DIDACTIC CONSIDERATIONS WHEN WORKING WITH LANGUACULTURE IN A MODERN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT. *Didactic Considerations When Working with Languaculture in a Modern Language Classroom.* The article investigates how educators in higher education can work with *languaculture* in a modern language classroom by using critical languacultural awareness, critical discourse analysis and translatology instruments. The article begins with a brief summary of how the term *languaculture* has developed over the years, how it has been adapted to a didactic setting by other scholars and how translation tools can resolve issues regarding equivalents and lacunas when working with texts between different languages. Thereafter, the article provides two examples of how one can work with typical Swedish cultural-specific expressions such as *miljonprogrammet* and *snilleindustrin*.

Keywords: *Critical languacultural awareness, critical discourse analysis, equivalence, languaculture, languarealia.*

REZUMAT. *Consideraţii didactice atunci când se foloseşte Languaculture într-o clasă de limbă modernă.* Articolul investighează modul în care experţii în educaţie din învăţământul superior pot lucra cu *languaculture* într-o clasă de limbă modernă, utilizând conştientizarea critică a *languaculture*, analiza critică a discursului şi instrumentele de traducere. Articolul începe cu un scurt rezumat al modului în care termenul de *languaculture* s-a dezvoltat de-a lungul anilor, modul în care a fost adaptat de către alţi cercetători unui mediu didactic şi cum pot instrumentele de traducere să rezolve problemele referitoare la termini

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echivalenţi şi lacune atunci când se lucrează cu texte între diferite limbi. În continuare, articolul oferă două exemple despre cum se poate lucra cu expresii specifice culturii suedeze, cum ar fi *miljonprogrammet* şi *snilleindustrin*.

Cuvinte cheie: *conştientizarea critică a linguaculture, analiza critică a discursului, echivalare, languaculture, languarealia.*

Introduction

The aim of this article is to investigate how critical languacultural awareness, critical discourse analysis and translatology tools can help students, not only highlight cultural-specific vocabulary, but also be a resource in connecting the two languages and their vocabulary, and give the students tools to investigate the meaning(s) of foreign words on their own. This article intends to answer the questions of how these approaches are relevant in the Modern Language Classroom and how teachers and students could work together with these concepts in the classroom.

Inspired by Michael Agar's concept of *languaculture* and the category of *languarealia* used by Slovak linguists, i. e. culturally specific phenomena manifested in language, we attempt to integrate these approaches in a class with undergraduate students studying Swedish at a B2 level. All of the students entered the university without any prior knowledge of Swedish, their native language is Slovak, and they study Swedish as part of their translation and interpreting studies in combination with English or German. In this article we discuss two cultural-specific expressions in detail – *miljonprogrammet* and *snilleindustrin.* In order to approach these phenomena, we work with concepts stemming from *languaculture* and critical discourse analysis, as well as concepts stemming from the translatological field – especially Koller's (2011) equivalence theory.

Languaculture and languarealia

The term *languaculture* originates from the linguistic anthropologist Michael Agar (1994). The term is a continuation of *linguaculture* used by Paul Friedrich (1989). Both Friedrich and Agar dealt with the old perception that language and culture can be divided into two separate units and subsequently can be studied independently of one another. According to Friedrich (1989, 307), language, ideology and political economy are dependent on each other,

and what must be studied is the relation between the three. Agar (1994, 100) changed the term into *languaculture* and advocates for a change in how we perceive language and culture. According to him, we can find *languaculture* in so-called rich points. We stumble upon rich points in our different *languacultures* when we realize that the communication is flawed and what we say is interpreted differently by the participants in the communication. Agar (1994, 90) stresses that in order to understand the utterance of another, we must also understand the cultural context in which it is uttered. A *languaculture* is not something which only exists between different languages in its classical meaning, but also within and between speakers of the same language. A language is a carrier of culture, and culture carries language. But, as Friedrich (1989, 307) rhetorically asks, "how much of each?". Rather, we should see both language and culture as one entity – *languaculture.*

