Interacting with the Other: Culturally Responsive Approaches Toward Intercultural Competence

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Interacting with the Other:
Culturally Responsive Approaches Toward Intercultural Competence

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Master of Arts in TESOL Degree
at SIT Graduate Institute,
Brattleboro, Vermont.

June 1, 2020

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Date: June 1, 2020
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Abstract

Traditional language teaching approaches assume a strong focus on linguistic proficiency, syntax, and grammar. This thesis makes the case that culture and language must be given equal consideration in a language curriculum, and educators must approach their work with a critical eye for the cultural identities of each of their students. The author examines the ways that learner identity, most notably as it pertains to race and sexual orientation, is a crucial element to consider as teachers build in areas of representation to mirror their learners, and she applies established frameworks of ICC to a world language unit. The author lays out the theoretical foundation of culturally responsive teaching and points out where they intersect with the tenets of intercultural competence, applying these principles to a French language unit. This paper underlines how educators can prepare students for successful intercultural encounters by developing their awareness of their own cultural perspective. The paper concludes by sharing teacher experiences of cultural conflict in the classroom, collected in survey responses, and explores how intercultural skills could help people to navigate conflict. Ultimately, the author reveals where and how a widened emphasis on interculturality should be applied to teacher development at every level.
ERIC Descriptors

Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)
Intercultural Competence (IC)
Intercultural Communication
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP)
Critical Pedagogy
Multicultural Education
Teacher Development
Culturally Relevant Education
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Part I.

Introduction

The role of culture in language learning is a powerful one; it has the potential to open students’ eyes to new perspectives, and culturally responsive teaching can affirm learner identities. The classroom is a place where learner identities co-exist. In multicultural school communities classrooms, teachers must hold a thoughtful eye to which student voices are free to be loudest and whose are silenced. Teachers need to bring a critical eye to every aspect of their teaching: from curriculum, to scheduling, to choice of literature, and to their own personal biases. In this essay, I will explore the current scholarship on culturally responsive teaching, and I will outline how educators can examine their pedagogical choices in order to create more inclusive, equitable classroom spaces. I will tackle questions of race and sexual orientation as I consider how classroom practices, texts, and other resources can provide an inclusive environment of respect where students can see both themselves and others in the curriculum materials, as well as develop skills in interacting with ‘the other’.

As I look to the field of language teaching, I will define the importance of using authentic materials and showcasing a multitude of representations to students so that learner encounters with the target language culture are not singular or static, but varied. I will emphasize the importance of building learner awareness of their own cultural viewpoint. I will draw upon prominent scholarship on Intercultural Competence (IC) to establish frameworks for implementation, and I will then apply the Byram (1997) model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) to a unit on food in a French language classroom. I will contemplate how building intercultural competence into language curriculums can ultimately lead to learners who
are capable of critical thinking, empathy, and tolerating ambiguity, all skills that are useful to the harmonious functioning of democratic societies.

As I close this paper, I will investigate how teacher development in cultural responsiveness could potentially help to support teachers in their work, specifically in helping teachers to navigate cultural or racial tension that can crop up as they lead diverse, equitable classroom spaces. I will reveal a variety of teachers’ survey responses as they frankly express the conflicts they have been faced with and what could help them to navigate these competently. I will report on how teachers often share similar experiences yet lack the training, support, or time to address bumps in the road as they occur and grow from them. I will conclude envisioning a landscape where the tenets of intercultural competence are infused into all areas of course content whereby teachers (not only language teachers) can share the terminology for what they experience, lean on a common structure for support, and build intercultural citizens who understand themselves culturally and are able to interact with ‘the other’ with empathy, openness, curiosity, and flexibility.
Defining Diversity

Educators serve diverse student bodies, and it is useful to pause for one second and consider what diversity means, and why it is necessary for teachers to hold their students’ identities at the heart of their teaching practice. In the “I-Thou-It” triangle (Hawkins, 1967), learners play an essential part of the triad. Teacher and subject matter enter the triad in an energy of respect, no element less important than the other. The three elements interact with fluidity, and Hawkins (1967) underlines how a healthy triad continues to flow within and outside of the walls of the classroom: “Adults and children can associate well only in worthy interest and pursuits, only through a community of subject matter and engagement which extends beyond the circle of their intimacy” (p. 49). What, then, defines a diverse classroom? Randolph and Anya (2019) remind us of the “necessary and challenging” nature of diversity: “to ignore diversity if to reinforce legacies of inequities and exclusions upon which our educational institutions were built” (p. 23). Our learners’ identities are varied: “In a world where people self-identify on multiple levels - from race and religion to gender, sexuality, and even dietary choices - the world has become as muddled as it is mandatory” (Randolph, Anya, 2019, p. 23). Bonny Norton (1995) argues that inequities present in the classroom necessarily impact learner investment in the course content: “In this regard, social processes marked by inequities of gender, race, class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation may serve to position learners in ways that silence and exclude”. (p. 326). The approach of educators to “not see color” or other identity markers in their students is problematic, according to Vivian Paley (2000): “To say that you don’t see race is to say that you don’t see students” (p. xix). Paley noticed the reluctance of teachers to avoid talking about other differences as well, like “stuttering, obesity, shyness, divorced parents” (p. xix). Students
see differences and they perceive racial dynamics. She recounts her work teaching kindergarten where students are curious about a new biracial student’s race, asking her “Is he black?” and of the troubling use of “color blindness” as a tactic among her colleagues at the time, quoting one who stated, “There is no color difference in my classroom. All my children look alike to me” (Paley, 2000, p. 12). One black parent she worked with retorts, “My children are black. They know they’re black, and they want it recognized. It’s a positive difference, an interesting difference, and a comfortable natural difference” (Paley, 2000, p. 12). This parent urges teachers to value differences more and avoid using ‘color blindness’ as a tactic, stating that “What you value, you talk about” (Paley, 2000, p. 12). In the same vein, Anya and Randolph (2019) warn of the danger of approaching diversity through an overly simplistic lens: “We also must resist defining it as the mere presence of individuals with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and identities. Such an approach amounts to little more than tokenism, because it focuses on counting people from different social categories without much thought to their inclusion, impact, interactions, and contributions“ (p. 23). The resources and tools we choose to infuse into our curriculum send powerful messages to students who may see their personal identities affirmed or denied in the class, which necessarily will affect their learning.

**Why Representation Matters**

Recently in an advanced French class I was teaching, we were working on the theme of bullying, and I presented a video from a French media site that had a little film about the dangers of bullying; it showed two cartoon characters on the playground bullying a third child. As I stopped the video to ask students questions about their comprehension, thinking that I was working on language skills, a student from China wondered aloud how interesting it was that the
bullies in the video were white, and the victim had brown skin. As she brought up this point, I suddenly felt embarrassed at my own lack of awareness of the race of the characters in the video. I had pushed forward pedagogically toward my linguistic objectives. Yet to my student, the race of the characters were front and center. Clearly my own race and the dominant race of the student body played a major role in this dynamic. As Paley (2000) states, “Our behavior in the classroom becomes an important part of the ‘hidden curriculum’” (Paley, p. xix). Can the latent curriculum of social justice ever exist separately from a language curriculum? Arya and Randolph (2019) describe what diversifying our curriculums looks like: “We must be intentional about finding and incorporating authentic resources that represent non-dominant target language and learner communities and cultural narratives… so that these voices may be amplified in our courses and, more importantly, so that our world and social realities can be more accurately and completely represented” (p. 26). As we look at the physical and intellectual spaces of our schools, critical pedagogy demands that we scrutinize every aspect of the classroom spaces, hiring practices, school calendar, and most pertinent to this paper, the curriculum: “What is excluded from the curriculum is often as revealing as what is included” (Nieto, 2018, p. 42). As my student reminds us, students have hawk-eye vision for clues that their voice and other minoritized voices are seen and valued.

As I created an English course last fall, I thought about which texts would bring the highest learner engagement. I wanted my students to enjoy reading, a lofty wish, some would argue, for the “screenager” generation for whom reading is losing popularity. As I reviewed countless young adult or high school English class classics along the lines of J.D Salinger's The Catcher In The Rye, or Robert Cormier’s The Chocolate War, I realized that many of these texts provide narratives of mostly white, middle or upper-class characters. It seemed that asking my
students from China, Italy, Thailand, Mexico, or Russia to engage with these stories seemed a long shot, as I don’t know where they could see themselves in the characters or storylines. Already, international students account for less than 15% of our school community; they are often in the linguistic and racial minority. Why work with texts that just replicate their daily experience? Rudine Sims Bishop (1990) illuminates the real damage possible in seeing minority voices either seldom or in a negative light: “When children cannot find themselves reflected in the books they read, or when images they see are distorted, negative, or laughable, they learn a powerful lesson about how they are devalued in the society in which they are a part” (p. ix). I will continue to explore this issue later in this paper as it pertains to inclusion of LGBT+ learners. Calling on the field of children’s literature to provide “mirrors” for students from all cultures, Sims Bishop (1990) notes that the absence of minoritized voices actually hurts students from dominant social groups as well: “In this country, where racism is still one of the major unresolved social problems, books may be one of the few places where children who are socially isolated and insulated from the larger world may meet people unlike themselves. If they only see reflections of themselves, they will grow up with an exaggerated sense of their own importance and value in the world - a dangerous ethnocentrism” (p. x). This consideration of representation echoes the ideas expressed by Nieto (2018) that multicultural education is for all students, not just students of color. It is important that literature provides representation of diverse identities so that “all the children from all the cultures that make up the salad bowl of American society can find their mirrors” (Sims Bishop, 1990, p. ix).

