Intercultural Education

The need for comparison in intercultural education

Gunther Dietz [a] & Laura Selene Mateos Cortés [a]

[a] Universidad Veracruzana, Xalapa, Mexico
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Gunther Dietz* and Laura Selene Mateos Cortés

Universidad Veracruzana, Xalapa, Mexico

Intercultural education has arisen in the last two decades as an intersectional field of academic knowledge and professional development, located at the borders and in the confluence of the multicultural paradigm in the social sciences, the anthropology of education, and other interdisciplinary subfields commonly known as Intercultural Studies. As will be discussed throughout this article, the thematic range represented by the broad topos of interculturality-in-education is not limited to questions about minority groups, but is closely linked to core issues of national identity and broad societal identification processes. Therefore, in order to be able to critically engage in a fruitful, truly 'intercultural' dialog between multicultural theorists and activists, on the one hand, and between academic and practitioners' knowledge on diversity, we need a particularly, and constantly, self-reflexive and mutually comparative hermeneutical approach. In this way, we can avoid the traps and bridge the biases of the underlying, but omnipresent, self-fulfilling, and self-essentializing identity discourses in broader national society as a whole.

Keywords: comparative approach; multiculturalism; identity politics; hermeneutics; reflexivity; Veracruz (Mexico)

This need for critical reflexivity is even more urgent when comparing multiculturalism internationally (Gundara 2001). When multiculturalist discourses migrate from one society to another – and particularly from originally Anglo-Saxon to other diversity contexts – these different diversity contexts and their underlying identity domains (their structures of identifying 'us' and 'them' in each society) tend to be biased by supposedly neutral and technical arguments. These take the form of pedagogical debates pertaining to appropriate models and 'solutions' for dealing with diversity, and they are imported and exported as such, without regard to differing societal contexts and identity constellations in the sending and receiving societies.

In order to analyze the scope of these underlying processes of identity formation and of perceptions of diversity, anthropology must provide both its conceptual framework – above all, its particular concept of culture and the interrelation between culture and the key concepts of identity and ethnicity–and its empirical approach, ethnography. Only in this way will it be possible to study critically both the discourses about multiculturalism, interculturality, and diversity, and the relationship that exists between these discourses and their associated practices as they contextually materialize in programs of so-called intercultural education. We must avoid the trap of 'methodological nationalism,' which is the false 'assumption that

*Corresponding author. Email: guntherdietz@gmail.com

the nation/state/society is the natural social and political form of the modern world' (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002, 302). This assumption is still strongly visible in social science research designs, and we must avoid it so that we do not unconsciously reproduce national idiosyncrasies and their underlying identity frames. In order to do this, the comparative lens of anthropology will be necessary to identify the institutional frames as well as the contextual factors which shape the national and regional 'dialects' of intercultural education as they get implemented:

> Anthropological theory needs to take account of no less than a range of contextual constraints (including socio-economic conditions, state policies and public discourse), historical trajectories, group variables, institutionalized practices and possible paths of individual or collective action and how these mutually frame each other. (Vertovec 2007, 969)

Bearing in mind these conceptual and contextual factors, it is from a luminal, anthropological educational perspective that we here propose to present and analyze intercultural education. Our approach will outline basic conceptual criteria and methodological guidelines for examining ethnographically the intergroup and intercultural structures and processes by which contemporary societies are constituted, differentiated, and integrated (Dietz 2009; Dietz and Mateos Cortés 2011b).

In the following, multiculturalism is briefly presented in its context of origin and its process of academic institutionalization and 'pedagogization'. We analyze – using different disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives – the distinctive conceptual and theoretical 'corpus' that anthropology contributes to the study of intercultural-educational phenomena. Finally, the anthropological concepts developed here are integrated into a proposed comparative model of how, ethnographically, hermeneutically, and reflexively, to study intercultural education.

Migrating multiculturalisms

Multicultural discourse, which had originally emerged in societies self-defined as countries of immigration located mostly in North America and Oceania (Kymlicka 1995), has since become the principal ideological basis of intercultural education, conceived as a differential approach towards the education of allochthonous, foreign, nonnative, immigrant minorities (Dietz 2009). As the longstanding tradition of *indigenismo* illustrates, however, in the Latin American context, and under nationalist, homogenizing, and assuredly nonmulticulturalist premises, very similar policies of differential education have historically targeted autochthonous, indigenous minorities, not only immigrant ones (Mateos Cortés 2009; Schmelkes 2009).

