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SECONDARY SCHOOL EDUCATORS' ENACTMENT STRATEGIES OF THE FRENCH INTEGRATED CURRICULUM CONTENT

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Abstract:

This article presents an action research on Lesotho educators' enactment strategies of the French integrated curriculum content. Essentially, the aim of this article was to explore the concept of content in order to establish whether enactment strategies used by educators on content favour successful attainment of goals. Convenience sampling was used in selecting seven participants. Four methods of data generation, namely, one-onone semi-structured interviews, document analysis, observations, and reflective activities, were used. Action research was effected in two phases: Phase One findings demonstrated educators' dominant use of savoir (factual enactment strategies) at the expense of savoir-faire (social enactment strategies) and savoir-être (habitual enactment strategies). This seemed to present a hurdle, as content was not aligned with goals. Phase Two results, through the intervention of action research, saw educators maintaining a balance among savoir, savoir-faire and savoir-être, thereby aligning content with goals prescribed in the curriculum and therefore augmenting greatly the chances of attaining these goals. The article consequently recommends a revision of the policy, in which the use of the three propositions of content would be advocated to encourage teaching of schooled knowledge, context-dependent knowledge, as well as knowledge that is deemed essential by the educator as required by the prevailing context.

Keywords: action research; content; enactment strategies; savoir; savoir-être; savoir-faire

1. Introduction

It has been insistently argued that educators' knowledge of content, and their ability to decipher that knowledge and ultimately present it, determines the eventuality of the learning process (Hoadley & Jansen, 2013; Samuel, 2008; Shulman, 1987). In this manner, educators are implicitly tasked with ensuring that learners, with their different backgrounds and learning styles, uniformly grasp content the way it was intended by the

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prescribed curriculum (Modipane & Themane, 2014). This assertion implies that educators should have necessary expertise to apply the presented curriculum in a 'correct' manner that allows for a smooth transition from the intended to the enacted stage. This obligation evidently calls for various enactment strategies to be applied in view of manoeuvring through different practical scenarios, sometimes unfathomable, in order to relay content that is representative of the subject matter. Educators of French as a foreign language are not immune to this imposition, with the Council of Europe having devised a framework to ensure uniformity of content at different levels of competences (Council of Europe, 2001). This framework, among other things, recommends the inclusion of three propositions of content, which are discussed in detail in this article, in ensuring that relevant knowledge is acquired by learners for them to be capable of communicating effectively in any situation using the language. Thus, it proved worthwhile to scrutinise the concept of content as prescribed at the macro level (policy) and at the supra level (French integrated curriculum) in order to establish whether strategies used by educators during the enactment process (micro) are favourable to the prescribed content for successfully attaining goals.

Essentially, the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) has forcefully advocated for the use of an action-oriented approach in teaching foreign languages, in which learners are viewed as social actors who have to complete tasks to effectively acquire the target language. This approach, to all intents and purposes, ideally permits unique use of the target language to render learners capable of acquiring real-life communicative skills. However, common practice has proven contradictory in that educators tend to use the traditional method, in which the teaching of grammar is prioritised and pre-eminent, above the teaching of communicative skills (Makumane, 2009). Taking into consideration the CEFR framework and its representation of content (savoir-faire and savoir-être), this practice seems to undermine accurate presentation of content, with the use of the traditional method discarding the inclusion of some propositions (savoir-faire and savoir-être). Therefore, this article aimed at empirically establishing to what extent this assertion held true in a real-life context; and to find transformative measures through the use of action research.

2. Literature Review (Content and Enactment Strategies)

Content is usually referred to as knowledge that is to be taught/learned (Harden, 2002; Hewitt, 2006; Hoadley & Jansen, 2013; Khoza, 2015; Ramnarain & Fortus, 2013; Shulman, 1987). Bernstein (1999) emphasises that content is *what* is to be learned. In the same line of thought, Shulman (1987) sees content as the source of the knowledge base that comprises what a learner should be exposed to, and understand. Shulman further opines that there are three components of knowledge. Firstly, there is content knowledge, which refers to conceptual knowledge that the educator possesses of the subject matter. This knowledge is acquired through facts and schooled knowledge, thereby summoning the use of factual enactment strategies (Hoadley & Jansen, 2013; Schiro, 2013). Secondly,

