Cross-Cultural Awareness for Second/Foreign Language Learners

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Abstract: This article proposes a reconsideration of curricular objectives with respect to the teaching of culture, in the interest of broadening the humanistic scope of the second/foreign language curriculum while at the same time alleviating the pressure of a typically over-extended instructional agenda. Recent research and theory support a relational approach to culture learning, emphasizing understanding of the target and home culture(s) as they relate to one another, with explicit reference to the learner's culturally subjective position. The article explores the notions of cultural identity and attitudes toward *the other*, arguing for increased emphasis on an understanding of self as cultural subject and openness of mind toward cultural difference. Topics and activities for a curricular module on cross-cultural awareness are suggested.

Résumé : Cet article propose une réévaluation des objectifs scolaires en matière d'enseignement de la culture, dans le but d'élargir la perspective des programmes de langue seconde et de langue étrangère en matière de sciences humaines, tout en réduisant la pression découlant d'un programme éducatif que l'on tend à étirer. Des théories et des recherches récentes soutiennent qu'il est nécessaire d'adopter une approche relationnelle dans l'enseignement de la culture, en mettant l'accent sur la nécessité de comprendre sa propre culture et celle de l'autre ainsi que la manière dont elles interagissent, en faisant clairement référence à la position subjective de l'apprenant par rapport à sa culture. Cet article aborde les notions d'identité culturelle et les attitudes envers autrui ; on y souligne l'importance croissante à accorder à la compréhension de soi à titre d'objet culturel ainsi qu'à l'ouverture d'esprit envers les différences culturelles. Des thèmes et des activités sont proposés dans le cadre d'un module d'apprentissage portant sur la conscientisation interculturelle.

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'L'étrange est en moi, donc nous sommes tous des étrangers. Si je suis étranger, il n'y a pas d'étrangers.'

–Julia Kristeva (1988), Étrangers à nous-mêmes

The integration of culture into the second/foreign language curriculum has progressed rapidly in recent years. Standards of cultural competence and goals for culture learning are currently an integral part of instructional programs at all levels, and French textbooks are replete with cultural material pertaining to the French-speaking world. Because the standards and goals for language learning have throughout this time remained relatively unchanged, the overall mission of language teaching has, in effect, expanded, and 'doing it all' – developing language proficiency in four skills and introducing students to a broad range of cultural material, all the while keeping L1 use in classroom interaction to a minimum – has become the unspoken imperative. This article proposes a reconsideration of curricular objectives with respect to the teaching of culture, in the interests of broadening the humanistic scope of the language curriculum while at the same time alleviating the pressure of a typically over-extended instructional agenda. While the article focuses specifically on French and francophone cultures, the arguments put forward and the approaches suggested are equally applicable to other second or foreign language contexts.

Traditional 'culture as information' approaches are problematic, not only because they present the difficult choice of which culture(s) to teach and what content to include but also because they implicitly represent cultures under study as *other*, or *marked*, diverging from the home culture norm. By contrast, instruction geared toward the development of cross-cultural awareness and understanding of the concept of culture-bound values and behaviour acknowledges the relational nature of cultural study. Inter-cultural learning, based on the principle that students cannot learn about values of another culture (C2) without considering those of their own (C1), requires relinquishing coverage of content (*information about* C2) in favour of a less tangible culture agenda that Galloway (1999) has aptly termed 'growing the cross-cultural mind' (p. 153). This broader objective is particularly important, yet often overlooked, in the early stages of language study, and particularly in required courses, when many learners may be motivated by something less than an affinity for a second or foreign culture.

Learner attitudes toward a second or foreign culture

A classroom interaction several years ago led me to reflect upon the relationship between a learner's cultural identity and his or her attitudes

toward cultural difference and to rethink the implicit culture agenda governing my own teaching. During an oral exercise, a student had occasion to utter the exclamation *'Ooo là là !'* By way of response, I laughed and added, *'Mais en France, on dit "Oh là là !"'* –to which he unhesitatingly replied, in English, 'But I'm an American!' I was struck by the contrast between my student's attitudes toward cultural identity and my own, for as a student I had always aspired to be like the other, and as an instructor I wanted to present my students with native-speaker models of language. My student, by contrast, was clearly not interested in sounding or acting French. Instead, he asserted his American identity and gave voice to it through the speaking of French, a reaction that seemed to me, at the time, to reflect a certain resistance to language and culture learning.

