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# Expressing Otherness in Interreligious Classroom Communication. Empirical Research into Dialogical Communication in Religiously Pluriform Learning Situations in Catholic Primary Schools

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Received 10 December 2007; accepted 27 March 2008

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## Abstract

This qualitative research investigates the degree in which pupils, who belong to different religions, express their religious otherness in dialogical communication, the degree in which teachers offer them room to do so and the views on religious pluralism that teachers use to this end. Otherness refers to the relation of the I with himself and with the other. The expressions of otherness of both teachers and pupils in nine lessons on interreligious communication were analysed by means of the Taxonomy of Verbal Response Modes, an instrument to describe interactions between people as conveyed in language. In addition interviews were used to investigate which views on religious pluralism the teachers use in interreligious communication. The main conclusion of the research is that both teachers and pupils do express otherness in interreligious communication, be it to a limited extent. The teachers and pupils that participated in the research appeared to feel a certain shyness to express otherness. This shyness can perhaps be explained by the educational context in which the interreligious communication took place. It is characterized by forces that wish to impose limitations to otherness in order to guarantee a maximum of comprehension and by the concept of religion that teachers use, which focuses on expressing similarities between religions rather than on expressing religious otherness.

## Keywords

interreligious communication, interreligious dialogue, otherness, religious pluralism, interaction, utterance.

## 1. Introduction

In this article we report on a research into interreligious communication in catholic primary schools in the Netherlands. Interreligious learning takes place by means of this communication. The purpose of interreligious learning can be described as bringing about a dialogue between pupils that belong to different religions. At the centre of this dialogue is that pupils express the meanings of religions, i.e. their religious otherness. Otherness is a relational term which refers to the identity (or distinctiveness) of a person or collective. What I associate with 'myself' is my otherness from the perspective of the other and what the other associates with himself is the otherness of the other from my perspective. We use the term otherness in order to stress the uniqueness of a personal or collective identity, or, to put it differently, to prevent reduction of identity to sameness. The other is a self who can (in freedom) decide what to do, think, feel, long for, et cetera. Without the self, the identity of persons or social groups is reduced to objects (Ricoeur, 1992). In interreligious communication the religious otherness of pupils can be expressed at two levels: at the level of the public stature of religion and at the level of the personal appropriation of religion. The public representation of religions refers to an institutional manifestation of religion, with the correct interpretation of a religious tradition being based on the power of religious authorities. Personal appropriation is the meaning which individual people attribute to elements of a religion. This research focuses on the expression of this personal meaning of religion.

Little research has been conducted into the expression of otherness in interreligious classroom communication. The expression of otherness in interreligious communication affects interreligious learning. After all, it is a matter of (at least the possibility of) learning if one becomes acquainted with something new, which means something unfamiliar. In this article we zoom in at the level of the personal appropriation of religion, because it is in this instance where the strangeness of the otherness of the religious other is strongest. After all, one may have become acquainted with the public manifestation of a religion at an earlier stage, for instance through the media. The otherness as the personal meaning of religion is generally unknown, unless one has already met the other before.

Do teachers stimulate pupils to express their religious otherness at the level of the personal appropriation? If so, which teachers do? The expression of the otherness of pupils from different religions assumes a concept of religion with room for otherness and where the otherness also contributes to the development of the personal identity of pupils. Teachers who do not offer room to otherness and who do not stimulate the expression of otherness, do not get a

learning process going, either. Research shows that teachers usually do not ask pupils to express their own otherness (Lockhorst, Van Oers & Wubbels, 2006). Teachers like to control the learning process, both as far as the contents of the learning process is concerned and the way in which it takes shape. The otherness of the religious other makes teachers feel insecure. Many teachers reduce this insecurity by projecting their wish for security on the pupils.

To obtain more insight into the expression of the otherness of pupils from different religions at the level of the personal appropriation in interreligious classroom communication, we have studied the degree in which pupils express their own religious otherness as an utterance of the perspective of themselves. And what do teachers do in the communication preceding and following the pupils' expression of otherness? Do they help pupils exploring their otherness or do they ignore expressions of otherness? These questions were studied empirically during nine lessons in interreligious learning of pupils who were 10-12 years old. We videotaped the nine lessons in interreligious communication. We wrote out all communication during these nine lessons, after which we analyzed the transcripts of the lessons.

We also investigated the views of teachers on religious pluralism and the relation between religions. Many teachers have a certain ignorance of religion. Research shows that teachers who are unfamiliar with religion, experience more difficulty with discussing the personal appropriation of religions than the public meanings of these religions (Hermans, 2003b). In the latter case a teacher can always fall back on the institutionally defined meanings of a religious tradition. To investigate teachers' views on religious pluralism and on the relation between religions we interviewed the teachers who taught the lessons. Due to the explorative character of our research, we have restricted ourselves to an empirical description of the expression of otherness and of the views that teachers have regarding religious pluralism and the relation between religions. We did not investigate whether or not or how there is a connection between the room teachers allow for otherness in their views and in the communication.

What is the structure of this article? In paragraph two we further examine the otherness of a person. Paragraph three focuses on the meaning of otherness in dialogical communication. In paragraph four we explain the significance of otherness in interreligious dialogical communication. Paragraph five contains the report of the empirical part of the research. In paragraph six we present the results of our analyses. We end this article in paragraph seven with the formulation of some conclusions and subjects for debate.

## **2. Otherness and the Dialogical Self**

In this paragraph we explain what we mean by a person's otherness, using a relational view of person to that end. We derive this view from Michael Bakhtin (1895-1975).

According to Bakhtin people do not exist apart from other people: being is always co-being (Holquist, 1997, p. 25). One way or another every person is related to one (or several) other person(s). The dialogical character of this relation means that in front of the self is not a 'voiceless thing', but another self with his/her own voice (Todorov, 1995, p. 18). The fact that life is always a life with others not only refers to the relation between me and the other, I can also be an other to myself. Concepts such as 'being', 'self', 'I' or 'other' often used in literature to indicate a person's identity, are no absolute or isolated concepts according to Bakhtin, but relative or dialogical concepts (Voloshinov, in: Morris, 1994, p. 45). So there is not just a (dialogical) relation between individuals; an individual also has a (dialogical) relation with himself/herself.

Hubert Hermans (1993, 2002) describes the way in which we can picture this relation by using the metaphor that a person can take several, even opposite, positions in relation to a situation, event, or even another person. For instance, I can admire someone for his courage, yet at the same time condemn his actions which have evoked in me this feeling of admiration. These positions often behave as each other's opponents. As position and counter position these terms express a spatial structure which is characterized by a certain tension. This field of tension can take various forms, for instance the form of a contrast, or of a collision, and even the form of an agreement. When I attribute a different appreciation to different positions, I can relate to these positions in a particular way. Within this framework Hermans also uses the term I-positions. I can get I-positions into conversation with each other. In this conversation the I-positions have the chance to let their own voice be heard and to tell their own story. The dialogical relations that are created between positions this way can take various forms, for instance the form of a construction of questions and answers, a debate, a meeting or a negotiation.

In Hermans' theory the dialogical self is a many-voiced self. The voices of the different positions not only belong to me, but also to others. These others can be people who are part of my current environment, but they can also be people from my past or even future people. I can hear the voice of my dead father or mother in me, or a former teacher or my present partner. I can also anticipate future conversations, for example when I am on my way to a job interview, or when I am about to have a 'bad news' talk with a pupil I have supervised. Within myself the positions of, for instance, my father (other) and my partner (other) can start a dialogue with one another. It is also possible,

though, that the position of one other starts a dialogue with one of my own positions. I can then use the result of the dialogue that has taken place inside of me, in the communication between me and others.

