

Developing (Inter)cultural Competence through Foreign Language

Learning: Turning Promises into Practices

A THESIS SUBMITTED
TO THE FACULTY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIERMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTERS OF ART

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JUNE 2018

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INTRODUCTION

For over the past 30 years, foreign language instructors have been searching for effective ways to integrate culture into their teaching, and yet, successfully teaching cultural elements in the foreign language classroom still remains elusive (Magnan, 2008, p. 356). I intend to explore the link between language and culture and how that transfers to developing (inter)cultural competence in the foreign language classroom with special attention to French at various learner levels but particularly within higher education in the United States. (Inter)cultural competence provides an overarching and balanced perspective for interacting appropriately in culturally diverse settings; however, research on its relationship with second language acquisition has been minimal to date despite its acceptance within the U.S. foreign language teaching curriculum. As international mobility (i.e. travel, study abroad, immigration etc.) is becoming progressively accessible, (inter)cultural competence is essential to building peaceful relationships among diverse groups of people locally, nationally, and internationally. While this skill set is essential in today's global context, the wide-ranging claim that learning a second language provides a framework towards developing (inter)cultural competence in the classroom is problematic without further research to comprehensively integrate and assess it as a foreign language learner goal (Crozet & Liddicoat, 1999, p. 116).

Today, most linguistic communities are reserved to a very small population. Currently there are approximately 7,102 living languages in the world; however, over two-thirds of the world's populations share only 12 languages. In other words, 96% of all languages spoken are represented by 3% of the world's population (Noack & Gamio, 2015). Languages have always disappeared, but never at such a rapid rate. More often

than not, larger linguistic communities end up taking them over for various reasons (Underhill, 2009, p. 3). Chinese, notably, has more native speakers than any other language followed by Hindi and Urdu. English comes in fourth place with approximately 527 million native speakers in over 100 different countries. Despite being in fourth place for the number of native speakers, English is the most studied foreign language in the world. More people learn English than French, Spanish, Italian, German Japanese, and Chinese combined but with a caveat because in certain countries, English is the only foreign language offered and is often compulsory. Approximately 500 years ago, only 5-7 million people spoke English, and now, roughly 1.8 billion people around the world speak English as either a native or second language (Noack & Gamio, 2015).

Other data suggest that for every five people in the world, at least one person has a working proficiency to both speak and understand English. Academic research and literature is more commonly translated or even originally written in English more than any other language. Additionally, English is often the language used in science, aviation, computer programming, diplomacy, and tourism and by default, it increases an English learner's opportunities for work within his/her own country or even abroad (Ash, 2015). In the defense of languages and alternative worldviews, English is often targeted. For example, many measures have been taken in France to prevent the infiltration of English words in the French lexicon by means of an official academy as well as employing national policies (Nadeau & Barlow, 2003, p. 43). Despite these efforts, even people a part of endangered linguistic communities value learning English in order to compete in today's modern global economy (Underhill, 2009, p. 5). As a result, English is fast becoming the world's universal language or alternatively, the world's lingua franca.

Due to the expanding popularity of learning English as a second language as well as advancements in technology, some would argue that learning a second language as a native English speaker is futile because of the abundant access to electronic and digital online translators that are constantly improving (McWhorter, 2016). For instance, a colleague of mine survived in Guatemala for a year without being able to produce any utterances in Spanish with the use of a translator. In tourist areas and resorts around the world, many locals have taken it upon themselves to learn English. So, why bother investing the time and effort it takes to learn a foreign language if you already speak English? The example above shows how the modern world's access to technology as well as the internationalization of English reduces the need for native English speakers to learn a second language and thereby negates the potential benefits that language learning can yield to an individual (Eaton, 2010, p. 6). After all, learning a second language is not essential for travel and study abroad when you can carry a handheld device as a personal translator in your pocket (p. 10).

Taking translators out of the equation, there are ample opportunities to live, work, and study abroad without needing any proficiency in the host country's language. For instance, there are over 12 dozen universities in China that are taught exclusively in English making international experiences accessible to students who do not speak any Chinese (McWhorter, 2016). China is not the only country using the English language for instruction in higher education due to the profitable economic gains of hosting international students. Study Abroad, in this sense, is a profitable export in today's global economy. Even with France's unique historical resistance to globalization, courses taught in English in higher education are on the horizon. The French parliament is even debating a new road map for French universities, which includes the proposal of allowing courses to be taught in English. However, this

development is not so new since elite French business universities and the *Grandes Écoles* such as the Institute of Political Studies have been teaching in English for the last 18 years (Tronchet, 2015). In this sense, (inter)cultural experiences are possible without needing to speak a foreign language (McWhorter, 2016).

So again, what is the incentive to learn a foreign language? Contrary to popular belief, living and studying abroad does not automatically mean the expatriate gains any (inter)cultural competence within the target culture (Crozet & Liddicoat, 1999, p. 116). To truly experience another culture, whether or not language channels culture, one must have some control of the language in which the culture happens to be conducted (McWhorter, 2016). The role of culture in foreign language instruction is wildly accepted since many professional associations such as *American Council Teaching Foreign Languages* (ACTFL) in the United States have implemented cultural learning goals which are listed in a pseudo-hierarchical order as the “5 C’s”: *Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities*. These goals stress the development of (inter)cultural competence as an outcome of foreign language learning (Magnan, 2008, p. 349). While there is an insurmountable amount of research and theoretical literature defining the role of culture in foreign language instruction, there are very few critical reviews evaluating its efficacy (Steele & Suozzo, 1994, p. 13).

Thus, the link between language and culture is a fraught topic as well as the link purporting that second language learning begets (inter)cultural competence (McWhorter, 2016). Developing (inter)cultural competence among language learners is not an intuitive process but requires intention and effort on the part of the teacher as well as the learner. It is not something that is simply taught (Bianco, Liddicoat, & Crozet, 1999, p. 13). While wonderful in theory, in practice it may consist “of little more than the recognition of a few isolated historical and geographical facts, holiday

customs, and food preferences associated with speakers of the target language” (Savignon & Sysoyev, 2005, p. 358). A focus on similarities and differences does not directly correspond to a mutual understanding of one’s native culture in relationship to the target culture which is an essential component of (inter)cultural competence (p. 358).

TERMINOLOGY OF (INTER)CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Just as the words globalization and internationalization are frequently used as synonymous terms in academic texts, so have various terms denoting (inter)cultural competence (Deardoff, 2011, p. 65). The following terms reveal a lack of consensus among researchers:

biculturalism, multiculturalism, bilingualism, multilingualism, plurilingualism, communicative competence, cross-cultural adaptation, cross-cultural awareness, cross-cultural communication, cultural competence, cultural or intercultural sensitivity, effective intergroup communication, ethnorelativity, intercultural cooperation, global competitive intelligence, global competence, international competence, international communication, intercultural interaction, metaphoric competence, transcultural competences and so forth (Fantini, 2009, p. 457).

Since the understanding of the wide array of terms employed in academic literature is so broad and often interrelated, there are rarely clear-cut distinctions between them and are consequentially used synonymously (Deardoff, 2011, p. 65). For example, in the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century*, cultural competence is embraced within the definitions of the “5 C’s”; whereas a similar text entitled *Acquiring Cross Cultural Competence: Four Stages for Students of French* published to accompany the previous text refers to the learner outcome as cross-cultural competence (Lawrence, 1999). However, cross-cultural competence is used interchangeably with both global and cultural competence throughout the text (Singerman, 1996). Similarly, assessments designated to measure (inter)cultural competence bear similar varying terminology and definitions which further stresses the need to properly define and

conceptualize it before it can be firmly declared as an outcome of language learning (Fantini, 2009, p. 457).

This inconsistency is problematic for many reasons. Firstly, the varied use of these terms with subtle distinctions is neither user-friendly nor accessible to its large audience as a text designed for foreign language instructors (Deardoff, 2011, p. 66). In my opinion, cross-cultural competence strictly relates to the comparison of two different cultures, but does not necessarily include the interaction of two cultures. To simplify matters, I will use the term (inter)cultural competence to refer to the set of cognitive (*knowledge*), affective (*attitude*), and behavioral skills to interact appropriately in a variety of sociocultural contexts (Crozet & Liddicoat, 1999, p. 116). Within the framework of (inter)cultural competence in foreign language instruction, these sets of skills primarily stress the act of communication such as “acting and speaking with an open and inquisitive mind; listening openly to new points of view; thinking flexibly, critically, and with empathy in new situations; fostering a desire to find out what is beneath the surface of cultural practices and products; and promoting a willingness to interact with others from different cultures” (Van Houten & Shelton, 2018, p. 34).

THE IMPORTANCE OF (INTER)CULTURAL COMPETENCE

In my opinion, we, as a global community, are at a critical juncture that calls for mutual understanding to resolve tensions on both macro and micro levels of society as well as acknowledging past atrocities committed abroad and locally that still produce trauma and suffering via collective memory. Regrettably, the early 21st century has been plagued with dramatic events worldwide that have consequently propagated divisions and distrust domestically, nationally, and internationally (Savignon & Sysoyev, 2005,

p. 358). On a macroscopic level, there are ecological, economic, political, military, and hygienic problems that extend beyond national borders and therefore require cooperation amongst the global village for their solutions. Global warming, for example, requires cooperation from many countries to create a sustainable solution, but due to the differences in the ways people *think, feel, and act*, disagreements have ensued on how to best address the problem. These disagreements will likely continue without mutual understanding. Therefore, one must nurture certain behavioral skills to mediate these differences, and it primarily begins with the individual developing this skill-set. (Inter)cultural competence is not strictly reserved for world leaders who control policies; it is also a valuable skill-set for individuals to navigate conflict as well as build relationships within diverse communities (Hofstede, Minkov G., & Minkov M., 2010, p. 4).

