

The Concept of Ecodomy as Teaching Instrument in Intercultural Pedagogy

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Abstract: This article is an attempt to see how the concept of ecodomy can be used in intercultural education to demonstrate how the idea of ecodomy can be applied to various domains of interest to tertiary education, especially to public universities from the perspective of two intercultural contexts, such as Western settings and their African counterparts. Particularly, the concept of ecodomy will be treated as a pedagogical instrument in both these contexts since it is related to the activity of teaching theology and religion as humanistic sciences, although I argue that the concept itself, as well as its content, should not be restricted to humanistic sciences alone. The purpose of using the concept of ecodomy as a pedagogical instrument in intercultural education is to see if it can fit within the field of intercultural education, and specifically in intercultural pedagogy.

Keywords: Ecodomy, Intercultural Pedagogy, Language, Critical Thinking, Context

Introduction

While almost certainly not a very frequent occurrence in educational sciences, the notion of ecodomy is not strange to theology and religion. While it originally refers to the actual building of a house – from the Greek *oikodomé* - and figuratively to spiritual advancement and personal edification (Kok, 2015), the concept was adopted by the Faculty of Theology and Religion at the University of Pretoria as its key research concept almost a decade ago, in 2014. Thus, ecodomy became the focus of an entire cohort of researchers who were supposed to investigate it within their own fields of research in order to see whether or not it was significant or helpful to their scientific efforts. It is important to notice at this point that ecodomy has become a notion of interest not only in research but also in teaching. This is why the research focused primarily on teaching theology and religion.

When seen as a constructive process, ecodomy appears to be synonymous with constructiveness, while the adjective ‘ecodomical’ appears to share the same meaning with the adjective ‘constructive’. Their synonymy, however, is not complete and the two adjectives do not overlap perfectly. While the adjective ‘constructive’ refers to the fact that a person or a group pursues improvement and development, the adjective ‘ecodomical’ brings with it the idea of a community that appears in the context of improvement and development for the sake of making life a most fulfilling experience. In other words, ecodomy is not just construction; it is a special sort of construction, which aims at building a community of persons interested in promoting improvement and development as a shared goal for a better life. So, if doing something constructively means that one pursues excellence in working towards a goal, doing something ecodomically implies, as we see in Rossing and Buitendag (2020), that one seeks outstanding results while surrounding himself or herself by like-minded people who live ‘life in its fullness’ as part of a community sharing the same purpose. It could be argued that, in addition to the idea of ‘construction’ which targets improvement and development, the concept of ‘ecodomy’ carries within an existential component that makes improvement and development a shared goal for a meaningful life. For instance, C. Niemandt (2015) explains that an ecodomical life is not only a life worth living, but a life based on values which sees value in the surrounding reality. This chapter is an attempt to show how intercultural pedagogy can be not only constructive in achieving its expected professional goals, but also ecodomical in doing so by enriching the lives of teachers and students with value and meaning.

Intercultural Pedagogy as Language Teaching

The first aspect that emerges as vital in intercultural pedagogy is language teaching. In Ojiugo Lilian (2018), intercultural pedagogy is a matter of exposure, an image that is quite telling especially with reference to early childhood, when learners are most avid to acquire knowledge. This cultural exposure leads to an 'encounter with different cultures' which, in turn, places the students on the path to 'growth and richness'. This is how they broaden their 'cultural horizons' through 'didactic activities'. This is true especially when culture and languages are put together, mostly because it is usually the case that different cultures come up with different languages. An ecodominical approach to pedagogy in the case of young children will help them engage with people of different cultures and thus train them 'to become citizens of a multicultural and plurilingual world'. In this sense, intercultural pedagogy results in 'intercultural awareness' and respect for other cultures.

The relationship between culture and language is also explored by Moloney (2013), for whom intercultural pedagogy integrates 'critical cultural reflection within language learning'. To achieve this goal, intercultural pedagogy must find new ways to present itself as a 'new pedagogy' which becomes an 'intercultural language pedagogy'. In this sense, if it is to reach its focus, intercultural pedagogy must operate as pedagogy of engagement as well as a pedagogy of daily interaction. An ecodominical intercultural pedagogy will foster 'changes in understanding' as well as in 'intended practice', while identifying not only the needs of the students, but also those of the teachers. In this regard, intercultural pedagogy is a pedagogy of intervention aimed at challenging established cultural assumptions in order to serve the teachers and the students in their educational endeavors. This is because, as Simuț (2018) points out, contexts alter human experiences; hence the need of a common language profoundly anchored in the reality of history which makes understanding relevant in specific learning environments.

Language teaching, as also confirmed by Liddicoat (2008), goes hand in hand with intercultural pedagogy because the interaction between cultures is first and foremost an interaction of languages. One of the most important aspects of intercultural pedagogy, when it comes to language teaching, is 'the development of intercultural abilities' for both teaching languages and learning languages. An ecodominical application of intercultural pedagogy in this field should address the challenges of language teaching so that teaching as well as learning languages leads to the integration of the students within their current society. The key word here is the need for constant 'refocusing' of intercultural pedagogy on the efficiency of the 'languages curriculum' with its permanent 'language focus'. In intercultural pedagogy, an ecodominical take on it means that 'the heart of the curriculum' remains language education.

