Integrating culture in teaching ESP via the LanGuide mobile application

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The present paper aims at describing the uncharacteristic illustration of working with the cultural element when teaching a foreign language against the background of the classicised approaches in this respect, in the context of the LanGuide project, whose objectives are to provide the users with a mobile application for learning and testing foreign languages. The approach tackled by the authors of the exercises, who are also the authors of the present study, combines two aspects from the traditional methodologies i.e., the inclusion of host-country cultural items in tasks devised in and for the English language, in order to meet the requirements and goals of the LanGuide project. Thus, students, teachers and administrative staff members involved in an Erasmus+ mobility who need to learn their English language knowledge in the fields of mobility, administration, IT and/or academic may find useful cultural elements of the countries they will visit while polishing their skills for English.

Keywords: *cultural element, cultural literacy, cultural competence, language skills, mobile application, LanGuide, ESP*

1. Introduction

Teaching specialised subject-matters in different fields is a process always accompanied by a particular methodology which describes and ensures its professional framework of implementation. Teaching foreign languages represents a particular case in point, because, besides the methods, techniques, activities, instruments and materials used, problems that may occur and possible solutions brought to them, aims targeted, as well as interactions between and among actants, the approach has always been an important aspect. As presented below, in the history of these approaches, the language skills started from playing no role, evolved towards gaining more importance and ended being the central focus in the communicative era alongside culture, a projected potential 5th skill, which has to be

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properly placed within the progression. All modern approaches nowadays agree that whenever teaching foreign languages is considered, irrespective of the language under discussion, the cultural element has to be present alongside reading, listening, speaking and writing as a core aspect in the practice of acquiring proficiency in that respective language. But what has been disputed was the very nature of the culture to be included in the dialogue, as it will be reviewed in the chapter to follow.

2. Literature review

Elementary questions such as: How can culture be defined?; Is there a relation between the culture of a people and the language spoken by that people?; What culture should be taught in the process of teaching a foreign language: that of the students learning it or that of the language learnt?; What is the so-called 'cultural element?; How can it be included in the process of teaching: as separate classes or melted within the paste of the exercises? and Can stereotypes be avoided or are they necessary? define the methodology that needed to be addressed and considered by the authors of the presents paper, as creators of exercises for the LanGuide mobile application, for which, in its first phase, exercises for the English language were designed, according to the scope of the project. Moreover, a question like the one Kramsch asked regarding the very nature of the cultural element: "how can we develop in the learners an *intercultural competence* that would short-change neither their own culture nor the target culture, but would make them into cultural mediators in a globalized world?" (emphasis added) (Kramsch 2013, 57) represented, as well, an important research base for the challenge of creating tasks in the English language targeting users of all cultural backgrounds and addressing, at the same time, several host-countries in whose cultures they may immerse themselves for a certain period of time.

2.1. Society and culture

Referred to in terms of *incarnation* by T.S. Eliot (1973), the relationship between a society and its culture was perceived as an interweaved canvas on which brushes from both sides colour in a reciprocal and balanced touch, society and culture breeding one another as an active and perfectly composed organism. Consequently, the paradigm of defining traits for profiling culture when attempting to define it on a syntagmatic axis is rooted in key terms such as: religion, history, literature, language, arts, philosophy, sports, physical territory, music, traditions

and politics. And even if all these can be reduced to stereotypes or clichés, which are, many times incorrectly or superficially associated to a certain culture, they need to be part of any foreign language teaching curriculum and properly mastered when included in the teaching continuum. And this is exactly what, for example, Borca (2019) tried to consider and include in her series of manuals dedicated to teaching Romanian as a foreign language, tailoring the cultural element according to the natural principle of mutual determination between language and society.

This particular way of viewing the implementation of cultural icons and characteristics into Romanian language exercises dedicated to foreign candidates to learning Romanian as a foreign language anticipates a discussion that will be reflected upon below and was previously described in detail and scientifically analysed in a research paper by Nechifor and Borca (2016, 99-108). What their study made visible to any researcher interested in this field is the fact that the cultural aspects which need to be considered when passing language information to students is that of the language taught and not necessarily that belonging to the students' background which can be done not only in separate classes dedicated to studying the particularities of one people's culture (even though the authors of this study do not disregard this as a possibility, especially when summer courses are considered, as specifically referred to in their paper), but as an organic inclusion of countless aspects that can be continuously caught in the paste of the exercises offered by the manual.