According to the theory of the dialogical self the other is not just outside myself, but is also part of me. The other is not someone who is first defined as an individual person and subsequently starts a relation with me. The other, as an I-position, is an intrinsic part of me, as I hold one or several I-positions in the other in an intrinsic way. As I-position the other cannot be dissolved from the self.

Summing up we argue that the term otherness refers to the I-positions of a person. I-position is a relational term indicating that the I (I) relates to the self (me). In this relation the other, the 'not-I-in-me' can also assume an I-position in the (virtual) space of my mind (Holquist, 1997, p. 29).

### **3. Otherness in Dialogical Communication**

In this paragraph we further examine the significance of otherness in dialogical communication. Otherness can be expressed in dialogical communication. We distinguish between expressing the personal otherness of the speaker and the expression of the otherness of the other. We use the term dialogical communication to indicate that the expression of otherness, be it one's personal otherness or that of the other, always happens in relation to the other, which can be someone outside myself or the other within myself. The concept 'dialogical communication' can therefore relate both to the communication which an individual has with himself/herself and to the communication which a person has with other people. We have not investigated the first form of dialogical communication. In this article we restrict ourselves to the dialogical communication between people.

In paragraph two we said that every person is related to other people. This being related means that the other is not just outside myself, but is also intrinsically connected with me. Based on this dialogical principle, every expression of otherness by a person is related in a similar intrinsic way to the expression of otherness by another person. Every expression of otherness is a reaction to an earlier expression of otherness. As a result, every expression of otherness is conditioned by its preceding expression of otherness and in turn the preceding expression of otherness is qualified by the current expression. Together current and preceding expression determine the nature and structure of the communication (Voloshinov, 1973). The type of communication that arises when a person (as dialogical self) expresses otherness in relation to the expression of otherness by another person (as dialogical self), we refer to as dialogical

communication. In dialogical communication one always addresses someone else, who does not assume a purely passive role in the communication (Bakhtin, 1986). The other, as interlocutor, participates in the expression of otherness. In dialogical communication the other and I not only adopt the role of speaker in turn; a speaker always reacts to the former speaker and at the same time anticipates the reaction to come. So the expression of otherness is not just a matter for the speaker alone, but the result of the interaction between speaker and other.

From the speaker's point of view, the expression of otherness exists in two possible relations: as an expression of the speaker's own otherness, for instance: "I think Christmas is a merry feast", and as an expression of the otherness of the other, for instance: "So you think Christmas is a merry feast". In the first example the speaker says something about the way in which the speaker *himself* experiences Christmas. In the second example the speaker says something about the way in which the *other* experiences Christmas. In dialogical communication there are two moments when, analogous to this, the speaker is confronted with the otherness of the other: 1) when the other expresses his own otherness, and 2) when a speaker expresses the otherness of the other.

The second case raises the question how much room the speaker's expression of the other, offers the other's otherness. A speaker offers a lot of room to the other's otherness when the speaker tries to express the other's otherness as the other sees it. Contrary to this, a speaker offers little room to the other's otherness when the speaker expresses the other's otherness as the speaker sees it. In the first instance there is a possibility to get to know the other; in the second instance there is a fair chance that the other will be misunderstood or not be understood at all.

Otherness is an important aspect of dialogical communication. Indeed, without otherness dialogical communication would not be possible. According to Bakhtin it is always a case of otherness. Because of the fact that the other is an other to me and that I am an other to the other, it is impossible to completely lose myself in the other and it is impossible for the other to completely lose himself in me. To clarify this view, Bakhtin uses 'the law of placement' (Holquist, 1997, p. 21). This law says that all observations occur from a defined unique position. Based on this law, I and the other can never make the same observation, even though we share the same room at the same time. In other words, even though I and the other are in the same (communicative) situation, I will still experience this situation differently from the other. My otherness and the other's otherness can never be reduced to nil. In dialogical communication, however, there can be more or less room for otherness. The amount of room depends on the degree in which a speaker expresses his/her own otherness and

the degree in which a speaker expresses the other's otherness as the other sees it. Obviously, it is also possible for a speaker to decide not to pursue the other's otherness. In that case the dialogical communication ceases to exist.

Summing up, we argue that dialogical communication exists in a speaker's expression of otherness in relation to the expression of otherness by an other. In dialogical communication between people, a speaker can express both his own otherness and the other's otherness. The degree in which a speaker expresses his own otherness as an expression of the perspective of himself and the degree in which the speaker expresses the other's otherness as an expression of the perspective of the other, there is room for otherness in dialogical communication.

#### **4. Otherness in Interreligious Dialogical Communication**

In this paragraph we further explore the meaning of otherness in interreligious dialogical communication. Previously, we argued that otherness is an important aspect of dialogical communication. In interreligious communication this otherness implies the relation of the religious other to a transcendental reality (God). God is Other-than-human, or, Totally Other. Religious people define themselves as being related to this Totally Other. Through different practices (such as the reading of holy scriptures, rituals, prayer, virtuous behaviour) they want to grow in their relationship toward God, and become a better, spiritually richer person (Ward, 2004). In order to avoid misunderstanding, we do not assume that God is mediated in or via interreligious communication. Religious people communicate (to a certain degree) about their relationship to God. This is precisely why the expression of otherness is highly relevant in interreligious communication from a theological point of view.

The question we want to answer in this paragraph, is whether someone can learn from the otherness of a religious other because of his or her relationship to God? Do we see this relationship distinct from the God to whom we are related in our tradition? Do we accept the fact that the religious other is related to God as Ultimate Reality? Or do we deny the truth of this relationship? The answer to this question has a strong impact on the way we respect the otherness of religious others in interreligious communication. How do we deal with religious pluralism? This paragraph describes three different views on religion based on their openness to religious pluralism: a canonical, a critical (liberal) and a global (pluralistic) view on religion (Ward, 2004). Within the latter we distinguish two subtypes: mutuality pluralism and acceptance pluralism (Knitter, 2002).

A canonical view on religion posits one reality of supreme value (God) in which human individuals may find proper fulfilment. This supreme value or reality is expressed in sacred texts that have absolute and final authority and distinguish the orthodox from the heretics. A canonical view on religion leads to orthodoxy, which is characterized by a systematic worldview and a consistent and codified set of moral principles. Religious traditions that hold such a view, 'find themselves competing for universal acceptance by all people as a revealed, final and absolute truth' (Ward, 2004, p. 221). Within this view on religion there is no room for religious pluralism.

A critical view on religion moves beyond the understanding of orthodoxy as an unchangeable norm for all beliefs and practices. It presses the question of the historical authenticity of religious traditions, the epistemological basis for their truth claims and their contribution to human fulfilment. From a critical view on religion, God is not seen as a supreme, sovereign divine will, working through church hierarchy (as in a canonical view on religion), but as a loving creator, encouraging the social participation of all people. Although a critical view on religion is associated with scientific knowledge and critical enquiry, it does not want to dissociate religion from factual belief, but from an authoritarian set of beliefs and their institutions (Ward, 2004). As a consequence, a critical view on religion permits a degree of pluralism *within* religions.

