Identity Dialectics of the Intercultural Communication Instructor: Insights from Collaborative Autoethnography

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Abstract: One way to deal with teaching challenges is to share personal stories with other teachers. In this article, four intercultural communication (IC) instructors consider how their teaching narratives provide insight into the dialectical tensions that exist with regard to teacher identity in the classroom, specifically in the context of their IC courses. Using a collaborative approach to autoethnography, we reveal four dialectics that highlight how our identity and intercultural experiences impact our teaching of IC: [1] Objectivity—Subjectivity; [2] Personal—Professional; [3] Learner—Teacher; and [4] Within—Beyond the Comfort Zone. These dialectics invite discussion regarding how IC teachers can navigate these contradictory tensions to be more effective instructors.
Keywords: Intercultural instruction, teacher identity, dialectics, narratives, collaborative autoethnography

1. Introduction

Matthew: Something happened in class that made me feel a bit awkward. One of my Israeli students completely disagreed with some information in the textbook about Israel. I wasn't sure how to address her comments in front of the class.

Tara: That sounds familiar. In my classes, most of the students have travelled extensively, so they tend to challenge me, as well. Many of them mistakenly believe that they already are skilled intercultural communicators because of these experiences. I often sense that they struggle with seeing me as a credible source for this subject matter. This is especially true when I invite them to share their international experiences, as they complain that they are, in essence, 'teaching' the class instead of me.

Elizabeth: I have the opposite issue in my classroom. My current student population is not overtly diverse, and few students have had travel experiences. They think my stories about living in South Korea are fun and strange, but I can tell that they don't know how to readily apply concepts to their own lives.

Anchalee: Well, what about me? You all should try being the 'stranger' in the front of the room! I often am uncomfortable using examples from Thailand to illustrate concepts. When I try to find current examples to illustrate course concepts, I worry that I don't fully understand the cultural contexts here in the USA.

This is a conversation that four intercultural communication (IC) instructors at universities in the United States have had regarding specific challenges in teaching intercultural content. As we shared our experiences, we noticed that the focus of our stories, while appearing to be outward situations in university classrooms, is actually the underlying tension related to our teacher identities. This realization prompted us to explore how teachers use personal narratives to address identity challenges they face in the classroom.

As this opening conversation suggests, we are located in different geographical areas and teach dissimilar undergraduate student populations. Three of us are White United States citizens; the fourth has relocated to the United States from Thailand. Anchalee, a Thai female, taught IC as a graduate teaching assistant and has been highly aware of her status as 'foreigner' in the classroom. While she believes her cultural differences and experiences are a valuable asset, she also is concerned students might see her as the sole representative of her culture. Elizabeth, a White female originally from the Midwest, spent many years teaching English in China and South Korea. While she enjoys sharing personal experiences from living abroad to illustrate course concepts, she worries that her students will focus on her entertaining stories, not on the specific theories these stories are illustrating, and will only consider IC as occurring in foreign locales. Tara, a White female also from the Midwest, has little travel experience compared to her student population, many of whom have been involved in religious mission work. She has taught students who view their international experiences as more credible than her theoretical education and training. Finally, Matthew, a White male from the Midwest, teaches at an urban school on the East Coast with a very diverse student population in terms of race/ethnicity and nationality. Like Tara, he wants to build credibility as an IC instructor based on his academic training and knowledge of communication theories, but his students occasionally challenge this premise and, at times, directly disagree with the content in the research articles he chooses for course curriculum. While we are aware that we are, in no way, representative of instructors engaged in intercultural education, we found that as we shared stories about our different situations there were similarities in the challenges we face with regard to our teacher identities.

This article highlights the fact that one way we deal with teaching challenges is to share our personal stories with others. These stories are more than just snippets of conversation, however. Through the method of collaborative autoethnography, insight into teacher identity can be extracted from our teaching narratives. Our experiences point to dialectical tensions that exist for us with regard to teacher identity, specifically as we engage in efforts to raise intercultural awareness and sensitivity. We will first explicate the concept of teacher identity, then set that within the specific context of teaching an IC class. Finally, we will highlight four identity dialectics that have surfaced through our dialogues with each other. Consideration of these identity dialectics can guide us to develop more conscientiously as teachers.

2. Background Information: Teacher Identity

While there are many ways to conceptualize identity, our purpose is to briefly introduce how we view identity as created through communication. Within education settings, we create our teaching identities through classroom interaction, so it is crucial to discuss how the context of an IC class could influence the development of our teacher identities.