I began to seek out texts portraying immigrant narratives, and if I could find coming-of-age stories portraying teenage or young adult experiences, even better. I came across the novel *Front Desk* by Kelly Wang (2018). The story is about a teenage girl, Mia, and her family who
immigrate from China to Northern California. As her parents begin work in managing a motel, the novel documents Mia’s cultural transition to the U.S, as well as covering mature topics such as racism, parental expectations and labor exploitation. I loved to see my students identify with the main character as she navigated a cultural adjustment, the teenage quest for identity, and her growing bilingualism. As I learned more about the author, I sensed that she shared my wish that novels represent the diverse and evolving face of its readers. Kelly Yang describes her childhood feeling self-conscious of her family’s struggles and that she didn’t fit in with her peers: “To cope, I buried my nose in books. But even there, I felt not normal. I remember reading books like *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing* and thinking, ‘God, I wish I had those problems’ (Yang, author website). As Kelly recalls the concerns that touched her life, like having enough food to eat, or fitting in with her white, suburban peers: “Those were very real concerns of mine growing up, and I couldn’t find them anywhere in the books I was reading. And when you don’t see yourself or your problems in the books you are reading, you start to feel invisible”. To Kelly Yang, “diverse books are the ticket to a brighter future. When children see themselves represented in a book… it’s the most empowering feeling ever and it changes lives” (Yang, author website). At best, authentic and diverse representations of culture open the window for the spectrum of identities that are valued in a society. At worst, a student can’t find themselves anywhere, or even worse, the representations an educator chooses to include perpetuate singular stories of culture which contain inequities of power. Sims Bishop (1990) underlines the power inherent in the act of reading: “Reading, then, becomes a means of self-affirmation, and readers often seek their mirrors in books” (p. ix). The teacher, therefore, is not a content deliverer of culture, but a vector through which a myriad of identities can pass through and occupy a curriculum.
Critical Pedagogy

The Comprehensible Input/ TPRS language teaching movement revolutionized language teaching in that authors of texts told compelling stories using high-frequency words (Krashen, 1982, 1985). The idea of ditching a textbook and exposing students to grammatical structures through the communication of interesting and novel stories is attractive. As the focus turns to the characters and storylines, I have had fun over the years telling seemingly nonsensical stories about a girl who needs three eggs to make a cake, or trips on her brother’s pants on the way to the kitchen. I started to wonder about how I was teaching culture through these nonsensical stories. If I was likely to glaze over the race or sexual orientation of the characters, I wondered if I was serving students by providing rich representations of the target language culture. I wondered if students of color had an entry point to interact with the cultural landscape of my materials. Without a critical eye, was I unwittingly reproducing replicas of the mainstream culture where minority students do not see an entryway? And how does this impact student learning? Bonny Norton (1995) introduced the idea of learner investment, which she argues is the more specific factor that influences if a student will ‘buy-in’ to the classroom practices and materials: “A learner may be a highly motivated language learner but may nevertheless have little investment in the language practices of a given classroom or community, which may, for example, be racist, sexist, elitist, or homophobic” (p. 326). During my first year in a new school which used a TPRS reader, I worked with a story about a girl (or boy) who ate too many pancakes; so many, in fact, that the director of her school told her that she couldn’t come to school until she went to the gym and lost weight. Most likely, the author wrote this story in a playful spirit. How humorous, they may have thought, the idea that a student became so large that they couldn’t fit through the school doors. But as my 9th grade students read this story, it
really didn’t matter that the story gave repeated or comprehensible exposure to the passé composé. The story reproduced, in my view, a harmful message to a teenager that their bodies are up for scrutiny of others, and that through manipulating our calories or activities, our bodies can become more accepted or rejected by the outside world. As soon as my critical eye opened, I rejected this text and discontinued my use of it. But this did require a shift on my part from ‘linguistics over everything’ to cultural responsiveness. In our choice of classroom practices, curriculum design, and authentic materials, teachers set a landscape to which a student can subscribe or not. The classroom inevitably occupies a political terrain for student identities to be either honored or discluded. In this way, every decision an educator makes in their instruction and curriculum can affirm or silence a student’s voice.

Scholarship in the field of critical pedagogy looks at textual resources world language teachers may use. While the language use may be clear and comprehensible, the content of the stories may possess damaging cultural stereotypes that may do more harm than good, particularly if this is the only interaction with the target language culture students experience. When the TPRS/CI movement gained traction in the 1980s, a few graded readers were published. One example seems pertinent to share here. In one story, Patricia, a 15 year old girl, “tiene una familia normal, con un padre, una madre, y una hija” (Ray, 2001, Chapter 2). Through the lens of Bonny Norton, I wonder who this representation of a so-called “normal” family serves, and who it may leave feeling excluded. What about students who are adopted, have parents who are divorced, of different races, are in a same-sex relationship, are unmarried, single, or are deceased. Such a story may conveniently meet language objectives in that it uses high-frequency words, but it also assumes a heteronormative script; would a gay student feel their worldview
expanded or identity affirmed in reading this? The static, overgeneralized portrayal of a culture is another element to problematicise. This particular story goes on to describe how the main character, Patricia, has an opportunity to host an exchange student from Guatemala. A few paragraphs describe the culture in Guatemala: “Los indígenas de Guatemala no tienen muchas cosas materiales. Solo tienen dinero para comprar comida. Guatemala es un país pobre. Las niñas tienen solamente una blusa o dos. Los niños tienen solamente un pantalón o posiblemente dos” (Ray, 2001, Chapter 1). The story goes on to explain that many children in Guatemala don’t have the opportunity to attend school, and that many children sell wares to tourists to bring money to their families. This is a singular, static story that offers a rather flat account of Guatemalan culture. One has to wonder if a Guatemalan person would approve of this representation of Guatemalan culture in our Spanish language curriculum. When an educator doesn’t challenge this singular narrative, it allows systems of inequity to be perpetuated. Whose voices do we showcase in our curriculum and texts, and whose do we exclude?

**Inclusion of LGBT+ learners**

Scholarship on how issues of sexual identity and orientation touch the classroom can be aptly applied to concerns of culturally responsive teaching as a whole. Bonny Norton’s (2011) work on learner identity provides a good framework for beginning to explore the topic: “Every time language learners speak, they are…constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world” (p. 410). Norton (2011) suggests that teachers must embrace a “pedagogy of inquiry, which asks how linguistic and cultural practices naturalize certain sexual identities, most notably heterosexuality” (p. 410). Cynthia Nelson (2009) looks at the idea of how “allowable identities” for students are determined in part by “allowable
discourses”, which are determined in large part by the teacher” (p. 13). Nelson recounts an anecdote wherein an ESL student, in a lesson targeting object pronouns, produces the phrase “When I love someone, I tell him”. Amid the muffled laughter of his peers, the teacher waits for him to self-correct: “When I love someone, I tell her” (Nelson, p. 13). Essentially, the teacher communicates the identities that are desirable or accepted within the community of both the classroom and outside of it. This is relevant when we consider that many ESL students are often newcomers to a community (as immigrants, refugees, international students, visiting workers, or tourists); it is therefore important that teachers “recognize that classroom relationships and interactions both consciously and unconsciously define what is desirable and possible for newcomers” (Morgan, 1997, p. 433). Nelson urges teachers to consider “how classroom practices encourage or discourage certain aspects of identity” (Nelson, 2009, p. 13). Nelson (2009) goes on to recommend that teachers “assume that they have gay, lesbian, and bisexual students in each of their classes (even if they do not know which individuals these are),” and to consider when and how students have opportunities to write or talk about their own lives: “For example, when teachers ask students to write about ‘personal’ information, do they make it clear in advance with whom this information will be shared with?” (p. 15). Nelson (2009) points out the many reasons that students may be reluctant to ‘come out’ in assignments like this, citing fear of homophobic remarks from peers, or even fear of political persecution or social discrimination after returning home to countries that were not ‘gay-friendly’ (p. 15). Teachers need to bring inclusivity to their work, and remember that every pedagogical choice they make communicates something to each student.
Representation of LGBT+ narratives in curriculum

A pedagogy of inclusion, according to Nelson (2009), aims to introduce images as well as experiences of gays and lesbians into curriculum materials. Teachers have a responsibility to “…ensure diversity within curricula and learning resources so that the characters, vocabulary, and issues that are represented are not overwhelmingly straight” (p. 15). This assertion can easily transfer to the inclusion of all marginalized voices within curriculum choices. Nelson points out how it is common for textbooks to include vocabulary pertaining to straight relationships, i.e ‘wife’, ‘husband’ or ‘father-in-law’, and less common to see gay-inclusive or gender-neutral terms like ‘partner’ (p. 15) and even less so, transgender-inclusive pronouns or narratives. Nelson documents how early attempts to include LGBT narratives in textbooks were imperfect; much critique went to representations that the gay community found stereotypical, tokenistic, or used with the objective to generate controversy. Nelson (2009) proposes that teachers use curriculum choices as an opportunity to model “a positive approach to sexual diversity” (p. 16) and that LGBT themes and narratives should be woven into topics of all themes: “Inclusion of gay and lesbian characters in our ESL materials and textbooks also allows for other students to begin to notice that… gays and lesbians are in fact a part of the multi-colored fabric of our lives” (p. 19). Snelbecker & Meyer (1996) examine the “clear omission” of LGBT voices in ESL textbooks: “This omission creates an environment in which LGBT students do not feel represented or safe, and therefore affects their ability to learn English effectively” (p. 19). Other studies have been critical of their representation of sex roles and sexualities in “prescriptive ways that may be alienating to transgender students” (p. 19). At the very least, Nelson (2009) tasks teachers with disallowing heterosexism or homophobic attitudes in their classroom. This process may be aided by an inclusive curriculum which equitably represents a variety of identities and
pushes learners to question normative practices, both in the target culture and within one’s own culture. Sears (1987) and Nelson’s (2009) work in this area speaks to the heart of culturally responsive pedagogy as Sears (1987) states so well:

“Educators have a social responsibility to promote human dignity and to further social justice for gays and lesbians. In simplest terms this means providing a learning environment that is free from physical or psychological abuse, that portrays honestly the richness and diversity of humanity… that integrates homosexual themes and issues into the curriculum, that counsels young people who have or may have a different sexual orientation and that supports gay and lesbian teachers” (p. 31).