Therefore, when multiculturalist discourses start migrating from one context to another, their original points of departure – a particular matrix of identity politics and their underlying institutional frames – often end up being blended, confused, and supposedly neutralized in their power to shape educational 'solutions' in the new context. A critical anthropological deconstruction of these migrating models must start by examining their rather different origins and contexts, which in both North American and British Commonwealth societies are related to new collective actors questioning mainstream society's false and often racist promises of a 'color blind' 'melting pot,' and striving therefore to distinctively empower minority students in often severely racialized postsegregation and/or postcolonial school environments (Banks 1986; Nieto 1992; Pollock 2004). Multicultural education in

such societies is accordingly formulated as a program of both political recognition and differential treatment for these 'minoritized' groups.

By contrast, in continental European countries intercultural, not multicultural, education has been developed, and it is conceived not as a minority claim targeting collective actors, but as an individualized 'integration' of immigrant minority students in postwar Fordist labor environments. These integration measures slowly evolved from assimilationist and compensatory approaches towards interaction-oriented 'solutions' which crosscut minority–majority divisions through an emphasis on developing individual intercultural competencies (Gogolin 2002; Aguado Odina 2003; Krüger-Potratz 2005; Gogolin and Krüger-Potratz 2006).

And in Latin America, finally, intercultural education emerges as a post*indigenismo* discourse and as a means of redefining the relationship between postcolonial nation states and indigenous peoples by supplementary, or even exclusively 'indigenous,' educational programs. Here, 'intercultural and bilingual education' (Bertely, Gasché, and Podestá 2008; Schmelkes 2009) shifts between collective-oriented community empowerment, on the one hand, and school-access provision for individual students, on the other hand (Dietz 2004a; Pérez Ruiz 2009; Mateos Cortés 2011).

The paradoxical similarity of educational solutions offered by these rather different approaches reflects the need to critically study the varied intercultural, multicultural, bilingual, and/or indigenist educational approaches from a viewpoint that goes beyond the mere pedagogical search for solutions. In both the European and American contexts, but increasingly also in diverse Latin American national contexts, intercultural education has mainly become a privileged field for pedagogical research and teaching. The vast amount of normative pedagogical proposals prove this increasing interest. However, in our opinion, the actual, empirically observable application of nominally multi/intercultural programs in diverse school and community contexts is only hesitantly being analyzed. This is an emergent area that can and should be studied not only through pedagogical and/or didactical approaches, but by an anthropology of education as well.

Provincializing multiculturalism

Accordingly, a step towards comparing and thus 'provincializing' (Chakrabarty 2000) dominant multicultural discourses and models as they migrate from one societal context to another is needed in order to perceive the particular national and regional identity dimensions hidden behind educational models. For this purpose, anthropological key concepts and ethnographic core methods are essential. When in the postcolonial period anthropology hones in, turning towards the study of nearby contexts and so-called complex societies, it is no longer defined by its object – 'primitive', 'exotic', and 'distant' – but rather by its particular outlook: a holistic approach towards any type of human subject, characterized by a dialectical move between an inward, actor-oriented, emic perspective and an outward, interaction-oriented, etic perspective (Díaz de Rada 2010). In this approach, cultural and/or subcultural practices, as well as their relation to the processes of identity formation that occur at the heart of contemporary society, take shape as one of the recurring nuclei of anthropological concern in general (Kuper 2000), and of the anthropology of education in particular (Spindler 1997; Levinson et al. 2000).

In order to embark on this endeavor of comparing, contextualizing, and provincializing multiculturalism, the main emphasis cannot be limited to ethnographically studying educational institutions as such. Rather, we must study the often conflictual intertwining of multicultural discourses and their institutional enactments; in the contradictions between official and counter-hegemonic discourses on identity and alterity, but also between discourses and educational institutional constraints, we can see the relation between the identity claims and the underlying models that lead to those particular identity politics. For example, subnational, regional 'majorities' such as the Catalans in Spain or the Flemish in Belgium discover intercultural programs as 'arenas' for identity claims and for multicultural community politics vis-á-vis their respective nation states, something which is taking place inside an increasingly supranational context of educational policy-making (Verlot 2001). In the course of these efforts, intercultural educational programs often become 'identity markers' which characterize the collective actors in their complex struggle inside our supposedly postnational (Habermas 2001) societies and states, as well as their respective educational systems. And in recent years, this trend towards a multilevel diversification of policies among subnational, national, and supranational actors is deepened by a simultaneous trend towards transnationalizing educational models, programs, and policies: the different models are migrating cross-nationally, e.g. between Europe, North America, and Latin America, and are often hybridizing each other.