2.1. The Communication of Teacher Identity

Identity is the focus of our research because we strongly feel that our sense of who we are affects how we teach intercultural communication. We are mindful, especially as intercultural scholars, that a person's identity is socially constructed, historically shaped, and bound by situation. Ting-Toomey (2005), in identity negotiation theory, defines identity as "reflective self-images constructed, experienced, and communicated by the individuals within a culture and in a particular interaction situation" (p. 217). Identity negotiation is a transactional communicative process in which people work to define, challenge, or modify these self-images (Ting-Toomey, 2005). Chen and Pan (2002) highlight how cultural identity "involves placement of an individual, in comparison to others, in the map of cultures, by the individual him/her-self or by others" (p. 160). This concept is also highlighted in the education discipline, as Hoffman-Kipp (2008) emphasizes that while identity involves the individual, identity is also "an invention of situated activity" (p. 153). Anspal, Eisenschmidt, and Löfström (2012) similarly specify that identity is "a dynamic, ongoing process and that teacher identity is influenced by a range of external experiences" (p. 198).

The importance of teachers' identity is often overlooked with regard to pedagogical concerns. Palmer (1998) describes how aspects of identity are hidden within educational discourse. Many times, education focuses on aspects of "how" we teach by highlighting methods or techniques. While methods are important, Palmer (1998) suggests the more essential issue regards the "who" of teaching: "…who is the self that teaches?" (p. 4). Hooks (1994) echoes this sentiment when expressing that teachers must "be actively committed to a process of self-actualization that promotes their own well-being if they are to teach in a manner that empowers students" (p. 15). Good teaching, then, is founded on the teacher's identity, not necessarily on the ability to master specific techniques.

For instructors to reach their full potential, according to Palmer (1998), they must recognize how static concepts flow through them, gaining vitality through their successes and failures. Knowledge cannot be limited to the pages of a text; it must be understood through lived experiences. In Palmer's (1998) words:

> Teaching, like any truly human activity, emerges from one's inwardness, for better or for worse. As I teach, I project the condition of my soul onto my students, my subject, and our way of being together. The entanglements I experience in the classroom are often no more or less than the convolutions of my inner life. Viewed from this angle, teaching holds a mirror to the soul. (p. 2)

With any subject, teachers must have a sense of who they are and recognize the unique imprint their experiences, education, and interests have on pedagogy. However, when teaching intercultural concepts, it is crucial for teachers to know themselves with regard to their own cultural identity. While our classroom stories might seem to focus on whether certain techniques did or did not work in a specific class, they actually demonstrate deeper concerns regarding both how we perceive and how we feel our students perceive our identities.

2.2. Teacher Identity in the Context of an Intercultural Communication Course

Since teacher identity consists of both the "person and the context" (Anspal et al., 2012, p. 198), then we acknowledge that challenges to our identity as teachers happen in the specific setting of IC courses. To set a brief context for how we approach our IC courses, we include basic tenets such as emphasizing culture-general knowledge over culture-specific knowledge, highlighting dimensions of cultural variability, and also including aspects of cultural self-awareness and communication competence (Fantini, 1997; Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey & Wiseman, 1991). General topics in our courses include a communicative approach to defining culture and cultural identities. Aspects of intercultural situations are often presented in units that focus on issues with verbal and nonverbal communication, including intercultural conflict management. We also have similarities in topics that we cover in our classes, including barriers to effective communication such as ethnocentrism, stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination. We are specifically concerned with how we navigate tensions in our identities as we communicate these aspects of intercultural content with our students; that is the "particular interaction situation" (Ting-Toomey, 2005, p. 217) in which these identity tensions exist.

The four of us have discussed how we find something particularly different about teaching IC compared to our other communication courses, even though this difference is ambiguous and difficult to articulate. While many social science courses aim to encourage critical thinking and to allow students to perceive the world in a deeper fashion, IC approaches these goals in a manner that directly challenges students' worldviews:

> When the course curriculum is intercultural communication, with a focus on challenging students' deep-seated beliefs—many of which are prejudices, stereotypes, and biases toward other groups of people that have been taught in the home or a community environment—the multicultural classroom becomes not only challenging but also problematic. (Hamlet, 2009, p. 29)

Because the content of an IC course by nature cannot help but address aspects of cultural identity, both teachers' and students' cultural identities become a critical factor in how course topics are presented and perceived.