Sears’ words apply aptly to areas of all marginalization, and the responsibility of the educator remains the same.

When considering inclusion of all learners, it is helpful to remember Norton’s framework of this through the lens of identity. Norton (2011) argues that a classroom is a necessarily political space where identities are negotiated, affirmed or denied: “Research on identity suggests that the extent to which a learner speaks or is silent, and writes, reads, or resists has much to do with the extent to which the learner is valued in any given institution or community” (p. 326). Nelson (2009) echoes this as she asks us to consider every language skill as a space where a learner identity is called into expression: “When attending to issues to language, it can be helpful to attend to how identities (one’s own and others’) are being constructed and interpreted through the acts of speaking, listening, reading, and writing” (Nelson, p. 13). These arguments underline the idea that linguistic work across all four skills necessarily require aspects of learner identity to engage, meaning that language and identity are critically intertwined.
Building a home base in one’s own culture

There may be a knee-jerk reaction of teachers to think that, because their classrooms are mostly white or they assume that their students are straight, that they don’t really need to examine their curriculums with a critical eye. Sonia Nieto and Patty Bode (2018) describe the misperception of educators to think that multicultural education is “only for students of color, for urban students, or for so-called disadvantaged students” (p. 37). Nieto (2018) argues that because multicultural education “is about all people, it is also for all people” (p. 38). In fact, she argues that it could be argued that students from the dominant culture need multicultural education more than others because they are “generally the most miseducated or uneducated about diversity” (p. 38). She describes how “European American youths often think that they do not even have a culture… At the same time, they feel that their ways of living, doing things, believing, and acting are ‘normal’. Anything else is ‘ethnic’ and exotic” (Nieto, Bode, 2018, p. 38). The idea that white communities don’t need multicultural education may be a defense mechanism, protecting the teacher from what may seem scary, threatening, or too big a “can of worms”. Many of us can imagine a colleague scrolling through their phone during a diversity training which he or she may not see as “necessary”. Nieto (2018) describes how the perpetual cycle of this “helps to legitimize their cultural blindness” (p. 37). Gloria Ladson-Billings (2017) sees this problem as lying from within teachers and that, necessarily, teacher educator programs must work to instill this awareness in pre-service teachers. In her experience working with university students in mostly white, middle-class communities, she has remarked that white students can seem unaware of their own cultural vantage point: “What is often missing among teachers is their limited understanding of their own culture” (p. 145). She explains that part of the challenge of her work as a teacher educator is helping these young people engage in the work of “cultural excavation”
in order to recognize their own experience as valuable and distinct: “I often explain to them that due to social power dynamics that define whiteness as the unmarked, invisible norm, they are like fish who have trouble seeing the water they swim in” (Ladson-Billings, 2018, p. 145). The fact that it is such a “revelation” to university-level students that they too have a “culture” is a testament to their starting point as they enter the classroom. Perhaps this puts them at a disadvantage when working with minority communities whose backgrounds differ from their own. Perhaps receiving a culturally responsive education with a focus on intercultural competence could have helped them see themselves as cultural beings earlier on, even before they entered an undergraduate or graduate level teaching program.

**Defining Culture**

Language teachers looking to teach culture will often find activities in their textbook that may introduce target culture practices or products explained in an article; the student may be asked to complete comprehension questions or make their own *bûche de Noël*. In reality, culture is such an intangible, evolving entity that may seem complex or daunting to tackle as a teacher, who may even question their role in teaching this area of their language curriculum. The Products, Practices, and Perspectives of a culture can not operate independently of the Communities and Persons of its culture, rounding out the five dimensions of culture as articulated by Patrick Moran (2001, p. 24) (see Appendix A). Moran (2001) draws upon these interrelated features to define culture thusly: “Culture is the evolving way of life of a group of persons, consisting of a shared set of practices associated with a shared set of products, based upon a shared set of perspectives on the world, and set within specific social contexts” (p. 24). Nieto (2018) defines culture broadly as “the ever-changing values, traditions, social and political
relationships, and worldview created, shared, and transformed by a group of people (p. 48). Bennett (1993, 1997) established the idea of Culture versus culture. Culture is what one might learn about in school, and culture is the ever-shifting landscape below the surface of a society (see “The Cultural Iceberg", Appendix B). Educators are beginning to see teaching culture as a “process that will allow language learners to develop not just knowledge about the other culture but a close understanding of how culture permeates and shapes the behaviors and interactions of people” (Furstenburg, 2010, p. 330). Hall (1990) describes culture as the “silent language” that people are not even aware of using: “[We] are not conscious of the elaborate patterning of behavior which prescribes our handling of time, our spatial relationships, our attitudes toward work, play and learning” (p. 10). Hall treats culture in its entirety as a form of communication. What can this mean in the language classroom? I recall the cultural iceberg image created by Brembeck (1977, see Appendix B). Perhaps learning about a cultural product can give way to an exploration of the deeper beliefs under the surface. Michael Byram (1997) makes the distinction between teaching culture as “content” and for building true interculturality as the difference between the tourist and the sojourner: “The experience of the sojourner is potentially more valuable than that of the tourist, both for societies and individuals, since the state of the world is such that the societies and individuals have no alternative but proximity, interaction and relationship as the conditions of existence” (p. 2). As Byram suggests, building learner skills in interculturality has an adjacent outcome of making the individual more capable of interacting with otherness, tolerating ambiguity, and therefore in navigating intercultural conflict.
Building Cultural Self-Awareness

The learner’s home culture serves as an essential starting point for building cultural skills. Moeller and Nugent (2014) allege that “many students in the United States enter foreign language courses with an unwillingness to consider another point of view as well as a lack of awareness of their own culture” (p. 4). Many argue that learning about the cultures of other places necessarily denotes a cultural learning or uncovering of the self. Edward Hall (1990) states that “Culture hides much more than it reveals, and strangely enough what it hides, it hides most effectively from its own participants” (p. 39). This can complicate the task of building intercultural competence as the concept of culture is elusive and intangible, yet learner ethnocentrism can render these initial steps paramount.

According to Moeller and Nugent (2014), the heart of intercultural competence is “the preparation of individuals to interact appropriately and effectively with those from other cultural backgrounds” (p. 2). Gloria Ladson-Billings (2017) refers to attempts to train individuals working in health care, for instance, on intercultural competence and how this training, at its worst, is a list of “do’s and don'ts” that don’t really focus on the skills needed to interact with ‘the other’ with empathy and openness. The standards recently established by ACTFL (see World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages) (The Five “C”s: Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities) are designed to guide learners toward becoming viables contributors and participants in a linguistically and culturally diverse society” (Moeller Nugent, 2014, p. 1). These standards were issued in recognition that language proficiency is no longer the sole objective of language studied. Moeller and Nugent (2014) showcase how building ICC relates closely to the principles Sims Bishop (1990) described in teaching for cultural relevance and sustainability: “A diverse curriculum should be a window, a mirror, and a sliding
glass door -- a window through which students examine and learn from the perspectives of others, a mirror showing their own experiences and cultures validated, and a sliding glass door through which students are able to enter into and experience the lives and cultures of others” (p. ix). As educators in ESOL or world language contexts infuse culture into our language teaching, we need to wonder where we are providing students with a mirror to examine themselves, guiding them toward an entryway into a foreign culture, and equipping them with skills to interact with another culture once they walk inside.

Byram (1997) echoes how the teaching of culture out of context keeps students as “tourists”: seeing everything as foreign as we bathe in our own vantage point as “normal” and culture-less:“The traditional emphasis in cultural learning in the classroom has been on the acquisition of knowledge about another country and culture. In the worst case, this involves decontextualized factual information with minimal relationship to the language learning focus at a given moment” (p. 65). This decontextualization is key: A textbook can jump from object pronouns to a reading on the history of the baguette with a flip of the page. Byram (1997) explains that the path to cultural competence can begin with interacting with the “other” using one’s native language with an interlocutor, or by interpreting authentic documents that have perhaps been translated into one’s native language from another culture/language. He advocates the use of realia and authentic resources and documents which compel a process of reflection and investigation.
Building IC through the lens of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

The objectives of culturally responsive pedagogy indeed share a common terrain with the work language educators do to promote intercultural competence. Gloria Ladson-Billings (2017) warns of the dangers of *tokenism*, whereby a racial group might be summed up conveniently in an effort to teach culture. She cringes to see her white student teachers working in Black communities using hip-hop as their ticket of entrance into their students’ communities. Many Spanish language students in the United States do an activity for *Dia de Los Muertos*, perhaps most remembering the candy skulls or skeletons. What can be unlocked in this lesson to include a nuanced exploration of cultural attitudes surrounding death, family, or mortality? Similarly, a world language textbook may provide a reading on the history of the baguette in France. It is interesting, but without tweaking it to promote interculturality, can it relay anything more complex to my students about, for example, the differing relationship to food that French culture holds? Can this reading turn the question back to my students to ponder their own attitudes toward eating, time spent at the table, standards of quality, and larger issues of socio economics related to the food industry in each country? Building intercultural competence speaks directly to this: “When reality is presented as static, finished, and flat, the underlying tensions, controversies, passions, and problems faced by people throughout history and today disappear…. ” (Nieto, Bode, 2018, p. 43). When cultural representations lack nuance or depth, and students are not given the opportunity to question, analyze, build skills, acquire knowledge, reflect on their attitudes like the tenets of ICC describe, then we are cardboard cutouts of culture to each other, and we likely to navigate conflict unskillfully. What are we doing in our language classrooms to expand students’ worldviews, develop their sense of global citizenship, and bolster their sense of cultural fluidity and flexibility as they look beyond their cultural viewpoint? And
most poignantly, how can teachers articulate and assess this skill so that building cultural competence occupies an intentional space in their curriculum?