On a micro level, even as an instructor of foreign language, I have caught myself in ethnocentric microaggressions based on my inherent values. I have studied human rights within the framework of the United States. What I recognize as essential and correct is not necessarily the case for others from different cultural perspectives. In fact, this mode of thinking can be harmful as seen in colonial history. In relationship to France, I frequently imposed my values and judgments towards gendered language. When people would refer to me as *une fille* (a girl) in France, I would correct them by saying *une femme* (a woman). My French female friend was particularly caught off guard by this insistence which led to a heated discussion of gender in language. She told me that it is not a problem in French or France, but I continued to press the matter of why the difference between a *girl* and a *woman* is important independent of language and culture. Until doing research on what it means to be (inter)culturally competent, I did not ever consider my own core values which were being reflected in this interaction

given that the context of modern U.S. feminism differs from the context of French feminism (Gambaudo, 2007, p. 106). Developing (inter)cultural competence can prevent these misunderstandings and mistakes that are based on latent assumptions of what is “right” based on our cultural framework (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 14).

Many people around the world are looking for ways to effectively communicate across linguistic and cultural differences. Communication in this sense goes beyond just being understood whether in one’s native language, the interlocuter’s native language or even a third one common to both, but rather, it has to do with learning new systems of behavior and interaction (Fantini, 2009, p 456). Disciplines such as anthropology, psychology, linguistics, intercultural communication, and education have contributed immensely to today’s understanding of cultural learning, and yet most of it is unrelated to foreign language learning (Steele & Suozzo & Suozzo, 1994, p. 13). In fact, multicultural education and models of (inter)cultural competence often neglect to address the positive benefits of target language proficiency to enhance aspects of (inter)cultural competence (Fantini, 2009, p. 456). This would suggest that target language proficiency is an essential component in the development of (inter)cultural competence (p. 459). Hence, the foreign language classroom is presently a self-proclaimed platform for nurturing both an intercultural and linguistic skill-set since a language is often associated with specific cultures. This assumption begets larger questions. To what degree does language inform a culture and vice versa? The answer is not simple since it has been an enduring and timeless philosophical debate (Van Houten & Shelton, 2018, p. 34).

UNDERSTANDINGS OF CULTURE, LANGUAGE, AND THOUGHT

Linguistic differences are often seen as the mark of another culture and can commonly create stark divisions among a community. A good example of this is in

Canada, where there is occasional social friction between the French-speaking locals of Quebec and the English-speaking majority. This is one example showing how language can be a pathway to distinguish between various cultural identities within national borders. While language often marks the presence of a culture, not all linguistic communities share the same culture as a collective phenomenon. For instance, the term *francophone* refers to the community of French interlocuters; however, this community which consists of diverse countries scattered across five continents simply defies generalizations. Today, language may be the glue that unites them, but as a framework of understanding, it can lead to oversimplifying individual francophone cultures as a homogenous entity (Steele & Suozzo, 1994, p. 54).

A variety of cultural identities may even exist within the borders of a single nation, particularly in reference to minority groups. Nations as political units are a relatively recent phenomenon that fundamentally relied on the suppression of differences to create national cohesion. Even in recent history, France has many salient examples. Minority languages and cultures, such as Provençal, Breton, and Corsican have been largely suppressed to create a dominant *État français*. This example illustrates the grave complications in navigating and understanding a foreign language's culture as a whole (p. 52). A country itself, does not necessarily equate to a homogenous social community due to the multitude of subcultures that reside within its borders (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 20). Culture is neither a static nor an autonomous entity (8). It is constantly evolving. Language operates similarly despite national efforts to keep it stagnate as is the case in France with the *Académie Française* (Nadeau & Barlow, 2003, p. 47).

In the general sense of the word, culture signifies a pattern of *thinking, feeling* and *acting* in a community that is learned and spread from person to person. Geert

Hofstede et al. (2010) uses the analogy of the way computers are programmed to understand these patterns within a society as the *software of the mind*. Every individual person possesses a certain method of *thinking, feeling and acting* based on their lived experiences. Similarly, to first language acquisition, these patterns develop during early childhood and continue to evolve into adolescence and adulthood. The analogy of culture as the *software of the mind* refers to the idea that human behavior is "...partially predetermined by his or her mental programs: he or she has a basic ability to deviate from them and to react in ways that are new, creative, destructive, or unexpected" (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 5). As follows, people from a given culture should not be seen as identical products from a factory. Culture merely predicts a behavioral pattern that is likely and understandable given one's background. Formative social factors such as one's family, neighborhood, school, and/or workplace all have an impact on this mental programming (p. 4). Defining culture as either a *mental software* (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 4) or as *blueprint for action* makes it an inclusive and yet broad term to incorporate individual variances (Crozet & Liddicoat, 1999, p. 116).

When describing a different cultural identity, outsiders often think of it as the sum of observable characteristics in a group, be it their cuisine, dances, music, arts, literature, or greeting rituals. These cultural differences appear in many ways, and coincidentally, some are more apparent than others. *Symbols, heroes, rituals, and values* are the four simplified manifestations of culture. *Symbols* tend to be the most visible and malleable manifestations of culture which includes items such as gestures, the words in a language or jargon, hairstyles, clothing, and status (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 8). Its evolution is seen most drastically when comparing younger and older generations within a social environment (p. 19). *Heroes* (alive, dead or fictional) possess traits that are valued and sought after within a culture which can also evolve from generation to

generation. For example, *Asterix*, a character in a famous comic book depicting the Gauls' resistance against the Roman empire, is considered a fictional hero in France; whereas Charles de Gaulle, a general who led the French Resistance against Nazi Germany, is a deceased historical hero. Both heroes are still important to French culture today. Meanwhile, *rituals* represent collective activities that are socially essential such as greetings and the more obvious, religious and/or traditional ceremonies. *Rituals* also include an aspect of language related to everyday discourse, text, and the beliefs surrounding communication (p. 8). These three manifestations (*symbols, heroes, rituals*) are referred to as *practices* and while they may be observable, their visibility is only a small piece of a much larger whole. In brief, the deeper cultural meaning remains invisible to the eyes (p. 19).

Values and *attitudes*, on the other hand, are less apparent and represent the core manifestation of culture which characterize the collective beliefs pertaining to good vs. evil, clean vs. dirty, dangerous vs. safe, decent vs. indecent, ugly vs. beautiful etc. Formative factors such as religion, history, educational systems, economics, family etc. help define and categorize a culture's core *values*. *Values* are developed at a very young age and are the most likely cultural manifestation to remain consistent across generations due to homeostasis. Albeit intentional or not, parents transfer the education that they received to their children (p. 11). Unlike cultural *practices*, these core *values* do not change quickly or easily. Like first language acquisition, this pattern is primarily acquired in early childhood even before one's earliest memories and continuously evolves during the first 10-12 years of life. Children by nature are more susceptible to learning and absorbing information unconsciously from their social environment (p. 9). Moving into adolescence and adulthood, we learn new *practices* (*symbols, heroes, and rituals*) more consciously (p. 10).

Interestingly, language or at least the way it is used is included within these manifestations of culture (p. 8). In relationship to France, history is an important formative factor that explains how the French spirit developed, and how it influences the civil, political, and social structure in France today. In fact, language has particularly played a huge role over the centuries to solidify a common social identity in France. The second amendment in the French Constitution states that the language of the republic is French (*Texte Intégral de la Constitution du 4 octobre 1958*). At first glance, this may not be surprising since many countries have a declared official language, but ever since the French Revolution, the French language has been an integral part of national identity. Without the monarchy or religion to unite the population, the *État français* gravitated towards a common language (Nadeau & Barlow, 2003, p. 47). However, the Jules Ferry Laws of 1880 are what truly forged the *idéologie linguistique française* (Encrevé, 2008, p. 25). These laws mandated that school would be free, obligatory, *laïque* (secular), and most importantly conducted in the French language. Making French the official language of instruction in public schools has led to the drastic decline of regional languages over the past four decades. This of course oversimplifies a very intricate history of both France and the French language. But as a generalization, the French language plays a very unique part in French history, and is essential to understanding French culture (Nadeau & Barlow, 2003, p. 47).

Conversation, in a sense, defines the French more succinctly than any other cultural manifestation such as cuisine, fashion, and art. In fact, verbal expression, rhetoric, and eloquence is a French artform with the objective of *conversing* rather than as a means of connecting to others (Barlow & Nadeau, 2016, p. 2). However, conversations with the French will often vary according to one's social status, level of education, age, region, and relationship or proximity with the interlocutor. To a certain

degree, the French tend to be very direct and value precision. One reason for this is that the French language is quite precise in part due to the work by the *Académie Française* in rigidly defining words; thus, it is difficult not to be direct when using it. This direct style of communicating has often been misunderstood as rude by outsiders, especially if they are not used to outspokenness (p. 8). In sum, communication styles vary from culture to culture which fluctuate on a spectrum between high-context or low-context communication.

Edward T. Hall's (1979) theory of low-context and high-context cultures help us better understand the powerful effect of culture on communication. Cultures that rely on high-context communication are said to be high-context cultures and vice-versa for cultures that rely on low-context communication (Hall, 1979, p. 90). Low-context communication tends to be explicit and straightforward and is often task-centered and individualistic. Meanwhile, high-context cultures relay messages that are indirect and implicit. In this case, people expect information to be known beyond what is merely said. This type of communication is common in collectivist cultures. Comparably, many aspects of life are self-evident in high-context cultures whereas in low-context cultures, it must be said explicitly. Based on the value placed on precision in the French language, one would be quick to assume that France is a high-context culture; however, it is actually a confusing and varying *mélange* between the two depending on the social context and situation (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 109). Instead of thinking of high-context and low-context in terms of strict categories, it's better to think of it as a spectrum between two extremes. Depending on one's frame of reference (native culture), a host or target culture could be perceived as either high or low context (Hall, 1979, p. 91).

Language, a phenomenon unique to humans, involves sharing a verbalized or signaled code with other people in a social environment and consequently, those who

share a social environment often share linguistical similarities in terms of jargon, dialect, or accent (Pinker, 2000, p. 411). Similarly, culture is inevitable within a social group because creating shared rules, even if they are never written down, is a precondition for group survival. Culture is the predecessor of spoken language (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 12). In fact, most cultures possess a language that is spoken or signed (and sometimes written) consisting of words strung together in a conventional way (Pinker, 2000, p. 411). However, the precise relationship between language and culture and how they interact is a minefield of contradicting views and paradigms within various disciplines (i.e. linguistics, psychology, social sciences, anthropology) (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 12). From what I have found, there is no universal consensus on the matter across these disciplines, but there are, in fact, a variety of convoluted studies supporting as well as contesting the role that culture plays in language. It is indeed a labyrinth that can easily lead one down a never-ending rabbit hole, but I will do my best to provide a general introduction to show the complexity surrounding our current understandings of language and culture from as early as the 19th century as well as specific examples demonstrating ways in which French language use can indeed be cultural.