In her analysis of the learner's cultural third place – the space between home and target cultures –Kramsch (1993) has alluded to the perennial struggle between the instructor, who seeks to foster understanding and appreciation of C2 behaviours and values, and the learners, who use cultural knowledge for their own purposes and 'insist on making their own meanings and [.].relevances' (p. 239). The interesting and sometimes challenging case of students whose impulse is not to identify with or become like the cultural other raises the issue of identity and authenticity and points to the need to acknowledge learners as cultural subjects, and raise their awareness of self as such, before moving on to culture learning in the more traditional sense of studying aspects of daily life, social practices, or institutions.

As language instructors are well aware, learners' attitudes toward a second or foreign culture may range from fear, hostility, and resistance, on one end of the spectrum, to attraction or even unquestioning fascination, on the other. Just as we may have the pleasure of teaching students who are motivated by the appeal and excitement of difference and who, as a result of classroom study or experience abroad, even adopt 'an altered cultural personality and identity' (Damen, 1987, p. 142), so, too, we may grapple with the problem of students who vigorously embrace long-standing negative stereotypes and images of a second or foreign culture.[1] But whether students display affinity or resistance, their awareness and understanding of the nature of cultural identity and difference as such may be rudimentary or non-existent.

In addition, beyond the classic categories of motivation relating to the learner's affinity for the target culture community (integrative) or long-term utilitarian purposes (instrumental), it is reasonable to expect that motivation in culture learning and receptivity to a culture and its speakers will vary according to situation (e.g., classroom or community)

and communicative context (to whom one is speaking, and for what purpose). Students can find themselves in any number of different learning situations –interacting with an instructor individually or in class, writing a composition, performing a skit in front of classmates, or asking questions of a native speaker in a classroom interview –each of which could call forth different attitudes and behaviour with respect to the second/foreign culture or culture-bearer. Furthermore, social factors, including issues of 'face' –not wanting to be seen as overly involved, too smart, or trying too hard in front of peers –may affect students' attitudes or behaviour toward language and culture as they are displayed during classroom interaction. In this sense, motivation and what might be called cultural stance or disposition are not fixed, or even stable, phenomena.

Being our (cultural) selves in the classroom

While many L2 and FL instructors are likely motivated by an inherent interest in dissimilar others, students' dispositions toward the C2 and its speakers may be more circumspect. Students may adopt or try on features of the language or culture –words, phrases, signs, or behaviours –for a variety of social purposes, including humour and play. Should this kind of hybridization (a cultural analogue of *franglais*) be viewed as problematic? Analyzing the concept of authentic language in the language classroom, Widdowson (1998) writes that communicative approaches to language instruction must 'come to terms with the learners' reality and somehow create contextual conditions that are appropriate to them and that will enable them to authenticate it as discourse on their own terms' (p. 712).[2] Similarly, culture learning is most legitimately considered authentic when the reality of learners' cultural identities and the mixed messages and feelings that are apt to emerge when studying other cultures are acknowledged in the classroom rather than displaced or repressed. As Brière (1986) has suggested, the goal in culture teaching is to foster understanding, not necessarily love or affiliation. A student's antagonistic attitude toward a particular cultural community may even fossilize if vigorously countered by the instructor. Ethnocentrism is therefore best viewed non-judgementally, as a starting position in culture learning rather than a fixed learner attribute (Bennett, Bennett, & Allen, 2003).

In recent years the long-standing norm of the educated native speaker, against which learners' language proficiency is measured in both government and academic proficiency testing, has been called into question. Kramsch (1997), for example, argues that the native speaker –