Ladson-Billings’s (2017) manifesto for culturally sustainable pedagogy (CSP) does indeed share much common ground with the ideals of building Intercultural Competence, as outlined by Michael Byram. She reminds us of the definition of cultural competence: “that all students should be able to develop fluency in at least one other culture -- even those who are members of the dominant culture” (p. 145). Nieto (2018) echoes that the work of building cultural competence is about helping students to “understand multiple perspectives and not only the viewpoints of the dominant groups” (p. 43). It guides students to become informed and active participants in a multilingual and multicultural world. Michael Byram (1997) states that world language teachers should “not introduce students to a culture, to a particular combination of beliefs, behaviors, and meanings dominant in a particular society, precisely because they are dominant and represent the interests of a powerful minority” (Byram, p. 35) When a student reads a story about a wealthy, white person interacting with other wealthy, white members of French society, it perpetuates systems of inequity, and it doesn’t give learners alternate viewpoints to consider, which Ladson-Billings (2017) reminds us: “Further, this limited perspective on culture almost always conceives of culture as static, unchanging sets of actions or behaviors” (p. 145). Building intercultural communicative competence in the language classroom, argues Sonia Nieto (2018), requires that students build competence in their own cultural viewpoint as they prepare to interact with a foreign culture: “The goal of cultural competence is to ensure that students remain firmly grounded in their culture of origin (and learn it well) while acquiring knowledge and skill in at least one additional culture” (p. 145). For this to happen successfully, educators must help their students locate their own identity, as well as
bringing awareness of our students’ unique identities: “For most marginalized students, the additional culture is typically the mainstream one, since it is typically the culture of commerce and social advancement. But the skilled pedagogue understands the value of keeping students grounded in the culture that represents their home, family, and loved ones” (p. 145).

**Roles and Challenges of Teachers**

In traditional language pedagogy, the teacher and the textbook may have been considered the experts and disseminators of cultural knowledge. Anointing teachers with the role of sole transmitter of cultural knowledge is an outdated, unproductive interpretation of the role of pedagogue; teachers must create this shift intentionally as they shift to an IC focus. Moeller and Nugent (2014) also advocate for a re-thinking of the teacher role:

> “21st century foreign language teachers are no longer expected to transmit detailed information about the culture being studied to learners, rather the teacher assumes the role of facilitator as she guides the learning process in order to actively involve learners as they explore, discover, analyze, and evaluate meaningful information through primary and authentic text. In this situation, the teacher’s job is not to provide specific questions and answers to the artifact, rather to pose some open-ended questions to guide learners toward independent discovery of differing worldviews based on common textual material” (p. 5).

Much of what marks teaching for IC is that the cultural content is often produced in the students’ self-reflections, their interaction with authentic documents and their investigation of ideas through a member of the target language culture, if available.
Pedagogy infused with IC features learning experiences that go beyond teacher or textbook dissemination of information about cultural practices and products to address multiple cultural perspectives and elicit meaningful cultural comparisons. As such, language learners must have opportunities to investigate the diverse perspectives behind cultural products and practices, from the point of view of natives of the target culture(s). This approach to teaching culture goes beyond teaching a unilateral and fixed culture for a group of peoples and leaves behind the idea of teacher as all-knowing cultural expert. Moreover, an IC approach to the teaching of culture calls for language learners to deconstruct their own cultural perspectives. We need to invite students to, as Kristin Hoyt (2016) describes, “deconstruct their own cultural perspectives.. or prepare them to see, understand, and accept ‘the other’” (p. 75). Gilberte Furstenburg (2010) explains it in this way: “It is to bring patterns to light and gradually put together the cultural puzzle - in other words, to teach the students to ask the right questions themselves and to facilitate the experience of self-learning” (p. 330). Indeed, building cultural competence necessitates that students create their own learning. It compels students to interact with another culture from their own vantage point - their deepest cultural selves.

In my specific context of teaching both French language and English Language Arts to new international students at my school, I have come to approach teaching culture as serving the same aim of intercultural competence, despite the work in itself differing slightly. Patrick Moran (2001) interviewed teachers who have described challenges: for those teaching world language in a mono-lingual environment far removed from the target language culture, and for students who are fully immersed in the target language culture in their daily lives. The author speaks to this: “Despite the great differences, both teachers are attempting to help learners make a transition from one world, one way of life, into another” (p. 11). Moran (2001) gets more specific on these
two differing cases. Students learning French in the United States “will likely not use the language ever again, and students who have already entered another way of life and are struggling with cultural conflicts as they learn the language” (p. 11). These statements echo what has been my experience. A teacher in Moran’s study who teaches French in New York states that “[in language learning] I believe there’s a lot of possibility for growth. Growth can look like linguistic growth, but it can also look like personal growth.” (Moran, 2001, p. 11) A teacher of ESL in the United States alluded to cultural conflicts that she would like to handle and dismantle through her intercultural-driven curriculum: “Students are very open to the cultural activities done in class, but conflicts arise when one culture strongly contrasts with another in a sensitive area, such as religion. Instead of learning about the differences, students become argumentative and judgmental” (p. 11). These cultural conflicts that the teacher alludes to are certainly of interest to me as I contemplate the implications of building interculturality in my students and keeping this work at the heart of language teaching, and which I will revisit later in this paper.

**Democracy and Relationships**

Relationships emerge as a common theme when discussing the nuanced work of building intercultural skills. The hard work of developing a student’s self-awareness toward their own cultural viewpoint has potentially great rewards in regards to navigating conflicts between people. Mikhail Gorbachev (1990) in his *Nobel Lecture* muses that harmony between people depends on embracing diverse viewpoints, stating that “Peace is not unity in similarity but unity in diversity, in the comparison and conciliation of differences”. The work that we do in the classroom has a direct link to how students become global citizens capable of encountering diversity of perspectives, as Beneke (2000) suggests: “[Developing IC] infers the ability to cope
with one’s own cultural background in interaction with others. In a wider sense, it involves the use of significantly different linguistic codes and contact with people holding significantly different sets of values and models” (p. 108). Deardorff (2010) emphasizes the role of the self in relation to others extensively in her work, and also sees its connection to humanity in a larger sense: “In the end, intercultural competence is about our relationships with each other and ultimately, our very survival as humankind, as we work together to address the global challenges that confront us in this century.” (p. 265). Byram (1997) and Hall (1987) reflect on the role of IC as equipping diplomats to enter cultures outside of their own successfully: “Where the tourist remains essentially unchanged, the sojourner has the opportunity to learn and be educated, acquiring the capacity to critique and improve their own and others’ conditions” (Byram, 1997, p. 2). Byram (1997) outlines the overarching goals of teaching for ICC: “Societies benefit from more harmonious coexistence,” and individuals are “made more conscious of their humanity and more able to reflect upon and question the social conditions in which they live” (p. 2). Shifting our classrooms away from the model of traditional culture learning through the eyes of a “tourist” may demand a focused attention on the part of the educator as they enhance their teaching with an IC focus, but equipping students with the ability to experience cultures as “sojourners” seems a worthwhile venture with potential benefits that can carry beyond even the walls of our classroom.
Part II.

Interculturality in Praxis

According to Byram (1997) there are 5 dimensions that make an individual interculturally competent:

- **Knowledge** (savoirs): of social groups and their products and practices in one’s own and in one’s interlocutor’s country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction
- **Attitudes** (savoir-être): curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one’s own;
- **Skills of discovery and interaction** (savoir apprendre/ faire): ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge under the constraints of real time communication and interaction;
- **Skills of interpreting and relating** (savoir comprendre): ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents or events from one’s own
- **Critical awareness** (savoir s’engager): ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one’s own and other cultures and countries (Byram 1997).

Byram argues that a curious and open attitude is a prerequisite for the development of ICC because if there is no desire to learn from or communicate with someone with different beliefs, values and behaviours, there will never be any development in skills or knowledge. Deardorff (2010) shares this opinion that attitudes are a fundamental aspect of reaching IC, stating that openness and curiosity “imply a willingness to risk and to move beyond one’s comfort zone. In communicating respect to others, it is important to demonstrate that others are valued. These attitudes are foundational to the further development of knowledge and skills needed for intercultural competence” (p. 256). I will come back to the role of attitudes in a later discussion about stereotypes.
My Context

In my current teaching assignment, I teach advanced levels of French language to students aged 15 through 18; this year students are generally in 10th grade through 12th grade. My school is a private, preparatory, boarding school which identifies as lay Catholic. We are located in Western Connecticut. Of the student population, 40% are day students, coming from surrounding communities, and 60% are boarding, coming from the United States or abroad. Classes meet for 45 minutes, four times per week. The demographic that I worked with this year as I was creating this project is predominantly composed of native-English speaking students from the United States who began studying French at the 7th or 8th grade level. Additionally, two students in my Advanced Placement course are native speakers of Mandarin and have been studying in the US for about 3 years. I have worked with certain students in this class since their freshman year. Last year, I conducted a partnership with a French high school class as well, although it had less of a specific focus of interculturality.

Building Interculturality into a Unit

For the purposes of this paper, I will rely heavily on the model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) as created by Michael Byram (1997), which refers to five specific savoirs of the interculturally competent speaker. I will lightly refer to work by Darla Deardorff, who also created a model for building assessing IC (Appendix F). Additionally, I will use the ACTFL’s can-do statements for Intercultural Competency (Appendix D) in my framing of a French lesson on food.
Based on the principles of Michael Byram, I adapted a unit in an existing French textbook and gave it an intercultural emphasis. At my school, we have chosen to work with D’accord by Vista Higher Learning. Because I wasn’t able to fully implement the lesson exactly as described here, I can report on what I did implement and how it worked. Most importantly, as I felt it would help this project, I identified a partner high school in France with whom my students could communicate in a guided intercultural exercise. We communicated through Google Documents and in making video messages on Flipgrid. Prior to starting this unit, students presented themselves in a video and received a reply from their partner.