For Kasumagić-Kafedžić (2023), language didactics is what constitutes the kernel of intercultural pedagogy when seen as critical pedagogy for teacher education. In the absence of teaching and learning languages, there is no intercultural pedagogy, mostly because without languages one cannot claim any attempts to implement interdisciplinary approaches for intercultural understanding. Since stereotypes and prejudices often constitute daily norms within societies, moving beyond them ecodominically, so that people live their lives meaningfully, is a crucial mandate of intercultural pedagogy. For that to happen, intercultural pedagogy must be able to articulate educational goals, promote values, enhance experiences, and transform lives by 'nurturing intercultural understanding and peace values.' Despite challenges and difficulties, intercultural pedagogy must focus on 'intercultural contents', come up with 'model lessons', and boost 'learning outcomes.' These goals can be reached for as long as intercultural pedagogy is ecodominically focused on theories of pedagogy that work critically, principles of learning that function trans-formatively, and humanistic convictions that enrich lives holistically.

A very interesting and yet potentially controversial perspective on intercultural education is proposed by Sorotou (2018), who advocates the use of myths in performing intercultural education when focused on teaching Greek as a foreign language. In short, myths are considered as possessing a 'pedagogical value' that 'encapsulate the deeper aspects of the human psyche', in

which sense they are ‘attractive’ and ‘engaging’ as pedagogical tools. Moreover, myths propose images of various interactions between different cultures while also ‘aiming at making people go along with each other in a prosperous and peaceful way’. Debatable as it is with reference to myths, this statement can be true when one speaks about intercultural education in its ecodominical dimensions. As such, intercultural pedagogy should aim at the ‘opening of the spirit’, which is a decisively ecodominical achievement, especially when it leads to hospitality and permanence in dealing with learning. Intercultural pedagogy should ecodominically transcend ethnic and cultural differences in order to promote harmony, embrace, and creativity.

One of the most visible aspects of intercultural pedagogy is plurilinguism, and Lwanga-Lumu (2020) discusses it in the context of ‘massive migration’ and ‘rapid change’ in South Africa. Plurilinguism is a huge challenge to intercultural pedagogy which, through its professionals, must find solutions to help students of various cultures to learn and live together. In such a context, intercultural pedagogy becomes a pedagogy of intervention which reveals its ecodominical strengths when it can ‘improve student performance, social cohesion, economic development, and peaceful coexistence’. This seems quite a lot for a single educational field to deal with, but a starting point could be identified in the dialectical relationship between ‘intercultural communicative language teaching’ and ‘language learning’. One of the many purposes of this complex endeavor is to support intercultural education in its efforts to decolonize African curricula for educational and social transformation. Nevertheless, there is a caveat here, according to Simuț (2020): Lwanga-Lumu’s ‘rapid change’ (2020) can lead to the problematic desire to experience ‘instant relief’ (Simuț, 2020); when that happens, the issue must be addressed by showing that learning sometimes involves painstaking effort amounting perhaps even to the level of suffering.

Intercultural pedagogy uses many methods to engage teachers and students, but Gregersen and Due Tiemensma (2006) speak about storyline as method to foster intercultural competence. However, in order for the storyline to function with a view to producing intercultural competence, it needs to be aware of the crucial relationship between ‘identity, culture, and language’. Intercultural pedagogy cannot work well if these three aspects are not included in the discourse of ‘the intercultural speaker’, namely the pedagogue who interacts with students ‘through the teaching of both linguistic skills and cultural knowledge’. Concretely, intercultural pedagogy becomes ecodominical when it develops the storyline based on ‘setting a scene’, identifying the characters, finds a ‘way of life to investigate’, and singles out ‘real problems to be solved’. The teacher must therefore develop his own perspective on the storyline, so that he becomes able to transfer his or her knowledge to the students.

Intercultural pedagogy can be useful not only for people who have normal abilities to learn, but also – as we read in Ayres (2022) – for students with Specific Reading Comprehension Deficits, who experience difficulties in understanding the meaning of the words that are being read. These students find it hard to understand the texts they read even though their ‘decoding competency’ is still intact. Thus, it is suggested that intercultural pedagogy should be coupled with multimodal pedagogy in order to help them, which means that intercultural pedagogy will have to address a series of issues, amongst which the most important include ‘semantic and grammatical processing skills’, ‘oral language skills’, ‘background knowledge’, ‘inference making’, multiple comprehension aspects, ‘working memory’, ‘inhibition’, and ‘attention’. Intercultural pedagogy can act ecodominically in these cases by ‘critical intervention’ and ‘early enriching ... experience’, so that the few students in a classroom who fight these comprehension issues should be fully integrated within the multicultural society they live in.

Students may have to face difficulties from within by experiencing various psychological disorders or from outside, such as ‘contexts of conflict’. In dealing with the latter, Holmes and Peña Dix (2022) focus on how intercultural pedagogy can use language and communication to help students in difficult times, especially as they go through various social conflicts. Thus, intercultural education is going to have to be applied in ‘disadvantaged backgrounds’, especially

by pre-service teachers who specialize in language didactics. In such cases, intercultural pedagogy will have to find ecodominical ways to be transformative, collaborative, and critical, so that the students are exposed to intercultural communication. Conflict zones are usually multicultural because of 'forced migration', which comes with 'economic marginalization', which means that intercultural pedagogy will have to focus on being socially activist to 'engage young people directly in intercultural communication'. Intercultural pedagogy can therefore be ecodominical and attach meaning to the lives of young people by using 'creative arts methods' to encourage and enhance intercultural communication. When it comes to learning languages, Simuț (2017a) indicates that 'encouraging wit and enthusiasm' is a traditional method used in language pedagogy since as early as the 18th century.

