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Critical cultural awareness in the foreign language classroom

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Abstract

Preparing learners to interact appropriately and effectively while participating in intercultural relationships is a key component of foreign language curricula. The notion of critical cultural awareness, which is embedded within the framework of intercultural communicative competence, encourages language educators to craft learning opportunities that guide learners in observing clear connections between classroom lessons and real-world issues while exercising critical thinking skills throughout the process. Although research by Byram (1997, 2012) has demonstrated the importance of critical cultural awareness, few studies have illustrated how critical

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cultural awareness can be developed in a classroom setting while working to achieve language proficiency. This paper summarizes the literature on critical cultural awareness and presents practical lessons for secondary- and university-level foreign language classrooms, thus enabling students to gain cultural and linguistic knowledge at the same time.

Research in the milieu of modern foreign language curricula often promotes the framework of intercultural communicative competence as an effective way to prepare learners for appropriate intercultural interactions

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(Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006; Fantini, 2007; Kramersch, 2004; Sinicrope, Norris, & Watanabe, 2007). In general, the literature draws from Byram's Model for Intercultural Communicative Competence (1997), which presents, defines, and clarifies the importance of preparing students with the attitudes, knowledge, and skills needed to participate in intercultural relationships of equality. The justification for an intercultural component in foreign language curricula is represented as a response to the transformation of local and global communities due to immigration, which necessitates that learners be better prepared for appropriate participation in intercultural conversations (Kramersch, 2004; Sinicrope et al., 2007; Stewart, 2007).

It is surprising however that the component of critical cultural awareness, which was originally positioned at the center of Byram's Model for Intercultural Communicative Competence (1997), is missing from much of the literature related to this intercultural learning framework. According to Byram's (1997) model, when

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the acquisition of a foreign language is enhanced by critical cultural awareness (CCA), defined as "an ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries" (p. 53), students leave the classroom equipped with the skills needed to participate in local and global communities due to a deeper level of cultural awareness and understanding. In addition, students who are given the chance to explore CCA in the language classroom attain proficiency in the skill of evaluation (Byram, 1997), feel more connected to the material because they can see how the notion of awareness connects to real-world issues (Kramersch, 2004;

Osborn, 2006), and gain experience exercising critical thinking skills, thereby raising the level of intellectual stimulation in the foreign language classroom (Osborn, 2006). Although there are some intercultural scholars who address the notion of CCA in relation to intercultural learning (Baker, 2012; Byram, 1997, 2012; Byram & Guilhelme, 2000; Fantini, 2007; Kramersch, 2004; Moreno-Lopez, 2004), much of the literature fails to address the awareness aspect of the intercultural communicative competence paradigm. Furthermore, although Houghton (2013) specifically addresses critical cultural awareness by depicting ways to direct students in managing stereotypes, he overlooks including language practice during awareness-raising lessons.

According to researchers in the field of foreign language education (Byram, 2012; Kramersch, 2004; Osborn, 2006), there is a need for more discussion regarding the incorporation of CCA in foreign language curricula. The purpose of this article is to add to this discussion by synthesizing the literature on CCA. Additionally, the social and psychological dimensions of CCA will be explored so that practicing educators can see how the integration of an awareness component into their curriculum creates possibilities for learners to experience a deeper connection to its content. Finally, this paper will culminate with some ideas for lessons that develop CCA in order to connect theory to practice for the classroom teacher.

Critical cultural awareness in the foreign language classroom

Intercultural Communicative Competence and Critical Cultural Awareness

Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is a framework for intercultural learning that prepares foreign language students for meaningful interactions with those from other cultures by addressing the attitudes, knowledge, and skills needed for effective intercultural communication (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006; Fantini, 2007). The literature on intercultural communicative competence focuses heavily on the notion of preparing learners to interact appropriately and effectively with people from diverse linguistic systems, backgrounds, and worldviews (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006; Fantini, 2007; Sinicropo et al., 2007). In order to prepare students for intercultural interactions, teachers are encouraged to

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design foreign language lessons that ask students to reflect on their beliefs about the target culture in conjunction with opportunities for students to participate in active inquiry regarding the products, practices, and perspectives of another culture (Byram, 1997; Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002; Council of Europe, 2001; Deardorff, 2006; McGee, 2011; Merryfield, 2008; Moore, 2006; National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 2013; Smith, 2013). Once attitudes and knowledge have been addressed, students should participate in tasks that promote the intercultural skills needed for participation in reciprocal relationships with individuals from different cultures (Byram, 1997). Teachers can incorporate an intercultural stance into the curriculum by providing opportunities for learners to practice skills in analysis, interpretation, communication, and interaction in relation to the products and practices of the target culture (Byram, 1997).