2.2. Language and Culture

Continuing with an even deeper analysis of the connection established between a society and its culture, the next inevitable stop is there where an even more sensitive liaison can be identified i.e., that between the culture of a society and its language. Without discharging two opposite viewpoints which put into perspective either culture through language, as stated by Hantrais: "culture is the beliefs and practices governing the life of a society for which a particular language is the vehicle of expression" (1989, 17), or the one which considers language the major generating factor of culture, as Emmitt and Pollock did (1997) when they stated that a language is rooted in its culture and that that culture, in its turn, is echoed in the language and inherited from generation to generation, we are more interested in the integrative approach as fostered by Kramsch, for example, who saw the connexion between language and culture from two simultaneous perspectives, in time, but also in the present moment, having both a historical view and a societal one, when stating that: "Language is intimately linked not only to the

culture that is and the culture that was, but also to the culture of the imagination that governs people's decisions and actions far more than we may think." (Kramsch 1998, 8).

Thus, "people do not only express experience but they also create experience through language" (Kramsch 1998, 66), and subsequently, "language embodies cultural reality" (Kramsch 1998, 14), where the term "embodies" makes a very good choice to express a suprasegmental way of looking at this phenomenon. That is why, as teachers of foreign languages, it is important to understand the need to teach not only forms, structures, vocabulary items and skills, but also essential pragmatic aspects in the linguistic-cultural life of the people whose language the students are about to learn, as their correct, full and complex perception can only be complete if and when they apprehend reality as seen through the cultural lens of that society, irrespective of the context that they might be using the language in: a native one or a derived one. Hence, the necessity we had to consider, when we designed the exercises for the LanGuide mobile application in the English language, to include elements of Romanian culture in them, as they targeted, as a special case of this project's aim, users from other countries who may visit Romania as exchange students, teachers or members of the administration in Erasmus+ mobilities. And because they may need to speak English before they learn, via the same application, the basic words, in the same specialised fields, in Romanian, their perspective of feeling included, accepted, their sense of belonging to the community they are supposed to be part of even for only 4, 6 or 12 months needs to be addressed first and has to start, in this situation, before learning the host-country language, so, actually, with the cultural element:

> To identify themselves as members of a community, people have to define themselves jointly as insiders against others, whom they thereby define as outsiders. Culture, as a process that both includes and excludes, always entails the exercise of power and control (Kramsch 1998, 8).

The same attitude had been approached by Allwright and Bailey (1991) who had equated the idea of learning a new language to that of learning a new culture, as well as by Byram (1989), who had even stated that the teachers of a new language are also the teachers of that culture, thus taken on skills from the teachers of social sciences, geography and history to impart this type of knowledge. Moreover, as Leveridge put it, a language teacher has to raise awareness of cultural differences and teach:

the cultural background of language usage, choose culturally appropriate teaching styles, and explore culturally based linguistic differences to promote understanding instead of misconceptions or prejudices. Language policy must be used to create awareness and understandings of cultural differences, and written to incorporate the cultural values of those being taught (Leveridge 2008, web page).

And even though researchers like Gay are of the opinion that "the academic achievement of ethnically diverse students will improve when they are taught through their own cultural and experiential filters" (Gay 2002, 106), opinion disseminated beforehand by Au and Kawakami in 1994, Foster in 1995, Hollins in 1996, Kleinfeld in 1975 and Ladson-Billings in 1994 and 1995, as quoted by Gay herself, because "when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference of students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly" (Gay 2002, 106), still, if not out of didactic reasons, then at least out of practical ones, the target language culture should be the case even under very atypical circumstances as the one provided by the LanGuide project. Such pragmatic examples can be: countries requiring, when granting citizenship, not only a test of language, but also an assessment of the knowledge regarding that country's history and geography, as well as the desire to feel welcomed and finely integrated in a society whose way of living you know even before you learn its language.

