

Intercultural Communication Education and Foreign Language Education: Shared Precedents, Procedures, and Prospects*

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Introduction

Intercultural Communication, although a field in its own right, has always drawn from other disciplines such as interpersonal communication, cultural anthropology, and social psychology for an understanding of culture and for suggestions on how to teach it (Dodd, 1987). This paper will introduce Intercultural Communication Educators (ICEs) to another discipline which has an important interest in teaching culture: foreign language education. The first section will demonstrate that Foreign Language Educators (FLEs) have a rich tradition of reflection about the place of culture in the language curriculum. The next section will enumerate the techniques which FLEs have used to teach culture, including some recent efforts to use audiovisual and computer technology. These first two portions will reveal that ICEs and FLEs unwittingly have much in common as regards understanding and teaching culture. The paper will conclude with a list of FLEs' current foci of interest about aspects of culture which may provide a basis for conscious cooperation with ICEs.

Historical sketch

According to Kelly (1969), the teaching of culture has always been an "unstated aim" of foreign language teaching (378). It appears that language educators have always taken for granted that in the course of teaching a foreign language, that language's culture must be treated. This follows logically from the observation that language is at once a vehicle, product, and producer of culture (Galisson, 1984). However, Kelly notes that certain schools of language teaching have given overt attention to culture. He singles out the Direct Methodists of the nineteenth century in

this regard. He also notes the importance given to culture in the US military's language programs during the Second World War.

The 1950s saw an amplification of the role of culture in language teaching. The Modern Language Association convened an interdisciplinary seminar in the summer of 1953 at the University of Michigan to examine the relationship between language and culture. This group published a report in the December, 1953 issue of the Association's Publications (volume 68, pages 1196-1218). This report did much, as evidenced by many citations (e.g. Nostrand, 1956; Brooks, 1968; Rivers, 1968) to bring culture into the consciousness of foreign language teaching professionals. The dominant attitude of the day was expressed by the eminent Charles Fries:

To deal with the culture and life of a people is *not just an adjunct* of a practical language course, something alien and apart from its main purpose, to be added or not as time and convenience may allow, but an *essential feature of every stage of language learning*. (Fries, 1955, p. 14)

In the 1960s and 70s many conferences, workshops, and publications were devoted to the issue. Notable among these were the Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (1960, 1972, and 1976), numerous publications by Howard Lee Nostrand and his *Emergent Model of a SocioCultural System* (1978), Lado's (1964) and Rivers' (1968) chapters on culture in their respective methodology textbooks, full-length treatments such as Seelye's (1974), Lafayette's (1975 & 1978), and the collection edited by Luce and Smith (1979). This last volume was published by Newbury House, which specializes in foreign language pedagogy. However, the contributors were from a wide variety of disciplines. A major theme of the book was "cross-cultural literacy" and the editors noted that diverse groups such as the Joint National Committee for Languages, the Society for Intercultural Education, Training and Research, and the International Communication Association and others were engaged in "professional dialogue" on the topic (p. 8).

In the 1970s one of the best discussions of the role of culture in language teaching was provided by Nelson Brooks (1975), who certainly ranks as one of the authorities in the field. One of Brooks' major contributions was to clarify just what is meant by the word culture. He differentiated between "culture as *everything* in human life, and culture as the *best* of everything in human life" (p. 20). Brooks calls the first sense Culture BBV: belief, behavior, and values. The second sense is Culture MLA: Music, Letters, and Arts. This distinction is sometimes referred to as culture and Culture, or more commonly, as culture and civilization. The intercultural educator who chooses to read what language educators have written about culture will soon note that these two notions of culture are not always kept discrete. This is certainly the case among French writers (Mounin, 1984).