In this sense, it is striking that in the continental European context the presence of native minorities and their claims for recognition in the educational arena have not triggered any interculturalization efforts; instead, either openly assimilatory or explicitly segregatory efforts have been the programmatic answer to ethnic claims from Norway (towards the Sami) and Denmark (the ethnic *Groenlaenders*), through Germany (the Sorbs) and France (the Normans, Occitans and Corses), down to Italy (the southern Tiroles), Greece (the Pontians and Macedonians), and several Eastern European countries (Hettlage 1996; Keating 1996). In all of these countries, intercultural solutions to school problems have only been implemented once immigrant minorities (Turks, Arabs, eastern European Roma, etc.) have been made 'visible' and problematized at school (Glenn and de Jong 1996; Sayad 1999; García-Cano Torrico and Márquez Lepe 2006).

The Spanish case is particularly illustrative for this national bias in multiculturalism. For decades, collective rights for autochthonous groups have been strongly and polemically discussed under nationalist, not multiculturalist premises, whereas multi/intercultural solutions are sought for with regard to Maghrebian and Latin American immigrant minorities (Gil Araujo 2010). Up to the present day, Catalan, Basque, Galician, and even Andalusian nationalism have employed ethnicizing, self-assimilatory discourses for their own nationalist claims, while resorting to sometimes multiculturalist, sometimes segregationary discourses for the treatment of newly immigrant communities. Throughout these dividing lines, historically rooted and dichotomously defined identities of 'the other' – stigmatized as the historically external 'enemy,' the Moor, or the historically internal 'enemy,' the gypsy or Roma (Dietz 2004b) – reemerge when multicultural models and discourses are imported and adopted by contemporary mainstream society and policy-making.

Thus, originally in the Anglo-Saxon debate, but also now in Latin American postindigenism and recent European migrant integration programs, a pressing need for 'multiculturalizing' the educational systems has been argued through

mechanisms of recognition and affirmative action, which would allow for an 'empowerment' not of all, but of certain – native or immigrant – ethnic minorities in the course of their process of self-identification, ethnogenesis, and 'emancipation' (Giroux 1994; McLaren 1997). Similarly, the ultimate need for the new European 'interculturality' in education is not claimed merely on the ground of the minorities' identity needs; rather, the struggle for intercultural education is increasingly justified by the apparent inability of the majority society to meet the new challenges created by the heterogeneity of the pupils, by the growing sociocultural complexity of majority–minority relations, and, in general, by diversity as a key feature of the future European societies (Verlot 2001; Aguado Odina 2003). In this sense, in different contexts educational authorities develop minority empowerment measures, which are explicitly directed towards 'problematic' target minorities – such as Roma children in Spain, second- or third-generation Moroccan or Turkish immigrant pupils in Belgium, the Netherlands or Germany and/or recently immigrated eastern Europeans in the UK or in southern Europe; but simultaneously, these authorities seek to complement this empowerment focus with an education which mainstreams the promotion of intercultural competencies among both the marginalized minorities and the marginalizing majorities. Instead of only working with 'problematized' target minorities, educational actors in different settings recognize the need to address the silent majorities, which often are the ones who 'problematize' and stigmatize the minority students. Crosscutting, intersectional, and inclusive educational programs are therefore developed to supplement the frequent minority-emphasis of intercultural educational measures (Dietz 2009).

