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Promoting Language and Culture Learning in an EFL Context

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ABSTRACT

This Independent Professional Paper (IPP) describes the intercultural communication project I undertook during my Interim Year Teaching Practicum (IYTP) in Granada, Spain. Throughout the academic year of 1998-1999, English-speaking students enrolled in the University of Granada's Spanish Language and Culture Courses were invited to participate as volunteer language and culture exchange partners with my Spanish-speaking, intermediate-level English as a Foreign Language students. These classroom experiences, designed to enrich the course's speaking, reading, writing, and listening curriculum, were intended to stimulate authentic communication and to heighten personal and intercultural awareness among the participants.

The argument presented in this paper is that by designing and implementing projects of this sort, language teachers, especially those working in a foreign language context, can adopt a teaching approach that not only acknowledges the interrelationship between language and culture, but also encourages the development of learners' communicative competence. In addition, intercultural communication projects, such as the one described in this paper, can help alleviate some of the inherent challenges of a teaching context, where the language of study is not present.

ERIC DESCRIPTORS:

CULTURE: Cross Cultural Studies, Cross Cultural Training, Cultural Awareness, Cultural Education, Cultural Exchange, Culture contact, Intercultural Communication, CURRICULA/PROGRAMS: Intercultural Programs, TEACHING PROFESSION: Teaching Experience, METHODOLOGY/CLASSROOM PRACTICES: Experimental Teaching, Teaching Methods, FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING: Communication Skills.

DEDICATION

This Independent Professional Project (IPP) is dedicated to my daughter, Sara Perez Battles, who is my constant source of inspiration and wonder. Without her love, understanding, and many amazing qualities and talents, I would have never been able to undertake and successfully complete my Master of Arts in Teaching. Thank you Sara! I love you forever and always!

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A concern with cross-cultural effectiveness and appropriateness—coupled with second or foreign language development—will, I hope, lead beyond tolerance and understanding to a genuine appreciation of others. For this to happen, we need to develop the awareness, attitudes, skills, and knowledge that will make us better participants on a local and global level, able to understand and empathize with others in new ways. Exposure to more than one language, culture, and world view, in a positive context, offers such a promise. (Fantini1997,13)

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

While there is little consensus on what makes a "good" language teacher, I believe that personally experiencing the trials and tribulations of becoming proficient in a foreign language is paramount. As Alvino Fantini notes,

> more than the actual attainment of proficiency is the fact that without a second language experience, [monolingual language teachers] have not grappled with the most fundamental paradigm of all—language, and the benefits that derive from this process… Without an alternative form of communication, we are constrained to continue perception, conceptualization, formulation, and expression of our thoughts from a single vantage point. (1997: 4 - 5)

In addition to this, I would add that language teachers must have both a deep understanding of the target culture as well as an awareness of their own culturally conditioned behavior, beliefs, attitudes, and values. There is no doubt in my mind that my experiences as a life-long learner of the Spanish language and culture deeply affect not only who I am as a person, but also how I approach language teaching. Therefore, I would like to elaborate on my background briefly in order to establish this connection for the reader.

The topic of this Independent Professional Project (IPP) evolved after I completed my first summer of coursework for the School for International Training's Summer Master of Arts in Teaching Program (SMAT) and I returned to my teaching position in Spain to begin my Interim Year Teaching Practicum (IYTP).

By that time, the academic year of 1998-1999, I had been deeply involved with the Spanish language and culture for more than twenty years. In fact, most of my adult life had been spent living in a country that I had adopted and made my own. At the same time, I still felt strong ties to the United States where I had been born and where my family lived. In reality, I belonged to two worlds with one foot here and the other there, trying my best to pick and choose from what both had to offer me. However, not only has my bilingualism and biculturalism enriched me personally, but professionally as well. Given that the bulk of my professional experience has been either teaching English to Spaniards or teaching Spanish to Americans, I'm much more aware than the monolingual language teacher of the contexts that will probably be familiar, meaningful, and even humorous to my students. By acting as a human bridge between the native and target languages and cultures, I have been able to help both my English- and Spanish-speaking students make a personal connection, which has, in my opinion, increased the quality of their learning along with their interest and motivation. In short, I honestly believe that my two languages and cultures have made me both a better person and a more effective teacher.

The remainder of this paper describes the design and implementation of the intercultural communication project that I carried out during my Interim Year Teaching Practicum (IYTP) in Granada, Spain. Throughout the academic year of 1998-1999, English-speaking students enrolled in the University of Granada's Spanish language and culture courses were invited to participate as volunteer language and culture exchange partners with my Spanish-speaking, intermedi-

ate-level English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners on five separate occasions.

These classroom experiences were intended to achieve the following goals:

1) To enrich the speaking, reading, writing, and listening curriculum of the EFL course.
2) To provide opportunities for spontaneous, authentic communication between Spaniards and Americans.
3) To heighten the participants' personal and intercultural awareness.

The argument presented in this paper is that by designing and implementing such language and culture-based projects, language teachers, especially those working in a foreign language context, can adopt a teaching approach that not only acknowledges the interrelationship between language and culture, but also the development of the learners' communicative competence, critical thinking skills, and intercultural awareness. In addition, intercultural communication projects, such as the one described in this paper, can help alleviate some of the inherent challenges of a teaching context, where the language of study is not present. The content and the organization of each chapter in this paper are described below.

Chapter Two describes my sources of inspiration for the intercultural communication project and the goals and objectives of my Interim Year Teaching Practicum. Chapter Two also presents the theoretical frameworks needed to un-

derstand the intercultural communication project that I designed and implemented—chiefly the concept of classroom-based teacher research, Graves (1996) Problematizing, Fantini's (1993) Process Approach, and Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Cycle—and how these frameworks were used during the planning, implementation, and evaluation stages of the project.

Chapter Three describes the teaching context where the Intercultural Communication Project took place. It includes information about the course description, goals and objectives, required textbook, course and intercultural communication project schedule, and how the logistical arrangements for the intercultural communication project were made. Chapter Three also includes the reasons why I chose my Level III class for the project, a description of the in-class teaching/learning activities used to foster the type of learning environment needed for the intercultural communication project, and the in-class teaching/learning activities used to introduce the concept of the intercultural communication project to the students in my Pre-Intermediate level EFL class.

Chapter Four is divided into five sections, corresponding to the five sessions of the Intercultural Communication Project. These five sections describe each of the sessions in terms of: (a) the pre-session warm-up activities, (b) content and activities included in the session, (c) post-session student processing and feedback of the session, and (d) post-session teacher reflection.

Chapter Five, the conclusion, summarizes what I learned about my profession on both a practical and theoretical basis through the Intercultural Communication Project. It presents a final discussion of the Intercultural Communica-

tion Project in terms of why teachers, especially EFL teachers, should undertake such action-based classroom research projects. Chapter Five also attempts to bridge my classroom experiences during the project with my investigation into the most relevant theories in the field. As such, it ends by explaining what the acceptance of a “communicative approach” to language teaching/learning implies.

Chapters Six and Seven correspond to the appendices and references/bibliography respectively.

Given this overview of the content and organization of the paper, I would like to outline the principal theoretical viewpoints that influenced my decision to undertake this project. As stated earlier, the two main components of an intercultural communication project—foreign language development and culture learning—can help alleviate some of the inherent challenges of teaching in an EFL context. In the following pages, I will describe how these two components relate to both the limitations of the EFL teaching context and how the goals and objectives of the intercultural communication project that I designed and implemented were aimed at overcoming the challenges imposed by this teaching context.

In my view, the greatest difficulty of the EFL teaching/learning context is the simple fact that the opportunities to actually use English beyond the classroom are few and far between. In such a context, the reasons for learning English range from such long-term goals as the desire “to communicate someday with people in another country” to “a need to gain a reading knowledge [of English] in a field of specialization” (Brown 1994, 183), to name but two. As a result,

students often find it difficult to maintain the degree of motivation, persistence, and commitment required to become proficient in a foreign language.

In order to succeed in such an endeavor, “it is not enough to think that we want to learn; we need to feel it. The result is called ‘felt needs’, and the process of motivating learners is referred to as ‘creating felt needs’. This means involving trainees/learners in a situation where they feel a need to learn or understand” (Hopkins 1993, 149). I believe that intercultural communication projects, such as the one described in this paper, can provide EFL students with the type of unrehearsed, language and culture-learning experiences with native English-speakers needed to create “felt needs”.

Damen (1987) suggests that if the classroom, especially in the foreign language context where intercultural contact cannot be made outside the classroom, is viewed as a specialized environment then it can offer many advantages as a site for intercultural communication and language learning. According to Damen (1987, 8), this specialized context can present the following benefits:

> 1. As an artificial community, it draws culturally protective walls around those within, bestowing less severe punishment for the commission of linguistic and cultural errors that might be met outside its walls.
>
> 2. The classroom community is managed, unreal, forgiving, and protective, but it is also an environment that offers unique opportunities for experimental intercultural communication. If administered well, this community can provide the first step on a long voyage of cultural discovery that will end in the world outside the classroom.

Although I truly believe that what we create in the short-lived confines of the classroom should parallel the natural processes of real speech situations, this

is not easily accomplished in an EFL context. For example, despite the fact that I maintained an “English only” policy in the classroom, I sometimes found it difficult to prevent my monolingual Spanish-speaking students, especially those in the lower levels, from slipping into their shared native language. The temptation of wanting to communicate quickly and effortlessly with one’s classmates and teacher in the native language (L_1) is understandable, but often frustrating for the teacher. Regarding this last point, Andrew Wright (1989, 24) states, “A central aim of the teacher is to help the students develop skill and confidence in searching for meaning themselves. Translation might often provide meaning quickly but it does not develop this essential learning strategy which the students can continue to draw on long after they have left the classroom”.

Bearing the discussion above in mind, one of the aims of the intercultural communication project was to provide my students with an opportunity to bridge the gap between the prescribed and predictable mechanical speech our EFL textbook generated to the much more linguistically and intellectually demanding task of making the best use of their English for authentic communicative purposes and self-expression. I agree with one teacher who states, “there comes a time for the students, with the help of the teacher, to summon all they have learned to discuss some real issues they are concerned with in extended and spontaneous speech” (Norman 1996, 598). In sum, I wanted my EFL students to be spurred into generating language from within in order to say or write what they really wanted to express in English.

At this point, it may be helpful to mention here H.G.Widdowson's distinction between *usage* and *use*. The notion of linguistic competence has two parts—*competence* and *performance*. The first refers to the language user's knowledge of linguistic rules, or what one *knows about* the language system. The second, performance, refers to the language user's linguistic behavior, or what he/she *does with* the language. According to Widdowson,

> *usage*, then, is one aspect of performance, that aspect which makes evident the extent to which the language user demonstrates his knowledge of linguistic rules. *Use* is another aspect of performance: that which makes evident the extent to which the language user demonstrates his ability to use his knowledge of linguistic rules for effective communication (1978, 3)

I knew from both my personal experience learning Spanish in high school and professional teaching experience that "learners who have acquired a good deal of knowledge of the usage of a particular language find themselves at a loss when they are confronted with actual instances of use" (Widdowson 1978, 19). In my opinion, this tendency is particularly true in foreign language teaching, as opposed to second language teaching because, in an environment where the language under study is not present, one can obviously function without it in the L_1. Although knowledge of the foreign language in such settings may provide advantages in educational advancement, work, or social status (Brown 1994) students rarely have the opportunity to actually *use* the language they are learning beyond the classroom. Therefore, there is no immediate, life threatening need to bridge the gap between language usage and language use.

Lastly, as both linguistic resourcefulness and creative self-expression were encouraged throughout the project, I wanted the learners to realize that effective and appropriate communication cannot be measured solely in terms of one's linguistic accuracy (or grammatical competence). On the contrary, I wanted the learners to comprehend that "communication is a process of negotiation, with success dependent on the cooperation of all involved" (Savignon 1983, 195). Thus, I postulated that both the native English-speakers and Spanish-speakers alike would gain more competency and confidence in using the full range of their communicative skills interactively. As a result of this, I hoped that my EFL students' inhibitions about participating in extended and spontaneous speech in English would decrease as they realized that the American students were struggling with similar language learning difficulties—embarrassment, awkwardness, lack of vocabulary, native language interference, etc. – in addition to seeing that *they* had just as many questions about how to communicate effectively and appropriately with someone whose native language and culture is different.

Of course, I understood that my intermediate level students' command of the English language system and communicative skills was still limited. Therefore, I assumed that they would draw heavily upon the grammatical patterns and vocabulary previously studied in class and undoubtedly make frequent errors. Although I realized that we could not forgo using the textbook entirely, I knew that more "textbook work" was not the answer. Despite institutional and collegial pressures, I was determined to use the textbook selectively as a "point of depar-

ture" for authentic, supplementary materials that I felt would personalize the instruction and do a better job of doing what the textbook claimed to do.

In so doing, I would acknowledge that "the development of the learners' communicative abilities is seen to depend not so much on the time they spend rehearsing grammatical patterns as on the opportunities they are given to interpret, to express, and to negotiate meaning in real-life situations" (Savignon 1983, vi). I contended that the presence of American students with limited Spanish proficiency in my EFL classroom was as close as I could come to simulating the dynamics of real communication and that, therefore, the joys and frustrations of trying to make oneself understood and understanding others would be experienced by all participants.

I also imagined that my students would be exposed to a more "authentic" variety of English. In other words, their American partners would not be as likely to adapt their speech to meet my EFL students' level of proficiency, to speak as clearly and slowly, to avoid colloquial or idiomatic expressions, or to use as many visual clues and sound effects as I tend to do in my "EFL teacher talk". While research suggests that "the adjustments in teacher speech to nonnative-speaking learners serve the temporary purpose of maintaining communication" (Chaudron 1988, 55) and may, in fact, facilitate language acquisition (Savignon 1983, 64), I felt that I was unconsciously offering my EFL students a simplified, and perhaps more sympathetic, version of what they would encounter when interacting with untrained native speakers.

I also believed that the intercultural communication project's experiential focus could overcome some of the weaknesses of traditional models of culture teaching/learning. Although the strength of a foreign language course depends, to a large degree, on the extent to which students are allowed to use and interact with the both the target language and culture meaningfully, many foreign language teachers find it difficult to overcome the inherent constraints of their context. As a result, these teachers tend to teach "knowledge about" the target culture, since "experience of" is difficult to reproduce realistically in the classroom. However, Nostrand warns, "Only when 'knowledge about' is put together with 'experience of' at least one other culture can understanding supplant the ingrained notion that all other ways of life are inferior" (cited in Abrate 1993, 32).

The intercultural communication project I designed and implemented was intended to provide the students with both "knowledge about" and "experience of" in that the participants would be confronted with significant cultural differences face-to-face. Then, through carefully guided exercises, I hoped that they would be compelled "to accept that 'my way' is neither the only way nor necessarily the 'right way'" (Abrate 1993, 32).

In addition, I wanted the students to discover cultural data rather than having static information about the target culture "fed" to them. Also, instead of focusing on the "target culture", I wanted to use my EFL students' native culture as the primary source of cultural data. More specifically, I wanted my EFL students to explain certain aspects of their native culture(s) to non natives with limited Spanish-proficiency in order to provide my students with an "authentic audience"

that would then respond, react, compare, and contrast the information to that of *their* native culture(s). In other words, the discussion and juxtaposition of the two cultures would provide a vehicle for my EFL students' foreign language development and intercultural learning.

While there were many reasons why I choose to adopt this particular approach, there are two that stand out in my mind. First, I wanted to acknowledge that students are not linguistic or cultural blank slates when they enter the second or foreign language classroom. On the contrary, they come with a wealth of experiences and knowledge that should be recognized and exploited if learning is to be meaningful. Regarding this last point, Lindstromberg says, "…people learn a language better if their experience in it is as full of meaning and as rich in images as possible. Meaning and mental images come only when connection is made with the learners' own world of experience. The greater the connection, the better the learning" (1990, cited in Rinvolucri 1999, 197). This view is also present in Ausbel's meaningful learning theory (Brown 1994), in second language acquisition research (Cummins, in Larsen-Freeman 1991) and in recent schema theories applied to the teaching of reading, writing, and listening comprehension.

I also believe that, "the subject we know most about is ourselves" (Murray 1993, 29). Therefore, many people find it easier to talk about themselves first and then, learn about others through their favorable or unfavorable reactions to the expressed points of view. I found theoretical support in Robinson who believes that the best way to expose students to another culture is to "build a bridge between the old and the new by providing culturally familiar content as the point of

departure for introducing culturally unfamiliar context at every level of instruction" (1988, 17). Two well-known experts in the field, Kramsch (1993) and Damen (1987), assert that before anyone can understand a target member's culturally-influenced behaviors, they must first become aware of their own culture-bound behavior. The way in which we interpret cultural phenomenon is colored by our subjective and, to a large extent, culturally determined perceptions. Therefore, I decided to start with the culture that was most familiar to my EFL students and build from there through description, comparison, contrast, and interpretation towards the unfamiliar culture (that of the American students).

After reading this brief overview of how both foreign language development and culture learning relate to the goals and objectives of the project that I designed and implemented and how these goals and objectives were intended to overcome the limitations of the EFL teaching context, I hope the reader is now prepared for the remaining chapters of this paper.

CHAPTER TWO

The present chapter is divided into the following four topics—sources of inspiration for the Intercultural Communication Project, goals and objectives of my Interim Year Teaching Practicum (IYTP), teacher-initiated action-based research projects, and the theoretical frameworks I used in designing, implementing, and evaluating the Intercultural Communication Project.

2.1 Sources of Inspiration for the Intercultural Communication Project

The idea for my Intercultural Communication Project evolved from two sources of inspiration. My first summer of coursework in the SMAT program as well as the goals I had outlined for my Interim Year Teaching Practicum (IYTP) represented the initial catalyst. A second source of inspiration was a casual conversation with my friend, Susan McDermott, a MAT alumni who also worked at the *Centro de Lenguas Modernas* (CLM) as the Resident Director of Central College's Study Abroad Program in Granada. During this conversation, Susan and I lamented the little interaction between international students and Spaniards at the center. It suddenly occurred to me that by having Susan's American students interact with the Spanish students in one of my EFL courses we could do something that might increase their interaction and perhaps improve the situation de-

scribed above. In so doing, I could also satisfy several personal and professional needs simultaneously.

Given my background, the thought of involving Spaniards and Americans in authentic and meaningful language and intercultural exchanges was obviously appealing to me. Although the participants of Central College's College Semester Abroad program received some intercultural training during their program's orientation and were housed with Spanish host families, the reality is that they spent from four to six hours a day in class with other international students. Consequently, with few exceptions, most of these students did not develop friendships with Spaniards, but rather with other English-speaking participants in their program. Therefore, in my opinion, most of Susan's students essentially had *an American experience on Spanish soil.*

On the other hand, the Spaniards learning English at CLM were busy with their daily lives of work or university studies, family, and friends. In addition, the majority didn't feel comfortable enough speaking English to initiate contact with the American students. More importantly, they assumed that they would have very little in common since Americans tend to be viewed negatively; commonly held stereotypes include arrogant, materialistic, ethnocentric, uncultured, and superficial. In fact, on more than one occasion, I have had students request to move to another group that was taught by a British teacher rather than an American teacher.

