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Aleidine J. Moeller

*University of Nebraska-Lincoln*, amoeller2@unl.edu

Sarah R. Faltin Osborn

*University of Nebraska-Lincoln*, srfosborn@unomaha.edu

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# A Pragmatist Perspective on Building Intercultural Communicative Competency: From Theory to Classroom Practice

Aleidine J. Moeller and Sarah R. Faltin Osborn

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

## Abstract

This article analyzes and synthesizes the major theoretical frameworks for building intercultural communicative competency (ICC) within the domain of the foreign language classroom. Researchers used a pragmatist orientation as a venue for the translation of theoretical models into usable, accessible guidelines for classroom teachers in order to provide a deeper understanding and clarity of ICC and its implementation in the language classroom.

**Keywords:** best practices, cultural comparisons, high-leverage teaching practices, intercultural awareness and competence, teacher development

Language teaching should prepare learners as world citizens  
instead of global human capital.

—Byram, 2011, p. 29

## Introduction

The importance of intercultural competence has found considerable resonance in the last several decades (Witte & Harden, 2011). Globalization, migration, and immigration have contributed to its growing importance,

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Aleidine J. Moeller (PhD, University of Nebraska-Lincoln) is the Edith S. Greer Professor of Foreign Language Education, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Sarah R. Faltin Osborn is a doctoral candidate of Educational Studies, with an emphasis in Foreign Language Education, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

particularly as the necessity to communicate among and between varied cultures and languages has become pivotal for communities and societies to thrive both economically and socially. Such changes have great impact on local communities and their members, often requiring that “traditional perceptions of *self* and *other* must be redefined” (Chen & Starosta, 2008, available in Jackson, 2014, p. 312; emphasis in original). The impact is especially felt in education and business within the local communities where the power of language and communication shapes an individual’s identity, success, and opportunities. How can individuals from such diverse backgrounds and languages learn to live harmoniously in ways that build bridges of communication and understanding? What role does schooling play in creating such a community, and how can education prepare its citizens to become interculturally competent? What role can the foreign language (FL) teacher and overall language program play in preparing citizens who demonstrate intercultural communicative competence (ICC)?

This article analyzes and synthesizes the major theoretical frameworks for building ICC using the FL education domain to illustrate how ICC can be promoted within and beyond the language classroom. In the context of FL education, the construct of intercultural competence has evolved into intercultural communicative competence, which underscores successful interactions with others while communicating in the target language (TL). Thus, a speaker of an FL who is interculturally competent possesses both communicative competence in that language as well as particular skills, attitudes, values, and knowledge about a culture. Such a speaker thereby gains an insider’s view of another’s culture while also deepening the understanding of his or her own culture.

## **Review of Literature**

The World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages (NSFLEP, 2014) define culturally appropriate interaction as “knowing how, when, and why to say what to whom” (p. 11), underscoring that language and culture are inextricably linked. Gabrovec (2007) stated, “It is a truth universally acknowledged that all texts are culturally loaded, and are influenced by the social context ... [and] language and non-verbal communication are charged with the social and cultural values of a society” (p. 19). Similarly, language assumes a central role in establishing and maintaining social norms and in mediating cultural patterns (Witte, 2011). According to Kramsch (1998), members of a shared culture do not only use language to express cultural reality but also use language to create experiences: “When [language] is used in contexts of communication, it is bound up with culture in multiple and complex ways ... language embodies cultural reality” (p. 3). Therefore,

as students move toward increasingly higher levels of proficiency in a second language, the FL classroom offers a natural—and necessary— opportunity for the exploration of cultures and the development of students into successful global communicators.

In examining the relationship between language and culture, Byram (1997) made use of a traveler metaphor: The tourist travelers visit another country hoping that their “own way of living will be enriched but not fundamentally changed by the experience of seeing others” (p. 1), while the sojourner travelers view the contact and communication with others as an “opportunity to learn and be educated, acquiring the capacity to critique and improve their own and others’ conditions” (p. 2). The tourist may be able to transmit linguistic knowledge, but the sojourner communicates. According to Lázár (2007), “A good knowledge of grammar rules, a rich vocabulary, a few memorized speech acts and cultural facts will not sufficiently help non-native speakers of a foreign language to socialize, negotiate or make friends in the foreign language” (p. 5). Neither will these help native or nonnative speakers “to successfully communicate with people from other cultures” (p. 5). Thus, in the context of FL learning, the goal is that educators develop sojourners rather than tourists, that we help learners become more open to other cultures and languages, which in turn enables them to build more successful intercultural relationships.