When teaching IC, many instructors' overt focus is on the development of students' cultural awareness. Not only is this a difficult goal to set objectives for and to actually measure (Matveeva, 2008), but IC teachers also carry concerns about how students perceive course content. Many students enter an intercultural course expecting the content to be overt descriptions about different cultural groups and easy steps regarding communication etiquette

in other cultures (Halualani, 2011; Mendoza, 2005). Instead, students are encouraged to explore their own layers of cultural identities and are asked to discuss sensitive issues like stereotyping, ethnocentrism, racism, and religion. Many of these issues challenge the beliefs and values they have embraced from their families, schools, and other social institutions. Eisenchlas and Trevaskes (2003) explain how "…teaching IC involves more than mere transfer of information. It requires students to conceptualize culture and their own place as agents and carriers of culture" (p. 398). If IC topics are not presented effectively, the end result could be students gaining more stereotypes about other cultural groups rather than a deeper understanding of how culture influences communication (Varner, 2001). Liu (2009) and Lebedko (2010) also echo this concern about the outcome of directly teaching stereotypes in class. Liu (2009) discusses how it is not possible to present a complete image of any cultural group in a classroom setting, so "the elusive nature of culture poses a major challenge to teaching IC in terms of integrating generalities and particularities of the cultural groups under study without stereotyping" (p. 96).

While the outward focus of IC instructors might be concern over how course content is perceived by students, these concerns also impact the perception and communication of teachers' identities. Teaching IC is particularly challenging, therefore, because of the nature of the course content. The critical piece in the IC classroom is that students learn not only from their textbooks, but also from examples and experiences that come from themselves and from teachers. It is within this context that we want to frame our identity issues that we face as teachers, not by centering our discussion on effective teaching methods, but on the crucial role that a teacher's identity plays in the creation and implementation of any IC course.

3. Method: Teachers' Identities as Presented through Personal Narratives

Our method to identify the specific tensions that we face with our teacher identity was to share our classroom stories with each other. Each of us found value and resonance in these opportunities to discuss our teaching experiences, including stories about what happened to us in the classroom, or how we felt students reacted to material, or stories about how we, at times, struggled to feel effective. Stories are important because "life is a narrative event" (Fisher, 1993, p. 280). Narratives are also a "way of knowing, a search for meaning that privileges experience, process, action, and peril" (Conquergood, 1993, p. 337). Narrative is important to self-concept; it comprises how we know ourselves and share ourselves within classroom contexts. Bruner (2002) explains how this construction of self through narrative is a balancing act between autonomy and commitment. Self-narratives include a sense of agency and yet must also include how people relate to others. As Trahar (2011) specifies, "Narrative inquiry concerns more than can be observed in daily practice. It also investigates the different ways in which people interpret the social world and their place within it" (p. 48).

One way to consider narratives is through an autoethnographic approach, since this allows us to share our stories as data. Autoethnography is a method that allows personal reflection to become part of a systematic study, when the "researcher becomes the research subject" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 50). As Fiske (1990) describes, "What autoethnography may be able to do is to open up the realm of the interior and the personal, and to articulate that which, in the practices of everyday life, lies below any conscious articulation" (p. 90). In addition, Vryan

(2006) highlights how, through autoethnography, analysis of an individual's experience can produce knowledge which is relevant to other people and contexts.

Our specific approach to autoethnography was collaborative. Chang, Ngunjiri, and Hernandez (2013) describe collaborative autoethnography as "a qualitative research method that is simultaneously collaborative, autobiographical, and ethnographic" (p. 17). One form of collaborative autoethnography includes participants first conducting individual data collection, followed by the process of a collaborative discussion, which results in the co-creation of a meta-narrative. An example of this type of collaboration model, according to Chang et al. (2013), is a study conducted by Geist-Martin et al. (2010) in which each author wrote their personal narrative independently but also shared their narratives in group discussion with the goal to analyse their stories through emergent themes. They also presented their research at a conference and collaboratively worked together to write the reflection paper. While the focus of the narratives in Geist-Martin et al. (2010) was on mothers and mothering, their particular study describes how they "utilize mothering as an exemplar context for accomplishing autoethnography as research practice via a nontraditional approach" (p. 2).

Along these same lines, we began our study by each writing a personal paper based on specific teaching narratives. We have shared these papers and specific narratives with each other through a conference panel presentation and several face-to-face and electronic conversations. As we shared and discussed our narratives with each other, we discovered similar themes. For example, all four of us referred to students' experiences abroad as compared to our own experiences. Each of us also addressed the vulnerability of disclosing aspects of our cultural and racial selves in front of students. Similarities such as these were noted to generate a list of themes. Once we compiled a meaningful list of themes, we created our combined meta-narrative by discussing how these themes could be best presented in a dialectical form. In this manner, we identify our method as collaborative autoethnography, since this method is one in which "researchers work in community to collect their autobiographical materials and to analyse and interpret their data collectively to gain a meaningful understanding of sociocultural phenomenon reflected in their autobiographical data" (Chang et al., 2013, p. 24.)