according to Shulman (1987), there exists pedagogical content knowledge, which is the unique representation of content knowledge by educators during practise in the quest to render their subject matter comprehensible to their learners. This knowledge thus requires the use of habitual enactment strategies. These enactment strategies, according to Khoza (2016), have personal meanings unique to each individual, being influenced by experiences born of a particular teaching/learning context. Lastly, Shulman (1987) discusses curriculum knowledge, which bears reference to the knowledge of recommended instructional material(s) and topics, and the ability to use them accordingly. This suggests that, through the use of these materials, educators strive to meet the needs of their learners, educators thereby applying their social enactment strategies. Schiro (2013) avers that social enactment strategies take into consideration societal needs, which translates to the educator attempting to address learners' needs in order to equip them with relevant knowledge. In other words, these strategies are context-dependent, as educators select what they believe to be the most appropriate and suitable content for that particular context (Sowell, 2000). Shulman's concept of knowledge, thus, intimates that it is of paramount importance for educators to have sufficient and relevant content knowledge. They (educators) are then in a position to effectively teach learners using pedagogical content knowledge while in alignment with curriculum knowledge.

Furthermore, Berkvens, Van den Akker and Brugman (2014) hint that welloutlined educational goals can guide decisions on the content to be selected for particular subject matter. They further posit that what students learn depends largely on the nature of content and how it is presented to them by educators. To extend this view, Hoadley and Jansen (2013) maintain that content is influenced by both everyday knowledge and school knowledge. According to them, everyday knowledge comprises what learners already know from their interaction and experiences with the environment. Bernstein (1999) calls this common-sense knowledge, as it applies to all; thus it may be accessed by everyone. Bernstein further proclaims that this knowledge is oral, local, and contextdependent. Hoadley and Jansen (2013) argue that everyday knowledge, which is social, is essential in that it helps educators understand possible setbacks learners might experience when being introduced to school knowledge. In this way, everyday knowledge is viewed as an essential bridge to school knowledge. In contrast, school knowledge furnishes formal knowledge and it is often discipline-based (factual). In Hoadley and Jansen's (2013) view, school knowledge, also termed powerful knowledge by Young (2007), is specialist knowledge embedded in prescribed content. Young (2007) adds that school knowledge influences new ways of thinking and that some forms of knowledge are more worthwhile than others, hence the selection of specific content for a subject matter.

2.1 Content in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy (CAP) Document of Lesotho

With regard to content, the policy suggests that it be contextualised to address local needs (Ministry of Education & Training, 2009a; Raselimo & Mahao, 2015). Cross, Mungadi and Rouhani (2002) propose that such a policy reform encourages local and community participation as well as relevant stakeholders in order to incorporate societal needs into the education system. This assertion echoes Stenhouse's (1979) theory of curriculum development, which advocates for community involvement (pertinent stakeholders) in curriculum design to address the needs of society, while also empowering that particular society through learners. This line of thought is supported by Wilmot (2005), who further asserts that the involvement of stakeholders allows for content to be integrated to discard compartmentalisation, hence the use of the integrated curriculum. The Lesotho policy on education has proposed an interdisciplinary curriculum, which disposes of subject boundaries and addresses issues related to "intelligence, maturity, personal and social development of the learner for survival purposes..." (Ministry of Education & Training, 2009a, p. 15). This suggests that content is taken from everyday knowledge (horizontal curriculum) and this content is thus context dependent (Bernstein, 1999; Hoadley & Jansen, 2013; Khoza, 2016). Such content, therefore, is influenced by society, and societal issues that are itching to be dealt with. Practically, the policy recommends that critical issues such high unemployment rate, high poverty, raging spread of HIV and AIDS, gender equality and equity, and democracy, among others, should form part of content proposed. This stance adopts the view that learners should be equipped with knowledge, attitudes, values, and skills to solve them (Ministry of Education & Training, 2009a). This implies that educators have to take into consideration societal needs, therefore invoking social enactment strategies.