However, Gay's concept of "culturally responsive teaching" is to be retained because it lays the foundation of teaching in a multicultural environment and analyses the even double difficult mission of a language teacher in this situation i.e., that of not only teaching a foreign language, but that of teaching a foreign language to a multicultural class, which comes along with:

developing a knowledge base about cultural diversity, including ethnic and cultural diversity content in the curriculum, demonstrating caring and building learning communities, communicating with ethnically diverse students, and responding to ethnic diversity in the delivery of instruction. (Gay 2002, 106)

2.2.1. Cultural awareness

Being culturally aware represents, according to Nechifor and Borca's opinion, "the first step to be apprehended and acquired by both the students and the teacher of a multicultural class, but also exchanged between them when involved in a multicultural educational environment." (2020, 295)

According to Tomalin and Stempleski's vision, the term 'cultural awareness' refers to "sensitivity to the impact of culturally-induced behaviour on language use and communication" (Tomalin, Stempleski 1998, 5) and incorporates the aspect of compassion when communicating by revealing sensitivity to the distinction between what is encoded, on the one hand, and decoded, on the other hand, from a cultural point of view. And starting from what Tomlison said that might be:

> a gradually developing inner sense of the equality of cultures, an increased understanding of your own and other people's cultures, and a positive interest in how cultures both connect and differ. Such awareness can broaden the mind, increase tolerance and facilitate international communication. (Tomlinson 2001, 5)

a very clear implicature can be derived referring to the fact that in the absence of cultural awareness one can be prevented from fully exploiting their linguistic potential, thus depriving the speaker of what Stern names to be "the native speaker's perspective" (Stern 1992, 217). Hence, the stance of the "fluent fool", in Barnlund's words (in Samovar and Porter 1991, 6), who can speak a foreign language correctly and even be fluent in it, at the level of productive language skills, but completely impotent of perspectivisation and contextualization of linguist/cultural meaning in various real-life social situations, a position which can be avoided altogether if comprehension of cultural customs and preferred behaviours is facilitated from a very early foreign language learning stage. Thus, "learning the cultural roots of a language is essential for meaningful fluency" (Seelye 1993, 275), 'meaningful fluency' becoming yet another interesting concept facilitating the arch between teaching a foreign language at a proficiency level, there where fluency is expected to act, and correlating it to cultural meaning, by being able to perform a "self-examination and in-depth exploration of one's own cultural and professional background" (Campinha-Bacote 2002, 182), and at the same time by attaining the level of "recognition of one's biases, prejudices, and assumptions about individuals who are different" (Campinha-Bacote 2002, 182).

2.2.2. Cultural competence

Thus, cultural competence would come as a second logical concept in the perception of a teaching process focused on foreign languages as:

being culturally competent means that, on the one hand, as a student in a multicultural class, one can not only be aware of differences and complexities, but can already know how to deal with them, handle them, and respond to their specificity. On the other hand, as an instructor, after becoming aware of the difficulty of teaching to a multicultural class exactly due to the same differences and complexities, one can manage the entire process in a professional way, having correct reactions, politically correct answers, a lot of bibliography to cover from this point of view. (Nechifor and Borca 2020, 297)

The link between this concept and the previous one, that of cultural awareness is covered by Sherwood who sees the value in understanding how important it is to be culturally aware, first of all, in order for anyone to be tolerant and to be able to display suitable reactions in multicultural environments, and, second of all, to be able to be culturally competent to "participate ethically and effectively in intercultural settings" (Sherwood 2015, web page), since showing signs of multifaceted attention, empathy, and active recognition of cultural diversity alongside appropriate behaviour and acceptance can generate the creation of a friendly and politically correct environment.

Nechifor and Borca develop more upon the concept of cultural competence when they see it as the step that can:

make the transition from the awareness everyone has to have with respect to cultural differences, to embracing the particularities of the target language's culture, from swirling around tolerance, acceptance and inclusion to the parameters which define the new culture one is about to learn its language and the characteristic features which define it. It is on the psychological territory of this concept that the cultural element of the target language can be introduced and taught, at all its levels, in order, afterwards, for the cultural literacy to fully be instated, with all its rightful determinations, laws, delimitations, frames, etc. (2020, 297)

and end up by amusingly stating that: "being culturally competent embodies the step of being aware of the cultural awareness and being able to deal with it, listing 'cultural mishaps' in a lesson plan, next to the classical rubric called 'anticipated problems". (2002, 197)