4. Results: Identity Dialectics of an Intercultural Communication Teacher

The concept of dialectics is the framework for us to articulate our identity challenges as IC teachers. Martin and Nakayama (1999, 2013) describe how the purpose of the dialectic is "to stress the relational, processual, and contradictory nature of knowledge production" (Martin & Nakayama, 1999, p. 13). Since the concept of a dialectical perspective is to hold "two contradictory ideas simultaneously," (Martin & Nakayama, 2013, p. 66), different aspects of IC can be perceived together, not separately; this encourages more connections between different elements. Mendoza (2005), in her own ethnographic description of ways in which she has structured her intercultural communication courses, relies on Ellul (1981) to describe the complexities of dialectic, specifically as a "theory of challenges" (Ellul, 1981, p. 297). Because life is full of contradictions, dialectic allows for us to consider situations more holistically. The two contradictory factors in dialectic can combine and transform into a third possibility; the process by which this happens can be both deeply intuitive and transformative. However,

Mendoza (2007) critiques Martin and Nakayama's (1999) conceptualization of dialectics because it "appears to be turned into just another cognitive tool with which to once again slice up reality (intercultural communication phenomenon) into another set of categories" (p. 92). Martin and Nakayama do not adequately discuss the deep tensions in dialectics, in her opinion.

We hope our presentation of dialectics does not appear to be just a cognitive tool. Our challenge is to present the tensions in these identity dialectics in written form; we want to emphasize how contradictory elements of identity both exist within each other and complement each other simultaneously. When we navigate these tensions in our classrooms, there is always an active energy involved as we continually make decisions regarding what to say or do next. Through our shared experiences, we identified four specific areas in which our identities are stretched, even with such divergent backgrounds. The following dialectics emerged from our data; while we used the concept of dialectics as described by Martin and Nakayama (1999, 2013), the four specific dialectics we identified in our data came solely from our analysis. Each dialectic will be illustrated with excerpts from our narratives. Within these four dialectics, teachers must navigate these contradictory tensions in order to be effective instructors.

4.1. Objectivity—Subjectivity Dialectic

The first dialectic focuses on the tension that exists between the privileging of one main approach to theory and research over another. For example, Matthew and Tara want to emphasize their credentials and training in a more objective approach; Elizabeth and Anchalee often try to share personal intercultural experiences in class to illustrate course concepts. This makes us consider how any teacher personally approaches intercultural knowledge, since all teachers must interact with the knowledge they teach. Social science and positivistic approaches to theory and research are more comfortable for some, while other scholars might resonate more with a subjective approach to theory and research, such as an interpretive or critical mode. There are implications to consider regarding an instructor's personal preference to content, both in how they respond to course content and also how content is presented. IC instructors make continuous decisions regarding which aspects of knowledge to emphasize within any course topic. These decisions can involve both a personal and a pedagogical conflict. How much personal experience do we allow in class discussions? How much do we work to emphasize theory? What happens when experience and theory do not seemingly converge?

Both Matthew and Tara, in their narratives about teaching, have highlighted aspects of this tension with regard to their attempts to present themselves as credible instructors based on their academic training. However, their student populations have asserted their own perspectives as more valid because they have either had more international travel experiences than the instructor, or have lived overseas, or are experiencing US culture as an international student. Matthew's words illustrate this tension:

> *I identify much more closely to the theoretical knowledge side of this dialectic. For this reason, I often find myself in awkward positions as an educator when course content is contradicted or when I am informed by students that the authors of texts provide oversimplified, overcomplicated, or a misrepresentation of culture. Out of all*

the classes I teach, IC is the most intimidating due to my lack of experience and the personal nature of the course. I have such a difficult time responding when a student shares a heart-wrenching story where they or someone they loved was the victim of discrimination because I do not want to appear as condescending, curt, or uncaring by listening to the example and simply thanking her or him for it. Because I feel I have not been in a similar position as the student, what can I say? These types of feelings and emotions do not surface in other communication courses for me, like public speaking or persuasion theory. In an IC class, this is something that I expect.

Tara has similar concerns:

While I also rely heavily on the objective side of the dialectic to establish credibility, my teaching style presents a completely different issue. I prefer a discussion-based classroom that can draw from students' knowledge and experiences. Because of this, I had hoped my lack of experience would prove inconsequential. However, after moving to a private university, I discovered on the first day of class that every student had lived in or visited one or more other countries either with their family or as a student missionary for periods of time that ranged from one week to four years. As the lesson continued, I could feel my credibility waning with every breath. Students were immediately more sombre and unresponsive, completely shocked that their IC professor had less cultural experience than they.