However, in practice, the notion of school knowledge comes into play (Khoza, 2016; Raselimo & Wilmot, 2013; Wilmot, 2005). As Raselimo and Mahao (2015) assert, the policy draws on global trends that somewhat include the aspect of prescribed content at the supra level of curriculum. This affirmation suggests that this prescribed content affects the macro level (the policy level) as well as the meso level (school/institution level). Here schools decide, while taking into consideration societal needs, knowledge that would best suit those needs in their context. Therefore, at the micro level of curriculum, educators follow what has been prescribed in order to give learners access to necessary knowledge. Hoadley and Jansen (2013) confirm that school knowledge influences cognitive skills that include critical thinking. With the policy insistent on the promotion of such skills, educators are forced to draw from theories and concepts that allow for acquisition of critical thinking skills. In this way, vertical curriculum is applied, in which knowledge is presented hierarchically and the cognitive domain of learners is advantaged (Bernstein, 1999; Khoza, 2016). This process therefore requires educators to use factual enactment strategies. Thus, educators draw from Tyler's Rationale (Tyler, 1949), which is technical and systematic in nature and which advocates for adherence to hierarchical knowledge construction. This implies that educators build on learners'

already existing knowledge in order to help them (learners) improve their cognitive skills.

The above assertions reflect a glaring contradiction inferred from the policy. Explicitly, the policy advocates the adaptation of the integrated curriculum, in which societal issues are prioritised and form part of the content to be addressed. Nevertheless, in the same breath, though passively addressed, the policy also suggests that academic standards be adhered to in order to equip learners with critiquing skills and to position them in the global world, where they would be part of globalisation. In this way, both horizontal (Stenhouse) and vertical (Tyler) curricula are recommended. A blend of these curricula breeds what Montouri (2006) terms Creative Inquiry, in which learners gain the opportunity of building their school of thought through both self-inquiry and accumulation of facts through proven research. The use of both curricula, however, might prove problematic during the enactment process. Educators, using their discretion, might favour one over the other, and thus risk diverting from attaining the ultimate goals. Alternatively, as Khoza (2016) asserts in his study, educators might be submerged by both curricula, hence fail to have control over them. It would appear that the solution to both possible challenges mentioned, would be to empower educators by taking into consideration their needs and personal experiences (habitual enactment strategies), thus liberating them. In this way, educators would develop knowledge, attitudes, values, and skills that would allow them to fuse the two curricula in order to effectively achieve set goals, thereby producing what this article terms Theory of Enactment Strategies. This theory originates and draws strength from striking a balance between Tyler's Rationale, Stenhouse's theory of curriculum development, and Freire's critical pedagogy theory, in aiding educators to apply factual, social and habitual enactment strategies evenly in their use of content.

2.2 Content in the French Integrated Curriculum in Lesotho

According to Van den Akker, Fasoglio and Mulder (2010), national foreign language curricula (macro) would generally focus on rationale, aims, objectives, and content. At the supra level, however, the foreign language curricula, inclusive of the French language curriculum, is determined by the Council of Europe (Council of Europe, 2001). The Council of Europe has devised a framework on which foreign language curricula may be based. In other words, the Council proposes a common framework, the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for the teaching/learning of foreign languages. CEFR describes different levels of competences (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2), whether linguistically or culturally, that learners must acquire to effectively communicate in given situations (Council of Europe 2001; Van den Akker 2010). These different levels describe essential language content pertinent to the performing of language activities in different settings at different levels of complexity.

Since the aim in introducing French in Lesotho is to render learners capable of communicating effectively in this language (Ministry of Education & Training, 2009b), it proves fitting that content would favour the attainment of this aim. Therefore, in relation

to the French integrated curriculum, content was selected based on the framework proposed by CEFR. This framework insists that three propositions be taken into consideration when deciding on the content to teach. These three propositions are *savoir* (general knowledge of the language), *savoir-faire* (know how to do) and *savoir-être* (know how to be) (Council of Europe 2001). The notion of *savoir* is driven by school knowledge in that educators draw content from conceptual and theoretical knowledge (grammar and phonology) in order to portray that knowledge to learners. Van den Akker et al. (2010) frames this as 'knowledge'. According to them, 'knowledge' entails factual and socio-cultural knowledge within which the language is spoken. This indicates that educators summon their factual enactment strategies in relation to *savoir*.

