

CHAPTER 5

Tensions in the Classroom

Introduction

In this chapter I look at what happened in the classroom data during the two lessons in which we discussed the *Men's Health* text, using the framework for analysis which I described in chapter 4. During the first lesson we discussed the text as 'text' and looked at it from the perspective of the immediate context, or the context of situation, which, as I described in chapter 4, I had conceived of as a pared down version of Hymes' model of communicative competence.

During the second lesson we looked at the text as a cultuurtekst, i.e. we looked at it at the level of the context of culture. For the second lesson I had invited two exchange students from the Netherlands to enhance the intercultural aspect of looking at text as cultuurtekst. I have explained in chapter 4 how these two lessons fitted in with the syllabus as a whole.

I had conceptualised both lessons to be distinct from one another, with lesson 1 focusing on the situational context, pedagogically speaking supporting the second, cultural and intercultural, layer of reading. Both levels of reading would require students to approach the text from a critical perspective, but I had envisaged students taking a critical approach to the text from an outside, seemingly objective stance in lesson 1 and a critical approach of critiquing the ideological stance in lesson 2.

To be able to answer the overall question of this study 'How do students engage with the cultuurtekst-pedagogy?' I focus in this chapter on what different ways of reading my focus in these two lessons yielded.

More particularly, I look at whether the cultuurtekst layer of reading would enable students to 'be intercultural', whether they recognise the range of (conflicting) discourses in the text, and whether reading the text at a tex-

tual level in the first lesson would pedagogically speaking support the reading of text as cultuurtekst in the second lesson. Finally I look at whether the notion of Dutch articulation is a fruitful one to pursue as part of a cultuurtekst approach reading.

A number of tensions emerged from these data, tensions which were located both in the fact that students' conceptualisation of the text and of the pedagogical activity itself were not always straightforward. It is particularly how students engaged with the text through 'dialoguing' and 'linguaging' which led me to understand the importance of students' own experience in interpreting the text, and particularly how these experiences can be utilised and given a greater role in the classroom.

Lesson 1: Text as 'Text'

The Progress of Lesson 1

This first lesson took place with all six students in the group, 2 male, 4 female. The students had read the text as homework and I had asked them to underline and look up the words and expressions they did not know. At the start of the lesson we quickly went through any queries students still had at a semantic level. I had not given students a copy of my framework for analysis, so the discussion was to a large extent teacher-led.

Whilst lesson 1 was geared towards looking particularly at the level of 'text' as a product and in relation to the immediate context of the aim, audience, function and structure of the text, students did start to deconstruct the text and issues of representation and voice also surfaced. I followed the structure of my framework for analysis loosely. The first 20 minutes or so of the lesson were taken up by me explaining the task, i.e. that we would look at the text twice over the course of two different lessons, that in each session we would look at it in slightly different ways, and that Dutch students would be joining us for the second session. I also explained briefly what these two different ways of looking at text were and that in the second session we would focus on text as 'cultuurtekst', i.e. looking at discourses and possible intertextual references. Students had heard of the terms 'discourse' and 'intertext', as they had been mentioned in other classes, but it seems fair to say that the understanding of these concepts was still somewhat vague. I only explained these in a cursory manner. This was partly because in previous years when I piloted my course, students had shown resistance to explicit analysis in class. They felt the language class was for learning language skills, not for doing text analysis. Equally in previous lessons in the course with the cohort of students on whom I am basing this study, students had responded very negatively when I mentioned the word 'discourse'. One student, Chris, said: 'It's always 'discourse this and discourse that. It's just jargon', referring to another (literature) course. Other students were nodding in

agreement. I felt at that time that we could talk about the issues by referring to terms such as 'ideas', 'values', and 'network of ideas', as these terms seemed less 'loaded' to students. After all, my aim was not necessarily for students to carry out a full discourse analysis of texts, but rather to raise awareness of underlying assumptions in texts. I did not purposely avoid the term 'discourse', but I felt we could talk about all the issues which a critical look at texts would throw up in language with which students felt comfortable. As it turned out some students occasionally used the term 'discourse' themselves, and whilst students sometimes searched for terms and phrases, they were able to express complex ideas fluently and at times in an academic voice.

The level of participation of individual students in this lesson was more or less on a par with that of other lessons during the year. Noteworthy is that the male students did not contribute very much to the lessons, though this was partly reflected in all lessons, as the female students tended to be very articulate and eager to engage in classroom discussions. Both male students signalled signs of resistance towards this particular text. Chris particularly disliked the text and said several times it was a very 'bad' (*slechte*) text. He commented once that the writer was probably drunk when he wrote it. Andy participated more than Chris, but tended mainly to contribute only when being addressed directly. Andy commented that he had not much to say about the text, because it did not relate to him. Both Andy and Chris rejected the triviality of the text. Andy commented later in his interview that he felt the topic would have been better discussed using a 'better' text. With this I assumed he meant an academic text, or one from a 'quality' newspaper. The female students in the class on the other hand clearly were invoking personal experiences and intertextual references, even in this first lesson. In my discussion of the data of this first lesson I am guided by the topics of the framework: content, function and text structure. A more specific selection of data was guided in the different ways of reading the text. I will now turn to the discussion of the first point in the framework; that of 'content'.

Discussing Text Content

Aligning with or Going Beyond the Text

In line with my framework, the first point I wanted students to engage with was the surface content of the text. My aim with this question was to elicit an awareness of the surface content, or 'preferred reading' of the text, what the text seemed to be about, at a first reading. Even though in my framework I had formulated other questions relating to content, particularly whether students recognised the theme of the topic and in what situations they might have heard or read about it, it turned out to be difficult to follow this format as the discussion tended to stray from the point at times.

My own interpretation of the surface content of the article was guided by the introductory paragraph in the text, as well as by recognising a particular rhetorical structure, often referred to in the Dutch mother tongue writing pedagogy as the ‘problem-solution’ structure (cf. Steehouder, 2006 (1979)). (We had discussed these rhetorical structures in texts a few weeks earlier.) Applying this structure to text, the ‘problem’ would then relate to a ‘certain type’ of women (single successful career women between 35 and 54) whose ‘problem’ is that they are not capable of loving and lasting relationships and were thus lacking a partner to have a baby with.

The question of what the text is about is of course very open and ambiguous. In effect I am asking students to give a concise summary in one sentence. And as we had not at this stage looked at the text in terms of its textual structure, the students responded from first impressions. Moreover, as I explained in chapter 3, readers bring their own experiences to bear upon interpreting text, so a wide range of interpretations is to be expected. This highlights the issue that summarising out of context – a standard pedagogical task in much of language teaching – is not a disinterested activity. We can only summarise a text if we know what the reason for the summary is and from which perspective we need to summarise.

The students gave indeed a range of different answers:

Eve

Eve: ...dat dat soort vrouwen nu bestaan en een beetje gevaarlijk zijn voor mannen [...] vrouwen die op jacht willen en jonge mannen willen pakken. [...] ja niet gevaarlijk, maar hoe zeg je dat nou? opletten

G: Ja een waarschuwing voor mannen.

Eve: ...that these kind of women now exist and are a bit dangerous for men [...] women who want to hunt and catch/ grab young men [...] well, not dangerous, but how do you say that: ‘take care’?

G: Yes, a warning to men.

Andy

Andy: Het gaat over dat sommige vrouwen nu een mannelijke identiteit hebben.

G: Wat is het mannelijke daaraan? Wat is het mannelijke aan hun identiteit?

Andy: Dat ze hard zijn geworden..

Andy: It’s about the fact that some women now have a male identity.

G: What is male about it? What is male about their identity?

Andy: That they have become hard...

Sarah

Sarah: eh... ik vond het een beetje grappig. Het gaat over hoe mannen ook gebruikt kunnen worden.

G: Als hoofdpunt of als bijpunt?

Sarah: er zitten een heleboel tips in over hoe je deze situatie kunt vermijden.

Sarah: I found it a bit amusing. It's about how men also can be used

G: As main point or as subsidiary point?

Sarah: ... there are lots of tips in the article about how to avoid this situation.

Claire

Claire: Kijk voor mij is dit de ideale vrouw die de ideale man wilt.

Claire: For me it's about the ideal woman who wants the ideal man.

Emma

Emma: Ik denk dat het echt gaat om vrouwen die echt denken dat ze niet zonder een man kan; dat ze echt een man nodig hebben.

Emma: I think it really is about women who really think they can't live without a man, that they really need a man.

The question of what the text was about was made even more difficult because of the range of conflicting discourses and the various textual elements in the text (e.g. the visual page lay-out of the text which included different headings, photographs and various text boxes). The students' interpretation of the text content showed that rather than trying to weigh up the different text elements together and to decide what the main thrust or point would be, they focused on only one aspect of the text. In doing so, students' answers depended on what they had selected as a significant aspect of the article.

Even though my question was intended to be one of surface content, students did go beyond that already, and tried to analyse the content in relation to an aim or an underlying meaning; they gave an 'evaluation' of the text, as Halliday (cf. 1985) calls it. Wallace (2003: 43), referring to Wells (1991), points out that it is inherent in readers, even very young ones, to discuss the implications of the text.

All students presented their answer with a confident voice and took the question to be a standard pedagogical one needing a definite answer. They did not query the ambiguity of the question, nor the ambiguity of the article.

Text Alignment: Discourse of Hard and Aggressive Women

The aim of this first stage of reading the text had indeed been to 'stay close to' the surface content of the text, and not to query any of the underlying ideological assumptions or the truth claims made in the text. However, even if students stayed close to the text, there were still significant differences in their responses.

Eve applied a common reading strategy to determine what the text was about. She looked at the first paragraph, where frequently the main point is introduced. In this introductory paragraph the text explicitly addresses the presumed male audience and says: 'take care: you're being hunted'. In her interpretation Eve is aligning herself with the text's presentation of what the main issue is; namely to say that 'these' women exist and men should be warned against them. She is interpreting what the text is about from a text functional perspective; the text aims to achieve something, and that aim is to warn men against these women. In seeing the content of the text as related to its function, she is in line with Hymes' paradigm where text function or aim is one of the features guiding communication.

However, in describing the women in the text as 'scary', Eve also evaluated the text. She presumably referred to the paragraph in which the women were described as enjoying 'male-bashing' when going out with friends in the evening. In focusing on this particular representation, rather than on any of the other various representations of women in the text, Eve saw the main point of the text as embodied in that particular discourse. Eve is confident in her interpretation of the text; she does not add qualifiers or modal particles.

Andy, similarly to Eve, feels the text is about a certain 'type' of women, but he pinpoints a different representation as the main point. By saying that they have a male identity, Andy may be referring to the part of the article which is written in a therapeutic discourse, where the male characteristics that women have taken on are explained as a response to their perceived lack of paternal contact. Andy does not elaborate on this, nor does he say the article *represents* the women as having a male identity. Instead he states that the text is about the *fact* that some women have a male identity. And as such he is staying with the thrust of the article. He says this in a seemingly objective voice by presenting his view as factual statement and by not adding a qualifier such as: 'according to me'. The meta-communication that Andy uses is in line with traditional educational discourse where the teacher asks a questions and the student responds. A qualifier in such cases is not necessarily a convention that needs to be followed.