This pragma-linguistic turn in linguistics has also shaped the study of the so-called *languarealia* (in Russian called *linguaculturemes*), which, as the Slovak linguists Dulebová and Cingerová (referring to Russian linguistics, especially V. V. Vorobyov is one of the leading figures of this approach) point out, is dealt with as a frontier discipline – linguaculturology. Indeed, this paradigm shift in linguistics brought about a move away from the isolated investigation of linguistic phenomena, and linguistics began to focus on the interdisciplinary dimension of the study of language and speech (Dulebová and Cingerová 2017, 9). Related to this is the fact that structuralistically defined linguistics was not enough to explain and subsequently understand certain linguistic phenomena, and it was also necessary to take into account "[...] a relatively stable set of associations, symbolism, culturally specific connotations, the extra-linguistic cultural milieu, and the imaginary network they form, the boundary of which is labile and fluid"[3] (Vorobyov 1997, cited in Dulebová and Cingerová 2017, 10). *Languarealia,* in this sense, can be understood as units of *languaculture*.

Languarealia and Precedent phenomena

First of all, it is necessary to distinguish the concept of realia from the concept of *languarealia*. Realia are the names of subjects focused on history, politics and culture in the study of languages at universities. When teaching the realia of a particular country, the emphasis is on analyzing the facts of cultural,

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[3] "[...] zobrať do úvahy pomerne ustálený súbor asociácií, symboliku, kultúrne špecifické konotácie, mimojazykové kultúrne prostredie a pomyselnú sieť, ktorú vytvárajú a ktorej hranica je labilná a pohyblivá" (Vorobyov 1997, cited in Dulebová and Cingerová 2017, 10, our translation).

social, historical and political life. *Languarealia*, on the other hand, "[…] is about learning about their reflection in the lexical plane of the language"[4] (Dulebová and Cingerová 2017, 14). To give an example, we can use the Battle of Poltava from a Swedish point of view. This historical battle is explained in terms of facts in history-oriented teaching, while as linguists we are interested in the term Poltava, which evokes associations and connotations such as defeat, humiliation and so on, in a member of the Swedish *languaculture*. These concepts are often dealt with simultaneously in practice, as we often combine teaching about the country with the teaching of the language, so that *languarealia* forms a natural part of subjects focusing on the political or cultural history of Scandinavia. Conversely, when teaching language-oriented subjects such as translation seminars, the teacher often moves away from linguistics to culture or realia, in order to clarify new facts or contexts. When teaching a foreign language, sooner or later we will encounter language phenomena with a national-cultural meaning component – these are what we call *languarealia*. These phenomena include non-equivalent vocabulary, aphorisms and idioms (containing stereotypical representations of certain phenomena), and so-called precedent phenomena (specific expressions, names, texts and situations) (Dulebová and Cingerová 2017, 9). The latter can be considered as the most complex type of *languarealia*, and will therefore be discussed in more detail.

Precedent phenomena

Precedent phenomena are immediately recognizable units in a language. They are stable, logical, and understandable to most speakers. These qualities, as Dulebová and Cingerová state, make them "[…] very attractive in different types of discourses (especially in the media, advertising and politics) […]"[5] (Dulebová and Cingerová 2017, 19). They are defined very broadly as linguistic forms that encode underlying ethno-cultural realities with rich and typical content in a particular culture, with a tendency for regular repetition (Dulebová and Cingerová 2017, 16). Dulebová, who has dealt with the issue of precedent phenomena in Slovak linguistics more in depth, draws attention to the relationship between precedence and intertextuality, whereby precedent phenomena, like intertextual signs, point to something that has already happened. It can be a particular text, an author, a personality, a fictional (literary) or even a

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[4] "[…] pri výučbe lingvoreálií ide o spoznávanie ich odzrkadlenia v lexikálnej rovine jazyka." (Dulebová and Cingerová 2017, 14, our translation).