In short, it was clear to me that CLM's unique position of being the only school in Spain to house programs for both foreign students and host nationals,

thereby facilitating their interaction and mutual understanding, was largely an unfulfilled assumption. Neither increased cultural understanding nor improved language acquisition was being brought about by the fact that the students merely shared the same school and its resources. Research studies (Barro et al., cited in Byram and Fleming 1998) on students returning from study abroad programs demonstrate that mere exposure to the way of life in another country, even for a substantial period of time, does not necessarily lead to a positive intercultural learning experience. The authors of *Intercultural Learning in the Classroom* sum it up nicely,

> Intercultural learning does not happen by accident. A chance encounter between two individuals from different cultural groups, or between two groups from different cultures, does not imply or guarantee that the individuals or groups will be able to understand each other or to communicate effectively. Intercultural learning requires a structure; it means planning and preparation; it needs monitoring and guiding; and it necessitates evaluation to realize what has been learned and what change has occurred (Fennes and Hapgood 1997, 5)

Given the discussion above, I sensed that the intercultural communication project had the potential of leading to a learning experience that would be "rewarding interpersonally, linguistically, pedagogically, and developmentally for teacher and students alike" (Dörnyei and Malderez1999, 157). More specifically, I wanted to design and implement a context-specific approach to culture-based language teaching/learning that was tailor-made to meet the needs and interests of my EFL students and I, while simultaneously satisfying institutional requirements. In so doing, I would be able to explore issues that are of concern to me, personally and professionally, and to the field of foreign language teaching.

2.2 Goals and Objectives of my Interim Year Teaching Practicum (IYTP)

In addition, many of the goals and objectives I had identified for my Interim year Teaching Practicum (IYTP) lent themselves to carrying out an intercultural communication project. My first goal had to do with developing my ability to observe and reflect upon what I saw, thought, and felt before, during, and after teaching while bearing in mind Zeichner and Liston's (1996) distinction between "reflection-in-action" and "reflection-on-action". My second goal dealt with making a conscious effort to investigate some of the areas I had become interested in during my first summer at the School for International Training (SIT) which, amongst many others, included the importance of teaching language within appropriate and meaningful contexts, the influence of affect in language learning, the need to create classroom situations that require language to be used as a means of communication, the subordination of teaching to learning, the use of students' native language and culture as a vehicle for foreign language development and culture learning, etc. My third goal had to do with my interest in doing a number of "pinpointed" observations on such issues as clarity of instructions and explanations, teacher control versus student initiative, and proportion of time spent on required textbook versus teacher- and/or student-generated materials. My fourth goal expressed a desire to better involve my students in their own learning processes. Lastly, my fifth goal, related to keeping in touch with the SIT/SMAT community and to exploring the resources of professional associations and organizations.

2.3 Teacher-initiated Action-based Research Projects

The fact that I had thought of carrying out a teacher-initiated action-based research project, "whose intent is to help teachers gain new understanding of and, hence, enhance their teaching" (Larsen-Freeman and Long 1991, 327), is not at all surprising if one bears in mind that the educational philosophy of the School for International Training's Summer Master of Arts in Teaching Program is as follows:

> The educational practices in our master's degree programs are based upon experiential learning, whole person education, and learning through individual responsibility and community. Students are invited to see, describe, inquire into, and act upon their own experience and that of their learners. They are asked to use these practices to develop a personal approach to teaching, which is guided by what is happening in the profession, their classrooms, and the communities in which they work (SIT Catalog 1999-2000, 30)

Little wonder then that the prospect of carrying out a teacher-initiated action-based research project during my IYTP appealed to me. As a foreign language teacher with more than twenty years professional experience, I wanted to validate and explore my profession, my craft further. I also wanted to acknowledge that when teachers develop their own approaches and methods that integrate language and culture teaching/learning, systematically try them out, and judge the results, they are taking an important step towards satisfying the communicative needs of their students more effectively and accepting the fact that teachers are learners, too.

According to Mary Kennedy, "Teachers, like other learners, interpret new content through their existing understandings and modify and reinterpret new ideas on the basis of what they already know or believe" (1991, 2, cited in

Graves 1996, 2). However, in order to do so, we must recognize the validity of our own experience and “develop a purposeful reflective teaching practice” (Stanley 1999, 123). Recognizing that our professional growth as teachers is a lifelong process, will allow us to “develop and change from the inside out, through individual practice and reflection, and from the outside in, through contact with the experiences and theories of others” (Graves 1996, 2).

Once we accept the need and desirability of linking language learning and intercultural exploration together, the fundamental question which then arises is how to translate this goal into actual classroom practice. According to H. Douglas Brown, “the [language teaching] profession has at last reached the point of maturity where we recognize that the complexity of language learners in multiple worldwide contexts demands an eclectic blend of tasks each tailored for a particular group of learners in a particular place, studying for particular purposes in a given amount of time” (Brown 1994, 160).

In other words, there never was and probably will never be a “set procedure to follow that will guarantee a successful course because each teacher and each teacher’s situation is different” (Graves 1996, 5). As a result, most language teachers today draw from a wide variety of instructional approaches, methods, techniques, and materials that are “based on their own educational experiences, their personalities, their particular institutional, social, cultural, and political circumstances, their understanding of their particular students’ collective and individual needs, and so on” (Pennycook 1989, 606).

Consequently, language teachers must begin by asking questions about the intricate web of variables that are at play in their unique teaching contexts where the learning/teaching is to take place. For example, who are the learners? How old are they? Why do they want to learn the target language? What opportunities exist for the target language to be used outside of the classroom? What is the teacher's native language? Does he/she speak any other languages? What should the students know and be able to do? How will this be brought about? Are there any goals or objectives set by the institution?

Needless to say, "teachers plan and teach courses not in the abstract but in the concrete of the constraints and resources" (Graves 1996, 34) of the teaching context in which they work. Consequently, "these questions can only be answered in relation to real students in real classrooms who are taught by real teachers" (Damen 1987, 259).

2.4 Theoretical Frameworks Used in the Design, Implementation, and Evaluation of the Intercultural Communication Project

Implicit in the previous discussion is a process that Kathleen Graves calls *problematizing*, which is not to be confused with problem solving. According to the author, "Problematizing depends on the teacher's perceptions of the context, out of which arise problems to be solved. The teacher defines the problems. As a teacher problematizes her situation, she can begin to find workable solutions that make use of her experience and the resources available to her" (1996, 5- 6).

By considering both the tangible and intangible givens of a particular teaching situation, the reflective teacher can begin problematizing the challenges

of this context in order to make informed decisions about what must and can be done while accepting what cannot (Graves 1996).

Therefore, in the case of designing and implementing effective intercultural learning activities or projects, foreign language teachers must have

1) clear and well-defined aims that help structure the learning activity for a particular time, with a particular group, in a particular situation, and for a particular purpose.

2) an experience or activity that will provide the basis of the language/culture learning provided that students have a chance to interact with or react to the material at some point.

3) a means for students and teacher to process or reflect on the learning activity or experience. (Ryffel 1997, 32)

We can conclude then that language teaching is a purposeful activity in that the teacher clearly directs students' learning explicitly and implicitly by creating a stimulating environment that supports the underlying goals and objectives of the course. The authors of *The Self-directed Teacher* comment,

> The potential success or relative failure of a lesson [or course, for that matter] will often be determined by the amount of planning and preparation the teacher is able to devote to the lesson, class or unit of work, and the extent to which the preparation of lessons or units of work is tied in to the teacher's overall pedagogical goals. (Nunan and Lamb 1996, 43)

I would now like to discuss Fantini's (1993) Process Approach, which is a framework that I found useful in helping me maintain a balance between my EFL students' language learning, on the one hand, and intercultural exploration, on the other hand. After that, I will describe Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Cy-

cle, which proved to be an effective framework to process each of the in-class exchange experiences with my students and to reflect on my own teaching.

It must be remembered that my teaching context was, first, and foremost, a pre-intermediate, integrated language skills course with a pre-determined syllabus that focused primarily on (1) the development of reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills as well as (2) the English language system (i.e.- phonology, vocabulary, and grammar). However, given that I am a foreign language teacher who is committed to incorporating culture as an integral component of language courses, I found Alvino Fantini's (1993) Process Approach (PA*)* to language teaching and learning very helpful.

I was already familiar with this framework, since I had used it previously to teach Spanish in SIT's College Semester Abroad Program in Granada. Listed below are the seven stages of the framework which, when taken as a whole, suggest a process for developing course syllabi and individual lesson plans (1996, 40 - 41):

1) Presentation of new material.

2) Practice of new material within a limited and controlled context.

3) Explanation or elucidation of the grammar rules behind the material, where necessary or useful (more appropriate for adolescent and older learners than for young learners).

4) Transposition and use of new material (in accumulation with other materials previously learned by the students) into freer, less controlled contexts and more spontaneous conversation.
5) Sociolinguistic exploration of the interrelationships of social context and language use, emphasizing the appro-

priateness of specific language styles (as opposed to grammaticality).

6) Culture exploration for determining appropriate interactional strategies and behaviors, while also learning about values, beliefs, customs, and so on of the target culture.

7) Intercultural exploration for comparing and contrasting the target culture with the student's native culture.

Most foreign language teachers are familiar with Stages 1-4 since most language courses and textbooks have traditionally focused on linguistic structures and, more recently, on communication. However, the remaining stages (5 - 7) are vital for ensuring "that language work is always complemented by explicit attention to sociolinguistic aspects, cultural aspects, and the comparing and contrasting of target and native linguacultures" (Fantini 1996, 41).

Although the PA framework presents a cyclical sequence, it is important to understand that these stages need not be followed sequentially as they appear in the framework itself. In other words, it does not matter which of the seven stages one begins with, provided that the full cycle is eventually completed. Regarding this last point, it should also be emphasized that it is not necessary to complete all of the stages in a single lesson, but rather some of the stages can be left for subsequent lessons before starting the cycle all over again.

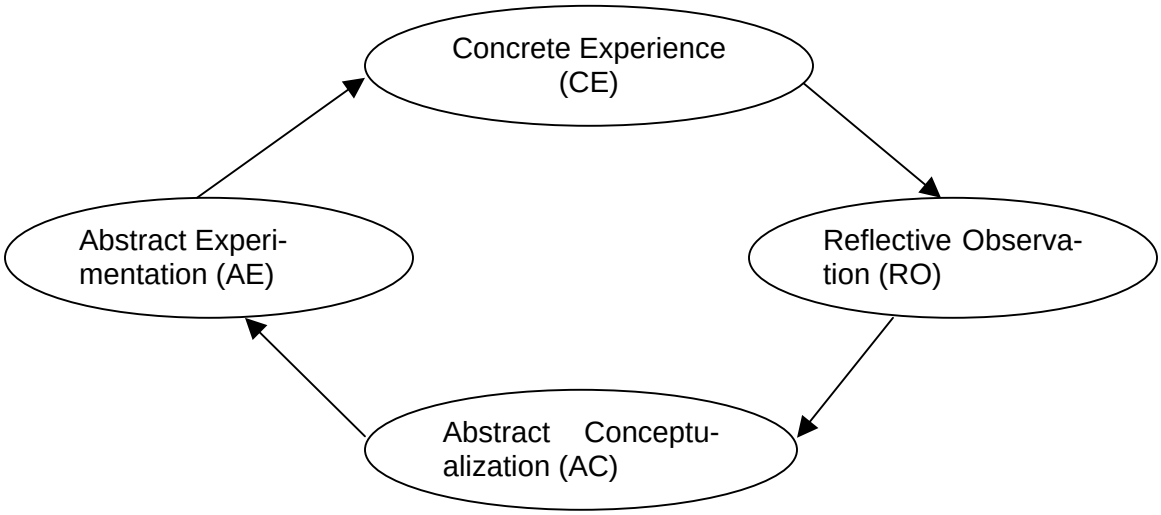
Although I did not follow Fantini's (1993) model religiously, it was always present in my mind during lesson and syllabus planning. First, I found the PA framework helped me to integrate skills development with vocabulary, grammar, and culture into theme- or context-based units of study. As a result, I found it easier to make decisions about what to include, omit, or build on from the text-

book as well as where to supplement with additional material. Second, the PA model enabled the intercultural communication project to be interwoven as an integral course component, rather than something that had been inserted as an afterthought. Indeed, the in-class language and culture exchange experiences, which specifically addressed the often-overlooked stages 4- 7 of the Process Approach, served as the culminating activity of the thematic units. Consequently, by employing the PA, I feel that I was able to provide instruction that not only was more personalized, but also more context-embedded, meaningful, and performance-based.

In addition to Graves (1996) Problematizing and Fantini's (1993) Process Approach described earlier, I knew that I would also need to apply a framework that would allow me to process each of the in-class exchange experiences with my students, on the one hand, and to reflect on my own teaching, on the other hand. Through SIT—with both the College Semester Abroad and the Summer Master of Arts in Teaching—I was already familiar with David Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Cycle (ELC).

According to Kolb, "This perspective on learning is called 'experiential' for two reasons. The first is to tie it clearly to its intellectual origins in the work of Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget. The second reason is to emphasize the central role that experience plays in the learning process" (1984, 20). Kolb's premise is that learning is a continuous process or cycle grounded in experience, which must, if it's to be effective, go through the following four stages: Concrete Experience

(CE), Reflective Observation (RO), Abstract Conceptualization (AC), and Active Experimentation (AE), as shown in the diagram below (1984, 20).



Thus, in the case of the intercultural learning project, each in-class language and culture exchange session constituted the students' concrete experience (CE). However, experience alone is insufficient to ensure effective learning unless learners use their experience as "the basis for reflection and observation. These observations are assimilated into a 'theory' from which new implications for action can be deduced. These implications or hypotheses then serve as guides in acting to create new experience" (Kolb 1984, 21). Therefore, based on Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle, the remaining three stages of reflection (RO), generalization (AC), and application (AE) are just as important for learning as the experience itself.

The first stage of processing is *the reflection stage* in which "students are guided to think about what happened to them as individuals or within the dynamic

of the group" (Ryffel 1997, 33). Here I asked my students to describe (and not interpret) what they felt and observed during the encounter.

The second stage of processing is *the generalization stage*, in which students must use their observations and reactions to make hypotheses and generalizations about the learning experience itself that can then be applied to future learning situations. Valuable questions at this point include "What did you learn about yourself/the group/the situation? What do you understand better about yourself/the group? What does this experience mean for you? What does the experience relate to? How could the experience have been different? (Ryffel 1997, 33)

The last stage of processing is *the application stage* in which learners are asked to link the implications of the new knowledge, awareness, or behavior identified in the previous stage with a new situation in the future. The questions here should reveal, this stage…[as]… the beginning of, and preparation for, the next experience. For example: How can the learning be applied? What can be done differently? What will happen if nothing is done? What can be done the next time in a similar situation? What forces will help or hinder application? (Ryffel 1997, 33)

It should be noted here, that due to lack of time, I had to ask my EFL students to respond to the questions from the last two stages of Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle (ELC) in a journal-like, written homework assignment (in either English or Spanish or both). I distinguished these reflective, journal-writing assignments from other written assignments by focusing on the text's message

rather than its form. In other words, I avoided correcting grammatical errors, except to clarify meaning, and wrote personalized comments that invited reflection and continued dialogue.

I had observed this technique used in my "Approaches to Teaching Second Languages" course during my first summer in the SMAT Program. I thought that this type of journal writing was appropriate for an EFL course that was attempting to integrate language and culture learning, on the one hand, and to link the experiential with the intellectual, on the other hand. Unfortunately, I did not have the foresight to make photocopies of what was included in the students' portfolios throughout the academic year.

As noted earlier, experience without reflection does not lead to learning per se. However, not only is this true for students, but for teachers as well. Only when concrete classroom experiences are coupled with student feedback and a purposeful process of teacher reflection, can there be a change in the teacher's practices and continued professional growth and development. Since the SMAT program required that I used Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle to reflect on my teaching after each lesson during my IYTP, I decided to apply it after each session of the intercultural communication project, too. The ELC, as applied to post-teaching reflection (Millet, Rogers, and Stanley 1999) allows the critical teacher to turn experience into learning through reflection. It includes the following steps:

1) Experience- The lesson or significant moments therein and the positive and negative emotions associated with it.

2) Reflective Observation- Significant details of the lesson in terms of teacher actions or state of mind, lesson design,

observable student performance and/or environmental factors that appear to affect student learning or lack thereof.

3) Abstract Observation- Analyze key events of the lesson in order to apply learning/teaching theories, to generate multiple options for why something happened or didn't happen, and to make generalizations for what helps or hinders learning.

4) Active Experimentation- Based on the conclusions from the analysis above, take intelligent action by generating plans to improve teaching in future lessons.

CHAPTER THREE

In the following section, I will provide information about the constraints and resources of the specific teaching context where the intercultural communication project took place. In so doing, I hope the reader will gain a better understanding of the some of the choices I made regarding the project's design and implementation. Nevertheless, it should be understood that "teaching always has been and always will be as much art as it is science" (Savignon 1983, 9). Thus, the very nature of teaching, like a work of art, implies that what is described herein is but one of the many other ways that "reality" could have been interpreted and acted upon.

3.1 Description of the Teaching Context: Centro de Lenguas Modernas at the University of Granada

The University of Granada's Center of Modern Languages, or *Centro de Lenguas Modernas* (CLM) as it is called in Spanish, is located in a beautiful, sixteenth-century palace that has been completely restored for teaching purposes. The Center boasts truly impressive installations: a multilingual library that is specialized in language teaching/learning and literature, a language laboratory with a well-stocked collection of international films, CDs, cassettes, slides, and other didactic material for either individual or group use, a state-of-the-art multimedia

lab equipped with fourteen computers which can be used in interactive language courses either in conjunction with those taught by the center's teachers or as self-learning programs, a café with a very congenial atmosphere, and up-to-date audiovisual equipment in all of the classrooms. Students studying at the center also have access to electronic mail and the Internet. In addition to publishing a cultural magazine called *Charlamos*, the center organizes a wide variety of cultural events: conferences, recitals, concerts, exhibitions, film cycles, visits to historic monuments and other places of cultural interest, etc. Interested readers can consult the center's website at http:www.ugr.es/~clm.

Since its inauguration in 1992, the Center of Modern Languages has offered both a variety of Spanish language and culture programs for foreigners, differing in length and in focus, and foreign language courses for local residents in such languages as English, French, Italian, German, Arabic, Modern Greek, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, Swedish, and Dutch.

As the Center's brochure states, "It's the combination of the two that make the center such an original venture and indeed, it is the only school in Spain which offers such possibilities. Here foreign students can share their daily lives with those of Spanish students, thus stimulating a mutual interest in their different languages and cultures. This contact is strengthened through a language exchange service, which gives students the opportunity to practice outside the classroom the language they are studying." To this end, CLM teachers are encouraged to facilitate these language exchanges (or *intercambios* as they're

called in Spanish) by putting students in touch with each other at the beginning of each trimester and during cultural events organized by the center.

CLM's foreign language program, which is not only aimed at Spanish university students but also at all individuals in both the private and public sectors, is intended to "promote the knowledge and use of those foreign languages in greatest demand through an essentially communicative approach in the most common cultural contexts" (CLM brochure). In my six-year experience of working at the Center of Modern Languages, all of my EFL students were Spaniards whose ages ranged from eighteen to late-fifties and who came from all walks of life—from university students (at both the undergraduate and graduate levels) to working professionals, housewives, civil servants, and the unemployed. Although their reasons for studying English varied from purely personal to urgent professional necessity, virtually all regarded English as "the most important language" due to its international *lingua franca* status and the fact that it is a common prerequisite for employment and/or professional advancement in Spain. Given the standard of living in southern Spain and the until now rare scholarship opportunities for study abroad, only a few of my students had ever been to an English-speaking country (usually Ireland, England, or Scotland and occasionally, the United States) to travel, work, or study.

The foreign language courses that are offered during the academic year (early-October through early-June) at the CLM consist of 120 hours of instruction per ability level distributed between three trimesters. In 1998-1999, each trimester cost 28,000 pesetas (approximately $185.00) and ran for ten weeks from: (a)

October 7, 1998 - December 18, 1998; (b) January 11, 1999 - March 19, 1999; and, (c) March 23, 1999 - June 11, 1999. Foreign language classes were two hours in length and met twice a week in the morning, afternoon, or evening on Mondays and Wednesdays or Tuesdays and Thursdays. Therefore, students received four hours of instruction a week, forty hours a trimester, and 120 hours per academic year. Students could also attend intensive foreign language courses, which offered forty-hours of instruction on a monthly basis in June, July, August, and September. During the summer, Specific Purpose courses (Business English, English for the Tourist Industry, English for Primary Teachers, etc.) were also available.