The decade of 1980s was a period of much interest in culture. It contained continuations of earlier efforts, such as Seelye's updating of his work in 1984 and the

anthology edited by Valdes (1986). The latter began with an excerpt on language and thought from the 1911 *Handbook of American Indian Languages* by Franz Boas and grouped writings from the 50s, 60s, and 70s with recent articles. The second edition of Luce and Smith's *Toward internationalism: Readings in cross-cultural communication* appeared in 1986 and The Northeast Conference maintained its tradition of periodically focusing on culture in its 1988 meeting (Singerman, 1988). Brown accorded much importance to culture, specifically culture shock and acculturation, in his methodology textbook (1980 & 1987).

Gail Robinson's *Crosscultural Understanding* (1985) merits special attention. She sought to extend what she termed the "behaviorist and functionalist" approach to culture, taken by the likes of Nostrand and Seelye, with a "cognitive and symbolic" (pp. 8-12) perspective. She felt that to focus only on observable behaviors and the purported functions of those behaviors was inadequate. She said consideration must be given to what is "inside" the minds of the members of a culture. This is the notion of culture as world view; ethnography is the method she recommends for studying it. Robinson also drew from symbolic anthropology: "culture ... is a dynamic system -- an ongoing, dialectic process, giving rise to symbols which may be viewed historically" (p. 11). These symbols are conceptualizations and communications of meaning. Finally, Robinson raised to the fore of culture teaching a concern for its sociopolitical implications: she listed "justice and kindness" (p. 1) as goals of work. The societal and global benefits of cross-cultural understanding were appreciated by the participants in the MLA's 1953 seminar and by later writers, but many FLEs appear to have been involved in culture teaching primarily out of a motivation to do full justice to the culture's language. Robinson's social priority is shared by some who have already written about culture in the current decade (Ramirez & Hall, 1990).

In 1987 a major contribution to the FLE tradition of reflection on culture was made by Louise Damen in her 400 page *Culture learning: The fifth dimension in the language classroom*. She provided the FLE community with a readable and applicable survey of the fields of linguistics, anthropology, and sociology, psychology, and communication. This was not the original contribution of her book: many FLEs have training in these fields (especially linguistics and anthropology), and are thus aware of what can be garnered from them. It is Damen's inclusion of intercultural communication which is of special note.

Damen sketched the history of intercultural communication. She highlighted the World War II effort, the publication of Edward T. Hall's *The Silent Language* in 1959, and the founding of the Peace Corps. She stressed its eclecticism. In fact, she viewed it as a "filter" for the five disciplines listed above:

The addition of the intercultural filter through which theoretical concepts and theories from a variety of disciplines and professional practice pass brings added dimension to both theory and practice. (p. 28)

Damen specifically maintained that FLEs can benefit in their practice by using the filter of intercultural communication as they draw from other fields. She included specific suggestions for the classroom implementation of the insights gleaned. She also maintained that "there is a need for professionals in the field of intercultural communication to understand the particular circumstances, problems, and variables at work in the multicultural language classroom" (p. xvi). Damen has thus called for dialogue, and by her book has prepared her FLE colleagues for it; this article, on a much more modest scale, is attempting to similarly prepare the ICE community.

The preceding outline introduces ICEs to the main currents of thought about culture and the principle shapers of that thought within the FLE community. Another summary of this history can be found in Morain (1983). The ways in which FLEs put their thoughts into practice will now be exhibited.

How Foreign Language Educators Teach Culture

Foreign language educators handle the teaching of culture in three ways: through culture and civilization courses, through textbooks, and through classroom activities. The first and second of these ways will be dealt with only briefly because, for reasons which will be given, there is less opportunity for transfer to the inter-cultural class.

At the university level, every foreign language department offers courses which have the words "culture, civilization, or society" in their titles. These courses focus on a specific language group, for example, French, German, or Spanish, and stress the divergences from American culture. For this reason the syllabi from such courses are probably of little benefit to intercultural educators who must treat many cultures at a time. Textbooks are likewise discounted because of their bidirectional rather than multidirectional nature. However, those books, such as *Poco a poco* (published by Heinle & Heinle), which provide cultural information in sidebars and in English, can perhaps be mined for vignettes.