### **Framework**

In order to create a classroom environment where these intercultural relationships can be built, it is essential for classroom teachers to have an understanding of the theoretical frameworks of ICC and the tools that enable them to teach ICC and nurture these relationships. In addition, in order to effectively use the tools and best practices developed for ICC instruction, educators must understand that the tools they use are, in fact, embedded within these frameworks. Thus, the research orientation of this article is practicality, and its purpose is to translate theoretical models into usable, accessible guidelines so that classroom teachers can develop a greater understanding of ICC, which in turn will allow them to successfully incorporate ICC into their classroom teaching. In creating these guidelines, a pragmatist lens—i.e., one that is “real world practice-oriented” (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2010, p. 40)—has been used. According to Biesta and Burbules (2003), “Although there is almost unanimous agreement about the idea that educational research should have a practical orientation, there are many different views about the way in which educational research should play its practical role” (pp. 1–2; emphasis in original). Pragmatism thus enables the researcher to focus “on the consequences of the research, on the primary importance of

the question asked rather than the methods” while remaining “oriented towards ‘what works’ and practice” (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2010, p. 41). Pragmatism, which traces its roots in Dewey (Biesta & Burbules, 2003), examines knowledge and its acquisition “within the framework of a philosophy of action ... especially relevant for those who approach questions about knowledge primarily from a practical angle” (p. 9; emphasis in original).

### **Importance of Teaching Culture**

Prior to introducing the varied definitions of ICC, these researchers believe it is necessary to understand the importance of including culture in the FL curriculum. Bennett (1997) cautioned, “To avoid becoming a fluent fool, we need to understand more completely the cultural dimension of language” (p. 16). Deardorff (2011) affirmed that “language alone is not sufficient but rather, a tool for building relationships” (p. 47). This again was underscored in the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning (NSFLEP, 2006) document: “Through the study of other languages, students gain a knowledge and understanding of the *cultures* that use the language; in fact, students cannot truly master the language until they have also mastered the cultural context in which language occurs” (p. 3; emphasis in original). However, because “beginning learners and non-native speakers who have not been socialized in the target culture make quite different associations, [and] construct different realities from those of socialized native speakers” (Kramersch, 2006, p. 107), the FL teacher has an important role: “For language teachers, taking the subjective aspects of language learning seriously means recognizing that the language they teach and the words used by native speakers may have quite a different ‘feel’ for non-native speakers than they do for monolingual speakers of the language” (Kramersch, 2006, p. 108). Thus, language teachers must act as a guide to learners as they move through the process of language and culture acquisition.

Noting that the human aspect of intercultural competence is often less emphasized compared to the economic benefits, Byram (2011) posited that the human aspect is equally important, as it “will provide a better understanding of human beings and their potential” (p. 20). Hiller (2010) noted that one must actively pursue ICC because “intercultural competence does not happen automatically when people from different nations meet under the same institutional context. Even when there aren’t obvious conflicts, that does not mean that there is successful interaction” (p. 150). Therefore, in the classroom, a teacher must create what Kramersch (1993) described as an intercultural space located “between cultures, from which the learner can negotiate differences and interact comfortably across cultures” (as in Newton,

Yates, Shearn, & Nowitzki, 2010, p. 19). Once this space is created and interactions take place, Byram (1997) explained that for purposes of assessment, successful interaction must be judged not only “in terms of the effective exchange of information” but also “in terms of establishing and maintenance of human relationships” (pp. 32–33). Thus, intercultural speakers must “interact, adjust, integrate, interpret and negotiate in different cultural contexts” (Lussier, 2007, p. 27).

### **Intercultural Competence and ICC**

According to Witte and Harden (2011), while ICC has gained attention in educational research, the concept itself is still relatively vague. In addition, with terms such as *communicative competence* and *intercultural competence* often referencing the same concept, the task of defining ICC becomes even more complex. However, the fundamental distinction between intercultural competence and ICC is that ICC requires communication and relationship building by using the TL.

Because of the lack of consensus regarding a general definition of ICC, Deardorff (2006) sought to establish a sufficient and agreed-upon definition using the Delphi method by consulting with top scholars in the intercultural field and administrators at institutions of higher education. Based on the data generated in the study, Deardorff found that the most cited definition was “the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (pp. 247–248). When looking solely at administrators, independent of scholars, Deardorff found that their top selection supported the work of Byram (1997), which did not emphasize the general concept of ICC but rather the skills that constitute it: “knowledge of others; knowledge of self; skills to interpret and relate; skills to discover and/or interact; valuing others’ values, beliefs, and behaviors; and relativizing one’s self. Linguistic competence plays a key role” (Deardorff, 2006, p. 247). Another important finding was the consensus of both scholars and administrators regarding the skills that are essential for developing ICC, such as “skills to analyze, interpret, and relate, as well as skills to listen and observe,” with cognitive skills such as “comparative thinking skills and cognitive flexibility” (p. 248) also emerging as necessities. Deardorff (2006) thus concluded that the consensus on these skills pointed to the “importance of process in acquiring intercultural competence” (p. 248). More recently, after reviewing multiple models of intercultural competence, Jackson (2014) succinctly noted that intercultural competence involves moving from a monocultural perspective to an intercultural mindset.