[5] "[…] obzvlášť príťažlivými v rôznych typoch diskurzov (najmä v mediálnom, reklamnom a politickom) […]" (Dulebová and Cingerová 2017, 19, our translation).

real situation, a phenomenon, etc. (Dulebová 2015). Technically speaking, these are two different theoretical approaches to understand the same phenomenon. To use an example, the sentence *Du skall inte tro att du är något* (you're not to think you're anything special), reproduced many times and in different contexts, can be considered a precedent expression. This utterance evokes all connotative shades in Swedish speakers without necessarily recognizing the literary source from which it originated. The speakers understand that the expression refers to the so-called *Jantelagen*, the Law of Jante, the code of conduct, but it is not necessary to know that it was formulated by Danish-Norwegian writer Aksel Sandemose in his novel *A Fugitive Crosses His Tracks* in 1933 and is a common, Scandinavian idea. Precedent names are mostly appellatives such as Quisling (in the meaning of a traitor, "en svensk quisling" – a swedish quisling), onyms such as Lucia (in the meaning a beautiful girl with long blonde hair, "en typisk Lucia" – a typical Lucia), but also real toponyms such as Saltsjöbaden or Saltis (meaning rich snobs, "snobbiga saltis-människor" – snobs from Saltis) or imaginary toponyms such as Nangijala (in the novel The Brothers Lionheart by Astrid Lindgren, meaning the place of afterlife, where children go after they die, "vi ses i Nangijala" – see you in Nangijala).

The categorization of *languarealia* and, within them, the focus on those that can be called precedent phenomena, could serve as a kind of analytical proto-tool. From this point of view, it makes sense to define *languarealia* as a separate category, as expressions that the student acquires at the same time as the culture whose phenomena these expressions manifest. When comparing two texts, for example in the process of translation, the equivalence theory can be used (Koller 2011). This is offered by the article in the first example – *snilleindustri*. By solving equivalences and finding appropriate expressions, we break away from the perception of language and culture as two separate drawers, and by comparing and actively searching for a solution (that can never be wrong), the protagonists are brought into a languacultural interspace in which their previous experience of not only the foreign, but also their own language is relativized.

Critical languaculture awareness through critical discourse analysis

Two scholars who have tried to formulate teaching practices using the concept of *languaculture* are Risager (2005) and Díaz (2013). Risager (2005, 195) says that we must broaden the view on language and culture, that "the target language should be seen as a cultural phenomenon, and simultaneously literature and other texts in the target language should be seen as linguistic

phenomena" (Risager 2005, 195). Díaz (2013) builds her practice on Michael Byram's (2012) ideas about intercultural communication. Byram (2012, 86) makes a distinction between being bilingual and/or bicultural and being intercultural. Being intercultural means for example the act of translating from one language to another, while being bilingual doesn't necessarily require any transfer between the two languages or cultures. To have intercultural competences means to have a certain mindset and the ability to act in an intercultural way. An intercultural person is someone who uses two cultures and makes them work together, as opposed to just letting them live side by side. Just as Agar (1994, 82) says, an intercultural act isn't necessarily an act between two different languages – it might also happen within one language area but with two different cultural groups represented.

Díaz (2013) tries to formulate a more didactic approach, using both critical intercultural competences and *languaculture* as a base. While Díaz (2013) mentions three different areas in which this didactic and pedagogical method needs to be implemented, we will in this article only focus on the pedagogical area which takes place in the classroom. What Díaz (2013) suggests is something called critical *languaculture* awareness, in which the aim of the studies is to become critically conscious of how *languaculture* is described and manifested, and to be able to (re)frame the new knowledge by substituting, negotiating and adapting the knowledge to the same and other *languacultures*. The criticality lies in the fact that the students (and the teachers for that matter) need to be aware of how a certain image is being portrayed and spread via textbooks, literature and other forms of texts. Students therefore need to be critical, not only of what information is given to them, but also about their own *languaculture*, and the implication it has on their analyses of the foreign *languaculture*. This idea of criticality can be seen also in the works of other scholars, such as Freire (1972) and Kumashiro (2002). It is no longer mere knowledge we're after, but empowerment to change what is wrong in society. Even if Agar (1994, 128) did not focus on the didactic implications of *languaculture*, he did write:

> And culture, once you make it up, doesn't leave you where you were when you started. When you're done with the job, you're aware of something about your own identity that used to lurk on the edges of consciousness as the natural order of things. And you understand an alternative to who you are, and now imagine that probably there are many more. If you hit a rich point, think you've solved it, and haven't changed, then you haven't got it right. (Agar 1994, 128)

Criticality is a critical stance not only towards what you learn about the other, but also (perhaps even more) about who you are yourself.