Even if teachers and students are both important in intercultural pedagogy, the role of teachers is primordial for making sure that the proposed result of the didactical enterprise are being met in the educational process. Aulia and Khaerudin (2021) investigate intercultural pedagogy through language teaching from the perspective of achieving not only intercultural communication, but also intercultural values. It is in this latter aspect that the ecodominical aspects of intercultural pedagogy are emphasized, especially when one realizes that teachers can inoculate profound meaning to the pedagogical context of students. Thus, intercultural pedagogy forges a correlation between what the teacher does and what the teacher believes, so there has to be an 'interrelationship between the teacher's 'personal development' and the teacher's personal belief. This is crucial because it is the teacher who the students' 'intercultural profile positioning'. In this regard, intercultural pedagogy should be 'personal, contextual, and dynamic' in order to ecodominically improve the students' individual perspective on the multicultural society wherein they live.

A crucial part of intercultural pedagogy is intercultural language teaching. Tajeddin and Khanlarzadeh (2023) focus on intercultural education from this specific perspective, which is supposed to produce 'intercultural communicative competence' in language didactics. For intercultural pedagogy to work towards the actual achievement of intercultural competences related to communication in specific languages, educational institutions need educational policies through dedicated programs. Acquiring intercultural language competencies is especially problematic in relatively monochromatic cultures, where dominant cultural perspective exert pressure on minority cultures, which is the case of Iran, for instance. Thus, an ecodominical goal for intercultural pedagogy in this respect could focus on the activity of educational policymakers to take into consideration the reality of intercultural 'similarities and differences.' This is why the first to be educated in this regard should be language teachers, so that their pedagogy becomes intercultural and competence-oriented.

In Bendraou and Sakale (2023), the notion of intercultural pedagogy is called 'critical pedagogy', mainly because it seen as a specific type of pedagogy which shapes 'intercultural understanding' into a creative educational process by promoting a 'value-based education' through high-order thinking skills' based on language didactic. This reveals the ecodominical constitution of intercultural pedagogy, since high-order thinking skills include analysis, synthesis, reasoning, comprehension, application, and assessment – all cognitive processes that have the capacity to transform one's perception about self and other. Intercultural pedagogy is therefore focused on embracing 'educational values' and 'intercultural identity' by explaining the 'value of individual freedom' in a multicultural world dominated by globalization. The purpose of intercultural pedagogy is to help students accept people of different cultures by raising awareness about their 'intercultural and critical cultural responsibility'. This can be done through 'reflection, essentialism, and cosmopolitanism' for as long as the educational system is willing to promote value-based approaches to teaching and learning. Intercultural pedagogy encourages 'critical literacy' to help students understand the importance of 'description, interpretation, and explanation' through the use of language 'as a form of political and social practice'.

Internationalization is a key element of intercultural pedagogy, but it is not the only one needed for success, especially when dealing with learning a second language. As we see in Jackson (2017), students need more than just international experience to attain ‘higher levels of second language proficiency, global-mindedness, and intercultural sensitivity’. While the traditional ‘immersion assumption’ works to a certain extent, intercultural pedagogy can be enriched by language learning when certain interventions are used to ‘deepen and extend’ student competence in learning a second language. What is needed here is ‘to bridge the research-teaching nexus’, in the absence of which optimization cannot be achieved with reference to study abroad initiatives. From an ecodominical perspective, intercultural pedagogy must challenge already-in-place teaching and learning programs by supplementing existing teaching curricula with elements originating in ongoing research efforts to improve intercultural learning.

An approach which is inherently ecodominical with reference to intercultural pedagogy was developed by Peskoller (2023) sees ‘classrooms as meeting places’ that enable students to learn from one another, especially when they come from different cultural environments. In intercultural pedagogy, the understanding of culture should be ‘open and dynamic’ with a decisive orientation towards the individual as a learner. Since all human beings share not only similarities, but also differences, intercultural pedagogy should grow aware of the ‘multitude of dimensions’ that are extant within the human being as well as among human beings. In a multicultural context, intercultural pedagogy should use ‘holistic and continuous’ approaches to teaching and learning with a specific focus on language education. This, on the other hand, must be done critically given the ‘existing diversity inside classrooms’, which can make intercultural pedagogy integrative and reflexive based on promoting knowledge through ‘perspective-changing’ efforts and critical analysis. Thus, intercultural pedagogy will ecodominically cultivate ‘open-mindedness, awareness of diversity, respect for otherness, reflexivity, empathy, and willingness to act’, a set of values which are congruent with those listed by Rotaru (2024, pp. 301-318) to include ‘kindness, courage, altruism, perseverance, empathy’. In doing so, students will be equipped with ‘cognitive, affective, and action-oriented dimensions’ towards achieving a genuine ‘global citizenship’.

Intercultural communicative competence is another often-spotted highlight of the various discussions about intercultural pedagogy. In putting together insights about the matter, Hoff (2014) points to Byram’s model of intercultural communicative competence while showing the need for intercultural pedagogy to focus on ‘the personal and cultural development of individuals’ in light of the concept of *Bildung*. Thus, in intercultural pedagogy, acquiring intercultural communicative competence should be ‘understood as an educational goal’, especially when it comes to teaching foreign languages. Since Byram’s model with five aspects – such as knowledge of self and others through interactions, attitudes about self and other by shifting the focus from self to other, skills for interpretation and relation processes, skills for discovery and interaction processes, as well as critical awareness about political education and cultural realities – is used for achieving intercultural communication competence, it is argued that his model places too much ‘emphasis on harmony and agreement’. A better, and specifically ecodominical solution can be reached by using intercultural pedagogy to teach people how to read the reality of conflict. In other words, ambiguity and difference should not be regarded exclusively as ‘challenging aspects’ in ‘intercultural encounter’; on the contrary, they should be critically read as ‘fruitful condition’ for encouraging a deeper ‘dialogue between self and other’, evidently for a better understanding of people across more or less conflicting cultures.