A global or pluralistic view on religion perceives all religions as parts of one global phenomenon of human religiosity. All human cultures have something to add to this global phenomenon of religiosity and what they say must be heard (Ward, 2004). Within this global view on religion we make a distinction between two different ways of adding to this global phenomenon of religiosity. The first way is the way of the Mutuality Model, the second way is the way of the Acceptance Model. We derive these two models from Paul Knitter (2002). As these models offer room for pluralism *between* different religions, which is important for the expression of the otherness of different religions in interreligious communication, we will explore these models a little more.

According to the Mutuality Model, no religion is the only source of God's salvation and the final word on what God intends for the world and for humanity. In a context of globalisation, the claim that God is fully and definitely revealed in only one religion, no longer stands. The adherents of this model believe that there is one God, or Ultimate Reality, that can be experienced in different ways in different religions. Each and every religion offers a different way to experience the 'one-and-only'. 'As the meaning of any word can be really understood only in a sentence — that is, in relation to other words — so the Word of God (...) can be understood only within all the sentences that make up the story of God's dealings with humanity' (Knitter, 2002,

p. 156). The critics of this model point to the fact that the model's concern to promote mutuality often leads to neglect, or even violate, diversity (Knitter, 2002). Firstly, they argue, there is always the possibility that there might be no common ground for different religions. And even when there is one, we cannot escape our historical situatedness. Every attempt to locate a universal centre of all religions, is an attempt from a particular place in history. In speaking universally for everyone, mutuality pluralists end up speaking individually for themselves (Knitter, 1995). Secondly, setting up a field of dialogue from a particular perspective, like that of 'modernity', is equally imperialistic. It imposes particular rules on how to communicate or about what does not have to be shared by all religions.

The Acceptance Model holds a cultural-linguistic view on religion. A cultural-linguistic view states that we first have to have external 'words' given to us by our culture before we can have internal words in our minds and in our hearts (Knitter, 2002, p. 180). The religious words we receive from our culture make and shape our religious identity. They are not only a means to express our religious identity; our religious identity is also determined by the words that are given to us. From this perspective it follows that different religions are incommensurable. It is impossible to understand one religion or one religious word or language by translating it into another religion or into another religious word or language. Religious words are true and understandable only within the given language system of a particular religion. Moreover, every religion offers a totally comprehensive framework in which everything fits: the world, itself and the source of it all. But this framework cannot be fit into another framework. This means that, when every religion offers a perspective that embraces everything and cannot be embraced by another, 'more embracing' perspective, no religion can be explained by another religion. The critics of this model point to the risks of isolation, relativism and fideism. If one insists on incommensurability, then every religious person is confined to his or her own religion (isolation). If the truth of each religion only makes sense within the language system of each religion, then, on the one hand, each religion is protected from the criticisms of others (relativism) and, on the other hand, the truth of each religion can only be explained to the adherents of that particular religion in the words of that same religion (fideism).

According to the Acceptance Model we have to accept the fact that religions are really different; religious otherness exists. The Mutuality Model wants to get beyond religious otherness. The Acceptance Model wants to live with religious otherness for ever. For the Mutuality Model the similarities that can be found in different religions are more important than the differences between religions. For the Acceptance Model religious differences are more important

than religious similarities. The Mutuality Model starts with diversity, in order to bring it to unity. For the Acceptance Model the otherness of other religions contains a divine surplus that is always more than we can ever know. '[It is] in the finite other that the Transcendent Otherness of God keeps entering our lives (...)' (Knitter, 2002, p. 221).

How does a pluralistic view on religion relate to Christian tradition? As globalisation is inevitable, Christian pluralist theologians, like Hick, Knitter, Pieris and Pannikar, (Hick & Knitter, 1989) have argued that it is time for Christianity to adequately respond to its challenges, for three reasons: 1) our growing awareness of the historical and cultural limitation of all knowledge and religious beliefs has led to the idea that it is impossible to judge the truth-claims of other religions on the basis of one's own, 2) our growing awareness of the infinity and the mystery of God, which goes beyond all forms of religious experience, exceeding every attempt to grasp it, forbids any one religion from having the only and final word, and 3) there are, throughout the world, so many people, in so many different cultures, with so many different religions, who are economically, politically and socially marginalised, that offering a solution to these problems can no longer be expected from one single religion. A preferential option for the poor and the oppressed constitutes the necessity of a dialogue with other religions. The Catholic Church council seems to be in full agreement with this. In official church statements of Vaticanum II, especially the 'Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions', the council affirms the universality of grace and salvation and states that even atheists, who follow their conscience, can partake in eternal life (*Lumen Gentium*, 16). But other passages as well, we believe, do support a Christian pluralistic view on religion, for instance the passage where the world religions are praised for the way they have answered 'those profound mysteries of the human condition'. Or when the council recognizes that the beliefs and practices of Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam contain what is 'true and holy' and 'reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men'. Moreover, the council 'exhorts' Christians '(...) through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, and in witness of Christian faith and life', to 'acknowledge, preserve, and promote the spiritual and moral goods found among these [followers of other religions]' (*Nostra Aetate*, 2. Translation: W. Abbott, 1966).

## **5. Description of the Research**

This paragraph describes the research questions (5.1), the research design and sample (5.2) and the measure (5.3), in that order.

## 5.1 *Research Questions*

Education is the context in which we have investigated the expression of the otherness of pupils from different religions on the level of the personal appropriation of religion. This context is dominated by forces that wish to impose limitations to otherness in order to guarantee a maximum of comprehension (Schön, 1983). This raises the question to what extent teachers offer room to otherness. Offering room to otherness in an educational context means that pupils (once the teacher has invited them to do so) express their own otherness as an utterance of their own perspective and that teachers express the otherness of pupils as an utterance of the perspective of the pupils (section 3). We can distinguish between the expression of the otherness of pupils preceding the utterances which the pupils use to express their own otherness and following these statements. We base this distinction on the proposition that every expression of otherness is a reaction to an earlier expression of otherness by another speaker (section 3). In a religiously pluriform learning situation pupils who belong to different religions express their own religious otherness as an utterance of the perspective of the religion they belong to and teachers express the religious otherness of pupils who belong to different religions from the perspective of these separate religions. The problem that arises in this situation is that many teachers have a certain ignorance of religion. A teacher who is unfamiliar with religion, will experience far more difficulty with discussing the otherness of pupils from different religions at the level of the personal appropriation than at the level of the public meanings (section 1). In the latter case a teacher can always fall back on the culturally well-defined meanings of a religious tradition. Discussing the religious otherness of pupils from different religions at the level of the personal appropriation assumes a view on religion that leaves room for the differences between religions. Do teachers hold such a view on religion?

Based on the above we formulate three research questions:

1. *To what degree do pupils express their own otherness as an utterance of their own perspective in interreligious communication?*
2. *To what degree do teachers express the otherness of pupils as an utterance of the perspective of the pupils, both preceding and following the utterances with which pupils express their own otherness as an utterance of their own perspective in interreligious communication?*
3. *Which views on the relations between religions do teachers use in interreligious communication?*

## 5.2 *Research Design and Sample*

The type of research we have conducted to answer these questions, can be described as an explorative and descriptive case study. All in all this case study consists of nine cases. Each case is about interaction between a teacher and his/her pupils. The teachers were selected on their experience with lessons in interreligious communication. We preferred classes where interreligious learning was common practice, because such an environment made it most likely that pupils had the opportunity to express themselves. The teachers had to be prepared (intentionally) to encourage interreligious learning of pupils by means of communication. The teachers were free in setting the teaching subject and the teaching structure, but the teaching subject had to be related to at least one other religion besides the teacher's religion. The pupils that participated in these lessons varied in age and were 10-12 years old. Based on the school data they had the following religious backgrounds: Catholic (57 %), Islamic (33 %), Hinduistic (2 %). The other pupils (8 %) were not religious.