## Frameworks of ICC

In reviewing the numerous theoretical models and frameworks of ICC, three were found to be of particular practical importance for classroom teachers. In this section, the work of Byram (1997), Deardorff (2006), and Borghetti (2011) is considered in order to explain the components of ICC. Then we draw from each theory in order to derive a more practical understanding of the concept.

### *Byram's Model for ICC*

Byram (1997) developed one of the first comprehensive models of ICC, the goal of which is the creation and maintaining of relationships. His model is based on three general factors: knowledge, attitudes, and skills. There are two categories of knowledge within his model. The first is based on knowledge about one's own country and social groups within it, and the other is based on knowledge of the interlocutor's country. Knowledge of one's country and its social groups is developed through experience. Byram described how knowledge of the interlocutor's country is "relational" in that it is understood in terms of how it is described in one's own country. The second kind of knowledge is one that must be developed more intentionally, which is "knowledge of the *processes* of interaction at individual and societal levels" (p. 36; emphasis in original). Byram described the basis for successful interaction as an individual's ability to understand how social identities are acquired, how they impact the perception of in-group members, and how social identities impact the perception of members of other groups, by both other in-group members and the self.

The attitudes, the second factor in Byram's model, considered important in ICC are those "towards other people perceived as different in respect of the cultural meanings, beliefs and behaviours they exhibit" (p. 34), while Byram exhorted educators to remember that these attitudes implicitly impact interactions with others. Byram began by stating that a positive attitude is in no way sufficient as a starting point toward successful interactions. Instead, attitudes such as "curiosity and openness, of readiness to suspend disbelief and judgments with respect to others' meanings, beliefs and behaviours,... willingness to suspend belief in one's own meanings and behaviours, and to analyse them from the viewpoint of the others with whom one is engaging" (p. 34) are key in developing ICC.

The final factor in Byram's model is skills, which Byram divided into two distinct categories: skills of interpreting and relating and skills of discovery and interaction. Skills of interpreting and relating are based upon existing knowledge, which Byram contended differ from skills of discovery and interacting in that "it need not involve interaction with an interlocutor, but

may be confined to work on documents” (p. 37). This enables the individual to work at his or her own pace, as there are no requirements for timely response as is required in interaction with others. The skill of discovery “comes into play where the individual has no, or only a partial existing knowledge framework” (pp. 37–38) and thus requires building new knowledge. Discovery may come about from documents, as skills of interpreting and relating do, but it may also arise in interaction with others. In interaction, Byram stated that individuals must not only carefully balance their existing knowledge and their diverse identities but also manage any challenges that arise in communicating with others.

### *Deardorff's Pyramid Model of Intercultural Competence*

Deardorff's (2006) pyramid model of intercultural competence arose out of her work to develop an agreed-upon definition of intercultural competence by scholars in the field. In addition to a definition, another of her resulting products was a visual representation of intercultural competence, a model that stresses the process orientation of intercultural competence and emphasizes that learners enter the framework from various levels, depending on their existing levels of intercultural competence. Within this model, the more components acquired, such as knowledge or attitudes, the higher the probability for interculturally competent external outcomes. In this model, the most basic and fundamental aspect of intercultural competence is attitude, which Deardorff defined as “openness, respect (valuing all cultures), and curiosity and discovery (tolerating ambiguity)” (p. 255). Next, learners move to the development of two interacting components—knowledge and comprehension—as well as skills. In terms of knowledge and comprehension, learners develop cultural self-awareness, an understanding and knowledge of culture, and sociolinguistic awareness, and the skills that enable learners to “[acquire] and [process] knowledge about other cultures as well as one's own” (p. 255).

Deardorff's model also emphasizes outcomes in the process of intercultural competence acquisition. First, learners have desired internal outcomes, which are composed of aspects such as adaptability, flexibility, an ethnocentric view, and empathy. The model and acquisition of intercultural competence culminates with the desired external outcome that involves “behaving and communicating appropriately and effectively in intercultural situations” (Deardorff, 2004, p. 196, available in Deardorff, 2006, p. 255). While the pyramid design may lend itself to interpretation as a process that begins at the most broad, basic level and ends at the desired external outcome, Deardorff stressed that this model is not a step-by-step process. She presented her theoretical model as a cyclical process model that “depicts the complexity of acquiring intercultural competence in outlining more of the movement and process orientation that occurs between the various elements” (p. 257).