2.2.3. Cultural literacy

Cultural literacy is the concept which was fully considered when creating the exercises for the LanGuide mobile application, after researching into the above-mentioned steps and concepts, as it is the element that can make the experience of learning a foreign langue complete. Referred to as 'culturacy', with a term coined by Nechifor and Borca (2020, 298) cultural literacy encompasses aspects such as:

> cultural icons, mythology and folklore, proverbs, idioms, philosophy and religion, literature, writing and speaking conventions, fine arts, anthropology, psychology and sociology, business and economics, physical sciences and mathematics, and even medicine and health practices (2020, 298)

which are also the elements depicted by *The New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy* of 2002 when endeavouring to profile what defines the Americans as a culture: "people, places, ideas, history, politics, American literature, wireless technology, gene therapy, science and technology, and events that shape the American cultural conversation." (Hirsch, Kett et al. 2002, viii)

And all these are supposed to be part and parcel of the foreign language class experience, at all competency levels, and imbued within all linguistic compartments, from phonetics to pragmatics, going through lexicology, morphology, syntax and semantics, and not (necessarily) the subject of separate specialised classes dedicated to teaching culture exclusively.

Consequently, enabling the students to acquire a foreign language through "meaningful gestures or other social cues" (Sternberg 2002, 13–43), can lead to attaining "not only linguistic forms but also ways of thinking and behaving" (Nguyen, Kellogg 2010).

3. The LanGuide case: English exercises with built-in Romanian cultural elements

In view of all these considerations, the LanGuide project brought about a new challenge, that of creating dedicated exercises for the English language, for specialised fields, such as, mobility, secretarial/administrative, IT and academic, in order to be input in a mobile application with the purpose of offering the candidates to learning this language as a foreign language the opportunity to acquire, to practice and to test their language skills, and grammar and vocabulary proficiency in the specific fields mentioned above as quickly, mobile and practical as possible.

But besides the double perspective that the linguists' team had to consider, that of creating original content for the specialised vocabulary areas named above and that of adapting the linguistic creativity to the constraints of the Content Manager, which is the data base repository where the exercises were uploaded in the online background of the application, another aspect was still to be accounted for, and that was the cultural element.

Nevertheless, this time, as different from the two perspectives minutely described in the literature review section before, the original characteristic consisted in the fact that the culture that needed to be included in the body of the tasks prepared was that of a host country, the country where the possible candidates might find themselves living at a certain moment, for a short period of time, in the context of a mobility, for example. So, in our case, Romania and Romanian were to be addressed in terms of culture, the other countries participant in the project being: Slovenia, Croatia, Spain and Sweden, Italy being also covered by the Slovenian team of linguists. Nonetheless, the language of the exercises was English, whose own cultural element was not the focus at all, as it didn't quite represent the field-reality of the context where the English language would be the case to be put into practice by the users.

Thus, a very original, yet paradoxical, combination of language and culture paradigm emerged, by inserting these host-countries' cultural elements in otherwise English language exercises, a perspective which hasn't been approached before and which constitutes, from a linguistic analysis point of view, against the background of the situations referred to in terms of research, a unique approach. In other words, the real-life perspective of practical encounters, administrative considerations, examples of good/bad practices, institutional bureaucracy, and teaching experiences of the host-countries needed to be included in the English version of the tasks, in order for the users of the application (students, teachers or administrative staff) to become familiar with such realities via English, the language which the application offers for learning at all levels, for interaction and information exchange in the countries where an Erasmus+ mobility might take them.

Its implementation would target all exercises, at all levels, for all language personae, in all the specific fields named, regarding all language skills, grammatical structures and vocabulary range. The creation of the exercises fell into a two-step framework approach, as we considered it necessary first of all to create an appropriate task environment for all exercises, in which a Romanian related background, regarding a real-life situation from administration had to be presented in detail, in order for the candidates to immerse themselves into a possible context that might represent a familiar reality by the time they come into real contact with our country, and second of all, to include, wherever possible, as many cultural

elements as possible, according to the description of this concept and the descriptors used to define it in the literature review section of the present paper.