Classroom activities are the third way in which culture is taught in foreign language courses. The room itself is important:

Every foreign language classroom should be a "cultural island," alive with colorful posters and pictures. ... A bulletin board is useful for posting current events, advertisements, comic strips, cartoons, and other items of interest ... A map of the foreign country and a wall calendar on which students could mark the foreign holidays also belong in every foreign language classroom (Hendon, 1980, p. 197).

If, in the following discussion, the reader encounters techniques which seem familiar, he or she is cautioned not to dismiss them for lack of originality. Rather, the reader should reflect that no method or technique has an existence apart from the context in which it is employed.

... a technique, like all behavior, is not *something*. It is not a static, formalized object or condition. Rather, it is an instance, a realization of potential, the particular manifestation of our ability to select, from a bundle of options, that piece of behavior which we believe will work, given our formal training, our experience, and the prevailing conditions (Clark, 1984, p. 583).

Intercultural educators should seek out their colleagues in foreign languages so that they can compare notes on the implementation of the techniques which they both employ.

Seelye's books (1974 & 1984) are the most complete sources of classroom suggestions for culture teaching in the foreign language teaching community. They set the pattern for later writers (notably Lafayette, 1978 and Damen, 1987) and have much visibility because they are published in conjunction with a major professional organization, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). All of the techniques which Seelye lists are tied to his seven goals of cultural instruction (see Appendix).

Seelye gives much space to the Cultural Assimilator, a technique which he notes was developed by social psychologists (Fiedler, Mitchell, & Triandis) and which is an example of a technique which intercultural educators share. This prominence is justified because it is "the approach to training that has been subjected to the most and to the best research" (Brislin, *et al.*, 1986, p. 25). Lafayette (1978) also includes the Cultural Assimilator, and further follows Seelye in commending Minidrama. This technique goes a step beyond the critical incident technique of the Cultural Assimilator. In Minidrama the students stage a problem so as to be emotionally, not only intellectually, involved in its resolution. A goal is for the participants to realize that "this could happen to me too" (Seelye, 1974, p. 92). Skits involve dialogue, a hoary practice in foreign language teaching which gives students speaking practice, so they are using the language while learning the culture.

Seelye and Lafayette both list the Cultural Capsule. Seelye attributes its origin to a foreign language teacher, Darrel Taylor, who collaborated with an anthropologist, John Sorenson. A Culture Capsule is a brief oral or written explanation, prepared by a teacher or a student, of one minimal difference between two cultures. It is normally accompanied by photos or other realia. Seelye gives an example of a "French Bread" capsule which involves an activity: the students taste what they have been studying! After the presentation and activity, the students answer content-related questions. This last activity is not to be considered optional if one follows the contention of Lafayette that culture, because it is important enough to be taught, merits to be tested as well.

Culture Clusters are three or four Capsules combined into a simulation or skit. This is analogous to tying together critical incidents into a minidrama as was mentioned above. The assumption is also the same: the students will learn best by being involved in creating a cultural situation. The procedure is as follows. Each capsule is presented

on a separate day. The culmination is the skit in which the teacher acts as the narrator who guides the students' action and speech. Seelye's example of a Culture Cluster is a family meal in France. The first cluster has to do with setting the table, the second concerns table etiquette, and the third is a presentation of the role of meals in French family life.

Seelye lists several other techniques under the rubric of "Asking the Right Questions." His goal is to get the students to be observers of culture, and from their observations to generate hypotheses and "hazard productive guesses" (p. 124). Seelye advocates using "the exotic as springboard":

Culturally contrastive patterns can best be exploited for their motivating interest by using them as *points of entry* (emphasis added) into the target culture. Once inside, the student should be helped to discover that even seemingly bizarre behavior makes perfect sense once it is seen within the context of the rest of the culture (p. 121).