(At left, figure 1)

As I skimmed over the traditional unit guidance in the textbook, I see that the vocabulary content is laid out first: I see groups of food and a cartoon drawing of people sitting in a cafe. At the end of the unit, there is a brief article about cafes in France accompanied by a photo of a cafe with a terrasse, a blurb about regional specialties in different francophone countries, and a list of slang or colloquial expressions related to food.

For the purpose of this lesson, I will define the target language culture as that of France, because we will work with French students in a pen pal project. The knowledge (products, practices, and products) as identified by the Byram (1997) model of ICC (figure 1) of the target language culture will be in the vocabulary to speak about personal eating habits, preferences, and asking others about themselves.
As a pre-assessment of student attitudes and knowledge, I first ask students to journal or answer a forum prompt. 1) *Quels aliments connais-tu ?* I ask students to brainstorm words they know in categories: Légumes, Fruits, Desserts, Boissons, Fromages, Féculents (starches). 2) *Quels aliments associes-tu avec la culture française ?* 3) *Qu’est-ce que tu aimerais savoir sur la nourriture en France ?* Here, I am able to get a preview of both their linguistic skills (what food vocabulary they have retained from previous French study), as well as the attitudes or awareness they currently possess. We may spend this first day focusing on lexicon issues: taking class surveys of what students ate or plan to eat, looking at today’s school lunch menu, or building class community about personal eating habits on the online forum. I ask students to brainstorm questions that they have for our peer school in France about their eating habits in their daily lives. Teachers may modify the execution of this step, but for my purposes I have students work in pairs to develop survey questions in French. As students share them with the larger group and I collect responses, I may provide corrective feedback for linguistic issues, but ultimately I want this group activity to produce the survey that will go out to our peers. For homework or in-class writing, I ask students to reply to the survey they created, but they may reply in English. This provides our French students with a rich opportunity for input of the target language. Below are the survey questions that I co-created this year with my students:

- Do you eat breakfast before school? If you do, what do you eat?
- On the weekend, do you eat breakfast? If you do, what do you eat?
- Who prepares meals for the family, in general?
- How long is your lunch period during the school week?
- Where do you eat lunch at school?
- One thing I have heard about food in France (is that….) Is it true?
- What times of day do you snack? What kind of snack do you usually eat?
- What are your favorite sweets/desserts?
- How often do you eat them, and when (events, times of day, etc.)?
- Do you eat dinner with your parents, in general?
- How long do you sit at the table during dinner, typically?
- What is your favorite food from your own culture?
- What other questions do you have for your partner?

Students’ responses to the surveys were lively and reflected their own voices and idiosyncrasies of adolescent English: “I snack around 3:30 after school or 5. I nibble on dark chocolate, bars, pretzels, or fruit.” Another student gushes: “I’m always in the mood for a snack hahaha. I mostly snack at night when I’m stressed because of homework or when I’m bored.” On the question of something that they have heard and want to know more about, students replied in English, giving our peers rich input in the target language. I saw a variety of replies:

- I heard french people eat a lot of bread, is that true? I’m a big fan of bread, and I feel like I would enjoy that.
- I’ve heard that the food is really good and everywhere you go, you can get good food
- Do you eat baguettes a lot? More than other kinds of bread? Do you like to eat snails?
- One thing I have heard is that you eat a lot of bread, cheese, croissants, and macarons. Is that true?
- There is a lot of butter in the food.
- Do you eat croissants and chocolat chaud every day?
- Do you eat escargots?
- Are there a lot of diets in France? (or) Do a lot of people go on diets in France?
- I have heard French people like to eat a lot of bread and cheese. I have been to France once so I know they have really good bread so I wouldn’t blame you for eating a bunch of bread.
- Why do people say “Bon Appétit”?

This survey contained another question about “anything you want to know about French culture,” which I hoped would fill out the correspondence, and I was touched to see some of their questions, which ranged from “How do you talk so fast?” “Why are French people so serious?” to “Why are French people so skinny?” These responses, while not necessarily relevant to this unit on food, demonstrated other areas of student curiosity which we may visit in another unit, and if nothing else, these questions would help to build a social connection to their partner in the French school. Additionally, this was an avenue for stereotypes to come up, and getting feedback from their partner gives them an authentic source to inform themselves (as well as hear French
students’ perception of American culture).

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, our class was unable to formally interact with our peer school, as our partner school closed, so they didn’t receive our survey or my students’ responses. Therefore, we were unable to receive replies in the target language and facilitate follow-up conversation over Skype or Zoom. We did continue communicating with our peer school on Flipgrid, making videos about our daily lives in Confinement and other topics, but unfortunately their replies were also spotty as some students did not have consistent access to wifi. Byram (1997) defines the skill set of Discovery and Interaction in this way: “The skill of discovery comes into play where the individual has no, or only a partial existing knowledge framework. It is the skill of building up specific knowledge as well as an understanding of the beliefs, meanings and behaviors which are inherent in particular phenomena, whether documents or interactions” (p. 38). Byram clarifies that this skill can be built without having access to partners of the target culture, stating that students can engage with target language documents “without direct contact with people of another country but nonetheless satisfy curiosity and openness” (p. 38).

In this same unit, I asked students to interact with an authentic document from the target language culture. I have students view a video, “La Gastronomie Française” on Youtube; this video was a candidate in 2010 to be named an immaterial good to be named as an example of world heritage protected by UNESCO. This video shows the various functions of food in French culture; from families singing around a table, friends making a toast with a Beaujolais wine, people talking with vendors at a farmer’s market, to a chef showing a whole, raw fish to clients before he prepares it. I have used the NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements for Intercultural Communication for guidance on how to formulate my objectives for this activity, which
demonstrates a novice-intermediate objective.

Learning Target for Intercultural Communication

- **Investigate:** In my own and other cultures I can identify how, what, and why people eat what they do.
- **Interact:** I can ask a member of another culture about their food preferences, attitudes, and habits.

As students watch the video, I ask them to complete a T-chart below in which they compare the role of food in France with that of their own culture.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(in target language)</th>
<th>What do I observe in the video?</th>
<th>What would someone notice about my own life/community?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List some food(s) that they notice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Places where groceries are bought</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviors they notice while people are eating; table manners or habits</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After completing this chart in pairs, pairs will discuss this question: *Qu’est-ce qui t’a surpris dans la vidéo ?* Did anything surprise you about the video? I will then collect student responses on the T-chart in the target language. As a closing activity, I may ask students to write their thoughts on what surprised or touched them in the video. If I feel that my students’ language levels may limit their expression of nuance in their ideas, this journaling activity may be in English. Essentially, this step is for them; it allows students to document their attitudes. Reading their responses will also help me to assess their learning and growth. Moeller and Nugent (2014) explain the strategy of using the students’ native languages to start the process of building intercultural competence: “[it allows] the learners the time to record new insights, to begin the process in English and translation to using the target language, and to allow to adequate time to
consider cultural situations in class” (p. 7). There seems to come a time where linguistic progress cannot be held as the sole objective, and that we are always simultaneously working toward both, never losing sight of the other.

**Critical Cultural Awareness**

The category of “Critical Cultural Awareness” (*savoir s'engager*) in the Byram model is the element that can be honed through critical brainstorming, project-based learning, or even community service projects, Byram (1997) advocates that critical awareness is a crucial element in language teaching as it can be used to foster student’s values towards democratic citizenship. In this unit, my students have done research on food waste in the U.S and in France. They have presented innovative solutions across both cultures that have been initiated, and as an action piece students may choose to propose solutions for curbing food waste, present a campaign to encourage people to choose less perfect-looking produce, or create a menu for a meal which they may offer to their visiting peer school.

Hammond (2014) argues that culturally responsive instruction is about helping students become independent learners. Earlier in this essay, I outlined the need to implement representations of diversity in course materials particularly in regards to race and sexual orientation. How, then, can we build critical consciousness when students encounter authentic or inauthentic resources that portray dominant narratives of the racial majority? The video that I selected in this lesson “La Gastronomie Française” depicts mostly white people engaging in heternormative behavior, despite France’s established immigrant stronghold particularly from francophone countries in Africa and its passing of *Mariage Pour Tous* (Marriage for All) in 2010. In this video alone, minority voices are essentially absent, and a student of color or another
minoritized identity may encounter a reluctance to engage with the target language culture as they do not see themselves in the course content.

Based on Byram’s model, teachers can guide students to build skills of interpreting and relating through the use of authentic documents, for example through studying census data of immigrant backgrounds in France, or looking at the geographic presence of immigrant communities based in different regions or cities. An extension project, therefore, might be to have students research the presence of these communities, and connect it to food practices within France. For example, let’s look at restaurants with Senegalese cuisine in Paris, or investigate where one can buy the best Moroccan pastries. Perhaps there is a news report or interview of people celebrating Ramadan: what does an Iftar (breaking of fast) look like for members of the Muslim community in France? Teachers can guide students toward exploration despite the presence of mainstream narratives; we can help them to develop a critical eye and supplement their own learning driven by their own curiosity. This will guide students to themselves perceive how culture is not static or unchanging; it is in constant flux and cultures contain a multitude of perspectives. Their critical cultural awareness is thus raised as they draw upon their learner agency to seek information.