After taking an oral and written placement test, students were placed in one of the following eight ability levels: Beginners (Level I), Elementary (Level II), Pre-intermediate (Level III), Intermediate (Level IV), High-intermediate (Level V), Advanced (Level VI), Superior (Level VII), and Bilingual-like Maintenance (Level VIII). Although students could sign up for only one trimester, most continued throughout the entire academic year in order to complete the ability level in which they had been placed and consequently, receive a diploma. As the maximum class size was fifteen students, there were usually many groups for each ability level (particularly levels I – V) taught by different instructors and at different times.

During the academic year of 1998–1999, the English teaching staff comprised ten teachers: eight from England, one from Scotland, and one from the United States (me). Based on our contracts, most of us were required to teach

between twenty to twenty-four hours a week, serve on one of the various work committees, offer a minimum of four hours a week of office hours, and administer the oral and written placement tests. We had very little say in neither our schedule nor the levels we were assigned to teach. For example, during my IYTP, I worked with levels III, II, and I on Tuesdays and Thursdays for six hours of back-to-back classes and Levels IV, III, and I on Mondays and Wednesdays divided between morning and evening shifts. Furthermore, contractual regulations sometimes caused periodic changes in our teaching assignments from one trimester to the next or even mid-trimester. Nevertheless, despite the fact that there were frequent tensions due to certain administrative policies and a general lack of support, an extremely friendly and good-humored atmosphere existed amongst the teaching staff.

3.2 Level III Pre-intermediate Course Description, Goals and Objectives, Required Textbook, Intercultural Communication Project Schedule, and How the Logistical Arrangements for the Intercultural Communication Project Were Made

According to CLM's guide for the foreign language program, which I've translated into English for the purpose of this paper, the general course objectives outlined for the Pre-Intermediate level of English are:

> To begin this level, students should be able to understand and produce English with sufficient fluency and accuracy to handle situations and topics that arise in a daily context with relative ease. A systematic review of basic grammatical structures will be carried out especially designated for those students who still have difficulty.

The specific objectives to be achieved through this course include:

- Aural comprehension- the course includes some recordings of authentic material (conversations and interviews) and other material similar to that used in levels II and I. The students should be able to understand and respond to language that approaches more realistic use. The selected material is still relatively close to the students' personal experience.
-
- Oral production- the students should be able to communicate and participate in authentic conversations related to daily situations, survival areas, and personal life experiences (provided that they are within the established parameters of the course).
-
- Reading comprehension- the students should be capable of understanding and interpreting lengthy texts, including "graded readers" of a certain level of complexity. Topics of current interest are also included.
-
- Written production- the students should be able to produce relatively complex written assignments that deal with both their life experience and other topics of general interest.

The CLM guide also states that in addition to studying the communicative topics from previous levels in greater depth, the following topics will be studied in Level III:

- Skimming and scanning
- Dictionary use
- Participating in debates
- Correcting oneself
- Summarizing the gist of a text
- Evaluating
- Taking notes while listening
- Extracting main ideas from a text
- Expressing and giving advice
- Studying the structure of a text
- Extending and accepting invitations
- Making and accepting formal apologies
- Extracting general and specific information
- Requesting information for a future moment
- Guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words from context
- Expressing agreement and disagreement
- Asking for things without knowing the exact words

- Creating spoken and written narratives
- Taking leave/departing in formal situations
- Writing personal letters
- Speculating about the past
- Dividing a text into paragraphs
- Discussing health and illnesses
- Writing simple documents

The CLM guide then goes on to outline a long list of almost thirty grammatical structures, such as the use of “ever” and “just” with the present perfect tense, that are not worth copying here since they merely reflect the grammatical contents found in the textbook set for Level III. Although CLM’s foreign language instruction was intended to follow an “essentially communicative approach in the most common cultural contexts” the operative syllabus, as described above, appears to fall short of this objective to a considerable degree. Unfortunately, the same contradiction was true of the textbook that I was required to use.

As an experienced teacher, I know that

> Textbooks are written for general audiences and thus cannot, in themselves, meet the needs of a particular L2 class. The authors of these textbooks cannot foresee all the needs of individual teachers and learners. The search for materials leads, ultimately, to the realization that *there is no such thing as an ideal textbook.* Materials are but a starting point. Teachers are the ones who make materials work; they make them work for their students and for themselves in the context in which they teach. (Savignon 1983, 138)

However, in my particular teaching context at the Center of Modern Languages, we were obliged to use the manual that had been selected for each of the levels, require the students to purchase it, and complete specific units within specific time frames. For example, in the case of the textbook used for Level III, which consisted of fifteen units, I was expected to cover five units per trimester.

In fact, there was something of a competition amongst the EFL teachers to be further along in the textbook than one's colleagues. At this point, it would be useful to describe the textbook I was required to use.

The course textbook recommended for Level III was John and Liz Soars' (1991) *New Headway Pre-Intermediate*, which, according to its back cover, is:

> a multi-level course for adults and young adults who want to use English both accurately and fluently. Grammar and vocabulary are taught and explained thoroughly, and all four language skills are developed systematically. The *Headway* series combines traditional methods of language teaching and more recent communicative approaches.

Nevertheless, Damen (1987, 256) cautions, "Anyone reviewing current student textbooks cannot fail to be aware of their virtually universal mission: the development of the communicative competence of the students. What may seem less clear is the connection between the organization of the content and the stated mission." In my opinion, this is certainly the case of *New Headway Pre-Intermediate.* Despite its claim that the development of fluent and accurate communication is its goal, its organizational format amounts to be little more than a revamped "traditional format, presenting grammatical forms in a spiral of increasing difficulty, but, in the spirit of the times, encouraging the practice of these forms in various formats" (Damen 1987, 256). Thus, the table of contents of *New Headway Pre-Intermediate* (See Appendix A) includes Grammar, Vocabulary, and Everyday English under the Language Input Section and various Reading, Speaking, Listening, and Writing activities included under the Skills Development Section. Each unit of the textbook is organized with the following format: Presen-

tation, Controlled Practice, Language Review, Skills Development, and Everyday English.

The so-called “communicative activities”, which make up about one-fifth of the exercises for each of the fifteen units or chapters, are, in reality, closely guided and extremely structured since they merely serve as pretexts to reinforce the “Language Input” sections. Savignon (1983, 33) agrees, “Most language textbooks are, in fact, grammar books. They select and sequence language according to formal or structural criteria, which may, for instance, be embedded in a passage or a dialogue. But these are not *texts*; they are, after all, *pretexts* for displaying grammar.” Consequently, I have found that these activities neither lead to the development of the students’ communicative skills nor allow for meaningful interaction amongst the students themselves or with the teacher.

Not only do these oral tasks, which are usually based on a contrived reading passage, a listening exercise that sounds like a script being read aloud, or outdated pictures, tend to have no or very little connection to the students’ own experiences, but also they are geared for short, form-focused exchanges. The students, working individually, in pairs, or in groups, are required to use the specific grammatical structures and vocabulary previously introduced in the unit to do the following types of activities (Norman 1996):

- Fill in the blanks of sentences or short dialogues
- Complete true-false grids or information charts and tables
- Formulate questions for provided statements and vice versa
- Match given statements with pictures
- Interpret pictures
- Write and act out short dialogues
- Give opinions on explicit statements, situations, or topics.

Based on the previous discussion, it is not surprising then that I decided to design and implement a classroom-based research project that would allow for native English-speaking students to participate as volunteer language and culture exchange partners with my Spanish-speaking, Intermediate-level EFL students. Before concluding this chapter, I will briefly describe the scheduling of the five classroom experiences and how the logistical arrangements for these were made.

The first session took place in the first trimester, on November 10, 1998. The second and third sessions, both of which fell in the second trimester, took place on January 19, 1999, and February 16, 1999. The fourth and fifth sessions took place on April 15, 1999, and May 6, 1999, in the third and last trimester of the academic year 1998-1999.

I will now clarify how the logistical arrangements for these language and culture exchange experiences were made. First, I tried to schedule them intermittently throughout the academic year bearing in mind the following factors (a) the dates when each trimester started/ended as well as the vacation periods affecting scheduled classes, etc., and (b) the nature and topic of the regular coursework (skills development-wise and thematic unit-wise) that was being completed in my Level III class. Second, once the tentative dates and topics of the five in-class sessions had been determined, I conferred with Susan McDermott, the Resident Director of Central College's Study Abroad Program. She talked with her students about participating in the intercultural language and culture project,

explained the topics and dates in which they had been asked to participate in my Pre-Intermediate EFL class, and secured their commitment.

Therefore, about one week prior to each exchange session, I reminded Susan of the date, duration, topic, and minimum number of participants required for the forthcoming session. However, I never really knew exactly how many English-speaking students would come (above the minimum number I had requested) nor who these students would be. In other words, due to the class schedules, workload, and previous commitments or obligations of the Central College students, I had to accept the fact that those who volunteered to participate would vary from one session to the next. Lastly, I decided that each in-class exchange experience should last for approximately one hour. I made this decision for two reasons. First, I was depending on American students who were volunteering to come in their free time and I did not want to overburden them. Second, I thought that this was the maximum length of time that my Pre-Intermediate EFL students could be expected to sustain an all-English conversation.

3.3 Reasons for Choosing the Level III Pre-intermediate Group for the Intercultural Communication Project

One of the main reasons why I decided to conduct this project with my Pre-Intermediate (Level III) class in particular was that, of the three groups I had committed to follow during my IYTP, it was the group with the highest level of English. I felt as though, by Level III, my students needed to become aware of the fact that direct personal communication with those from another culture (and *not* mindless substitution drills and verb conjugation charts) was what language

learning was all about. I thought that if the project were successful, my EFL students would be motivated to continue learning English in the classroom and beyond.

My Level III class met on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 4:00 to 6:00 PM throughout the academic year of 1998–1999, but the twelve to fifteen students enrolled in the course changed slightly from one trimester to the next. Nevertheless, a core group of ten students remained in the course for all three trimesters. In retrospect, I realize that this "core group" was vital to the success of the course in general, and of the project in particular, as they played an influential role in welcoming and engaging the newcomers. Participant "buy-in" is a must!

With the exception of one woman in her mid-forties, all of my Level III students were in their twenties. Although a few worked, most of them were university students (both undergraduate and graduate) whose studies ranged from environmental science to medicine and primary education. The students who were from the city of Granada lived with their families and would probably continue doing so until they got married. There were also those who came from other provinces in Andalusia, but who were studying or working in Granada. This second group of students usually lived with a relative, friends, or in a residence hall (or *colegio mayor*) for university students. I'd have to say that the majority came from middle to upper-middle class families who could afford the tuition at CLM, university studies, fashionable clothes, leisure activities, and summer vacation homes on the coast.

Since English is now the primary foreign language taught in Spanish schools (French was up until the mid-1970s), my students had all studied English during most, if not all, of their secondary education. Nevertheless, due to such factors as large class size (35 - 40 students), lack of trained teachers, equipment, curricula, and student interest, their prior language instruction had tended to focus on grammar, vocabulary, and translation. Therefore, most of my students had had very little opportunity to actually use English creatively or interactively as a means of communication. None of these students had ever studied at the Center of Modern Languages previously nor had they ever had a native English-speaking teacher before. Most of them had never been to an English-speaking country and the few that had, only visited briefly with either family or friends. While some of my students wanted to learn English to go abroad to travel, work, or study, others wanted to improve their prospects of finding a job or to apply their knowledge to their university studies. Despite their personal reasons for studying English, virtually all of these students wanted to have a better understanding of the language and culture that is having a *huge* impact on their daily lives (i.e. , music, television programs, films, tourists, Internet, etc.).

Another reason why I decided to conduct this project with my Pre-Intermediate (Level III) class was due to the fact that not only had the students bonded as a group, but they had also responded extremely well to the type of supportive, yet challenging learning environment I strive to create in my classes. According to Savignon (1983, 122)

> Communicative language teaching requires a sense of community—an environment of trust and mutual confidence

> wherein learners may interact without threat or fear of failure. Good teachers have long recognized the value of community in all learning environments and have found ways to encourage group cohesiveness and responsibility. Communicative language teaching depends on these traits. Without community there can be no communication.

A learning environment such as the one described above underscores the critical role that affective factors play in the learning process. Indeed, Stevick asserts, [Language learners'] "success depends less on materials, techniques, and linguistic analysis, and more on what goes on *inside* and *between* the people in the classroom" (1980, 4). In the same vein, Underhill points out, "teachers who claim it is not their job to take [affect] into account may miss out on some of the most essential ingredients in the management of successful learning" (1989, 252).

In my opinion, the authors of the last two quotes are not proposing that language teachers focus on affective questions instead of cognitive aspects, but rather suggest that an awareness of both sides of the learning process can enhance learning experiences and outcomes. Therefore, in addressing what "goes on *inside* the people in the classroom", language teachers must attempt to stimulate positive emotions (self-esteem, empathy, and motivation) while ameliorating negative emotions (anxiety, fear, stress, anger, and depression) so that our students' cognitive learning processes can reach their full potential (Arnold 1999, 2).

However, teachers are also largely responsible for what "goes on *between* the people in the classroom" in that "even in non-teacher fronted classrooms, [teachers] are the focus of learners' attention and they inevitably provide models... Cognitively, we are good models when we provide examples of appropriate

use of the language to be learned in a way which can be assimilated well…Nevertheless, …since we provide affective models at the same time, it is important that these models also be appropriate" (Arnold 1999, 106). In order to model behaviors and attitudes that are nonjudgmental and accepting of our students, Carolyn Ryffel (1997, 33) adds,

> We need to be aware of our own cultural baggage—its values, beliefs, world view—and understand the extent to which we are a product of our own culture. Second, we should be clear about classroom norms and procedures…[and be sure that they] include respect for all opinions; a recognition that differences are not right or wrong, good or bad, but just different; the need for confidentiality (all discussions stay within the group); and full participation, which means being mentally engaged but not necessarily talking. Finally, no one—student or teacher—should be burdened with the role of being a spokesperson for a culture. Although everyone is a member of a culture, no one ever represents an entire cultural group.

In conclusion, language teachers have an enormous responsibility in establishing, developing, and maintaining a challenging, yet safe, secure, and accepting learning environment that is, of course, prerequisite for the emergence of a cohesive and well-functioning group and subsequent communicative language teaching/learning.

3.4 In-class Teaching/Learning Activities Used to Foster the Type of Learning Environment Needed for the Intercultural Communication Project

Given the discussion above, my Level III students and I dedicated a lot of time and effort to creating a solid "affective ground" upon which to build our positive learning environment. Between the onset of the course (Oct. 7,1998) and the first in-class language and culture exchange experience (Nov. 10, 1998), we es-

tablished group norms, clarified group goals, and set the tone for inter-member relations.

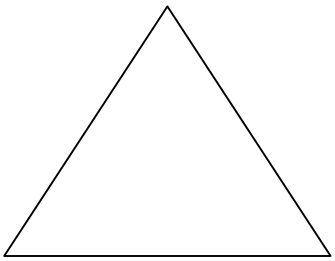
First, I began by changing the seating arrangement from desks that were pushed up against the walls in a U-shape to a tight, circle in the front half of the classroom. The psychological impact of this huddle-like formation, coupled with the fact that I sat as another member in this circle, literally set the stage for what was to come. Although we frequently used other configurations, as required by the particular activity that was taking place and my instructions, the tight circle remained to be the basic seating arrangement throughout the course.

Second, I identified my students' needs and interests by having them complete a student questionnaire (see Appendix B) that included the following questions: (1) Why are you learning English? (2) What do you need/want to do in English? (3) What do you find difficult? I also asked my students to write a paragraph or two in English or Spanish on the backside of this survey that described their work/studies, interests, concerns, and hobbies. Later, we had a lengthy group discussion about the information revealed in both parts of this survey.

The assessment of students' needs and interests in the first few days of a communicative language course is vital since, as Savignon notes in the case of non-obligatory language studies like those at the CLM, [learners'] "progress will depend on the ability of the program to respond to the interests they bring with them to the program. Although learners may be initially attracted to the foreign language (L2) study because they consider it to be challenging, elitist, or even

exotic [or simply useful], chances are that if they do not experience *success in terms of their own interests*, they will not pursue the studies for long" (1983, 125).

Third, we read the following blurb from the introduction of *Headway Pre-Intermediate* (1991, 6)

> There are three parts to learning a language in the classroom.
>
> You
>
> 
>
> Your teacher Your course book
>
> Remember! Your teacher can't learn English for you, but he/she can help. *Headway Pre-Intermediate* can't learn English for you, but it can help. What *you* do is very important if you want to learn English.

We used this rather simplistic drawing and paternalistic advice to identify my roles and responsibilities as the teacher as well as those of the students at both the individual and group levels, which then led us to discuss some of the characteristics of effective learning/teaching. At this point, I gave the students information about the course requirements, syllabus (including the intercultural communication project), and methods of evaluation/assessment. To the extent possible, I allowed for some negotiation of the above. I also introduced the following expressions that I expected the students to use in class "How do you say …in English?", "What does… mean?", "I don't understand…", "Please repeat…", "How do you spell…?", "Can you write…on the blackboard?", "I need a coffee

break", etc. Last, we evaluated our initial expectations and drew up more realistic individual and group goals, which we then discussed.

This explicit norm-building procedure was important since "institutional rules and regulations [or those imposed by a teacher] do not become real group norms unless they are accepted as right and proper by the majority of the members" (Dörnyei 1999, 161). Not only do well-internalized norms affect the quality of individual learners' academic work and morale, but also those of the group at large. According to one researcher,

> Much of the work that teachers usually do is taken care of by the students themselves; the group makes sure that everyone understands what to do; the group helps to keep everyone on task; group members assist one another. Instead of the teacher having to control everyone's behavior, the students take charge of themselves and others (Cohen 1994a, 60, cited in Dörnyei 1999, 161)

Fourth, we spent a good portion of the first month simply getting to know each other as individuals and as a newly formed group. According to the pertinent research, the single most important factor contributing to the development of positive group dynamics and inter-member relations, is "*learning about each other* as much as possible, which includes sharing genuine personal information" (Dörnyei 1999, 160). Therefore, I made a conscious effort to use the techniques and suggestions listed below, which have been summarized in the article *The role of group dynamics in foreign language and teaching* (Dörnyei 1999, 167)

- *Use Ice breakers*- Ice breakers are activities used at the beginning of a new course to set members at ease, to get them to memorize each other's names, and to learn about each other.
-
- *Use Warmers*- Warmers are short introductory games and tasks used at the beginning of each class to allow members time to

readjust to the particular group they are now with (reestablish relationships, implicitly be reminded of goals and norms, and at the same time to 'switch' from the mother tongue into thinking in and articulating in the L2.

-
- *Promote peer relations* by enhancing *classroom interaction* (using such activities such as pair-work, small group work, role play, 'mixer' classroom organization not only allows, but encourages people to come into contact and interact with one another, as well as helping to prevent the emergence of rigid seating patterns) and by *personalizing the language tasks* (choosing, when possible, activities with a genuine potential for interpersonal awareness-raising to allow members to get to know each other).
-
- *Promote group cohesiveness* by including small group 'fun' *competitions* in the classes, by encouraging (and also organizing) *extracurricular activities*, and by promoting the creation of a *group legend* (establishing group rituals, bringing up and building on past group events, creating a semi-official group history, [etc.]).

The first mentioned suggestion, "use ice breakers" was obviously used in only the first day or two of each trimester in order to put the new members of the course at ease, to get everyone to memorize each other's names, and to learn about each other through such fun activities as *silent line-ups* in which the students arrange themselves in a line without speaking or writing according to some predetermined category (i.e.- by year, month, and day of birth or by the distance from their place of residence in Granada to the CLM, etc.) or *find someone who…* in which the students must move about the classroom asking as many people as possible a variety of questions that determine if they fall into the categories outlined in the search form (i.e.- find someone who has more than four siblings, who has been to London, etc.).