Prior to each lesson we asked the teachers about their intentions with the lesson and about the reasons for the teaching structure and teaching contents. Next we videotaped each lesson. At the end of each lesson the teachers watched the video recording of their own lesson, indicating what was 'running through their mind' during the lesson. Then the teachers evaluated their own lesson based on their intentions with the lesson. The material of the video recordings (the communication between teachers and pupils) was written out and divided in teachers' utterances and pupils' utterances. Three different people (encoders) each fitted all utterances with a code, which were then categorised on the basis of this coding. Then all utterances were analyzed by means of SPSS. The interviews that had been taped were also written out and analyzed. We looked at what the teachers said in these interviews about the relations between religions and religious pluralism respectively.

## 5.3 *Measure*

This paragraph has been divided in three subparagraphs. In section 5.3.1 we introduce the measuring instrument that we have used to describe the expression of otherness (Taxonomy or Verbal Response Modes). In section 5.3.2 we describe the categories of utterances that are suitable for the expression of the personal otherness of the speaker as an utterance of the personal perspective of the speaker. In section 5.3.3 we describe the categories of utterances that are suitable for the expression of the otherness of the other as an utterance of the perspective of the other.

### 5.3.1 *Taxonomy of Verbal Response Modes*

Stiles (1992) developed the Taxonomy of Verbal Response Modes. We have chosen this instrument, because it is based on a relational approach to communication: it can be used to describe interactions between people as conveyed in language (p. 17).

Stiles distinguishes eight different manifestations of verbal interaction by distinguishing three principles: source of otherness, presumption about otherness and frame of reference. Every principle can either take the value 'speaker' or 'other'. Every utterance can be considered to concern either the speaker's or the other's otherness. Moreover, in making an utterance, the speaker may or may not make presumptions about the other's otherness. An utterance may or may not require that the speaker presumes to know what the other person thinks, feels, perceives or intends. Finally, in making an utterance, the speaker may represent the otherness either from his or her own personal viewpoint (speaker's frame of reference), or from a viewpoint that is shared or held in common with the other (other's frame of reference).

By combining these three principles, eight ( $2 \times 2 \times 2$ ) different categories of utterances are created; disclosures, edifications, advisements, confirmations, questions, acknowledgements, evaluations<sup>1</sup> and reflections. A disclosure is used to express the personal thoughts, feelings, wishes or intentions of the speaker, for instance: "I think that when you believe in God, you have to go the whole way of faith". An edification expresses the view of the speaker in the form of an actual statement, for example: "We do not celebrate Christmas at home". Someone who wants to give advice will indicate what the other should think or do according to him/her, for example: "Try and help Carli by explaining why you think Easter is important". Someone who expresses a confirmation, tries to compare his/her own otherness with the otherness of the other, for instance: "We believe the same thing, don't we?". Someone who asks a question, does so because he/she does not have the information he/she would like to have, for instance: "Would you also like to take part in the Ramadan?". By expressing an acknowledgement someone wants to show that he/she is receptive to the expression of otherness by the other, in which context one can think of 'meaningless' sounds, such as ehm, hmm etc. By expressing an evaluation someone imposes his/her evaluation on the other, for: "So you do believe in God!". Someone communicating in the form of a reflection tries to describe the otherness of the other as seen by the other. This is easily done by (almost)

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<sup>1</sup> Stiles uses the term interpretation for this category of utterances. In view of the cultural-theoretical approach of this article, this name could be confusing.

literally repeating what the other has said, or by rephrasing the otherness of the other, for instance: “During the Ramadan it is important to you to think of people who have little to eat.” Figure 1 offers a schematic overview of all categories and shows the way in which the three principles have been combined for each category.

In applying the instrument, each utterance is coded twice, once with respect to its grammatical form and once with respect to its communicative intent.<sup>2</sup> Grammatical form refers to the literal meaning of an utterance; communicative intent refers to the pragmatic meaning. The literal meaning of an utterance is based on the dictionary meaning of the words and on the standard meaning of the grammatical construction of the words. The pragmatic meaning of an utterance is what the speaker intends the utterance to mean on the occasion it is used. It refers to on-record meanings only, not to off-record meanings. In contrast to off-record meanings, on-record meanings are communicatively accessible meanings, at least for the other as an interlocutor. The utterance: “On 25 December we always go to church”, is, for instance, coded as a disclosure form in combination with an edification intent (DE). The utterance has a disclosure form, because the words and sentence structure indicate that it is an utterance which says something about the speaker himself/herself; the speaker uses the first person plural. The utterance is coded as an edification intent, because the words and the sentence structure indicate that the speaker expresses an utterance which can be falsified by the other; the speaker’s utterance is either right or wrong. If the speaker has an intention in mind other than making an actual statement, which remains hidden from the other (off-record meaning), it cannot be coded by means of the Taxonomy of Verbal Response Modes. Whenever we apply a disclosure or an edification code in this article, we refer to the communicative intent of the utterance. We do not refer to the grammatical form in which this utterance is presented. The example above is therefore an example of an edification. When we want to draw the reader’s attention to the grammatical form of an utterance, we will explicitly refer to it.

### 5.3.2 *Expressing the Otherness of the Speaker*

Which categories are best suited for expressing the personal otherness of the speaker as an utterance of the perspective of the speaker? When answering this question we use both the principles of the instrument and the distinction we have made between grammatical form and communicative intent (section 5.3.1).

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<sup>2</sup> The same categories are used for the form-mode as for the intent-mode. A disclosure-intent can for instance be phrased in the grammatical form of a disclosure, yet also in the grammatical form of an edification, an advisement, a confirmation etc.

**Figure 1: Schematic overview of the Taxonomy of Verbal Response Modes**

Source of otherness	Presumption about otherness	Frame of Reference	Category	Code
Speaker	Speaker	Speaker	Disclosure (reveals speaker's otherness)	D
Speaker	Speaker	Other	Edification (states collective otherness as fact)	E
Speaker	Other	Speaker	Advisement (guides other's otherness)	A
Speaker	Other	Other	Confirmation (compares speaker's and other's otherness)	C
Other	Speaker	Speaker	Question (requests information about other's otherness)	Q
Other	Speaker	Other	Acknowledgement (conveys receptiveness to other's otherness)	K
Other	Other	Speaker	Evaluation (explains or labels other's otherness)	I
Other	Other	Other	Reflection (rewords other's otherness)	R

Based on the three principles of the instrument, a *disclosure* is best suited for expressing the personal otherness of the speaker as an utterance of the perspective of the speaker, because the speaker expresses his/her personal otherness when uttering a disclosure, and at the same time expresses a presumption regarding this otherness and expresses this otherness by means of his/her own frame of reference. A second category of utterances of the personal otherness of a speaker from the perspective of the speaker is the category of the *edifications*. Someone who uses an edification, expresses, as is the case with a disclosure, his/her own otherness in combination with a presumption regarding the personal otherness. In contrast to the utterance of a disclosure, however, an edification is expressed by means of the collective frame of reference of a group of people. By uttering an edification, the speaker expresses an otherness which is shared by many people and is therefore considered to be 'right' or 'true'. This

is the case when a culturally well-defined meaning of a religious tradition is expressed, for instance: “Islam has five pillars”. It is not clear to what extent this expression of otherness is an expression of the speaker’s otherness from the personal perspective of the speaker. To obtain more clarity about this, we use the distinction which the Taxonomy of Verbal Response Modes offer between communicative intent and grammatical form.