Furthermore, *savoir-faire* alludes to the competence that the learner acquires in learning the French language. This includes social and communicative skills related to everyday life that the learner must acquire in order to interact effectively (Council of Europe, 2001; Germain, 1993; Van den Akker et al., 2010). Van den Akker et al. (2010) term this 'skills and attitudes'. In addition, in relation to *savoir-faire*, learners are equipped with intercultural awareness skills. They are thus able to respect social rules and appropriately use French in different contexts. Makumane (2009) avows that, in order to promote intercultural awareness, the teaching of French should be adapted to the local context. Learners would not only be equipped with French language knowledge and skills: intercultural awareness would also be promoted by comparing learners' own culture with that of the target language. Manyawu (2008) supports this view, confirming that adaptation of French language to a local context, which he calls 'local ownership of French,' could motivate learners as they would be able to use the language outside the walls of the classroom. As a result, educators make use of their social enactment strategies in rendering learners capable of being members of the target language community.

Savoir-être infers attitudes, values, and styles that learners display during their usage of the target language (Council of Europe, 2001; Makumane, 2009). These attitudes and values are unique to each individual as they are influenced by personal experiences (habitual enactment strategies). Van den Akker et al. (2010) term this 'individual need,' whereby the educator takes into account personal experiences during language acquisition. Intriguingly though, these three propositions of content are not explicitly outlined in the French integrated curriculum. This might consequently lead to educators being unaware of their existence, unintentionally disregarding them during practise.

3. Research Purpose, Objective, and Questions

This article intends to establish and understand educators' enactment strategies of the French integrated curriculum content, and is thus guided by the following questions:

- a. What are educators' enactment strategies of the French integrated curriculum content?
- b. How do educators use their enactment strategies of the French integrated curriculum content?

c. What informs educators' enactment strategies of the French integrated curriculum content?

4. Research Methodology

As the main aim of this study is to explore educators' enactment strategies of the French integrated curriculum in relation to content, this summoned the use of a qualitative approach, which permits an in-depth exploration and understanding of a phenomenon (enactment strategies) (Seale, 1999). The critical action research was used as it was essential in helping establish existing conditions in which educators found themselves, and devising transformative ways in areas that warranted such action (McKernan, 1998). Therefore, action research was effected in two phases. The first phase was intended as a symptomatic phase, in which problems and hindrances were identified. The second phase acted as a remedial phase, in which an attempt was made to transform educators, overcoming misinformed beliefs and practices. This was accomplished by providing them with necessary and applicable tools to help them effectively attain prescribed goals in their respective contexts (Walsh, 2014).

4.1 Sampling

In selecting participants, convenience sampling was used. Convenience sampling, according to Farrokhi and Mahmoudi-Hamidabad (2012), is a type of sampling that allows researchers to select participants according to easy accessibility, closeness, and availability. This type of sampling, thus, was deliberately used in selecting seven participants who displayed interest in partaking in the study, as their eagerness promised generation of authentic data. These participants were also readily accessible and had been teaching the French language for over three years at the time of the study, which meant that they had experiences that could be worthwhile to the results of this article.

4.2 Data-generation Methods

In alignment with the qualitative approach, four methods of data generation were used to help establish in-depth understanding and promote credibility of the study through triangulation (Khoza, 2013). These methods are one-on-one semi-structured interviews, document analysis, observations, and reflective journals. Interviews, which lasted between 15 to 25 minutes, were conducted once in each phase, while participants were observed twice in each phase. Both interviews and observations were audio-recorded for purposes of easy transcription and accuracy of conveyed information. Reflective activities were effected twice, once in each phase, and three lesson plans were analysed per participant per phase.

4.3 Data Analysis

Data generated from these methods were analysed using guided analysis. This method of analysis allows for identification of themes prior to data generation, with possibilities

of modifications through interaction with data (Samuel, 2009). The theme "content and enactment strategies" was guided by the research questions of this study, while incorporating the propositions of enactment strategies (habitual, social, and factual), as presented in the findings section below.

5. Results and Discussion

As the critical action research used was effected in two phases, findings of each phase are presented independently of the other, to demonstrate the impact of action research on participants' practice. Direct quotations from participants' reflective activities are used to evidence their actual reflection and enactment strategies from both phases; and to establish how consequential this study was to their practice. Direct quotations were also used to authenticate and validate data (Bryman and Bell, 2007; Neuman, 2007).