Sarah's answer is interesting, because on the one hand she seems to align herself with the text position, yet on the other hand she is looking outside the text to interpret the main issue of the article. Sarah, like Eve and Andy, also uses a confident voice and uses no qualifiers such as 'I think', so she seems to be confident about her interpretation. However, she is also explicit about her own response to the article: she thought it was a bit amusing. Sarah is also evaluating the text; she is assigning meaning to it. Like Eve, she also sees the article in

terms of its discourse of women who are 'dangerous' for men, but Sarah transforms that discourse into one of 'exploitation'; the text is about the fact that men can also be 'used'. So, Sarah sees the main focus of the article not so much in terms of 'the fact' that 'these kind of women' exist, but instead, she focuses on the *effect* these women have on men. Whereas Eve and Andy saw the article in the light of women, Sarah is seeing the text in relation to men.

However, Sarah also evokes her knowledge of society to attribute meaning to the text. By using the modifier 'ook' (*also*) Sarah transposes the issue of women being used (by men) to men being put in the same role. Being used is not just happening to women, Sarah seems to be saying. Moreover, Sarah, like Eve also assigns a functional meaning to the text. By stating that 'there are lots of tips in the article about how to avoid this situation' (of being used by women), Sarah sees the aim of the text also as informative for men, which could have a real impact on the readers' lives (avoiding a particular situation).

Even though the three students above, Eve, Sarah and Andy all hinted at the particular discourse of 'aggressive women', their answers still showed considerable differences, showing the complexity and ambiguity of the question of what the text is about. Eve stayed closest to the text by focusing specifically on the introductory paragraph, whereas Andy and Sarah were already 'evaluating' the text. In mentioning the amusing aspect of the article, Sarah pointed to the 'preferred reading' of the text. All three students had interpreted the task as a traditional language classroom task, and followed the academic discourse for that. They gave their answers in a seemingly objective voice. They also stayed on task in seeing text in relation to the immediate context.

Going Beyond the Text: Different Discourses

Two other students, Emma and Claire, did not just stay close to the text position of the discourse of 'hard' women, as Eve, Andy and Sarah had done. They both allowed a greater role for cultural context in their interpretations. But each of them drew on a different discourse in the article. Claire took on a position of critique from the start. By saying that the text was about the ideal woman wanting the ideal man in the set of data above, Claire is not only evaluating the text, in relation to its immediate context, she is relating it already to a context of culture. It is not clear how she has come to this interpretation, or indeed what she means by 'ideal', although in making this statement, Claire is, like Sarah, clearly referring to the text-producing environment and indeed discursive formations. She comes back to this interpretation later on in the lesson when she seems to refer to the pressure women are under to conform to certain lifestyle characteristics (e.g. have a great body, wear great clothes, have a great car etc.). In making this connection, she is also evoking her life experience and knowledge of media discourses by seeing the text in the light of these previously encountered discourses. She comes back to this text fragment several times in the lesson.

In contrast to the other students, Claire makes clear that she is not just stating what the content of the article is, but what *she thinks* the text is about; *Kijk voor mij is dit...* [Look for me this is about...]

Emma has yet another response to the question of what the text is about. Like Claire, she is not aligning herself with the position of the hard and aggressive women, and she brings her own evaluation and interpretation to bear on the text. She, like Claire, is explicit in stating she is giving her own interpretation (*ik denk dat het echt gaat om...*, I think that it is really about...). Her interpretation centres on one of the aspects of the article which focuses on women who are unsuccessful in their relationships, as represented through the therapeutic discourse of women who go into therapy to help them to have 'stable and mature' relationships. That she feels strongly about her interpretation is shown by the fact that she used and repeated the word 'echt' (really) several times. She did not explain her interpretation nor why she specifically focused on only this particular discourse. Both Claire and Emma were already engaged in 'discourse mapping', even if they did not do this explicitly.

In summary, in the individual answers as to what the text is about, students focused on the various content aspects of the text, which represented a range of discourses; aggressive women (who are 'bad' for men), women who have a male identity, pressures on women to be perfect, and women who feel they are incomplete without a man.

In doing so, they discuss the text at a range of levels: functional, cultural (identity and representations) and intertextual (implicit references to other media representations). So even if the question of content was intended to focus students' awareness on the superficial text level, students interpreted the task as an invitation to go beyond the text, to evaluate the text and critique the ideas and truth claims implicit in it. Even in the answers which stayed closest to the text, and indeed the intended task, students inscribed their own meaning onto the text and evaluated it in relation to what could lie behind this text.

However, the contrast in these representations, the aggressive woman versus the image of fulfilled motherhood, was not seized upon by any of the students at this stage, and in fact never became a point of focus in either of the two lessons, despite my efforts to draw students' attention to it. Each student saw the text only in the light of *one* discourse, i.e. single-voiced discourse, whether about 'aggressive women' or about 'women as mothers'.

Discussing Text Function

Different Positions of Critique

From the initial statements about the content of the texts, students gradually started to collaborate to make sense of the text around the questions which focused more specifically on the pragmatic aspect of the text (audience/aim) as

well as structure and argument. My intention had been to focus specifically on this immediate context of text production, but students continued to relate the text further to its wider cultural context.

In my own answer to the question of what the text was aiming to achieve, I indicated that there were two sections in the article where the reader was addressed directly; in the first paragraph this consisted of a warning (as Eve had indeed noticed earlier), and further on in the article, as Sarah had noted above, the reader was presented with advice on 'what to do when trapped in a relationship with a career woman'. However, apart from these paragraphs which indicated a warning and advice, at the surface level the article as a whole seemed to present itself as an informative text, albeit in a humorous tone, setting out the phenomenon of 'single career women' and its 'associated problems'.

Claire focused on the latter notion in saying that the function of the text was (in part) a commentary. However, as the data below show, Claire's position shifted immediately from taking part in the classroom exercise of looking at what the text was aiming to achieve, to critiquing the text itself for its positioning. She used both levels of criticality I referred to in chapter 4; on the one hand she criticised the text for not achieving its aim, and on the other hand she critiqued the text (albeit implicitly) for its ideological view:

Claire: Ik denk dat er zijn een paar serieuze commentaren want je denkt, ja... er zijn vrouwen die hebben problemen, maar ja sorry hoor, dit is niet normaal. er zijn veel vrouwen die ik ken, maar ik ken geen stereotiep... Dit is een heel streng stereotiep.

G: Welk stereotiep?

Claire: De eerste, op het begin.... 'leuke goed gebekte meiden, zalm in de koelkast'... ja....

Emma: Ik weet niet wat hij hiermee wil zeggen. Hij noemt een aantal vrouwen op die een bepaalde leeftijd zijn en een bepaalde levensstijl, maar wat wil hij daarmee zeggen? Is dat een probleem van alle vrouwen? Of van de vrouwen die hij toevallig is tegengekomen?

G: Ja, maar Claire zegt hij heeft het over een bepaald verschijnsel en jullie zeggen ook... je herkent dit verschijnsel, zo van de succ...

Claire and Emma: de succesvolle carrièrevrouw

Emma: Maar gaat dit altijd hand in hand met dit [gedrag]?

Claire: Ja, precies, precies.

Translation

Claire: I think there are a few serious comments because you think, yes...there are women who have problems, but sorry, this is ridiculous.

I know many women, but I don't know a stereotype[ical one]... this is a very strong stereotype.

G: Which stereotype?

Claire: The first... at the beginning... 'good looking girls with the gift of the gab, salmon in the fridge'... yes...

Emma: I don't know what he intends to say with that. He talks about a few women of a certain age and leading a certain lifestyle, but what does he want to say with that? Is that a problem of all women? Or just the women he has happened to have met?

G: Yes, but Claire said... you recognise the phenomenon, that of the succ...

Claire and Emma: of the successful career woman

Emma: Yes, but is that always accompanied by this [behaviour]?

Claire: Yes, exactly, exactly.

Rather than staying with the task of identifying the aim of the text, which Claire brushes off with the comment that it could be seen to be a commentary about problems that women have, she immediately turns to the implication of the text by relating it to her own experiences and evaluating it in accordance with those.

Claire makes use of her personal experiences at two levels. In stating that the text aims to be a serious commentary she legitimises the topic, it seems, and confirms that 'women who have problems' do exist. So she does not dismiss the text as ludicrous or not worthy of discussion outright (although which 'problems' Claire is referring to is again not clear: women who are 'hunting', women not having successful relationships, women harassing men, women feeling the biological clock?).

But Claire also makes use of her lifeworld knowledge as she starts to deconstruct the text. She looks not just at the text, but she uses – implicitly – the context of her own experiences as a reality check against which to gauge her own response to the text; there isn't anyone she knows who is like this. Claire is moving on from 'text' to critique its representation.

By asking students to look at the text at a textual level in relation to immediate context, I had assumed students would take on an 'outside' position (i.e. looking at the text for its textual intricacies and specificity at a seemingly objective level). This outside perspective is surrounded by its own conventions of 'educational talk', where in class students usually employ an 'analytical voice'. However, as Claire is taking on a position of critique and using her experience of the world to look at text at a cultural level, she, in contrast with the convention of this approach, switches to using a 'personal' voice: 'well, I'm sorry, but this [stereotype] is ridiculous'.

Emma then contributes to Claire's analysis and critique by trying to link the excerpt quoted by Claire with the motivation or intention of the author. Emma is also critical of the text in different ways. On the one hand she criticises the author's lack of clear purpose and his lack of intellectual rigour in using stereotypes. But, at the same time she also takes a more critical cultural perspective on board; she starts to consider that the excerpt is a generalisation which suggests all women display the same lifestyle characteristics. Both Claire and Emma are starting to relate the text to social and cultural perspectives and knowledge, Claire critiquing the text for not according with reality, Emma for its generalisation.

Text Alignment in Order to Understand the Male Perspective

Sarah on the other hand, provided a very different take on the idea of what the text aimed to achieve. Since the students had brought the discussion on to a cultural level, I wanted to build on this by focussing their attention on what these particular stereotypes might signify. The stereotypes to which Claire above had referred, were a set of lifestyle characteristics that successful career women displayed, such as having a house with a balcony, luxury food, snazzy car and so on. But when I ask, in response to Claire's statement in the set of data above, why the author might have chosen those particular clichés, Sarah interpreted my question not as an invitation to refer to the social world or other views she may have had. Instead she brought the discussion back to the textual level referring to the aim of the text, which was indeed the aim of this pedagogical activity in the first place. In doing so, Sarah introduced the notion of the intended reader:

Sarah: Ik denk dat hij zo begint om ze zo aan te trekken, ze zijn daarin geïnteresseerd... als je aan een leuke goed geklede mooie vrouw denkt, dan als je als man dat artikel leest dan denk je van 'he mmmm' interessant en dan wat is het, hoe gaat het verder, dus het is eigenlijk... het trekt precies de mannen aan... dus het werkt alsof het zo'n vrouw is, 't zegt: hier is een groepje mooie vrouwen en we gaan hun houding bespreken en dat... dus het brengt de man die de tekst leest, in, zeg maar, om eh om het verder te gaan lezen en aan het eind is het zo andersom dat eigenlijk eh dan willen ze niet meer... dan zijn ze niet meer in deze vrouwen geïnteresseerd want ze zijn eigenlijk een beetje kinderachtig.