*Borghetti's Methodological Model of Intercultural Competence*

Borghetti (2011) proposed a three-phase process for teaching intercultural competence to language learners. The model arose out of concerns for educators themselves, who “are supposed to propose stated educational goals and even didactic objectives without having access to equally clear methodological directions” (p. 141). While Borghetti proposed a methodological model rather than a framework for understanding ICC, inherent within the proposed methods are the components of ICC that Borghetti held as essential: “only those frameworks that relate to the competence as an integral whole of cognitive, affective, and behavioural factors that influence the understanding of and interaction with diversity in a broad sense, and which can be developed through education and/or experience” (p. 143).

Borghetti recommended beginning with cognitive processes because they enable the teacher to develop a sense of community and trust that is necessary before engaging learners in tasks that are more emotional, primarily because “working with students’ emotions is quite possibly the most delicate task for teachers” (p. 150). Then, the model emphasizes the development of affective processes, which Borghetti called “a key moment, a turning point, in the educational process, as it marks the beginning of stimulation of various forms of emotional intelligence” (p. 150). Borghetti explained that the difference between knowledge building and understanding lies in the fact “that the latter allows, through empathy and self-awareness, [one] to go beyond an effective, appropriate communication and reach a deeper comprehension of unfamiliar people, habits, and situations which may, in turn, have consequences for one’s own identity construction processes” (p. 151).

The final two components of Borghetti’s model are skills and awareness, which includes cultural awareness, intercultural awareness, and self-awareness. Borghetti emphasized that cultural and intercultural awareness are closely tied to one another:

since one can be aware that culture exists and influences values, attitudes, and behaviour (cultural awareness) only after one has experienced difference and has realised, indirectly, that all cultures influence every aspect of every aspect of human life in an equivalent, if different, manner (intercultural awareness). (p. 151)

Borghetti described the final component, skills, as the “bridge connecting competence to performance” (p. 152), thus emphasizing the ability to link to the behavioral and situational dimensions. Self-awareness, however, is based on metacognition and the recognition of personal limits, preferences, and abilities.

## Developing a Practical Understanding of ICC

These three theoretical models of ICC shed light on this complex phenomenon and illustrate the extent to which it is difficult to conceptualize. It is, therefore, important to understand the relationship among these models. Byram's model (1997) emphasizes three general areas: knowledge, attitudes, and skills, while Deardorff's (2006) model expands this conception to include internal and external outcomes, which reiterates the importance of not only the learner but also of how intercultural competence impacts the learner's beliefs and actions. In Borghetti's (2011) methodological model, the classroom as well as the learnability and teachability of ICC become priorities: Borghetti contended that the best starting point for intercultural competence instruction involves cognitive processes, followed by affective processes after the classroom community has been established. Finally, Borghetti's model includes awareness, which is "both the result of and a resource towards" furthering results from cognitive and affective instruction (p. 150). Unlike Byram's model, skills are not held as a unique component in Borghetti's model but are instead developed throughout the teaching model across the teaching and learning of cognitive and affective processes and awareness.

While each of these models present unique features, the many commonalities and general structure of ICC can still be summarized as the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that lead an individual to both think and act in an interculturally competent manner while using the TL.

### *Knowledge*

These theoretical frameworks affirm that knowledge, which overlaps significantly with Borghetti's (2011) cognitive processes, is a vital component of developing ICC. Both Byram (1997) and Borghetti suggested that what this requires is a shift from information to knowledge acquisition. Thus, this knowledge should not be limited to cultural facts; instead, it should include knowledge of the cultural biases that an individual brings into an exchange that are strongly influenced by one's experiences and surroundings.

### *Attitudes*

While all three theoretical frameworks emphasize attitudes, Deardorff (2006) made an important distinction that the most basic level of ICC learning begins with requisite attitudes, including respect, openness, and curiosity and discovery. Both Byram (1997) and Deardorff classified attitudes as the fundamental starting point; however, it is important to remember that

nurturing and maintaining these attitudes is vital throughout the acquisition and development of ICC. As such, Deardorff's emphasis on desired internal outcomes aligned closely with Borghetti's (2011) affective processes, such as empathy, flexibility, and adaptability. As previously mentioned, Borghetti stressed that these affective processes should become part of a teaching module on ICC only after a classroom community has been developed because the attitudes that are intentionally addressed in a course may be highly emotional for students, particularly when students' own beliefs may be called into question in order to develop the necessary attitudes that allow for effective intercultural communication and relationships.