Contributions from hermeneutics and reflexivity

The nascent Intercultural Studies reflect this success achieved in different societies and contexts by multiculturalism in its strategy of visualizing and recognizing cultural diversity in all spheres of contemporary society. Although school and academia had been points of departure for these strategies of recognition, it is the whole of society in its complex diversity which is ultimately to be targeted (Radtke 1996; Dietz 2007). The polyphonic and manifold character of contemporary diversity in society makes any attempt to cover these diverse features from a monodisciplinary perspective impossible. This affects, first of all, the anthropological perspective and its definitive loss of the monopoly on the concept of culture (Hannerz 1996). While in its first clashes with Cultural Studies anthropology was deeply concerned with other disciplines' often vague, uncritical, and/or all too metaphorical use of the concept of culture (Kuper 2000), nowadays new points of positive encounter are found, particularly between the anthropology of education and other subfields of the so-called 'new humanities' (Gandhi 1998). Philosophical, and above all hermeneutical, approaches to interculturality offer a potential convergence with contemporary anthropological and ethnographic concepts and procedures.

In particular, a so-called 'intercultural hermeneutics' (Stagl 1993, 34) conceives itself to be an extension and systematization of the classic transcendental hermeneutics that – with evident Kantian as well as Gadamerian echoes – reflects on the conditions that make *Verstehen* and communication between human beings possible. Within this paradigm, all acts of *Verstehen* are understood to be tentative, border-crossing, and necessarily circular procedures of a 'fusion of horizons' (Gadamer 1975, 289). The goal of this operation of intercultural and inter-group

comprehension is to generate an intersubjective meaning, defined as 'the comprehensible meaning of expressions and actions, as well as of cultural forms of life specific to a certain group' (Braun 1994, 20).

Both in an anthropology of education that is dedicated to 'what is intercultural' (Masson 1995), and in the nascent field of 'intercultural philologies' (Schmidt 1995), this hermeneutic notion is broadened by resorting as well to the original phenomenological concept of the 'life world' (Schütz 1967). The plurality of 'life worlds,' shaped as dynamic and adaptable cultural resources that provide meaning to their members, requires the pluralization of interpretative models as well. Educational institutions can therefore be analyzed as encounters of rather different life worlds of pupils and their parents, of teachers and their professional traditions, and of administrative, institutional life worlds. Frequently, the plurilingual and culturally diverse composition of contemporary life worlds clashes with the still rather monolingual habitus (Gogolin 1997) of the Western educational system – a habitualized practice expressed in an assumed 'common sense' about the 'normalness' and 'naturalness' of focusing education on a certain, 'official,' standardized language and because of this, considering dialect and linguistic diversity to be a 'school problem' (Gogolin 1997, 2003). Together with a explicitly monocultural attempt at 'neutralizing' school culture as a 'common ground,' the monolingual habitus of the Western school is still attractive to teachers and school administrators because of its capacity to 'naturalize' and 'normalize' the exceptionality of monolingualism:

> Among its deeply rooted basic assumptions, there is the one on the 'naturality' of monolingualism, be it in relation to the adolescent, be it the human being's basic linguistic structure, be it the linguistic configuration of a (state-) society. The teachers studied moreover showed their conviction that one of the school's functions is the promotion of this 'natural' monolingualism. For them, the 'normal' means of the school are not adequate nor apt to face the case, which is exceptional, but inevitable in a society of immigration, of teaching a multilingually raised child. No-one among the teachers doubted that in this particular situation it was necessary to help these children; for that purpose, they claimed an increase in supporting and special promotion measures. According to them, this support should–and could–only be directed towards acquiring higher levels of German language performance. (Gogolin 1997, 20–21)

Thus the possibilities of intercultural comprehension, which seek to 'translate' between these often opposed life worlds, depend not only on linguistic competence and skills, as the subfield of intercultural communication suggests, but also on the development of actor's and institutions' self-reflexivity, of engaging in 'reflexive dialogues' with the 'other's' horizon of comprehension (Braun 1994). Collaborative, critical and reflexive approaches, which combine qualitative-ethnographic perspectives with institutional and organizational analysis are accordingly required in future research (cf. below).

If this dialogic reflexivity is established between subjects coming from different 'horizons of meaning,' then comprehension of the other will lay the foundation for 'modifying attitudes towards determining one's own meaning based on the other's meaning' (Schmied-Kowarzik 1993, 73). Thus, it inaugurates a process of interculturalization and a reflexive intertwining of what is 'mine' and what belongs to 'others.' This is the genuinely anthropological contribution, and its empirical procedure, ethnography, systematizes the interpretive challenge of translating between different

life worlds (Stagl 1993); ethnography would accomplish the analytic systematization which provides paths for a normatively guided translation, as well.