The use of journaling will be important as students draw connections in their interactions with target culture documents like those described above. I can ask students to revisit the UNESCO video on la gastronomie française with new eyes: Whose voices are present in the video? Whose are absent? One of the major tenets of Culturally responsive is to put student voices at the center of the course, after all: “Culturally responsive teaching positions the learner's cultural identities at the core of the learning process and uses the learner's cultural knowledge, experiences, and frames of reference in order to help the learner be successful in the course and
at the school” (Rhodes, C., Schmidt, S., 2018). I can ask students to create their own UNESCO-type video for their own families or community: As an extension activity to my original post-watch survey to the video, I can use the information students gathered in “What would someone notice about what people in my community eat/ where we buy it/ how we gather around food” to create a video that represents our community, city, or region. Student voices will necessarily shape this project, and curiosity could drive students to research the presence of immigrant communities in their region or in the US as a whole. As students draw parallels between the immigrant landscape of the US, their awareness deepens, and their attitudes hopefully become flexible. Underlying this exploration will be the hidden curriculum whose learning will hopefully be enduring: whose voices are absent and whose are dominant? They can hopefully approach every document or future interaction with the target culture with a growing sense of discernment and flexibility.

**Final Reflection on Unit**

Although the project encountered some discontinuity due to time constrictions, a global health crisis, and school closures, I was pleased with how I amended existing textbook materials with the tenets of IC in mind. As I designed the survey with my students, I was touched to see their areas of curiosity expressed. Even if some of their attitudes were overlapping or stereotypic, their responses gave me data to know where they were growing on the Bennett scale (see Appendix C) and as intercultural citizens, ready to successfully interact with target culture members. Merely by documenting their attitudes, I was able to sense that students began to capture the intangibility of elusiveness of the concept of food in francophone culture and in their own culture, and that their growth would continue beyond this unit. I have created this chart
below to demonstrate the versatility of the Byram model when creating units embedded with an IC focus. I have adapted this chart with inspiration from the work of Conlon Perugini (2018, p. 56):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Traditional Unit</th>
<th>IC Modified Unit “Food”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge</strong></td>
<td>Vocabulary of common food groups, expressing food preferences, gender of nouns</td>
<td>Vocabulary of well-known dishes across francophone cultures, food and drink commonly associated with certain holidays between cultures, steps of meal and table customs Use of authentic resources to provide vocabulary in context i.e. menus, advertisements, public health campaigns, guest chef to give a cooking lesson on French dessert during <em>L’Epiphanie</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills of relating and interpreting</td>
<td>Students classify foods into food groups</td>
<td>Tasks that allow careful reading, analysis, interpretation of resources – in order to achieve a change of perspective Studying typical school lunches from across world, interviews with French children about holiday meals, studying nutritional advice between cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills of discovery and interaction</td>
<td>Pairwork asking about everyday food preferences, Simulated conversations between server/client</td>
<td>Face-to-face and virtual encounter projects (Skype, Zoom, Flipgrid) with peer school in target culture (if available), Email/ text exchanges, listening to interviews or personal narratives of people, negotiation of cultural misunderstandings, role plays, critical incidents i.e. table etiquette, purpose of family mealtimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Students use journaling to reflect on attitudes. Students have opportunities to reflect on essential questions in English. Visual aids when working with texts to create curiosity and interest, using texts written by or about learners from other cultures telling about their lives, children’s and young adult literature, authentic texts – brought by learners (songs, interviews), virtual and face-to-face encounter projects (e-mail, exchange)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical, cultural awareness</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Critical comparison of portion sizes, food pyramids, nutritional advice between cultures, presence of diet movements, standards of beauty and wellness, eating disorders across francophone cultures, investigation into demographic landscape, immigrant narratives of cultural role of food, personal discovery/reflection on stereotypes held</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerns about social justice</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Researching equity issues in organic food movement; studying rates of obesity between cultures, food availability for defavorized populations, food assistance programs across cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Component</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>A look at food waste across both cultures, solutions proposed, including in local community, studying political initiatives across cultures that promote health and fitness among young people</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Use of Target Language

As I began this work, I was reluctant to let students slip out of the target language, a dogma that has permeated much of my training and early career. The ACTFL makes this statement on this topic: “ACTFL recommends that learning take place through the target language for 90% or more of classroom time except in immersion program models where the target language is used exclusively. The target is to provide immersion in the target language unless there is a specific reason to NOT use the target language.” As I considered the cultural opportunities present in a fluid classroom which has access to authentic resources and interaction with target language culture in some way, I considered the moments where using a native language would serve the students’ budding interculturality. Another issue is the prominent idealization of native speaker speech: “Traditional methods for teaching foreign language emphasized the importance of students practicing language structures, pronunciation, and vocabulary in order to become native-like speakers” (van Ek (as cited by Byram, 1997) explains that putting the focus on the creation of native speakers actually sets most students up for failure because they are asked to detach from their own culture while accepting the fact that the native speaker holds the power in the interaction” (italics mine). This inhibits growth toward intercultural competence, as the learner isn’t given equal opportunity to bring his/her beliefs into the conversation. This sets learners up to fail in their intercultural interactions, according to Lazar (2007): “A good knowledge of grammar rules, a rich vocabulary, a few memorized speech acts and cultural facts will not sufficiently help non-native speakers of a foreign language to
socialise, negotiate or make friends in the foreign language. Furthermore, native or near native fluency alone will not necessarily help native or non-native speakers of a language to successfully communicate with people from other cultures either (Lazar, 2007, p.5). The ACTFL made this declaration about the high value of cultural competence: “It is worth noting that the lack of sufficient language proficiency does not prevent the internalization of cultural perspectives, it only hinders the ability to communicate them in the target language. Learners internalize perspectives by reflecting on them and expressing them in their native language, before they express those perspectives in the target language” (see ACTFL Can-do reflection, Appendix D); ACTFL further suggests that as novice learners gain an understanding of products and practices, they steadily internalize the perspectives associated with them. Later, and as their linguistic proficiency grows, they are able to apply this knowledge of perspectives in intercultural contexts. Therefore, rather than putting so much emphasis on target language dogmas and native-speaker proficiency, teachers should promote the ideal of the intercultural speaker, one who is apt and competent in his or her interactions with people of other cultures (Schultz, 2007). Using native languages is a tool; an entrypoint for engagement with the target language culture.

The Usefulness of Stereotypes

As we embark in this work with learners, there may be moments where preconceptions or stereotypes are expressed. Scholarship in the area of IC suggests that teachers should not avoid student exploration of their stereotypes. On the contrary, we can use stereotypes as tools to help students identify their point of departure: “By debating commonly held statements, students become aware of implicitly held cultural beliefs and that there are multiple sides to any one
issue” (Wallace, Tamborello, p. 101). Discussion of stereotypes, argue the authors, “can allow for the introduction of issues of social justice” (p. 101). Eliciting stereotypes corresponds to guidance on how learners on the minimization stage on the Bennett DMIS scale (Appendix C) may raise their cultural self-awareness. Byram’s definition of “critical cultural awareness” emphasizes the importance of being conscious of one’s own critical and moral standpoint” (Byram, et al., 2017, p. 55). Eliciting these attitudes from students, according to the authors, can “lead to noticing and challenging what is taken-for-granted…. This can and should lead to reflection in the evaluation which often takes place spontaneously, an evaluation of our own beliefs, values and behaviours, and the beliefs, values and behaviours of others” (p. 55). The articulation of cultural stereotypes in this work, therefore, is not something to shrink away from or avoid; they can yield useful moments of learning when approached skillfully. Once students can identify their own biases, they can begin to deconstruct them.
Part III.

Navigating Cultural Conflict as Educators

As I close this paper, I bring my attention to what has spurred my interest in this field in the first place. I have suspected that building intercultural skills in students as we guide them to recognize their own cultural identity has the potential to make conflicts that arise perhaps easier to navigate. Bennett makes explicit the link between conflict resolution and having intercultural skills: “Intercultural sensitivity is not natural. It is not part of our primate past, nor has it characterised most human history. Cross-cultural contact usually has been accompanied by bloodshed, oppression, or genocide. Education and training in intercultural communication is an approach to changing our learners to transcend traditional ethnocentrism and explore new relationships across cultural boundaries. This attempt at change must be approached with the greatest possible care” (Bennett, 1993, p. 21). In the area of Critical Cultural Awareness/Political Education, Michael Byram (1997) enunciates this objective that “the intercultural speaker is aware of potential conflict between their own and other ideologies and is able to establish common criteria of evaluation of documents or events, and where this is not possible because of incompatibilities in belief and value systems, is able to negotiate agreement on places of conflict and acceptance of difference” (p. 64).

As I consider my own motivations for guiding students toward intercultural competence, I am driven by moments in my own classroom or school community where I have witnessed students or colleagues of different cultural or racial viewpoints clashing. In these instances, I may have felt unequipped to address them adequately, perhaps due to lack of experience or training. Often, these moments are shrouded in a sense of shame in my own lack of skill, or even at my own, albeit unintentional, contribution to the incident, through my silence or other misstep.
I have learned to adapt a spirit of curiosity as well as build an awareness of my own racial and cultural position within the context I teach in. I am white woman of European descent, often sharing a common social and racial identity with the dominant majority in my work community. I grew up in the northern suburbs of New York, where my experience in public schools was marked by teachers who almost entirely were white. Most of my teachers looked like me. Because of my social markers, I experience a high degree of privilege as I move through society. I have had to guide myself out of my own racial blindness, using the words of Gloria Ladson-Billings, to perform my own “cultural excavation”.