These narrative excerpts demonstrate the struggle regarding how to present teacher identity, facilitate class discussions, present content, and remain credible when students are not willing to assign credibility based on, in their perspective, a lack of experience on the part of the instructor.

Elizabeth and Anchalee tell different stories about their teaching concerns, stories that indicate they are comfortable sharing personal stories to highlight or illustrate concepts. At the same time, they are concerned with possibly misrepresenting aspects of culture or presenting information too simplistically. As Elizabeth shares:

At the beginning of my IC course, one of the topics we discuss is value differences, and Hofstede's (1997) value dimensions are part of this discussion. I include this information because these different value continuums were very helpful in my own understanding of South Korean culture, where I lived for four years. As I describe the different dimensions, I tell personal stories from my experience in Korea to illustrate each one. While the examples seem to catch students' attention, I am concerned that these stories can misrepresent Korean culture. These examples are interpreted through my own lens and also based on Korean culture as I experienced it several years ago. I also worry that the stories only entertain and do not adequately teach students how to apply aspects of value dimensions to their current context.

Elizabeth wonders if her emphasis on personal experience with IC encourages students to

prioritize experience over theory. If some students' experiences do not connect with theory, she worries there is possibility students will reject theory based on the strength of their experiences.

Our teaching stories represent the challenging energy that exists between representing both the objective and subjective nature of intercultural knowledge. Teachers negotiate this tension in their own identity, since most are probably more comfortable with one approach compared to the other. At the same time, there needs to be representation of the other in the classroom. One cannot only focus on individual, personal experiences to represent culture. One cannot only focus on theories without addressing the practical application to life experience. So, how a teacher decides to represent or privilege aspects of knowledge provides an energetic tension.

4.2. Personal—Professional Dialectic

All of our narratives highlight our struggles to present a professional persona while at the same time honoring our personal identity issues. This second dialectic represents the "complexities of being and remaining a professional and the strategies used in order to maintain a sense of self" (Day & Leitch, 2001, p. 403). As instructors, we make decisions about how much of our cultural identities we self-disclose to students. Of course, there are certain cultural identities we cannot hide, but even with these identities there is personal information that we hold dear. For example, in our narratives we share our struggles regarding how much information about our racial identities we would like to disclose to students and whether it is appropriate to reveal aspects of our limitations with regard to cultural experiences. As we teach about the specifics of cultural identity, we have to navigate decisions regarding how much of ourselves we are willing to share. There may also be course content we are personally still coming to terms with ourselves, resulting in a tension over how to present information that we are grappling with ourselves. In describing the goals of an IC class, Hamlet (2009) draws on Young Yun Kim's concept of intercultural personhood: "The intercultural person is a type whose cognitive, affective, and behavioral characteristics are not limited but open to growth beyond the psychological parameters of his or her culture. It is a journey that both students and the professor take" (p. 25). How do IC professors take this journey, though, and how much of that journey should be overtly presented within the classroom? This dialectic focuses on our inward tensions to balance personal identity issues in our professional lives.

One example of an identity challenge in the personal-professional dialectic has to do with racial identity. Because of our context of teaching within the USA, we all have been taught to consider aspects of racial identity in the racialized atmosphere of our classrooms and universities. We continually work to personally explore and acknowledge the implications of our racial identities while at the same time we hope to professionally approach this topic in our classrooms. Tara, Matthew, and Elizabeth have emphasized how, as White instructors, we are trained to both study and explore personal issues of Whiteness, which is "the study of White privilege as an enactment of institutionalized racism; it critically interrogates the ways in which race is socially constructed and studies the everyday performances of White privilege through discourse and other practices" (Endres & Gould, 2009, p. 419). While Whiteness is important for us to teach, in our honest moments we can admit to each other that we are still learning about our White identity and are still challenged to continuously identify ways in which White

privilege may be present, even in our own teaching. According to Elizabeth:

> *I would hope that I could say by now that I "understand" what it means, personally, to be White in the USA. But I cannot claim that. I am grateful that I was pushed to critically reflect on aspects of racial identity in graduate school. I continue to study these issues, too. However, I can still feel unsure about how to proceed in class discussions on these topics, specifically when the conversation has become charged and emotional. I want to continue to challenge students to explore their own racial identities, but I admit to still learning, myself, the implications of these identities. How can we effectively teach these concepts when we are still dealing with our own personal racial identities?*

Similarly, Tara shares:

> *Most of my students espouse the idea that the man is the head of the household, so discussions on Whiteness and male privilege are tricky. Negotiating the tension between religious beliefs and cultural sensitivity/openness has proved to be difficult. One student, in response to a question of cultural identity replied, "None. I am White." And yet when we discuss Whiteness as the center, and discuss racial labeling, students are not convinced there is anything wrong with it. They argue that in journalism specifically they are taught to provide as much of the relevant information as possible and that it is relevant to know the ethnicity of a person. When I point out that we label everyone except White people, many students simply argue that we do use the "White" label sometimes and that we should just adopt this practice rather than take away the labels of other groups as it provides us with valuable information. Even though I recall grappling with these ideas myself, it is a tremendously tenuous tightrope to walk in the classroom.*

These narratives provide examples of the challenge in presenting specific course concepts in a professional manner when the instructor is aware of their own continuing personal learning with the same content.

Anchalee faces different challenges in that she is teaching IC in a 'foreign' culture. She is continuously aware of her cultural learning experiences living in the United States while concurrently teaching IC. Anchalee's stories focus on the challenge of balancing aspects of her personal identity, a Thai native, with her professional persona, that of IC instructor:

> *I believe one of the goals of an IC class is for students to be able to apply their knowledge of intercultural sensitivity in their own diverse country. As a result, I attempt to present many intercultural lessons based on US American cultural contexts. For example, in a lesson about dialects and accents, I switched from discussing international dialects to domestic dialects and accents. I had done some research about these in order to present them to my students. However, I felt that I came across a little pretentious because I did not fully understand or even recognize these differences. Also, I only gained information by reading or listening about it; but I did not "live" with it. I*

felt that I might make mistakes talking about those issues or did not fully understand nuances of those meanings. The next semester, I switched back to discussing dialect across nations—a more familiar and easier topic for me to instruct.

Even though she is in her own cultural adaptation process, she still wants to communicate her expertise in her content area. She must decide how much she is willing to broadcast her own personal identity as a 'foreigner' to the United States while simultaneously developing her professional image as an IC instructor.

Therefore, we want to acknowledge that IC instructors may grapple with their own aspects of cultural identity while teaching these topics. Whether or not an IC instructor is open and aware of the complex layers of their many cultural identities is a very sensitive issue. We feel this is not overtly approached in IC scholarship because it is a messy and difficult topic; however, we want to open up aspects of this conversation in a way that encourages candid discussions regarding these challenges. Therefore, there is tension existing within an IC instructor regarding their own personal identity challenges and how they navigate these in the classroom.

4.3. Learner—Teacher Dialectic

Another aspect of teacher identity in the IC classroom is that, although we have theoretical knowledge, we are still learning. This third dialectic highlights the stories we tell when we confess we do not know everything there is to know about culture, despite having spent years formally studying aspects of it. As teachers, we are also participants in the classroom; we both claim our status as teacher and also are open to learn from our classes. Our concern is how we present this tension. How do we show students we are credible teachers when we are also willing to be surprised and learn new aspects about culture? Compared to the previous dialectic, this one highlights an outward focus regarding how we present ourselves as teachers while we still acknowledge that we are life learners.

Tara's stories focus on this tension. She enjoys facilitating a discussion-based approach to her classes, but has also experienced trepidation from students about having to actively engage in their own learning. While Tara wants to rely on her expertise at facilitating discussions and on her credibility as theoretically knowledgeable about IC, in her attempt to open up a space for discussion regarding course concepts, her students responded negatively. Tara explains how her attempt to present herself as both teacher and cultural learner did not turn out as successfully as she had hoped:

Having taught a number of classes using a discussion-based approach, I knew there would be some trepidation from students about having to actively participate in their own learning. However, the backlash was far greater in my IC class than any other I had taught. In anticipation of the discomfort students feel with my style of teaching, I specifically explained my philosophy and methods at the start of the semester. Previous classes have muddled through, then, with only minor murmurings about having to do so much of the "work," but this one IC class was particularly resentful. I remember this

vividly. The students repeatedly complained that they were "teaching" the class instead of the teacher. They were convinced that because I had "no" cultural experience and I encouraged students to speak even when their ideas contradicted those of the textbook, that I was not teaching. No amount of explanation seemed to suffice.

Matthew claims that his preferred teaching style is the "Sage on the Stage" persona, someone whose teaching "remains partly a performance piece. Just as good actors carry the audience with them while they speak their lines, good lecturers carry the listeners along while they think outloud" (Fendrich, 2010, p. 4). However, this teaching persona clashes with attempts for Matthew to present himself as a learner of culture, too:

Since I rely so much on academic articles and preparation, I find myself in uncomfortable positions where students will contradict what authors claim. Although this produces a lively discussion, I feel uncomfortable in this position. Should I rely on the member of the cultural community for correct information or choose an article written by a theorist whose experience may not be as authentic? I also doubt whether or not to automatically accept the perception from a student as legitimate. What the student expresses may be a personal preference as compared to a cultural practice.