### *Awareness*

Before continuing on to the third component of the general ICC model (skills), it is important to attend to Borghetti's (2011) inclusion of awareness as a vital component of ICC. Borghetti's conceptualization of awareness interacts differently with knowledge and attitudes. Cultural and intercultural awareness impact knowledge, most especially when a learner begins to understand how culture not only exists but also influences every aspect of human life, which occurs "only after one has experienced difference" (p. 151). Self-awareness, an important third component of awareness, focuses on how an individual reasons, acts, and recognizes his or her own personal limits. According to Borghetti, this level of self-awareness impacts attitudes because the object of cognition is how individuals reason, act, and recognize their own personal limits (p. 151).

### *Skills*

Byram (1997), Deardorff (2006), and Borghetti (2011) each emphasized the need for the development and practice of specific skills that assist individuals in building their own intercultural competence. However, only Byram made a distinction between two different skill sets, distinguishing between the skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*) and the skills of discovering and/or interacting (*savoir apprendre/faire*). In Deardorff's model, the skills included are those required for "acquiring and processing knowledge about other cultures as well as one's own culture" (p. 255). While Borghetti's model offers some examples of skills in ICC, such as self-analysis and collaboration, skill types are not categorized. Regardless of what skills are suggested in the model, a classroom teacher should help students develop varied types of skills that allow them to critically analyze their own culture, become open to another culture, and maintain effective relationships, especially those skills that allow learners to continue to develop their own competence outside of the classroom and beyond their formal education.

## Implementing ICC in the Classroom

Regardless of the components of the models of ICC, all of these theoretical frameworks underscore that a process orientation is essential for the teaching and learning of ICC. Like students' progress toward more nativelike proficiency in the language itself, students' development of ICC does not have a clear starting point and end point that stay constant across learners; instead, each learner brings a unique set of skills, knowledge, and attitudes that impact his or her point of entry as well as growth trajectory. This thus has tremendous implications for classroom teaching and assessment: "Since all students enter the classroom with differing viewpoints and worldviews, it becomes almost impossible to simply expect students to grow interculturally at the same rate" (Moeller & Nugent, 2014, p. 1).

In order to continue to work toward a more practical understanding of ICC, one must acknowledge the challenges that arise with formal instruction of ICC in the FL classroom. In order to combat these challenges and to offer examples that allow for a more concrete understanding of ICC, specific examples of classroom activities are offered here that can be integrated into the language classroom. A description of how these activities are embedded in theory is provided in order to explain how the activities have been created to promote effective instruction of ICC.

There are some limitations that classroom-based learning places on the acquisition of ICC, especially in terms of the limited number of minutes that students spend in the FL classroom. Witte (2011) contended that "learning to view and interpret not only events and figurations, but also foundational constructs of self, other and world through the lenses of the intercultural space can hardly be achieved in the ordinary context of isolated three or four 40-minute sequences per week" (p. 97). In addition, Lange (2003) found that, while teachers often acknowledge the importance of developing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for ICC, they may not feel sufficiently prepared to "teach the *whole of the culture*" (p. 346; emphasis added), choosing instead to accentuate linguistic instruction and believing that cultural learning will take place naturally. Another challenge present in incorporating ICC into the foreign language classroom is that, according to Jackson (2014), research shows that there is a positive relationship between intercultural competence and higher levels of TL proficiency.

However, Byram (1997) noted that the classroom has clear advantages for accomplishing the above task in three ways. First, "it provides the space for systematic and structured presentation of knowledge in prolongation of the better traditions of language teaching" (p. 65). Second, it allows for the acquisition of the skills needed for ICC under the guidance of a professional—the educator. Finally, the classroom offers space for reflection and guided discussion of the skills, knowledge, and experience gleaned outside of the classroom walls.

According to Lázár (2007), within the last two decades, the FL education domain has stressed as its primary aim “to enable learners to communicate with people coming from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds in a multicultural world,” thus enabling students to “deal effectively and appropriately with cultural diversity” (p. 5). This in turn allows for the acquisition of higher levels of ICC. In the classroom, intercultural language teaching and learning assists learners with the development of “an understanding of their own language(s) and culture(s) in relation to the additional language and culture,” which takes place through a “dialogue that allows for reaching a common ground for negotiation to take place, and where variable points of view are recognized, mediated, and accepted” (Newton et al., 2010, p. 12).