In anthropology, many scholars have documented language as the heart of a culture, and that the loss of a language marks the death of a cultural identity and heritage as it merges into the dominant language and culture. This has often been stressed as a valued human rights concern as more and more languages become endangered (Romaine, 2015, p. 32). Similarly, other enthusiasts claim that “culture is embedded in language as an intangible, all-pervasive and highly variable force” (Crozet & Liddicoat, 1999, p. 116). To the contrary, the linguist, Steven Pinker (2000), has carefully outlined in his work entitled *The Language Instinct: The New Science of Language and Mind*

that language is intrinsic to human nature and that it develops systematically independent of culture in terms of acquisition. This ability or drive to communicate is so tightly interconnected to the human experience that it is nearly impossible to imagine life or even the complex process of thought without it (Pinker, 2000, p. 17). Summarizing culture as a pattern in which people *think, feel, and act* brings forth the question of how thought works and how it is connected to language (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 4).

Correspondingly, Steven Pinker's (2000) research explores how language operates from a neurological level in terms of language acquisition as well as the translation of human thought into language. To support his claim of a language instinct, he suggests that there is a hypothetical grammar gene responsible for language development. People who have poor grammar or spelling skills are said to lack a certain chromosome responsible for executing these concepts appropriately in their speech patterns (Pinker, 2000, p. 325). As for culture, there is nothing hereditary about it; although, it was once believed to be the case (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 7). Pinker (2000) primarily analyzes syntax from a cognitive scientist's perspective which relies heavily on studying the biological makeup of our brains (Pinker, 2000, p. 54). For him, social scientific and anthropological anecdotes have minimized the extent to which human nature is influenced by genetics as well as the current understandings of human intelligence (p. 17). In other words, language is not a cultural artifact, but a consequence of the human drive to communicate (p. 18). To demonstrate his point, he gives several examples of deaf children who lacked a language but eventually invented a signed one with a cohesive structure (i.e. grammar) (p. 59). This cohesive structure naturally manifests due to a language-like thing called *mentalese*, an internal language of thought, with which we are all born (p. 56).

However, Noam Chomsky (1984), during an interview with Wiktor Osiatynski, said that presently there is no scientific evidence that proves whether or not we think in our native language which thereby significantly weakens Pinker's (2000) claim of a language instinct. Despite the lack of scientific evidence, Chomsky (1984) introspectively believes that humans do not necessarily think in their native language in part due to the occasional difficulty in verbalizing our thoughts. Thinking happens in a variety of ways such as through visual images, and potentially what Pinker describes as *mentalese*. Even when we can express the content of our thoughts in words, it does not always correlate to what we mean. In other words, "there is a kind of nonlinguistic thought going on which we are trying to represent in language, and we know that sometimes we fail" (Chomsky, 1984). Pinker's (2000) understanding of language is largely based on Chomsky's theory of *Universal Grammar* which refers to the innate human ability to acquire grammatical structures during first language acquisition (Pinker, 2000, p. 56).

The notion of an innate *Universal Grammar* and the concept of *Linguistic Relativity*, are, essentially, diametrically opposed. In attempts to understand how language influences a culture or worldview, Wilhelm von Humboldt suggested that language mirrors the spirit of a nation (Underhill, 2009, p. 89). If that is the case then learning a foreign language could provide a new and different approach to understanding the world (Jackson, 2012, p. 102). This later developed into what we know today as *Linguistic Relativism* or more commonly, the *Sapir-Whorf hypothesis* that is divided into two versions, strong and weak (p. 104).

The strong version claims that language, in terms of its structure, controls thought by focusing on different aspects of reality and the world (Pinker, 2000, p. 57). Most studies supporting this hypothesis show how linguistic categories in a language

influence the way in which people group things, but this does not necessarily prove that language determines thought or culture on a larger scale. *Linguistic Relativism* is often misused and consequently highly criticized in association with the strong version of the *Sapir-Whorf hypothesis*. However, *Linguistic Relativism* is better understood in relationship to the weak hypothesis since it does not make the claim that language ultimately determines human thoughts. The weak version simply suggests that a language's linguistic structure may influence a speaker's habitual thoughts but to what degree, it has not yet been firmly established (Jackson, 2012, p. 104). The *Sapir-Whorf hypothesis* is still relevant and has played a major role in the field of anthropology in which anthropological linguists believe that human beings develop the language necessary to solve tasks within their living environment (Ericksen, 2001, p. 227). A social group's language is then respectively a bountiful source of knowledge that reveals "their mode of thought, their cosmology, and their everyday life" (p. 228).

Other linguists, such as Paul Simpson, argue that "language does in fact shape our thinking because viewpoints become both consciously and unconsciously encoded" (Underhill, 2009, p. 10). The idea that the two are interrelated has gained general acceptance to some degree among many scholars in a variety of disciplines. Subsequently, culture can change language by developing the need for new words as technology advances, and language, seemingly, can have an impact on culture depending on how you look at it (p. 11). Anthropological linguistic theory does not contradict the human innateness of language but veritably confirms it. To some degree, humans share universal but not identical characteristics such as their mental faculties. Congenital differences do not explain cultural variation which debunks earlier colonial thought regarding people of color as less evolved. By confirming that language is a part of our mental faculty, the main goal of research is simply to account for cultural

variation by referring to events taking place after birth among social groups worldwide to explain these different systems of knowledge and patterns of thought that are revealed by language (Ericksen, 2011, p. 229).

On a fundamental level, Pinker's (2000) research is convincing and compatible with other frameworks in terms of the innate human drive to communicate and acquire language, but his research on language and thought strictly looks at the monolingual mind (Pinker, 2000, p. 290). For instance, there are studies showing how a bilingual's behavior changes depending on his/her language of operation. The German language tends to structure *paths of action* as goal oriented such as a *woman walks towards her car*. Meanwhile, the English language focuses on the action itself such as *a woman walks*. After watching a video scene, German-English bilinguals when tested in English focused on the action and vice versa, when tested in German, they highlighted a goal (Athanasopoulos, 2015). Similarly, Jean-Marc Dewaele and Aneta Polvenko (2002), specialists in bilingual and multilingual studies, have documented the ways in which "...language, emotion, and cognition interact in second language socialization and use" (Dewaele & Polvenko, 2002, p. 300). By analyzing, English-Russian bilinguals, they would argue that learning a second language can impact the way a speaker internalizes these new emotion words (p. 263). Many scholars argue that emotions are in fact socially constructed rather than inborn qualities such as "the capacity for love, hatred, empathy, aggression and so on" because numerous studies on indigenous tribes around the world have shown that there are existing societies without the "concept comparable to our concept of aggression" (Eriksen, 2011, p. 239). Additionally, Dewaele and Polvenko's (2002) findings privilege the role of language and culture since words connected to emotion are conceptualized variably in different languages. Since

concepts and their nuances often differ across cultures, they may not always be translated to another language with ease (Dewaele & Polvenko, 2002, p. 263).

Translating between different languages often shows how several concepts can often inhabit a single word. Interpreting concepts based solely on our own terms without the framework of culture problematizes translation (Ericksen, 2001, p. 228). For example, modern French has distinct meanings for *langue* and *langage*, but they are treated as equivalents when translated into English as language. *Langue* is typically used to refer to a language system or group of languages which all have a special feature in common. Meanwhile *langage* is understood as the ability to communicate or as one's faculty of speech. It is also the system (spoken or written) you use to express yourself or to describe individual qualities and attributes of a text or speech act. To simplify matters, *langue* refers to a regional or national language such as French or English, while *langage* is your choice of words within that language. When learning a foreign language, translating foreign words into our native language is tempting. However, translating does not always provide reliable conceptual equations. Words can take on different meanings according to the context. This is one of the most insurmountable difficulties of language learning. Since the nuances of meaning can vary, a language ought to be understood within its cultural contexts (Underhill, 2009, p. 12).

Within the context of France, we can observe how language is used to perform various cultural as well as communicative functions by highlighting some generalities of the French people. When speaking of these collective patterns, it should be noted that it would be rare for an individual to possess all the following cultural reflexes and tendencies. But to varying degrees, they all "have been subjected to a specific type of French 'formatting,' through education and the transmission of a particular set of values that are practically universal across the country" (Barlow & Nadeau, 2016, p. 6).

Familiarity of a culture or even proficiency in the language, does not equate to the understanding of a culture. Contrary to popular belief, even native speakers from francophone countries struggle to communicate with the French. Meanwhile, some people who barely speak or understand the language can navigate interactions with little to no difficulty. Language, itself, is not the real obstacle (p. 1). The difference lies in the fact that “speaking French grammatically is not the same as *talking* French culturally” (Barlow & Nadeau, 2016, p. 2). To understand the sum of what the French say, one must explore beyond these external manifestations of what’s visible into the deeper and broader components of culture (i.e. attitudes and values). In other words, it involves unraveling the unwritten cultural codes to understand how French language use is cultural (p. 2).

The phatic use of *Bonjour* is one of the most salient examples of how language is used as a cultural act as well as how its use evolves over time. In *The Bonjour Effect: The Secret Codes of the French Language*, Julie Barlow and Jean-Benoit Nadeau (2016) mention that the compulsory *bonjour* used to be reserved to shops, but its use has since increased over the past 15 years to other spaces such as the post office, public transportation, restaurants, etc. This change is likely rooted in *égalité* (equality), a French value that is prized even more than *fraternité* (fraternity) and *liberté* (liberty) (Barlow & Nadeau, 2016, p. 22). As a rule of thumb, start every encounter with *bonjour*; while this will not necessarily guarantee smooth sailing in France, not saying it will guarantee a rough ride. Barlow and Nadeau (2016) illustrate many salient examples of the phatic use of *bonjour*. One use is simply to address your presence as in *I am here*. It is also used as a tactic for mutual agreement to begin conversing as in *we are going to talk now*. According to Barlow and Nadeau (2016), “In France, you can’t just take for granted that you can communicate with someone without asking first”

which is done by saying *bonjour* (Barlow & Nadeau, 2016, p. 19). However, conversation does not always ensue upon saying it. Another ritual use is for entering someone else's territory to acknowledge that you are no longer in a public space such as walking on someone's private property (p. 21).