[...]

Sarah: Ja maar volgens het artikel... dus aan het eind dan is dan wordt de mannen vrijgelaten, zeg maar, van de vrouwen in de tekst.

G: Hoe wordt hij daardoor vrijgelaten...?

Sarah: Omdat gewoon hoe het aan het eind is dan zou hij niet meer geïnteresseerd zijn in de vrouw want het lijkt alsof ze een beetje stom is en nergens naartoe gaat.

G: Waar zie je dit precies? aan het eind hè, ja 't eind is interessant hè, Claire noemde het eind ook al...

Sarah: Ja ik denk niet dat het oppervlakkig is want 't gaat over de relatie met hun vader. Als je kijkt daarnaar dan zie je dat het is een sociologische en psychologische analyse over wat er in hun hoofden zitten. Dus eigenlijk denk je: ze zijn een beetje gek, het is eigenlijk... ze weten niet wat ze willen. Ze willen gewoon alles wat ze denken te kunnen krijgen. Dus eh 't gaat eigenlijk over de manier waarop mannen oppervlakkig in deze vrouwen geïnteresseerd zijn, maar de doel van de tekst is eigenlijk te zeggen: nou deze vrouwen zijn niet goed voor je want ze kunnen niet goed met je praten, want ze kunnen alleen maar over hun praten en...

G: Ja ze zijn niet goed voor je en ze zijn alleen maar met zichzelf bezig.

Sarah: Ja.

Translation

Sarah: I think that he starts like that to attract them. [To draw the male readers into the article] They are interested in that... if you think about a nice well-dressed beautiful woman, then when you read the article as a man then you think: mmmm interesting and then:...what is it? How does it continue? So really. It attracts exactly the men... so it works as if it is one of those women, it says: here is a group of beautiful women and we are going to talk about their attitude and that... so it brings the man who is reading the text in, as it were, to eh to read further and at the end it is the other way round that actually eh then they don't want them anymore... then they are not interested in these women anymore, because really they are a bit childish.

[...]

Sarah: Yes, but according to the article... so at the end the men are released as it were from the women in the text

G: How is he released by that?

Sarah: Because, well just how at the end he is not interested anymore in the woman because it seems as if she is stupid and going nowhere.

G: Where do you see that exactly? The end is interesting isn't it, Claire also mentioned the end...

Sarah: Yes, I don't think that it is superficial because it is about the relationship with their father. If you look at that then you see that it is a sociological and psychological analysis about what is in their heads. So actually you think... they are a bit mad, it is really... they don't know what they want. They really want everything that they think they can get. So eh it is really about the way these men are superficially interested in these women, but the aim of the text is really to say: these women are no good for you because they can't really talk with you, because they can only talk about themselves and...

G: Yes, they are not good for you as they are only concerned with themselves.

Sarah: Yes.

Sarah is constructing a different context in which to interpret the aim of the text by referring to the intended reader. In explaining why these stereotypes were mentioned in the text, Sarah focuses on the rhetorical structure of the text. She sees a parallel between the way that the text is structured as if it were a metaphor for the women themselves; the quote which Claire called stereotypical, (the description of women in terms of lifestyle characteristics) Sarah regards as a rhetorical effect: the male reader would be attracted to these women because they are good looking, and so would be inclined to read further. But, further on in the article, Sarah says, the male reader would realise these women are 'stupid' (*stom*). With her interpretation Sarah brings the discussion back again to the textual level; both in term of how the text is constructed which leads her to conclude that the aim of the text is to say to the reader: 'these women are not good for you.' The text function is then, as Eve had suggested in the first set of data, a warning to men.

Assigning a function to a text takes account of a social context; the immediate context in which the text functions as a communicative act. Sarah did indeed consider a social context: that of the male reader who needs to be warned against 'these' women. By describing this text function from the perspective of how a male reader might approach this text, it might seem that Sarah is trying to read the text interculturally: she is trying to understand the 'other'; the 'other' being the male author as well as the male reader for whom the text is intended. It would seem that Sarah is trying to relate the text to the context of reception, but as she is not referring to previous knowledge, or experiences of the context of the intended readers of the text, she is taking her cue from the text itself. So by explaining how a male reader might read the text, she is actually 'imagining' this context.

Like Emma and Claire, Sarah focuses just on one of the discourses in the article; but unlike Claire and Emma, she does not see the article to be about women who are out to hunt or hurt men, but women who are 'stupid' and 'a

little bit mad'. She seems to refer to the part of the text which describes women in therapy in order to deal with their inability to have long-term relationships. She does not see the text as representing women as such, but as a description of how women 'are'.

Sarah, like Emma and to a lesser extent Claire, also feels sure about her interpretation is the 'correct' one. In one of her interviews she later states that she really doesn't see how you can interpret the article in any other way.

Discussing Text Structure

Conflicting Discourses

My intention with focusing on textual structure was to encourage students to recognise the different ways in which the women in the text were portrayed. This would then prepare the way for seeing the text as cultuurtekst and the multiple and contrasting discourses embedded in it. In the course of the discussions so far, students had located their comments regarding the text always within one particular representation of the women, one particular discourse. Students were not necessarily aware that they saw the text in terms of a *representation*. In this lesson, I did not use the meta-language of the cultural studies oriented analysis, which makes up the cultuurtekst part of the framework we would discuss in the next lesson. Students seemed to regard their interpretation as 'obvious'. As I had said before, students felt confident about their interpretation, and at no point did they seize on the conflicting answers that each student seemed to give in terms of what they thought the main point or aim of the text was. Students then read the text as, what Kramsch (1993: 27) calls after Bakhtin, a 'single-voiced discourse'.

Only Claire had voiced her concern with the conflicting discourses. When I asked earlier in the lesson whether there was an argument in the article, she said:

Claire: Maar ik denk dat het begint met een idee en dat het eindigt niet met hetzelfde idee, of in het midden is er een... there's wires crossed.

Claire: But I think that it starts with an idea and it does not end with the same idea, or in the middle there is eh... wires crossed.

In the data below, I am trying to focus students' attention to the contrast of the discourses in the beginning and end of the article; what Claire described as 'having its wires crossed'. The set of data below starts with me asking how women are represented at the end of the article (i.e. in terms of fulfilled motherhood) in comparison to the beginning, where women were first described in terms of 'ladette' behaviour out to 'destroy men', and in the paragraph following

that, where they are represented in terms of their consumerist lifestyle. Claire and Emma disagree in their interpretation:

G: ... je zei eerder het is een vreemd eind van de tekst heel anders... de vrouw wordt aan het eind totaal anders beschreven dan aan het begin. Hoe wordt ze anders beschreven?

Emma: een beetje zielig.

G: Wordt ze als zielig beschreven? Vanuit wie gezien? Vind jij dat ze zielig is of vindt de schrijver dat?

Sarah: wWt betekent zielig?

G: Pitiful, iemand waar je medelijden mee zou hebben.

Claire: Maar de vrouw op het eind zegt... eeh ja, 'mijn relatie gaat nu al vijf jaar hartstikke goed: dat is echt heerlijk'. Maar het is... wennen... 'zeker voor vrouwen van mijn generatie'. Dus voor haar, zij is een andere vrouw, ze heeft geleerd en nu ...alles gaat goed, nu heeft zij een man en een kind en zij heeft... ja...

[Claire and Emma talk at the same time, but I think Emma says]:

Emma: Dus hij heeft toch eigenlijk wel bereikt wat het doel was waar al die vrouwen naar streven.

G: ja maar dat is de psychologe dus...

Emma: ja, maar dat is dus het man-en kindverhaal.

Translation

G: ... You said before that the text has a strange end... very different... at the end the woman is described very differently from the beginning. How is she portrayed differently?

Emma: a bit 'zielig' [pitiful].

G: is she described as pitiful? From whose perspective? Do you think she is pitiful or does the author think that?

Sarah: What does 'zielig' mean?

G: pitiful, someone whom you would pity.

Claire: but the woman says at the end: ... eeh [she quotes] 'yes, my relationship has been going really well now for 5 years and that is really wonderful', but it is... getting used to... 'for women of my generation'. So for her, she is another woman, she has learned and now... everything is going well, she has a man and a baby and she has... yes...

[*Claire and Emma talk at the same time, but I think Emma says*]:

Emma: so he has achieved what the aim was of all those women.

G: Yes, but she is a psychologist so...

Emma: Yes, but that is the husband and child narrative.

Emma does not take my question as an invitation to describe what that particular representation was, but she momentarily steps outside the classroom discourse of text analysis, and uses a personal voice by making a value statement: the women (as described at the end of the text) are to be pitied. Claire disagrees with that particular value judgement; after all, she says, the woman in the text describes herself as happy. She has learnt [from her therapy] and now everything goes well. Claire further quotes from the text itself, saying that women of her (i.e. the female psychologist's) generation have 'had to learn', but now 'everything is going well'. Claire is trying to find evidence in the article to describe this particular discourse, but Emma responds to Claire by switching the focus from the text and the portrayal of women in that last section, to the author: 'he has achieved what the aim was for all those women', and she concludes by saying: 'that is the 'husband and child narrative'', which she explained earlier as the way that women are seen as reaching fulfilment only through motherhood. So Emma seems to suggest that since the article finished with this particular representation, this shows that the representation of women as fulfilled by their relationship and 'happy motherhood' is the 'solution' or most important discourse of the article: he [the author] achieved what all those women want. Emma looks at the text from a critical ideological perspective; she critiques the intensely traditional view of women finding happiness only in marriage and motherhood, but in this critique she is not considering any of the other discourses and representations. The discourse or representation of women as taking on the 'male' characteristics of achievement and success, she did not mention.

Claire is much more prepared to see the text in its complexities of conflicting discourses, and is still struggling to make sense of the text. Emma is not. She is sure of her interpretation.

Conclusion Lesson 1

The focus of this first lesson was to look at text on a textual level and in relation to the immediate context. What emerged was that, even at this level of looking at text, many different interpretations are possible. The range of answers students gave to the first question about the content of the text showed how complex and ambiguous such a question is. Indeed, I take a view that text interpretation is a process in which readers use their experiences and lifeworld knowledge to *give meaning* to the text, not to *extract* pre-existing meaning (see chapter 3). However, that does not mean we should allow for a limitless number

of interpretations in pedagogical activities. I believe, along with Wallace (2003: 16) that we can talk about a range of 'preferred readings' of text. The answers to the question about content showed that students do not look at text in a disinterested way. Even if students try and stay close to the text in their answers, they still inscribe meaning, they 'evaluate' the text, and see it in relation to its context in relation to its effect on the world; e.g. the text is about women who have a male identity, the pressure to be 'perfect', or about how women 'use' men, or, in total contrast, that women only gain happiness through having a stable relationship and a child: what one student called the 'husband and child narrative'.

This may show that seeing text as stable, which is in effect the assumption underlying questions such as what the text is about, is an artificial and ambiguous task.

Another significant aspect to emerge from the data of this first lesson, is that in ascribing meaning to the text, students tend to focus on only one of the discourses within the text, rather than seeing the text in its entirety and with a complexity of multiple discourses. Critical thinking merged with critique of ideology in some instances.