Cultural Conflict in the Classroom

I surveyed teachers working in various contexts and levels. I wanted to know if they have experienced hiccups within the classroom where they sensed a cultural conflict at play, and may have felt unequipped or untrained as to how to proceed. An issue that I see as compounding the difficulty in handling cultural conflict is that teachers may not feel free to discuss the incident with their colleagues or supervisors, thinking that the incident reflects negatively on their perceived professionalism or authority. Many incidents come to my mind when I think about conflicts, but I can share one here. While I was co-teaching a conversation course, we implemented a debate activity where students were asked to agree or disagree with a controversial statement. Students were from a variety of countries, including Japan, China, Italy, Turkey, and Russia. One of use had likely googled debate topics in the ESL classroom, and stumbled upon a list of controversial topics to ‘get students talking’; students needed to agree or not with the statement, and assemble themselves in the room according to what degree they agreed with the statement. Of the more benign topics, good discussions were generated around
school start times, cell phone use at school, and the cost of public education. When we introduced the topic of “Homosexuals should have the right to be married”, students dutifully placed themselves on the spectrum of where their opinion stood. The conversation that ensued became thorny for my colleague and I, and we found ourselves in dangerous water. A student from Japan declared, “My father is a psychiatrist, and he says that it’s like an illness, like a sickness; that there’s something wrong with you if you are gay”. My colleague and I fumbled to take the reins back and guide the discussion. A student from Vietnam added that there were people in his community who dressed like the opposite sex; he found this “really weird.” An Italian female student started to tell the Vietnamese student that what he is describing is different than being gay. Accompanying this banter by a few students was the silence of many others. As Nelson (2009) points out, “Teachers need to be wary of approaching ‘social issues’ in a simplistic way” (p. 15); she cites how early attempts of ESL textbooks to bolster awareness of gay and lesbian experiences fell short in that they provided overly simplistic or heterosexist portrayals of gays or lesbians. Nelson (2009) recalls a textbook published in the 1990’s that provided discussion starters for advanced ESL/EFL students which contained a unit in which students are asked to discuss their opinions about gay rights and attitudes about gay people. She counsels teachers to be wary of an “infantilizing approach to high-interest topics” (p. 16) and other oversimplifications that many ESL resources and curricula may propagate.

As I share this incident here, I am aware of my own self-judgement. How could I have thrown students of different cultures straight into such delicate conversational topics? How could I have better prepared the class community to tackle such an activity? I am also struck by my own fear of handling a conversation that derailed, and I wonder how many teachers have also had this sense of fear and discomfort in situations like these. Nelson criticizes early attempts by
textbooks to touch LGBT concerns (i.e. asking students to discuss their romantic lives or “asking
students what they think of gays” (Nelson, p. 16) and applauds how textbooks have evolved in
positive ways to embed LGBT narratives into coursework: “Other textbooks do not aim to
generate controversy but to integrate gay characters or concerns in less ‘marked’ ways by
embedding them within another theme” (p. 16). As I reflect on my summer teaching
conversational ESL, I wonder how I could have embedded gay and lesbian voices into various
elements of my curriculum throughout the course in order to prepare the terrain for a
performative speaking task like the one we asked students to participate in. At the same time, I
am curious about the conflict that arose in my class; both in my own experience of it as a teacher,
and in what training or skills could have helped me to navigate it in the moment.
**Teacher Experiences of Conflict**

In my research, I polled teachers to hear about cultural conflicts they have experienced in their career, if they were pleased with their own response to the conflict, and what training they had received or had liked to have received to help them navigate the situation. One teacher describes how many incidents of conflicts “…have almost always arisen when a student has said something that's involuntarily offensive.” The class dynamic in that moment can become tense or even volatile. In the context of a class discussion, students need to be guided to listen and hear each other. As I hear this personal account, I wonder how intercultural competence could help students themselves could guide their raft boat out of treacherous waters, so to speak, while hearing everyone’s voice and finding calmer waters. As I read other accounts, I was struck most by the teachers’ vivid recollection of these situations, often many years after the fact. I also noticed the similar thread of self-criticism and shame that I saw in myself. One high school teacher wistfully reflects,

> “I know that I have missed opportunities to hold kids accountable in situations over the years. There is one clear situation related to a sports team where there were ‘jokes’ and name calling toward a particular student that I did not intervene with. The jokes seemed to have to do with the person's sexual orientation. Part of my hesitation was thinking that the situation might become worse, draw attention to the situation. Perhaps even make the situation worse for the student when outside of my purview.”

This teacher weighed different approaches to addressing the situation, but ultimately out of fear of aggravating the problem, or making things even more uncomfortable for the student, they opted to not address the situation directly. Another teacher expresses this same fear of making the situation worse, and they describe the same dilemma:

> “I am generally unsatisfied with my responses to these situations because I feel like I let the student down. I can't explain why I may not intervene...it is partly due to avoiding an uncomfortable situation, fear of making a mountain out of a molehill, of bringing more attention to the situation rather than diffusing it, general fear of doing the wrong thing.”
Another high-school teacher echoes this as she describes: “I was not satisfied with my response but wasn't sure what else to do in the moment. I have not spoken with the student/s about _____, but I think I likely should have.” In these responses, I hear a remarkable ability to self-critique, even as the teacher may not consider the lack of support or training potentially not available to them at the time. As I read these responses, I think about how often individual teachers exist within a school climate that may not have equity or inclusion at the forefront of the school’s mission. As I connect these responses to the principles of Culturally Responsive Teaching, I wonder how an culturally responsive focus on curriculum and practice in intercultural skills starting in elementary school could change things. If students built skills of empathy and intercultural competence in each of their classes (not just language), perhaps they would be able to consider other viewpoints and be better citizens to the school community, instead of the large task of falling on a select few in moments of crisis. Perhaps training for these situations (for all parties) could begin well before a hatred or bullying incident.

According to the surveys returned, teachers are able to identify some obstacles that may hinder their ability to perfectly navigate these uncomfortable moments. Time and the multi-tasking nature of teaching was a recurring theme, one teacher stating that “the times I wasn't [satisfied with my response to a conflict] was when too much was going on and I became sidetracked and didn't address the situation in a timely enough manner.” Another teacher laments that, particularly in independent schools, time is a precious commodity, and that school-wide training in intercultural awareness, equity, and inclusion may take a back seat to other elements which are seen as more pressing, i.e. enrollment, fund-raising, or marketing: “Independent schools always have to have one eye on enrollment, which can mean that some issues (AP tests or college entry) can interfere with the fact [that] inclusion can be inefficient time-wise.”
Comments like these make the case that teaching with an intercultural focus as a way to, ultimately, create a more harmonious community, where each student possesses skills to navigate differences they encounter, should indeed be the work of every content area, not only of language teachers. An instructor of adult learners describes tensions between dominant language groups and students who don’t speak the dominant language:

“I have a predominantly Spanish speaking class who sometimes speak Spanish during class to clarify instructions/vocabulary or just chat during the breaks. One of my non-Spanish speaking students felt uncomfortable when others were speaking a language she couldn’t understand and told them ”speak in English” to which they replied that they were on break. But they switched to English because they saw it made her feel uncomfortable (maybe she thought they were talking about her?). I find it difficult to negotiate sometimes the interactions when there is one dominant group and then a few "stragglers" from another culture that don't share the same language/humor/directness in communicating.”

This educator recognizes the multi-layered nature of this conflict: it is both linguistic (a student’s insecurity that others are talking about her), and cultural; language is inherently cultural; style of communication style (tone, jokes, directness) may differ between cultures. This teacher cites her diverse learners’ different communication styles and varying attitudes about conflict or authority as an obstacle she has faced in navigating this conflict in her classroom: “I sometimes go back and forth between just speaking directly with those involved in a misunderstanding or opening the floor for discussion about it because that's also very cultural. Some prefer to talk openly about conflict and others prefer to speak to someone in authority and not confront a person in the same room.” This response reveals a pattern I heard among teachers in that, in times of conflict, they are keenly aware of the many ways to approach the issue, yet the multitude of considerations and their lack of focused training or support can somewhat freeze them into indecision and rumination. One American teacher in an EFL context in Japan recounts hearing
negative or stereotypic attitudes surrounding race expressed by learners that she sees go largely untouched by her Japanese counterparts:

"Often because my students have never seen a person of color before, and they will make comments that are ranging from weird to very rude. As an example, a previous English teacher had made flash cards and had included images of black people on the cards. During this unit, there were kids in every class who yelled that those cards were ‘scary’ or ‘crazy’. The Japanese teachers that I work with don’t say anything and it’s always left up to me, but I’m not totally comfortable with that."

This teacher cited her own language level as an obstacle to creating critical awareness or changing the attitudes of her learners: “I felt that I needed to say something, but my Japanese wasn’t good enough at the time so all I could say was that they shouldn’t say that because it’s rude.” This teacher felt unsupported and followed the lead of her colleagues, who didn’t have a common approach to guide learners toward critical awareness of their own stereotypes.

Teacher Training and Development

When I asked teachers what kind of training they have ever received on leading diverse classrooms or navigating conflict, I saw a spectrum of replies. One college-level instructor aptly observed the lack of cross-cultural training she received specific to teaching: “I took an intercultural communication class as part of my undergrad program but nothing specific to class management.” This suggests how the field of conflict resolution and intercultural communication could perhaps merge and provide targeted training to teachers. Another common theme is that if training was available or proposed to teachers, many found it to be ‘pre-packaged’ and most largely felt that it was insufficient: “When discussions are had or programs are offered, it feels like going through the motions and checking off a box that the school is doing it instead of working to integrate.” I’ve heard a word coined on Twitter discussion groups about this word that seemingly expresses this: chequity. “How white liberalism can undermine equity work: We
emphasize kindness, we celebrate diversity, we host an anti-bullying assembly, we display an I Have a Dream poster. Maybe we talk about implicit bias, carefully avoiding institutional racism. We check the box. Then we rest.” Robin Diangelo (2018) elucidates the patterns which are the foundation of white fragility, naming “guilt that paralyzes or allows inaction” and “failure to understand that we bring our group’s history with us, that history matters”, “assuming that everyone is having or can have our experience” and “defensiveness about any suggestion that we are connected to racism” as among the key pillars of white fragility (p. 68). With these in mind, one can imagine how, particularly in mostly-white communities of educators, such trainings proposed as in-service professional development can be ineffective, as they are likely designed to keep everyone feeling comfortable. In my survey, one university-level educator posits that in terms of diversity, equity, and inclusion, a truly efficient ‘training’ “requires being vulnerable and looking at power dynamics and injustices. It demands letting go of things staying the way they have been and it makes everyone uncomfortable…. If there is not a safe space for communities to stay together and deepen and grow in this process, it is difficult to move forward.” Another educator suggests that it would be helpful for school communities to “have more discussions about whether or not we are walking the talk.” This shines light on one obstacle cited which is enrollment. Independent schools, in particular, are in strong competition to yield student enrollment and retention. Diversity has become one more ‘product’ that schools may be judged by and want to outshine a competitor; therefore, much effort may be exerted on the front end of writing mission statements for the website or curating admissions catalogues, without truly training its faculty behind the scenes in how to lead diverse, inclusive, and equitable spaces of learning. Perhaps, training in intercultural competence and communication should be one element of in-service professional development. Perhaps in doing so, all parties,
students and educators alike, would feel more competent in interacting with ‘the other’, in communicating skillfully, and even in navigating discord.