One approach for effective integration of ICC into the classroom is through alignment of the language and culture curriculum to the World-Readiness Standards (NSFLEP, 2014). The five Cs goal areas of Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities offer a framework that can be beneficial in conceptualizing how to bring ICC into the classroom. Language learners practice interpersonal communication through negotiation of meaning and interaction with native speakers of the second language/culture or use a presentational mode of communication to share what they have learned after they have explored different cultures, which can be designed to involve the Cultures standard. A key-pal experience would allow students to develop and use each of the five Cs, as they learn about the foreign culture through written or spoken exchanges with members of the other culture. These exchanges would also promote cultural comparisons as students present and compare their own experiences to those of their classmates. By using the five standards as a framework for designing ICC learning tasks, language educators provide language learners with optimal opportunities for quality language and culture learning experiences, elements that are critical for the development of ICC.

Because ICC must be addressed and developed (Witte, 2011), it is important for teachers to have access to resources and exemplars that can be adapted for use in their own classrooms. However, it is also necessary that the learning tasks be firmly grounded in the theoretical frameworks of ICC. Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) expressed that there are “dialogic relationships between theory and practice, between teaching and learning, and between teacher and student” (p. 7). Thus, it makes sense to provide classroom activities that translate theory into practice and that represent the theoretical models presented above.

### **Example One: Student as Active Constructor of Knowledge**

In the teaching and learning of ICC, access to authentic texts—texts written by members of a culture for members of that culture—is of great importance because they provide evidence of the culture in its truest and most lively form. It is through these resources that learners have the opportunity to come into contact with and thus to analyze other cultures. Inauthentic resources developed for the language learner often prioritize language over culture, while more authentic “material developed by speakers of a language for communication with speakers is heavily contexted and privileges processes of meaning-making over language use for its own sake” (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013, p. 94). Using authentic materials also offers learners opportunities for interacting with cultural products, thereby connecting products and perspectives, as suggested in the Cultures World Readiness Standard (NSFLEP, 2014). Peterson and Coltrane (2003) suggested that positioning learners as anthropologists allows them to explore and understand another culture in relation to their own culture, whereby “students achieve a level of empathy, appreciating that the way people do things in their culture has its own coherence” (p. 1).

In one possible classroom activity, using a jigsaw learning approach, language learners are divided into home groups consisting of four individuals, each of whom selects one car advertisement they would like to review (e.g., Mercedes, Volkswagen, Porsche, BMW).<sup>1</sup> The participants move to their expert groups to discuss their chosen advertisement in detail, analyzing the images, message, vocabulary, and cultural values that are projected in the ads. Learners are asked to describe the features of the ad, determine the purpose of the ad, describe how this message is communicated, and notice/examine the language used. Upon returning to their home groups, the four experts/individuals in each group share their findings and compare results. A final visual is created that synthesizes the findings, and results are shared in a presentation to the whole class. The final task consists of providing each home group with a U.S. car ad (e.g., Ford, Cadillac, Hummer, Chrysler) and having members of the home group examine and discuss the images, message, and vocabulary of the advertisement. Each home group creates a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting the car ads of the native and foreign culture, making inferences supported by the language and images of the ad.

Such an activity exemplifies a process of intercultural learning described by Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) that sequences noticing, comparing, reflecting, and interacting. In order to integrate active use of the second language, students could meet with their classmates who reviewed the same ad. The oral production and interaction in these small groups would allow students

to practice using the TL in preparation for the classroom discussion. While it may seem challenging for students to develop their intercultural competence in the second language, these activities allow students time to reflect privately, to collaborate with one another, and to consult with the teacher, all of which allow for scaffolding for the second language large group discussion.

A brief summative classroom discussion follows during which learners determine if the ads reflect their beliefs about their own culture. For example, learners who feel that the native culture ad does not represent their own values and beliefs about their own culture, or that the foreign culture ad can be interpreted in multiple ways, are thereby provided an intercultural third space (Kramsch, 1993) where students enter, negotiate meaning, and take part in intercultural interactions. Depending on the proficiency level of the course, this discussion could be held in the first or second language, and because students have already used the second language throughout, first language learners would now be able to offer their final reflections in their native language while maintaining the best practices assumption that 90% of the class should be conducted in the TL and the remaining 10% in the native language. According to Kern (2008), many FL teachers may believe that analyzing text is only realistic at the advanced level, but it is possible in classrooms where students are asked to develop and practice the skills necessary to complete these analyses. A final task consists of the creation of an ad for a similar product with the intent to appeal to individuals from both cultures based on their findings from the document analysis.