Lesson 2: Cultuurtekst

Of the group of 6 regular students Sarah and Andy were not present in this lesson, but two exchange students from the Netherlands, Yasmin and Marijke joined this class. I had invited them to create a dialogic space in the classroom as well as an intercultural element in which students could discuss various interpretations and relate to other texts which drew on similar or significantly different discourses. Because I wanted to introduce the idea of 'Dutch articulation', i.e. what I perceived to be the intensely traditional discourse on women, I also thought the presence of the Dutch students might add an extra layer of interculturality. To ensure the Dutch students were prepared for this class I had given them a few articles we had discussed during this block on gender, and the framework for analysis that guided our discussions. I had also briefly discussed with the Dutch students the issue of 'cultuurtekst' and I had given them a photocopied handout of a few pages from a book by Maaïke Meijer, in which she discusses the notion of cultuurtekst. This meant that the Dutch students were more explicitly prepared for this class on a theoretical level than the regular students of the class, as these had not received the text by Maaïke Meijer. As I explained in chapter 4, I had not been explicit throughout the course about its underpinning theories, as I had assumed, partly based on previous experiences in other classes, that students would not appreciate theoretical discussion or information as part of a language class.

To prepare the regular English students for this particular class I had asked them to complete a homework task. This task was to write down their answers to the cultuurtekst section under point 5 of the analysis for framework we used

(see appendix). These questions were designed to get students to recognise which discourses underpinned the text, and asked how the topic and subjects in the text were talked about; how the reader seems to be addressed; which discourses or intertexts they recognised, and whether these were in any way conflicting with one another. All of these questions asked for specific references to linguistic points of vocabulary or grammar to explain their answer. Sarah was the only student who had not carried out this piece of homework. Emma had given her own interpretation to the task and rather than treating it as an academic and analytical exercise she wrote a spoof on the original text as if it was an article in a glossy women's magazine.

The Progress of Lesson 2

The aim of the second lesson was to discuss the text as 'cultuurtekst': text as a cultural construct through discursive mapping. I had wanted to draw students' attention to the prominence of particular discourses in the text, and how these took on an aura of 'truth'. The issues of representation had surfaced in the first lesson, but I wanted students to recognise the cultural locatedness of the text, i.e. the different discourses and values, and to see whether the range of different discourses added an extra layer of meaning to the text.

The lesson moved from eliciting some initial responses from the Dutch students to discussing issues of representation: how maleness and femaleness was constructed and what particular values, intertexts and discourses were recognisable. Finally we moved to the question whether this issue is talked about differently in England and Holland; in other words was there a Dutch articulation? By the exercise of discursive mapping, as well as looking at 'Dutch articulation', I asked students in effect to look at both a 'generic' and a 'differential' level of language and culture (see chapter 3).

After the short discussion around the initial responses of the Dutch students, I had asked students to do an exercise in pairs to look specifically at how men and women were represented in the text and to make a list of words and expressions which showed that. The aim of the exercise was to encourage students to see these different discursive formations through looking at the language used. By doing the exercise I hoped to make the (conflicting) discourses visible. After this exercise we looked at the text in sections by which I hoped that the students would recognise the different voices with which women were represented. So far in the first lesson only Claire had picked up the issue of the different representations. In the second lesson which I discuss below, students were 'dialoguing' more with one another and responding to one another's comments than in the previous lesson.

On the whole the Dutch students took a fairly equal part and the English students were not particularly more interested in what the Dutch students had to say in comparison to themselves. The Dutch students were perhaps a little

reticent and less likely to respond as this was a new group and also a new way of looking at texts. The English students felt very comfortable in their comments about how things were 'done' in the Netherlands; as they had lived there during the year abroad, they felt their observations were valid.

My role during this lesson was less fore-grounded than in the first lesson. Whereas I asked questions to initiate discussions, responded to students' answers, and asked students to elaborate on certain points, on the whole I took a background role. Students were dialoguing and engaged in the discussions, frequently without any prompting from me.

I did not use the questions on the framework explicitly, as it had become clear during the first lesson, that working our way through the framework rigidly stopped the flow of the discussion. Nevertheless, there was a progress in the lesson as I had the framework questions in my mind, and through the discussions the notion of discourses and values in the text were gradually made more explicit by the students. However, this process did not take place neatly in a linear way and also led to misunderstandings amongst students as they sometimes were more interested in discussing the issues which were thrown up as a result of having highlighted the discourses, rather than seeing the text as the micro cosmos in which these discourses were reflected and recreated. It turned out that the presence of the Dutch students helped to make the discussion more focussed. I will start with the latter point below, and then move on to discuss how students engaged with the text and its underpinning values in an increasingly intercultural and ethnographic manner.

Role of the Dutch Students: Towards an Understanding of the Socio-cultural Context

My expectations of the role of the Dutch students had been that the English students would be more to the point in their answers, because they had experience of discussing texts in previous classes, albeit not using an explicit framework. As it turned out, it worked the other way round. The inclusion of the Dutch students in the lesson immediately raised the level of discussion, as their responses prompted more dialogic responses from the other students.

In giving their first responses to the text, both Dutch students straight away took an evaluative stance to the text and considered, without being prompted, what might lie behind the stereotypical representation of women in the text:

G: Wat is jullie eerste reactie op de tekst... puur persoonlijk en waar ging de tekst over naar jouw gevoel?

Yasmin: Heel herkenbaar, ja. Als je naar programma's kijkt als 'Sex in the city' en 'Ally McBeal' dan gaat het echt daarover. En dit artikel, ja dat was niet iets nieuws... ik herkende alles.

G: Je herkende, wat precies?

Yasmin: Nou zeg maar die hoger opgeleide vrouwen die een man wil om haar leven, zeg maar, compleet te maken en dat lees je ook in tijdschriften als Cosmopolitan en normale kranten ook en dergelijke, voorgekauwd spul was dit... ja dat heb ik heel vaak gelezen.

Translation

G: What is your first reaction to the text... purely personal reaction and what was the text about, you feel?

Yasmin: Very recognisable, yes, when you look at programmes like 'Sex in the city' and 'Ally McBeal' then it is really about that. And this article, yes it was nothing new... I recognised everything.

G: You recognised what exactly?

Yasmin: Well, those well-educated women who want a man to make their life, well, complete. You read that also in magazines like 'Cosmopolitan' and also normal newspapers, hackneyed stuff this was, yes I have read this often.

The dialogue continues:

Marijke: Dat was mijn reactie ook wel. Om nou te zeggen... ja, ik herken het natuurlijk ook wel, ik heb ook artikelen gelezen dat je ook over al die series op tv over vrouwen...

Claire: Ja, dat stereotiepe ook.

Marijke: Ja en als ik dan denk van... ja, ik herken het omdat ik er vaker over heb gelezen, ik herken het niet als verschijnsel in de maatschappij... ik heb dit soort vrouwen nog nooit gezien. Ja, eigenlijk vind ik het een beetje belachelijk dat mannen vernielen, ik vind dat heeel kinderachtig. Zijn er echt vrouwen... is er een hele beweging van vrouwen die dat soort dingen serieus doen?

Yasmin: Ja, je leest er wel verhalen over, maar gebeurt het ook op grote schaal? Ik ken persoonlijk niemand die zo is.

Translation

Marijke: That was my reaction as well. Well... yes, I recognise it of course, I have also read articles like that and all those series on tv about women...

Claire: Yes, the stereotypes...

Marijke: Yes and when I think... yes, I recognise it because I have read about it more often, but I don't recognise it as a phenomenon in society... I have never seen these women. Yes, actually I think it is a bit

ridiculous... that 'destroying men' thing, I find it veeeery childish. Are there really women... is there really a whole movement of women who are really doing that kind of thing?

Yasmin: Yes, you read about it, but does it really happen on a large scale? I personally don't know anyone who is like that.

Yasmin first responds by saying she recognised the issue of highly educated women who want a man to make their life complete. But she immediately made explicit that she recognised the *ideas* by having read about them in glossy magazines as well as in 'normal' newspapers. So Yasmin located the article in an intertextual relationship with global media discourses. The Dutch students were not just criticising the article for using stereotypes (although they did that too), but they were at the same time relating the article to the wider issue that these stereotypes indeed existed and were not only recognisable, but were hackneyed (Yasmin). This was a collaboration: Yasmin initially felt that the article portrayed something very recognisable, but Marijke takes her point further; she recognises the stereotypes because she has read about them so often, but she considers that these stereotypes do not relate to reality. Marijke, then, separated the 'cultuurtekst' (the underlying ideas in the text) from actual reality.

During the next exchange Emma considered what could be behind the creation of such stereotypes in the media, and how these ideas could become dominant, considering they do not relate to reality. And again in the ensuing dialogue, a collaboration takes place between Emma and one of the Dutch students, Marijke, who helped to make a more explicit link with the cultural context of the article:

Emma: Misschien dat soort benoemingen dan, van mannen – of vrouwen vernielers, misschien is dat ooit een keer gezegd als grapje, en is dat gewoon opgenomen in de maatschappij en is dat opgenomen door mannen, of ja, door wie, en misschien van daar is het een verschijnsel in de geschreven... eh pers geworden, want ja, ik denk, ja, er zijn vaak genoeg vrouwen inderdaad die toch gewoon gelukkig zijn om alleen te zijn en die inderdaad op een beetje fun uit zijn, die wel eens een man versieren. 't Is niet zozeer dat ze een man willen vernielen, maar net als mannen, die willen verder niks... (onverstaanbaar)... ja, en daar houdt het dan mee op.

Marijke: Ja, 't kan ook best wel dat je... want het is natuurlijk een heel interessant onderwerp, iets zoals dit, dus als je er ook maar een klein beetje aan ruikt of iets opvangt wat een beetje in die trant zit van vrouwen die een man gaan vernielen, dat klinkt heel interessant en dan kun je daar ook een prachtig artikel over schrijven wat al die mannen ook als een gek gaan zitten te lezen... ik bedoel, 't blijft gewoon een ontzettend interessant onderwerp, man versus vrouwen.

Emma: Ja precies, kijk wat een man doet, als een man uitgaat en een vrouw versiert, nou dat is gewoon normaal, niemand kijkt daar van op, maar als een vrouw dat doet, dat wordt nog steeds gewoon beoordeeld.

Marijke: Misschien is dat dan wel de waarde of het beeld dat je eruit kunt halen, hè, dat 't van vrouwen niet... dat 't niet bij ons beeld van vrouwen past om uit te gaan en mannen te versieren.

Translation

Emma: Maybe that those kind of labels: 'destroying men/male bashing' or women, maybe that has been said once as a joke and that label has just been taken over in society and taken over by men or yes, and maybe from there it became a phenomenon in the press, because yes, I think there are often enough women who are indeed just happy to be on their own and who indeed are out to have some fun, who would like to get it off with a man, not that they want to destroy a man, but who just like men... and who do not want anything more than that (inaudible) and... well that's all there is to it.

Marijke: Yes, it is also possible that you... because it is of course a really interesting topic, something like this, so if you sniff at it only a little or if you catch something in the sense of women who are going to destroy a man, that sounds very interesting and then you can write a wonderful article about it which all those men are going to read like mad... I mean, it remains such an interesting topic: men versus women.