If the goal is to educate critical *languaculture* awareness, how does one do that? Speaking with one eye towards Freire (1972), Díaz says that 'teaching ' might not be the concept to use when speaking about cultural awareness as it implies a static viewpoint. Furthermore, Díaz (2013, 52) writes that "we are in a post-method era, in which well-defined methods should be abandoned in favor of identifications of practices or strategies of teaching design to reflect local needs and experiences". It's important to notice that Díaz does not advocate a methodless teaching, but rather a "beyond-methods approach" (Díaz 2013, 53), flexible enough to suit different language levels and different learning situations. In the background of the concept of *languaculture* and its pedagogical aspects lie also the ideas brought forward by discourse analysts such as Fairclough (1992) that language is not static and different words can have different meanings depending on in which discourse they partake. Agar (1994) mentions the importance of context in order to understand an utterance, and the way certain words can have different meanings depending on in which context they are uttered. Also, Risager (2005, 193) mentions this connection when she writes: "Languaculture is related to one or more specific languages. The concept is a theorization of the interface between language and the rest of culture. But the cultural view of language should also embrace the concept of discourse. The concept of discourse may be used as an intermediary concept between the concepts of language/languaculture and the more general concept of culture". Later on in this text we will give an example of how one can use different discourses when investigating a languacultural rich point.

In conclusion, we can say that *languaculture* and the pedagogy that surrounds it have in common that they try to deal with the old notion that things (culture, language and the teacher-student relation) are neatly divided in separate containers which can be dealt with or handed out one by one in a certain order. Instead, they argue that language and culture are not to be understood as separate units but understood as two aspects of the same – *languaculture*. The criticality lies in the idea that one needs to investigate and be aware not only of the foreign, but also one's own *languaculture*, since the idea is not to educate students to become bicultural but intercultural. The same goes for the teachers, as one hardly can 'teach 'culture if by teaching we mean explaining how a certain culture is. Díaz (2013, 54) writes: "Therefore, to explore the target *languaculture*, learners need to be given the opportunity and encouraged to develop the appreciative capacity to 'explore 'their own cultural behaviour at the same time they explore the target one". Not teaching – exploring.

Languarealia – exploring through translation

Students acquire a foreign language through language and its phenomena; language is not only a goal but also a tool. In the process they find themselves in a situation where they are forced to translate – either literally or for themselves, often finding themselves lost in translation, much like the migrants that the Slovak Germanist Paulína Šedíková Čuhová writes about in her monograph on the figures of translators and interpreters in migrant literature. They find themselves, as it were, in Homi Bhabha's (2000) third space: "[...] sort of an in-between-space offering them the insight into both cultures and the opportunity to confront the differences between them" (Šedíková Čuhová 2019, 145). It is always a very challenging situation – whether it is the translation of a specific text where the student is looking for solutions, or a teacher's attempt to explain a concept different from the extra-linguistic reality in which the student lives or with which he or she is intimately familiar. We can understand translation as a possibility for the intellect to try the experience of the relativity of one's own world and as a way to transcend the horizons of language (Flusser, 2005).

It could be said that by using translatological terminology, we are interested in those *languarealia* that belong to the so-called non-equivalent vocabulary. In this case, we register so-called lacunas in the target language. According to the Slovak linguist Ján Horecký (1999, 95), lacunas refer to obscure places, difficult to decrypt text-sections that require philological and culturological analysis. These are, as Horecký says, blanks, holes or gaps, and they are found in the vocabulary of particular languages when it comes to naming cultural specifics.

Thus, from the point of view of foreign language teaching, it makes sense to deal with those *languarealia* which belong to the non-equivalent lexis without being precedent phenomena, as well as those that belong to the non-equivalent lexis and unambiguously can be labeled as precedent phenomena. The first group includes for instance culinary specialities, natural and national specifics or supernatural beings that have no equivalent in the target language but do not refer to any specific situation, person or utterance, such as *tack för senast*, *surströmming*, *fika*, etc. The second group includes terms such as *folkhemmet*, *miljonprogrammet*, Poltava, *snilleindustrier* or *allemansrätten*. This division does not take into account the translation aspect, i.e. the difficulty of translation solutions in specific texts; both groups may contain complex *languarealia* (terms such as *fika*, *folkhemmet*, *miljonprogrammet*) or less complex (*surströmming*, *Poltava*) *languarealia* from a translatological point of view.