If I were to single out a key aspect of intercultural pedagogy which is truly ecodominical it will have to be linguistic citizenship. A useful investigation into the concept of linguistic citizenship is revealed by Sun (2023), who explores ‘the constructive role of English as a foreign language’. From this perspective, intercultural pedagogy can be viewed as a ‘critical intercultural discourse’ because it turns teachers into ‘agents of action’ and implementors of ‘social change’. Also, intercultural pedagogy must use critical discourse analysis in order to oversee the development of teachers as individuals who acquire ‘critical intercultural awareness’. To be

successful in this endeavor, intercultural pedagogy should be supported by ‘teacher education programs’ which challenge ‘hegemonic ideologies’ in school curricula. To this end, intercultural pedagogy will have to engage in a ‘justice-oriented dialogue’ which helps learners to develop personal capacities for reflection and action. As Rotaru (2021a, pp. 87-92) puts it, these values produce a ‘materially, socially, and spiritually emancipated society’. Consequently, the students will learn not only how to master a foreign language that allows them to become citizens of a multicultural society, but also how to engage in living purposefully in the world irrespective of cultural challenges.

Intercultural Pedagogy as Critical Thinking

The second aspect which defines intercultural pedagogy has to do with critical thinking. If intercultural pedagogy is to become truly ecodominical, then we learn from Start (2019) that it must turn into an ‘intercultural communication pedagogy’. By focusing on efficient communication, intercultural pedagogy emerges as an efficient educational process by promoting ‘crystallization’ in the context of the students’ ‘creative process for learning’ through critical thinking. Thus, intercultural pedagogy contributes ecodominically to the enrichment of the students’ lives by helping them ‘fulfil the need for relatedness’, then by focusing on promoting ‘insightful, personally meaningful knowledge’, and, lastly, by encouraging them to cultivate ‘reflexive thinking’. In doing so, intercultural pedagogy emerges as ecodominical by teaching students how to be critically open, authentic, sympathetic, appreciative, and reflexive in their relationship with people of different cultures.

Intercultural pedagogy is indeed ecodominical when it creates opportunities to ‘critically examine cultural assumptions, as we find out in Moloney, Harbon, and Fielding (2016). In order for this process to be also meaningful on the long term, the people who participate in the learning process as representatives of different cultures working together in the same educational environment must work together not only in the classroom, but also outside it. Thus, their interaction must allow for all participants to ‘voice diverse perspectives’, as well as ‘notice, explore, and respect the complexity of the interaction’. In this regard, ecodominical intercultural pedagogy promotes transformative thinking and dynamic understanding by using critical reflection in the acquisition of knowledge through ‘active questioning’ of various cultural perspectives and assumptions.

On the other hand, intercultural pedagogy cannot be ecodominical without creating a context of ‘cultural awareness’. Ghasemi Mighani, Yazdanimoghaddam, and Mohseni (2019) show that only approaches which are considered constructively have a real chance at promoting a genuine intercultural pedagogy by creating ‘intercultural skills.’ Thus, intercultural pedagogy must find ways to promote ‘teaching procedures’, ‘concrete methodologies’, and ‘tangible pedagogical frameworks’ to capitalize the intercultural skills for the implementation of teaching and learning processes. The medium by which all these can become not only possible, but also meaningful is ‘effective communication’, which allows for a positive experience of intercultural interactions. Intercultural pedagogy reaches its ecodominical capabilities when it is implemented through ‘critical thinking strategies’ for ‘critical cultural awareness’. This way, intercultural pedagogy promotes meaningful processes involving discoveries, interactions, interpretations, relationships, and evaluations.

Within the very same line of thought, namely one which equates intercultural pedagogy with a critical pedagogy, Kasumagić-Kafedžić (2017) insists that such didactical efforts should always be in search of ‘new opportunities for creativity, innovation, and new developments’. Intercultural societies are not always bent on generating the best opportunities for growth when it comes to people from other cultures, but an ecodominical intercultural pedagogy will strive for ‘comprehensive reforms’ that aim at teaching ‘skills, attitudes, and knowledge’. All these must be done by transfer for transformation ‘in critical, constructive, and empathic ways’, which constitute the very essence of ecodomy. Dead ends and stagnation should be avoided at all costs, so that

intercultural pedagogy seeks the best educational services for teacher education in general and for children's life in particular. Consequently, teachers must constantly attend 'teacher education programs', learn how to be 'educational administrators', and become involved in 'curricular reforms'.

The intercultural competence which intercultural pedagogy is supposed to craft within students is not just an abstract concept. On the contrary, as we see in Sommer, Wang, and Vasques (2022), intercultural competences should be 'sustainability-oriented', especially in the higher education which should 'produce creativity' and 'critical thinking'. Thus, the students should be 'empowered' by these intercultural competences to 'address urban sustainability challenges', which means that they should be taught how to lead their lives in the complex realities of the cities. This is why these sustainability-oriented intercultural competences must be based on 'transformative, interdisciplinary, and intercultural learning'. Intercultural pedagogy reveals its ecodominical capabilities when it helps students develop professionally as they actively integrate their lives in the complex life of the urban environment. The integration though needs to be done meaningfully in order to be sustainability oriented as supported by tertiary education curricula and didactics.