An ethnographic example from Veracruz, Mexico

In this sense, in an ongoing reflexive-ethnographic project, we are currently analyzing the 'grammar of diversity' underlying the creation of so-called intercultural universities in Mexico. These higher education institutions were created after the 1994 Zapatista uprising in different indigenous regions throughout Mexico in order to meet claims for indigenous access to university education, as well as to provide culturally pertinent educational alternatives for young indigenous people not willing to emigrate from their communities. Through a case study in four indigenous regions of the southeastern state of Veracruz, our project has critically accompanied the innovative, community-based teaching developed inside one of these universities, the *Universidad Veracruzana Intercultural* (UVI). Mostly indigenous, but also non-indigenous students study a BA program in 'Intercultural Management for Development,' specializing in translation and mediation activities in either communication, health, languages, legal issues, or sustainability domains. Classes are normally taught in Spanish, but certain kinds of teaching and project activities are also carried out in the main indigenous language in the region: in Náhuatl (in the Huasteca, Grandes Montañas and Selvas regions), in Totonaco (in the Totonacapan region), in Zoque-popoluca (in the Selvas region), and in Otomí (in the Huasteca region).

The indigenous regions of Veracruz are still marked by a striking lack of educational options at high-school level so that students have often been obliged to pursue precarious modes of distant education such as *telesecundarias* and *telebachilleratos*, which are postprimary schools which lack the complete range of teachers and which are therefore run through satellite-TV educational programs. For this reason, the 'normal' process of choosing students through multiple choice entrance exams is not applied in the UVI regional centres. Instead, students must run through a qualitative selection interview and present a personal letter of their motives for pursuing studies at the UVI as well as a letter of recommendation by a traditional, civil or religious authority of their local community. Given the recent nature of this new kind of university, the first UVI Intercultural Managers for Development recently graduated in 2010 and have now started working as project managers, mediators, translators, liaison officers, and/or technical assistants in governmental or nongovernmental projects. Others work through self employment in local and regional development initiatives or consultancies.

To achieve a smooth transit from UVI studies to employment, the majority of students have started rather early to carry out intermediary and advisory activities and to design projects while still studying. Almost all of the UVI students are from indigenous regions and would not otherwise have been able to access higher education in urban centres. However, recently an increase in student mobility between regions is perceivable due to the fact that more students who are from other regions, including urban centres, have decided to apply to study at the UVI. The BA in Intercultural Management for Development is taught through a mixed format that combines conventional face-to-face classes in small groups with newer kinds of workshop-based classes and intensive community outreach work, which students carry out under the supervision of a lecturer/tutor and in close collaboration with communal authorities, non-governmental organizations and civil associations present

in the regions. For this reason, the UVI has signed a series of agreements with local actors and regional networks, who get involved as counterparts in the extra-curricular teaching and learning process. Through such early work experiences the students have to compare, contrast, and translate diverse types of knowledge: formal and informal, academic and community-based, professional and experiential, generated in both rural and urban contexts by both indigenous and nonindigenous actors. This continuous exchange of knowledge and methodologies, of academic vs. community-rooted kinds of knowledge, is generating new, rather hybrid subjects which are able to oscillate not only between different kinds of knowledge, but also between rather diverse ways of putting knowledge into daily practice inside and outside their communities of origin.

Through our ethnographic accompaniment of these students and our constant shifting between interviewing of all participant activist groups, participant observation of the UVI and the community interaction arenas, and joint academic-activist workshops where we discuss our findings with the participating teachers, students, and community authorities, our ethnography directly nourishes UVI teacher training. The main focus of these discussion and mutual training workshops is the search for both a pedagogically and politically adequate manner of dealing with different sources of diversity – not only ethnic and cultural, but also gender-based, sexual orientation related, and religious ones. Students train and practice these diversity approaches throughout small, but locally relevant joined community action research projects[1].