Phatic words and expressions do not function as what is *said* but as a strict social code. When you greet others with the phatic expression *bonjour* (good day), there is nothing especially *bon* about the *jour*. Similarly, it is unlikely that you will *revoir* (see again), the majority of people to whom you say *au revoir*. The equivalent for *you are welcome* in English literally translates as *I beg you* in French, but there is no real intention of begging people when they thank you for something. It is strictly a cultural reflex such as saying *hello* when answering the phone. Phatic words and expressions can be thought of as a “part of the communication protocol that establishes links” (Barlow, 2016, p. 17). Phatic expressions of course are not unique to the French language, but the way they are used varies from culture to culture.

For instance, U.S. Americans frequently begin verbal exchanges with *I'm sorry but...* or *excuse me...* to request something from someone whom they do not know (p. 18). Language learners, by nature, tend to view the target language through the framework of their native language, and by consequence, translate their native communicative understandings into their interactions with the target language (Tarone & Swierzbina, 2009, p. 12). However, according to Ross Steele and Andrew Suozzo (1994), “One cannot properly learn another language without learning something about the cultural and social contexts in which it is used and the values of those who speak it, nor can one communicate accurately with a speaker of another language if one filters the information received through one's own monocultural experience” (Steele & Suozzo, 1994, p. 69). Similarly, Claire Kramsch argues that language itself is culture

which can be seen with the phatic use of *bonjour* in France. If that is true, language learning is inevitably essential to truly imbibe a foreign culture since the interaction between language and culture can often be difficult to tease apart (Bianco et al., 1999, p. 10).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS: TEACHING LANGUAGE AND CULTURE TO PROMOTE INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

Past and present trends to teach language and culture seem to fall somewhere in the middle of the spectrum regarding the precarious relationship between language and culture. Even though the extent to which language and culture have influenced one another remains uncertain, most teachers of foreign language would agree that language and culture cannot operate independently. While its importance is recognized, the approach to teaching culture in the foreign language classroom is constantly being reconceptualized (Bianco, et al., 1999, p. 7).

In the past, the *traditional approach* treated culture through the target language's literary achievements (p. 8) which is sometimes referred to as capital-C culture (Savignon Sysoyev, 2005, p. 359). However, focusing on literature only provides insight into high culture of educated speakers and does not emphasize the role of language as a window to broader aspects of culture to communicate and connect with native speakers. The *traditional approach* was replaced by the *culture studies approach* in the 1970's which defines the target culture through its history, geography, and institutions as a body of knowledge (Bianco, et al., 1999, p. 8). This approach does not connect language with culture because reducing a culture to a set of facts does not necessarily require knowledge of the target language (p. 9).

A third paradigm, '*cultures as practices*' approach, teaches culture within the framework of practices and values such as embracing either 'direct' or 'indirect' ways

of communicating. In this case, (inter)cultural competence is reduced to “knowing about what people from a given cultural group are likely to do and understanding the cultural values placed upon certain ways of acting or upon certain beliefs” (Bianco et al., 1999, p. 9). In sum, this approach views culture as inherently connected to language and behavior; however, it tends to present culture as a stagnant and homogenous phenomenon which can subsequently catalyze stereotypes of the target culture (p. 10). Stereotyping can be understood as a type of reductionism to summarize perceived differences and thereby prevent a student from perceiving a culture’s richness; although some instructors believe that stereotyping is inevitable and therefore a part of the learning process (Steele & Suozzo, 1994, p. 36). Traditionally, if the instructor is not a native speaker, his/her personal relationship with the target culture as well as the way it is depicted in the textbook directly impacts the learner’s experience. Thus, the instructor and the textbook become key factors in the presentation of the target culture. Textbooks, for instance, usually present information that is most typical for French people and runs the risk of stereotyping (p. 68). Teaching materials, methods, and curricula can either promote or impede intercultural learning by including or excluding opportunities to reflect on the cultures involved in language learning (Bianco et al., 1999, p.185).

Before the 1980’s, language and cultural learning was treated in a linear manner (i.e. amount of time studied). Based on specific linguistic needs within the Foreign Service of the U.S. Department of State, the *American National Standard for Foreign Language Teaching (ACTFL)* created guidelines which proposed a *common yard stick* to measure functional abilities in second language acquisition which takes cultural norms into consideration. The focus of language acquisition shifted from linear to cumulative. Thinking of language acquisition in terms of a cumulative total is

represented in ACTFL's inverted cone of proficiency. As the learner's proficiency level increases, the cone expands due to the acquisition of various skills such as grammar and vocabulary as well as sociolinguistic and cultural understandings (Garza, 2010). Proficiency correlates to what a learner can do with a given amount of information which does not necessarily mean perfect grammar and pronunciation but rather that students are able to communicate clearly or in other words, are able to understand others and simultaneously be understood (Lawrence, 1999, p. 33).

While there are many approaches and methods regarding the best ways to teach foreign languages and culture, the latest research from ACTFL asserts that the Communicative Approach is the most comprehensive, and consequently, the "5 C's": *Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities* are anchored on the basis of a highly communicative classroom (Magnan, 2008, p. 351). In general, the communicative foreign language classroom is taught almost entirely in the target language. Grammar is taught inexplicitly under the assumption that students make grammatical connections on their own while simultaneously developing basic communicative functions (i.e. interpretive, interpersonal, presentational) in terms of proficiency rather than mere performance (*Standards*, 1996, p. 31). Despite its wide acceptance in foreign language teaching, there is no fixed or clearly defined model or authority on the Communicative Approach. Its versatility allows for creativity, but can sometimes lead to misunderstandings among educators (Kustiwan, 2016, p. 3). For example, in a study that asked K-12 foreign language teachers within the United States, to describe their teaching methodology, they all mentioned something about the Communicative Approach. However, when they were pressed for more details, their explanations of this approach varied and were often vague. These responses inevitably highlight some inconsistencies among foreign language educators' understandings of

the Communicative Approach. To implement it successfully, it is important to understand its theoretical framework (Richards, 2005, p. 2).

The theoretical basis for communicative language teaching draws from Chomsky's *Universal Grammar* theory which characterizes the ideal learner's linguistic competence. Dell Hymes, an anthropological linguist, adapted Chomsky's theory as his basis for foreign language learning in terms of communicative competence (Kustiwan, 2016, p. 3). Hymes defines communicative competence as the ability "...to participate in [the child's] society as not only a speaking but also a communicating member" (Magnan, 2008, p. 353). Hence, communicative competence is understood as the intimate relationship between language and knowledge of social considerations within the target language's culture. Previously, many pedagogical trends focused purely on the *how* (grammar) and *what* (vocabulary) and consequently never taught culture as an embedded part of language (Bianco et al., 1999, p. 10). While grammar and vocabulary are still important components in second language acquisition, teaching grammar by means of rote memorization does not necessarily promote second language acquisition. Meanwhile, ACTFL's *World Readiness Standards* are trying to implement the *why*, *when* and *whom* (i.e. the sociolinguistic and cultural aspects of language learning) in addition to the *how* and *what* by using communication as the organizing principle for language study (Lawrence, 1999, p. 11).

By teaching grammar inexplicitly, the Communicative Approach attempts to mimic the way we learn languages as children in terms of a social context (Magnan, 2008, p. 353). As a child, first language acquisition continuously evolves and develops until it meets the native speaker level (Tarone & Swierzbin, 2009, p. 13). For example, a child develops subject-verb-agreement in English by unconsciously adding an "s" to a verb when the subject is in the third person singular such as "*He walks to school*" and

then the child says “*He be’s in Kindergarten.*” Pinker (2000) declares that these *interlanguage* patterns are not related to imitation as is commonly believed but are purely instinctive (Pinker, 2000, p. 45). The term *interlanguage*, coined by Larry Selinker in 1972, is used to describe a language learner’s linguistic system as they attempt to express meanings in the target language. A learner’s *interlanguage* can only be observed when they are focused on the meaning of the message and is therefore not based on grammatical accuracy (Tarone & Swierzbin, 2009, p. 12). Children do not hear and repeat these constructions by imitating the people around them; they created these forms themselves by extracting generalizations to produce new sentences in their *interlanguage* (Pinker, 2000, p. 45). Correspondingly, the grammatical error illustrated by Pinker (2000) would be attributed to an over generalization of a rule in the foreign language classroom. Overgeneralization involves the application of otherwise correct grammar rules within the wrong context. Both children learning their native language and adults learning a second language resort to overgeneralizing a grammatical rule to communicate (Tarone & Swierzbin, 2009, p. 13). Because language is such an intricate communication system (i.e. phonology, phonetics, syntax, morphology, semantics, lexis, and pragmatics), language acquisition consists of several stages that are largely based on using such generalizations to create meaning (Jiao, 2014, p. 253).

It almost goes without saying that second language acquisition in an adult learner does not grow and develop in quite the same way as it does for a child; however, this does not mean that first and second language acquisition are fundamentally different (Tarone & Swierzbin, 2009, p. 12). For instance, in first language acquisition, there are approximately 10 stages from “crying, cooing, babbling, intonation patterns, one-word utterances, two-word utterances, word inflections, questions and negatives, rare or complex constructions, [to] mature speech” (Jiao, 2014, p. 253). When children

enter puberty, a small section of the brain that is responsible for language acquisition significantly reduces in size and in some cases, completely disappears. This suggests that it requires a greater cognitive effort to learn a foreign language after puberty; whereas younger children would absorb a second language as effortlessly as a sponge absorbs water. This is not necessarily a critique of the Communicative Approach; since in theory, an adult language learner has a greater cognitive capacity than a child (Pinker, 2000, p. 18). While there are some similarities between first and second language acquisition, the stages inevitably vary from learner to learner (Jiao, 2014, p. 253), but in theory, for both children and adults, language learners naturally develop the necessary grammatical competency that they need to communicate despite variances in their respective *interlanguage* (Scott, 1989, p. 14).