Investigating the reality of culture through intercultural pedagogy takes many forms, but Drissat (2022) explores how intercultural pedagogy is able to develop 'critical consciousness' in the lives of students, who are therefore helped to reflexively develop critical thinking about 'culture, identity, stereotypes, and ethnicity'. This goal can be achieved through 'dialogic classroom interaction', but in order for it to become genuinely ecodominical in nature, intercultural pedagogy must find ways to challenge the students by teaching them how to question as well as defend the complex realities of culture. One of the main goals of intercultural education is to identify 'the wider ideological structures' which not only give legitimacy, but also support the 'processes of oppression and inequality'. As part of this endeavor, intercultural pedagogy can ecodominically promote 'critical consciousness', which in turn leads to 'stereotype deconstruction' by challenging 'normative assumptions' about the reality of the self and the reality of the other.

The various methods used by intercultural pedagogy to reach its goals includes a combination of what Aulia (2023) calls 'macro levels' and 'micro levels', which refers to 'discourse building' and 'personal belief' or 'personal trajectory'. According to this methodology, intercultural pedagogy is promoted by means of specialized curricula focusing on multilingual educational contexts. A key element that should be taken into consideration is the necessity to challenge the way teachers understand multicultural realities by cultivating their 'critical awareness' about 'values, beliefs, and behaviors'. For intercultural pedagogy to work ecodominically, it is not enough to entertain a focus on curriculum development; another aspect which is equally important revolves around the need to support teacher practice. When national identity collides with intercultural identity, intercultural pedagogy should be able to encourage didactic reflexivity in teachers as well as create 'critical intercultural skills' as part of the students' educational experience.

Another approach that focuses on teacher development is that of Darii (2023), who argues that today's teachers must find new ways to develop their own competences when faced with a series of social phenomena, such as 'globalization, migration, and population diversity'. These phenomena, however, reveal the empirical dimension of human realities through the availability of language, as demonstrated by Simuț (2017b), which enhances the efficiency of pedagogy. On the other hand, the same three aspects have been traditionally part of intercultural pedagogy, mostly because 'intercultural competence is considered a pivotal domain within the European framework'. Thus, intercultural pedagogy addresses the need to develop didactic skills and behavior, at multiple levels, such as personal, interpersonal, and intercultural, based on learning how to use critical thinking. This way, intercultural pedagogy fabricates a profoundly ecodominical input by helping students 'constructively engage in both social and professional spheres.' Concretely, intercultural pedagogy can help in at least three directions: first, to enhance the

intercultural profile of educational institutions; second, to support the development of teachers towards intercultural competence, and third, to focus on the intercultural progress of academic curricula by transforming their theoretical ‘framework, content, and format’. This should lead to teachers and students transform their ‘attitudes and behaviors’ and assess their ‘assumptions, worldviews, cultures, and knowledge’ by critical reflection.

It is vital to understand that intercultural pedagogy works not only in primary, secondary, and tertiary education institutions, but also in preschool establishments. Stier et al. (2012) indicate that preschool learners are capable of developing their ‘respect to ethnic and cultural diversity’ if intercultural pedagogy finds ways to address their ‘intercultural sensitivity’ by focusing on helping them attain ‘intercultural competence’. Not only preschool learners, but also preschool teachers must be exposed to the same didactic challenges in order to become ‘interculturally competent’, and it is here that critical thinking becomes very important for teachers, who need to discern critically how to teach cultural differences to preschool learners. At this point, intercultural pedagogy exposes its ecodominical traits by focusing on systematic work with a view to developing ‘intercultural communication skills’ as well as creating ‘discursive awareness’. It is clear then that intercultural pedagogy must find ever new ways to debunk ‘cultural stereotypes’ by actively and critically engaging both teachers and learners in permanent scrutiny endeavors aimed at developing personal values and cultural behavior.

Yaylacı, Yaylacı, and Kobak (2022) investigate a rather interesting method of developing intercultural awareness through what they call ‘participatory photography’. Intercultural pedagogy should therefore aim at using any means which demonstrate didactic efficiency and, in this regard, tertiary education students managed to develop their intercultural skills and competence through participatory photography. In a multicultural campus context where foreign people meet and interact regardless of whether they are migrant, refugee, or international students, intercultural pedagogy demonstrates its enormous ecodominical potential by raising awareness about the realities of the ‘other’ and its often-accompanying prejudice. This specific result was achieved through internationalization policies that were open to accepting the complexities of migration, then by implementing critical pedagogy, and intercultural dialogue – all with the purpose of ‘confronting otherness’ by meaningful interaction and friendly attitudes. Intercultural pedagogy is therefore not only a means to learn theoretical information, but also to develop crucial social attitudes that build a meaningful perspective on life both at a personal level and throughout society. According to Rotaru (2021b, pp.190-196), all these practical achievements acquired ‘beyond the theoretical knowledge’ help individuals to boost their own confidence and ‘grow self-esteem’.

An issue which is rarely associated with intercultural pedagogy, but appears to be often inferred within the various discussion in the field has to do with bullying. While investigating the phenomenon, Elamé (2013) focuses first on the actual meaning of the term, whose complex usage reveals how intercultural pedagogy can ecodominically help to confine the phenomenon if not completely eradicate it. If bullying is accepted as reflecting ‘forms of harassment’ which range from verbal to physical manifestations – but also with reference to other possibilities – then intercultural pedagogy becomes a form of teaching that fosters the personal and communitarian fulfilment of students. Educational institutions are in place to instil formation, development, self-control, restraint, and critical judgment; thus, intercultural pedagogy can fight bullying by focusing on nurturing ‘proper judgment’ for all the persons who are involved in the educational act, both teachers and students. Intercultural pedagogy should therefore seek to manage and minimize conflicts, create a proper environment for development, deal with ‘personal excesses’ in specific ‘social circles’, and openly fight against violence of any sort. When bullying takes the form of sexual aggression, intercultural pedagogy should build a safe haven for teachers and students by attempting to eradicate the underlying discrimination involved in bullying.