Within the framework of intercultural communicative competence, Byram (1997) defines critical cultural awareness as “An ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one’s own and other cultures and countries” (p. 53). When teachers attend to CCA as a component of intercultural learning in the foreign language classroom, learning tasks must provide opportunities for students to practice the skill of critical evaluation. In order to accomplish this task effectively, educators must consider developmentally appropriate ways of scaffolding learning so that students learn how to evaluate the practices, products, and perspectives of the target culture. For this reason, a necessary first step in the process toward building CCA is that students must be given time to identify and reflect upon their preconceived ideas, judgments, and stereotypes toward individuals from the target culture. According to Byram (1997), students will undoubtedly bring their predetermined ideas into intercultural conversations. It is therefore the intent of classroom activities that encompass CCA to guide students in considering the origins of these preconceived notions and provide assistance in determining whether or not these judgments are rational or unsound (Byram, 1997).

CCA is characterized by a concern with ideology (Byram, 1997), which can be defined as “a system of ideas which drives behavioural choices” (Holliday, Hyde, & Kullman 2010, p. 261). Byram (2008) clearly asserts that one of the goals of CCA is to unmask student ideologies while providing opportunities for learners to “critically evaluate ideological concepts that could possibly lead to intercultural conflict” (Yulita, 2013, p. 205). In order to do this, instructors should provide students with words and phrases needed to prevent conflicts that take place in intercultural interactions due to stereotyping and bias. For example, a teacher may model using language such as “some” Spanish speakers or French citizens “tend to” so that broad generalizations are avoided. As students move toward CCA in the foreign language classroom, the objectives that follow are accomplished (Critical Literacy Winter School, 2006, p. 1). Students will

- see things from different perspectives;
- examine the origins and implications of worldviews, values, beliefs, and attitudes;
- analyze the construction of knowledge, cultures, identities, and relationships;
- make connections between global and local contexts; ask questions about the world, themselves, and others; and
- question what is presented as universally true.

As foreign language learners move toward critical awareness, teachers should craft activities that encourage students to consider new values and beliefs based on facts uncovered during the research process.

As foreign language learners move toward critical awareness, teachers should craft activities that encourage students to consider new values and beliefs based on facts uncovered during the research process (Galloway, 1998). The ideal format for this type of intercultural learning is described as cooperative investigation in which learners work together to control the direction of their learning while the teacher operates as a guide throughout the process of discovery (Byram, 1997; Byram & Guilhelme, 2000; Byram et al., 2002; *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, 2001; Furstenberg, 2010; Kearney, 2010; Kramsch, 2004; Lee, 1998; Moore, 2006). This is important because it is not the teacher’s role to push a personal viewpoint on the learners, rather the teacher should create an open environment of inquiry so that students can discover the origins of judgments or stereotypes independently (Byram & Guilhelme, 2000). According to Houghton (2013) one important role of teachers of foreign languages is to facilitate communication across cultural barriers, and “one of the most challenging barriers to be overcome is the stereotype” (p. 1). Developing CCA is one way in which teachers can encourage students to deconstruct stereotypes and prejudice in the classroom.

Once learners have spent time examining their beliefs, the second step in the process toward critical cultural awareness begins when students engage in tasks that encourage thoughtful and rational evaluation of perspectives, products, and practices related to the target culture (Byram, 1997). During this second step,

Critical cultural awareness in the foreign language classroom

students draw from research practices acquired during the knowledge phase of intercultural communicative competence in order to defend, with proof of rigorous inquiry and thoughtful reasoning, their beliefs about the target culture. As a deeper understanding of the target culture is achieved, learners' beliefs will undoubtedly change and evolve resulting in a more profound understanding of a foreign culture (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006). Moreover, it is important to note that the consideration of students' native culture is a vital component of the process toward CCA in that students are encouraged to be equally consistent when judging the practices of their own culture once they have learned proper techniques for evaluating the practices of the target culture (Byram, 1997; Chapelle, 2010).