Theme: Content and Enactment Strategies Phase 1: Symptomatic Phase

In this phase, it became evident that some participants favoured *savoir* in their teaching of content. Moss, for instance, stated in his reflective activity, "I basically teach phonics, part of speech in grammar, mechanical accuracy in basic French as well as the oral formal formation of language acquisition." This assertion suggests that the participant's content was centred on the rules that govern the language, which translates into the technical knowledge of the subject. This reflection was not unique to Moss, as Tau said, "French semantics and verb conjugation." Saucy, Estelle, and Mbi were in accordance with this, with Saucy adding in the interview, "well, the greater part consists of grammar, and then of course vocabulary…"

From these assertions, it may be deduced that the participants' reflections were based on their application of schooled knowledge (savoir) in their teaching of the language. This was also seen in classrooms during observations. For instance, in Lerato's class, the teaching of grammar, conjugation of verbs to be specific, dominated a 40-minute session. Learners were asked to conjugate the "er" verbs in four different tenses: le présent (present tense), le futur proche (near future tense), le passé recent (recent past tense) and le passé composé (past tense). Similarly, in Annabelle's class, vocabulary of different objects, together with their gender, dominated observed session. Interestingly, most lesson plans presented in this phase did not reflect the savoir aspect that was so dominant during practice. Instead, they reflected savoir-faire, which implied that learners would be given a chance to use language in different situations. This was mostly deduced from the outcomes and activities that were outlined and proposed by educators. However, Mbi was more explicit in her description of savoir when she stated "conjugate reflexive verbs that end in "er" in her lesson plan.

Additionally, some participants incorporated *savoir-faire* in their teaching. Seemingly, the *savoir* that was taught in isolation in some sessions was a build up to *savoir-faire*, in which learners would be expected to use their acquired knowledge to ultimately use it in practical situations. It is noteworthy that this practice was not

universal to every participant, but was applicable to some. Estelle, for instance, stated that "other than the grammar and structure, I really concentrate on the communicative part... how do we do this? What do I say when I get in a bus?" Similarly, Annabelle claimed, "[I teach] many aspects, the grammatical aspect, cultural aspect, and socio-linguistics... almost every aspect that a language ought to have." This suggests that educators relied on cognitive knowledge to facilitate practical knowledge. This was also observed in some classes. For instance, in Tau's class, knowledge (vocabulary) was taught while creatively engaging learners through contextualised phrases. In a similar vein, Annabelle's class displayed a blend of savoir and savoir-faire, in which learners were expected to use the pre-acquired rules to manipulate the language in simulated situations, in which they had to pretend to be buying various items from one another. It was also in this instance that their savoir-être was displayed, and this was uniquely seen in Annabelle's class throughout all the observations in this phase.

The findings in this phase showed inconsistencies between educators' goals and the content that they were favouring in class. For instance, educators outlined as their aim to render learners capable of communicating in different situations. However, their chosen content did not seem to match this aim as it was *savoir*, which covered the rules of the language and not necessarily how to manipulate this language to manoeuvre in different situations. As claims Van den Akker (2003), alignment of curriculum concepts is of paramount importance in ensuring an effective teaching/learning environment. Thus, Phase Two mostly dealt with how to consolidate the three propositions of content to align them with the set goals.

Phase 2: The Remedial Phase

In this phase, a change was mostly apparent in the classroom during observations, where participants attempted, with success in most cases, to incorporate all three propositions of content. During the observation phase, Mbi made it a point to ensure that she introduced new knowledge (conjugation and vocabulary) to her learners before affording them the opportunity of using it in real-life situations (savoir-faire). This was achieved through proposed activities that were tailored to accommodate learners' values and attitudes (savoir-être), of which the educator was aware through her interaction with her learners. This implies that in her proposed activities, the educator allowed learners to draw from their personal experiences in order to make learning meaningful to them. This observation is supported by Le Grange and Reddy (2017), who advocate for alignment of activities with learner experiences to ensure effective learning. Additionally, Saucy followed the same style of incorporating the three propositions. Interestingly, he made sure to contextualise the knowledge to learners' environment in order for them to identify with it. This was also observed in Estelle's class, where, when teaching *l'emploi du temps* (time-table) she ensured that, in addition to the prescribed textbook, which presented a student's typical timetable in France, she made copies of her learners' own timetables. This was to help learners contextualise and identify with the new knowledge they were acquiring. This practice echoes what the Ministry of Education and Training (2009a)

upholds, which is to equip learners with knowledge that they can use to tackle their reallife challenges.