Matthew admits that he does not always know how to respond to students' challenges to content. If he appears that he is learning about culture from students, he is worried how this will appear, both for his own credibility but also for the possibility of taking one student's voice as a representative of an entire cultural group. These examples illustrate the difficulty in balancing ourselves as both learners and teachers of intercultural content, especially when we are standing in front of a room full of students.

4.4. Within—Beyond the Comfort Zone Dialectic

The fourth dialectic is that of within-beyond the comfort zone. Our stories often focus on classroom moments when we feel confronted or outside our comfort zone; we are aware these moments can be both excruciatingly difficult and also can provide moments of growth for us and our students. One of the goals of IC is to teach students to embrace differences and explore the unfamiliar. However, as IC teachers, there could be risk involved in going beyond our comfort zone when teaching. We are obviously more familiar with certain cultures than others, prompting concerns about the implications if we only present specific examples that might be seen as privileging some cultures over others. If we stray outside of our comfort zone, we worry about authenticity and oversimplification. While we would like to provide a variety of intercultural experiences to our students, we are confronted with our own experiential limitations.

Anchalee highlights how she often feels more comfortable discussing cross-cultural issues related to Asian cultures:

Since I believe narrative is an effective teaching tool, I often refer to my Thai culture

and my past experiences working in international organizations. My rationale of using real-life experience is that the examples are authentic. When I try to use examples based on other cultures, I fear that I oversimplify those cultures. Nonetheless, using my own experiences in class can bore students, impose my ethnocentric point of view, and even unintentionally create stereotypes of my culture to the students. For example, in a lesson concerning nonverbal communication, I often use the "Do's and Don'ts in Thailand" poster, created by the Tourism Authority of Thailand, found in front of many temples in Thailand. The poster advises tourists how to behave properly in a "polite society." When I use this poster as an example, I believe students learn something from it. But I also fear that I am an ethnocentric teacher who can think only of her own cultural constructs.

Anchalee clearly describes her concern between appearing ethnocentric but also oversimplifying information or reinforcing stereotypical views. It might feel safer for Anchalee to limit examples to her experiences, but she worries that taking this "safe" route, staying within her comfort zone, is not always the most effective.

Tara's stories discuss her struggles in knowing when to take a risk with lessons. She has felt that sharing cultural experiences is expected in an IC class. As an instructor with little international travel experience, she once decided to share a significant portion of her personal background with her students by assigning a reading that chronicled the life of a teen mom with a challenging past. This activity was assigned only after establishing a trusting relationship with the students at her small, close-knit university. Once students had shared their reactions regarding the main character in the story, Tara revealed this was her personal story. While it is risky for her to reveal this, Tara's experience is that the risk is worthwhile for the learning that occurs as students confront their own stereotypes and evaluations of others. Effective teaching moments may arise if we step out of our comfort zone, but simply taking risks in teaching does not guarantee successful results. Therefore, teachers struggle with the tension involved in how much we decide to stay on familiar ground, and how much we are willing to, at times, step out of our comfort zone to challenge both ourselves, personally, and our students.

To summarize, when considering aspects of an IC teacher's identity within the classroom, these four dialectics were presented through our narratives: Objectivity—Subjectivity, Personal—Professional, Learner—Teacher, and Within—Beyond the Comfort Zone. The dialectics, which emerged exclusively from our autoethnographic data, demonstrate the different identity challenges that occur when teaching intercultural content.

5. Discussion: Implications of the Identity Dialectics

These specific dialectics demonstrate the identity tensions that IC teachers face in the classroom. While these dialectics are not in any way the complete set of challenges that IC instructors face, we still hope the presentation of these encourages critical discussion. Since intercultural instruction is crucial in current university settings, we desire these issues to be studied and discussed more to facilitate positive experiences for both teachers and students. There are specific implications which we want to further explore.

First, we hope to spur more reflection and research into the specific nature of teaching intercultural content, where difficulties exist because of course content that challenges students' cultural identities, perceptions, and biases. To fully appreciate the challenges facing IC teachers, we must better understand specific ways in which intercultural content is challenging. The traditional way to approach teaching challenges in IC is to focus on effective teaching methods (Eisenchlas & Trevaskes, 2003; Lebedko, 2010; Liu, 2009; Varner 2001; Yu, 2011). Teaching methods are important and useful to facilitate effective classes, but they still do not address issues of teacher identity that significantly influence the classroom (hooks, 1994; Palmer, 1998). With a stronger understanding of identity issues, teachers can then develop course content and training methods to facilitate courses in a way that highlight the strengths of their identities. In other words, we hope that methods are built upon the foundations of identity, instead of methods being used to mask identity struggles.