The final step in developing CCA is to create real or simulated opportunities for interactions with individuals of diverse cultural backgrounds and worldviews (Byram, 1997). This presents opportunities for students to practice communicating and negotiating beliefs with those who may not necessarily share their worldview. Moreno-Lopez (2004) promotes this component of CCA through connecting the school environment to the local community as she describes building awareness in the Spanish classroom by preparing students to complete mini-ethnographic studies with members of the Latino community. Byram (1997) urges foreign language educators to include CCA in curricula "not just for purposes of improving effectiveness of communication and interaction but especially for purposes of clarifying one's own ideological perspective and engaging with others consciously on the basis of that perspective" (p. 101).

Social Dimension of Critical Cultural Awareness

Tasks promoting CCA present opportunities for students to use higher-order thinking skills in order to become more aware of the ideological component underlying intercultural interactions. For teachers hoping to include a critical evaluative component in foreign language curricula, the notion of CCA can be regarded as being comprised of two distinct dimensions: social and psychological (Byram, 2012). The social dimension presents an opportunity for students to analyze and reflect on the social aspect of language and culture, thereby connecting the notion of communicative competence to intercultural competence (Byram, 2012). Byram (2012) posits that students in a French classroom can compare the language variations that take place in specific social situations in France, Francophone Africa, and Canada. One result of this type of lesson is that learners begin to see that languages work differently depending on the context and users (Byram, 2012). This type of lesson also helps learners visualize how cultural values and beliefs play a crucial role in the types of interactions that occur in different societies even when the same language is being used. Teachers can add a culminating element to this type of study by asking learners to consider the role language differences play in their own country.

Tasks promoting CCA present opportunities for students to use higher-order thinking skills in order to become more aware of the ideological component underlying intercultural interactions.

The social dimension of CCA also guides learners in considering the effect of language and cultural differences in smaller communities at home and abroad.

The social dimension of CCA also guides learners in considering the effect of language and cultural differences in smaller communities at home and abroad. As teachers create opportunities for students to consider the variations in languages and cultures as seen in the French example above, this same teacher can also craft experiences for studying language and culture differences in smaller communities in France. For instance, a classroom can embark on a research study of the way that the French language has been transformed in Paris due to immigration. Learners can search for ways that different cultural groups have adopted the French language and how this affects traditional social actions in Parisian society. Furthermore, students can consider how French culture and language transform the culture of newcomers living in France. Kramersch (2004) echoes this sentiment when she says that, “This does not mean they [teachers] can no longer teach the standard national language and national traditions, only that these symbols of national identity have become multiple, hybrid, changing, and often conflictual” (pp. 43-44). So, as foreign language teachers encourage learners to acquire the standard national language alongside the standard traditions, time can also be spent contemplating how these traditions have evolved over time due to the influence of other cultures and languages. Again, by focusing on the dynamic and ever-changing culture of a foreign country, teachers can present opportunities for reflecting on similar occurrences in the students’ native country. Osborn (2006) encourages teachers to incorporate activities that reflect back on local communities so that students can see the connection between their language learning experience and their daily lives.

Psychological Dimension of Critical Cultural Awareness

The second dimension of critical cultural competence, the psychological dimension, asks students to consider the connection between language and identity.

The second dimension of critical cultural competence, the psychological dimension, asks students to consider the connection between language and identity (Byram, 2012). German language students can study how language affects identity differently in Germany compared to Austria by looking at what native speakers consider to be typical German and Austrian characteristics (Byram, 2012). Byram (2012) posits that it is worthwhile for students in a foreign language classroom to consider how language, whether native or foreign, affects an individual’s personal and social identity. Moreover, foreign language educators can respond to multiculturalism in societies by helping students examine the complexity of identity for immigrants living in foreign countries (Kramersch, 2004).