Representative examples for beautifully constructed task environments are presented in Figures 1, 2, and 3 below:

You are a student at the Faculty of Letters, "Transilvania" University of Brasov who has applied for an Erasmus+ study mobility in Greece. The secretary of the Erasmus+ department has informed you about the possibility of being disqualified from the competition, unless you bring the original papers needed for the application file, but you seem to have problems submitting them in due time. You are in the secretary's office now and you have to defend your case. Prepare an oral account regarding this situation, explaining why you cannot hand in the required papers before the deadline, asking for an extension of the deadline and offering alternative solutions to the problem meanwhile. Consider using an appropriate register, a wide variety of vocabulary items and grammatical structures, a well-organised and coherent discourse. Provide personal arguments and examples. Talk for approximately 3 minutes.

Figure 1. Student/Advanced/Secretarial/Evaluating&creating/Speaking/Tick and cross

You are student Silvana Enescu, you are in your second year of studies, first semester, at the Faculty of Letters. Create the correct form of an application letter for an exchange Erasmus+ programme at Granada Faculty of Letters, in Spain. You should consider:
  ☐ describing your profile and your interests
  ☐ inquiring about possible syllabus matches between your BA undergraduate programme and the one of the targeted faculty
  ☐ asking to be selected for an interview
You will address the letter to the Erasmus+ department with your university, Mrs. Davidescu Lorena.

In order for you to achieve this task, please select the appropriate answer for each entry on this letter from the dropdown menus available.

Figure 2. Student/Advanced/Secretarial/Creating/Writing/Multiple choice (drop-down)

As a student in the Erasmus+ programme, imagine you have to write to the Dean of the Faculty of Letters to let him know about the problems you have regarding attending the second semester in Brașov, Romania, according to the agreement. Put the parts of this formal letter in the correct order:

Figure 3. Student/Beginner/Secretarial/Applying/Writing/Ordering

Representative examples of cultural element inclusion within the body of the exercises themselves can be traced in Figures 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 below:

Date: 11.05.2020 A.D.

TRANSILVANIA UNIV. OF BRAȘOV'S AD.

POSN.: Recep. / Sec. / OA - c. 25000 Ron p.a.

Famous university in RO, located in the heart of the country, is looking for a bright, hard-working, dedicated, and ambitious Sec./OA for their busy Recep. area. Your day will be very varied, as well as the duties and tasks that you will perform, i.e.: admin. support to a lively and famous teaching staff. You must have a min. of 50 wpm, a knowledge of wp software (esp. Office Word, PP, .pdf), and min 2 yrs exp. in reception.

For app., email Simona Columbeanu (sc@unitbv.ro), from HR, ASAP, quote ref. no. 96/G41 and encl. a CV, but only after you read the T&C.

The date for the exam: TBA
FYI: For this position, an NDA is N/A

Tel: 004 789 300 202

P.S.: Even if OJT is offered, you still need at least one outstanding L/recomm.

Figure 4. Administrative staff/Advanced/Secretarial/Analysing/Vocabulary/Fill-in

1. I have made an appointment for you to see your Erasmus+ coordinator ..... 2 o'clock ...... Friday the 16th.
2. The person in charge with the incoming students is in China ..... the moment so I'm unable to make any arrangements for you to see her ..... she returns. She is away ..... two weeks, but ..... this time her duties are attributed to Ms. Carolina Davidescu, the Erasmus+ department manager. She works ..... Thursdays. Would you like me to book a meeting for you ..... her this week?
3. The Vice-Rector is due back in the office ..... a few minutes if the meeting ends ..... time.
4. Please don't forget to bring all your papers for the Erasmus+ file ..... the next few days, ... the end of the week.
5. I'll confirm if your application file for the Erasmus+ study exchange programme for Germany is complete ..... Tuesday morning ..... the latest.

Figure 5. Administrative staff/Beginner/Secretarial/Grammar/Understanding/Fill-in

1. Where's the department photocopy machine?	a. It's Mr. Lăzărescu, assistant professor, Ph.D.
2. What is the Dean's telephone number?	b. At her office, on Colina, room II29.
3. When is the Department meeting regarding the situation of the transferable credits?	c. My appointment with the Faculty Erasmus coordinator is at 9:30 am.
4. Who is the Dean of the Faculty?	d. The Erasmus+ coordinator, under whose supervision you've been from the beginning of the exchange.
5. When is your appointment with the Faculty Erasmus coordinator?	e. I'm sorry, we're not allowed to provide it, but if you want, you can make an appointment with him.
6. Where can I find the coordinator of the Erasmus+ programme of this Department?	f. It is on July 4th.
7. Who will be in charge with checking my student supplement before I return to my home university?	g. It is upstairs, in room T18.