The other three suggestions listed above, however, were used frequently throughout the academic year. For example, as far as “warmers” are concerned, I often began class with a series of rapid-fire questions to signal the switch from Spanish to English which “tested” the students’ aural comprehension and followed up on their personal lives (i.e, How did your driving test go?, Is your grandmother feeling better?, How was your weekend in Madrid?, etc.). I also used a wide variety of “mixer classroom organization” techniques (such as counting off, symbols written on a slip of paper, choice of “X” colors, etc.) to form pairs, small groups and teams; however, I frequently allowed the students to choose their own partners or to work alone, too.

I made an attempt to personalize the language tasks at every possible opportunity by using (1) Spanish magazine pictures of famous people or familiar places or situations as lead-ins for reading, writing, listening, and speaking activities; (2) students’ input for brainstorming and graphic organizer (mind mapping) sessions, and (3) local and national current news or events as the topics for discussion or writing assignments.

More importantly, I encouraged the students to talk about their own lives and concerns and I did likewise. I have found that the more I share of myself (within appropriate limits of professionalism), the more my students are willing to share of themselves. As a result, the students in my pre-intermediate class and I formed a deep bond that grew and developed during the year. We viewed each other as “whole people”, with strengths and weaknesses, rather than as “lan-

guage teacher" and "language learners". In his article *Evoking the Spirit in Public Education*, Parker J. Palmer adds:

> Teaching and learning, done well, are not done by disembodied intellects but by whole persons whose minds cannot be disconnected from feeling and spirit, from heart and soul. To teach as a whole person to the whole person is not to lose one's professionalism as a teacher but to take it to a deeper level. (1998/1999, 10)

Group cohesiveness was achieved through what has been described above and by

(1) using activities that were, at times, based on competition and, at other times, on cooperation;

(2) recognizing the students' varied learning styles or preferences and ability to use different learning strategies;

(3) occasionally getting together outside of class;

(4) encouraging the creation of a group legend or group rituals. For example, the intercultural communication project, our "huddle-like" seating arrangement, or the fact that these students established a tradition that whoever had a birthday had to bring in lollipops for the whole group, etc.

During the first trimester, the task of getting to know one another was accomplished through many of the suggestions listed earlier in conjunction with the first unit of *Headway Pre-Intermediate*, which, like the first unit of most foreign language textbooks, begins with basic personal information and the review of yes/no and open-ended questions. Nevertheless, I personalized the textbook's communicative activities by

(1) using such *Jigsaw* or *Information Gap* activities as asking students to bring in their family tree or photographs to share and discuss with a partner, who then introduced him/her to the rest of the group;

(2) playing a game that I call *Mystery Woman* in which the students try to discover as much personal information as they can about me by asking first yes/no and then open-ended questions, which is followed by a *Round robin* oral summary of all the information gathered;

(3) telling or writing collaborative *Chain Stories* based on visuals or a set topic;

(4) having the students conduct paired interviews or in-class surveys and polls;

(5) a long etcetera of other activities, exercises and techniques adapted from such sources as Pro Lingua materials, Jill Hadfield's (1984, 1987, and 1990) series of elementary, advanced, and intermediate communication games, photocopiable activities from *English File One* (1996) and *English File Two* (1997), Christopher Sion's (1985) *Recipes for Teachers* books, Penny Ur's (1992 and 1982) *Five-Minute Activities* and *Discussions that Work*, and other material listed in the bibliography.

Fifth, and last, I passed out a written questionnaire (see Appendix C) from *Recipes for Tired Teachers* (Sion,1985) around mid-term in which students were asked to complete a series of unfinished statements. The way in which students completed these statements allowed me to determine their overall satisfaction with the course (i.e.- "The class as a whole is…" or "When I tell other people about this class I say…") as well as other pertinent information (i.e.-"The best way to motivate me is…" and "When I am corrected I feel…" or "When I am not corrected I feel…"). After the questionnaires had been completed for homework, I held an in-class feedback session that led to a further redefining of our group goals, roles, rules, and norms.

In conclusion, by the time the first in-class exchange experience of the intercultural communication project took place on November 10th, my Level III students and I had thoroughly bonded and were primed for what lay ahead.

3.5 In-class Teaching/Learning Activities Used to Introduce the Concept of the Intercultural Communication Project to the EFL Students

Just before the first in-class exchange experience took place, on November 10, 1998, I followed the advice given in *Intercultural Learning in the Classroom* (Fennes and Hapgood, 1997), which I was fortunate enough to locate in the library at the Center of Modern Languages. The authors suggest that intercultural learning projects begin with a preparation phase or "initializing event" in order to engage the learners' interest in this type of learning and to help them see the need for such experiences. Thus, I decided to initiate the project by asking my EFL students to write a list of the current events or issues, occurring at the local, regional, national, European, or international levels, which appeared to have an intercultural dimension.

Once this homework assignment was completed, I divided the fifteen students into five groups and asked them to use their individual lists to write up a common group list, without repeating any of the items, on a sheet of poster-size paper. During this process, I wandered from group to group and helped with vocabulary, which I then wrote on the blackboard so it could become "group knowledge".

Afterwards, the posters were hung on the walls and the five groups took turns presenting their posters while the other group members listened. Not only

did the posters illustrate many examples of conflict based on political, economic, social, cultural, religious, linguistic, ethnic, regional, sexual orientation, and age-related factors at the international and European levels, but also at the national, regional, and local levels. Frankly, the amount of intercultural conflict displayed on the classroom walls spoke for itself. The students were able to see that many of these topics related directly to their personal experience and that, therefore, the intercultural communication project, which I had described at the onset of the course, was something worth pursuing.

I decided early on that the intercultural communication project had to begin by addressing the stereotypes that my EFL students had about other countries, in general, and about the United States, in particular. In addition, I thought that this topic could be linked to my students' becoming more aware of their own and others' lifestyles and behaviors since many stereotypes and prejudices seem to arise from these differences. Fennes and Hapgood (1997, 120) comment,

> An important element of any preparation for an intercultural project is a reflection about lifestyle, values, and cultural identity. This reflection should also lead to an awareness of what is taken as being obvious. Another aspect of preparation is becoming conscious of the images one has about the other cultures or countries involved in the project. These images strongly influence behavior and actions when one is discussing, meeting, or relating to people of other cultures or countries. Only if these images are conscious can they be questioned and possibly corrected as a result of the project or encounter.

Therefore, it is important to mention here that all of the above was tied into the thematic work about "lifestyles" we had just completed in unit two of *New Headway Pre-Intermediate* (John Soars and Liz Soars, 1991). More specifically,

we began by doing a reading exercise about people's lifestyles in different European countries. This then led to a discussion about the students' views concerning the accuracy of this supposedly "factual" information. I asked the students to reflect on the sources of their information about other countries/cultures in order to encourage them to think about the possible origins and consequences of their potentially prejudiced and stereotypical views.

We also worked extensively with the skills development section of this unit, which included:

(1) A pre-reading task in which the students were asked to write down the first five things that came to their mind when thinking about Britain. In small groups, they compared their lists and explained why those images had come to mind.

(2) A jigsaw reading exercise in which the students were divided into three groups and asked to read a portion of a magazine article about the views of three foreigners living in Britain while also answering the following questions: (a) Why did he/she go to Britain? (b) What does he/she do?, and (c) Find one thing he/she likes about Britain and one thing he/she doesn't like so much. Afterwards, the students had to find a partner from each of the other two groups to compare and swap information and to decide if a series of statements about those three foreigners were true or false.

(3) A communicative exercise called "What do you think?" in which the topics from the preceding exercises are "transferred to the students' lives" through the following questions: (a) What do tourists like doing in your country? Where do they go? What do they do? (b) Do you know any foreigners living in your country? What do they like about it? What do they find different?

Needless to say, this was the perfect starting point for the first in-class language and culture exchange experience. I reminded my students that a group

of American students would be coming to our next class and asked them to complete the following three homework assignments:

(a) Write a list of the images that come to mind when you think of the United States or American people. Reflect on the sources of those images and their affect on your opinions and behavior.

(b) Read a short editorial in Spanish (See Appendix D, Mata, 1998), published in the local newspaper (*IDEAL*), which discusses very eloquently the unique view that foreigners have of Granada in that they are sometimes able to notice things that are often overlooked and taken for granted by its natives.

(c) Prepare a summary of the short text that you were assigned to read in Spanish (See Appendix E, Mata, 1998), which accompanied the editorial described above, about six foreign students' impressions of Granada and its lifestyle. Be prepared to describe this person and his/her views to your American exchange partner. Think of WH-questions to ask your partner about his/her first impressions of Granada (Look at the questions from "What do you think?" on page 16 of the textbook). You should also be prepared to describe your lifestyle to your partner by explaining "how often you…..(watch TV, go out with friends, do exercise, go out to eat, go to the cinema/movies, etc.).

CHAPTER FOUR

In this section, I will describe the five sessions, which comprised the Inter-cultural Communication Project I carried out in 1998- 1999. I would like to remind the reader of the schedule for the five classroom experiences with reference to the following dates:

4.1 First Session: November 10, 1998
4.2 Second Session: January 19, 1999
4.3 Third Session: February 16, 1999
4.4 Fourth Session: April 15, 1999
4.5 Fifth Session: May 6, 1999

As such, one session took place during the fall trimester; two, during the second trimester; and two, during the third trimester. The description of each session includes warm-up activity, the session itself, student feedback and proc-essing, and post-session teacher reflection.

4.1 First Session: November 10, 1998

4.1.1. Pre-Session Warm-up Activity

Since I had arranged for the American participants to come to my class at 4:30 pm, my students and I used the first half hour of class to discuss their first homework assignment briefly (see “a” on page 54 of Chapter 3). I have to admit that I was disheartened by many of their images associated with Americans, even though my students kept repeating, “Well, that is except you; you’re not like

that". At this point, I told them that I could not guarantee whether the in-class exchange partners would confirm or contradict their views, but to remember that the United States is an incredibly diverse country and that there was no such thing as a "typical" American any more than there was a "typical" Spaniard. I also reminded them that by keeping an open mind and reserving judgment, they had a chance to see if there were more Americans, like me, who did not fit their stereotype, which would, of course, imply that their preconceived image was either erroneous or too limited.

I felt confident that the American students would demonstrate the attitudes and qualities that promote intercultural learning since they had volunteered, and had not been required to come to Spain or to participate in my Level III EFL classes. In addition, their program's orientation included training on such topics as the attitude and skills needed to live with a Spanish host family, take advantage of the experience, get involved in the culture, attend Spanish university classes, meet Spanish people, reserve judgment, etc.

Lastly, I put my EFL students in pairs or triads, based on the short foreign student profile they had been assigned to read and summarize, and allowed them to confer and practice together while I moved from group to group in order to help with vocabulary and review their prepared questions and information from the third homework assignment (see "c" on page 54 of Chapter 3).

4.1.2. During the First Session

When the seven American students arrived at 4:30 pm, I was glad to see that they represented a broad cross-section in that there was a mix of male and

female students from a couple of different ethnic backgrounds who came from different regions of the United States. I asked them to say their names as I ushered each one to the pair or triad of Spanish-speaking students in different areas of the classroom with whom they would be working. I had all the students put on nametags and briefly introduce themselves to the other members of their group in order to put everyone at ease and establish quick group rapport. I then asked my EFL students to begin the session by describing to their American partners the information about the foreign student (i.e., name, age, origin, things they liked or did not like about Granada, etc.) that they had read about for homework.

What impressed me the most here was the “buzz of communication” that immediately filled the classroom as the two (or three) EFL students worked together, with the aid of their American partner, to complete this task. As I wandered about the classroom, I emphasized that when in doubt my EFL students should ask their American partners how to say things in English or to simply insert a Spanish word occasionally. The native English speakers were instructed to provide the English equivalent or, when they did not understand what the Spanish-speaking students were trying to say in English, to ask for more information. In so doing, the conversations were kept flowing and concepts unique to the lifestyle of Granada, like *ir de marcha* (= to go out partying/bar hopping), *vida nocturna* (= night life), *ir de paseo* (= to go for a walk/stroll), *de madrugada* (= late at night, in the wee hours of the morning), *puente* (= long weekend), etc., were discussed. I was able to write most of this vocabulary on the blackboard so that others could refer to it.

By this time all of the students were relaxed and the conversations shifted, without any overt guidance, from a focus on the foreign student profiled in the newspaper to the exchange partners sharing their own views and describing their own lifestyles. At this point, my EFL students had an opportunity to compare and contrast their English-speaking partner's lifestyle in the United States to that of their own in Granada. As a result, my students learned that their American partners had a great deal of mobility, usually studied at a university that was not in their hometown, tended to have one or more part-time jobs, frequently had step-families, were often affiliated with a group (athletic, church, volunteer organization, etc.) and, in more than one case, were vegetarians, non-smokers, or non-drinkers. Throughout this portion of the session, I continued to circulate among the groups to listen in, help with the exchange of ideas and information, or to share a brief personal anecdote.

4.1.3 Post-Session Student Processing and Feedback-

Since I wanted to allow time for my EFL students and me to process the first exchange experience during our class time, the session was scheduled to last for about one hour. Therefore, although all of the groups were still thoroughly engaged in conversation, I had to step in to remind the participants that it was 5:30 pm. I commended each of the groups and thanked the American students for coming before they left the classroom. I could see that my EFL students were thoroughly exhausted from such a linguistic and intellectual challenge, so we agreed to take a five-minute break before using the model described below to reflect on the session.

As described earlier in Chapter Two, I used David Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Cycle to process my EFL students' post-session feedback as well as a vehicle for me to reflect on my own teaching. The reader is reminded that Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle (ELC) is divided into four phases: Concrete Experience (CE), Reflective Observation (RO), Abstract Conceptualization (AC), and Active Experimentation (AE). Thus, each in-class language and culture exchange session constituted the students' concrete experience (CE), whereas the remaining stages were used to guide the students' reflection about the experience.

In the first stage of processing, the *reflection stage*, one student began by saying that she was more aware of her stereotypical images now because she had been surprised initially by her partner's physical appearance. Apparently, she had anticipated a blonde-haired and blue-eyed American, rather than an Asian American. I responded by posing such rhetorical questions as: Do you look like a "typical" Spaniard? What do Spaniards look like? Do all Spaniards have dark skin, hair and eyes? In a country marked by such diverse cultures and peoples as the Celts, Iberians, Carthaginians, Romans, Goths, North Africans (or Moors), and others, I knew that they had some "food for thought".

Later, I could see a clear pattern emerging from their descriptions and emotional reactions to such questions as: "What happened? What did you observe? What emotions, feelings, [and] reactions did you experience? How were observations [or] reactions the same? Different?" (Ryffel 1997, 33). Initially, they were all excited, but understandably apprehensive. Later, they felt relieved to

have an initial task to focus on which made them realize that they could, and should, work as a team with both the other EFL students and the American student. Several mentioned that simply knowing that, if need be, they could use a Spanish word or two occasionally, made them feel more relaxed. By the time they began discussing their own lifestyles, most of the students reported feeling less inhibited and more confident about their ability to make themselves understood. However, understanding their English-speaking peer's impressions of Granada or lifestyle in the United States was a monumental effort not only in terms of different accents, vocabulary and colloquial speech, but also in terms of the concepts expressed. One student said that he had a headache from concentrating so much and a few joked that they needed to have a drink.

The second stage of processing is the *generalization stage*, in which students must use their observations and reactions to make hypotheses and generalizations about the learning experience itself that can then be applied to future learning situations. Valuable questions at this point include: "What did you learn about yourself/the group/the situation? What do you understand better about yourself/the group? What does this experience mean for you? What does the experience relate to? How could the experience have been different?" (Ryffel 1997, 33).

The last stage of processing is the *application stage* in which learners are asked to link the implications of the new knowledge, awareness, or behavior identified in the previous stage with a new situation in the future. The questions here should reveal, "this stage…[as]… the beginning of, and preparation for, the

next experience. For example: How can the learning be applied? What can be done differently? What will happen if nothing is done? What can be done the next time in a similar situation? What forces will help or hinder application?" (Ryffel 1997, 33).

Due to lack of time, I had to ask my EFL students to respond to the questions from the last two stages in a journal-like, written homework assignment (in either English or Spanish or both). I also asked them to explain what made the greatest impression on them and why, by referring to specific things that were said or done during the exchange session. I began our next class by having the students form the same groups they had been in during the first in-class exchange session. I then asked them to swap their homework assignments to compare and discuss what they had experienced and learned from the session. Finally, the students were allowed to choose a few thoughts from either their writing or subsequent small group discussion to share with the whole group. Afterwards, I collected these assignments to better understand my students' perspective on the experience and to check for signs of the project's objectives being met.

Because I was emphasizing cultural learning, I distinguished these reflective, journal-writing assignments from other written assignments by focusing on the text's message rather than its form. In other words, I avoided correcting grammatical errors, except to clarify meaning, and wrote personalized comments that invited reflection and continued dialogue.

After reading this first batch of journal entries, I can say that my students' feedback was unanimously positive. They all agreed that maintaining such a lengthy conversation in English was a struggle at times, yet they were all surprised that an hour had passed by so quickly. Most of the students said that the experience had given them more confidence in their ability to speak English with native speakers other than me. In fact, some students said that they liked having face-to-face communication, because they could actually see if their partners had understood them by their body language and facial expressions. Therefore, they knew when they needed to find another way to say the same thing or to use gestures or to draw a little picture.

All of the students felt that having a fellow classmate in their group, rather than a one-on-one situation, was not only less intimidating, but also contributed to their learning in that they were able to take turns and to work together. They also told me that doing a task that was related, but not personal, was a good way to ease into the second part that involved more personal sharing. In addition, many students now recognized how hard it must be for the American students to be immersed in an environment where only Spanish was spoken; one student commented that what he and his classmates had done for an hour was what their English-speaking partners were faced with doing day-in-and-day-out.

Although it was still very difficult for any of my students to relate to their English-speaking peers' lifestyles in the United States, many of them had become more aware of the uniqueness of their own lifestyle by having explained it to a foreigner and by hearing that person talk about their very different lifestyle.

Lastly, they all said that they liked having to write about the experience, because the process of putting thoughts onto paper clarified their thinking. A few students claimed that they after reading their rough drafts, they changed some broad evaluative statements into more neutral, descriptive language.

4.1.4 Post-Session Teacher Reflection-

As far as my observations and thoughts are concerned, I think I learned just as much if not more than the participants. For example, I was disappointed to see that despite what (in my mind) had been extensive preparation, my students continued to hold less than favorable images of other cultural groups. Frankly, there was a part of me that wanted to call the whole thing off or at least postpone it. However, I realized later that any change in their views was going to be a gradual process, stemming from the relationships that they developed with real individuals who could potentially counteract those views.

I was very pleased with my decision to place one English-speaking student with two (and in one case three) of my EFL students. Based on the cooperative learning and moments of comic relief that I witnessed, I understood that having a pair or triad pool their resources to complete a task or keep the conversation from stalling was not only more effective, but also implied less risk. Consequently, I decided to follow this arrangement throughout the intercultural communication project.

I also agreed with my students that it was useful to begin the session by having them summarize information about an unknown, third party. The fact that my students could initially rely on something they had prepared for homework

and practiced beforehand bolstered their confidence. At the same time, this task eased them into the second part of the section in that both parties could agree or disagree with the views expressed in the newspaper text without the risk of offense. After that portion of the session, both English-speakers and Spanish-speakers seemed more willing and comfortable making personal statements that described their own habits and lifestyles. I realized that for some of my students it was a big leap into extended, spontaneous speech and that these students would have probably preferred using a written questionnaire. However, I felt that while this would have provided security, it would have prevented them from learning how to communicate without a written script of prescribed questions. While I did not expect my students to become professional ethnographers, I did want them to practice a technique that is used frequently in ethnographic interviews: the skill of listening carefully to the interviewee's responses in order to come up with other open-ended, probing follow-up questions that further elicit the interviewee's feelings and experiences. In reality, this technique mirrors the characteristics of effective communicators engaged in the continuous, give-and-take process of expressing, interpreting, and negotiating meaning (Savignon 1983).

