



by Mark Taylor

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Stretching zone for Intercultural Learning? Clicker training in the future?

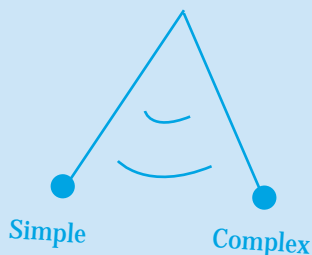
Peter's legacy.

«Marker» is a regular column in Coyote, written by Mark Taylor, looking at issues in training and hoping to encourage debate, questions and even - who knows? - a cultural glasses exchange programme with added clickers...

▶ Stretching zone for Intercultural Learning?

Last issue was full, full, full of articles and references to intercultural learning - one of my passions since many years. Some of the articles, together with voices in other fora made me question strongly whether or not this passion of mine had actually been a counter-productive waste of energy, time and other resources. That what many of us had been doing was even reinforcing negative stereotypes and prejudices – especially because there was rarely enough time to go really deeply into all the processes involved.

Some years ago, trainer and linguistic animator Philippe Crosnier de Bellaistre introduced me to his idea of the pendulum:



His idea was that in our intercultural learning activities we needed to swing like a pendulum between the simple and the complex. Put things simply so that people can gain an overview, see the patterns, orientate themselves. But never forget that life is actually incredibly complex, thus the need to compare «simple» ideas with our different realities.

I love the pendulum concept because it is at one and the same time simple and complex. You may say that is because of my small brain and you could well be right.

Within intercultural learning we can play with this model, for example, by substituting the two poles of «simple» and «complex» with «difference» and «common ground» (or even solidarity). We look at difference and the acceptance and understanding of differences, but we must not forget the things which bind us, which allow us to live and work together. Some would say that we forgot those things too often in the past. We left people in the hell of thinking «yay! We're different! They are different! Therefore we are better!» Or even «It's true, we are worse, worth less, it's clear!».

Sometimes this has thrown up very bizarre experiences and wonderfully obscure defences of inappropriate behaviour. To give one little example: the scene was a European seminar about the politics of immigration during which time we had also looked at intercultural learning and the mechanisms of prejudice. From the beginning, two male so-called participants from a predominantly green island chose to get drunk each evening and would arrive in plenary the next morning at the end of the coffee break or even later. When challenged, their reply was «look, we've been learning about respect for differences and our culture dictates how we are – what do you expect? we can't help it!»

Clicker training

My family decided recently that we should get a new dog while our old dog Othello is still alive. The idea being that Othello (who is very nice and a big softy, or so we thought) would teach the new dog some good ways to behave. For the past six weeks our lives have been turned upside down by the arrival of Dexter – if you have ever seen any of the adventures of Winnie the Pooh, you will know the effect of Tigger the tiger who bounces into everything and every body! And sometimes he tries to ignore us completely. So we have embarked on a series of training sessions in order to go from this:



To this:



Using «treats» and what is known as a «clicker».

The idea is to reward and praise positive behaviour by giving a little treat or biscuit and, at the same time, to make the clicker make a clicking sound. In this way the dog associates the clicks with nice treats and, the theory goes, you don't need to give treats after a while.

I was wondering what are our «clicks» and «treats» in training for (for instance) European Citizenship? Or in participation do we need clicks and treats to get up the famous ladder?

▶ Peter's Legacy

After fighting against cancer, Peter Lauritzen left us too soon. As Hanjo Schild's article in the last Coyote made plain, Peter's legacy was impressive and there was much more than could fit in there. Luckily now there are two books which go some way to giving some more detailed impressions: *Born in Flensburg, Europe* contains reflections and ideas and tributes from colleagues and friends and gives a multi-faceted picture of Peter the man; and then there is *Eggs in a Pan* which shows his work, articles and speeches spanning a very full career; and what makes it even more special is the inclusion by the editors of internal papers he wrote only for debate with close colleagues – fascinating glimpses into how he brought so many ideas together!

And lastly

Thanks to those who wrote and those who responded to the Coyote on-line survey. Constructive remarks and suggestions were very helpful, but it is hard to know how to react to one person who felt that Spiffy the coyote should be killed and put in a museum. Next time we look more closely into the pataphysics of Seville orange marmalade...



Sounds, words, inspirations



- Amélie Nothomb (2008): *Le fait du prince*, Albin Michel
- Demokratie & Dialog e.V. eds. (2008) *Born in Flensburg, Europe*. Journeys with Peter Lauritzen
- Grow Fins (2008): *Get yourself a life and die*, <http://www.myspace.com/growfinsdk> [accessed 05.02.2009]
- John Martyn (1977): *One World*, Island Records
- Peter Lauritzen (2008) [Editing Yael Ohana, Antje Rothemund]: *Eggs in a pan* – Speeches, writings and reflections by Peter Lauritzen, Council of Europe Press.
- Rodrigo y Gabriela, *guitar video lesson*: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dvk2e9F9-Qs> [accessed 29.11.2008]
- Rokia Traore (2008): *Tchamanché*, Emarcy label
- Russell Hoban (2005): *Come dance with me*, Bloomsbury

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