain behaviors, and other ways of thinking or of situating ourselves and the Other. Therefore, a person can only become close to another person through a process that goes from knowing and recognizing one's own culture and that of the Other, to understanding both cultures, and finally becoming rich. In this sense, it is necessary that there is an openness that avoids a culture shock that occurs when the culture of the Other is not understood, and therefore cannot be accepted, which undoubtedly creates tensions. Thus, only by integrating soft skills such as empathy, respect, motivation, ethics, tolerance, team spirit, self-confidence, open-mindedness, or intercultural communication, as soft, human and behavioural competences, into intercultural pedagogy, can this fear, anxiety, or even terror of the Other, who represents the unknown and the departure from one's comfort zone, be avoided. Thus, awareness of interculturality can greatly reduce the lack of knowledge and distance between different ethnic groups.

Moreover, intercultural dialogue not only allows for exchange with the Other, but above all it allows for listening to the Other. Thus, only communication and open-mindedness can enable the development of intercultural competence, which, as we have seen throughout this work, is a much more complex operation than it seems, because all cultures are equal, no one culture is better or superior to another, and each one makes its own contribution, however small, to another culture.

The only way to promote this competence is to understand that the discovery, knowledge and recognition of another culture can only be an asset to one's own culture and identity. However, it is necessary to point out that there are many soft skills, but some are more specific than others as far as interculturality is concerned, which does not mean that the soft skills that have not been dealt with in this study are not beneficial to intercultural pedagogy. We have deliberately opted for the soft skills mentioned in our work because these are the



ones that seemed to us to be the most appropriate to define the integration of a person in a heterogeneous team made up of people of different origins, traditions and customs, and therefore of different cultures.

Finally, it is essential for a Professor to receive adequate training in order to integrate soft skills into intercultural pedagogy, because soft skills are the soft, human and behavioral competences that allow for open-mindedness, and thus recognition and acceptance of the Other. The Professor must therefore be equipped with soft skills in order to be able to teach them in an experienced way, but above all in a way that is adapted to the audience, both face-to-face and on-line, because "online has been conceived as more practical but quite challenging and tough for others." (Bousdig & Tahiri, 2022).

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