Concerning the first stage of processing the experience, it might have been beneficial to include the American participants, but it just seemed too complicated to do so. I also knew that Susan McDermott, the director of their study abroad program, would be discussing this experience in her next weekly meeting with them. At first, I regretted not having had the time to go through all three

stages of processing the experience in class. However, I realized later that the written format with subsequent sharing, described earlier in this section, was just as effective. Thus, I continued to follow this format for the generalization and application stages for the other four in-class exchange experiences. On a personal note, I sensed that I was going to have to be a three-ring circus leader for each of these in-class experiences in that I had to act as a language consultant, animator, and mediator for each of the groups while simultaneously attending to the topic and task of the session and the clock.

4.2 Second Session: January 19, 1999

4.2.1 Pre-Session Warm-up Activity

Once classes resumed after the holidays and we had reacquainted ourselves as a group with several new members, we worked on a thematic unit about food. Through a series of reading, writing, listening, and speaking exercises, which I will not elaborate on here, the students learned a lot of food and cooking related vocabulary, expressions of quantity and measurement, countable and uncountable nouns, ordinal numbers and adverbs of sequence, the imperative tense, ingredients and instructions of recipes, British and American money, and British meals. The students also used pictures from American supermarket advertising fliers to do several food shopping role-plays in which they practiced being the customer and shopkeeper based on such variables as age, gender, socio-economic status, etc. They also watched a satirized cooking show called “Cooking with Arlene” from the video series *On Track One*, followed by a series of communicative activities.

I had decided early on that the intercultural communication project should include the topic of food since it represents “a basic human need [that] touches all aspects of life, health, sickness, death, celebration, family, and friendship, and constitutes an ever-present yet irrational element of culture” (Abrate 1993, 32). In addition, the eating rituals and attitudes toward food of any given country can be attributed, in large part, to the values, norms, and lifestyle espoused by that culture. Therefore, I thought that the topic of food tied in well to the topic of lifestyles that had been dealt with in the first language and culture exchange session. Finally, most Spaniards, and many EFL textbooks published in Britain, consider American food to be synonymous with fast food. Of course, the proliferation of McDonald’s, Burger King, and Wendy’s in Europe does not help counteract this image. Other commonly held stereotypes include that Americans do not cook, but rather warm up a package of frozen or canned food; that we only eat as a source of nourishment; and that families do not sit down daily to enjoy a meal together.

After telling my students that I had scheduled another in-class language and culture exchange session for January 19, 1999 in order to discuss the differences and similarities between Spanish and American meals and eating habits, I divided my fifteen students into five groups. I then had the three members from each of the groups decide which Spanish meal (i.e., breakfast, lunch, or dinner) he/she wanted to investigate and report on to the English-speaking partner who would be in their group and who would, in turn, describe the meals and eating habits of his/her family in the United States. Although many Americans do not

view food as symbolically or eating as such a sensory experience as it is in Spain, there are still many social and cultural implications that can be explored and compared.

Therefore, I thought by having the students examine the who, what, where, when, why, and how of these three meals and their associated practices, they would learn that food and eating are a means of exploring both their own culture and that of another country. Fortunately, the book, *Intercultural Learning in the Classroom* (Fennes and Hapgood, 1997), included a questionnaire about "Everyday Meals" (see Appendix F) with such an angle. So, after providing my students with a photocopy of this questionnaire, I asked them to do the following two homework assignments:

> (a) Use the questions listed in section two of the questionnaire to prepare notes for a five - ten minute presentation about the Spanish meal you chose to represent.
>
> (b) Use all of the information from the questionnaire to think about the kinds of questions you want to ask your American exchange partner. What do you want to know?

As a final note, I told my students that this was intended to be an informal speaking exercise and that they would NOT be allowed to simply read their notes aloud. Therefore, before ending class that day, we identified some of the characteristics of an effective presentation. For example, "dry running" the presentation with a friend or classmate, taking several deep breaths before beginning, establishing and maintaining eye contact with the listeners, speaking clearly and slowly, using humor, etc.

On January 19th, the day of the second language and culture exchange, I began class by grouping the students based on the meal they had chosen to represent. In other words, the five self-designated representatives for each of the three meals were grouped together so that they could compare their information and practice discussing their topic with their peers. After that, I asked the members of each of these groups to count off to five in order to form new groups that consisted of a representative for each meal. I then allowed the members of these five groups to confer and organize themselves for another ten minutes or so. During both stages, I circulated among the groups to check their progress and to help resolve questions and doubts concerning wording, vocabulary, or any other issues.

4.2.2 During the Second Session

When the five American students arrived at 4:30pm, I was glad to see that there were only two new exchange partners. The others had decided to continue on with the project, for the time being. Once again, I asked them to say their names as I ushered each one to the triad of Spanish-speaking students in different areas of the classroom with whom he/she would be working. I had all the students put on nametags and briefly introduce themselves to the other members of their group in order to put everyone at ease and establish quick group rapport.

I then asked my EFL students to begin the session by stating which Spanish meal they would describe and suggested that the order of each five-ten minute presentation be (a) breakfast, (b) lunch, and (c) dinner. I reminded my students that they should not read from their notes, but rather present the informa-

tion. I also explained that there would be a brief question and answer period following each presentation. Therefore, I advised the participants that as they listened to each presentation they should jot down the questions or comments they wanted to make afterwards. Finally, I told them that the session would end with my EFL students asking their English-speaking exchange partners a series of questions about food, meals, and eating practices in their region of the United States.

After explaining the structure of the session, I stepped aside to let them get to work while still being available for consultation. As I monitored each of the groups, I was impressed with the level of autonomy that I observed and how engaged both listeners and speakers were. Although my students had been provided with a questionnaire to orient and structure their work, no one read their written responses to question one, followed by question two and three, and so on as I had feared. On the contrary, they attended to the themes suggested by the questions and presented coherent and cohesive information about their topic while making eye contact and establishing relaxed and friendly rapport with their "audience".

In addition, most of the students used "I statements" or expressions such as "in my house", rather than broad, sweeping generalizations about what happens in the "typical" Spanish home. This was an especially important point, since there have been many changes in the traditional Andalusian lifestyle in recent years. Although good eating remains a strong tradition and priority in Spain, the fact that many Spanish women now work outside the home has meant busier

schedules, a growing tendency to buy food on a weekly basis at large supermarkets (as opposed to on a daily basis at specialized shops), the use of microwave ovens, and the consumption of more processed or convenience foods.

I also observed that even though the American students lived with Spanish host families and were, therefore, familiar with the topics, there were many moments during and after the presentations in which they suddenly understood Spanish breakfast, lunch, and dinner practices better than before. For example, the negative memories many older Spaniards have towards *pan integral* (a dark whole wheat bread that was the main staple during the Spanish Civil War), the importance of bread and wine during meals as symbols of Christ, the ingredients of many popular dishes, some of the differences between urban and rural meals and eating practices, historical reasons explaining the popularity of pork and pork-related products, the tendency to offer and insist on second (and even third) helpings, etc.

Since the basis for an individual's food preferences is frequently influenced by his/her culture, I encouraged several American students to qualify their likes and dislikes of such dishes as rabbit, kid goat, blood sausage, and bull's tail, rather than making a disgusted face or saying, "gross". At the same time, my EFL students seemed to gain insight into their own culture, because I heard many students comment, "Oh, that's interesting. I've never really thought about …[that aspect]" during their peer's presentation or exchange partner's questions.

In the second part of the session, my EFL students asked their exchange partner a series of questions, from either the questionnaire or their own work,

about the food, meals, and eating practices of the United States. Although we had discussed American meals during our thematic unit from *New Headway Pre-Intermediate* (Soars and Soars, 1991), they were still very interested in obtaining information firsthand. I was delighted to see that most of the English-speaking students had taken the initiative to bring in some family photographs (Thanksgiving/Christmas/Hanukkah celebrations, barbecue cookout, soup kitchen where student volunteered, vegetable garden, New England lobster/clam bake, etc.) and food-related products that they had received in "care packages" (maple syrup and recipe for pancakes, peanut butter, Tollhouse chocolate chips, salsa, oriental noodles, etc.). By examining these objects and entering into a dialog about them, my students were able to go from their initial view of the American diet (hamburgers, French fries, and Coca Cola) to one that recognized the influence of regional, ethnic, religious, and socio-economic factors. As such, the fact that one's food-related traditions and eating habits are determined largely by one's cultural values and norms or lifestyle was made apparent.

4.2.3 Post-Session Student Processing and Feedback

The second in-class exchange experience, like the first, was scheduled to last for one hour so I could at least process the reflection stage with my students before class ended at 6:00. Once again, even though all of the groups were still thoroughly engaged in conversation, I had to close the session due to the time constraint. I commended each of the groups and thanked the American students for coming and for bringing in their photographs and realia. As they left the class-

room, I told my students to take a five-minute break before we began reflecting on the session.

Similar to the first in-class exchange experience, we did the first stage of processing in class with the ELC and the remaining two stages were assigned as a journal-like written homework assignment. When I asked my students to describe (and not interpret) what they felt and observed during the encounter, they all agreed that they had felt much more relaxed and comfortable with both their performance and their English-speaking partners. They attributed this to the following factors (a) it was the second time around, (b) the structure of the session (short presentation followed by question and answer period and questionnaire/object-based interview), and (c) my instructions that had helped them understand not only the topic, but also the nature of the assignment. Several students mentioned feeling really proud of themselves, because the only Spanish words they had used were names of foods or dishes like *jamón serrano* or *paella* that have no English equivalent. A few students said that "really listening" to their classmates' presentations was easier because they had been encouraged to write questions and comments and to raise these points at the end of each talk.

All of the students said that they really enjoyed the photographs and food-related items and commented that it was an interesting focal point for the second part of the session. Apparently, having a series of prepared information-seeking questions, from either the questionnaire or their own work, coupled with the chance to discuss and examine photographs and objects, helped my students ask their English-speaking partners questions that might have gone unasked

otherwise. They also felt that such tangibility helped them understand the comments of their English-speaking peers better. A number of students said that they were really learning a lot about themselves and each other and a few actually thanked me before leaving class that day.

4.2.4 Post-Session Teacher Reflection

Once again, I think I learned just as much if not more than the participants. I was feeling pretty good about coordinating this whole experience and for having found a way for both groups of students to learn about each other and themselves. Although I was making no attempt to formally assess gains in my students' proficiency in English or changes in cultural awareness, I could see that these in-class exchanges were beneficial in both respects. For example, not only did my students seem less inhibited about their ability in English language skills, but also less intimidated about interacting with native speakers. It appeared that they were beginning to realize that "knowing" a foreign language and being familiar with its culture means that one possesses some of the tools needed to gain entry into another way of life.

Placing only one English-speaking student with three of my EFL students in this encounter, like the first time, was a good decision in that it allowed for greater intimacy amongst the group members and implied less risk for my students. I agreed with my students that it was useful to begin the session by having them give a short presentation on a topic they knew well and had prepared for homework. I gave explicit instructions about how the questionnaire "Everyday Meals" was to be used as a starting off point, rather than as a crutch. In so doing,

I recognized the security that this would provide some of my students without jeopardizing the give-and-take of natural speech in which one does not usually have a written script of prescribed questions. Lastly, because I knew that listening activities are more effective when they require students to do a task, I thought that by encouraging them to take notes during each presentation would help them be more attentive listeners, allow for practice of “active listening” skills, and hold them accountable for contributing to the exploration of the topic.

With regard to the second half of the session, I can take no credit for the photographs or food-related objects that the American students shared with my students. I found out later that it had been Susan’s suggestion. After seeing my students’ handling the packages, discussing, and even tasting these products, I realized that not only did they allow my students to interact with the English-speaking participants more effectively, but they also acted as a springboard for the discussion of related and broader issues. As such, my students were able to generate their own questions without having to rely on the questions from the questionnaire. Consequently, I had the impression that my students were becoming more confident about expressing themselves with whatever means they had to get their message across and more skilled at asking sensitive and sincere information-seeking questions. In my mind, this meant that they were, in fact, going through and learning from each of the stages of Kolb’s (1984) Experiential Learning Cycle. I also observed that having the participants discuss an inanimate object that they could see, touch, smell, and feel produced two effects. First, it made meaning tangible and second, it diffused the encounter. It was as if the

packet of Tollhouse chocolate chips, for example, was the mediator. It made the meaning perceivable and was less threatening than abstract and unknown references.

On a final note, I felt like less of a three-ring circus leader during the second in-class experience. Although I still had to act as a language consultant, animator, and mediator for each of the groups while simultaneously attending to the topic and task of the session and the clock, I felt less harried and more able to simply enjoy watching the students interact. I think that this had to do with the clear topic, objectives, and structure of this session in addition to the fact that it was the second time around for me, too. Lastly, I was feeling more comfortable with my role as cultural mediator between the two groups. In other words, both groups of students identified me as someone who was equally familiar with both languages and cultures. Therefore, my personal experience in language learning and cultural adjustment "gave me the clout" to sympathize with both groups without being partial to or defensive of either one.

4.3 Third Session: February 16, 1999 4.3.1 Pre-Session Warm-up Activity

When Bonnie Mennell, my Interim Year Teaching Practicum (IYTP) advisor from the School for International Training's Summer Master of Arts in Teaching Program, came to observe me for a week at the Center of Modern Languages, my Level III students and I had been working on a *New Headway Pre-Intermediate* (Soars and Soars, 1991) textbook unit that dealt with (a) asking for a general description of people, places, or things ("What + verb (to be) + subject + like?"), (b) the form, meaning, and use of comparative and superlative adjec-

tives by comparing two or more places in terms of a variety of factors (i.e., size, cost of living, weather/climate, lifestyle, public transport, shops, etc.).

Although I did not want to promote a "my-town-is-bigger-and-better-than-your-town" showdown, I had foreseen that this was another great opportunity to invite a group of Susan's students from Central College to my class. I informed my students that I had arranged for five American students to come to our next class so they could describe and compare the Spanish towns and cities with which they were familiar to their English-speaking exchange partners. I also explained that the American students would describe and compare the different towns and cities in the United States with which they were familiar.

I had arranged for the English-speaking students to come at 4:15pm so we would have time to determine exactly which Spanish and American cities/towns were going to be described and compared and on what basis of comparison. I greeted the five students when they arrived on February 16th and was surprised (terrified, shocked, and horrified was more like it) to see that they were all newcomers to the in-class exchange sessions. To make matters worse, I was feeling very anxious about Bonnie's presence in my class even though I wasn't intimidated by her and considered this portion of my IYTP to be a rare privilege and an honor.

I passed out nametags to all of the students and asked them to write their names and the towns/cities they represented. After the students shared this information with the rest of the group, as a way of introducing themselves, I realized that there were not as many cities/towns represented as I had hoped. Panic

set in as my mind began to reel with how I was going to arrange the grouping of Spanish- and English-speaking students.

However, before I attempted to coordinate the groups, I wanted the students to identify the topics that would serve as the basis for comparison. So, I wrote “population (size)” on the blackboard and asked my students, “Can you think of other things about your cities and towns that we can compare?” My EFL students called out such suggestions as age, weather, climate, geography, landscape, food, music, nightlife, and festivals and I wrote them on the blackboard. I also invited the American students to contribute to this list and they added the following items: houses (architecture), traditions/customs, religions, education, monuments, sports, and industry/business.

I felt that I could not have the two groups of students simply count off by five, for example, because I was concerned with the variety of Spanish and American towns/cities represented in each group. Therefore, I asked the English-speaking students to sit/stand in different areas of the classroom designated as group one, group two, and so on, while I quickly referred to the information on my EFL students’ nametags to determine which three Spanish-speaking students would be in each of the five groups. Unfortunately, it turned out to be as confusing as it sounds here.

In any case, once the five groups were formed, I told the students to take five minutes to get acquainted since these were new exchange participants. According to Bonnie’s notes, “it seems the time you allowed for the members to get to know each other was essential for the groups’ feeling relaxed”. I then called

their attention and told the participants that we were going to begin the discussion. I asked the students to (a) take turns describing the town or city where they were from in terms of the factors listed on the blackboard and to (b) compare that city or town with another city or town with which they were familiar. I also told the students that they could use the maps and brochures of Spain and the United States that I had brought in. As I spread these resources out on the floor in the center of the classroom, I was delighted to see that many of my EFL students had brought in their own maps and brochures, too.

4.3.2 During the Third Session

The groups started working on the task described above immediately and the level of genuine interest and engagement that filled the classroom struck me. Regarding this last point, Bonnie wrote, “They really seemed to *come alive* describing [their cities or towns] to each other”, “…Clearly they were fascinated with being in a discussion with native speakers”, and “[Your students] were *really focusing* to understand”. As I circulated among the groups, I was delighted with the amount of communication in English that was taking place. However, I noticed that the comparative structures were not being used as often nor with as much accuracy as I had hoped. Bonnie wrote in her notes here, “Did *real* interest in learning [about each other] overshadow focus on using comparatives?” So, although I wanted to allow the students to experience spontaneous, free speech, I also wanted them to see that the comparative and superlative structures lent themselves naturally to the topics being discussed. Therefore, a number of times I tried to discretely “pull the students back on task” by catching the topic of their

conversation and making a summarizing comment that modeled the use of comparative and superlative structures. For example, “Oh yes, I agree it’s much faster and cheaper to go to Seville by bus rather than by train”.

While I did hear some description and comparison of American cities and towns, I noticed that most of the conversations were focusing on Spain. The American students obviously recognized that “The best source of information about a culture is someone who has lived extensively in that culture” (Seelye 1974, 136). Therefore, it was understandable that they wanted an “insider’s view” on such topics as: Which town on the coast had the best beach and nightlife? Were the “Holy Week” processions (that take place over Easter) better in Granada or Seville? What was the cheapest way to get to Cadiz? Where was the best place in Granada to rent ski equipment? Since my students seemed to be equally interested in these topics and they were, in fact, practicing both their speaking and listening skills, I made no attempt to change the course of their conversations. I believed that if the in-class exchange experiences were to be truly effective and meaningful for the participants, I had to maintain a balance between providing structure and clear objectives, on the one hand, but without driving out the spontaneous expression of the students’ needs and interests, on the other hand.

When I called the session to an end at 5:30, I thanked the American students for coming and told my students to take a five-minute break. I also reminded the students that this was another opportunity for them to arrange an *intercambio* (language exchange). Therefore, I encouraged them to exchange

phone numbers so they could meet on their own outside of class. While I prepared for the last part of class, Bonnie described the encounter in her notes as,

> [A] *really* strong experience for your students to be in an all-English conversation for an hour [in which they were] really describing and giving information about Granada and Spain. In the two groups that I could overhear, your students did hear about American cities and towns, but the emphasis stayed on here [Granada]…It's the reality they share. Comparatives arose naturally from time to time, but not 'natural' as a prime structure for the type of discussion going on.

4.3.3 Post-Session Student Processing and Feedback

Since, we were well past the mid-point of the Intercultural Communication Project, I wanted to conduct a brief feedback session when the students returned to reflect on the reasons why these American students were being invited to come to our class. I began by stating that the language and culture exchanges were intended to provide opportunities in the classroom to (a) practice and use the English language skills developed in class, (b) speak English freely and spontaneously for an extended period of time, (c) practice listening to and understanding a different accent and manner of speech, (d) learn about the American students' culture and lifestyle in the United States, and (e) help the American students better understand you and your way of life since, as Spaniards, you are all "experts" of the local language and culture. Bonnie described what was said above as, "[a] clear, helpful overview of your reasoning".

Afterwards, I asked each student to explain briefly why we should or should not continue having these in-class exchange experiences. I am grateful that Bonnie tried to capture my students' actual words and comments in her notes below:

- “[The in-class exchanges are] very interesting, because I don’t have another time [to do them]”.