Towards a comparative model

To ensure a dialog between such a reflexive ethnography and intercultural pedagogy, it is necessary to redirect the classic legacy of hermeneutics in anthropology and ethnography, until now confined to the semantic and conceptual dimension (i.e. the discourses and models of multi/intercultural education), towards cultural praxis, that is, towards daily interaction (Fornet-Betancourt 2002). This requires a 'pragmatic hermeneutics' (Braun 1994) that analyzes the conditions and possibilities for validating meaning practically, within its social contexts. From an intercultural perspective, this hermeneutic-pragmatic approach allows us to distinguish between the mere translation of a culturally specific meaning (i.e. the level of semantics, of competence), on the one hand, and the analysis of the performance of this meaning that different groups in contact use while interacting, on the other hand (i.e. the level of pragmatics, of performance; cf. Braun 1994). In our Veracruz example, the semantic level of competence includes the varying notions and perceptions of kinds and hierarchies of diversity, as expressed by our informants–collaborators–activists through ethnographic interviews and group discussions, while the pragmatic level of performance resides in the detailed, participant observation of practiced, lived diversity in daily school and community interaction.

Accordingly, for an empirical study of multiculturalism in practice and its link to educational policies, the reflexivity of the social and educational actors must be taken seriously and faced by a committed, engaged, and thus doubly reflexive anthropology. Since this commitment to the particular school actors studied does not imply full identification with their objectives, the task of a 'double hermeneutics' (Giddens 1984) is to broaden the study of the educational actors to include

the uses that these actors make of academic knowledge, e.g. how they appropriate academic diversity discourses in their daily school and classroom routines. The resulting ethnographic praxis that is proposed here is not limited to either esthetic introspection, as suggested by postmodern tendencies, or mobilizing externalization, as practiced by former activist approaches. Through the reciprocal negotiation of academic and pedagogical-cum-political interests, it is possible to generate a 'novel mixture of theory and practice' (Escobar 1993, 386), which consists of phases of empirical research, of academic theorization, and of transference to political and/or educational praxis. Again, in our example on intercultural universities in Mexico, the ethnographic fieldwork with the educational community *in situ* elucidates local and contextual logics of negotiating over different kinds and sources of diversity: on how to articulate inside and outside the classroom gender and generational diversity with ethnic dichotomies and religious differences, on how to diversify accordingly the B.A. curriculum without ethnifying and essentializing such differences, on how to articulate legitimate ethno-cultural and ethno-political claims-making with the pedagogical need for 'meta-cultural' (Jiménez Naranjo 2009), interaction-centered competences. This kind of dialogic and reflexive fieldwork prompts programmatic conclusions and alternative curricular propositions, e.g. on classroom interaction and group composition criteria, on student project priorities, on the constitution and composition of alumni and professional networks, all of which are then negotiated – locally as well as on the state level – with the directing boards of these institutions. And again, the ethnographic accompaniment of these negotiations provides new insights on the underlying and emerging local 'grammars of diversity' (Mateos Cortés 2009, 2011; Dietz and Mateos Cortés 2011a).

As may be seen from this case study, this transfer is not reduced to an act of 'consciousness raising', as conceived by classical Freirian pedagogy, but constitutes rather an exchange between the two kinds of knowledge mentioned: between the knowledge generated in the 'first-order' by the 'experts' of their own life world, on the one hand, and the anthropological knowledge generated in the 'second-order' by the academic 'expert', on the other. The possible contradiction that arises from the exchange of both perspectives has to be integrated by the ethnographer in the research process itself, which will oscillate dialectically between identification and disengagement, between phases of full commitment and phases of analytic reflection (Dietz 2009). The intersubjective, dialectic relationship that thus arises between the researching subject and the actor-subject that is being researched (Kleining 1982) generates a continuous and reciprocal process of criticism and self-criticism between both parties. Understood in this way, research on social reality is, simultaneously, its own critique (Kleining 1988), so that the ethnographic relationship itself becomes political-pedagogical praxis.

In order to illustrate the empirical possibilities of this conceptual approach, we finish with a brief presentation of a conceptual-methodological grid. As we show, the main contribution that anthropology can and should offer to the contemporary debate on diversity, interculturality, and education resides in its ethnographic potential – our ability to study these very debates in real places in real time. Nevertheless, in order to take advantage of this potential, it is indispensable, in the first place, to rethink and reiterate the close relationship that must exist between theoretical conceptualization and empirical realization. Therefore, we hold that ethnography cannot be reduced either to a merely interchangeable instrument

in the range of social science methods and techniques, or to a simple weapon to 'liberate' the 'oppressed'. Going beyond the alternative between academicism – whether of a positivist or postmodern origin – and tranformationism, our proposal is to re-conceive ethnography as a reflexive task that recovers, from within, the discourse of the social actor being studied, while simultaneously contrasting this discourse, from outside, with the actor's habitualized praxis (Gobbo 2002; Díaz de Rada 2010).