The two examples we offer in the next section both represent precedent phenomena, referring to whole (discourse) situations and, within them, to other

languarealia. The teacher can use this network to explain further contexts, to present a more holistic historical and political context, thus increasing not only the linguistic, but also the cultural competence of the student.

Ett svenskt snille as study object

The Swedish expression *ett snille* came up in a translation seminar with B2-level students in the article "Snillen byggde landet" from the newspaper Svenska Dagbladet, published on the 23rd of December 2000 (Ahnland 2000), and led to a discussion surrounding the *languarealia ett svenskt snille* (a Swedish genius). In Swedish the term is understood as Swedish quality, originating from *svenska snilleindustrier*. As this was a translation class, we communicated this *languarealia* and associated facts with the instruments provided by translatology.

The first step was to resolve the translation of *ett svenskt snille* referring to the phenomenon *svenska snilleindustrier* as an expression for which there is no equivalent term in Slovak. The second step was to deal with examples of texts where this expression appears in the text as *languarealia*, i.e., it is not used to explain facts, but to activate connotative meanings.

Behind the expression or the word *snilleindustri* lies the meaning of a symbol of Swedish identity creation in the 20th century – important Swedish entrepreneurs in the late 19th and early 20th century. Thus, if we want to translate the term *snilleindustri* into Slovak, we have to think about the concept that is hidden behind this term. Because "[t]he term is the linguistic expression, while the concept is what we mean when we use the term"[6] (Institutet för språk och folkminnen 2021). The important thing is that the connection between a word (a sound or written image) and its referent happens through our imagination. Between our perception of a word (with the sense of hearing or sight) and the interpretation of this perception, our representation, a process of meaning takes place. The connection between this representation and phenomena in reality and abstract concepts arises through an act of reference (Cassirer 2003, 108).

Searching for a translation equivalent can be complicated, because languages are not symmetrical. They are different on a phonetic, morphological, syntactic, lexical and pragmatic level. The last two levels play an important role in the translation of realia. Although Slovak has both the term *snille* (génius)

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[6] "Termen är det språkliga uttrycket, medan begreppet är det vi menar när vi använder termen." (Institutet för språk och folkminnen 2021, our translation).

and the term *industry* (priemysel), a counterpart does not exist. This means that a lacuna, a gap, is perceived at the lexical level.

We can conclude that in the source language, Slovak, there is no corresponding expression, and that the Slovak cultural context lacks the same realia that could be referred to. We can distinguish between the interlingual and the intertextual equivalence relationship (Kenny 2011). In the first type, the interlingual relationship, the comparison consists between two language systems, in the second between two text types or two concrete texts - one in the source language (here Swedish) and the other in the target language (here Slovak).

So far, we have been dealing with the first type of equivalence, the interlingual one. It may be fruitful to move on to concrete texts and co-texts. Considering the relationship between the source text and target text, Koller distinguishes five levels of equivalence: denotative, connotative, text normative, pragmatic and formal-aesthetic equivalence (Koller 2011). If we take a closer look at the text "Snillen byggde landet", we can consider the terms *snille* and *snilleindustri* in this rather modern text which takes up the terms without explaining them to the intended reader. At first glance, we can already identify the problem at the denotative, connotative and pragmatic equivalence level. While the first level of equivalence refers to the extra-linguistic, i.e. to comparison at the denotative level, the second level is played out at the cultural and social level and the pragmatic one refers to the recipient. The expression is thus a challenge on all three of these levels; the search for an adequate translation solution is at the same time a conscious work with both the lexical and discourse levels.

Homework:

1. Search for the word *snille* in the Swedish Academy Dictionary.
2. Go to the Swedish Academy website, discuss the expression *Snille och smak* and its historical context.
3. Discuss the expression industrisnillen.
4. Read the text "Snillen byggde landet" by Lars Ahnland from Svenska dagbladet (2000-12-23). Find all the sentences where *snille* is used in the text. Try to translate the expressions as well as whole sentences in which they are found.