- “They’re good for practicing speaking and listening to English”.

- “It’s difficult to understand my partner’s accent. For example, she says ‘twennyun’ [twenty-one]”.

- “Their pronunciation is different from your pronunciation. I can’t understand other [English-speaking] people sometimes. We understand you, because you are our teacher and you speak clearly so we can understand”.

- “It’s important to listen to different accents and pronunciation. We need to understand different accents and pronunciation and learn new words, too”.

- “I like to meet with another person from a different country. I know where she comes from [now]”.

- “It’s difficult to speak English [with my partner], because I don’t have the words…I forget” [I commented that I had seen this student drawing pictures during the session and she responded] “yes, it helps when I forget the words”.

- “[During the sessions], you learn about another culture”.

- “It’s much funner than the book. We can talk about many things”.

- “[During the sessions], you can speak English to someone and understand someone speaking English to you”.

- “It was more interesting for Juan Andrés. He asked the American girl her phone number and they’re going to meet tonight”.

- “For me it’s difficult, but very interesting. It makes me think more fast…faster”.

- “[It’s] very interesting, because it’s another situation. We can do other things”.

- “I like it, because I can practice the things we study in class and learn new things, too”.

- "I feel good speaking only in English for so long a time. I want to do more [in-class exchanges]".

Throughout this whole group feedback session, which worked out very well in that it allowed the students to express their overall feelings about these in-class experiences, I tried to practice the art of "active listening" as taught at SIT. In other words, after listening carefully to each student, I tried paraphrasing what he/she had said, followed by a response that Bonnie described as "brief, but natural." In sum, although some of my Level III students found these sessions more difficult than others, they all identified a number of reasons why we should continue. After that particular session, which I was only partly satisfied with, I needed to hear some affirmation of the perceived usefulness of these language and culture exchanges. Later, I asked the students to complete the remaining ELC processing stages on their own by doing another journal-like writing assignment as we had done after each of the previous sessions.

4.3.4 Post-Session Teacher Reflection

Despite my attempt to structure the session so that the students would compare cities and towns in *both* Spain and the United States on the basis of many different factors, I realized that the participants were intent on exchanging and obtaining information about their "shared reality". In other words, the interests and practical concerns of these twenty-something-year-old university students had to do with the "here-and-now" of Granada and where to spend Easter vacation, money, partying, recreation, etc. As such, I was reminded that, "each

interaction with a stranger is an adventure into uncharted territory, and one cannot predict the turn of events" (Seelye 1974, 138).

While there is a lot of truth in Seeyle's comment, I think it was especially true in this particular exchange session for two reasons. First, my EFL students did not have a series of set questions that they had prepared beforehand. Therefore, without the benefit of an established task and prepared questions, my students were not able to "direct" the course of the interview. While I considered the English-speaking students to be more than mere language and culture "informants," in that I wanted them to ask questions also, the reality is that the interviewees dominated the third exchange session, because, as native speakers, they had the communicative skills to do so.

In addition, this third session made me more aware of one of the project's flaws—the fact that I had not secured a group of American students who were willing to come to *all* five sessions. As such, the English-speaking students who volunteered to participate varied from one session to the next depending on their class schedules, workload, and previous commitments or obligations. Of course, this circumstance can be viewed either positively (as a resource) or negatively (as a constraint) for as Kathleen Graves states, "Resources and constraints are two ways of looking at the same thing" (1996, 32). On the one hand, my EFL students were exposed to a greater number of participants, which, in turn, meant that they had the opportunity to establish relationships with that many more English-speaking students and to hear a greater variety of accents and manners of speech. However, on the other hand, this contextual circumstance also meant

that it was a lot more difficult for the participants and me to establish the necessary rapport, security, and commonly shared goals and objectives that intercultural learning requires.

4.4 Fourth Session: April 15, 1999

4.4.1 Pre-Session Warm-up Activities

Once the third, and last, trimester of the 1998-1999 academic year began, my Level III students and I got reacquainted. At this point, there were only twelve students in the group since a few had dropped out after the second trimester. Enrollment at the CLM usually drops slightly between the second and third trimesters, because many university students feel they do not have the time to continue studying English when their final exams are approaching. In any case, we resumed our work by doing a textbook unit that dealt with some of the structures that are commonly used to express varying degrees of obligation or to give advice ("have + to + infinitive verb", "should + infinitive verb", and "must + infinitive verb"). More specifically, we

(a) Discussed the pro's and con's of a number of different professions based on what this job required (i.e., wear a uniform, work long hours, get up early, work inside, etc.) followed by a "guessing game" listening exercise.

(b) Completed a reading exercise about two teenagers—a fifteen-year-old computer programmer and a fourteen-year-old top model—and the things they had to do to become successful and what they have to do on a daily basis.

(c) Read and discussed several "Dear Abby"-type advice letters as well as the columnist's responses.

(d) Listened to three people giving advice about visiting their country in the month of January while completing a chart

> about the information given on the weather and clothes to bring, things to do there, and the country's food and drink. As a follow-up homework assignment, they used "have to", "don't have to", "should", and "must" to write a letter to a foreign friend who was planning on studying in Granada and needed advice about his/her stay (i.e., passport, visa, money, documents, clothes, health, accommodation, etc.).

In addition, the "Everyday English" portion of this unit dealt with some of the structures and expressions used to extend, accept, and refuse an invitation. We did a listening exercise in which the students had to determine which flow-chart-like pattern of invitations and refusals or acceptances was followed in each of the dialogues. We then practiced other alternatives that could have been used given a change in such social or situational factors as the age of the speaker/listener and the relationship between the speaker/listener. I related the above to the students' lives by asking them to make a five-day date book and to write in all the appointments, obligations, and previous arrangements that they really had during this five-day period. Then, the students stood up and "mingled" to make plans/arrangements (i.e., go to the movies, go for a walk, have a cup of coffee, go out to dinner, etc.) with each of their classmates who, in turn, accepted or refused the invitation based on his/her date book. I also encouraged the students to explain why they could not accept an invitation by using the structures of obligation we had studied. This context-based exercise worked out really well, because the students had the opportunity to use the inviting, refusing, and accepting structures and expressions based on their own interests and for their own purposes. I learned later that the students actually followed through on these

plans and did, in fact, meet to go to the movies, for a walk, shopping, etc., as arranged in class.

While planning the intercultural communication project, I had predicted that another in-class exchange experience would tie in nicely here given both the topic and grammatical content of this unit. I thought that my EFL students could advise their American exchange partners on how to resolve the problems or difficulties they had experienced (or were still experiencing) with their home stay families, with life in the city of Granada, or with the Spanish language and culture in ways that were both effective and culturally appropriate. Fantini (1997, 11) notes, “Whereas effectiveness is often a judgment from one’s own perspective, appropriateness is based on judgments made from the host’s perspective.” Furthermore, I knew from both personal and professional experience that most individuals experience varying degrees of frustration, intercultural conflict or challenges, and even anger or depression while adapting to a foreign culture. I do not claim that what is commonly known as “culture shock” can be avoided entirely but, through some of the techniques described below, its toll can be lessened for both ourselves and for the host nationals with whom we interact.

I had used “cultural assimilators”, “culture capsules”, “culture clusters”, and “critical incidents” successfully while working with SIT’s College Semester Abroad Program. According to Seelye, “The first two techniques, cultural assimilators and culture capsules, deal with ‘mini-exposés’ of a small unit of target behavior that is confusing to an American. The third technique, culture clusters, sketches broader relationships among several cultural fragments” (1974, 100).

The last technique, sometimes called “critical events” (Hess 1997, 29), systematically studies an encounter with host nationals and/or the host culture that went awry. Based on a failed intercultural encounter that the foreign student experienced or a cultural *faux pas* that he/she committed, the student is asked to (a) identify the encounter as a critical difference between the two cultures, (b) reconstruct what happened and in what context, (c) obtain more information from a cultural informant about what may have occurred and why, and (d) reinterpret the incident on the basis of this new information in order to make appropriate adjustments in his/her behavior.

Therefore, when I reminded Susan of the topic and date of the upcoming in-class exchange experience, I asked her to tell the volunteer participants to think of one or two problems or difficulties they had experienced (or were still experiencing) with their home stay families, with life in the city of Granada, or with the Spanish language and culture.

I then explained the topic of the fourth intercultural session to my EFL students and had them to count off to three in order to form four groups of three students. After that, I gave each group a photocopy and asked them to read for homework a different cultural assimilator (See Appendix G), which (a) described a critical incident or point of miscommunication or misunderstanding between an American and a Spaniard, (b) listed several options as to how the American should respond, or (c) explained the cultural appropriateness of each of the alternatives from the Spanish perspective. I also asked the students to identify a few other everyday realities, behaviors, or social interactions that might represent

a “critical incident” for an American visiting Granada, the reasons why they thought this could be considered as such, and what the foreigner should do.

4.4.2 During the Fourth Session-

I began class on April 15th by having these four groups assemble to discuss their homework assignment. First, they talked about the particular cultural assimilator they had read and checked to see if they all agreed on the same response and the subsequent explanation provided. Then they compared and discussed their lists of hypothetical critical events, the reasons why this may be viewed as such by an American, and what the American should do to adapt to the new culture. During both parts of this process, I sat in briefly with each group to help with vocabulary, pronunciation, and the expression of their thoughts and opinions. Given my bicultural background, I also tried to explain some of the reasons why the items on their lists were points of potential conflict. Shortly before the American students arrived, I asked my EFL students to fold the photocopy of the cultural assimilator over so that “Section C”, which explained the cultural appropriateness of each of the given reactions to the incident, could not be seen.

When the four English-speaking exchange participants arrived, I asked each one to join one of the four existing groups and to take a few minutes to get acquainted. Later, I explained that this session would consist of two parts. In the first part, my EFL students would read a cultural assimilator that described a critical incident or point of miscommunication between an American and a Spaniard. The English-speaking participants would then have to choose one of the alternatives listed as to how the American should respond in this situation. Afterwards,

my EFL students would explain to their exchange partner the cultural appropriateness of his/her choice.

In the second part of the session, the American participants would describe one or two problems or difficulties they had experienced (or were still experiencing) with their home stay families, with life in the city of Granada, or with the Spanish language and culture. The Spanish-speaking members of their group would act as “cultural informants” who would try to provide “information about the nature of and background to this event” (Hess 1997, 31). The EFL students would also try to give advice on how to resolve the problems or difficulties that had been described in ways that were both effective and culturally appropriate from the Spanish perspective. I also reminded the students that the session would last about one hour; therefore, I suggested that they spend about fifteen or twenty minutes on the first exercise and the remaining time on the second part of the session.

The four groups began the first task by dividing the roles or work to be completed. Thus, one of the three EFL students in each group read the episode from the photocopied cultural assimilator out loud. Another EFL student read the three or four alternative responses out loud and then asked his/her American exchange participant to choose the option they considered most appropriate. At this point, some of my Spanish-speaking students started pretending that it was a game show and said things like, “Congratulations! You chose the correct answer! You’ve just won a BMW!” or made a buzz sound at an incorrect choice and told their partner, “You should try again. It’s not ‘A’; so, is it ‘B’, ‘C’, or ‘D’?” The

American students understood that they were not being laughed at and enjoyed the humor, too.

When the groups revealed “Section C” of the photocopy, in order to discuss the cultural appropriateness of the different choices, there was still a lighthearted and relaxed atmosphere. In reality, the American students did not make many culturally inappropriate choices, due to the fact that they had done similar exercises during their program’s orientation and, by that time, they had been in Spain for about seven months. In any case, it was a relaxed and humorous warm-up for the second part of the session, which involved more personal sharing, on the part of the English speakers, and sympathetic comments and questions on the part of my EFL students.

Given the nature of the second task, I told the students that rather than moving in and out of the groups, I had decided to position myself strategically in the center of the classroom. This allowed me to “listen in” on each of the groups’ conversations simultaneously without being overly physically present. As each American student described an encounter in which they had been baffled, frustrated, embarrassed, or hurt by either a host national’s words or actions or simply by a reality of the foreign culture, my Spanish students listened attentively. They appeared to be very interested in how a mispronounced word, a household norm, or a passerby’s glance or comment could turn into a personal drama for their exchange partner. As Hess explains,

> In a critical event there is a setting in which people are acting or interacting in a more or less routine way. Something happens which breaks the routine, something unexpected that intensifies or modifies the action and draws out different be-

> haviors. A drama of some sort unfolds. Eventually there is a climax to the action, for good or bad, and then a denouement in which there may be apologies, congratulations, efforts to pick up some of the pieces—or it may be an event in which the denouement occurs entirely within the individual as he or she mulls over what happened. (1997, 30)

As I sat in the center of the room "eavesdropping" and taking notes on vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and errors for each of the groups, I realized that much of the dramatic narrative or reconstruction of these critical events was far beyond the proficiency level of most of my Level III students. However, I noticed that in each group one or two of them interrupted occasionally to ask for clarification of a word or the sequence of events. In the end, their familiarity with the social and cultural context in which these everyday experiences took place, coupled with an adequate understanding of the narrative, allowed them to "put the pieces of the puzzle together" so to speak.

For example, in one of the groups there was an American woman who was deeply offended when her male Spanish teacher paid for her drink at a local bar. Since he had not extended an invitation (such as "This one's on me"), but had discretely picked up the tab without her knowing it, she had interpreted his behavior as "a come on" and an attempt to "pick her up". I decided to observe this group closely, because I knew for a fact that my pre-intermediate students did not understand these colloquial expressions. Nevertheless, they apparently understood enough of the total communicative act (which included gestures, movements and grimaces) to surmise her emotional reaction and displeasure with the event. They then realized that this woman had misinterpreted the inci-

dent, because she was unaware of the local customs regarding buying rounds of drinks or “beating” one’s friends, relatives, co-workers, and acquaintances to secretly picking up the tab as a display of generosity.

I was impressed with how these three students worked together to provide their English-speaking partner with the necessary cultural explanations, comments and advice that allowed her a chance to reconsider the premise of her original interpretation. What more, I overheard all of my EFL students using many of the structures and expressions for expressing obligation and giving advice that we had practiced in class. Of course, they were not always used accurately (for example, some of my students included the “to” of the infinitive verb following the modals should and must), but this did not seem to interfere with their intelligibility or the successful completion of this task.

4.4.3 Post-Session Student Processing and Feedback-

As usual, I called the session to an end at 5:30 pm, thanked the American students for coming, and told my EFL students to take a five-minute break. Afterwards, we discussed the first stage of processing in class and the remaining two stages were assigned as a journal-like written homework assignment. When I asked my students to describe (and not interpret) what they felt and observed during the encounter, they all agreed that they were feeling more and more relaxed and comfortable with these exchange experiences. They attributed this to (a) the trusting and lighthearted relationship that was developing among the participants in each group, (b) the structure of the session (the “game show” atmosphere of the cultural assimilators followed by the American students’ retelling a

personal critical incident and the groups' subsequent discussions, comments, and suggestions), and (c) the fact that I did not circulate among the groups increased their sense of autonomy.

Similar to the first in-class exchange experience, the students felt that the cultural assimilators task, which could not be ascribed to the participants personally, was a good way to ease into the second part of the session since it involved more personal sharing. While all of the students admitted that they had not understood a lot of the narratives during the second part of the session, they were confident that they had, in fact, captured the gist. They were also really pleased to have acted as "cultural informants" who had possibly helped their exchange partners see or understand things in a different light. Most of the students seemed to be gaining an awareness of the impact of their own and others' cultural conditioning. In other words, the fact that incidents—ranging from a *piropo* or suggestive comment made by a man to a woman passing by, the treatment of animals, smoking in public buildings, behavior of drivers and motorcyclists, public displays of affection, or the concept of punctuality—could be perceived and interpreted so differently.

At this point, I gave each of the groups the individualized notes I had taken throughout the session. These notes consisted of three columns where I had tried to jot down the vocabulary needs, idiomatic expressions, and errors I had overheard for each group member. The students had a few minutes to look these over and ask me any questions or express any doubts. It was obviously hard to take notes on four different groups simultaneously, but not being directly involved

in the students' interaction allowed me to assess both the session and the students' individual performance. More specifically, I had a much better idea of who needed more controlled practice with the modals must and should, who was skilled at using communication strategies effectively, and who was least empathetic to his/her exchange partner. Lastly, I noticed that while the students were reviewing these notes, many of them were able to correct their own errors, which meant that they might not have been errors at all, but rather mistakes. In any case, I think the students appreciated having something tangible to refer to since I had decided at the onset that tape recording these sessions was unwise.

4.4.4 Post-Teaching Reflection

The fourth exchange experience, like the others, was just as much of a learning experience for me as it was for the students. The fact that I had positioned myself in the center of the classroom gave me a whole new vantage point from which to view the session. Although I had not been an intrusive participant in any of the previous sessions (at least I do not think so), I had still intervened to help with vocabulary, to resolve communication blocks, and to support the participants' efforts. I suppose I was trying to ensure successful communication amongst the participants, much like a parent hovering over her infant who is learning to walk. Bonnie's week of observing my classes gave me the idea of adopting more of an observer role for the fourth exchange session. I figured by then the students were equipped to work autonomously and should have the satisfaction of being able to produce and comprehend spoken English on their own.

It is hard to say whether the American students who participated in the fourth exchange session went on to internalize these new interpretations and adjust their behavior or expectations accordingly. I *do* know, however, that my EFL students made explicit some of "the social knowledge required to manage even the most ordinary activity or most routine social relationship" (Barro, Jordan, and Roberts, 1998, 84) in an intercultural context, thereby giving their exchange partners a glimpse into what it is like to see through Spanish eyes.

4.5 Fifth Session: May 6, 1999

4.5.1 Pre-Session Warm-up Activities

Prior to the fifth, and last, in-class exchange experience, my students and I worked on thematic unit entitled "The Way we Were" that dealt with the structures of "used to + base form verb" and "would + base form verb" to express habitual past actions and states. More specifically, this unit dealt with the "generation gap" that has often characterized the parent-child relationship at different points in recent British and American history. Some of the highlights of the practice stages of this unit included:

(a) A listening exercise about a woman who was a young girl in the 1920s and the things she used to do that shocked her parents, which I thought tied in well to a textbook reading exercise about the British suffragette movement. As a follow-up homework assignment, I asked the students to find out from their parents or older relatives when women got the right to vote in Spain and how had the roles of Spanish men and women changed in this century. This led to a very heated discussion in the following class about past and present gender roles in which the students expressed their views with supporting evidence from their parents', grandparents', and their own lives.

(b) A listening exercise about two people who were born on the same day and in the same year (circa WWII), but whose lives had been very different. However, I set this up as a “jigsaw listening exercise”. So, I divided the students into two groups and each group listened to a different recording. Afterwards, I asked the students from Group A to find a partner from Group B to exchange information about their respective person. As a follow-up discussion, we had an interesting talk about the influence of where, when and into which family one is born.

(c) A listening exercise about a woman, who was a teenager in the 1960s, describing her rebellious youth. Since this was a somewhat stilted listening exercise from our textbook, I offered my students a more natural version by talking for about fifteen minutes in a very conversational, non-EFL teacher tone about my teenage years in the 1970s. Of course, the structures of “used to + infinitive verb” and “would + infinitive verb” were very useful for describing how my two older sisters, who were in college at the time, used to bring me to rock concerts and wild parties and introduce me to great music and books. Finally, the students wrote a composition, which they shared with a partner later, about the things they used to do or believe in when they were teenagers or children and the person (or people) who influenced them the most as they were growing up.