Figure 6. Student/Basic/Secretarial/Understanding/Speaking/Matching

TRANSILVANIA UNIVERSITY OF BRASOV CENTRE FOR LEARNING MODERN LANGUAGES
<u>Training for the future</u> Belonging to the Department of Continuous Education and offering courses taught by the academic teaching staff of the Faculty of Letters and of the Faculty of Business and Administration, CLML invites you to enrol for the following classes, stating the 15th March 2021: 1.   Secretarial and Business courses 2.   Bilingual courses: ✓   English/Spanish ✓   English/German ✓   English/French ✓   English/Japanese 3.   Marketing and Advertising courses
So, if you are adults between 18 and 60 years old, registration is open on a permanent basis on cilm.ro and the courses start when a group of minimum 8 persons is formed. You can find us for further detail at 20 Eroilor Blvd, Brasov, Romania or you can call at: 0040734202020.

Figure 7. Student/Basic/Secretarial/Understanding&applying/Reading/Fill-in

1. As a newly arrived Erasmus+ student at Transilvania University of Brasov, can you tell me whom I should contact regarding my accommodation with the university?

C. Hello, how can I help you?

E. You'll have to speak to our vice-rector, Mr. Doru Muntenescu, who is responsible for any student-related matters, including room distribution in our university's hostels.

2. Hello, I'm looking for my Erasmus+ coordinator, Ms. Cristiana Demetrescu.

3. That would be very kind of you. And yes, as a matter of fact I would, as I haven't eaten since my arrival in Bra?ov, at noon.

A. Can I take your coat, Ms. May? Would you like a biscuit?

D. Good afternoon. My name is May, Dora May, and I am an assistant lecturer at the University of Manchester. I have just arrived for my teaching mobility at your university. Is this the secretarial office of the Erasmus+ department?

4. What shall I take to get to my hotel, Mr. Dragu?

5. Good afternoon, Ms. May. I am Cornelia Dragu. I am the secretary of the Erasmus+ department at Transilvania University of Bra?ov. Welcome to Era?ov!

B. I can call a taxi for you, Ms. May. We usually recommend Martax, as a private taxi company.

Figure 8. Administrative staff/Beginner/Secretarial/Understanding/Speaking/Match

In all 8 examples above, as, actually, in the majority of the exercises created for this mobile application within the LanGuide project, the candidates to learning English, either from Romania or from abroad, are placed in real contexts pertaining to the secretarial field – which was the field allotted to the Romanian linguistic team, connected to an Erasmus+ exchange for which they may have enrolled. They are supposed to imagine themselves in a situation that they may experience once arrived in the host country, in Romania, or before they leave Romania for an exchange, as Romanian natives, and even if, in the second case, the context may appear as unnecessary and/or unnatural, still the intention of offering even the host-country natives the opportunity to polish their specialised vocabulary in the same field, in English, with the same purpose, is fully met. However, in this case, they fall into the category of learners who are offered their own cultural element within the exercises, as described by Gay in the literature review section, which offers us one more reason not to disregard this approach as obsolete, this particular mixed design being a good example of how such a situation can still be valid nowadays.

Thus, the name of *Transilvania* University of Brașov – Figures 1, 4, 7 and 8, the name of the Faculty of Letters – Figures 1, 2, 3 and 7, the name of The Centre for Learning Modern Languages – Figure 7, the name of the Department of Continuous Education – Figure 7, the name of the Faculty of Business and Administration – Figure 7, the name of the Erasmus+ Department – Figures 5 and 8 are all examples of the cultural element imbued within the exercises, reduced to practical aspects and naturally scattered throughout the lines of the applied activities the users are offered, as names of educational establishments and departments of institutions which exist as such at our university and which can help in the field reality when and if the case.

Also, the proper names of the individuals used in all the examples extracted from the database of the exercises created are worth a special and separate discussion, as they do not only represent good practice of specific Romanian proper nouns of persons (Silvana Enescu), in order for a certain degree of familiarity to be generated in this respect for the users of the application, but, for a bit of fun, they actually represent adaptations of the real names of the persons referred to for the positions mentioned in the exercises, at the moment when these exercises were originally created by the authors of the present study (Lorena Davidescu – Figure 2 / Carolina Davidescu – Figure 5, Simona Columbeanu – Figure 4, Mr. Lăzărescu – Figure 6, Doru Muntenescu – Figure 8, Cristiana Demetrescu – Figure 8, Cornelia Dragu – Figure 8).