Emma: Yes, exactly, look what a man does... when a man goes out and gets it off with a woman, that is just normal, it is expected. But when a woman is doing that it is still being criticised.

Marijke: Maybe that is the value or the image you can recognise, that it doesn't fit in the image we have of women to go out and pick up a man.

Emma's initial suggestion that the description of women as 'mannervernielers' ('destroyers of men'/ 'male-bashers') had come into use purely by accident, through a joke that then became part of an accepted notion in society, does not consider in any way its social or cultural origins, ideologies or power relations. Emma's suggestion does not really refer to any previous knowledge or experience either, it seems. It is an attempt at explaining an existing and recognisable discourse as not located within a particular socio-cultural context, but as a chance happening. Marijke then takes Emma's suggestion on board, but instead of accepting Emma's version, she locates the emergence of 'labels' within the commercial text-producing environment; the magazine needs to attract readers, and gender relations, after all, constitute a very interesting topic, Marijke says.

Emma builds further on this and this time she does make a link with the socio-cultural context. She relates the representation of women as being sexually aggressive to cultural conventions: what is 'normal' behaviour for a man is not deemed acceptable in a woman. It is Marijke who makes this even more explicit and brings this back to what the text then might signify as a whole; that 'chasing men' is not part of the acceptable image of women in our society. Marijke is already referring to discourse here: the implicit conventions and assumptions of how women should behave.

So Emma, even though she thought she was agreeing with Marijke, approaches the text initially from a perspective outside society. Marijke tries to formulate it from a socio-cultural perspective and tries to engage with the values underpinning the text straight away, which Emma then responds to. The students then are starting to engage with the notion of how gender is constructed in the article; they have started to 'map' the discourses through their dialogic interaction. In the set of data I discuss below, Claire takes the mapping of discourses further still.

Reading from Inside or Outside Perspectives

The fairly heated exchange below shows the very different approaches between Emma and Claire in terms of conceptualising text and context. Claire was discussing the particular fragment in the text¹ (which Emma and Claire had also disagreed over in lesson 1), which she said was being stereotypical. Claire had just mentioned that she thought these stereotypes consisted of women being represented as having masculine traits:

G: En jij vindt dat mannelijk. Wat is er mannelijk aan?

Claire: Ik vind dat mannelijk want de vraag die ik citeer over seksueel rendement... voor mij is dat heel mannelijk, want ik vind dat dat is hetzelfde als de vrouwen in het eerste voorbeeld en dus voor mij is dat eh hij doet een eh 't franse woord 'rapprochement' eh ja...

[er wordt gelachen]

Claire: Wat is dat in het Nederlands of Engels? 't Brengt dat eh...

Marijke: Toenadering.

Claire: Ja...

G: Hij brengt die twee dingen bij elkaar.

Claire: Ja.

G: Maar hoe...wat is er nou precies... hoe komt het dat dat op elkaar lijkt... het feit dat vrouwen eerst worden beschreven met wat ze dragen... designer clothes, cellulitisvrij... getrainde billen...

[er wordt gelachen]

G: Je zou kunnen zeggen dat daar een soort...

Claire: Op zich is dat mannelijk want...

Emma: Neeeee! Waarom?

Claire: Ja, dat hele...

Emma: Als je succesvol bent, bent je dan mannelijk als vrouw?

Claire: Nee, maar...

Emma: Maar dat zeg je dan.

Claire: Nee, ik vind dat als je dat vind belangrijk, ja ik vind dat een beetje mannelijk.

Emma: Dus jij wil gewoon onderdanig blijven aan een man en met geld...

G: Emma, Claire zegt volgens mij niet dat dat mannelijk is, maar dat de schrijver het presenteert als mannelijk, dat de maatschappij dat zo vindt.

[door elkaar praten en lachen]

Claire: Maar wanneer je een lijst maakt met alle dingen... ik...

Emma: Hij beschouwt het als mannelijk.

Claire: Ja, als je geen namen hebt, als je zegt dat hij eh Maarten en zijn drie vriendin eh, vrienden, dan voor mij is dat misschien niet zo, ja, misschien niet die billen

[er wordt gelachen]

G: Nou, die billen zijn wel belangrijk natuurlijk. Waarom zijn die...

Claire: Seksueel.

G: Omdat hij toch de vrouw daardoor als seksueel aantrekkelijk neerzet.

Emma: Dus als ze dan dit allemaal hadden maar toch die cellulitis dan was er toch niet zo...

[onverstaanbaar door het door elkaar praten]

Claire: Luister... dakterras of balkon, ja vlot karretje, ja niet die cellulitis, hoe zeg je dat voor mannen, is dat eh... hoe zeg je...

sommige studenten: Sixpack.

Marijke en Yasmin: Wasbord.

Claire: Wasbord, ja make-up niet, maar koelkast met zalm en champagne en die job met uitdagende perspectieven, ja voor mij dat kan mannelijk ook...

Eve: Typisch zo'n bachelor...

[...]

G: Dus het is... de vrouw wordt beschreven in die succesvolle... economisch succesvolle termen en het prestatiegerichte... eh hij zegt ook op een gegeven moment eh... hij definieert het mannelijk zijn als eh prestaties verrichten... op blz... ik weet niet zo gauw.

Marijke: Ja, op blz. 49 aan het einde... 'zo bouwen ze een door het leveren van bepaalde prestaties'.

G: Ja, inderdaad, [ik herhaal het]... is een mannelijke identiteit, ja dus met andere woorden, prestaties leveren is een mannelijke eh karaktertrek.

Emma: Ja, dan ben ik het met je eens dat het inderdaad zo gepresenteerd is, maar...

Claire: Ja, ja.

Emma: Maar...

G: Ja, je bent het niet eens met wat ie zegt.

Emma: Nee.

Translation

G: And you find that male? What is male about it?

Claire: I think that it is male because the question which I'm citing about sexual gain for me that is very male. I think that that is the same as the women in the first example and this for me he is doing... eh the French word is 'rapprochement' eh yes...

[Laughter]

Claire: What is that in Dutch or English? It brings that...

Marijke: Approach.

Claire: Yes.

G: He brings those things together.

Claire: Yes.

G: But how... what exactly... how come that that looks like one another... the fact that women are first described by what they wear... designer clothes, cellulite free trained buttocks

[Laughter]

G: You could say that there is a kind of

Claire: In a way that is male...

Emma: Noooo... why?

Claire: Well, the whole...

Emma: When you are successful as a woman, you are being male?

Claire: No, but...

Emma: But that's what you then are saying.

Claire: No, I think that if you find that [kind of thing] important yes, I think that is a bit male.

Emma: So you want to remain submissive to a man and with money...

G: Emma, I don't think that Claire is saying that it is male, but that the author presents it as male, that society thinks it is male.

[*Students talking and laughing*]

Claire: But when you make a list of all those things... I...

Emma: He thinks of it as male.

Claire: Yes, if there wouldn't be any names given... eh Maarten and his three friends, then for me [it could be about men]... well, perhaps not those buttocks

[*Laughter*]

G: Well, those buttocks are important of course... why would they be...

Claire: Sexual.

G: Because he is portraying the women still as being sexually attractive.

[...]

Claire: Listen... roof terrace or balcony... yes, trendy little car, well, not the cellulite, how do you say that for men...?

Marijke and Yasmin: Six-pack.

Claire: Six-pack, yes, not the make-up, but the fridge with salmon and champagne and the job with prospects... yes, for me that can be male.

Eve: A typical bachelor...

[...]

G: So, the women are described in those successful economically successful terms and focused on achievement... eh... he also says somewhere... eh... he defines being male as eh... achieving... on page... I don't know...

Marijke: Yes on page 49 at the end: 'that's how they build a... by achieving things.'

G: Yes, indeed. Achieving... is part of the male identity, yes, so in other words I repeat what was said is a male characteristic.

Emma: Yes, then I agree with you that indeed that is how it is presented, but...

Claire: Yes, yes.

Emma: But...

G: Yes, you don't agree with him.

Emma: No.

Claire and Emma had discussed the same text fragment (the one about designer clothes etc.) in the first lesson, and they had both agreed that it represented a negative view of women, but they had each interpreted it differently. Emma had seen this fragment as representing women as superficial, being only interested in clothes and make-up, whereas Claire had seen it in terms of the representation of an 'ideal' that women would need to live up to. Those interpretations were forgotten now, and both Emma and Claire seem to agree that in this fragment women are described as being successful, having achieved a certain status due to these materialist possessions.

Claire notes that this particular representation of describing women in terms of success is gendered: success is represented as a male characteristic. But Emma does not seem to recognise that Claire is making a statement about a representation in the text and she assumes that it is Claire's own opinion that success constitutes a male characteristic. Emma steps outside the meta-communicative style of the classroom discussion and seems to forget we are engaging in the pedagogic activity of analysing a text. She feels so strongly about this that she almost launches a personal attack on Claire: '*Dus jij wilt gewoon onderdanig blijven aan een man en met geld...?*' (So you want to stay submissive to a man and with money...?).

When I am trying to build on Claire's point that the way that the women are presented is almost in male terms, and when I try and articulate that in terms of economic success and a focus on achievement (which the author later in the article explicitly defines as being a male characteristic), only Marijke latches on by pointing out where in the text this is said. Only then does Emma agree that, yes, this is an issue of representation, but states yet again that she doesn't agree with the view that success could be seen as a male characteristic.

Emma then seems to firmly remain outside the article, not trying to understand the text as discursive formations, but responding to the statement almost as an item for debate. Claire, on the other hand is trying to understand the text fragment in the context of the article itself and link it to its socio-cultural

environment. By doing so, Claire is moving away from looking at the text as a product, and is starting to see the text as *cultuurtekst*, i.e. the discourses which underpin the text. Claire made use of her socio-cultural knowledge to come to this analysis and took on a position of critique. But, paradoxically, Emma's strong criticism of the text using her personal experiences or views, formed a hindrance to a position of critique as she saw the text in relation to a discussion about content, not a discussion about discourses. Claire saw this fragment in terms of culturally located ways of presenting male and femaleness, Emma saw this as a statement of truth, and she drew the discussion on to personal terms. This might suggest that a *strong* emphasis on personal experience, which is not being reflected upon, can be detrimental to being critical and even be stereotype confirming.

However, as a result of the interplay between theory, data and my own reflection, I realised in the later stages of this study that Emma's response to the text cannot be solely explained by her taking a position outside the text. It was precisely her emotional response to Claire's pinpointing of the particular discursive forces in society which represent success and independence as the prerogative of men, which alerted me to the fact that Emma was engaging with the text, and more so with Claire's responses to the text, in a critical way, critiquing the ideologically motivated content, and how a truth-certainty is maintained about gender. Her emotional response was directed at these particular discursive understandings, even if she mistakenly believed that Claire personally held that particular view. Through asking Claire directly whether she would like to remain dependent on a man and his money, Emma brought both the personal *and* political domain into the classroom. Since I felt uncomfortable with the emotional and passionate tone of the discussion, I intervened, without giving this personal political element a chance to develop. However, the next set of data shows a moment in the class where that did happen. It shows that students' engagement with their personal experiences can indeed be a step towards a critical engagement with the discursive forces of the text-producing environment.