Second, we acknowledge that teacher identities are crucially connected to student identities. As Hoffman-Kipp (2008) highlights, "teachers' identities are powerful factors in students' identity construction" (p. 153). Our initial focus is, admittedly, addressing identity issues for teachers engaged in intercultural education; however, the implication is that the more confidence an instructor has regarding how to navigate identity challenges, the stronger impact that instructor can have on addressing issues in students' identity construction. Ideally, as intercultural instructors become more overtly aware of the dialectical tensions within their identities, they can be more aware of the tensions students face and better equipped to help students confront and develop their own cultural identities.

Third, we feel it would be valuable for graduate programs to add pedagogy courses to their curriculum if they do not already have them. As students, we were required to take multiple research methods courses, but very few discipline-specific teaching methods courses were required or even offered in our programs of study. Our graduate programs seemed to operate on the assumption that graduates who have studied topics in intercultural communication are ready to effectively teach these topics. Therefore, we hope that graduate programs can more seriously consider adopting pedagogy courses to better prepare future instructors.

Providing graduate students with opportunities to consider effective approaches to teaching intercultural content, including aspects of teacher identity challenges, can only help forward the goal of intercultural education; these topics are much too crucial to leave up to chance for effective and appropriate instruction to occur. For example, if one outcome of a course is intercultural competence, then the course needs to address all three major components of competence: cognitive, behavioral, and affective skills (Bennett, 2009; Gudykunst et al., 1991). Knowledge transmission, or an emphasis on cognitive skills, is too often the sole focus of instruction. However, pedagogical preparation can also provide insight into how to address crucial aspects of behavioral and affective skills within the classroom as well. Emphasizing aspects of behavioral and affective competence is one way to include aspects of teacher identity, since these areas of competence go beyond the cognitive level. Pedagogy courses can also provide specific support in consideration of how intercultural content is communicated to students, because, after all, "it is important that instructors in intercultural communication courses model effective intercultural communication" (Gudykunst et. al., 1991, p. 277).

In such pedagogy courses, we hope that explorations of teacher identity are approached.

This suggestion has not been met with quick acceptance, however. In the process of writing this article, one of our anonymous reviewers along the way responded that this implication of ours was "naive. The purpose of graduate education is to prepare students in a discipline… teacher education programs prepare teachers." This particular reviewer's comment directly fits in to a transmission perspective on learning, which Hoffman-Kipp (2008) describes as an approach in which "identity doesn't matter; it's the unaltered content, the great books and ideas, communicated, directly and efficiently, to students that does" (p. 162). This study demonstrates, however, that teacher identity does matter. We also contend that graduate education can prepare students in a discipline while at least acknowledging that many graduates will end up teaching that specific discipline to others. Adding a pedagogy course, even as an elective, is not going to interfere with the primary goal of a graduate program.

Finally, one last important aspect of a dialectical approach is relationship. As Martin and Nakayama (2013) explain,

> A dialectical approach focuses on the relational, rather than individual aspects and persons. This means that one becomes fully human only in relation to another person and that there is something unique in a relationship that goes beyond the sum of two individuals. (p. 66)

Our dialectical approach to teaching intercultural content is meant to highlight the importance of this in classroom settings. We, as IC teachers, want to foster aspects of "becoming fully human" as we teach course content by respectfully acknowledging our identity issues while at the same time encouraging our students to also develop. Day and Leitch (2001) also emphasize that "Maintaining an awareness of the tensions in managing professional identity is part of the safeguard and joy of teaching" (p. 403). We have found that our increased awareness in our identity challenges allows us to better navigate our teaching challenges which, in turn, allow us to interact more effectively with our students. Within intercultural education, we hope to encourage continuing dialogue on challenges and experiences, not only by sharing our teaching narratives, but also by emphasizing our efforts to negotiate our teaching identities. We also hope that the challenges of teaching intercultural content can be approached in a more systematic way, both through continuing research into teacher identities and also in consideration of teacher preparation. For those involved in preparing future interculturalists, simply focusing on whether or not trainees are familiar with content might not be adequate preparation. Instead, incorporating elements that overtly acknowledge challenges to teacher identity can enhance education programs and, hopefully, encourage more effective and meaningful courses in the broad picture of intercultural communication.

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