What would help us? I asked this question of my survey respondents. One teacher recognized how crucial collegial support was to her, stating, “My most helpful support was one faculty member who sat with me every day after class and listened as I sorted out what to do next”. Other suggestions include that a certain level of critique toward one’s own organization or community is necessary: “Maybe besides conversations around awareness raising, we should be having more talks about whether or not we are walking the talk.” As Robin Diangelo describes the foundation of white fragility, she names “wanting to jump over the hard, personal work and go to solutions” as an obstacle to equity work, particularly for communities of white educators. Bringing in-service training to schools can transform, but there are certainly obstacles. One K-12 private school educator in my survey noted, “Diversity discussions at my school seem to start with a nervous eye toward pleasing its constituents, recruitment and enrollment. They want the school to ‘have diversity’ but they don’t want to alienate families, alumni or board members who seem conservative or anchored in the old legacy of the school climate. I just don’t know how we grow from there.” Administrators, in addition to being hyper-focused on revenue and buy-in, may want to see ‘results’ immediately. As a result, diversity programming and training may tend to paint a broad stroke and become prematurely self-congratulatory of the school in the progress they are making.
Role of Teacher Education

I look then to the field of teacher education and development and wonder if it could help teachers create intentionally equitable classrooms and enact critical pedagogy. One survey respondent wondered whether teachers could benefit from a better understanding of what intercultural competence is, and how they can build the skills in their own classrooms, regardless of their content area. One educator on Twitter recalls how her cultural training ultimately was exterior-facing: “My cross-cultural competence training 25 years ago focused on understanding students, not understanding ourselves as teachers. I was never asked to think about how the identities and histories I brought into the classroom impacted my students’ learning.” Like Gloria Ladsing-Billings (2017) suggests, teachers need to complete a “cultural excavation” on themselves, and perhaps even make this an element of continued professional development. A training of this genre; where teachers can build a mechanism that will enable them to self-reflect over the course of their careers, is necessary. Rhodes and Schmidt (2018) also hint about the critical skills necessary for teachers to embody: “Finally, educators must have sociopolitical consciousness, or a well-developed understanding of their own world views, along with the knowledge that their own worldviews are shaped by their experience, and, as such, are probably not the same as those of the learners in their classes. Culturally responsive educators are those who continually examine their own cultural perspectives and biases to ensure that they are creating environments that are supportive to all learners” (Rhodes, Schmidt, 2018). Just as teachers need to identify their own viewpoints and biases, so too do they need to bring a critical eye to inequities in their school communities: Bonny Norton (2011) also had an eye on the field of teacher education as a way to equip teachers for leading diverse and equitable classrooms, wondering about the “ways in which teacher educators can intervene in the process of practicum
observation to bring about educational and social change” (p. 410). Pennycook (2004) also posits that the teacher practicum period “can be used [by teachers] to raise larger questions of power and authority in the wider society, and provide an opportunity for critical discussion and reflection” (p. 21). Hawkins (1974) recognizes that the learning initiated during the formal education setting must be internalized in the student and carried into their future self, stating: “So, in a way, you become educated when you become your own teacher” (p. 53). Training in cultural awareness and communication needs to take place throughout the education and development of teachers.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have laid out why and how teachers must consider their classrooms as political spaces where learner identities are constantly being voiced, asserted, and affirmed. I have explored how classroom materials can offer singular or damaging stories to cultural groups. Our learners may not invest in our course content if they feel unseen or represented, or if they perceive the course material to perpetuate systems of inequity. LGBT+ learners must see their experience represented in ways that are not heterosexist or stereotypical, but instead embedded in the fabric of the course. Teachers have a responsibility to offer a multitude of perspectives to their learners, so that learners can see themselves in the course content, and also build skills in empathy as they consider other viewpoints which exist in multicultural societies with diverse identity markers. White teachers in white schools cannot complacently themselves that they are exempt from this recommendation; multicultural education is for all students.

Byram (1997) states that “teaching for linguistic competence cannot be separated from intercultural competence” (p. 22). This is relevant when educators look to textbooks to be guided
about the pacing and course content, only to find a grammar and linguistic focus, decontextualized from the cultural content. Bennett evokes this paradox, stating “to avoid becoming a fluent fool, we need to understand more completely the cultural dimension of language” (Bennett, 1997). A teacher must therefore modify cultural lessons so that students can establish their own cultural viewpoint before they interact with the foreign culture. Building the skills of IC is almost like equipping students to travel between cultures with ease and able to navigate conflict should it arise. Hawkins (1974) work recognizes that learning is initiated in the classroom and ideally continues beyond it: “What we all hope, of course, is that as the formal, institutionalized role of education is finished, its most conspicuous and valuable product will be seen in the child’s ability educate himself” (Hawkins, p. 54). This thinking can be applied equally to learners as they go on to encounter other cultures, and to teachers as they go on to lead diverse and equitable classrooms.

As I contemplate the next steps for teacher education, I would like to see the principles of IC and CRP be more widely known as the standard by which we practice. I notice that the field of language education is often discussed as the only place where students can learn interculturality, and the many opportunities it affords for cross-curricular content-building has told me that it is not. As I listened to teachers’ experiences, I was struck by their feelings of aloneness as they attempt to navigate very complex issues with little support or training. As I closed the paper, I laid out what I perceive to be gaps in teacher development in regards to diversity, which seems to be treated as a compulsory item on a check list that schools seem to content themselves with before returning to work as normal. I additionally challenge the field of educational leadership to make sure that educators have a baseline foundation to conduct this work in diverse classrooms, creating spaces for support and training which will share equal space
with pressing matters of testing, enrollment, and recruitment. I believe in the work of Intercultural Competence. I think longingly of a philosophy of teaching which ultimately creates flexible, empathic, global citizens who are able to tolerate ambiguity and problem solve skillfully as they interact with ‘the other’ throughout their lives. I ponder the positive implications the proliferation of this work could have in helping teachers do their work better.
Works Cited


Moeller, A. K., and Nugent, K. Building intercultural competence in the language classroom. (2014). Faculty Publications: Department of Teaching, Learning, and Teacher Education.


Appendix


![Figure 3.1: The Five Dimensions of Culture](image-url)
Appendix C: Bennett, M. (1993). Bennett scale of Ethnorelativity

Development of Intercultural Sensitivity

Experience of difference

Denial  Defense  Minimization  Acceptance  Adaptation  Integration

Ethnocentric Stages  Ethnorelative Stages

© Milton Bennett

Appendix D: ACTFL Can-Do Statements

**EXAMPLES:** Linking Investigation and Interaction

I can... (customize with specific content).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INVESTIGATE</th>
<th>INTERACT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In my own and other cultures I can identify social practices such as greetings, introductions, leave-taking and thanking people.</td>
<td>I can greet and take leave from someone using polite rehearsed behaviors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In my own and other cultures I can identify whom people consider to be part of their family.</td>
<td>I can appropriately address members of a family who represent different generations and genders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In my own and other cultures I can identify how people count and measure.</td>
<td>I can work with a target language peer and use math skills to compare the area of our living spaces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In my own and other cultures I can identify how, what and why people eat what they do.</td>
<td>I can act appropriately when obtaining food in familiar situations, such as grocery shopping or eating in a restaurant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In my own and other cultures I can identify some products that reveal a stereotype or exaggerated view of a culture.</td>
<td>I can work with a peer in the target culture to create posters exposing stereotyped images of each others' countries.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Distinctions of Equity

It is important to distinguish between three key areas when engaged in equity work. We often confuse their particular purposes. As a result, we use them interchangeably when they are not. Below is a simple chart to help you understand the distinctions between them. Remember, it is NOT a continuum. You cannot begin with multicultural education and believe it will lead to culturally responsive instruction. Why? CRT is focused on the cognitive development of under-served students. Multicultural and social justice education have more of a social supporting role.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION</th>
<th>SOCIAL JUSTICE EDUCATION</th>
<th>CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE EDUCATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focuses on celebrating diversity.</td>
<td>Focuses on exposing the social political context that students experience.</td>
<td>Focuses on improving the learning capacity of diverse students who have been marginalized educationally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centers around creating positive social interactions across difference.</td>
<td>Centers around raising students’ consciousness about inequity in everyday social, environmental, economic, and political situations. Anti-racist efforts live here.</td>
<td>Centers around the affective &amp; cognitive aspects of teaching and learning. Efforts to accelerate learning live here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity and inclusion efforts live here.</td>
<td>Diversity and inclusion efforts live here.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerns itself with exposing privileged students to multiple perspectives, and other cultures. For students of color, the focus is on seeing themselves reflected in the curriculum.</td>
<td>Concerns itself with creating a lens to recognize and interrupt inequitable patterns and practices in society.</td>
<td>Concerns itself with building cognitive capacity and academic mindset by pushing back on dominant narratives about people of color.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Social Harmony**
- **Critical Consciousness**
- **Independent Learning for Agency**

Figure 4. Process Model of Intercultural Competence
Source: Deardorff (2004).
Note: Begin with attitudes; move from individual level (attitudes) to interaction level (outcomes). Degree of intercultural competence depends on degree of attitudes, knowledge/comprehension, and skills achieved.