When formulating a disclosure or an edification in the grammatical form of a disclosure (first person singular or plural), the speaker clearly indicates that he/she expresses his/her otherness as an utterance of the perspective of himself/herself. Examples of this are: “I think it is important that you say to God: ‘thank you for what you have given me’” (DD), or: “On 25 December I always go to church” (DE). When a speaker expresses a disclosure or an edification in the grammatical form of an edification (third person singular or plural or ‘one-form’), it is less clear to what degree the speaker expresses his otherness as an utterance of his own perspective. When a pupil is asked why he thinks Christmas is a merry feast, and the pupil answers with a disclosure in the form of an edification, such as “Then you [one] got to wear your new shoes” (ED), it is impossible to tell by the form of the utterance (‘you’) that the pupil expresses his own otherness from his own perspective, but it is possible, based on the communicative intent of the utterance (to reveal the speaker’s otherness) to establish that it is an expression of the personal otherness of the pupil. An edification, on the other hand, formulated in the grammatical form of an edification, such as: “On 25 December Christians celebrate [one celebrates] Christmas” (EE), cannot be recognized as an expression of the personal otherness of the speaker from the perspective of the speaker. An edification expresses the meaning of a group of people, without a clear indication what the relation is between the speaker and this group of people. In our research we therefore restrict ourselves to edifications that have been phrased in the disclosure (I/we) form (DE). With regard to the disclosures we focus on both the disclosures that have been phrased in the disclosure (I/we) form (DD) and on the disclosures that have been phrased in the edification (one) form (DE).<sup>3</sup>

Summarizing we distinguish three categories of utterances that are suitable for pupils to express their own otherness as an utterance of their own perspective: utterances with a disclosure form and a disclosure intent (DD), utterances with an edification form and a disclosure intent (ED), and utterances with a disclosure form and an edification intent (DE).

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<sup>3</sup> In practice pupils also use, besides these two manifestations of a disclosure, a disclosure in the grammatical form of an acknowledgement (KD). This code is only applied when a pupil reacts to the teacher with ‘yes’ or ‘no’. In view of the question in this article, we leave this category aside.

### 5.3.3 *Expressing the Otherness of the Other*

Which categories of utterances are suitable for expressing the otherness of the other as an utterance of the perspective of the other? When answering this question we allow the principles of the Taxonomy of Verbal Response Modes (section 5.3.1) to guide us once again. This time it is not about the expression of a pupil himself/herself, but about the intention to undertake verbal interaction as part of the teachers' responsibility. Consequently, we restrict ourselves to the communicative intent of utterances.

We distinguish three categories of utterances which, each in their own way and to a varying degree, are suitable for the expression of the otherness of the other as an utterance of the perspective of the other: reflections, acknowledgements and questions.

*Reflections* are utterances which are most suitable for expressing the otherness of the other as an utterance of the perspective of the other. The reason for this is that a speaker who uses a reflection, expresses the otherness of the other using the frame of reference of the other and at the same time expresses a presumption regarding that otherness. By presumption we mean that the speaker presumes to have some knowledge about the otherness of the other. Without this presumption it is not possible to reflect upon the otherness of the other. Nevertheless, it is up to the other to decide if the presumption of the speaker is or is not correct! The category of the reflections has three manifestations: repetitions, rewordings and explorations. An utterance is coded as a *repetition*, when it is an (almost) literal repetition of what the pupil has said. *Rewordings* are utterances that make an attempt to rephrase the utterance of a pupil. *Explorations* are rewordings in the form of a question. Since rewordings and explorations rephrase the otherness of the other, instead of simply repeating it, rewordings and explorations are more suitable for expressing the otherness of the other as an utterance of the perspective of the other, than repetitions.

*Acknowledgements* are, like reflections, expressions of the otherness of the other by means of the frame of reference of the other. Contrary to uttering a reflection, the speaker expresses by means of an acknowledgement no presumption regarding the otherness of the other; the speaker does not pretend to know the otherness of the other by means of this utterance. An acknowledgement is therefore less suitable for expressing the otherness of the other as an utterance of the perspective of the other, than a reflection.

Finally, *Questions*, also express the otherness of the other. Unlike, however, reflections and acknowledgements, a questioner does not express a presumption regarding the otherness of the other, nor does he use the frame of reference of the other. Is it fair to say that a questioner expresses the otherness of the other as an utterance of the perspective of the other? We prefer to turn this question around. You cannot say that a questioner does not use the perspective

of the other. A speaker who poses a question shows curious involvement in the other. He expresses the otherness of the other, though without presuming to know the otherness or the perspective of the other. He detects a gap in his knowledge about the otherness of the other and hopes to fill this gap with knowledge about the other. The category of the questions shows minimal focus of the speaker on the otherness of the other. We distinguish three different kinds of questions: real questions, probing questions and test questions. *Real questions* and *probing questions* both inquire after the otherness of the other which the speaker does not know or only partly so. The difference between real questions and probing questions is that the answer to a real question fully meets the intention of the questioner. This need not be the case with a probing question. When a teacher asks a pupil: "Where do you keep the Koran at home?", and the pupil answers: "On top of the cupboard", the intention with which the question was asked, has been fulfilled. The next real question can therefore only relate to a different subject, for instance: "When do you read the Koran?" or if it is addressed to another pupil: "And where do you keep the Koran at home?" By posing a probing question, a questioner indicates that the answer to a previous question has not or just partly met the expectations of the questioner. Perhaps the answer to a previous question has possibly raised new 'questions'. When a teacher wants more information than the answer to a real question offers, he can ask a probing question. Probing questions are questions, such as: "Why do you think that?" or "What do you mean by that?". Contrary to real questions, probing questions try to penetrate into the otherness of the other. Test questions have a different intention. Test questions are actually a didactic trick which teachers use to check if, according to them, the pupils possess the right otherness, for instance: "Which other feasts do you know?", or: "What was the sheep feast about again?" Test questions are an utterance of forces in the educational discourse that wish to impose limitations to otherness in order to guarantee a maximum of comprehension (see paragraph 5.1), rather than expressions of the otherness of the other.

Summarizing we distinguish six categories of utterances that are suitable for expressing the otherness of the other as an utterance of the perspective of the other: explorations, rewordings, repetitions, acknowledgements, real questions and probing questions.

## 6. Results

The first research question reads: to what degree do pupils express their own otherness as an utterance of their own perspective in interreligious communi-

cation? In order to answer this question we have calculated the frequencies of the DD, ED and DE categories of utterances which the pupils used during the lessons we studied. Before answering our first research question, we present a few examples of DD, ED and DE utterances made by pupils during the lessons.

*Pupil: "I do not really have an opinion about the Ramadan". (DD)*

*Pupil: "I would like to participate in the Ramadan, (DD)  
but my parents will not allow it". (DE)*

*Pupil: "(...) that there has been one man in the world who has wanted to sacrifice himself for the rest of the world". (ED)*

*Pupil: "Christmas is not really all that important". (ED).*

Table 1 shows the results of the analyses.

**Table 1: Frequencies of pupils' DD, ED and DE categories of utterances in %**

Category	%
DD Disclosure form & Disclosure intent	9.9
ED Edification form & Disclosure intent	15.6
DE Disclosure form & Edification intent	5.5
Remaining*	69.0
Total (n = 2521)	100.0

\* The remaining category is largely formed by edifications (50.1 %).