In order to add a necessary personal element to the psychological dimension of CCA, teachers can ask students to consider their personal identity transformations as foreign language learners (Byram, 2012). Building on the German example above, students can explore how they view themselves as German speakers or

Critical cultural awareness in the foreign language classroom

how others perceive them when they speak German (Byram, 2012). Students, who become aware of their own identity transformation as a result of language and culture studies, are more open to considering the impact new cultural and linguistic experiences have on others. Byram's (2012) suggestions for incorporating the psychological dimension into learning based on CCA are vague and he admits that his ideas regarding the psychological dimension of CCA are lacking and that foreign language teachers need more guidance in creating opportunities for learners to reflect on the connection between languages and identities.

The activities that follow provide examples of ways to incorporate learning that addresses critical cultural awareness in the secondary or university foreign language classroom. It is important to note that some teachers will be able to conduct the entire activity in the target language, while others will not. This will depend on many factors such as the general climate in the classroom, the proficiency level of the teacher and students, and the age, abilities, and cognitive development of the students. The literature on intercultural communicative competence clearly states that when deep cultural understanding and awareness are the goals, some portions of intercultural lessons will prove more powerful when conducted in the native language of the students (Byram, 1997; Furstenberg, 2010; Kramsch, 2004; Osborn, 2006; Schulz, 2007). However, as will be demonstrated in the examples that follow, teachers can create multiple opportunities for students to engage with the target language in concert with profound discussions and inquiry related to critical cultural awareness.

Critical Cultural Awareness Activities for the Foreign Language Classroom

Beginning to Intermediate Language Learners: Nationalities and the World Cup

Every four years, billions of soccer fans worldwide spend time watching the World Cup finals organized by FIFA (*Fédération Internationale de Football Association*). Following the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, FIFA claimed that half of humanity tuned in for at least one match during the month-long tournament in which 32 national teams competed for the honor of being named the world champion of soccer (Stromberg, 2014). The World Cup provides a compelling context for foreign language teachers interested in considering how CCA can be explored through the lens of a global soccer match.

In the foreign language classroom, a teacher may connect to information about the World Cup during a unit on sports by taking students to the FIFA website (www.fifa.com) to search for information about the most recent World Cup tournament. By clicking on the language icon located at the top of the page between the shopping cart and magnifying glass, students can change the language of the website to the target language. The World Cup website (<http://www.fifa.com/worldcup/index.html>) provides a world map depicting the countries involved in the most recent games. Teachers can access this map by clicking on the Teams icon located near the top of the page. With the map projected, the teacher can begin to teach the names of countries and the names of nationalities connected to each country using the map as a backdrop while holding up flashcards displaying the

names of the countries and nationalities written in the target language. During this input phase of the lesson, the teacher can begin to ask questions, either in the target language or the native language of the learners, about the different countries involved such as:

1. On which continent is Algeria found?
2. Has anyone ever visited Italy?
3. What language do citizens of Switzerland speak?
4. Do you think people from Iran live in France? Why or why not?
What is their nationality if they were born in Iran but live in France? What is their nationality if they were born in Iran but live in the United States?

During the input phase, the instructor takes time to gather some background knowledge from the students along with their attitudes about other countries and on the topic of worldwide immigration. This connects to real-world conditions that result in multiculturalism in societies and helps students to begin to examine identities and differing worldviews (Kramsch, 2004).

Students can then form small groups and continue to explore the website cooperatively. Depending on the language classroom, students can move to the page for a national team or teams that match the foreign language being studied. For the purpose of this example, a lesson for a beginning and/or intermediate French classroom will be described from this point forward. Learners in a French classroom will begin by studying the players portrayed on the website while completing specific tasks in their small group such as:

1. Look at the names of the players on the French team. Choose three players as a group and conduct a Google search, in French or English, to find out more about them. Were the chosen players born in France or elsewhere? Were they born in France to French parents or were they born in France to parents from other countries?
2. Do you think the players who were not born in France consider themselves to be French? Why or why not? Do you think French citizens and soccer fans consider them to be French? Does it matter?
3. What do you think the attitudes of the players born in France are toward players that were born or who lived a significant amount of time in other countries? How much do you think race plays a factor in these attitudes?

Learners should be given time and space to explore, consider, analyze, research, and discuss with their group before moving back to the large group in class. During class discussion, ideas should be shared freely and openly, but students must remain respectful and provide rationale for any judgments made. This begins to fulfill Byram's (1997) evaluative component of CCA and promotes the notion that judgments must be backed up with rationale.