Lifeworld Knowledge: Being an Intercultural Reader

The fragment below shows that instead of being a hindrance to engaging with text meaning, referring to one's own experience of the world could indeed aid the process of being critical in problematising the text, and being intercultural. The personal and cultural can combine to aid students to become intercultural readers. When the exchange below took place in the lesson, I felt at the time that the discussion had moved away from the text and that students used the text merely as a vehicle for a discussion about the topic. My aim throughout the lesson had been to get students to focus on the text and to point to the language in the fragment to prove their points, so I was initially disappointed that

discussions like the one below developed, even though I recognised the value of having debates like this. Looking at the exchange now, I think it shows that students did have a meaningful and intercultural dialogue by collaborating in their interpretative discussion and making use of their personal experience. In doing so they were critical from an inside as well as outside perspective. Students were both intercultural in the sense of understanding the complexity of culture (cf. Blommaert, 1998; Holliday et.al, 2004) and they were 'being intercultural' (Phipps and Gonzalez, 2004) in trying to understand the 'other', in this case 'the male', in relation to their own experiences. Students tried to understand the text and its underpinning discourses; they also critiqued, as a group, these discourses, which in turn led them to look at their own situation in a different light again.

Claire: Maar we zeggen één ding en we denken een ander ding. Ik denk dat ik heb hetzelfde probleem, ik zeg altijd ik kan doen wat ik wil, ik kan carrière hebben of niet, wat ik wil, maar ook in mijn gezin [mijn eigen familie, GQ], ze zegt altijd, wanneer is het huwelijk, wanneer komt de kinderen en dat is een heel, ja, ik vind het heel moeilijk en ik denk dat dat is een normaal probleem van vrouwen in deze tijd, ja de... hoe zeg je dat?

G: Ja de rol, de veranderende rol.

Claire: Ja, de rol, je kan alles zijn of niks zijn, maar het is moeilijk om een balans te vinden.

Marijke: Ja, blijkbaar vinden mannen dat ook heel moeilijk dat ze niet goed weten wat ze nou van een vrouw moeten verwachten en dat daarom zo'n artikel ook gepubliceerd wordt omdat dat daarop ingaat van wat voor wat willen vrouwen nou eigenlijk en hoe zitten ze in elkaar...

G: En wat willen ze zelf?

Emma: En wat willen mannen?

G: Ja, precies dat bedoel ik.

Emma: Willen ze een hoer hebben of een moeder?

G: Een hoer en een madonna.

Claire: Ja, een hoer in de slaapkamer en een moeder in...

Marijke: [lacht] Ja, in de huiskamer of zo...

[door elkaar praten. Iemand zegt]:

In de keuken

G: Ja, inderdaad. Zit er ook iets in van jaloezie? Dat de vrouw...

Claire: Alles kan hebben.

G: ...een bedreiging vormt? de man is nu zijn positie kwijt als degene die presteert, mannelijke identiteit is het leveren van bepaalde prestaties.

Claire: Dat is het feministenidee dat ik heb de laatste tijd ook met mijn Franse professor zo gepraat. Zij zegt dat sinds het begin van de tijd, mannen hebben een probleem, want vrouwen kunnen de kinderen hebben en mannen niet en dus mannen hebben vrouwen eh 'repressed'?

Marijke: Onderdrukt.

Claire: Onderdrukt... enne nu vrouwen kunnen een carrière hebben en een huis en een baan en ze kunnen alleen wonen als we wilt, ja we kunnen alles doen en dat is een grote probleem voor mannen en ze weten niet wat ze willen en ze moeten denken...

Marijke: Maar dan zou je kunnen zeggen dat dit artikel... juist die nadruk op de carrièrevrouw die, zeg maar, helemaal de plank misslaat, een bescherming is van hé, het is altijd van ons geweest om een carrière te hebben en om te presteren en nu doen die vrouwen het ook, maar kijk eens naar ze, ze kunnen er niks van, 't gaat helemaal mis met ze, dus om dat ook een beetje te beschermen van 'ja, maar het is toch ook een beetje van ons', want, ja, al kunnen ze het wel... toch niet zo goed als wij.

G: ja, dus wat spreekt daar dan..., als we dat dan bijvoorbeeld vergelijken met Liesbeth Wietzes artikel van de man als dinosaurus, de mannen hebben hun positie verloren, ze zijn meelijwekkende wezens geworden, eh het was een heel extreme visie van haar, ze bracht het heel extreem, omdat het polemisch bedoeld was, maar herken je daar misschien iets in, zeg je, ja er is een bepaald maatschappelijk verschijnsel niet zozeer het maatschappelijk verschijnsel zoals hij het beschrijft over die agressieve jonge vrouwen, maar is er een maatschappelijk verschijnsel dat mannen, of vrouwen ook, in de war zijn, niet meer precies zoeken zoeken naar...een andere vorm...

Emma: Ja, ik weet het niet, het is heel moeilijk, maar ik ben niet in de war, als vrouw zijnde heb ik geen probleem dat ik ook een carrière wil en desnoods kinderen en getrouwd zijn.

Marijke: Maar denk je dat dat gaat lukken ook als je dat allemaal wil?

Emma: Dat weet ik niet en als het niet lukt, ok, daar heb ik ook geen probleem mee.

Claire: Maar ik denk ook dat de vrouw niet kan accepteren dat het ok is om geen man te hebben. Er is een...

Emma: Vrouwen kunnen dat niet accepteren?

Claire: Nee, de maatschappelijke mensen, ja, vrouwen, ik denk dat het misschien is het... het is dom, want ik weet dat zonder man kan ik gewoon functioneren op een normale wijze.

Marijke: Ja...

Claire: Ja, er is misschien een soort idee en...

Marijke: Maar er is toch ook een soort restant van dat hele traditionele dat je toch ook een, dat je toch het idee hebt dat je een man nodig hebt en als je dan ook kijkt naar 'Ally McBeal' en al die series, je zit er toch ook op te wachten dat ze eigenlijk een vriendje krijgt?

Emma: Maar is het ook niet zo tegenwoordig dat er voor mannen een beetje een nieuw concept is dat zij gewoon een vrouw nodig hebben voor eh eh 'companionship'?

Iemand zegt Gezelschap.

Emma: Gezelschap, want mensen als wezens, ik denk zijn niet bedoeld om alleen te zijn, man of vrouw, 't maakt niet uit. Misschien is het dan voor mannen, misschien moeten ze een hoofd er...

Claire: Get their head around it.

Emma: Ja, het idee dat die mogen ook kwetsbaar zijn, die mogen ook zeggen, ja eigenlijk wil ik best wel een vrouw.

G: Ja en denk je dat dat hier ook enigszins naar voren komt?

Emma: Nee.

[er wordt gelachen]

Translation

Claire: But we say one thing and we think another thing. I think I have the same problem, I always say I can do what I want, I can have a career if I want and what I want. But also in my family, they always say, when is the wedding, when will you have children, and that is, yes, I think that is very difficult, and I think that that is a problem of women these days, yes, the... how do you say that?

G: Yes, the role, the changing role

Claire: Yes, the role, you can be anything or nothing, but it is difficult to find a balance.

Marijke: Yes, apparently men also find it difficult that they don't know what to expect from a woman, and that is why an article like this is published because it discusses what kind... what women actually want and what makes them tick.

G: And what they want themselves?

Emma: And what do men want?

G: Yes, exactly that is what I mean.

Emma: Do they want a whore or a mother?

G: A whore and a madonna.

Claire: Yes, a whore for in the bedroom and a mother in

Marijke: [laughs] Yes, in the living room

[*Talking and laughing. Someone says*]:

In the kitchen

G: Yes, indeed. Do you think there's an element of jealousy? That the woman

Claire: Can have everything.

G: ...forms a threat? The man has lost his position as the one who achieves success; male identity is [seen as] achieving success.

Claire: That is the feminist idea. I also talked about that with my French lecturer. She says that since the beginning of time men have a problem because women can have children and men can't. That's why they have 'repressed?

Marijke: Oppressed.

Claire: Oppressed... and eh... women now can have a career and a house and a job and they can live on their own if they want. Yes, we can do anything we want and that is a big problem for men and they don't know what they want and they have to think...

Marijke: But you could say that of this article... especially the emphasis on the career woman who has got it all wrong [in her private life] is a protection of... eh... this has always been our [domain] to have a career, to achieve, and now women do it as well, but look at them, they go to pieces, so to protect that a bit as well, yes, this is also ours... because even though they can do it, they can't do it as well as we can.

G: Yes, so what can we if we compare that for instance with Liesbeth Wietze's article 'the man as dinosaur', men have lost their position in society, they have become sad creatures... it was an extreme view... she presented it in a very extreme way because it was intended to be polemical, but do you perhaps recognise something that there is a phenomenon in society, or no not a phenomenon the way he describes it about aggressive women, but a phenomenon that men, and women as well, are confused, don't know exactly... are looking for new ways...

Emma: Well, I don't know, it is very difficult, but I am not confused, as a woman, I have no problem with the fact that I want a career and possibly children, and be married

Marijke: But do you think that you will manage it, if you want all of that?

Emma: I don't know, and if I won't manage it, then that would be fine too.

Claire: But I also think that the woman can't accept the fact that it is ok not to have a man.

Emma: Women can't accept that?

Claire: No, society... people, yes, women, I think that... maybe it is... it is silly, because I know that I can function normally without a man...

Marijke: Yes...

Clair: Yes, maybe there is a kind of idea and

Marijke: But there is still a remnant of that very traditional... that you still have the idea that you need a man and also when you look at 'Ally McBeal' and those TV series... you are waiting for them to finally get a boyfriend?

Emma: But, is it also not the case that there is a new concept for men that they need a woman for eh eh [she says in English] 'companionship'?

Iemand zegt: Gezelschap.

Emma: Companionship, because people as beings, I don't think they are meant to be on their own, man or woman, it doesn't matter. Maybe it is then for men, they need to get their head...

Claire: Get their head around it.

Emma: Yes, the idea that they can be vulnerable as well, that they can also say: Actually, I would quite like to have a woman [female partner, GQ].

G: Yes, and do you think that this comes across in any way in the text?

Emma: No.

[Laughter]

The classroom exchange above occurred at the point in the lesson straight after I had guided students through the different representations of women in the article. I had wanted them to consider how these different and conflicting representations, i.e. women as 'aggressive hunters of men', as 'excessive life-

style consumers,' and as 'mothers,' created a different layer to the text. Claire answered by relating these different representations to her own life and suggesting that women may think or say they have the freedom to be what and who they like to be, but that in reality they are under pressure to conform. So she implied that whilst women might think they have all they want, they are nevertheless strongly influenced by expectations of society, that is to say the discourses which are enacted by their friends and family. It is difficult to gain a balance between those discourses, she seemed to say. Claire was thus reflexive in her answer.

Marijke then made an explicit link with the article suggesting that men clearly find it difficult to balance these various changing expectations women themselves and society have. Emma then turns the discussion towards men: they don't know what they want: a whore or a mother. She elegantly (and perhaps unwittingly) brings two discourses in the article together; that of the sexual representation of women in one of the early representations in the article and the end of the article, which could indeed be termed the madonna-discourse: the traditional mother.