The reality of conflict is a constant issue in intercultural pedagogy, because conflict is the actual reality which occurs when cultures meet, usually through collision. In exploring the matter, Mudambi et al. (2023) focuses on how intercultural pedagogy can mold critical reflexivity

through communication. Since conflict is never a reality to be easily appeased with light solutions, the ecodominical nature of intercultural pedagogy is evident when it uses communication as a pedagogical instrument for stimulating critical reflexivity in finding solutions to conflicts. Intercultural conflicts have a certain dynamic which can be addressed with increased efficiency when communication is used pedagogically. For this to work, however, communication must be channelled towards conflict solutions by means of critical reflexivity; one way forward is to determine students to 'question various assumptions' about their own selves as well as about other people. When that happens through pedagogically using communication through critical reflexivity, intercultural pedagogy reveals its capacity to find resolutions to conflict by showing people who they are culturally in relation to other people from different cultural milieus.

Having a similar focus on intercultural competence, Milani (2022) strives to draft a perspective which deals with how intercultural competence should be assessed through 'service learning'. Since service learning is directed towards meeting a wide range of societal needs, its ecodominical potential is enormous when intercultural pedagogy adopts it as a 'teaching strategy'. Concretely, service-learning works as a testing tool for evaluating the efficiency of intercultural pedagogy by connecting it with 'living experience' through critical reflection. Service learning is simultaneously an educational approach which, when used within the techniques of intercultural pedagogy, can ensure that intercultural competences are monitored constantly and evaluated permanently 'with a view to continuous improvement'. The aim here is to make sure that students are supported and guided in a way that leads to 'personal growth' for a better service in and to society.

The idea of value is of critical importance for intercultural pedagogy because it reflects and creates a specific ethos, as shown by Skubic Ermenc (2016). As an integral part of intercultural education, intercultural pedagogy must be developed as a 'critical pedagogy' based on relevant 'pedagogical research' with the specific purpose of dealing with 'the power inequalities' within 'the education system itself'. This purpose can be reached if intercultural pedagogy seeks to implement 'a multi-perspective and anti-bias curriculum' by creating a 'school ethos' which is 'democratic', 'pluralistic', and 'inclusive'. When ethos is the gist of intercultural pedagogy, the ecodomy of the field itself brings to light the fact that intercultural pedagogy aims at the improvement of human life. This is why intercultural pedagogy should not be seen just as a 'specific pedagogical discipline', but also – and more importantly so – as 'a pedagogical principle' which has the capacity to 'enable recognition and empowerment of all minority groups.'

Intercultural Pedagogy as Context Modelling

The third salient aspect of intercultural pedagogy is the important of context which needs to be modelled, created or shaped, so that it becomes a meaningful world for all those who live in it. For Szczurek-Boruta (2012), intercultural pedagogy is constructive process that places the student in 'interaction with the surroundings', thus creating a context of learning, because people tend to learn by challenging their already familiar patterns of thinking with new information they acquire from the environment. In this sense, intercultural pedagogy is a teaching methodology based on conflict, since what the student already knows is often placed against what he or she finds out from investigating the surrounding reality. By making use of this learning conflict, students learn in a constructive way, both in the sense that they build something and in the sense that they find meaning in what they learn. Ecodomic intercultural pedagogy, however, could go a step further in the direction of creating a community of teachers and learners who find meaning for their lives as a result of their 'conflict' with the world.

In forging learning based on the conflict between the context of the learner and the context of the surrounding reality of the world, intercultural pedagogy is a useful epistemological tool, especially in pluriethnic societies. Thus, Sani (2014) is a constructive attempt to educate people from various cultures by 'fighting prejudices' as well as the 'lack of knowledge', so that specific

mentalities should no longer remain ‘restricted’ and prejudicious to the cultures of migrant people. The ecodominical nature of intercultural pedagogy resides therefore in helping people not only understand other cultures, but also ‘live in a complex and cosmopolitan reality which changes continuously’, so that both natives and migrants find meaning for their lives.

When people of different cultures meet, their encounter can turn into a collision or an interaction. It is precisely in this respect that intercultural pedagogy is so very important: it can turn potential conflicts into meaningful exchanges of ‘cross-national and cross-cultural’ human experiences. We learn about this aspect from Lee et al. (2018), who investigated what happened to ‘international students and non-native English speakers’ as they interacted in a context set ‘to promote inclusion’. This arrangement shed significant light on the ecodominical constitution of intercultural pedagogy, because the participants not only acquired knowledge about ‘best practices and relevant research’ but also demonstrated that they had pursued ‘more purposeful and substantive interactions.’ This happened in the classroom and outside it, which confirms the ecodominical essence of intercultural pedagogy when it meaningfully engages people of different cultures.

In order to be ecodominical, intercultural pedagogy must be not only a critical pedagogy, but also an effective exercise in intercultural communication in a specific educational context. Accordingly, Shi-Xu (2001) reveals that intercultural pedagogy must be able to create a rather encompassing range of discourses about ‘diversity, equality, common goals, and rational-moral motivation’. All these aspects reveal that pedagogy, is after all, about living life purposefully, but in doing so it must perform a crucial work of ‘translation’. Intercultural pedagogy must translate intercultural and linguistic knowledge into intercultural competence. This can be achieved when domination, exclusion, and prejudice are no longer promoted pedagogically in intercultural educational settings. Ecodominical intercultural pedagogy generates ‘alternative pedagogical discourses of combating power’ through ‘discursive transformation’ while focusing on one single purpose: that of enriching pedagogical and life experiences with motivation, both rationally and morally.