The term *snilleindustri* in the text being studied refers both to a Swedish phenomenon of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but also functions as a complex *languarealia* in today's Swedish vocabulary. A final challenge is related

to this: Discuss how the term *snilleindustri* is also used in connection with digitalisation (as an example Benner 2018, online).

The Swedish concept of miljonprogrammet as study object

During the spring semester of 2022, we decided to work with the word *miljonprogrammet,* a political project with the goal to build a million new housing facilities in ten years in Sweden between 1965 and 1975. There were several reasons for why this particular word was chosen. One reason was the fact that it would work as a continuation of another theme we'd discussed during the autumn – the Swedish countryside. From the countryside to the city. On top of that, we'd discovered that the students had difficulties understanding the word *förort* (suburb), as this word has many different connotations the students could not transfer to a Slovak context. *Miljonprogrammet* would thus be of help in order to better understand also *förort* in a Swedish context. Both *miljonprogrammet* and *förort* are interesting in that they convey many different connotations for different people. Even if they can be explained very briefly, as we've just done, the explanations don't tell us everything that is implied if you say that you grew up in a *miljonprogramsområde*, for example. Another reason for why the word is suitable to investigate is that it gives the students a chance to learn more about Sweden's contemporary history and welfare society.

The main idea was for the students to read different articles and other genres all containing the word *miljonprogrammet* in order to get a better understanding of how the word is used, and which connotations the word creates in Swedish. The students study interpretation and translation from Swedish to Slovak and had, at the beginning of the semester, studied Swedish for 5 semesters. Their proficiency level of Swedish was somewhere between B1 and B2 according to the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR). The theme was part of the optional course Conversation in Swedish 2, and the theme was one of three covered throughout the semester. The theme was discussed during 4 classes of 90 minutes and was evaluated by a written assignment. Below follows a detailed description and analysis of how the project was carried out.

The political discourse surrounding *miljonprogrammet*

For the first encounter with the word *miljonprogrammet*, the students read a text published on the website Stockholmskällan, a historical resource site

managed by the City of Stockholm. Stockholmskällan is a collaboration between the Stockholm City Archives, the Stockholm City Museum, the Medieval Museum, the Stockholm City Library and the Stockholm Education Administration. The website contains information and historical sources to several different themes and the students read the text "Miljonprogrammet" (Stockholms stad, n.d.). The text briefly explains the origin of the word and the goal and visions of the political project of building a million new housing facilities. The text worked as an introduction to the theme since it explains the origin of the word, but also because the text contains several words related to different types of neighborhoods and city planning. The students were told to read the text before class, and during the class we discussed both the content of the text and spoke about the meaning of the new words the students had come across. The students were asked if they knew of any similar housing project which had taken place also in Slovakia, but they did not know of any such housing project.

Having read and discussed the text, we watched the movie *Historien om Bergsjön Centrum och Kortedala Torg – Göteborgslokaler 25 år*, a commercial movie produced by Göteborgslokaler (2021), a real estate company owned by the city of Gothenburg. The movie presents the history of the neighborhoods Bergsjön and Kortedala and, being a commercial movie, it mentions the reconstructions that have been made in the areas. The movie shows the neighborhoods by using calm music and bright, positive photos. The areas are described as being a realization of the political vision of *folkhemmet*, a word introduced by Per Albin Hansson, the leader of the Social democratic party, in 1928. The movie, in many ways, repeats the information given in the text from Stockholmskällan, even if Kortedala and Bergsjön anticipate *miljonprogrammet* by some ten years. The movie was used as a simplified version of the information introduced in the text, and the students were given the opportunity to listen to spoken Swedish and see pictures of what was described.

