A Master’s degree by research is definitely an experience that marks a young researcher’s life and career. In this article, we shall discuss our experience throughout the past two years as we steadily worked on our dissertation focusing on the use of French in Quebec.

The first step that made this a positive experience was the fact that we chose our own research topic and devised a methodology that helped us achieve our aims. At the University of Malta, it was certainly an original subject: an interactionist approach to the functions of swearwords in Quebec and in Malta. We stood behind our subject from the very beginning. Applying for the Endeavour Scholarship helped us prepare arguments in order to support this project and the fact that we managed to obtain funding meant that it was worth studying. This step will help us in future research and work projects as it helped us develop our creativity and our mindset in order to defend our academic positions.

There is always that point during a research project when the researcher starts seeing their best ideas fall into place as if by some pre-determined logic. This point, we believe, is one of great satisfaction. The project has taken a certain form in the researcher’s mind and now they have to iron out the details in order to make the chapters flow from one to the next. That said, one of our great challenges was to integrate the final chapter with the rest of the research. This chapter deals with developing an intercultural approach in the classroom. Thus the transition towards it was far from straightforward.

Here, we believe that this drawback stems from the Endeavour Scholarship due to its unnecessary focus on the practical aspect of research. We were almost forced to think about the implications of our research for educational services when this could have been easily left out in order to focus more on theory. The Scholarship should invest in purely theoretical research because this is the foundation of knowledge. Pure, theoretical research in the sciences, arts and humanities provides the best opportunity for the most talented members of society to explore new horizons. These researchers should receive more investment rather being heckled by practical concerns in order to obtain funding for their research.
Nevertheless, we can also see the benefits of having been restricted in this sense because it made us stronger when it came to integrating the practical aspect of our research with the theoretical part. We managed to shift the focus of the last chapter from swearwords towards the intercultural skills and attitude one obtains when they face a different culture at a personal level. Therefore, we also admit that this chapter has really grounded our research in a pragmatic perspective that can contribute towards other research in interactionism, interculturality and diplomacy.

It was very interesting to experience ourselves the same kind of transformation that we were describing. As we were comparing cinematic productions from Quebec and from Malta in order to analyse the different interactional functions assigned to them in the dialogue, we noticed that we were actually trying to find similarities between two representations of two cultures. As we have emerged from Maltese culture, we were confronting our knowledge of Quebec culture with that of our own and the results were fascinating. When one tries to put aside their prejudices in a situation like this, one achieves decentralisation, that is, they understand more about the common human factor between cultures than about the differences. The final step in order to consolidate this experience was an actual visit to Quebec. Having the opportunity to discuss our research with the natives helped us see where we had gone wrong and where we had uncovered conclusions which were invisible to them.

Ultimately, this Master’s degree was a necessary step in our academic journey. We hope potential employers will understand the value of a person who possesses such a degree, but we also hope that it will not be the last step for us in academia. Research is a laudable area of work that is not open to everyone since it demands a particularly curious mindset that knows how to ask the very best of questions in order to arrive at careful conclusions.

Ludwig Camilleri B.A. (Hons.), M.A. (Melit.)

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