The discussion amongst the students then becomes political: (suppression of women throughout history), and psychological (envy of women's reproduction abilities) before it turns personal again about whether students themselves think they can combine the different roles of being a career woman with that of being a mother. Finally, Emma talks about relationships between men and women.

At this stage in the lesson, students were not any longer trying to make sense of the text. They had made the text their own and were collaboratively creating meaning, in trying to relate the text to their own reality and their own experiences. As I said, my initial feeling during this exchange in the lesson itself was that they were almost 'hijacking' the text. Cooke and Wallace refer to this as 'talking around a text' when a text carries '*too much* meaning in a personal experiential way' for the students to maintain the required distance to stay 'on task'. Students wish to 'make meaning in different ways' than the questions asked by the teacher (2004: 109). But looking at the data, students are doing more than merely talking around the text. They are discussing the issues which arose from the text as a critique of society and highlighting the power differentials that women still face. The style of meta communication had indeed changed from analytical talk of standing outside the text to a dialogue and collaborative style of talking, referring to personal experiences, as well as discourses in society. In fact, students are even quite explicitly referring to the issue of discourses. Claire calls it *een soort idee* (a kind of idea), which Marijke specifies as *een soort restant van dat hele traditionele...* (a remnant of the very traditional...). In this discussion, then, students are using the insights gained through the text analysis, taking these further in a discussion using both the ideas that were gained through the classroom activity of the text analysis, relating these to their own experiences, before applying these ideas which had been gained through

a more personalised discussion, back to the text. This way they were seeing the text as *cultuurtekst*, in terms of its conflicting and multiple discourses: the expectations of being successful and independent versus the expectations to be married and have children, which Claire highlighted as being part of everyday reality for women. They also saw the conflicting discourses of ‘the whore and the madonna’, as Emma phrased the expectations of men towards women, which indeed highlighted the way the article had represented women.

By using the dialogic space students collaborated to engage in both discursive mapping, and in discussing how they themselves were affected by these expectations and discourses in society. Students were engaging through ‘*languageing*’ (cf. Phipps and Gonzalez, 2004), or ‘*dialoguing*’, as I call it, using the article as a starting point, but then conversely relating their discussion again to the article. They referred to a range of personal experiences to engage with the text, from giving examples of their own experience, to relating the discussion to other academic discussions (e.g. Claire referring to a literature class in French), and students talking about their expectations for their own future.

The personal here helped to engage students and make them see the cultural and social significance of the article. Marijke particularly brings the discussion back to the article. She also queries Emma in her confident statement that she will have no problems integrating being a woman with having a career. She makes it personal and at the same time queries underlying assumptions, both in the text, but also in the attitude of the students themselves.

By standing both inside and outside the text and through dialoguing, students were able to use the personal to be intercultural. They were intercultural at a generic level: recognising the cultural values embedded in the text and the complexity of society of which this text is a product. However, the lesson also addressed being intercultural at a more specific level and local level. I conceived of this as Dutch discourses, and I turn to this next.

Dutch Articulations

Even though the topic discussed was transcultural, and certainly not specifically Dutch, as mentioned, I felt this particular texts showed what I called Dutch articulations in the text. Students had indeed recognised the global, or at least western, relevance of the text and made intertextual references to American and English soaps and films. I asked students whether they felt that this issue would have been written about in a similar way in an English magazine aimed at men. As I describe in more detail in chapter 4, my own interpretation had been that the extreme traditional positioning of women as needing to find fulfilment through motherhood, would not have been acceptable in an English publication, not even in a men’s one. This discourse was made more acceptable by another discourse which also carried a Dutch flavour: that of therapy and

self development, which, I thought, would equally have been out of place in an English magazine aimed at men.

In the fragment below I am trying to bring this discussion into the foreground. The exchange student, Marijke, responded as I had expected, saying that this kind of discourse certainly does not surprise her, but the regular students of the class did not seem to want to pursue this line of analysis. As in the previous set of data, they 'talked around the text' and focused on the difference in conventions in how people talk about relationships: what can you say and what not? The students are relating it to previous knowledge and experience gained when living in the Netherlands. Marijke took on the role of 'learner' about English culture. The discussion which I had hoped to kick-start on whether there was Dutch articulation to some of the discourses employed, became a content-oriented one, based on personal experience, or at least what they had inferred and observed about differences in relationships in England and the Netherlands:

Claire: Ja, maar ik moet zeggen ik heb in MH in Engeland gekijkt wanneer ik was in Waterstone's en MH in Engeland is niks te doen, of er is een klein artikel over seks maar al andere artikelen zijn over sport en health hoe je kan een betere sixpack hebben.

G: Ja, wasbord dus.

Marijke: [lacht]

Claire: Ja, en een betere... 'deze schoenen voor voetbal'.

G: Niets over relaties.

Claire: Nee, niets over relaties.

[...]

Marijke: Maar denk... dan wat je ook zei dat over MH dat het alleen maar over sport gaat, dat praten over relaties, dat dat niet helemaal kan, dat dat te open is?

Claire: In Engeland het kan niet ja, ik denk dat in Engeland je kan het niet publiceren in een Engelse mannelijke publicatie.

G: En dan met name het vrij serieuze over relaties en het therapeutische gedeelte...?

Claire: Nee, nee want ik denk dat in Engeland we praten niet over deze soort dingen, want ik denk mannen, maar ook vrouwen praten niet in dezelfde manier over seks.

Emma: Nee.

Claire: In Nederland is het heel... je hebt 6 mannen en 6 vrouwen die woont bij elkaar en misschien ik weet het niet, praat je over seks en dat soort dingen.

Marijke: [lacht]

Claire: Maar je praat over relaties.

Marijke: Ja, dat gaat.

Claire: Maar ik denk in Engeland ik praat niet met mijn vrienden over mijn relatie behalve dan in een meer generale manier.

Translation

Claire: Yes, but I have to say, when I was in Waterstone's I had a look, and in MH in England there is nothing, or just a small article about sex, and all other articles are about sport and health... how you can have a better 'sixpack'...

G: Yes, 'wasbord'.

Marijke: [laughs]

Claire: Yes, and a better these shoes for football.

G: Nothing about relationships.

Claire: No, nothing about relationships.

[...]

Marijke: But do you think, that what you said, that MH is only about sport, that talking about relationships that it is not possible/acceptable, that it is too open?

Claire: In England you can't do it, yes, I think that in England you can't publish it in an English publication for men.

G: And then particularly the fairly serious tone about relationships, that therapeutic part?

Claire: No, because I think in England we don't talk about these kind of things, because I think men, but also women, don't talk in the same way about sex.

Emma: No.

Claire: In the Netherlands it is very... you have 6 men and 6 women who live together and maybe, I don't know, you talk about sex and that kind of thing...

Marijke: [laughs]

Claire: But you talk about relationships.

Marijke: Yes, that is...

Claire: But I think in England I don't talk with my friends about my relationship except in a more general way.

Claire had taken an intercultural stance by looking at an English version of *Men's Health* for comparison. Her analysis, that it did not contain anything about relationships, was taken further by Marijke. She was interested to what degree you could infer whether there is more of a taboo on talking about relationships in England than in the Netherlands. The exchange is perhaps a little essentialist in its focus and conducted at a very general level, but I had encouraged that by my initial questioning about 'Dutchness'. Whilst the dialogue was not leading to discourses in Dutch society regarding women, that I had scaffolded the discussion towards, the dialogue was nevertheless intercultural. An interesting side effect was that the intercultural dialogue was taking place in both directions: the statements about English society made by Claire, led Marijke to ask further questions. Interesting is that the English students were more confident in their observations about cultural difference. Marijke did not focus on cultural differences, and in her interview she said she had no idea what 'Dutch values' were, as she, as a native speaker, had never thought about it in those terms.

The students may have taken on an intercultural stance in the sense that they were thinking about the issue of the wider cultural context in the Netherlands and Britain, but they were not extending this to continuing the position of critique of discourses. Nevertheless, the students were reflecting; Claire used both the evidence of what she had inferred from the article, and something which Marijke had said earlier on in the discussion and then related it to her own experience. On the other hand, the discussion did not rise above the level of stereotypes, and students were not aware of the fact that they were colluding in stereotypes.

I then aim to bring the discussion back from the 'talk around the text' to the pedagogical task at hand, i.e. looking at the underpinning values in the text and whether these could be said to constitute a Dutch articulation. I want to find out from Marijke whether she feels the underpinning values in the text are in any way 'recognisable' to her:

G: [question directed at Marijke] Wat vind jij, heb je het gevoel dat... komt dit op jou vrij herkenbaar over, dat je deze waarden in een tijdschrift hebt of vind je dat ook vreemd, als je tenminste in ogenschouw neemt dat dit tijdschrift op mannen is gericht?

Marijke: Ik vind het niet vreemd dat ze iets zoals dit publiceren. Ik heb niet het idee dat dit heel erg buiten de toon valt van wat er verder in Nederland te lezen is, nee.

Claire: Dit is een normaal artikel in MH in Nederland.

Marijke: Ja, niet dat ik MH lees, maar... [lacht]

[...]

Eve: Er is veel meer vrijheid in Nederland om te schrijven wat jij bedoelen wat jou mening is, veel Nederlanders geven hun mening zoveel makkelijker aan dan Engelse mensen. Het is meer sociaal acceptabeler om te zeggen wat je voelen over hoe het dan is, want dat is jouw mening.

Claire: Je hoeft niet te vragen over hun mening want ze zegt het...

[door elkaar praten]

Emma: Maar dat [Nederlandse, GQ] mannen makkelijker over gevoelens praten of makkelijker dan Engelse mannen over gevoelens praten, dat kan ik je wel vertellen. 't Is echt tanden trekken soms.

[...]

[door elkaar praten]

Claire: ...over seks ik denk dat seks is niet zo problematisch en een soort idee. In Nederland er is meer sex education op school, je bent jonger, 't is meer...

Emma: Het is gewoon in Nederland.

Claire: 't Is normaal, het is topical.

Eve: De Engelsen vinden het zo moeilijk om over seks te praten.

G: Actueel.

Claire: Ja, actueel en in Engeland het is taboe.

Emma: Het is alledaags bijna in Nederland, niet dat iedereen de hele dag over seks praat, maar...

[door elkaar praten]

G: ...maar hier in deze tijdschriften kom je dat toch ook tegen in Engeland, in Cosmopolitan heb je toch ook een heleboel seks.

Emma: Ja, maar dat is...

Claire: Dat is niet...

Eve and Emma: Dat is voor vrouwen...

Claire: Ook het is over goede seks...

Emma: Ja, maar dat is ook echt niet...

[...]

Claire: Ze zegt dat seks is niet altijd perfect en het gaat niet altijd goed en dat in relaties zijn er momenten dat je hebt problemen, maar in Engeland is het altijd, ja je moet, hoe zeg je 'orgasm' in het Nederlands?

Emma: Orgasme.

Eve: Het is elke keer, ja je moet een multiple orgasm...

Claire: Ja, precies.

[lachen en door elkaar praten]

Emma: [onverstaanbaar]... seksueel

Claire: Ja, ze moeten over seks praten in een soort closed of, ja, het is een soort perfect idee, ja en je praat over dit perfecte idee, maar het is alleen maar...