The last text dealing with *miljonprogrammet* in a political context was a text written by Heidi Avellan (2013) and published in the Swedish newspaper *Sydsvenskan* in 2013. Although the language in the article itself did not cause any problem for the students, the article is filled with references to ongoing political debates regarding suburbs, exclusion and immigration. This made the text difficult to understand for the students, which is why we chose individual paragraphs from the text to discuss which underlying discussion or debate the paragraph made reference to. What's especially interesting when studying *miljonprogrammet* is the fact that Avellan writes: "Simply put, the only common denominator between the different suburbs is that they are all areas built during *miljonprogrammet* and that they only receive public interest outside of their own borders when they are set on fire and stones are thrown"

(Avellan, 2013)[7]. The images portrayed by Avellan of the areas built during *miljonprogramme*t are fundamentally different from the information we received in the text from Stockholmskällan and the commercial from Göteborgslokaler. Together with the students, we concluded that there seem to be two opposing images of the areas built during *miljonprogrammet*: one image talks about *miljonprogrammet* as a democratizing project with cheap housing easily accessible in the bigger cities – the other image talks about negative stereotypes and high crime rates.

Miljonprogrammet in a popular cultural discourse

In order to investigate how *miljonprogrammet* and adjacent concepts are described in Swedish popular culture, we chose three different texts from three different media, which all deal with the theme: the novel *ABC-staden* by Måns Wadensjö (2011), the short documentary movie *Drömmar i nordost* (Hjortén and Jönsson, 2013) and the song *Bredäng centrum* by Doktor Kosmos (2002).

The novel *ABC-staden* (Wadensjö, 2011) tells the story of how the neighborhood Vällingby in Stockholm was built. This was before *miljonprogrammet* was introduced, but the neighborhood shares many of the features typical also for neighborhoods built during *miljonprogrammet*. Approximately 10 pages were chosen for the students to read before class, together with questions to be discussed during class. The aim of the questions were to place the construction of Vällingby in a historical context, to pinpoint the goal and visions of the new neighborhood, and how the author of the book expresses his view on how well these visions and dreams were fulfilled. Is the image of Vällingby given in the book a negative or a positive one?

We continued by listening to the song *Bredäng centrum* by Doktor Kosmos (2002). Having discussed difficult words and new phrases in the lyrics of the song, the students were asked to come up with three words that describe the image given of Bredäng centrum and *miljonprogrammet*, and explain why they had chosen those words.

The movie *Drömmar i nordost* (Hjortén and Jönsson, 2013) narrates the story of suburbs in Gothenburg. By interviews with people living in the northeast of Gothenburg, we understand their ambitions, dreams and feelings toward the neighborhoods in which they grew up. Simultaneously, we get to know about the housing projects in the areas and the visions surrounding the

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[7] "Enkelt uttryckt är en gemensam nämnare att 'förorterna' är miljonprogramsområden och att de bara väcker intresse utanför sina egna gränser när det brinner och stenarna viner." (Avellan, 2013, our translation).

project at the time of the construction. We learn that the apartments are all designed to be functional for a middle-class family, with lots of green areas between the buildings for the kids to play in. The neighborhoods built in the middle of the woods surrounding Gothenburg are compared to Brasilia, the capital of Brazil built during the 1960's. The apartments were considered to be hypermodern and supposed to solve the problems with cramped housing accommodation. At the same time as the movie shows the problems related to the neighborhoods, it also manages to show a certain pride in living there. One of the characters expresses that she has learnt a lot by living in a multicultural neighborhood, and that she knows things other habitants in Gothenburg might not know, precisely because of her upbringing in Hjällbo. The task given to the students was to come up with as many contrasting pairs as possible in the 14 minutes long movie. They came up with pairs such as: old – new; green nature – gray concrete; nature – city; built for Swedes – inhabited by (second generation) immigrants; industry – nature; forgotten – present; home – away and idea – reality. These contrasts were later on used as inspiration for when the students were to write their texts which would serve as the examination of the course.

Miljonprogrammet in a scientific discourse

To show a more scientific approach to miljonprogrammet, the students were to read 18 pages from the introduction and summary of the book *Förorten* by Peter Esaiasson (2020). The book is built on the opinions and experiences the author collected from people living in Bergsjön and Hjällbo, two suburban areas built as a part of *miljonprogrammet*. After conducting the research, Esaiasson summed up what he had seen in 19 bullet points. The introduction explains how the survey was done, why these specific areas were chosen (and how they are categorized using different terms) and quickly summarizes what the 19 bullet points are. The material was chosen to provide the students with another way of how to conduct research – by working with surveys. Furthermore, the book served the purpose of giving us a view coming directly from the people living in an area built during *miljonprogrammet*. Although the author himself does not live there, the basis of his conclusions comes from the opinions of the people themselves, as opposed to medial representations, as had been the case in the other text the students met. The book furthermore gave the students another description of how the words *förort* and *miljonprogrammet* coincide, and when they don't:

There is no generally accepted clarification of the areas that belong to the suburb in the meaning referred to in this book. It's more complicated than to assume that the suburbs are areas built during miljonprogrammet with high-rise buildings. Even though almost every suburb was built during miljonprogrammet, there are several areas built during miljonprogrammet which would not be considered suburbs. (Esaiasson, 2020,15)[8]

The assignment for the students was to read the 19 bullet points and pick out two or three of them which caught their attention. These bullet points were later on discussed in class from both an understanding point of view – what does the text say about it – and a comparative point of view – could this be said also about one or more areas in Slovakia?

Another interesting side to the book is that it compares the visited suburbs to the rest of society, or at least to an idea of how the rest of Sweden is organized and constructed. This caused many interesting discussions on how Sweden in general is perceived, and whether the students perceive Slovakia to be similar or not. To mention one example, Esaiasson (2020) concludes that the supposed lack of trust towards the authorities could not be seen in his survey. The level of trust towards other individuals, however, was lower than in other surveys done in other areas of Gothenburg and Sweden. This caused a discussion in class whether or not the students themselves trust the authorities and other individuals in Slovakia, and how their perception of Slovakia is in this regard.

How to evaluate critical languacultural competences?

In order to evaluate and grade the students' knowledge and critical languacultural competences, we chose to let the students write a text which would fit as a column in a newspaper. There were several reasons for why this form of examination was chosen. First of all, the competence in writing different types of texts had been highlighted as one area in which the students needed practice. Furthermore, a column or a chronicle has the benefit that it is supposed to have a personal touch, which is why the students would have the chance to focus on intercultural communication. In one way or another they have to relate the situation in Sweden to a situation in which they have found themselves. The assignment given to the students was to write a column using one

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[8] "Det finns ingen allmänt accepterad precisering av vilka områden som är förorter i den mening som avses här. Det är svårare än att utgå från miljonprogramsområden med höghusbebyggelse. Även om så gott som samtliga förorter är miljonprogramsområden finns det många miljonprogramsområden som inte är förorter" (Esaiasson, 2020, 15, our translation).

or more of the different contrasts we had found surrounding miljonprogrammet in the texts we'd worked with.

There was no need to make explicit reference to the studied texts, as we as teachers had seen that the students understood the texts when discussing them in class. Nor was the course itself intended to be theoretical, but rather to have an informal communicative approach. What the assignment did was to force the student to transfer or translate what they had learnt from the Swedish examples to a Slovak context.

All of the students chose to write about different topics, and their topics dealt with themes such as fighting stereotypes that exists between city and countryside, the role of nature in the city, old architecture in a new era, tourists versus inhabitants in the city – who has priority, and identity changes when moving from a small town to a big city.

Although they received different grades depending on linguistic aspects in the texts and on how well their texts met the criteria of how a column should be constructed, all of the students, it turned out, managed to transfer one or several of the contrasting images surrounding *miljonprogramme*t to a Slovak context.

Conclusions

Having worked with the two languacultural concepts of *snilleindustrin* and *miljonprogrammet*, we could see that the students gained a deeper understanding of the concepts. Not only of the meaning of the words, but also of how these concepts and words were created and their different use in different discourses. This emphasized the awareness that languages don't exist in a 1 to 1 relation with each other. Furthermore, the students gained experience in investigating potential lacunas and conducting critical discourse analysis. By having to translate the concepts into Slovak, both in the traditional way of translating (word by word, sentence by sentence) and in the wider sense (discussion topics around *miljonprogrammet* into a Slovak context), the students were forced to work with an intercultural perspective, leading to critical languacultural awareness. This type of learning uses the concept of *languaculture* by not treating language and culture as different areas, but instead working with words and concepts which in themselves are cultural representations.

It is our hope that this article will help facilitate an intercultural education in critical languacultural awareness, and that analytical tools from translatology will be seen as cornerstones in the Modern Language Classroom.

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APPENDIX: MATERIAL USED IN CLASS

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