This discovery and open-ended approach of Seelye's is congenial with Robinson's later emphasis on the dynamism inherent in cultures and on the necessity of viewing cultures from the inside.

The food examples which Seelye used to illustrate Culture Capsules and Clusters are contained within Robinson's eight multi-sensory modes of culture transmission: (1) emotion, (2) sound, (3) space, (4) time, (5) body movement and dance, (6) touch, (7) taste, foods and food sharing, and (8) aesthetics and visual adornment. She prefaced her suggestions of using these modes in teaching culture by acknowledging that "experimental education" is often looked on askance in higher education. She chose to "risk pointing out the obvious to underscore the academic soundness of using different sensory modes in transmitting cultural learnings" (p. 27). Robinson's advocacy of multisensory means to teach culture provides a transition to the consideration of the use of technology.

Teaching culture with technology

To augment their classroom activity, FLEs have many commercial resources available to them, and there are promising ones in development.

Culture Capsules are available on audiocassette from the Audio Forum in Guilford, Connecticut. Tapes are available for major culture/language groups such as Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish. All are in English and may be considered "crash courses" in culture for eventual travelers. The ICE could perhaps extract portions, such as the treatments of greetings, to illustrate points of contrast between American culture and these others.

Video is being used increasingly in foreign language teaching. It is often justified because of the ability of the visual medium to present language in its cultural context. A

notable example is the popular *French in Action* series which was produced with major support from the Annenberg/ CPB project. Since 1982 the Project for International Communications Studies at the University of Iowa has been collecting "authentic" video material; that is, commercials, newscasts, documentaries, sitcoms, etc. which were not produced for the purpose of language teaching. Enough material to fill 16 videodiscs has been amassed and interactive software has been developed to allow learners to explore it. Other universities are putting together interactive video materials thanks in part to support from IBM (Horwitz, 1991). For the Apple environment there is *A la rencontre de Philippe* developed by the Athena Project at MIT and *In The French Body* and *In the German Body* from the University of Massachusetts at Boston. The latter programs are unique in their focus on proxemics.

Computers are being used increasingly to teach foreign languages. Many software packages attempt to teach cultural points as well as features of the language (see LaReau & Vockell, 1989, for examples). One promising computer application is telecommunications. Hammadou (1991) has conducted preliminary research with students using France's videotext network called *Télétext* (also known as *Minitel*). This popular network has attracted the attention of mass communication researchers in this country (Miller, 1986) because of its impact on French society. When students access such a network, they are doing what millions of French people do everyday. This supports the claim of Hammadou and others (Challe, 1989) that telecommunications is a way to transmit "up-to-date cultural information" (Hammadou, 1991, p. 7). Telecommunications can also facilitate the common practice of having "pen pals" in a foreign country. Both the American Association of Teachers of French and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages have conducted workshops to train teachers to use *Minitel*.

The evolution of dictionaries, vital tools for language learners and teachers alike, is another promising development. Lado (1964) foresaw a role for dictionaries in culture teaching:

A very comprehensive dictionary collecting ... words and phrases and including also idioms, proverbs, names of heroes, well-known legends and stories, heroic deeds, beliefs, etc., would be in fact an excellent index to a culture. Such a collection coupled with a systematic analysis of the structure of a culture would constitute a most complete codification of its content (pp. 23-24).

There has also been recent interest in increasing the dictionary's treatment of culture as a means of elucidating vocabulary, especially "fixed expressions" ... which "can be culturally opaque or transparent depending on the degree of cultural knowledge a learner needs to draw upon for purposes of decoding" (Bool & Carter, 1989, p. 174). To do so would require extensive notes, but space is not an issue with computer-based dictionaries, many of which are appearing (Wooldridge, 1991). It may be that Lado's vision of a comprehensive treatment of culture will become a reality in expanded,

electronic versions of conventional dictionaries rather than in new works. Wyatt (1989) foresees a great boon to reading coming from such online annotation: it could delineate the “culturally determined schema” (p. 68) in online passages.