Critical cultural awareness in the foreign language classroom

An effective homework activity in relation to this discussion involves asking the learners to read an article from *The Washington Post* (Gehring, 2014), which juxtaposes the diversity of the French national soccer team with anti-immigrant politics in France. For teachers of German, this article addresses the same situation in the German context. The teacher can make this activity simple enough for younger learners by simply asking them to report back the main beliefs the French hold toward immigrants in regular life compared to their feelings toward immigrants playing on the national soccer team. This will provide enough information for a discussion on the way that situation and perspective can alter ideologies. Furthermore, teachers may want to engage the students in a discussion about racism in target language and home societies. For more mature learners, a more in-depth discussion related to the article can take place.

Once the class has finished considering and discussing the homework, the teacher can return to the FIFA website and project the team members for the United States national soccer team. In relation to the article about immigration in France, the teacher can ask students to consider their beliefs toward immigrant players on their own national soccer team. Specifically, learners can look at identity and what it means to be an American by completing the following task:

Do a Google search of the American squad and investigate the origins of three U.S. players. How does this team compare to the French team? Do you think U.S. players who were born outside of the United States are considered American? Why or why not?

As Byram (1997) explains, a major goal of critical cultural awareness is to encourage learners to question their own histories and to become more engaged in their own society. By connecting the foreign language curriculum to the real-world situation of the learners, teachers devise lessons that have a greater impact on the learning that takes place in the classroom. This also encourages students to transfer the skills acquired during lessons addressing CCA to situations that may occur in their own society.

In order to bring the French language back into the lesson, the teacher can prepare opportunities for students to discuss the countries of origin and nationalities of the players from the French soccer team. This can be done by projecting a photo of a player onto the screen while asking students to describe his nationality and origins using some sentence frames and a key vocabulary word bank. The language guide may resemble the following:

1. *Il est (du, de la, de _____ (lieu)).* [He is (from) _____(place).]
2. *Il est _____(nationalité).* [He is _____ (nationality).]
3. *Il est né et il a grandi (au, en) _____ (lieu), mais sa mere est (du, de la, de l') _____(lieu) et son père est (du, de la, de l') _____ lieu).*
[He was born and grew up (in) _____ (place), but his mom is from) _____(place) and his dad is (from) _____ (place).]

The vocabulary word bank may resemble the following:

Places	Nationalities
<i>la France</i> [France]	<i>français</i> [French]
<i>la Martinique</i> [Martinique]	<i>martiniquais</i> [Martiniquais]
<i>l'Italie</i> [Italy]	<i>italien</i> [Italian]
<i>l'Algérie</i> [Algeria]	<i>algérien</i> [Algerian]
<i>l'Afrique (L'Afrique de l'ouest)</i> [Africa (West Africa)]	<i>africain</i> [African]
<i>la République du Congo</i> [Democratic Republic of Congo]	<i>congolais</i> [Congolese]
<i>la Guinée</i> [Guinea]	<i>guinéen</i> [Guinean]
<i>le Mali</i> [Mali]	<i>malien</i> [Malian]
<i>l'Angola</i> [Republic of Angola]	<i>angolan</i> [Angolan]
<i>le Sénégal</i> [Senegal]	<i>sénégalais</i> [Senegalese]
<i>l'Espagne</i>	<i>espagnol</i> [Spanish]

Next, the teacher can set aside time to focus on Patrice Evra (or another player currently on the national team) as a specific example from the French team of someone who has a complex background. Students will find that Evra was born in Senegal, but moved to Belgium as a young child. When he was three, his family settled in France. As students recall his story from the Internet, they may begin to question whether Evra considers himself Senegalese, Belgian, French, or Senegalese-French (or perhaps he considers himself Juventus, since team identity is often a large part of a soccer player's personal identity). Through this example, students can begin to see that assigning identity is a complicated social construct, and that peoples' experiences affect the way they self-identify. Additionally, the teacher can open up the conversation to consider how people with similar backgrounds often choose different ways to be identified, thus dispelling stereotypes and helping learners to view those that speak other languages as individuals. It is highly encouraged that the teacher devote some time during the following day's lesson to complete this same exercise while focusing on the American soccer team in order to demonstrate that nationality and identity are complex in the home culture as well. Students should also be given time to share their own nationalities and histories in French as a way to personalize the lesson and connect with the psychological dimension of CCA.