A similar approach can be identified in Potter (2021) who notices that intercultural pedagogical initiatives transcend the mere reality of knowledge acquisition by creating ethical and moral meaning as part of a learning context that shapes the lives of students. Intercultural pedagogy is inherently constructive and ecodominical because it develops various educational approaches that transform learning and life experiences into ‘meaning-making’ activities, which – in turn – create an ‘ethical framework’. This suggests, that ecodominical intercultural pedagogy is and should remain concerned with moral development. It is crucial though that, in intercultural pedagogy, personal values and individual morality should be kept in balance with ‘group agreement and consensus’. What remains truly important in the end is that intercultural pedagogy does not succumb to political slogans such as ‘global competitiveness and social mobility’, but promotes ‘deep ethical’ commitments.

One of the aspects which are not so often discussed in connection with intercultural pedagogy is religion, although it is perhaps the most ecodominical factor in human life. Religion as a field of inquiry is extremely complex and it becomes even more so when coupled with education. However, for Irizarry (2011), Christian religious education can become ecodominically relevant when it focuses on ‘the conceptualization of culture’ with a view to ‘understanding the social nature of faith communities’; in this respect, Irizarry explains that ecclesiastical communities are essentially intercultural in nature as living and learning contexts, because they are made of people ‘with distinct cultural perspectives’ who ‘come together to forge a shared religious identity’ in a religious context that moulds their lives through values and meaning. Following this line of thought, an intercultural religious pedagogue finds himself or herself in a state of permanent intercultural conflict by evaluating his or her ‘own cultural orientations’ against ‘those of the learners’. If true, then intercultural pedagogy in the field of religion is a ‘contrastive pedagogy’ characterized by an essential ‘intercultural dynamics’: on the one hand, the

educational nature of the Christian experience and, on the other, the vocation of the pedagogue as ‘intercultural religious educator’.

The idea of conflict emerges recurrently in the field of intercultural pedagogy because this sort of pedagogy involves a double encounter: between the pedagogue and the students, as well as among the various cultures of the educational actors, pedagogues and students alike. This is why an ecodomic intercultural pedagogy is a pedagogy of encounter between the native people in the classroom environment (pedagogues and students) and the migrant persons coming into it. The classroom becomes a fundamental learning and living context for both the teachers and the students. Melillo and Arrigo (2021) approach the issue of the encounter between natives and migrants in a globalized society by stressing the need for integration policies coupled with intercultural pedagogical approaches. An ecodomic perspective on intercultural pedagogy should focus on the reality of the migrant’s alterity, identity, and culture if the future of intercultural education is genuinely enabled to absorb new challenges in teaching and research. Concretely, intercultural pedagogy should help the teachers and the students to dialectically move between their own cultures to intercultural communication by encouraging the development of differentiated linguistic abilities to be used in specific life contexts.

There is a feature of intercultural pedagogy which has not been intensely debated in the specialized literature, and that is cohesiveness. Although discussed by Perez (2023) in connection with Latino students, it is still relevant to the debate, because – seen through the lens of cohesiveness – intercultural pedagogy focuses not only on the usual topics, such as knowledge, abilities, and skills, but also on ‘collectivist values’ which can attach ecodomic value to intercultural pedagogy. Cohesiveness can produce ‘educational aspirations’ among the students, which – when nurtured in certain settings – will result in ‘collectivistic values’, like commitments, that may ecodominically enrich the lives of the students in their daily living contexts. Through cohesiveness, intercultural pedagogy may channel various educational efforts to help students ‘experience academic success’ in a culture different than their own, which becomes their existential context. Also, cohesiveness can assist students of various cultures to diminish their own tendency to discriminate against others as well as put off prejudice.

In order to be successful as well as ecodominical, intercultural pedagogy must be able to combine learning with multiculturalism, which is a key feature of the students’ living and learning context. According to Omar (2011), intercultural pedagogy must be sensitive to cultural difference’, so that it does not limit the didactical capacity of educational institutions. Our societies, Western or not, are ‘increasingly marked by cultural diversity and plurality’, in which case intercultural pedagogy must realize and understand the extremely diverse needs of people when it comes to teaching and learning. At the same time, intercultural pedagogy must identify the pedagogical deficits in our educational systems in order to shape ‘a holistic intercultural education’. In doing so, intercultural pedagogy will have to be fundamentally transformative to move from ‘cultural homogeneity’ to inclusive interculturality. When this focus is kept, intercultural pedagogy becomes a crucial social tool for ‘inclusive enterprise’ in order to present students with equal opportunities with a view to integrating them in their society as active participants.

Taken at face value, intercultural pedagogy is a methodology which juxtaposes education and culture in the context of pluralism and globalization. Iuso and Marinaro (2023) explore this aspect by highlighting that intercultural pedagogy should be seen as a ‘starting point’ in dealing with the complex challenges of contemporary societies. In order to do so ecodominically, intercultural pedagogy must highlight the need for a crucial awareness, namely that historically cultures changed ‘through interactions, exchanges, and hybridization’; the end result of this process is a society characterized by pluralism and multiculturality. In such contexts, intercultural pedagogy should ‘develop approaches’ that impress some engaging dialogue and ‘mutual recognition’ upon educators and students. Thus, monocultural mentalities should be nurtured into understanding the plurality of multicultural societies by countering the native ethnocentrism with

‘a broader perspective’. When engaged in this process, intercultural pedagogy should seek to pursue the formation of citizens whose willingness to contribute to a multicultural society is adequately informed educationally.