While both first and second language acquisition rely on over-generalizations, second language learners additionally rely on their first language structures when speaking or writing in the target language. Native language transfer is when second language learners apply rules from their native language to produce an utterance in the target language (Tarone & Swierzbin, 2009, p. 12). This learner error is common in the early stages of second language acquisition, and consequently the *interlanguage* is different from both linguistic systems of the target language and of the native language (p. 13). In many ways, learning a new linguistic system provides an objective framework to view one's native language (Lawrence, 1999, p. 11). For instance, a U.S. American student learning French encounters linguistic elements such as gender and subject-verb-agreement, as well as how one word in English, such as window, can be translated into several words in French depending on the context (i.e. *fenêtre*: house window; *vitrine*: shop window; *guichet*: ticket window) (Standards, 1996, p. 91).

Similarly, learning about a new culture, one becomes more aware of his/her own culture (Lawrence, 1999, p. 11).

Just as *Universal Grammar* served as the foundational theory behind the Communicative Approach, the implementation of culture into the classroom stems from the *Sapir-Whorf hypothesis* under the presumption that language use is in fact cultural, and thus discourse is central to the cultural dimension of language learning (Hinkel, 1999, p. 9). To develop the cultural dimension through language learning, the five goal areas in ACTFL's *World Readiness Standards* treat communication and culture dichotomously as the primary goals so that learners can eventually make connections and comparisons to be part of the global community (Lawrence, 1999, p. 9). Each of the "5 C's" are vaguely defined and each accompanied with 2-3 standards as well as examples of progress indicators to reflect what students can do with the language (Savignon & Sysoyev, 2005, p. 359). While the "5 C's" emphasize (inter)cultural competence as a learner goal in their given definitions, the framework for French as a foreign language incorporates a vast range of cultural differences within its linguistic community. (Inter)cultural competence in French would require specific knowledge of not only France but rather any of the other francophone communities such as North America, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean, North Africa etc. It does not necessarily mean that to be (inter)culturally competent in the French classroom that a learner or teacher must be an expert in all target cultures. However, in the early stages of language learning, it is encouraged to begin challenging students in the knowledge of one French-speaking area because it would be difficult to be all-inclusive without relying heavily on superficial aspects of culture (Singerman, 1996, p. 17).

Communication, as the first goal, refers to a learner's ability to negotiate meaning in various contexts, written or oral, but it also emphasizes the use of language

for communication in "real life" situations by using cultural conventions and norms of politeness (Lawrence, 1999, p. 43). This goal is noted to be easier to achieve in the classroom than the others, such as a learner's ability to recognize when to use *tu* vs. *vous* in French (Magnan, 2008, p. 352). Because of the Communicative Approach to foreign language teaching, this goal stresses the necessity of developing interpretive, interpersonal, as well as presentational communication skills by using authentic texts and resources. For instance, today's access to media, videos, and literature can serve as useful tools for students to interact and interpret opinions, ideas, and concepts by native French speakers either orally or in writing (*Standards*, 1996, p. 29).

Cultures, on the other hand, deals with the learner's ability to understand different points of view situated within a cultural framework that is in turn reflected in language use (Lawrence, 1999, p. 9). Learners of French should be able to recognize the influence that both France and other francophone countries have made to civilization in terms of philosophical perspectives, social practices, as well as products. Linguistically, students will be able to interact appropriately within the French speaking milieu (*Standards*, 1996, p. 58). For example, in order to demonstrate an understanding of cultural practices, students could do a role play of going to a French restaurant and ordering a meal by using the appropriate communication skills to express norms of politeness. Additionally, the instructor can provide authentic menus from French and U.S. American restaurants for students to compare the items as well as the order in which they are served in the respective country. For instance, in the United States, salad is typically served before the main course; whereas in France, it is typically served after (Wood, 1999, p. 439). *Communication* and *cultures* are the foundational goals to assist in attaining the three other remaining goals, *connections*, *comparisons*, and *communities* (*Standards*, 1996, p. 78).

Drawing from the communication skills and cultural understandings developed in the previous goals, *connections* refers to a learner's ability to connect the language to their academic goals and coursework to further expand their knowledge of the target culture (Lawrence, 1999, p. 9). For instance, students of French will be able to make connections to other disciplines such as fine arts to learn more about French impressionism (*Standards*, 1996, p. 78). *Comparisons*, on the other hand, encourages language learners to develop insight into the nature of language and culture by comparing the target language and culture with their respective native language and culture (Lawrence, 1999, p. 9). For a linguistic comparison between English and French, students could make a list of English words found in the French lexicon such as *le week-end*, and vice-versa, a list of French words found in English such as *fiancé* (*Standards*, 1996, p. 94). As for cultural comparisons, students will become aware that practices in one culture may not be the same for another such as when salad is served or how to greet someone. For instance, in U.S. American culture, it is customary to greet others by shaking hands; whereas in France, people generally greet each other with *bises* (kisses) and the number of *bises* often varies depending on the region (p. 103). Unfortunately, an approach in the classroom focusing on fundamental differences could potentially result in the destruction of empathy by reinforcing the *us vs. them* mentality (Steele & Suozzo, 1994, p. 38).

Finally, *communities* refers to a learner's ability to communicate and interact with (inter)cultural competence in multilingual communities both at home and around the world. In a sense, this goal emphasizes the necessity of taking student learning outside of the classroom (Lawrence, 1999, p. 9). While important, *communities* tends to be the most difficult goal to implement into the classroom because it hinges on the availability of experiential learning opportunities. However, today's technology and the

internet make connecting with francophone communities easier than it has ever been before (Magnan, 2008, p. 352). For instance, Tandem Exchange is a free website on which students can connect with native speakers in person or online for mutual language practice (*Tandem Exchange*).

One major concern with the current practices of teaching language and culture in the foreign language classroom is that teachers tend to focus on the language itself more than the behavioral and interactional aspects of communication. In essence, the foreign language instructor is, first and foremost, a teacher of language rather than a teacher of (inter)cultural competence (Fantini, 2009, p. 457). In a study, teachers were asked to describe how they implement sociocultural understandings into their lessons based on the “5 C’s.” Responses were varied providing both positive and negative insights. In an interview, one teacher mentioned that “sociocultural understandings just seem to be there – as a heading – I had no idea what it meant, what I was supposed to do with it; so I skipped it because I didn’t understand it” (Crozet & Liddicoat, 1999, p. 114). While that is one teacher’s experience, the findings provided inconsistent practices among those interviewed which might be worthwhile to investigate. The *National World Readiness Standards* by ACTFL were designed to guide students to know *how*, *when*, and *why* to say *what* to *whom*. To achieve these goals, teachers must be aware of them as well as know how to implement them into their classroom. Similarly, according to a survey done by the *Center for Applied Linguistics*, only half of k-12 foreign language teachers in both public and private settings were aware of ACTFL’s *National World Readiness Standards* (Wood, 1999, p. 436). Teacher beliefs have a dramatic impact on achieving these standards. To put the ACTFL goals into practice, research on teaching and teacher education could provide invaluable insights

on the discrepancies among current foreign language educators in order to provide direction for future teaching development and improvement (Allen, 2002, p. 519).

Despite some irregularities, the Communicative Approach is the most widely accepted method to teach foreign languages in North America and in some countries in Europe, and it has substantial theoretical evidence to sustain it. Meanwhile, there is little to no evidence documenting significant progress towards the development of (inter)cultural competence in the foreign language classroom (Bianco et al., 1999, p. 10). In order to turn these promises into practices, some scholars have provided alternative frameworks to resituate language and culture in the classroom. One of the biggest problems with the “5 C’s” is that they tend to look at learner goals individually rather than as overlapping despite the intertwining circles as its emblem. For example, the distinction between communication (using language to communicate) and culture implies that they are two separate constructs (Magnan, 2008, p. 355). Michael Agar, an anthropologist who coined the term *languaculture* which is the combination of the words *language* and *culture*, asserts that language and culture cannot be treated dichotomously. For example, separating the two problematizes how an instructor teaches foreign language idioms that are often memorized and coupled with an English translation or similar expression that encompasses a similar idea. In theory, they should be taught through “the conceptual worldview that they represent” since the nuances of meaning can vary (p. 356). In French, *j’ai du pain sur la planchet* literally translates into English as *I have a lot of bread on the board*. However, when used in a conversation, the literal translation of this sentence is not helpful in understanding its meaning which is *I have a lot of work to do*. This colloquial expression refers to a time in France where most people in villages made their own bread as part of their daily ritual (Crozet & Liddicoat, 1999, p. 114). Because current teaching practices do not

recognize the inability to separate language from culture, they subsequently overlook “the links between language and culture and the necessity to understand communication between non-native speakers (the language learners) and native speakers as intercultural communication rather than communication in the target language” (Crozet & Liddicoat, 1999, p. 113).

Like the concept of *interlanguage* to describe the language of learners (Tarone & Swierzbina, 2009), there is also a concept of *interculture* or a *third place* for acquiring (inter)cultural competence (Bianco et al., 1999, p. 181). This model suggests that intercultural learning and acquisition takes place between the native culture and the target culture; however, it can also take place between more than two cultures (p. 13). Just as a learner’s *interlanguage* differs from the native and target language (Tarone & Swierzbina, 2009), so does this *third place* in intercultural learning (Bianco et al., 1999, p. 181). This *third place* is unique to all learners as they negotiate the cultural perspectives between the *self* and *other* (p. 181).