Eve: Alleen maar de 'beautiful people'.

Claire: Ja, en je bent niet in hetzelfde soort...

Marijke: Het is niet persoonlijk?

Claire: Ja precies, het is een soort ideaal.

Translation

G: [question directed at Marijke] What do you think? Do you have the feeling that... does this come across as fairly recognisable... that you find these values in a magazine, or do you find that strange as well, considering this magazine is aimed at men?

Marijke: I don't find it unusual that they publish something like this. I don't think this is very different from other things you can read in the Netherlands. No.

Claire: This is a normal article in *Men's Health* in the Netherlands.

Marijke: Yes, well not that I read *Men's Health*, but...

[...]

Eve: There is more freedom in the Netherlands to write what you think, what your opinion is, so many Dutch people give their opinion so much easier than English people, it is more socially acceptable to say what you feel, to say how it is because that is your opinion.

Claire: You don't have to ask their opinion, because they say it.

[Students all talk at once]

Emma: But [Dutch, GQ] men talk more easily about their own feelings than English men talk about their feelings, that much I can tell you. Sometimes you really have to pull it out of them.

[Students all talk at once]

Claire: ...about sex I think that sex is not so problematic and a kind of idea in the Netherlands, there is more sex education at school. You are younger, it is more...

Emma: It is normal in the Netherlands.

Eve: The English find it so difficult to talk about sex.

Claire: ...and in England it is taboo.

Emma: It is almost everyday in the Netherlands, not that everyone talks about sex all day, but...

G: But in the magazines here in England, in *Cosmopolitan* there is also a lot of sex.

Emma: Yes, but that is not...

Claire: that is not...

Eve and Emma: That is for women...

Claire: And it is about good sex...

Emma: Yes, but that is not really...

[...]

Claire: She says that sex is not always perfect and it doesn't always go well, and that there are moments in relationships that you have problems, but in England, it is always, yes, you have got to... how do you say 'orgasm' in Dutch?

Emma: 'Orgasme'.

Eve: It is everytime, yes, you must [have] a multiple orgasm...

Claire: Yes, exactly.

[Laughter and everyone talks at same time]

Emma: Yes, it is very extreme... [not audible]

Eve: [not audible] Sexual.

Claire: Yes, they have to talk about sex in a kind of closed, or yes, it is a kind of idea about perfection, yes, and you talk about this 'perfect-idea', but it is only...

Eve: Only beautiful people.

Claire: And you are not in the same [league?]

Marijke: It is not personal?

Claire: Yes exactly, it is a kind of ideal.

Marijke indeed feels the values reflected in the article are similar to those in other publications in the Netherlands, which might suggest there may be a Dutch articulation to some aspects of the text. My question was aimed at discourses in the media, and Marijke's answer does indeed focus on this. However, the students did not follow up on the representations in the media, but instead continued the theme of attitudes of 'openness' in attitudes and communication, which the discussion around the text had thrown up for them. In comparing these attitudes between the Netherlands and England, students followed essentialist notions of national cultures. Eve's general observation that Dutch people have a direct style of communication is applied by Emma to different communicative behaviours between English and Dutch men when it comes to talking about feelings. She seems to make use of her own personal experiences by emphasising: 'that much I can tell you.'

From that point the discussion starts to focus on sex, but Claire relates this to her cultural knowledge of the Netherlands. She suggests that because there is sex education at schools, it is easier for people to talk about sex. However, rather than just making an observation, using her cognitive schemata, she touches on a more complex point; she says that talking about sex is 'a kind of idea' (*een soort idee*). Claire seems to suggest that because sex is talked about from a younger age at school, it becomes part of culture, almost like a discourse. The other students do not pursue the more complex point Claire is making, but they confirm the fact that talking about sex is just more common in the Netherlands.

When Eve focuses on the comparative element ('the English find it so difficult to talk about sex') both Emma and Claire confirm this, but I feel that the students are colluding in a stereotype. I want them to query this further and I counter their comments by stating that there is a lot of talk about sex in English magazines as well. This leads students to consider the way Dutch magazines write about sex compared to English publications, such as *Cosmopolitan*. It is Claire again who considers these differences and she suggests that Dutch magazines will write about sex in the context of relationships and that they would also focus on the fact that sex is not always perfect. English magazines (i.e. *Cosmopolitan*), on the other hand, write in a 'closed way' about sex, as if sex should be perfect all the time; it is not about personal experiences, but an 'ideal' to live up to (Eve: 'multiple orgasms'). Again Claire comes close to suggesting that there are different discourses surrounding sex, i.e. conventions in talking about sex and the assumptions and expectations which surround it. Also interestingly, Claire focused again

on the pressure that glossy magazines exert to conform to the image of an 'idealised' lifestyle, which Claire mentioned a few times in relation to the article in *Men's Health*.

Whilst I had wanted to focus on Dutch articulation and discourses in the *Men's Health* text, students changed that focus to a comparative one, looking at the differences in the Netherlands and England in communicative styles in the way people talk about feelings and about sex. Whilst partly I felt students were colluding in stereotypes, they also, Claire in particular, attempted to relate both their personal experience and their cognitive and lifeworld knowledge to reflect on these differences.

I felt slightly uncomfortable about discussing issues comparatively, as this so easily leads to an unproblematic confirming of national stereotypes. Of course, I had encouraged the comparative stance in trying to make students consider the idea of a Dutch articulation, but articulation focuses on discourses, rather than on the 'facts' of people's behaviour, which is how the discussion was developing. On the other hand, students were reflecting on their own experiences when they had been in the Netherlands during their residency abroad. Whilst I think students were in danger of over-essentialising their experiences, Claire points towards a way in which topics like these could be debated in a more constructive and intercultural way, with students reflecting critically on their own experiences. She hints at the fact that there are discourses, which she referred to as 'kinds of ideas', surrounding sex, which may differ from country to country (or indeed from social group to social group), because of historically developed attitudes, or indeed, as Claire suggests, because of the educational curriculum, which is a powerful conductor of values and discourses. Focusing on discourses rather than the 'facts' of people's behaviour, allows for a more comprehensive and problematised view of the notion of a possible national articulation.

In comparing the two different sets of data, i.e. the one where students were engaged critically in mapping discourses and were discussing these on a transcultural basis, the data set above relating to Dutch articulation in contrast reverted the topic onto a national level. These different data show the tension between these perspectives, transcultural and national, which I think are part and parcel of language teaching which takes into account the complexities of language and culture. Both sets of data showed students engaged in 'dialoguing' about issues which related to culture, language and clearly to students' own lives. The data also show the importance of collaboration in the meaning making process. The fact that one set of data showed students taking a more complex stance to the topic in hand, and a more essentialist approach in the second one, also shows that the context of discussion is important. This context was partly created by me by asking students to focus on Dutch articulation. But students themselves also created the context together. If one student introduced a different perspective, i.e. Eve in the last set of data introducing the notion of differences in communication styles between the English and Dutch, then others

were prepared to follow that line of conversation. In doing so, students showed responsibility and engagement towards one another in their discussions, as well as an intellectual curiosity towards new and other perspectives.

Conclusion

What emerges from the classroom data is that the personal experience and reflections of students, the collaborating and dialoguing together in class is as important as the analytical activity of looking at the text from the various perspectives encompassed in my framework. In the first lesson students took a greater distance towards the text, took on an outside position, and seemingly approached the task of discussion as a traditional pedagogic activity, where a 'correct' answer is expected. Generally speaking it was not until the second lesson, when we looked at the *cultuurtekst* perspective, when students started to take a more dialogic approach to the text, relating the text to their personal experiences, which in turn influenced their interpretation of the text.

Over the two lessons, the discussion in class became more 'dialogic' as the lessons progressed, both in relation to the text - students engaged with the text at various levels, but also in terms of class discussion - students initially answered my questions directly to me, but soon started to respond to one another and collaborated (or clashed with one another on a couple of occasions) in interpreting the text. On the whole, it could be said that students' understanding of the text gradually moved from the level of text as product, to text as *cultuurtekst*, recognising underlying values. However, this was not a neat and linear progress. There were significant learning moments, but students' understanding of the discourses in the text remained frequently at an implicit level. At times, it also felt that students had negated their earlier understanding of the text. Students used a variety of approaches to interpret the text and these approaches also differed from student to student.

There were occasions where the students were intercultural in their attempts to understand the text from the inside, i.e. engaging with the cultural meaning of the text in relation to their own lived experiences. They also tried to understand and critique the values contained in the text. In that sense students were ethnographic and engaging. However, students did not reflect on their own interpretation of the text, so as such they did not make their own reality 'strange'. This was not surprising, as I had not invited students to be reflexive. I only conceptualised the notion of text ethnography and its reflexive aspect as a result of this data analysis. Students did, however, take a position of critique as they reflected on the ideological underpinnings of the text and its representation of normalising the discourse of women being soft, gentle, caring and dependent.

Interestingly, the deeper insights by students occurred when they moved away from the exercise of text analysis and made the discussion their own.

The 'talking around the text' became the most dialogic, insightful and even academic discussions of the two lessons, where students recognised the power structures that regulate women's personal life choices in terms of career and motherhood.

Whilst in the first lesson, students conceived of the discussions at the 'text level' as a more traditional learning task, responding to questions and tasks, in the second lessons students created their own dialogic space in which they collaborated to talk around the text, which at times also took on elements of discursive mapping. Students moved from particular interpretations and readings to other ones, even if these seemed to be conflicting. In doing so they created their own changing, what I call, 'context of discussion', a shared experience of learners engaging in the task of making sense of a text, mapping discourses and relating it to their own experiences. Students' readiness to engage in different interpretations or articulations showed their responsibility to one another in the classroom discussions. The dialogic space in the classroom gives rise to a fluidity of the 'context of discussion', opening up opportunities for sharing experiences, for expressing thought in a continuing shifting exchange of ideas, emotions and experiences.

The notion of Dutch articulation did not lead to any insights or, even considered discussions. The Dutch student, Marijke, did acknowledge that the discourses in the text were recognisable in terms of what was published in the Netherlands, but this point was not taken up further by anyone. I think in retrospect, the notion of articulation would need to be developed further as it is at a very subtle level that this takes place. The evidence from the classroom discussion suggests that the idea of a national articulation leads to uncritical comparisons and feeds into confirming stereotypes. However, one student did introduce an interesting notion, by implying that ways of talking about a topic, such as sex, can be nationally articulated to a degree, depending on to what degree it is included and how it is talked about in education.

Nevertheless, I believe the tendency to confirm stereotypes shows how careful we need to be in focusing on national patterns. Even if there may be a Dutch articulation in texts, or indeed discourses, this is only a particular tendency at a particular time and in a particular environment. Such an articulation is only one of various other articulations and of other discourses. Since students had difficulty making sense of the multiple discourses, or voices in the text, and had a tendency to interpret the text only in the light of one of these, focusing on a 'national' articulation carries with it the risks of confirming or creating new stereotypes which should probably not be tackled until students have a fuller and more balanced understanding of the complexities of national identity.

Notes

- ¹ 'Designer clothes, roof garden, nice trendy car under their cellulite-free trained buttocks, make-up of Clarins and Roc, a fridge full of salmon and champagne and of course that job with challenging prospects...'