This activity addresses one of the major challenges that educators face in teaching culture and interculturality: namely, a concern that teacher knowledge of the target culture is insufficient (Lange, 2003). The task of exploring cultural artifacts places the authentic texts as the experts and the learners in the position of inquirers, where the teacher is not the sole provider of cultural expertise. According to Kramsch (1998), a text can be viewed as “the product of an identifiable authorial intention, and its relation to context of culture as fixed and stable” (p. 57). By explicating and deconstructing the ads, language learners can work to unveil the intended meaning and explore what is evoked by the text (Kramsch, 1998). The tasks also promote the acquisition of knowledge, attitudes, and skills. In this activity, learners are asked to explore ads as reflections of culture. By being involved in the analysis and interpretation of texts and products, learners build knowledge about other cultures while also realizing the diversity within their own culture. Moeller and Nugent (2014) offered similar intercultural classroom lessons detailed with accompanying intercultural assessments for use in the FL classroom.

### **Example Two: Student as Cultural Anthropologist**

Because attitudes are considered the fundamental starting point for ICC (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006, 2011), it is important to allow students to challenge and develop their own attitudes and assumptions and to approach the target culture in an open, nonjudgmental way. The OSEE tool, developed by Deardorff and Deardorff (2000), is designed for these purposes. It is composed of four components:

1. O: Observe what is happening.
2. S: State objectively what is happening.
3. E: Explore different explanations for what is happening.
4. E: Evaluate which explanation is the most likely one.

To use this tool in the classroom, the teacher introduces a video showing a variety of ways in which a task or action may take place within the target culture: e.g., a variety of greeting scenarios or restaurant etiquette. The initial viewing of the video would not contain sound in order to focus the learners' attention on and recording of what they see. They would thus observe, not just view, the interactions, noting how individuals greet each other—e.g., shaking hands, waving hello, hugging, congenial back-slapping, or kissing one another on the cheek—or, in the case of the second example, how they are seated at the table, if they use utensils for eating, if plates are shared or distributed individually. The learners would then describe what they had seen by stating objectively what is happening, working to maintain freedom from judgment (Deardorff, 2011). They would then hypothesize why and in which contexts the various greetings might—or might not—take place. In the first example, learners may hypothesize that friends kiss one another on the cheek when seeing one another, or that only family members do this. In the second example, learners may note that individuals do not use utensils to eat their meal but rather use one of their hands. In the final stage, in which learners evaluate which explanation is the most likely one, the teacher plays the video again with sound and has students listen for verbal cues that help establish or disprove their explanations. This activity allows language learners to engage in a sociolinguistic discussion that enables them to explore the questions such as: When do individuals of the second language/culture use these greetings or customs of dining? Why? With whom? How do we accomplish the same tasks or interactions in our native culture, with whom, and when?

In this final stage—evaluating the most likely explanation—Deardorff (2011) encouraged learners to conduct additional research, whether through conversations with others or by using other forms of inquiry, in order to



inform, deepen, and evaluate their explanations for what they had seen. Learners could search the Web for videos/films made by native speakers, read blog posts that explore greetings in that country, or seek out others who may have had experiences with native speakers from the target culture. Through their own cultural research, learners could interact with native speakers using written or oral language and expand upon the comparison of their own culture practices to those of the target culture, which would allow them to continue to develop diverse goal ideas from the World-Readiness Standards (NSFLEP, 2014).

### **Principles for Developing ICC Learning Tasks**

While it is clear that ICC is a complex phenomenon, it can and should be a key component of the FL classroom. As shown in the above examples, there are several key features that will assist teachers in designing and integrating tasks that can guide students' development in this critical domain. First, ICC requires a process approach. Because of its complexity, there is not a clear starting point or end point in the process (Deardorff, 2006). One does not become perfectly interculturally competent, as culture is always changing and communication is highly contextual. Thus, adopting a process orientation, and then utilizing assessment techniques that correspond with this approach, demonstrates to students that their learning and their personal growth are important, as emphasized in Byram's (1997) and Deardorff's (2006) frameworks of ICC, which underscored that students enter into ICC learning with their own experiences and ideas, often at distinct starting points as compared to their peers. The development of ICC very much parallels what Selinker (1972) described as interlanguage, or the language system that each learner constructs at any given point in language development. Interlanguage and intercultural competency reflect an interim competence that contains elements from both the native language and native culture.

It is vital that authentic materials be used when creating ICC tasks. If language teachers use inauthentic, simulated texts, then learners are denied the opportunity to interact with the target culture. Only through authentic texts do language learners have access to second language discourse created by native speakers for native speakers. Oral discourse and written texts are cultural in nature and cannot truly be replicated for ICC learning. There are a variety of language input options such as podcasts, videos, films, and images that can serve as excellent authentic language resources for the language classroom.