in terms of both linguistic authority and social and cultural authenticity –is an imaginary construct and consequently suggests a 'rethinking of the subject position' of language learners (p. 360). In her analyses of the pleasures and privileges of being 'in between,' the learner position is conceptualized not as a deficiency but as an inherently interesting vantage point and place to be. Galloway, for her part, highlights the dimensions of conflict and multiplicity within the learner's own cultural and subcultural identities and in cross-cultural encounters (1999, p. 164). And the instructor's cultural position is certainly no less complex. Thus Murti (2002), a South Asian professor of German, underscores the unique advantages of the non-native instructor, who, in her words, is well situated to 'teach people from other cultures how to use somebody else's linguistic code in somebody else's cultural context' (p. 29). According to these analyses, conflict, exhilaration, and even ambivalence are equally strong signs of life in the inter-cultural learning process. Instructors and students alike occupy multiple subject positions, and the L2 or FL classroom can therefore be conceptualized as a place of cultural intersection, a context in which to learn about Canadian, French, or other cultural and subcultural identities. Relevant questions in this kind of culture learning are relational rather than absolute (Brière, 1986); studying another people's values and practices tells us something about our own. Framing the question as relational rather than objective is an important step toward what Brière has called perceiving the other 'as a cultural subject rather than a cultural object' (p. 204) and also toward understanding oneself as culturally determined. Thus, questions such as, 'What similarities and differences between the first and second culture can we see?' 'What is particularly appealing or unappealing to us, and why?' 'What is unexpected or difficult to understand?' and, especially, 'What might others find strange about our ways of speaking or thinking?' remind learners of the relational nature of cultural observation. The ongoing process of identifying and understanding similarities, differences, affinities, and disaffections is a feature of critical pedagogy that allows for a mix of cultures –and for an honest, intelligent accounting of mixed feelings as well.[3]

Culture learning goals: Which culture(s) to teach?

Culture-specific content includes knowledge about societal values, practices, and products. These goals relate to the recognition and comprehension of distinctive cultural viewpoints on various issues and patterns of behaviour and interaction, as well as to familiarization with cultural products of many kinds, ranging from implements of daily life

to paintings or literature. Culture-specific content includes features of high and low culture commonly found in textbook material, such as practical aspects of daily life, and civilization topics such as social and political institutions, economic trends, or the arts.

As Fantini (1999) has suggested, the heterogeneity of low-context cultures (those that exhibit more and greater differences among groups and individuals) 'raises questions about what cultural aspects to teach without overgeneralizing' (p. 186). This has always been the case –for all instructional materials and programs inevitably reflect conscious or unconscious choices about the social situations and participants to be represented and described –but the question of what exactly constitutes the C2 or the target culture(s) is even more striking in the face of the expanded focus on the francophone world, the multicultural Canadian context, and changing demographics within France. It is also difficult for instructors to acquire familiarity with, let alone expertise in, the wide range of regions and cultural topics typically included in textbook material. In many cases instructors may not have first-hand experience with one or more of the target cultures, or, if they do, it may not be recent or in depth (Damen, 1987, p. 56; Allen, 2000, p. 52).

Within Canada, the cultural hetereogeneity of Montreal and the province of Quebec is increasingly complex, and for the francophone population outside of Quebec the relative importance of language and regional affiliation to cultural identity is a pertinent question. In addition, as LeBlanc and Courtel have indicated, French Canadian culture can be defined as a 'culture of situation,' meaning that cultural identity is tied to the situation of being a 'linguistic and cultural minority, at once threatened and seduced by assimilative forces,' more than to particular behaviours, beliefs, or customs (1990, p. 83). Sensitization to the deeper social/political dimension of cultural identity is of particular importance for the Canadian context, and for countries like Switzerland and Belgium as well.

In France, the relative homogeneity of the past has given way to much greater ethnic diversity as a result of economic migration. In addition, distance and, to some extent, dissimilarity have diminished in recent years, given the globalization of cultural trends and the extraordinary accessibility of news, film, and music. Although cultural difference has not evaporated, and the negotiation of social interaction still calls for skill and understanding, it is safe to say that North American students today recognize more of their own world on the other side of the Atlantic. And while Europe arguably does not represent a culture as such, many transnational institutions and structures are now a familiar part of French political and economic life.