As a final formal assessment for this unit on the World Cup, students can create a drawing, poster, video, or online poster using glogster.com or mural.ly about their discoveries regarding immigration, identity, nationalities, and their specific beliefs in relation to the topic. The teacher can ask students to include comments related to beliefs about diverse players on national sports teams, the nature of identity, and the ever-changing demographics of local and global communities, thereby encouraging learners to think about global topics on a deeper level. This final component creates space for learners to reflect and document their ideological stance supported by information gathered during inquiry sessions in class.

Critical cultural awareness in the foreign language classroom

Intermediate to Advanced Language Learners: Breaking Down Stereotypes

One way to develop critical cultural awareness in the intermediate to advanced foreign language classroom is by directly addressing stereotypes through the examination of critical incidents, defined by Fielder, Mitchell, and Triandis (1971) as puzzling intercultural situations involving some type of conflict (Lebedko, 2013). Since the topic of appropriate behavior with peers at school in the target culture is often presented and discussed in foreign language classrooms, the following activity will describe how to include CCA in a similar unit for a Spanish classroom. In order to make the lesson more meaningful for students who may not have the opportunity to live abroad, the scenarios will concentrate on interactions that take place in the home culture.

Each critical incident will be written in Spanish so that the learners will have the opportunity to engage with vocabulary from the unit of study. Once students have been given an introduction to vocabulary and cultural information for appropriate behavior with peers in a Spanish-speaking culture, students are grouped into pairs and given the following critical incident card, which would be in the target language but has been translated into English for the purpose of this example:

Critical incident number one.

Tyler: Hey, I'm having a party tonight. You're from Mexico. Do you want to come and show my friends how to dance salsa?

Juan: I don't know salsa. I know *cumbia*, *quebradito*, and a little *brinquito*.

Tyler: I've never heard of those. I thought all Latinos knew how to salsa.

Juan: No, they don't, and not all Latinos can dance either.

In pairs, the students work together to figure out the linguistic and cultural meaning of the conversation using their textbooks, dictionaries, and online Spanish resources. This addresses the knowledge phase of intercultural communicative competence as students are given the opportunity to explore information pertinent to the subject matter being studied. Once students return to the whole group setting, the teacher will choose a pair group to role-play the incident in front of the class. Following the presentation, comprehension questions will be posed in Spanish in order to check for understanding of the content of the critical incident. Following the discussion, the teacher can show students representations of some of the dances mentioned in the role-play from YouTube in order to extend the discussion further. Students are then assigned a different partner, and are asked to repeat the same procedure as described above with the new critical incident.

Critical incident number two.

Andy: Hey Melissa, I need some help on my project for Spanish class. I'm supposed to interview someone who is not from the U.S. and speaks Spanish. Can I interview you?

Melissa: Sorry, but just because I speak Spanish doesn't mean I am from another country. I was born in the U.S. and I am a U.S. citizen.

Andy: Oh, but you speak Spanish so I thought you were from Mexico.

Melissa: I'm American, but my parents are from Colombia. You know, not all Spanish speakers in the U.S. are from Mexico, and not all Latinos speak Spanish.

After students repeat the same procedure from above with critical incident number two, they will take their seats as the teacher projects the questions listed below for students to ponder (adapted from Lebedko, 2013, p. 263). Learners will take some time to write down some possible personal responses for each question. Depending on the language level of the students, the teacher can include some sentence frames in order to scaffold the lesson so that students are able to compose their answers entirely in the target language. The questions and sentence frames may resemble the following:

1. *¿Cómo te sentirías si tú estuvieras en una situación similar?* [How would you feel if you were in a similar situation?]
Me sentiría _____. Me gusta/No me gusta cuando_____. [I would feel _____. I like/ I don't like it when _____.]
2. *¿Alguna vez has estereotipado a otros?* [Have you ever stereotyped others?]
Sí/No. Por ejemplo, una vez _____. [Yes/No. For example, one time _____.]
3. *¿Eras consciente de la repercusión de los estereotipos acerca de las personas?* [Were you aware of the impact of stereotypes on others?]
Sí/No. Yo (no) era consciente / era consciente pero no sabía que _____. [Yes/No. I was (not) aware / I was aware, but I didn't know that _____.]
4. *¿De qué eres consciente ahora después de reflexionar acerca de estas situaciones?* [What are you aware of now after reflecting on these situations?]
Ahora soy más consciente de que _____. [Now I'm more aware of _____.]
5. *¿Qué has aprendido acerca de los latinos con estos dos ejemplos?* [What did you learn about Latinos from these two examples?]
He aprendido/ Aprendí que _____. [I learned _____.]

Once the students have had some time to consider the reflection questions individually, they will move to small groups for discussion, followed by a whole-class conversation regarding stereotypes. This lesson provides space for learners to access higher-order thinking skills while encountering the social dimension of CCA as learners begin to reflect on the powerful effects of ideological beliefs in social interactions. There are several extension activities that teachers could choose to develop at the end of this lesson, depending on availability of resources, time, and language ability of the students. One option would be to continue the conversation during the next class session by having students examine videos about:

- how citizens of Spain view Mexicans
 (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mGxKKGdqdoSA>)
- stereotypes of Latin Americans in the media
 (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ca-S1ZxVrk>).
- typical stereotypes of Americans
 (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ESeItF9MWp8>)

Critical cultural awareness in the foreign language classroom

This would give teachers an opportunity to juxtapose stereotyping of foreign cultures to common stereotypes of Americans. This fulfills the notion of promoting self-awareness in the intercultural communicative competence paradigm, as learners are encouraged to reflect on their own culture alongside exploration of the target culture (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006).

In order to create a powerful culminating lesson for this study related to critical incidents, teachers could organize a question and answer session with a panel of guest speakers from different Spanish-speaking countries and regions. In order to prepare for the panel, learners can write questions in Spanish to ask during the session. The teacher plays the role of moderator, who would be in a position to guide the discussion and create connections to the information students have gathered related to stereotypes. The goal of this session would be to illuminate the diverse experiences, perspectives, and beliefs of Spanish speakers, thus reinforcing the fact that stereotypes often simplify culture and discount the multi-layered nature of cultural identity. In addition, this activity gives students the opportunity to interact with Spanish speakers, thereby positively impacting the learners' perceptions of Latinos, and further developing their critical cultural awareness. Finally, since most of this lesson would be conducted in the target language, students are able to advance both their aural and oral language skills by practicing Spanish vocabulary and grammar language control in an authentic setting.

Conclusion

If foreign language educators want to create powerful lessons that encourage students to think at deeper levels about the intercultural interactions that take place in their real lives, critical cultural awareness as an expansion of intercultural communicative competence must become an important component of the curricula. This paper has shown that the social and psychological dimensions of CCA guide teachers in addressing how the social context of language and culture affects interactions while identity influences perspectives and beliefs. As a result, students who become more aware of the nuances that underlie culture will become better prepared to engage appropriately and effectively in intercultural relationships.

If foreign language educators want to create powerful lessons that encourage students to think at deeper levels about the intercultural interactions that take place in their real lives, critical cultural awareness as an expansion of intercultural communicative competence must become an important component of the curricula.

The research-based activities presented in this paper depict ways to further language development as opportunities are provided for learners to engage the target culture at a deeper level while connecting classroom learning to situations that occur in the global community. It is recommended that practicing language teachers consider connecting critical cultural awareness to themes that are already being explored in the regular foreign language curricula. In making minor adjustments to lessons that already function successfully for language learners, teachers can make small strides today that will positively impact students as they

move toward becoming participating members of society. Although teachers may initially feel that including critical cultural awareness in the foreign language classroom “requires much effort and skill” (Bandura, 2013, p. 180) as students are encouraged to become aware of “perceptions of representatives of other cultures” (Bandura, 2013, p. 180), it is nonetheless vital to focus on the positive results of preparing students to enter into intercultural relationships with a greater awareness of the multifaceted nature of culture.

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Critical cultural awareness in the foreign language classroom

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