Table 1 shows that merely 31 % of all utterances which pupils expressed during the nine lessons which we studied in the framework of our question, are utterances which show that pupils express their own otherness as an utterance of their own perspective. The majority of these utterances (25.5% in total) is made up of the category of utterances most suitable to that end: the disclosure (DD and ED). Only in a small number of cases (5.5% in total) the pupils use an edification (DE) instead. Striking in the use of the disclosures is that they are more often phrased in the grammatical form of an edification or one-form (ED), than in the grammatical form of a disclosure or I/we-form (DD). The one-form is a safer way for expressing one's personal otherness than the I-form. The frequent use of the one-form could signify that the pupils do not feel sufficiently safe to express their own otherness. This feeling of insecurity can be related to the pedagogical climate in class, but it can also mean that pupils have a certain unfamiliarity with expressing their own otherness.

The second research question reads: to what degree do teachers express the otherness of pupils as an utterance of the perspective of the pupils, both preceding and following the utterances with which pupils express their own otherness as an utterance of their own perspective in interreligious communication? In order to answer this question we calculated the frequencies of the explorations, rewordings, repetitions, acknowledgements, real questions and probing questions which the teachers phrased both immediately preceding and immediately following the DD, ED and DE categories of utterances of the pupils. Table two shows the frequencies of teachers' explorations, rewordings, repetitions, acknowledgements, real questions and probing questions that directly *precede* pupils' DD, ED and DE categories of utterances. Table three presents the frequencies of teachers' explorations, rewordings, repetitions, acknowledgements, real questions and probing questions that directly *follow* pupils' DD, ED and DE categories of utterances.

Before presenting the results of the analyses in relation to the second research question, we first present an example from a field situation in which the utterances above are used in relation to one another. The example is from one of the lessons we have analyzed.

*Teacher: L, what do you do at home during the Sugar feast? (real question)*

*Pupil: I eat a lot. (DE)*

*Teacher: How do you like celebrating the Sugar feast? (real question)*

*Pupil: Fun. (ED)*

*Teacher: Why? (probing question)*

*Pupil: Because you get to wear your new shoes. (ED)*

*Teacher: B, do you think it is important to celebrate the Sugar feast? (real question)*

*Pupil: Yes, I think it is important. (DD)*

*Teacher: Why? (probing question)*

*Pupil: First you pray and stuff, (ED)*

*Teacher: Hmm (acknowledgement)*

*Pupil: and then it is just celebrating. (ED)*

*Teacher: Then it is just celebrating. (repetition)*

*[And a little later, when the conversation is about Christmas...]*

*Teacher: J., what does Christmas mean to you? (real question)*

*Pupil: I don't really celebrate Christmas, (DE)*

*But if Christmas were to go away, I would really mind. (DD)*

*Teacher: Do you mean you would miss something? (exploration)*

*Pupil: I don't know. (DD)*

*Teacher: L., and to you? (real question)*

*Pupil: If you eat something special on that occasion, you can tell that it is not standard. (ED)*

*Teacher: So you say you want to turn it into something special. (rewording).*

How often do teachers use utterances that are suitable for expressing the otherness of pupils as an utterance of the perspective of the pupils *preceding* utterances with which pupils express their own otherness as an utterance of their own perspective?

**Table 2: Frequencies of teachers' explorations, rewordings, repetitions, acknowledgements, real questions and probing questions that directly precede pupils' DD, ED and DE categories of utterances in %**

Pupil's utterance	DD	ED	DE
Teacher's utterance	n=101	n=138	n=42
Exploration	1.0	2.1	2.4
Rewording	1.0	2.1	0.0
Repetition	3.0	2.1	4.8
Acknowledgement	2.0	6.5	2.4
Real question	19.8	23.9	35.7
Probing question	8.9	13.8	2.4
Remaining*	64.3	49.5	52.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

\* The remaining category is largely formed by advisements.

Table 2 first shows that less than half the pupils' expressions of their own otherness as an utterance of their own perspective (DD, ED and DE categories of utterances) is preceded by a teacher's utterance which, based on our theoretical framework, is suitable for expressing the otherness of pupils as an utterance of the perspective of the pupils (remaining > 49%).

Secondly, teachers, preceding pupils' expressions of their own otherness as an utterance of their own perspective, mainly ask many questions and more real questions than probing questions. Teachers ask comparatively more real questions preceding utterances containing an edification; probing questions are more often used in utterances with a disclosure. It seems that teachers chiefly associate real questions with edifications and probing questions with disclosures. This could mean that teachers are aware of the distinction between disclosures and

edifications as far as the expression of otherness is concerned (see paragraph 5.3.1 and 5.3.2). Disclosures show more clearly that a speaker expresses his/her own otherness than is the case with edifications, and they are therefore rather expressions of an otherness unknown to the other. Due to this unfamiliarity, the intention of the questioner to get to know the otherness of the other, cannot just be satisfied by means of real questions. Real questions do not penetrate sufficiently far into the otherness of the other, as is illustrated by a teacher's utterance during one of the interviews: "I simply continued asking questions [with probing questions], because I actually wanted to get to the point where we would discuss what the Ramadan meant to the girl [pupil] herself".

Finally, we notice that teachers, preceding pupils' expressions of their own otherness as an utterance of their own perspective, hardly use explorations, rewordings, repetitions and acknowledgements. Contrary to the categories of the real questions and the probing questions, which use the speaker's frame of reference to express the otherness of the other, the categories of the explorations, rewordings, repetitions and acknowledgements use the frame of reference of the other. Preceding the utterances with which pupils express their own otherness as an utterance of their own perspective, the teachers use their own frame of reference rather than the pupils' frame of reference. This could mean that teachers have difficulty with anticipating the otherness of the pupils (other). By using their own frame of reference, the teachers safely hold on to their own presuppositions.

How often do teachers use utterances that are suitable for expressing the otherness of pupils as an utterance of the perspective of the pupils *following* utterances with which pupils express their own otherness as an utterance of their own perspective?

**Table 3: Frequencies of teachers' explorations, rewordings, repetitions, acknowledgements, real questions and probing questions that directly follow pupils' DD, ED and DE categories of utterances in %**

Pupil	Teacher	Explo- ration	Reword- ing	Repeti- tion	Acknowl- edgement	Real Question	Probing Question	Remain- ing*	Total
DD	n=113	4.4	7.1	14.2	16.0	14.2	9.7	34.4	100.0
ED	n=200	0.5	19.5	15.5	12.5	11.0	7.0	34.0	100.0
DE	n=71	1.4	9.8	8.5	18.3	21.1	1.4	39.5	100.0

\* The remaining category is largely formed by advisements, evaluations and edifications.

Table 3 first shows that over 60% of pupils' expressions of their own otherness as an utterance of their own perspective (DD, ED and DE categories of utterances) is followed by a teacher's utterance which, based on our theoretical framework, is suitable for expressing the otherness of pupils as an utterance of the perspective of pupils ( $34\% \leq \text{remaining} \leq 39.5\%$ ). When comparing this result with those in table 2, it appears that the teachers in their response to utterances with which pupils express their own otherness as an utterance of their own perspective, use more utterances to express the otherness of the pupils as an utterance of the perspective of the pupils than preceding these pupils' utterances.