The notion of hybrid cultural space more aptly describes today's world, as suggested in a 2002 issue of *PMLA* devoted to the theme of mobile citizens, media states, and the relative meaninglessness of place in a global economy. Heterogeneity and multiplicity of cultures are quite simply the hallmark of contemporary life, and cultural identity within nations is marked by increased fluidity and complexity (Rodowick, 2002, p. 16). Artists themselves are often products of mixed cultural heritage and reflect that diversity in their work. Thus, for example, singers Hélène and Célia Faussart of Les Nubians, born to a French father and Cameroonian mother and raised in both France and Chad, assert their *afropéanité*, a cultural identity stemming from colonization and migration that they see as newly formed, *'en construction'* (Dicale, 2003, p. 15). The mixing of languages (French, English, Creole, Spanish) in the rap music of Quebec's hip-hop community is another striking example of the hybridization of cultural and linguistic identity that marks contemporary urban life (Sarkar, Winer, & Low, 2005).

Given the phenomena of global interdependence and increasing cultural diversity within national boundaries, comprehensiveness in curricular content is impossible and coherence elusive. Accordingly, instructors and program developers must make decisions about what content areas to select, based on some mix of factors including students' need or desire to know, curricular guidelines, and instructors' expertise and/or areas of interest. In the larger picture, however, the need for selectivity is not cause for lament. Acknowledging that we cannot grasp culture in its entirety is an exercise in realism and humility. As Damen (1987) has suggested, all cultures are in process: 'Cultures and cultural patterns change. It is more important to learn how to learn a culture or adapt to these changes than to learn the 'facts" and 'truths" of the moment' (p. 88). Reducing coverage of cultural content makes space for consideration of important culture-general issues, such as the need for empathy with others, and for understanding the nature of culture (pp. 262-263) and its internal conflicts. A greater focus on the nature of cultural identity, with examples from both home and target cultures, allows students to appreciate the cultural heterogeneity that defines self and other at any given moment and over time.[4]

The culture-general goal of cross-cultural awareness

Culture-general curricular objectives include fostering dispositional attributes such as tolerance of and respect for cultural difference or interest in the unfamiliar. In addition, one of the most basic and important goals of intercultural education, many educators and

researchers agree, is to lead students to some understanding of the notion of culturally determined behaviour as such (Fantini, 1999, pp. 167, 184-185; Kramsch, 1983, p. 438; Mantle-Bromley, 1992, p. 119), so that they begin to see themselves, not just others, as culturally *marked.* In Byram's terms, this amounts to an understanding of the relativization of self (1997, p. 22); thus, Byram's seminal definition of the inter-cultural speaker includes recognition of self and other as socially constructed (Roberts, Byram, Barro, Jordan, & Street, 2001, p. 30). Decades ago, Hall (1959) suggested that the primary goal of language and culture study 'is not to understand foreign culture, but to understand our own' (p. 53). And, as Damen (1987) has argued, awareness of self is a necessary corollary to awareness of others:

> Cross-cultural awareness involves uncovering and understanding one's own culturally conditioned behavior and thinking, as well as the patterns of others. Thus, the process involves not only perceiving the similarities and differences in other cultures but also recognizing the givens of the native culture. (p. 141)

In a similar vein, Brière (1986) argues for an approach that acknowledges the relative nature of any discourse on a second or foreign culture and defines the observer's position as subjective rather than neutral or absolute.

The goal of understanding self and other as culturally constructed features in both the culture syllabus of the National Core French Study (NCFS) in Canada and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) National Standards. Among the general objectives of culture learning cited in the NCFS is the broadening of students' cultural horizons, defined as openness to cultural difference and altered awareness of one's own culture (LeBlanc & Courtel, 1990, p. 86). Similarly, one of the ACTFL Standards stipulates that students 'recognize that cultures use different patterns of interaction and can apply this knowledge to their own culture' (National Standards, 1996, p. 216); students reaching this objective are said to understand their home culture as distinct and to develop some understanding of the concept of cultural specificity and cultural systems, continually discovering 'perspectives, practices, and products that are similar and different from their own culture' (p. 216).