This oscillation and contrast between an emic, semantic, and discursive axis and an etic, praxis, and interaction driven axis has to be finally integrated into an ethnographic study of the institutional structurations in which intercultural education develops. In linking these different research perspectives, a three-dimensional ethnographic model emerges, which combines (Dietz 2009; cf. figure 1):

- a 'semantic' dimension, centered on the actor, whose identity discourse is studied – basically through ethnographic interviews – from an emic perspective and is analyzed in relation to his/her strategies of cultural and/or ethnic identity;
- a 'pragmatic' dimension, focused on the cultural praxis, i.e. on the particular 'modes of interaction' (Soenen 1998), each defined by specific logics that constantly overlap in school praxis and that do not stem from a specific culture, but are the result of the dynamic hierarchization that is part of the school institution;
- and a 'syntactic' dimension, centered on the institutions inside of which these identity discourses and interaction practices are developed; these institutional settings are analyzed and 'condensed' starting from the classical 'epistemological windows' (Werner and Schoepfle 1987) of fieldwork, i.e. the systematic contradictions that emerge when contrasting emic vs. etic types of ethnographic data, and which have to be interpreted not as mere data incongruities, but as those 'coherent inconsistencies' (Verlot 2001) which reveal the underlying particular logic of the analyzed institutions and their respective nation state in question.

Semantic Dimension	Pragmatic Dimension	Syntactic Dimension
actor-centered	interaction-centered	institution-centered
identity and/or ethnicity	praxis, culture (intra-culture/inter-culture)	institutional entities (territorialized)
= discourse	= practice	= societal structure
ethnographic interviews	participant observations	intercultural workshops
=*emic*	= *etic*	=*emic / etic* ("epistemological windows")

Figure 1.   Dimensions of a comparative ethnographic methodology.

Conclusion

Far from establishing new empirical fields and/or new academic sub-disciplines in a context that is already excessively specialized and compartmentalized, the distinctively anthropological contribution to the study of intercultural and/or multicultural education lies in its particular theoretical-empirical binomial. This dual emphasis on a theorization of diversity, and an ethnography of the intercultural and intracultural phenomena in actual schools, generates an integral vision, both emic and etic, of the object–subject of study.

This methodology allows us, on the one hand, to de-construct and challenge the discursive and practical 'comings-and-goings' of a broad range of cultural essentialisms, racializations, ethnicisms, and nationalisms. On the other hand, its semantic and pragmatic analyses complement each other and complete an ethnographic vision of the institutions which, like an omnipresent but underlying syntax, tend to structurally influence the identity discourses of each of the actors studied, as well as their respective life-world practices. By doing this, by turning our eyes from the problem to the problematizer, from the individual to the sedentary institutions, from the subordinate minority or the 'beneficiary' client to the hegemonic 'benefactor' nation state, the anthropological endeavor aims at disturbing, questioning, and de-coding settled, fixed, and often deeply internalized classifications and identifications.

Notes on contributors

Gunther Dietz holds an MA and a PhD in anthropology from Hamburg University (Germany) and is currently a research professor in Intercultural Studies at Universidad Veracruzana in Xalapa (Mexico). His latest books include: *Multiculturalism, interculturality and diversity in education: An anthropological approach* (Waxmann, 2009) and *Interculturalidad y educación intercultural en México* (September 2011); email: guntherdietz@gmail.com.

Laura Selene Mateos Cortés holds a BA in philosophy from Universidad Veracruzana in Xalapa (Mexico), an MA, and a PhD from Universidad de Granada (Spain). She is currently a research professor in Intercultural Studies at Universidad Veracruzana. Her latest books include: *Los estudios interculturales en Veracruz* (Editorial de la Universidad Veracruzana, 2009) and *La migración transnacional del discurso intercultural* (Abya Yala, 2010); email: lauramat@gmail.com.

Note

1. For further ethnographic data and methodological details of this project, cf. Mateos Cortés (2009, 2011) and Dietz and Mateos Cortés (2011a).

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