In addition, the learner should play an active role and the teacher should serve as the facilitator and developer of curriculum. While the teacher selects the authentic texts and visuals and determines the tasks that students

encounter, it is the students who are actively engaged in acquiring the information from the texts during the learning task. In this way, even teachers who are fearful that they do not know and understand the *whole* of the target culture (Lussier, 2007) are able to assist their students in developing deep cultural knowledge, attitudes, and skills. Teachers are not expected to be target culture experts but rather to know how to structure the cultural discovery learning process for their students. Thus, as curriculum developers, teachers must find authentic instructional materials that allow their students to make these discoveries.

Furthermore, the teacher must also work to carefully build both classroom community and a classroom environment where the intercultural third space (Kramsch, 1993) is a place for students to enter, negotiate meaning, and take part in intercultural interactions. Kramsch (2009) extended the concept of the intercultural third space into symbolic competence, which moves from abstract to concrete and focuses on “the particularity of day-to-day language practices, in, through, and across various languages” (p. 201). In building a community where negotiation and interaction are valued, a teacher must remember what Borghetti (2011) stressed: that building cultural knowledge before working to build or adapt cultural attitudes offers a teacher and language learners time to develop a relationship that lends itself to the openness required to developing ICC.

In ICC learning, students must also develop a sense of self, where they gain awareness about their own culture before embarking on discovering a second culture. Before being able to challenge their own beliefs and begin to understand and accept those of individuals from another culture, students must not only know what they believe but why they believe it. They must undergo an exploration of how they developed their own understanding of the world. By questioning their own belief system, and even comparing it to those who share their home culture, they will become more prepared for exploring another culture and interacting with people from that culture.

Finally, while ICC can be complex in both its definition and its implementation, there are tremendous benefits that make it a necessary component of FL teaching and learning. ICC promotes a meta-level understanding of oneself and one’s own culture while also facilitating successful communication and understanding of other cultures. It also enables students to develop and practice critical thinking skills as they work to learn and understand the relationship amongst languages and cultures, and “if we want them to develop critical thinking skills, we can’t restrict their school experience to drill and practice or to teaching that rewards rote memorization to the exclusion of creativity and intellectual risk taking” (Scheibe & Rogow, 2012, p. 52). Thus, intercultural learning tasks, such as those described above, that promote learner inquiry can promote critical thinking in the FL classroom.

## Conclusion

Linguistic ability alone does not guarantee effective communication (Fox, 2010; Lázár, 2007; Moloney & Harbon, 2010; Sercu, 2010); thus, the language classroom, where both language and culture are intimately connected, becomes a practical and meaningful place to foster cultural exploration and promote systematic inquiry into and development of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are necessary for the acquisition of ICC.

One issue that has emerged in the literature and one deserving of further investigation is that of the measurement and assessment of ICC (Lussier, 2007). Much as with language acquisition, individuals advance and regress at their own rate while acquiring intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006). Scholars have therefore suggested alternative assessment approaches (Fox, 2010; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; Schulz, 2007) that are process oriented as a venue for implementing effective cultural assessments into the FL curriculum (e.g., portfolio assessments, peer review, and self-assessment checklists). However, this topic is beyond the scope of this article and would benefit from a deeper and independent investigation.

As Byram's (1997) metaphor of the tourist and sojourner note, a tourist sees another culture through his or her own lens, interpreting solely based on limited knowledge and understanding through a monolingual/ cultural lens rather than through oral interaction that promotes an exchange of opinion, experiences, and knowledge. The tourist is restricted to the role of observer, interpreting through his or her own—and only—lens. ICC learning allows students to move beyond the limits of the self and native culture tourist perspectives to that of the sojourner, who can communicate and interact with native speakers. Thus, instead of leaving an interaction with a printed text, a video clip, or a conversation with a native speaker with reinforced perspectives of what the culture was or should have been, the sojourner interacts with the culture in order to make sense of what he or she is seeing.

According to the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning (NSF-LEP, 2006), "Even if students never speak the language after leaving school, they will for a lifetime retain the cross-cultural skills and knowledge, the insight, and the access to a world beyond traditional borders" (p. 31). Byram (1997) also found that "this means that the dichotomy of the 'classroom' and 'real world' is a false one" (p. 65). Meaningful instruction and assessment of ICC begins in the classroom but extends well into the diverse realms of students' social, academic, and professional worlds, and it enables students to develop into sojourners, who see the world not only for what they think it should be, but also as what it really is or could be.

## Note

1. The home group is the original group to which students are assigned. The expert group contains the students who share the car ads. Once students have met to discuss their ad in the expert groups, they return to their home groups to share each of their unique ads. In these expert groups, students examine the TL ad.

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