In addition to identifying the learner's position as a cultural subject, the development of cross-cultural awareness requires recognizing the internal diversity and conflict that typically characterize the home culture (Galloway, 1999, p. 164). Instructors and learners alike, as

cultural subjects, are constantly in process; we belong to subcultures defined by ethnicity, gender, geography, generation, and other factors. Coming to terms with cultural others requires recognizing others within –on a personal level but also as a multicultural society. The purpose of developing awareness of self as a cultural subject in classroom study is thus to increase students' understanding of the nature of cultural identity, with its conflicts and multiple dimensions, to make cultural practices in their own environment visible to them (Crawford & McLaren, 2003, p. 146), and to preclude simplistic reactions to difference and overgeneralization about regional or national culture(s). Whereas cross-cultural *training* is focused on developing an individual's practical ability to function in a second or foreign culture, the understanding of self as culturally determined is closely associated with the humanistic values L2 *education* is designed to promote, and it is a valuable asset for lifelong learning as well. Individuals may eventually forget particulars of their knowledge about a culture (and particulars change in any case) but keep in mind more general notions about approaches to culture learning, categories of cultural behaviour, or the nature of language–culture relationships.

Given the wide range of motivations and dispositions commonly found among intermediate-level students, careful consideration of goals for culture learning is paramount. An analysis of learners' real world and academic needs, in terms of cultural knowledge, awareness, or ability to function in culturally appropriate ways, is a first step. With whom will students be interacting, and in what contexts? For many learners of French, the second culture is close at hand. Others may travel to France, Morocco, or another Francophone country and communicate with educated native speakers, or use French as a *lingua franca* to speak with foreigners they meet abroad. Still others may never have occasion to interact with French speakers of any kind, and the cultural component in language coursework must be meaningful for those students as well. A second/foreign language curriculum driven by humanistic objectives as well as practical ones would place greater emphasis on cross-cultural awareness than is commonly the case, while maintaining a limited, carefully selected share of culture-specific content, depending upon students' interests and needs and instructors' expertise.

While many instructors and curriculum developers might agree in principle that cultural self-awareness is a valuable goal, academic programs in which it figures prominently are perhaps not so easily found, particularly at lower levels or in required courses. Work of this nature may be seen as moving beyond the domain of language and culture teaching into that of anthropology. However, when the self-

awareness component of culture learning is missing, a skewed perspective on second or foreign cultures may emerge. The following suggestions for a cross-cultural awareness module are offered in the interests of strengthening this dimension in the early stages of language learning.

A curricular module on cross-cultural awareness

If time permits, or if traditional content coverage can be reduced, intermediate-level secondary or university courses might begin with a one- or two-week unit on cultural awareness, taught in both L1 and L2. While unorthodox, a curricular unit of this kind, with activities designed to encourage reflection on cultural behaviour in the home environment and the concept of culture-specific behaviour itself, would unarguably provide students with an extremely valuable perspective on the cultural dimension of communication and language learning.[5] The module is suggested for the intermediate rather than the introductory level, to ensure that learners have had enough contact with the L2 or FL to formulate their own questions about cultural similarities and differences and have acquired sufficient reading proficiency to work with selected L2 texts.

A questionnaire designed to elicit learners' attitudes or questions about cultural issues can be administered at the outset, and students can be invited to reflect on these issues in writing again at a later stage. Regular journal entries, written entirely or partly in the L1, are another vehicle for encouraging open-ended thinking about cultural questions. In addition, instructors and their colleagues can talk with students about their own personal history of intercultural learning experiences and evolving attitudes toward different cultural groups.

Possible topics for the cultural awareness unit include (but are not limited to) defining the self as cultural subject; subcultures within the home culture; insider views of the second/foreign culture; outsider views of the home culture; culture-specific language behaviour; and cross-cultural misunderstandings. The activities described below can be selected *à la carte,* according to the needs of particular students and programs. If an extended, 'stand-alone' unit is not feasible, a smaller selection of activities can be integrated at regular intervals into the course syllabus.

Self as cultural subject

At the outset, students are invited to reflect upon the cultural dimension of their own identity. The instructors can model this process by sharing a short list of attributes, values, or behaviours descriptive of herself that

she considers to be culturally determined rather than personal. Students write their own lists, then compare them with those of classmates as a prelude to whole-group discussion. Alternatively, in an activity outlined by Paige, Cohen, Kappler, Chi, and Lassegard (2002a), students define themselves as cultural subjects by naming various aspects of their identity (only child, city-dweller, athlete, etc.) in a series of seven or eight different circles that constitutes a 'personal culture diagram.'[6] They then choose one or two identities that seem more important than the others and, in a later stage, associate values with each of the circles. The activity is a vehicle for discussion of multiple influences within one's own life and, as such, is designed to pre-empt reductionistic characterizations of the cultural identity of others.