Moreover, particularities regarding some aspects of bureaucracy characteristic to Romanian institutions are presented within either the task environment or the body of the exercises themselves, such as: the problems one may

have with the application file "unless you bring the original papers" (Figure 1), writing to the Dean of the Faculty of Letters for certain problems "regarding attending the second semester in Brașov, Romania" (Figure 2), having the department to meet for analysing the "situation of the transferrable credits' (Figure 6), as well as institutionally related features, such as the institutional email and platforms account extension: @unitbv.ro (Figure 4), the fact that courses start at The Centre for Learning Modern Languages only when "a group of minimum 8 persons is formed" – Figure 7, reference to the person who should be contacted for accommodation in case of newly arrived students from abroad – Figure 8. All this is inserted in the body of the exercises in order for the users to be exposed to certain possible realities of the Romanian system of administration.

Nevertheless, toponyms and location indications are also a valuable cultural element that we worked with, examples such as: Brașov (spelled with the compulsory diacritical mark), "located in the heart of the country" (Figure 4), even classroom names TI8, II29 – which accounts for the territorial reality of classroom/auditoriums numbering in our university (T – for building, I – for level, 8 – for the actual classroom, for example) (Figure 6), the address of The Rectorate building: "20 Eroilor Blvd" – Figure 7, the prefix in the telephone number which is valid for Romania: 004 – Figure 7, the place where the majority of the faculties have their classes: Colina – Figure 6, as well as useful and practical information regarding even the name of a trusted taxi company: Martax – Figure 8 shape a more complex profile of living, visiting and studying in Romania and contribute to creating a familiar cultural environment that one might recognize once experiencing the linguistic offer suggested by the mobile application.

4. Conclusions

Displaying skills of cultural competency represents, nowadays, a real plus not only when working for multinational companies, or when travelling for relaxation, but more precisely when travelling for work, especially in the context of education, for mobilities and teacher or student exchanges, as well as in multicultural classes. That is why, being aware of the consistent cultural background of all the parties involved in the interaction, understanding it properly and contributing to its correct dispersion has become one of the most important skills and roles that a teacher of, especially, foreign languages must have. In this way, acceptance, patience, tolerance, sympathy and empathy are taught and developed as skills in the candidates learning a foreign language, as well as recognition of unfamiliar situation as already known, at least at a theoretical level.

But apart from referring to the benefits of being culturally literate from a cognitive and emotional perspective, there is also motivation which needs to be considered, which represented the subject of an observation made by Harmer (1991) when stating that a foreign language charms more those who want to be part of the culture of its users, as they are "more attracted to the culture of the target language community" (Harmer 1991, 4), in this way triggering what Gardner and Lambert (1972) had called 'integrative motivation.'

Summarising the main aspects tackled by the present article, the cultural element has become a must in terms of inclusion in the body of the process of teaching, learning and testing one's abilities in a foreign language. And this in terms of being either that of the source language users, as it was in the curious case of some of the exercises designed for the LanGuide project, described in the practical section of the paper above, or that of the target language users, as it is desired and natural, according to the opinion that we share of many methodologists and foreign language teachers, minutely approached in the literature review chapter of this study. However, a combination of including the cultural element of the country one would like to live in otherwise exercises dedicated to another language, as it was the special case of English language exercises comprising Romanian cultural elements, designed as such in order to meet the intentions the LanGuide project, was worth analysing even as just a case of exception from a clear path to be followed in this respect.

The conclusions of the present study look back on all the theories presented, as well as on the original examples designed by the authors of this research and pinpoint the way in which language can adapt to the necessities of a reality which sometimes is intricate, catering for the needs of, for example, students, teachers and members of the administrative staff wanting to learn or to polish their English with the aim of enrolling themselves in different Erasmus+ mobility programmes, but trying to become familiar, at the same time, with the reality of the countries they will be part of, for longer or shorter periods, depending on the length of the exchange, exactly as described by the LanGuide project's reality.

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