(d) A monologue from a 1988 Bruce Springsteen concert in Madrid that I went to with my brother, who was visiting at the time, in which “The Boss” talked for about ten or fifteen minutes about his teenage years as a lead-in to a song called *The River*. The first time the students listened to this recording they were absolutely “blown away” by his thick New Jersey accent and claimed to have only understood a word or two here and there. I then gave the students a gapped tape script (see Appendix H) of the monologue and asked them to work with a partner to fill in the blanks with either “used to + base form verb” or “would + base form verb” as they listened to the recording again. Although they were able to do this cloze exercise, most of meaning and cultural references continued to elude them. So, we discussed the monologue line-by-line. I helped the students paint a visual image of what was described in the monologue by acting out a lot of the scenes and by continually drawing attention to the subject—a teenage boy from working-class New Jersey in the 1960s who was going through some major family/generation gap struggles. I also made reference to the glossary (see Appendix H) of unfamiliar vocabulary I had included on the backside of the tape script. By the time I was convinced that the stu-

> dents had thoroughly understood the context, we listened to the recording once again while they followed along with the tape script. The meaning and emotion described were so clear now that I observed the students smiling, chuckling, and mouthing the words. The magic of this moment—my memories of this unforgettable concert combined with the fact that my students had fully understood something that a short while ago they had deemed "impossible"—was a very powerful experience for me.

At this point, I reminded Susan of the topic, date, and number of English-speaking students I needed for the final in-class exchange session since my EFL students were now prepared to discuss some of the issues raised in this unit with their English-speaking peers. The transition from a parent-child relationship to a parent-young adult child relationship is, as we all know, typically fraught with conflict and struggles. While this is certainly true in the United States, I think it is even more of an issue in contemporary Spain.

Given the major social, political, and economic changes that have taken place in Spain in the last quarter of a century, I have witnessed an ever-widening generation gap. Although the traditional, close-knit family structure continues to be a permanent feature of Spanish society, the respective value systems and social realities of parents and their offspring are often diametrically opposed nowadays. In addition, since most of my students still lived at home with their parents and were financially dependent on them (due to both cultural and economic factors), I knew that this was a topic that not only concerned my students, but also one that they had strong feelings and opinions about.

On the other hand, students who are learning Spanish as a foreign language are invariably exposed to the Hispanic concept of kinship without truly be-

ing aware of the lifelong consequences of membership to this network. Two Spanish teachers who have attempted to change this inadequacy explain,

> References to the close-knit extended family are always present in Spanish language classes, but samples of the realities, complexities, and challenges that this value implies for the members of this group are rarely made available. For the language student, this larger family simply means a larger group of people. Since the deeper cultural implications and complications are overlooked it is obvious that students will impose their own view of the world and therefore will misinterpret the concept. (Evans and Gonzalez, 1993, 39)

Through my work with SIT's College Semester Abroad Program and the many conversations that I have overheard between American university students at the CLM, I was more than aware of this tendency. I had frequently heard these students make comments in which their Spanish peers were "judged" on the basis of American views towards individualism, self-reliance, and pragmatism. For example, a twenty-something-year-old Spaniard still living at home was all too often referred to as a "loser", the twenty-two-year-old Spanish man who declined an invitation to go hiking with some American friends, because he had to spend the day with his grandparents, was told to "get a life", and the twenty-year-old Spanish home stay "sister", who was afraid to ask her parents for permission to go to the Mardi Gras-style Carnival in Cádiz, was dismissed for not getting a job and telling her parents "where to go".

The examples above serve to illustrate the obvious need for intercultural understanding on this front. In her book *Spain is Different*, Helen Wattley-Ames sums it up,

> Americans and Spaniards differ markedly in their beliefs regarding the importance of individualism and how the individual fits into society. The most visible differences are often superficial, but those that are less visible are often the most fundamental and can cause misunderstanding or friction. (1999, 23)

Through our skills development work and discussions in this thematic unit, as well as the previous in-class exchange sessions, my EFL students were aware that in the United States and the United Kingdom "the expectation is that children will leave home by the end of their teens [frequently to go to college or university in another part of the country] and will delay departure or come back to live [with their parents] only if forced to do so by a limited job market, high housing costs, or a personal crisis" (Wattley-Ames 1999, 24).

Bearing the above and the grammatical structures of this unit in mind, I asked my EFL students to write between six and ten open-ended questions, which would elicit their exchange partner's views on some of the issues that had been raised in this thematic unit. After the students had completed this task, which was done in class, I had them compare, revise, and discuss their questionnaire with another classmate. Throughout this process, I checked in with each pair of students to check their progress, to assist with vocabulary, and to ensure both the comprehensibility and appropriateness of their self-generated questionnaires. Regarding this methodology, two educators make the following comment,

> Students are more likely to learn something when they themselves perceive a need for it; language learners will benefit more from the teacher responding to their requests for an item of vocabulary or for a better way of saying some-

> thing, once they have themselves tried the task and have identified their problems with it. (Lynch and Anderson 1992, 63, cited in Norman 1996, 599).

Since I wanted to allow each individual the freedom to determine what they were most interested in discovering and to then make the best use of their language skills to do so, this approach seemed the most appropriate. In any case, as I reviewed my Level III students' questionnaires, two things impressed me the most. First, the breadth of topics covered, which ranged from curfews and chores to career choices and church, as well as the obvious interest that they had in finding out about the American students' lives and social reality in the United States. Second, the degree of linguistic accuracy reflected in their questions, which included, by way of a few examples (a) Could you stay out as long as you wanted, or did you have to come home at a certain time? (b) Did you use to argue with your parents a lot? If yes, what did you argue about? Do you argue with them now? (c) Did your parents influence your decision about what you are studying at university? (d) How do your parents feel about you living in Granada for one year?, etc.

For homework, I asked the students to copy their six to ten questions over neatly and to practice asking them to a classmate before the fifth, and last, exchange session, which was scheduled for our next class. I also cautioned them of something to the effect of, "Interviews are structured, not to drive out the spontaneous, but to have something to fall back on to keep the conversation rolling, and to enhance obtaining certain specific information" (Seelye 1974, 139). Therefore, this was not a formal interview in which question one is read aloud and then

responded to, followed by questions two, three, and so on, but rather a dialogue to learn about themselves and each other. As such, I advised my students *not* to write their exchange partner's responses, because that would interrupt the conversational tone. If they wanted to, however, they could write down key words or expressions (especially if they were new or interesting in some way). I also told my students that this last session would be a one-on-one encounter, rather than small groups. Needless to say, some met this idea with resistance and others with pleasure.

4.5.2 During the Fifth Session

When my EFL students came to class at 4:00 pm on May 6th, twelve American exchange partners were sitting and waiting for them at intermittent desks. Amidst nervous smiles, giggles, and exclamations of "Oh, my God!, I greeted my students, and asked them to sit at one of the empty desks that was next to one of the English-speaking students. I then told my students to turn to their left and take a few minutes to introduce themselves to their exchange partners. It was nice to see that, at this point, all of the students had either worked together or had seen each other in previous sessions. As a result, some of my students' initial fears of working on a one-to-one basis seemed to be alleviated.

I explained that although my students had prepared a series of questions that they were interested in exploring during this last session, the format remained conversational. Therefore, the English-speaking students should feel free to ask their exchange partner a few related questions, too. In addition, I informed the students that I would not be moving around the classroom. Nevertheless, I

was available for consultation if, after trying to resolve the problem themselves, my help was requested. Lastly, I instructed the pairs to work for about an hour, to take a ten-minute break at 5:15 pm, and to return to the classroom for a processing and feedback session in which all of the participants , including the American students, would assess their learning and the project as a whole. I also suggested that the students move to a quiet area of the classroom to work together.

Of course, once the students got to work, there were no quiet areas in the classroom. The sound of twenty-four students asking, answering, conversing, laughing, and communicating simultaneously was amazing, if not deafening. Although I sat at the teacher's desk, something I rarely (if ever) did, I could see that all of the students were deeply engrossed in heartfelt communication. From time to time, someone, either an English-speaking or Spanish-speaking student, called me over to help resolve a communication block. I observed in these instances that there seemed to be a sense of urgency as he/she invariably used his/her native language to quickly explain to me, "I want to say/talk about _____; I tried _____, but my partner does not understand _____. What should I say/do?" I would then make a few suggestions of alternative strategies and wait a moment or two to see if they were able to repair the breakdown in communication successfully. Afterwards, once these students were "back on track", I noticed how they would both look at me as if to say, "O.K. you can go now; we don't need you anymore".

Frankly, I was marveling at how well each pair of students was working autonomously and cooperatively to maintain extended, spontaneous, and au-

thentic conversations. In other words, it was apparent that both participants were equally and actively involved in the natural give-and-take process of expressing, negotiating, and interpreting meaningful messages about the trials and tribulations of their childhood and adolescence. I felt like I was witnessing the kind of successful communication that Gattegno referred to as “a miracle”. There is something truly miraculous about two or more people, whose native language and culture are different, using a common language to convey intimate thoughts, experiences, and emotions. The joy of understanding and being understood allows one to enter into a “sacred partnership” of sorts. In any case, the hour went by very quickly and so, at 5:15 pm, I had to tell the students to take a well-deserved ten-minute break and to then return to the classroom for a whole-group feedback session. To my surprise, a few pairs passed up the break so that they could continue talking.

4.5.3 Post-Session Student Processing and Feedback

About ten minutes later, we formed a large circle and I asked each participant to make a brief comment about the overall experience of having participated in the project and his/her learning throughout the five sessions. I made the decision to not pass out a photocopied evaluation form at this time for two reasons. First, I thought that this format was both too formal and too restrictive for the type of sincere and impromptu responses I was seeking. Second, I was concerned that a written form would distract some students in that they would begin completing the form then and there, rather than giving their undivided attention to the other members. I listened attentively and tried to write down as much as possi-

ble. The following comments, with mistakes and all, are excerpts that came from either the whole group feedback session that took place in class that day or from a sentence completion form (See Appendix I, Fennes and Hapgood, 1997, 7) that I passed out afterwards:

- [American student] I really enjoyed participating in these classes. It felt good to actually be able to contribute something, because I feel like I'm always on the receiving end here. I don't know my way around or how to do really basic things so I'm always asking my home stay family how to do this, where's that, and what does this mean. They must think I'm an idiot. My mother won't even let me set the table or wash my own clothes.

- [American student] I've come to all of the sessions" [group applauds and whistles and she blushes]…No, really…It's been great getting to know these guys [the Spanish exchange students] and being able to talk to them about things that are important to us.

- Spanish student] I liked talking to you, too [moves hand in circular motion, meaning everyone in the circle]. It was very interesting and I learned a lot of English from you. I know you now; so when I see you here at the Center or on Pedro Antonio [street in Granada where there are a lot of bars and intense nightlife], I'll say 'Hi, _____! How are you?

- [American student] Yeah, it was cool to meet Spanish students our age through this class. I made some friends and really learned a lot about Granada and other parts of Spain. I've used these ideas during the semester.

- [American student] I came here to meet Spanish people, but I'm in class all day with Americans and my Spanish isn't very good. Even though we only spoke English most of the time, I still learned a lot of things in this class. I feel like I know more about the culture and how to communicate with Spanish people.

- [Spanish student] I never used to think about my life in Granada, because I know everything about it. But when I talk about my life and have to explain it and they [my ex-

change partners] ask me questions, I sometimes don't know the answer. I have to think very much and I learn new things. I learned about my culture and also the culture of the United States in the conversations.

- [Spanish student] I really wasn't very interesting in learning about life in the United States, because I see the American programs on T.V., I listen to some American music, and I go to the American films. So, I think I know enough. In this class, they [the American exchange partners] tell to me different things about the regular life and not the things from television or Hollywood.

- [Spanish student] It was very amusing [fun] to meet American people. I practiced speaking in English and I learned many new words. I was hearing a different accent and pronunciation from my teacher. It's very good practice, but very difficult also.

- [American student] It was great to help out in this class, because when I'm doing an *intercambio* [language exchange] I feel like the other person's getting the raw end of the deal because my Spanish isn't very good and a lot of times I don't know what to talk about.

- [American student] I found out lots of good information about things to do in Granada and I met people I can do them with! I'd like to be a teacher some day so it was a good experience for me to be a part of. I think it's important to have contact with native speakers of the language you are learning. I'd like to do this in my classes.

- [Spanish student] I feel more relax speaking English now. I know I have a lot of mistakes and a big accent, but it's not important. For me, it's more important to say all that I want to say. If the English people don't understand, they should say it to me. Then, I'll say it a new way or I'll do this [makes hand signals]. Also, I never understand all they say to me, but I imagine what they say.

- [American student] I have a ton of homework and reading to do, because I'm taking business classes at the university plus my language classes here. So, I wasn't going to volunteer, but then some of my friends convinced me to come one day…it was the one about food. I thought that it was really interesting and I had a lot of fun. It made me

put things in perspective and realize I came here to meet Spaniards, not to read about them.

- [Spanish student] For me, it was the same as _____. I've been studying English for a long time…I think since I was eight or nine. I know a lot of grammar, but this is the only time that I could talk with people whose language is English. Speaking and participating with a group of people to do activities in English, is more interesting than books.

- [American student] I've really had a hard time speaking Spanish to native speakers since I've been in Granada, because even a simple conversation is a struggle for me. Now I know that it's not just me; it's a struggle for everybody who's trying to learn a foreign language. They [the Spanish exchange students] probably feel as silly and stupid speaking English as I do speaking Spanish.

- [Spanish student] I have studied English in the school, but that was five years ago. So, I want to remember all that I forget. I have a lot of problems when I have to speak and express myself. My pronunciation is very bad and I can't remember the adequated words. This class helps me to improve my English level, especially speaking and listening.

- [Spanish student] These classes are very good because we speak English the most time. When I participate with all my classmates talking to the American students, I learn a lot of new things. Also it is funny, dynamic, and interesting, too. So, I think I'm improving a lot and that is what I want.

- [American student] I've really enjoyed this class. I liked the atmosphere of working together [with the Spanish students]. I tried to help them improve their English skills as well as teach them what I could about American culture. It was exciting to see their progress.

- [American student] Compared to other countries, I've always felt that we don't have a culture [in the United States]. I came to Spain, because it has such a rich culture and I wanted to learn more about it. To be completely honest I volunteered to come to this class, because it was a way of accomplishing this goal. However,

meeting these students [the Spanish exchange partners] and discussing our lives, has allowed me to learn more about myself and my country than I expected. It's given me a different and broader perspective of culture. I've realized that I have a culture, too.

- [Spanish student] I'm very happy, because I'm beginning to improve my English, especially my speech. I'm very interested when I participate talking with a group of people who only speak English to me. It's very useful, because I learn a lot with my mistakes when I try to say things in English. Also it's interesting to listen about a different country.
- [Spanish student] Comparing our culture and custom is very interesting and funny. I know about life in the United States more that before, but I would like to visit there some day. I can see some differences in our opinion about many things, but we are a group of friends. So, we can help each other to learn.

- [American student] When I first arrived here I was very impressed with the beautiful art and incredible architecture. The Spanish people are so warm and friendly and they have such a strong sense of history and tradition. The students I've met in this class and some of the things we've talked about have helped me go beyond my postcard image of Spain. Hearing and seeing things from their perspective really had an impact on the way I started seeing things. I'm much more aware of some of the social and economic problems they face.

- [Spanish student] Sometimes I'm very frustrating in my English class, because the teacher don't mind if the students improve. It's very difficult to see when I commit a mistake when we make speaking and listening exercises with the students from the United States. For me, the American pronunciation is too difficult to understand. I have to read a lot of English articles and books at the university and I lose a lot of time to read and translate them. I need to learn more grammar and special English.

- [Spanish student] I used to think only bad things about the American people and the United States, because of all that I see in the T.V. and the American politic. I have to learn English, but I don't like very much this language. My teacher and the students who help to improve our

English pronunciation are very friendly and kind. We are like a group of friends. Now my opinion is different, because I know some good American people.

- [American student] When I came to the first class I didn't know what to expect. I thought I was volunteering to tutor English, but after the first class I realized that I could get a lot out of this as well. I liked the atmosphere of working together and learning from each other. It was a real win-win experience. I've made some good friends in this class and we've met outside of class and had a lot of fun together.

4.5.4 Post-Session Teacher Reflection

What impressed me the most about these comments was the diversity, yet overwhelmingly positive tone, of the opinions expressed. Some of the Spanish-speaking students focused more on the development of their language skills than culture learning. This may be due to the fact that to many this may have been viewed as secondary to the language learning objective, which is understandable given the nature of the course, the syllabus set by the Center of Modern Languages, and the fact that my EFL students may have perceived language skills development as a more tangible and necessary goal than culture learning or intercultural communication skills. With the exception of one student, whose needs appeared to have been unmet, all of my Spanish-speaking students reported an improvement in their language skills. In addition to the above, many EFL students specifically mentioned that they had learned about culture as well. In some cases, reference was made to learning about the culture of the United States, while, in other instances, a greater awareness of the native culture learning was reported. All in all, it appears that my EFL students realized that they could in-

crease their speaking, listening, writing, and reading skills (as well as their overall confidence) “while gaining further cultural insights into the target culture [and their native culture] affirming that language and culture are inseparable” (Evans and Gonzalez 1993, 47).

By the same token, the comments made by the English-speaking participants were equally diverse, but also overwhelmingly positive. It was interesting for me to see that some viewed their role in the in-class exchange sessions as that of a language tutor, while others, despite the use of English as the *lingua franca*, recognized the mutually beneficial and interactive nature of the project. Given that English was the primary language of communication between the participants, the American students’ comments obviously addressed culture learning rather than language learning. Once again, for some English speakers the culture learning focused on the target culture, which in their case was the Spanish culture, while others reported having gained insight into their own culture. Lastly, given that one of the project’s main objectives was to increase the interaction of host nationals and Americans at the Center of Modern Languages, I was happy to see the number of participants—Spanish- and English speakers alike—mention that they had become friends. In this respect, it appears as though the intercultural communication project successfully promoted mutual understanding among the participants and a positive intercultural learning experience for the vast majority of participants (myself included).

While self-reporting may be questioned in terms of its reliability and validity as a tool for evaluation and assessment (Larsen-Freeman and Long 1991,

182), I feel that reflection on the process and outcomes of a learning experience, such as the one described in this paper is vital for learners and teachers alike. According to the authors of *Intercultural Learning in the Classroom*, regardless of whether this evaluation takes the form of a written questionnaire or a group discussion, it should enable participants "to reflect on what has been learned, to link the various parts, to become aware of development and growth, to think about the consequences for future behavior, [and] to bring closure to the activity" (Fennes and Hapgood 1997, 271).

Furthermore, the preceding comments, in addition to those that were obtained after each session both orally and in the journal-like writing, allowed me to gain insight into what the participants' themselves felt they had learned both cognitively and affectively. This information, coupled with my own observations throughout the process, became the means by which I evaluated both the intercultural communication project, as a whole, and the effectiveness of my role in its design, integration with the EFL course requirements and textbook, implementation, and facilitation.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The Intercultural Communication Project that I conducted during the academic year of 1998-1999 gave me the opportunity to design, implement, and evaluate a new curriculum that integrated speaking, listening, reading, and writing skill development with culture learning while providing opportunities for spontaneous, authentic communication, on the one hand, and a raising of the participants' personal and intercultural awareness, on the other. More importantly, it gave me the tools—observation, reflection, and analysis—needed to implement an informed and purposeful teaching practice.

Learning how to reflect in a way that actually helps us develop and grow as teachers and as learners of our craft is not something that comes automatically for many teachers—myself included. Although I was an experienced language teacher when I enrolled in the School for International Training's Summer Master of Arts in Teaching Program (SMAT) in 1998, I did not know how to use reflection as a tool for change and action at that time. This is not surprising when one bears in mind that engaging in the analytical process of reflection is rather a complex cognitive and affective task, which takes time to practice and guidance to develop. In reality, many teachers are so engrossed with the day-to-day aspects of their lessons that it is hard to find the time or space to go beyond a su-

perificial, and sometimes emotional, reaction to the class such as, “that activity really bombed” or “these students just aren’t motivated”. This type of reflection won’t allow us to go into the depth needed to “transform the situation, which had been seen as a problem, into a source of creativity and insight into the teaching-learning process” (Stanley, 1999).