Secondly, we can see that teachers following pupils' expressions of their own otherness as an utterance of their own perspective, make more use of acknowledgements, real questions and probing questions than reflections (explorations, rewordings, repetitions). Acknowledgements, real questions and probing questions are all categories of utterances where the teacher does not express a presumption regarding the otherness of pupils, which make these utterances less suitable for expressing the otherness of pupils as an utterance of the perspective of pupils. As a result, the room which teachers offer for the expression of otherness of pupils as an utterance of the perspective of pupils, is reduced.

Thirdly, within the category of the reflections, which is most suited for expressing the otherness of pupils as an utterance of the perspective of pupils, teachers use more repetitions than rewordings and explorations. Teachers often repeat the personal otherness as expressed by pupils literally, rather than try and capture this otherness in their own words, and still use the frame of reference of the pupils, when they return it to the pupils. This, too, restricts the room which teachers offer for the expression of the otherness of pupils as an utterance of the perspective of pupils. Teachers seem to adopt a cautious attitude in relation to the otherness of pupils.

Fourthly, teachers make little use of explorative questions (explorations) and probing questions. Teachers hardly continue asking questions, whether they express (in the case of an exploration) or do not express (in the case of a probing question) a presumption regarding the otherness of the pupil. This is also an indication that teachers are very careful regarding the otherness as expressed by pupils.

Fifthly, teachers more often use explorative questions and probing questions as a response to pupils' disclosures than as a response to pupils' edifications and more often as a response to pupils' disclosures that have been phrased in the I/we-form (DD) than as a response to pupils' disclosures that have been phrased in the one-form (ED). Rewordings, on the other hand, are more often used as a reaction to pupils' disclosures that have been phrased in the one-form

(ED) than as a reaction to pupils' disclosures that have been phrased in the I/we-form (DD). This could mean that teachers 'continuing to ask questions' chiefly associate with utterances which in their grammatical form are also a clear expression of the personal otherness of the other (see paragraph 5.3.1). Utterances that express the personal otherness of a person in the third person singular or plural (it, impersonal 'you', one), suggest a general statement rather than an expression of the personal otherness and are therefore less inviting to explore.

Finally, it is striking that, like preceding utterances with which pupils express their own otherness (see above), real questions are used more often to react to pupils' edifications than to pupils' disclosures. This is not surprising in view of the nature of real questions.

Our third research question reads: which views about the relations between religions do teachers use in interreligious communication? In order to answer this question we have used both the interviews preceding the lesson and the ones after the lesson, plus the interviews during which the teachers watched the video recording of their lesson. These interviews show that all teachers, except for one, hold a view about the relations between religions that seems to correspond with that of the Mutuality Model (section 4). During the interview one teacher makes statements that point to the Acceptance Model. The teachers, who use 'the Mutuality Model', agree that there is one Universal Reality which is the same for all religions. Statements from teachers that illustrate this conclusion are, for instance: "In essence religions hold more common ground than differences", or: "There is far more that connects religions than that keeps them apart". This does not always mean that these teachers are blind to the differences, but the differences between religions are considered less important than the similarities. It has to do with the nature of the differences and the nature of the similarities. The similarities have to do with the experience of an Ultimate Reality, which transcends our everyday reality; the differences between religions are considered to be 'human interpretations' of this one Ultimate Reality. Within the Mutuality Model these differences between religions are valued differently. Some teachers are not really interested in these human interpretations, as the following statements show: "And whether you are Muslim, Hindu or Jew, or whatever, that really does not matter to me at all", "I just happen to be a Roman Catholic. (...) Had I grown up in a Muslim family, I think I would have had the same ideas", or: "And this [the similarity we have found], I think, can (...) push away those religious outward appearances". To others these differences are a source of conflict and

tension between religions: “Similarities connect, differences separate”, or a sign of weakness: “I also think that you should not need, an outside, other people to know what it is you believe in. (...) I can understand that people want somewhere to go to. (...) I think it is quite scary”. Others regard it as an enrichment, though from the viewpoint that different religions express differently the one thing that connects us all: “I am satisfied when they [the pupils] know what the Feast of Tabernacles means, that the Feast of Tabernacles is a Jewish feast, but that we [non-Jews] also have thoughts that are related to the Feast of Tabernacles”, or: “Each faith [religion] has charity, each faith [religion] has peace (...) and each faith [religion] has: ‘God takes care of His children’”. Many teachers indicate that they think that the religion within oneself or being able to make one’s own choices about faith and religion, is important: “(...) and that pupils must learn [the way in which religions influence the lives of people] to make their own choices”, because the real faith, which is universal, is in man himself: “(...) and that they [the pupils] will realize that religion is not something from above, but that it actually comes from within as well. And that when I hear the stories of religions being opposed to one another (...) that that is a wrongful view on religion”.

The teacher whose views seem to agree most with the Acceptance Model, does not mention anything during the interview about the universal character of religion, but merely talks about the differences between religions and about the importance to learn from one another. Illustrative is the statement: “I think the lesson is a success when the pupils have communicated. So when they have talked about this subject [religious feasts]. One pupil reacts, the other responds with a reaction, so they have really discussed it. (...) what such a feast can mean to someone and that another feast again has a completely different meaning for someone else or the same feast has a different meaning for the first one. (...) That is, I think, important indeed. One person experiences something this way and the other experiences it that way and a third one has again a totally different experience and to start a discussion about this, yes, I think that is quite useful to improve perhaps mutual understanding”. Contrary to the other teachers who use the Mutuality Model, this teacher does not make statements that point in the direction that the differences between the religions have to be overcome. On the contrary, the fact that he says that a religious feast can have different meanings for individual pupils, shows that in his lessons he wants to make room for the expression of the otherness of pupils from different religions at the level of the personal appropriation and that there is room in his views for differences between religions.

## 7. Conclusion and Discussion

In paragraph 5.1 we raised three questions: 1) to what degree do pupils express their own otherness as an utterance of their own perspective in interreligious communication?, 2) to what degree do teachers express the otherness of pupils as an utterance of the perspective of the pupils, both preceding and following the utterances with which pupils express their own otherness as an utterance of their own perspective in interreligious communication? and 3) which views about the relation between religions do teachers use in interreligious communication? Which conclusions can be drawn with regard to these three questions?

1) Less than one third of all pupils' utterances is an expression of the otherness of pupils as an utterance of the perspective of pupils. The majority of these expressions of otherness has been expressed by means of the category of utterances most suited to that end: the category of the disclosures (see paragraph 5.2). At the same time, however, we observe that half of these disclosures has not been phrased in the I/we-form, but in the one-form instead. This is remarkable, as it concerns an expression of the personal thoughts and/or feelings of pupils. An explanation for this could be that by expressing themselves, pupils make themselves vulnerable and, as it were, surrender to the judgement of the other. The one-form is a far safer way to express one's personal otherness than the I/we-form. This significance of security can refer to the pedagogical climate in class, but it can also refer to the degree of familiarity with expressing (religious) otherness. The limited extent, in which pupils express their own otherness as an utterance of their own perspective in interreligious communication, can indicate that the pupils experience a certain ignorance of expressing religious otherness.