As was demonstrated in the section entitled *Understandings of Culture, Language, and Thought*, learning about how culture links up with language is not an easy or straightforward task. However, to impart (inter)cultural learning, it is important for learners to understand the complex interconnectedness between the two as a *languaculture* which is not noticeably or readily apparent within the framework of the “5 C’s.” Similarly, a learner should not simply compare similarities and differences between the target and their native *languaculture* but actively learn about their own *languaculture* in order “to distance themselves from their native language/culture environment to see it for the first time as what it really is, as just one possible world view and not the only world view” (Crozet & Liddicoat, 1999, p. 117). In this way, language learners’ cultural schemata are highly valuable tools. Each student in the

foreign language classroom has an established pattern of *thinking, feeling, and acting*. To acquire (inter)cultural competence, it requires a certain degree of unlearning as well as self-awareness to be able to learn something different. As Hofstede et al. (2010) puts it, “Unlearning is more difficult than learning for the first time” (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 5). In fact, it can be quite jarring to the point that sometimes the natural gut reaction is even to deplore the ways of the *other*. Suspending judgment is not an easy task, so students will need assistance to place their personal dissonances into perspective (p. 20).

The main challenge when it comes to navigating between cultures relates to the tension between the moral circles that are anchored in one’s *values* as a cultural manifestation. A common saying that can be found in various schools of thought around the world such as in Christianity or the teachings of Confucius is “do to others as you would wish them to do to you” or “love and treat thy neighbor as thy self” (p. 13). These good intentions rely on the assumption that all human beings share the same core values which is inaccurate to put it mildly. Nevertheless, it is difficult to suspend judgment and action without feeling as if one is compromising their own beliefs. According to Hofstede et al. (2010), intercultural learning refers to the modification of our *mental software* due to these unwritten collective rules as well as personal experiences (p. 7).

Modifying our *mental software* does not require erasing one’s values or boundaries, but merely understanding those boundaries as a cultural manifestation (p. 8). As a result, the learner must “make choices about what to hold and what to relinquish, what to adopt and what to let pass” which eventually leads them to a hybrid *third place* in between two cultural frameworks (Bianco et al., 1999, p. 181). The development of the *third place* can simply be defined as a “*meeting place* where the understanding of how different worldviews operate (in one’s own *languaculture* and

foreign *languacultures*) frees the mind to explore and at the same time to create interculturality” (Bianco et al. 1999, p. 13). The dual understanding of how the self and others operate within a cultural framework begets an orientation of empathy towards cultural differences (p. 13). Empathy is not a passive feeling but requires participation, understanding, and a change in view that transforms the learner’s monocultural schemata (Steele & Suozzo, 1994, p. 75).

To illustrate this transformation, I will use an example that outlines the development of (inter)cultural competence in four stages found in the text, *Acquiring Cross-cultural Competence* (Singerman, 1996, p. 11). These four stages are framed within the context of a U.S. American, Joe Johnson who is studying abroad in France. During his stay, he meets some native French peers, and one day, he is confronted with a rather intense verbal disagreement that is not customary to communication styles from back home. Joe’s reaction and approach to this cultural difference will vary according to his level of (inter)cultural competence. In the first stage, Joe may arrive at the conclusion that French people are combative or even potentially anti-U.S. American; however, he overcomes this by dismissing it as a cultural difference. In the second stage, Joe recognizes the frequency of debate and lively intellectual discussions among the French. Consequently, he acknowledges that his discomfort is due to his inexperience with abrasive styles of communication as a cultural phenomenon. In the third stage, Joe has made a distinction between the opposition of ideas and the opposition of people. He therefore attempts to learn more about topics that are likely to surface in French conversation so that he can participate appropriately. In the fourth stage, Joe adjusts his behavior to be an active yet comfortable participant in discussions. He accepts the differences between U.S. American and French conversation styles and

recognizes that neither are right or wrong. In essence, he approaches French conversation without judgment by exerting empathy (Singerman, 1996, p. 12).

The example of Joe Johnson does not necessarily provide a framework to integrate and nurture these stages of (inter)cultural competence within the classroom, but merely what the various stages would be like in a real-life scenario or an immersion setting. To translate it to the classroom, an instructor could provide authentic video documents on which the students could make observations regarding cultural differences in communication style (Singerman, 1996, p. 13). But how can these critical transformations occur and be measured within the context of foreign language learning? It does not emerge from language teaching alone because the *third place* is only established when the learner can validate both cultural perspectives and consequently reconcile his/her personal dissonances (Bianco et al. 1999, p. 13).

TRANSFORMATION IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

Experiential learning turns into transformative education (Jackson, 2015, p. 93). A language taught within the confines of a classroom is less interactive and has limited time to expose learners to the target language and culture (Skow, 1999). Collective debriefing on culture and language is an important tool to encourage student reflections. (Inter)cultural competence is not something taught but something that develops if appropriately nurtured in the foreign language learning context (Crozet & Liddicoat, 1999, p. 118). Therefore, the foreign language instructor has immense responsibility to teach language for this purpose by providing ample opportunities for students to develop their *third place* (Bianco et al., 1999, p. 185). Transformational learning is contingent upon interaction and experiences that go beyond the confines of a classroom or textbook to manifest such transformations. It is not as simple as learning about

another culture or language (Deardoff, 2011, p. 70). Students should be highly encouraged or even required to maximize curricular and co-curricular resources on campus such as interviewing international students, scholars or professors, attending events given by international speakers or in a related topic area, and even actively engaging in service learning opportunities on campus to nurture the plethora of diverse perspectives. Some researchers refer to this as using the “internationalization at home” as a means for developing (inter)cultural competence (p. 71).

To impart cultural knowledge, it is important for an instructor to gauge student assumptions and knowledge pertaining to the target culture in the foreign language classroom. One method suggested by Steele & Suozzo (1994) involves asking students to draft a list: three things they know about France or the French way of life, three things they like and dislike about France or the French way of life, and finally, three adjectives to describe the French. Students will then write a list in reference to their own culture (Steele & Suozzo, 1994, p. 37). Seeing how students see themselves is equally important to promote more enlightened attitudes (p. 123). Based on student responses, the instructor will create a collective list. The comparison of responses along with a debriefing of the activity will hopefully sensitize the class to the subjective nature of such judgments about the French and about the value system of their own culture. This questionnaire can also be used as a reference point for students to learn more information and to re-evaluate judgments on both their own culture and target culture (p. 37). Even if students do not make these connections immediately, being aware of common assumptions can help the instructor act on them positively throughout the remainder of the course (p. 123). Tempering stereotypes in the foreign language classroom is also quite complex, and thus, it is important to not perpetuate stereotypes in executing this kind of activity (Deardoff, 2011, p. 71)

In practice, I have taught English at a French university as well as French at a U.S. university. I practiced this technique to temper stereotypes in my own way and have created a document summarizing common unrefined generalizations from both universities reflecting on the target culture in addition to their native culture. As an experiment, I first elicited information from students with a questionnaire based on both the target and native culture and then asked them to reflect on how they acquired these assumptions, such as film, tv shows, literature, news etc. depicting caricatures of the target culture. I have consequently developed a document summarizing the collective ideas from a French and U.S. American perspective on their culture and respective target culture to use in my classroom. For example, I shared the list of French stereotypes drafted by my former U.S. American students at the French university, and vice versa, I shared the list of U.S. American stereotypes drafted by my former French students. I also showed the respective reflections on how the target culture see themselves. This experiment elicited strong responses. I also asked students to reflect on why these stereotypes potentially exist and if they were justified. I then shared the collective list from my former courses. I think this exercise was more meaningful to some students than others, but I do believe that it helped them become aware of the fact that how we see ourselves is not necessarily the same as the way others see us and vice versa how we see others is not necessarily how they see themselves. The activity suggested by Steele & Suozzo (1994) is similar and perhaps less abrasive than my tactic. However, I feel that it achieved a similar outcome of reflecting sensitively on the concept of *self* and *other* (Steele & Suozzo, 1994, p. 74).

As was previously mentioned in an earlier section, focusing solely on differences and similarities is inadequate. The transformation towards becoming (inter)culturally competent manifests in different ways for each learner, and

pedagogical methods can often vary depending on the academic discipline (Deardoff, 2011, p. 69). In that case, foreign language instructors should reach beyond their educational background to other fields such as anthropology, sociology, and international studies for new strategies in culturally appropriate pedagogy (Steele & Suozzo, 1994: 13). Anthropology for instance can help us define cultural content within a lesson so long as it is adapted to the linguistic level (p. 75).

To manifest intercultural experiences within the limits of a classroom, there are many simulation activities from multicultural education that implicitly challenge and engage students to critically reflect on their approaches and orientations in an intercultural situation. Such activities are designed to simulate encounters between people of more than one cultural identity which can range from “national, ethnic, occupational, gender, racial, or any groups that can be constructed as cultures because they are inherently different due to values, norms, behavior patterns, and the like” (Fowler & Pusch, 2010, p. 94).

In addition to providing a simulation of an intercultural experience, these activities provide a safe space “where people can take risks in what they say or do with minimal danger of doing harm or being harmed” (Hofstede & Pedersen, 1999, p. 418). More often than not, intercultural simulations and roleplays involve assigning contrasting and fictitious cultural identities to participants that often differ from whom they are in real life to achieve a certain outcome. The contrasting roles among students causes a degree of difficulty as they attempt to complete the goal or aim of the simulation while being true to their role. Depending on the simulation, students will navigate and mediate “the use of space, verbal and nonverbal communication, values, social structures, time consciousness and many other aspects of cultural differences”

(Fowler & Pusch, 2010, p. 95). To stay aligned with learning a foreign language and culture, many simulation activities designed to promote (inter)cultural competence can be readapted according to the learner language level and thus conducted in the target language.

Example of Simulation Activities

Barnga is a simple nonverbal card game tournament in which students are divided into equal groups to learn the rules of the game. Since it is a nonverbal game, instructors could define the rules at each table in the target language. Unbeknownst to the students, each group is given a different set of simple rules. After playing a few rounds in their first group to ensure that the students understand their rules, losers and winners of a round end up moving to a new table. Because students think they are playing the same game, nonverbal argument is likely to take place as well as a strong feelings of culture clash as they navigate these differences. Some players may attempt to make it easier for newcomers to a table by adapting to new rules whereas others may defend their original ones. Afterwards, the debriefing centers around the student's experience and the cultural connotations in navigating the tension. Barnga is a metaphor for cultural differences and cooperation by understanding how one set of rules is not inherently better than the other (Hofstede & Pedersen, 1999, p. 418).