Developing intercultural competences is a commonplace in intercultural pedagogy, but Bunăiașu (2015) demonstrates that, in order for intercultural competences to develop, one needs to consider ‘curricular premises and strategies’ first. The focus here is on students, who should work to develop their personalities in the direction of cultural diversity. The ecodominical capacity of intercultural pedagogy surfaces again, because the learning experiences of students and their social awareness cannot develop in the absence of appropriate educational curricula. On the other hand, these curricula will never become interculturally focused, unless some pedagogical premises and strategies are conceived and implemented before intercultural pedagogy really does its work in the context of classroom didactics. Consequently, before a curriculum becomes effectively intercultural, some steps need to be taken beforehand, such as: building a theoretical foundation so that the students have a chance to develop intercultural competences; including intercultural education research results into a curricula that is intended to work as interculturally pedagogical; suggesting concrete curricular strategies for intercultural learning with a focus on acquiring specific competences, and taking into account the students’ expectations and personal opinions, as well as the perspectives produced by the teaching staff, intercultural educators, intercultural researchers, and social sciences specialists.

The connection between pedagogy and intercultural communication devises a suitable combination of techniques which are supposed to help people navigate through postmodernity and the world it created, which is in fact the context in which students acquire knowledge and shape their life experience. Accordingly, Milani (2017) explains that intercultural pedagogy is a field with sufficient capacity for adaptation to deal with the plurality and complexity of postmodernity. The major problem of postmodernity is identified as the lack of meaning, so despite the ‘multiplication of opportunities’ spawned by the postmodern world, what it does not seem to be able to offer is meaning for individuals and communities. If looked at ecodominically, intercultural pedagogy has the capacity to guide people through the ‘current crisis’ by fruitfully engaging ‘thought, concepts, and perceptions.’ In doing so, intercultural pedagogy shares light on the worth of ‘being’ when explained linguistically, culturally, socially, and religiously.

Beljanski and Dedić Bukvić (2020) are interested in intercultural pedagogy from the perspective of intercultural education and the development of intercultural competence. Interculturality is a reality in most contemporary societies, so what is being taught in educational institutions must reflect this aspect by having curricula that include intercultural content, especially in universities. Although in theory things appear to sound rather well, in practice the situation is less encouraging, at least in regions like Bosnia and Herzegovina, where interculturality has been a phenomenon for centuries. Thus, what seems to be needed is a thorough reconsideration of curriculum formation by ‘introducing systematic intercultural education to teacher colleges and universities of education’. The purpose here is to create a context for the professional and pedagogical formation of competent teachers who will in turn ‘create a positive environment for proper intercultural communication’. This goes alongside another goal, namely that of developing ‘intercultural sensitivity’ among students in order to promote ‘a culture of dialogue’. It is here that the ecodominical aspect of intercultural pedagogy is clearly emphasized: drafting an intercultural curriculum serves not only initial learning, but also life-long learning, which are excellent venues for the active promotion of ‘intercultural values.’

Jackson and Sun (2020) come up with an interesting vision about e-learning, not necessarily because it is innovative, but because it was presented just before the massive lockdown caused by COVID-19 at the end of March 2020, when e-learning had not been that widespread as an actual teaching methodology through dedicated e-platforms. The research is based on the crucial observations that foreign students who study abroad do not develop ‘second sensitivity or global mindedness’ just because they live in a foreign country, as their daily living context. Thus, an

intervention is needed and that could be done by using ‘learner-centered technology’ based on a ‘fully online general education course’ facilitated by e-learning platforms. While asking the students to come up with reflexive essays about their intercultural experience, relevant discussions are initiated which reveal an increased awareness about cultural realities towards ‘intercultural-global citizenship’. This way, the students make up an online community which is their learning context and, to a significant extent, also their daily life context, at least for a while. Intercultural pedagogy works therefore in an ecodominical way by making students not only more aware of cultural realities, but also by enriching their life experience through inculcating meaning in their ‘intercultural sensitivity and global mindedness’. This way, intercultural pedagogy becomes a mentoring e-pedagogy which gives students the chance not only to create but also to explore ‘meaningful advances’, especially through language learning.

Conclusion

This paper is an investigation of the relationship between intercultural pedagogy and ecodominicality. Despite the overwhelming dimension of intercultural education which can prove to be ecodominical in nature (or constructive with a focus on inculcating a meaningful perspective on life), three such dimensions were highlighted recurrently during my research. First, it was intercultural pedagogy as language teaching, which demonstrated that in variegated national and ethnic contexts, the teaching of language ingrained an intercultural capacity in the minds of students who were enabled to understand the world more meaningfully. Second, intercultural pedagogy appears irrelevant in the absence of critical thinking, which prepares the students for a relevant interaction with the multifaceted and complex realities of life. Third, I noticed that intercultural pedagogy had this extremely important capacity to model the contexts in which people live. When adequate pedagogy is implemented in intercultural educational institutions, appropriate teaching of cultural similarities and differences are didactically implemented in the practical reality of the classroom. Also, when these educational efforts are carried out with a focus on equality, equity, and justice, this intercultural pedagogical process leads to dramatic changes not only in mentalities, but also in how mentalities end up modelling specific life contexts, especially through ecodominically raising the students’ awareness about ethical values and the meaning of human life.

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