Conclusions

FLEs and ICEs belong to different paradigms (Thomas Kuhn’s sense): we are in different departments, we read different journals, and we belong to different professional associations. Yet we have a common interest in the teaching of culture, and as this paper has shown, we use some of the same classroom techniques in our work, and we tap some of the same sources for theoretical insights (e.g. cultural anthropology and social psychology). Moreover, we are quite likely to bump into each other in the library because many of the books in our two fields are at the beginning of the Ps in the Library of Congress system! Thus, it would appear that there is much basis for a professional dialogue. Many FLEs who have written about culture (Nostrand, 1956; Edgerton, 1972; Robinson, 1985; Damen, 1987) have stressed the need for interdisciplinary cooperation, so ICEs who approach their FLE colleagues will most likely get a friendly response.

At a minimum we can swap classroom experiences. At a higher level there is room for cooperation in attempting to better understand the function of fixed expressions, which were mentioned in the previous section. Language teachers are grappling with how to properly teach stock idioms and other “frozen patterns used to direct the flow of conversation and often, additionally, to mark the speaker’s attitude to an interlocutor or to earlier remarks” (Cowie, 1989, p. 204). FLEs can provide their ICE colleagues with many examples of these. The latter can perhaps apply the theoretical base and terminology of interpersonal communication to help the FLE better understand the function of such expressions and what they reveal about a culture. Fixed expressions relating to requests and apologies are already the focus of crossdisciplinary inquiry (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989).

A common focus on language by FLEs and ICEs is natural. Some language items are epitomes, crystallizations of the values of a culture (e.g., *amae*, *sempai*, and *kohai* in Japanese) (Doi, 1973; Nakane, 1970). This is the “they have a word for it” phenomenon. We demonstrate respect for other cultures by attempting to understand them through their own terms. It will be a good learning experience for our students to wrestle with the difficulty of translating foreign expressions (Kohls, 1979). Moreover, by focusing on language, we will return to our common roots. Edward T. Hall, who has been influential in both FLE and ICE circles, said in his seminal *The Silent Language* that he, as a researcher of culture, wanted to emulate the “dramatic progress ... of linguistic science” (p. 61) and make it possible to “teach each cultural situation in much the same way that language is taught” (p. 50).

Envoi

The author is a member of the FLE community who has been greatly helped in his work by insights emanating from the ICE community. This paper is his humble contribution to the dialogue between the two communities which Damen has espoused:

It is time to build two-way, multi-lane bridges of interchange so that professionals in intercultural communication and in second or foreign language learning may combine forces to their mutual benefit and to the ultimate advantage of their students. Together they may profitably explore the multifaceted concepts of language and culture and their roles in human interaction. Their combined efforts should enhance research and practice in both fields. (p. xvii)

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Appendix

H. Ned Seelye's seven goals of cultural instruction (1974, pp. 39-45)

1. The sense, or Functionality, of Culturally Conditioned Behavior:

The student should demonstrate an understanding that people act the way they do because they are using options the society allows for satisfying basic physical and psychological needs.

2. Integration of Language and Social Variables:

The student should demonstrate an understanding that such social variables as age, sex, social class, and place of residence affect the way people speak and behave.

3. Conventional Behavior in Common Situations:

The student should indicate an ability to demonstrate how people conventionally act in the most common mundane and crisis situations in the target culture.

4. Cultural Connotations of Words and Phrases:

The student should indicate an awareness that culturally conditioned images are associated with even the most common target words and phrases.

5. Evaluating Statements about a Society:

The student should demonstrate the ability to evaluate the relative strength of a generality concerning the target culture in terms of the amount of evidence substantiating the statement.

6. Researching Another Culture:

The student should show that he has developed the skills needed to locate and organize information about the target culture from the library, the mass media, people, and personal observation.

7. Attitudes toward Other Cultures:

The student should demonstrate intellectual curiosity about the target culture and empathy toward its people.

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