Thanks to the SMAT program, I was introduced to Kolb’s (1984) Experiential Learning Cycle as a tool for classroom reflection. As such, I was trained to implement a formal process of reflection by

> (a) looking back to what had just happened in my classroom and remembering as much detail of the events as possible (Reflective Observation).
>
> (b) analyzing why certain events took place, generating plausible reasons why this might be so, and making generalizations about what this tells me about language learning (Abstract Conceptualization).
>
> (c) deciding on what needs to be done next in light of the analysis above and trying it out (Active Experimentation).

While the Intercultural Communication Project itself was not formally included as part of my Interim Year Teaching Practicum (IYTP) work, I *do* feel that my on-going dialogue with Bonnie Mennell, my IYTP advisor, gave me the tools and courage to design and implement a project which was based on my own experiences, intimate knowledge of my teaching context, and grounded in the experiences and theories of others in the field. The experience of conducting an action-based research project has made me realize the truth in the SMAT motto of “You are your own best resource.” With respect to this last point, Kaltheen Graves states,

> Valuable though the knowledge of experts may be, teachers themselves are experts in their settings, and their past experience and successes [as well as failures or shortcomings, I would add] can serve as bridges to new situations. Correspondingly, the experience of developing a course [or, in this case, linking language and culture learning together] enables teachers to make sense of the theories and expertise of others because it gives them opportunities to clarify their understanding of theory and make it concrete. Their practice in turn changes their understanding of the theories. (1996, 6)

However, in order to "make a bridge between practice and thought so that one can influence the other" (Graves 1996, 6), one needs to learn "how to think, feel, and teach reflectively" (Stanley 1999, 124). What Stanley refers to as "purposeful reflection" is the only means that teachers possess to integrate theory in the general sense, on the one hand, and theory in the personal sense with the practice of teaching in his/her unique context, on the other hand (Graves 1996, 9). Such reflective teaching ensures continual growth and development, both personally and professionally, throughout one's life. Indeed, learning how to reflect on one's teaching represents the opportunity for individualized professional development that can last the length of one's career.

I am confident that the Intercultural Communication Project allowed me to sharpen my skills in observation, analysis, and reflection. More specifically, it enabled me to develop and perfect both a broad or telescopic view (Stanley, 1999) as well as a narrow or microscopic view (Stanley, 1999) of the teaching/learning process.

In her qualitative research projects, which study what it means to reflect on one's teaching, Stanley explains that,

> the terms microscopic and telescopic were chosen to indicate the quality of enhanced vision one can gain through the use of an actual microscope or telescope. When teachers put their teaching under the microscope, it implies a very close-up, even blow-up, perspective of a small piece of their teaching. When teachers use a telescopic style of reflection, they gain a distant vision of their work. They focus on one issue, as one might look at the North Star, but they maintain a vision of the whole of their work and teaching context. (1999,14).

These two divergent styles of reflection gave me the perspective I needed to dig deeper. The goals and objectives I outlined for my Interim Year Teaching Practicum (IYTP) as well as the goals and objectives of the Intercultural Communication Project provided me with a framework of inquiry through which I was able to generate multiple focusing points of reflection. Stanley notes that "focusing points" help many teachers get a more sharply defined image of the teaching/learning process. Choosing a particular topic or issue and following it for an extended period of time, getting input from many sources, and undertaking purposeful reflection, allows this information to then be used as a catalyst for change in the classroom.

Not only did these focusing points guide me in knowing what to look for and what to take notice of, thereby sharpening my observation and reflection skills, but they also sparked in me an interest in experimentation. As a teacher-initiated, action-based research project, the Intercultural Communication Project empowered me to explore issues that are of concern to me, personally and professionally, and to the field of foreign language teaching.

The reader is reminded that the Intercultural Communication Project was specifically designed with my particular EFL students, within my specific teaching context, in mind. It was a tailor-made response to a specific situation at the *Centro de Lenguas Modernas* and to the inherent limitations of the EFL context, where the language of study is not present outside of the classroom.

This, in turn, marked a turning point in my teaching as I became much more learner-centered. I started looking more closely at my students' learning, rather than my teaching, as a focus of reflection. The elusive "let your students' learning guide your teaching" that I had heard so often at SIT, but had never fully understood, became more and more apparent to me during the Intercultural Communication Project. By observing my students' interacting with each other, with the American students who participated in the five sessions, with the content of the Intercultural Communication Project, and with me, I was able to dig deeper and mine for gold. I became fascinated by the moments when I could actually see learning taking place, because they represented the golden nuggets that gave me insight into the complex process of teaching and learning. Reflecting on what appeared to help or hinder learning, of course, made me want to adjust my teaching in order to maximize the quality and quantity of the learning opportunities made available to my students. .

The Intercultural Communication Project also allowed me to fully understand and to embrace what it means to adopt a "communicative approach" to language teaching. Despite widespread use and popular acceptance of the terms "communicative language teaching" and "communicative competence" there con-

tinues to be a great deal of disagreement and confusion about the implications of these terms. Long ago, H.G. Widdowson cautioned,

> If we are seriously interested in an approach to language teaching which will develop the ability to communicate, then we must accept the commitment to investigate the whole complex business of communication and the practical consequences of adopting it as a teaching aim. Such a commitment involves, I believe, a consideration of the nature of discourse and of the abilities that are engaged in creating it. (1978, ix)

In other words, communicative competence that is acquired through the study of another language and culture is a functional language proficiency that involves "*knowing how, when, and why, to say what to whom*" in any given speech community (ACTFL 1996, 11). It is within this context of the inseparability of language and culture that some of the challenges of learning and/or teaching a foreign language become apparent. The ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in another language requires not only proficiency in the language, but knowledge of the culture as well.

Although language theorists and practioners may disagree on the specific methods and objectives that facilitate such competence, the fact that the study of language cannot be separated from the study of culture, nor vice versa, is an undeniable reality. Thus, all second and foreign language teachers, but particularly those that use a so-called "communicative approach" must address the cultural dimension of language if our students are to develop fully the awareness, attitudes, skills, and knowledge necessary to understand and be understood in another language and cultural context.

While many different, often conflicting, theories of second language acquisition exist, present day language teaching rhetoric supports the conviction that "the more learners *use the target language in meaningful situations*, the more rapidly they achieve competency. Active use of language is key to the learning process; therefore, learners must be involved in generating utterances for themselves" (ACTFL 1996, 37). This view of language learning/teaching is also reflected in Ballman's assertion, "The movement away from a teacher-dominated classroom toward a student-centered and communicative environment, has forced language educators to focus on what students can *do* with the language, rather than what they know *about* the language" (1996, 37).

In the final analysis, language teachers must obviously decide for themselves which instructional approach or "unified but broadly-based theoretical position about the nature of language and of language learning and teaching" (Brown 1994, 244) is best suited for both their particular teaching style and their specific teaching context.

In my opinion, though, language instruction should provide students with ample opportunity to experiment with the challenges of language and culture learning (irregardless of whether that involves speaking and understanding what others say in the target language or reading and interpreting written materials), on the one hand, while simultaneously developing the awareness, attitudes, skills, and knowledge that result in effective and appropriate intercultural communication, on the other. In so doing, culture learning/teaching is no longer

treated in an anecdotal, peripheral, or supplementary way, but rather as an integral and indispensable component of language study.

I would also add that language learning is just as much about developing positive attitudes and increasing cultural awareness as it is about acquiring linguistic and cultural knowledge and skills. Current descriptions of language education programs in many countries include, amongst other things, specific objectives that not only encourage learners to develop positive attitudes towards and understanding of others and their way of life, but also to relate the language and culture under study with that of their own. These aims entail reflective language learning/teaching, thereby broadening the learners' view of the world by implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, examining previously unquestioned assumptions and values.

This represents a major turning point in language education, indeed a revolution. For the first time, language and culture learning/teaching is directed inward and not just outwards. It is through objective comparison, a potentially powerful means of acquiring a new perspective on one's own language and culture, that one can begin to perceive and eventually accept difference not as better or worse, but as just different.

The ultimate goal, of course, is to develop "intercultural learners" who are able to "establish a relationship between their own and other cultures, to mediate and explain difference—and ultimately accept that difference and see the common humanity beneath it" (Byram and Fleming 1998, 8).

Given the circumstances of “a world seemingly forever torn by war, dissension, distrust of the stranger, and virulent ethnocentric behavior” (Damen 1987, 231), teaching should focus on our cultural similarities—our common humanity—and not our differences. In my opinion, both similarities and differences must be considered, because a focus on either one or the other does not prepare learners for the challenges of intercultural contact, and yet it is precisely such contact which is vital to experiencing and appreciating the diversity and richness of humanity.

However, as Milton Bennett states, “overcoming ethnocentrism—or seeing one’s culture as central to reality—is a developmental effort…[Achieving] this sense of appreciation and respect for one another…is not something that is waiting for us to rediscover, but rather something that we must work toward…Tolerance is simply not good enough for making multicultural society work…” (1996, 16).

Bennett’s “developmental effort” obliges us, as language educators, to go beyond merely teaching a linguistic system and to consider the awareness, attitudes, skills, and knowledge necessary to “function competently…in the rapidly shrinking, interdependent world of the twenty-first century” (ACTFL 1996, 35). As our knowledge of the nature of language has improved, it has become evident that we are dealing with an extremely complex concept, not only in and of itself but, more importantly, in terms of its use in human interaction. In the last decade, we have also begun to recognize that when this interaction occurs between indi-

viduals who do not share the same native language or cultural background the complexity of their communication is greatly increased.

Consequently, the demands made on language teachers and learners today are greater than ever, since “language learners need to go beyond the acquisition of a linguistic system, and language teachers need to find ways to help them do so” (Byram and Fleming 1998, 3). Such a challenge obliges the cultural dimension of language to be acknowledged by everyone in the field of education, which, in turn, will require both teachers and learners alike to take risks and to assume new roles in the classroom and beyond.

By coupling my experiences in the classroom with my investigation into the theoretical issues described in the last pages, the Intercultural Communication Project also helped me become more aware of the very tenets of my particular approach to teaching/learning, some of which are outlined below:

- Given that language “is fundamentally and primarily a social instrument” (Dewey, cited in Seelye 1974, 13), which serves as a means of communication as well as “a system of representation for perception and thinking” (Bennet 1997, 16), it cannot be separated from the people who use this language nor their social or cultural context. Therefore, language learning/teaching should address the cultural dimension of language by examining the products, practices, and perspectives of the people whose language is under study.

- Such learning enables students to gain insight into and become more aware of their native language and culture, thereby offering learners the opportunity to “step outside” of their own taken-for-granted milieu and to develop a different or, at least, expanded world view.

- However, this learning will remain purely an intellectualized, academic endeavor if it is not accompanied by experience of and interaction with members of another culture. Regardless of whether this takes place abroad, in the classroom, via the Inter-

net and e-mail, or through an exchange program with a partner school, we can actually have real conversations with real people in real time.

- Therefore, the goal of second or foreign language learning is to develop both communicative competence and cross-cultural awareness or the knowledge, skills, awareness, and attitudes needed to communicate appropriately and effectively with people of another society and culture in a variety of settings and for a variety of purposes.

- Linguistic competence is but one aspect of communicative competence. It is not enough to ensure successful communication or the ability to repair breakdowns caused by differences in linguistic and cultural background. Therefore, learners need to practice using language creatively and in personally meaningful ways so that they can develop the full range of their communicative competence.

- Language learning/teaching is a personal encounter that involves both cognitive and affective factors. Learners will be motivated to reach their fullest potential if both needs are met and if they are encouraged to express their own meanings in a safe and secure learning community.

- Language teachers should guide the learning/teaching process by knowledge of the subject matter (language and culture) combined with knowledge of the group undertaking such an endeavor (students and teacher) and of the language learning process itself (Larsen-Freeman and Long 1991, 3).

Lastly, In evaluating the effectiveness of the intercultural communication project, in terms of how well it linked language and culture learning or achieved the desired goals and objectives, I feel confident about responding affirmatively to the following questions proposed by Crawford-Lange and Lange (1984, 145):

[Did the in-class exchange sessions…]

1) Make the learning of culture a requirement?

2) Integrate language learning and culture learning?

3) Allow for the identification of a spectrum of proficiency levels?

4) Address the affective as well as the cognitive domain?

5) Consider culture as a changing variable rather than a static entity?

6) Provide students with the skill to re-form perceptions of culture?

7) Provide students with the ability to interact successfully in novel cultural situations?

8) Exemplify that participants in the culture are the authors of the culture?

9) Relate to the native culture?

10) Relieve the teacher of the burden of being the cultural authority?

In conclusion, this paper about the Intercultural Communication Project that I carried out in Granada, Spain during the academic year of 1998- 1999 has provided the reader with the rationale why teachers, especially EFL teachers, should undertake action-based classroom research projects geared towards meeting the needs and interests of their students while helping to overcome some of the challenges imposed by the teaching context.

Such action-based classroom research projects offer EFL teachers the opportunity to hone their ability to observe, reflect, analyze, and implement change in the classroom. Although there are many ways to accomplish this goal, I found the support and structure of the SMAT Program, the dialogue I maintained with my IYTP advisor, Bonnie Mennell, as well as colleagues at the *Centro de Lenguas Modernas* and fellow SMAT participants, the goals and objectives I

identified for both my IYTP and Intercultural Communication Project, and the use of Kolbs' (1984) Experiential Learning Cycle as a tool for purposeful reflection to be extremely beneficial in developing my skills, knowledge, attitude, and awareness of teaching and learning.

In addition, I have provided the reader with an understanding of the most significant developments that have taken place in the field of language teaching and learning over the last three decades. I have also outlined some of the major theoretical and pedagogical issues underlying these developments as well as what the acceptance of a communicative approach to language teaching/learning implies.

CHAPTER SIX

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Table of contents from *Headway Pre-Intermediate*. (Soars, John and Liz. 1991. *Headway Pre-Intermediate*. Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Appendix B: Needs Assessment Form (Oxenden, Clive and Paul Seligson. 1997. *English File Two*. Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Appendix C: Mid-term Feedback Form (Sion, Christopher (Ed.) 1991. *More Recipes for Tired Teachers*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc.).

Appendix D: Homework Assignment (b) for first in-class exchange session
(Mata, Juan 1998. Editorial: *Mirar atentamente es la manera que tiene el extranjero de dialogar con la ciudad desconocida*. Granada, Spain: *IDEAL*).

Appendix E: Homework Assignment (c) for first in-class exchange session
(Mata, Juan 1998. Editorial: *Mirar atentamente es la manera que tiene el extranjero de dialogar con la ciudad desconocida*. Granada, Spain: *IDEAL*).

Appendix F: Everyday Meals Questionnaire – Homework Assignment (a) and (b) the Second In-class Exchange Session (Council for Cultural Co-operation, Strasbourg, 1989. Located in Fennes, Helmut and Karen Hapgood. 1997. *Intercultural Learning in the Classroom*. London: Cassell).

Appendix G: Cultural Assimilators Homework Assignment for fourth in-class exchange session The samples here are from: (Wattley-Ames, Helen. 1999. Spain is Different. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, Inc.). However, I used similar ones, which appear in the 1992 edition of this book.

Appendix H: Listening Exercise (d) from "The Way we Were" Thematic Unit Prior to fifth in-class exchange session (Springsteen, Bruce. 1989. *Prelude to The River*. Recording from Concert in Madrid, Spain)

How are you doing out there tonight?…That's good.

This is the…When I was growing up, me and my dad *used to go at it* **(A)**[1] all the time over almost anything, but ah…I *used to have* **(B)** really long hair way down past my shoulders. Now, I was seventeen or eighteen and Oh, man![2] He *used to hate* **(C)** it! And we got to where we were fighting so much that I *would spend* **(D)** a lot of time out of the house and in the summertime it wasn't so bad, (be)cause it was warm and my friends were out. But in the winter, I remember standing downtown[3] and it *used to get* **(E)** so cold and when the wind *would blow* **(F)**, I had this phone booth[4] that I *used to stand* **(G)** in and I *would call* **(H)** my girl like[5] for hours at a time[6] (just) talking to her all night long. And finally, I *would get my nerve up* **(I)**[7] to go home and I *used to stand* **(J)** there in the driveway[8] and he *would be waiting* **(K)** for me in the kitchen. And I *used to tuck* **(L)** my hair down in[9] my collar and I *would go in* **(M)** and he *used to call me back* **(N)** to sit down with him. And the first thing he *would* always *ask* **(O)** me was what did I think I was doing with myself ?[10] and the worst part about it was I could never explain it to him. I remember I got in a motorcycle accident once and I was laid up in bed[11] and he had a barber come in and cut my hair. And man! I can remember telling him that I hated him and that I *would* never ever[12] *forget* **(P)** it! And he *used to say* **(Q)**, 'Man, I can't wait[13] (un)til the army gets you…When the army gets you, they're going to make a man out of you. They're going to cut all that hair off and

they'll make a man out of you'. And this was in, I guess, '68[14] and there were a lot of guys[15] from the neighborhood going to Vietnam. I remember the drummer[16] in my first band coming over my house with his marine uniform on saying that he was going and that he didn't know where it was. And a lot of guys went. And a lot of guys didn't come back. And a lot that came back, weren't the same anymore. And I remember the day I got my draft notice[17]. I hid it from my folks[18] and three days before my physical[19], me and my friends went out and stayed up all night[20] and we got on the bus to go that morning and man, we were all pretty[21] scared[22]. And I went and I failed[23]…[laughs]…And I came home…[audience applauds]…It's nothing to applaud about…But I remember coming home after I had been gone for three days and walking in the kitchen and my mother and father were sitting there. And my dad says, 'Where you been?' I said, 'Ah…I went to take my physical.' And he says, 'What happened?'. I says[24], 'They didn't take me'. And he says, 'That's good'. [audience applauds]…[strains of a harmonica playing]…[the song "The River" begins].

GLOSSARY FOR PRELUDE TO "THE RIVER" BY: BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN

1) To go at it = to argue violently and frequently

2) Oh, man! = slang exclamation, similar to "Jo, macho!" in Spanish

3) Downtown = the center of town

4) Phone booth = American English for "phone box" in British English

5) Like (preposition) = (a) similar to; somewhat resembling (ex.- She's like a bird.) or (b) comparison to express in a manner characteristic of; similarly to (ex.- She sings like a bird.).

6) For hours at a time = for long periods of time

7) To get one's nerve up + Infinitive verb = to have the courage to do something, similar to "armarse de valor" in Spanish

8) Driveway = la entrada asfaltada de una casa donde entran y aparcan los coches

9) To tuck in = remeter

10) To do with oneself/To do to oneself = here it's a rhetorical question or a "reproche paternal", similar to "hacerse auno mismo/hacerse con uno mismo" in Spanish

11) To be laid up in bed = to be in bed for a long period of time because of an illness or injury

12) Never ever = emphatic expression that means never again, similar to "nunca jamás" in Spanish

13) Can't wait until + Infinitive verb = no poder esperar hasta que + Subjunctive

14) '68 = short form to say or write the year 1968

15) Guys = slang expression, similar to "tios" in Spanish

16) Drummer = a musician who plays the drums, "baterista' in Spanish

17) Draft notice = notificación official para encorporarse a filas

18) Folks = slang expression for parents or group of people

19) Physical (examination) = a physical exam or check-up done by a doctor. In this case, it was done to check the health of the potential soldiers.

20) To stay up all night = to Not go to bed, similar to "quedarse en vilo" or "trasnochar" in Spanish

21) Pretty + Adjective = In American English same as "quite + Adjective" in British English, similar to "bastante + adjetivo" in Spanish

22) Scared = afraid or frightened

23) To fail (a test or exam) = to NOT pass, silmilar to "suspender un examen" in Spanish

24) I says = slang form of "I said"

Appendix I: Sentence Completion Form Used to Evaluate the Intercultural Communication Project After the Fifth In-class Exchange Session (Located in Fennes, Helmut and Karen Hapgood. 1997. *Intercultural Learning in the Classroom*. London: Cassell).

CHAPTER SEVEN

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