Bafa' Bafa' was developed by Simulation Training Systems in 1973. In this activity, students or participants are divided into two fictitious cultures often exaggerating differences found in high context and low context cultures. During the simulation, students travel between the two cultural spaces in attempts to understand the "other" while staying in character. This in many ways exemplifies the difficulty of interpreting actions and exchanges in an unfamiliar setting as well as the necessity for comprehensive strategies to appropriately and respectfully engage in a culturally diverse environment. The debriefing for this simulation addresses "what attitudes emerged and how they developed, and the skills that would make this a more constructive and satisfying interaction—in other words, the development of intercultural competence" (Fowler & Push, 2010, p. 97).

There are many other variations of these intercultural simulations that could be adapted to the foreign language classroom. In fact, the *Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition* (CARLA) at the University of Minnesota has a comprehensive list of simulation activities, including the two examples above, that can be adapted for use in the foreign language classroom as an effective way to introduce (inter)cultural

competence. Unfortunately, this amazing list of resources is not disseminated among foreign language instructors which renders it useless if instructors are unaware of its existence (*Culture Learning*).

While simulation activities can be an excellent way to help students prepare for future experiences in intercultural situations, the replication of *Intensity Factors* of intercultural contact: *ethnocentrism, language, cultural immersion, cultural isolation, prior intercultural experience, expectations, visibility/invisibility, status, power, and control* can induce emotional responses and reactions from students such as frustration (Fowler & Pusch, 2010, p. 95). Since many of these *Intensity Factors* are likely to emerge with varying degrees of impact in these kinds of simulation activities, the instructor needs to be prepared to mediate student feelings sensitively and respectfully (p. 96). For instance, there was a study done evaluating the impact of “BAFA BAFA” on U.S. university students that suggested a heightened level of ethnocentrism as a subsequent result. The conclusion of this finding proposed an extensive debriefing session as well as some modifications to the activity to prevent breeding hostility (Hofstede & Pedersen, 1999, p. 418).

Depending on the learner level, there may need to be a debriefing in English afterwards for the instructor to assess whether or not the simulation elicited deeper reflections on cultural differences as well as discuss the feelings of tension that surfaced. Using the diverse backgrounds of students can be a fruitful tool especially in the university setting where there are international students to add unique perspectives during this reflection phase. For instance, an international student, depending on their country of origin, may have a different outlook than a U.S. American would which is

equally valuable for learning how to empathize with others and to critically think about one's own experience (Deardoff, 2011, p. 70).

ASSESSMENT OF (INTER)CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Assessments in any course should naturally correspond with the philosophy and goals as well as weekly activities (Jackson, 2015, p. 95). In order to assess (inter)cultural competence, there needs to be transparency in both its definition and conceptualization (Fantini, 2009, p. 458). Universities and public schools around the United States have reported using the *National World Readiness Standards* defined by ACTFL in their lessons as well as their rubrics, but there are few studies showing the impact of these goals on developing said (inter)cultural competence (Magnan, 2008, p. 352). In fact, research on assessing (inter)cultural competence lags significantly behind when compared to the research on assessing linguistic competence. (Inter)cultural competence is often assessed with the same proficiency levels as the other four skills: novice, intermediate, advance, superior, near-native competence, and native competence. Each level denotes a clear progression of an established skill (Steele & Suozzo, 1994, p. 119). (Inter)cultural competence is a continuous and ongoing developmental process that largely depends on a student's background and exposure to cultural differences. While it evolves, language learners may hit a plateau periodically resulting in stagnation or sometimes even regression (Fantini, 2009, p. 459). Most language learners will enter the foreign language classroom at various stages of developing (inter)cultural competence, but in theory, they will have similar linguistic capacities as they progress through a higher educational program. Thus, culture should not be considered a fifth skill in addition to reading, writing, listening, and speaking (Steele & Suozzo, 1994, p. 13).

In the ACTFL provisional *Proficiency Guidelines* for culture, a characteristic of *Near-Native Competence* is that the learner "...has internalized the concept that culture is relative and is always on the lookout to do the appropriate thing; no longer assumes that own culture is *the way it is*" (Steele & Suozzo, 1994, p. 118). There is no compelling research to support why this cannot be attained at the intermediate or even novice level. As a matter of fact, developing accepting attitudes toward people may precede the progression of simple linguistic skills and cultural knowledge (p. 119). While they are interrelated and consequently enhance one another, linguistic proficiency and cultural knowledge does not necessarily correspond directly with (inter)cultural competence (Singerman, 1996, p. 11). Using this approach risks reducing intercultural understandings as mere cultural trivia, which was the flaw of previous approaches towards teaching culture and thus, does not necessarily encourage learners to see differences within a meaningful system of behaviors, attitudes, and values (Steele & Suozzo, 1994, p. 118).

Additionally, there is considerable doubt that (inter)cultural competence is defined by a hierarchical progression similar to that of oral proficiency. Assessing oral proficiency in the target language is the most advanced since it has been a principal goal of communicative competence, and there is solid evidence supporting what constitutes progression in control by the learner and how this control can be measured (Steele & Suozzo, 1994, p. 118). While cultural knowledge and communication skills are more explicitly assessed in the foreign language classroom, assessing (inter)cultural competence in terms of attitudes and awareness is uncommon and not easily quantified or documented. Knowledge, skills, attitudes, and awareness are interrelated components defining (inter)cultural competence, and thus each one must be addressed and assessed (Fantini, 2009, p. 459). However, for a quality assessment, it is important

to determine which aspects of (inter)cultural competence are being weighed which begins with establishing clear goals with measurable outcomes (p. 462). Despite the varied terminology referring to (inter)cultural competence, it is in fact something that can be measured as long as it is “multidimensional, multiperspective, ongoing, integrated, aligned, and intentional” as well as mixing both quantitative and qualitative methods (p. 465).

In general, there are several types of assessments from direct, indirect, to discrete formats which are often used together. Direct assessments are usually announced and can range from traditional formats such as tests and quizzes that measure knowledge to less traditional formats such as portfolios or capstone projects. Contrary to a direct assessment, an indirect assessment is not explicitly known to the learner, and largely involves observation on the part of the instructor regarding a learner’s performance. Depending on the criteria established, the teacher can take notes and follow-up on specific issues as needed. Other formats of indirect assessment include self-report surveys, interviews, and focus groups where students reflect on their learning. Meanwhile discrete assessments narrow in on specific learning outcomes such as demonstrating a skill or revealing critical insights. Combining these formats along with a variety of different techniques and strategies gives a bigger picture of the learning that takes place over time. Strategies vary from questionnaires, closed and open-ended questions, oral and written activities, individual and interactive activities, journaling, blogging, and more. Assessing (inter)cultural competences requires the use of multiple combinations of assessment types (p. 464).

According to Claire Kramsh, the primary goal of assessing (inter)cultural competence should be an autonomous self-reflection on the forms and values of another society as compared to one’s own (Steele & Suozzo, 1994, p. 117). The “Can-Do”

statements by ACTFL attempt to elicit these kinds of reflections. In short, the “Can-Do” statements “...are a set of benchmarks, indicators, examples, and scenarios that show how learners use the target language and knowledge of culture.” Language learners reflect and evaluate their understandings of culture by checking off a box based on what the learner can do (Van Houten & Shelton, 2018, p. 35). While self-reflection is a necessary part of the process, it does not provide a framework in understanding the heart of what is acquired in cultural learning (Hinkel, 1999, p. 29). Self-reflection puts a lot of weight on the learner to take initiative for their learning, and thus requires motivation to reap the benefits. In theory, it is appealing, but in practice, it does not seem likely without feedback, specific direction or discussion in the classroom. Instead of the normal power dynamic of teacher-student, the foreign language instructor assumes the role of a facilitator within the communicative classroom. This comes with its own set of pros and cons when students must take responsibility for their own learning (Richards, 2005, p. 5).

EXTERNAL FORMS OF ASSESSMENT

Students claim to have a transformational understanding of a culture after studying abroad, but pre/post results from numerous assessment tools reveal little to no impact on students’ (inter)cultural competence (Crozet & Liddicoat, 1999, p. 116). Study abroad is potentially the most effective way to achieve a deep understanding of a culture, but it is not an automatic one (Steele & Suozzo, 1994, p. 139). In my opinion, the most puzzling matter is the assumption that students gain cultural competence within the foreign language classroom while it has been proven that study abroad where students have direct contact with the target culture does not show any significant findings (Crozet & Liddicoat, 1999, p. 116). It could be informational to apply these

external instruments to foreign language learners to verify if students are in fact developing the skills that are often proclaimed as an outcome of foreign language learning.

Many external instruments are available to assess differing components of (inter)cultural competence, but with a caveat, as they do not address every aspect of (inter)cultural competence such as language and frequently come with a financial cost. While many of these instruments possess varying conceptualizations of what it means to be (inter)culturally competent, they could serve as an invaluable asset to gauge the development of (inter)cultural competence in the foreign language classroom. However, selecting one can be challenging because there are over 46 different instruments based on theoretical foundations such as the *Behavioral Assessment Scale for Intercultural Communication* (BASIC), *Beliefs, Events, Values Inventory* (BEVI), *Cross-cultural Adaptability Inventory* (CCAI), *Global Mindedness Scale* (GMS), and *Intercultural Development Inventory* (IDI) (Fantini, 2009, p. 466 – p. 471). The latter (IDI) is a developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS) which was developed by Milton Bennet to measure “orientations toward cultural differences” as well as “changes in a world view” under the assumption that heightened intercultural sensitivity begets a higher potential for putting (inter)cultural competence into practice (Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003, p. 421).