2) Less than half of pupils' expressions of their own otherness as an utterance of their own perspective, is preceded by a teacher's utterance which, based on our theoretical framework, is suitable for expressing the otherness of pupils as an utterance of the perspective of pupils. The category of utterances which teachers use most to this end, is the category of the questions (real questions and probing questions). This category, however, is hardly capable of expressing the otherness of pupils as an utterance of the perspective of pupils. Real questions and probing questions are used to obtain information *about* the other's otherness, instead of asking questions about the other's otherness from *within* this otherness.<sup>4</sup> It is noticeable that real questions are asked more often preced-

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<sup>4</sup> The latter takes place by means of explorations (rewordings phrased as a question).

ing pupils' edifications than preceding pupils' disclosures, whereas probing questions are asked more often preceding pupils' disclosures than preceding pupils' edifications. This could mean that teachers are conscious of the fact that edifications are less suitable for expressing the personal otherness of pupils as an utterance of the perspective of pupils than disclosures. After all, the more pupils express their own otherness, the more utterances they make on matters which the teachers find strange. In that case real questions no longer supply sufficient information for the teachers to express this otherness (of the pupils) in an adequate way.

3) Preceding the utterances with which pupils express their own otherness as an utterance of their own perspective, teachers use significantly more real questions and probing questions than acknowledgements, explorations, rewordings and repetitions. Contrary to real questions and probing questions, which use the frame of reference of the speaker, acknowledgements, explorations, rewordings and repetitions are utterances that use the frame of reference of the other. This means that teachers, preceding the utterances with which pupils express their own otherness as an utterance of their own perspective, make more use of their own frame of reference than of the pupils' frame of reference. This means that they do not express the otherness of pupils as an utterance of the perspective of the pupils, but as an utterance of their own perspective. This could be explained by the fact that teachers find it hard to anticipate the otherness of pupils as an utterance of the personal perspective of pupils.

4) Over 60 % of pupils' expressions of their own otherness as an utterance of their own perspective is followed by a teacher's utterance which, based on our theoretical framework, is suitable for expressing the otherness of pupils as an utterance of the perspective of pupils. In their response to utterances with which pupils express their own otherness as an utterance of their perspective, the teachers use more utterances that are suitable for expressing the otherness of pupils as an utterance of the perspective of pupils, than preceding these pupils' utterances. This is not surprising. In a response to what pupils have said about themselves, teachers will be more inclined to express the personal otherness of pupils as an utterance of the perspective of pupils than preceding pupils' utterances. Preceding pupils' utterances, teachers are mainly trying to persuade pupils to say something.

5) The majority of the utterances, however, which teachers use to express the otherness of pupils as an utterance of the perspective of pupils following pupils' expressions of their own otherness, are those where the teacher does not express a presumption regarding the otherness of pupils (acknowledgements, real questions and probing questions). This means that the teachers

stand aloof from the otherness of pupils. This picture is reinforced by the fact that when teachers use the category of the reflections, which is the category most suited for expressing the otherness of the other as an utterance of the perspective of the other, they more often use repetitions than rewordings and explorations. Repetition is the least suited of these three kinds of reflection to express the otherness of pupils as an utterance of the perspective of pupils. A literal repetition of what the other has said does not clarify, after all, what the present speaker does or has done with the otherness expressed by the other. Moreover, teachers use the type of reflection that offers most room to the otherness of the other, the exploration,<sup>5</sup> least of all! During the lessons we have studied, teachers use few utterances that are largely suitable for expressing the otherness of pupils as an utterance of the perspective of pupils. In other words, in interreligious communication, the teachers create limited room only for the otherness of the pupils by means of their utterances.

6) In the lessons we studied, following pupils' expressions of their own otherness as an utterance of their own perspective, the teachers more often use an explorative question or a probing question in relation to pupils' disclosures than in relation to pupils' edifications and more often in relation to pupils' disclosures that have been phrased in the I/we-form (DD) than in relation to pupils' disclosures that have been phrased in the one-form (ED). Rewordings, on the other hand, are more often used in relation to pupils' disclosures that have been phrased in the one-form (ED) than in relation to pupils' disclosures that have been phrased in the I/we-form (DD). This could mean that teachers 'continuing to ask questions' (by means of explorative questions and probing questions) chiefly associate with utterances that are undeniably an expression of the personal otherness of a person as an utterance of his/her own perspective (see paragraph 5.3.1). Utterances that express the personal otherness in the third person singular or plural (it, impersonal 'you', one) suggest a certain distance to the applied frame of reference. They are a 'hidden' expression of the personal otherness and are thus less inviting to be explored.

7) Most teachers hold a view about the relation between religions that starts from the existence of one Ultimate Reality for all religions, which can be experienced by all people, regardless of their religion. Religions are considered to be the human interpretations of this Ultimate Reality. As people (and their cultures) differ that much, their interpretations of this one Ultimate Reality are also different. These differences, however, are overcome by this one Ulti-

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<sup>5</sup> An exploration is a rewording phrased as a question. It is a combination of the offering-room-for-otherness qualities of a rewording with the inviting effect of a question.

mate Reality. In the communication with pupils who belong to different religions, this view is expressed in a search for similarities between religions at the level of the public meanings of religions, rather than in naming the differences between religions at the level of the pupils' personal appropriation of these meanings. Most teachers stress religious 'sameness', with reference to the culturally well-defined meanings of religious traditions, rather than religious otherness as the appropriation of religious meanings by individual pupils.

Summing up, we come to the conclusion that in the lessons of interreligious communication which we studied, religious otherness is being expressed, both by pupils and teachers! At the same time we observe a kind of shyness, among both pupils and teachers, to bring this otherness up for discussion. Where does this shyness come from? A first explanation could be that the context in which we studied interreligious communication, the context of education, leaves little room for otherness. According to Wertsch (1991) education frequently uses a theoretical form of knowledge that needs to be reproduced. Education is also characterized by a difference in the division of power between teacher and pupils. The ultimate aim of this way of communicating is the organization of the intermental plane in a way that its patterns can be mastered and internalized by pupils 'the right way'. The teachers who participated in our research, seem to have a hard time with being objective about this 'monological' way of communication. This emerges, for instance, from the fact that, seen from our theoretical perspective, they use their own frame of reference too much and too little the frame of reference of their pupils. The fact that the pupils often express their otherness in the third person (one-form), could also point to an educational culture which has not been sufficiently organized for the openness and insecurity involved in the expression of the otherness of pupils from different religions at the level of the personal appropriation.

Leaving room for otherness in dialogical communication means that teachers must focus on the unknown. Not so much unknown, unloved (as the saying goes), but first and foremost, insecure. Teachers do not like to part with the control of the learning process. The teachers also feel a lot of insecurity regarding the contents of the learning process (the meanings of the various religions): "Do the children know why, why it is the way it is, and do I know myself?". Many teachers have a certain unfamiliarity with religion, not only with the religions of the immigrants (Islam, Hinduism), but also increasingly with the Christian religion. A teacher who is unfamiliar with religion, will have far more difficulty with talking about the otherness of pupils from different religions at the level of the personal appropriation of religions than at the level of the public meanings of religions. In the latter case a teacher can always fall back on the public meanings of a religious tradition. Even the

views of teachers on the relation between religions leave little room for the expression of the otherness of different religions at the level of the personal appropriation. Teachers are more focussed on expressing 'what it is that connects religions rather than what separates them'.

When interreligious communication in an educational setting remains restricted to the explanation and the reproduction of the public meanings of religions, in other words, when pupils can only use the (collective) positions of religious traditions to express themselves instead of using the positions that express their personal appropriation of those traditions, they are deprived of the possibility to explore and get to know their otherness. What's more, pupils 'learn' that the other in interreligious communication is only interested in the otherness of religious traditions, or rather: how 'one' behaves in Islam, Christianity, etc. Consequently, the 'dialogical' (or the encounter with the otherness of the other) in interreligious communication is not done justice.

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