In their reflective activities and interviews, participants displayed knowledge of the three propositions. Annabelle stated, "savoir, yes I use it, but I use savoir-faire the most. Learning becomes interesting when I use savoir-faire. For learners it becomes easier to retain the knowledge when they use savoir-faire and savoir-être." Lerato was less explicit in her use of the terms, "the level that we are teaching right now is A1. So we have to teach the kids about their immediate environment, they have to learn about themselves, about their villages, about their families, their surroundings in the school." From Lerato's assertion, it may be deduced that content was centred on the learner and thus the aspects of savoir, savoir-faire and savoir-être were implicitly embedded in her teaching of the language. In the lesson plans, content taught/experienced was evident in the activities proposed. For instance, Moss indicated, "the teacher will allow learners to introduce themselves and share with the class, their family composition." From this, it appears that the educator used pre-existing knowledge (savoir) to engage learners in an activity that allowed them to use the language (savoir-faire) and to identify their values and attitudes (savoir-être).

The above assertions suggest that there was transformation in participants' practice as they were aware of the three propositions of content. In this way, they were able to incorporate these into their teaching. Additionally, participants took into consideration the essentiality of context in their teaching. According to Sowell (2000), this is vital as there is an apposite correlation between content and awareness of context in order to make informed decisions regarding the appropriateness and suitability of the knowledge they impart to their learners. Educators explored their pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). This requires their habitual enactment strategies, in ensuring that they used their formal knowledge (factual enactment strategies) and their experience(s) with the learners to determine knowledge that best suited their needs (social enactment strategies). Ramnarain and Fortus (2013) affirm that educators' unique understanding of how content should be transferred to learners influences PCK. In a similar vein, Worden (2015) adds that PCK draws from educators' content knowledge, which is expert possession of facts and theories in a particular subject (Ball, Thames & Phelps, 2008; Veal & MaKinster 1999), and learners' experiences and context. Therefore, these findings address the three propositions embedded in the Theory of Enactment Strategies. That is, in using savoir, savoir-faire, and savoir-être in their relaying of content, educators expose their learners to knowledge informed by facts (Tyler). This is achieved while taking into consideration their needs (Stenhouse) and allowing learners to have a critical consciousness of the knowledge exposed to them, consequently to use it in their unique way (Freire).

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

In line with the questions of this study, the main aim was to establish educators' enactment strategies in relation to content and how these strategies affected the

attainment of goals prescribed in the intended curriculum. The findings of this study have essentially unearthed that three propositions of content exist that educators use, although not always in equal measures, in an attempt to achieve the set goals. Phase 1 findings demonstrated an imbalance in the use of content, with savoir, which educators regarded as the epitome of content, favoured over savoir-faire, and savoir-être. This practice of teaching savoir in seclusion, that is, out of context, seemed to compromise greatly the attainment of goals. However, in Phase 2, through the intervention of action research, participants attempted to incorporate the three propositions of content, thereby teaching the language in context in compliance with what the curriculum recommends. Thus, through this study, evidence was provided in Phase 2 that educators were able to relay content to learners in a way that they deemed fit. This was per their unique interactions with their environment (habitual enactment strategies), while taking into consideration their learner needs (social) and subject needs (factual enactment strategies). In this way, a balance was established among the three propositions, with deliberate caution exercised on not overemphasising one at the expense of the other(s). Thus, in addition to constant utilisation of action research for continual reflections on and improvement of practice, this study strongly recommends a revision of the policy, in which the use of these three propositions would be advocated to encourage the teaching of schooled knowledge, context-dependent knowledge, and knowledge that is deemed essential by the educator, pertaining to learner needs. This would essentially guide curriculum developers and designers (educators involved) to devise an elaborative curriculum suitable to addressing subject, learner and educator needs for consequent prescription of accurate and appropriate content. This would be explicitly categorised into three propositions of savoir, savoir-faire, and savoir-être.

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