In this framework, intercultural sensitivity refers to an individual’s ability “to discriminate and experience relevant cultural differences” whereas (inter)cultural competence refers to the ability “to think and act in interculturally appropriate ways” (Hammer, et al., 2003, p. 422). Experience is not a matter of being present in a situation, but rather how one interprets it. According to Hammer et al. (2003), “Individuals who have received largely monocultural socialization normally have access only to their

own cultural worldview, so they are unable to construe (and thus are unable to experience) the difference between their own perception and that of people who are culturally different” (p. 423). In the DMIS, there are approximately 6 stages to conceptualize worldview orientations. The first three represent more ethnocentric approaches to differences in the sense that one’s own cultural experience is either superior or the reality of the way things are: *Denial*, *Defense*, and *Minimization*. *Denial* of cultural differences is an orientation that views one’s native culture as the only real one; whereas *Defense* against cultural differences is an orientation that recognizes cultural differences but maintains that one’s own culture is superior (p. 424). *Minimization* of cultural differences is an orientation that focuses more on universal similarities such as our biological make-up rather than differences and consequently neglects them as irrelevant.

The remaining three orientations tend to be more ethnorelative in the sense that one’s own culture is understood within the context of other cultures: *Acceptance*, *Adaptation*, and *Integration*. In brief, *Acceptance* of cultural difference is an orientation that understands one’s own culture as an equal part of a plethora of elaborate worldviews. Adaptation to cultural difference describes the orientation in which one can perceive and adapt himself/herself appropriately in culturally diverse contexts. Integration is the final stage where one expands their notion of *self* to include different cultural worldviews (p. 425). The IDI consists of 50 questions that places participants into one of the six categories. Additionally, the IDI also provides the stage in which the participants perceives themselves to be. For example, I might perceive myself in the adaptation phase whereas the IDI shows my actual orientation as the minimization of cultural differences. Both the perceived and actual orientation are calculated based on my responses to the 50 questions (p. 431). The results of the IDI also provide a

comprehensive and detailed analysis of steps that should be taken to continue one's personal development of (inter)cultural competence (Hammer, 2013, p. 17).

Granted, there is a plethora of facets to take into consideration to measure (inter)cultural competence which may be overlooked in the theoretical foundation of the DMIS (Matsumoto & Hwang, 2013, p. 860). This medium as well as other mediums measuring (inter)cultural competence are not without flaws. For example, the IDI assessment fails to take into consideration demographic variables such as "...(inter)cultural experience, friends from other cultures and language study, age, education, and years spent in another culture and/or length of time attending international school" (Matsumoto & Hwang, 2013, p. 860). However, the IDI has extensive data supporting its claim to show how a person approaches (inter)cultural situations in a variety of situations (p. 860). In fact, one of the many uses is for university courses that have inaugurated (inter)cultural competence within its curriculum (Hammer, 2013, p. 16). If funding were not a limitation, employing pre- and post-assessments of an external tool could shed light on various aspects of a foreign language learner's development of (inter)cultural competence. For instance, if there is a reoccurring pattern among the students surveyed, the data could inform the strengths and weaknesses of current teaching practices in purporting a student's development of (inter)cultural competence. Certain measures could be taken such as implementing the advice given in individual IDI reports for self-improvement. An instructor could evaluate the varying needs of her students to address these steps in the foreign language classroom (p. 17).

CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS

To a certain degree, the "5 C's" are encouraging global citizenship through foreign language learning especially after reading the mission statement behind these

goals from the *National Standards for Foreign Language Education* which declares, “The United States must educate students who are equipped linguistically and culturally to communicate successfully in a pluralistic American society and abroad” (Lawrence, 1999, p. 7). This emphasis in foreign language teaching stresses the application of language beyond the instructional setting to bring (inter)cultural competence to a foreign language learner’s future experiences (p. 8). Presently, there is no national requirement for U.S. students in secondary education to learn a foreign language though it is strongly encouraged because many U.S. liberal art colleges require at least 4 semesters in a foreign language to obtain a degree. However, data show that “fewer than 10 percent of undergraduates take a course in international relations, and fewer than 20 percent of four-year colleges even require more than two years of foreign language study (Deardoff, 2011, p. 69). In my opinion, there is a huge gap between the mission statement and current educational practices. Another problem lies in the fact that if students do not continue to develop their linguistic and intercultural accomplishments, these skills dramatically decrease with time (Cohen, 1986, p. 143).

While the benefits of language learning are valued among some, student motivation is a variable that can impact both second language acquisition and developing (inter)cultural competence. Many College of Liberal Arts students are required to take a foreign language and are simply there to meet a requirement. Coincidentally, enrollment data indicate that very few students pursue a foreign language to reach advanced levels of proficiency (Van Houten & Shelton, 2018, p. 34). As established earlier, learning a second language as an adult requires serious motivation and commitment which is not always abundant in the foreign language classroom (Neuner & Byram, 2003, p. 79). For example, learning the *passé composé* in French as a native English speaker requires as many as six conscious grammatical

operations that are vastly different from the English language. For starters, there are two auxiliary verbs (*être* and *avoir*) that are used to denote the perfect tense; whereas in English, only one verb is needed to describe a completed action, and there are no changes to the past participle to modify its subject (Macaro & Graham, 2008, p. 6). The probable variant in acquiring these complicated grammatical features is linked to the foreign language learner's level of motivation and commitment (Neuner & Byram, 2003, p. 79). It is exceptionally hard work to learn a language especially if you consider the standard 10,000-hour rule to become an expert in a subject area. Language learning, like any other skill, requires consistent effort over a long period of time (Eaton, 2010, p. 9).

In 2005, I did a survey in my French 1001 introductory course in which I asked students why they are studying French. As predicted, they almost unanimously stated that it was mandatory for their college of liberal arts education. In other words, their motivation to learn French is not coming from a place of mere interest, but out of necessity to complete their higher education degree. With that being said, the requirement to take a language at a university up to a certain level is a double-edged sword. While some students select a foreign language by choice due to familial roots or pure interest, many students in introductory courses are not there by choice and acquiring a second language may be far down on their list of priorities. These attitudes can prevent fostering a positive learning environment in the classroom. So, what is the value of studying a language? What can students gain from a few years of learning a language? I think these variables add a whole new dimension to learner goals.

To address student motivation to learn the language, Sarah Elaine Eaton (2010) suggests that teachers should use the power of their story to convey the positive impact that language learning had on them. Sharing stories is a concrete way to demonstrate

how one's worldview can change for the better such as becoming less myopic (Eaton, 2010, p. 27). In my opinion, incorporating some of the simulation activities and extending beyond a text book can potentially assist student motivation levels as active participants. Additionally, the instructor should take the time to understand the reasons behind student enrollment as well as individual student interests and backgrounds to incorporate into their lesson plans. Studies have shown that the relationship between the instructor and students are interdependent in promoting motivation and classroom cohesion. This, of course, requires a lot of effort on the part of the instructor, but it could potentially change the pace and atmosphere of the classroom. Time is an important variable, and unfortunately, many of these simulation activities would require a full class period to execute them effectively (Clement, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1994, p. 443).

The limited amount of time in a classroom which on average is roughly 345 contact hours for 4 semesters of a foreign language in higher education, is problematic and perhaps over-ambitious to achieve the current goals in foreign language education. There are four different rankings to measure language difficulty for native English speakers. French, for instance, belongs in the first category which in theory requires less contact hours than other languages to get to various levels of proficiency as defined by ACTFL. To reach an intermediate-mid proficiency, it requires approximately between 675-750 contact hours; however, the number of hours needed to reach a specific proficiency level often varies from student to student (Garza, 2010). Since few students will continue long enough to reach advance levels of proficiency, (inter)cultural competence has become an important focus to promote world languages (Van Houten & Shelton, 2018, p. 34). However, the way in which many foreign language programs are currently set-up in higher education is through a progressive

sequence that is often outlined within a textbook. In order to maintain a standard, students are primarily assessed on their linguistic competence in terms of reading, writing, speaking, and listening to continue on to the next level. The intercultural components in language learning become secondary to these goals. There are many studies documenting the problems associated with foreign language textbooks. For example, a textbook which informs learners to communicate speech acts such as invitations might only concentrate on a single semantic formula that rarely occurs in the speech of native speakers, and thereby does not prepare learners to communicate appropriately with native speakers (Nguyen, 2011, p. 19). The textbook, in essence, is “the visible heart” to foreign language teaching because it is the main resource that learners use for both linguistic and intercultural communication practice (p. 18).

Presumably, this explains why standardized textbooks tend to provide activities and exercises with activities strictly based on linguistic competency as its focus for communicative competence (Steele & Suozzo, 1994, p. 127). However, (inter)cultural competence is often not an explicit goal in these exercises and is rarely assessed beyond behavioral surface manifestations of culture. There should be more activities designed to nurture the learner’s knowledge of the deeper system that links these surface manifestations to core values as well as to the learner’s empathy toward the target culture. Unfortunately, cultural components are either ignored or strictly accepted as a part of oral proficiency which would make additional assessments unnecessary (p. 116). Correspondingly, some studies have even claimed that understanding a new cultural system is not always attainable for adults which further addresses the need of reliable ways to integrate and assess the development of (inter)cultural competence in the foreign language classroom (Hinkel, 1999, p. 10).

CONCLUSION

Assuming that language and culture are interconnected and that language use is cultural, understanding languages and cultures outside of one's worldview has become a paramount importance in today's multicultural and pluralistic nature of society. Because the world is changing at a rapid pace, previous ways of promoting language learning are no longer effective which were largely based on hollow promises such as language learning is easy and necessary for travel. Other incentives have emphasized future job prospects, but while proficiency in a language can be an asset in the workforce, it is only one skill to complement one of many (Eaton 2010, p. 37). Promoting foreign languages has since shifted its focus towards developing (inter)cultural competence (Crozet & Liddicoat, 1999, p. 116). Meanwhile, there is minimal information outside of personal anecdotes regarding the impact that foreign language learning has on (inter)cultural competence or in other words, that learning a foreign language indeed assists an individual's development of (inter)cultural competence. Implementing and assessing (inter)cultural learning in the classroom requires effort as well as time, and while that may be challenging, it is both possible and necessary (Deardoff, 2011, p. 76). In other words, the current practices of language education need to be re-evaluated if we want to use foreign languages as a platform for (inter)cultural competence. This process has only just begun and therefore requires further explorations to ameliorate our understandings of turning this promise of (inter)cultural competence into practice through second language learning (Bianco et al., 1999, p.186).

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