Subcultures within the home culture

Students are led to consider the nature of subcultural differences or affinities related to age, gender, race, ethnicity, class, or regions in the home culture. A relevant awareness activity suggested by Fennes and Hapgood (1997, p. 203) is the 'piece of culture' exercise, in which a student presents an object that is meaningful to a particular (sub)cultural group, or to him/herself as a member of that group. Students and instructor can also share personal experiences that relate to regional or ethnic identity. The goal of these activities is to raise awareness of self as culturally defined.

Insider views of the second/foreign culture

Ethnographic interviews of native speakers offer a view from inside, a description of a culture in its own terms (Damen, 1987, pp. 59-60), and allow for the discovery of cultural similarities and shared values as well as differences. Studies investigating the factors that influence an individual's response to dissimilarity have demonstrated that engaging in interaction increases attraction to dissimilar others (Broome, 1983, pp. 146-148). Ethnographic approaches reflect this principle and have the added benefit of allowing instructors to learn along with students, relieving them of the role of expert in the culture learning process. The interviewer asks an open-ended question ('What does it feel like to . .?') to begin the conversation, makes an effort to listen carefully to the response, and follows up on the interviewee's thought, without judging what is said or over-managing the line of inquiry.[7]

Ethnographic interviews, which expose students to a personal perspective on cultural issues, are a particularly practical and rich resource for inter-cultural learning in the Canadian context. A view of

language as integral to identity has particular significance in a bilingual or multilingual environment (Wright, 1996, pp. 49-51). In order to explore the connections between language, culture, and identity in such an environment, students can be assigned 'home ethnography' tasks in which they investigate aspects of their own culture as a first step, interviewing one another, for example, about attitudes toward the use and social/political status of first and second languages or about questions of regional, national, and linguistic affiliation. As a follow-up, they might interview an anglophone, francophone, and/or bilingual member of their local community on a topic relating to language use in daily life, such as the connections between language and identity or a speaker's use of both languages (code-switching) in a bilingual environment. Other possible topics include cultural practices (beliefs about health, eating, education, work), or political issues (immigration, attitudes toward government).

If there are relatively few native speakers of the L2 in the community, one informant can be interviewed by the whole class. Instructors can also invite more advanced students into the classroom to share results of ethnographic interviews or other projects they have conducted as part of a cultural exchange or study-abroad experience.[8] Another option is for learners to conduct e-mail interviews or engage in video-conferencing with peers from a French-speaking region or country (Robinson-Stuart and Nocon, 1996). Sanaoui and Lapkin (1992), for example, describe a joint computer-networking project between anglophone and francophone students in Canada in which participants exchanged views on such topics as cultural identity (as it relates to city, province, and country), immigration policies, language issues (including Quebec's Bill 101), and racism. Although the project was not designed to focus specifically on culture, students reported acquiring significant insights into the C2 as a result of the exchange.

Outsider views of the home culture

In order to explore outsider views, learners can analyze the representation of second/foreign cultures or subcultural communities by various media. Students work with a collection of ads, editorials, or newspaper headlines and search for common elements in the portrayal of a particular region or country, (re)constructing the semantic field that may define a prevailing cultural view.[9] Yet another contrastive activity consists of viewing a videotape of French-speaking students in an ESL or EFL class, such as the segment included in Unit 5 of Petit's (2000) video program, *A French City Speaks* (Study Guide, p. 31). Watching

French middle-school students attempt to respond to their English instructor's questions in English (e.g., 'What do you *always* do? What do you *sometimes* do? What do you *never* do?' to elicit present-tense verbs) allows students to see their own language, which they take to be natural and given, as something others work to acquire.

Texts dealing with the home culture written from a foreigner's perspective, such as travel guides written for the tourist from France visiting Canada or the United States for the first time, also allow students to see themselves as *other* –and perhaps enjoy the view. For example, a passage from *Le Guide du routard : États-Unis*, included in the intermediate textbook *Ouvertures*, explains for the reader a number of mysterious American food habits (Siskin, Field, & Storme, 2001, pp. 58-59), and the French tourist on his way to Canada is informed matter-of-factly on the guide's Web site that 'les Canadiens [.].se nourrissent généralement mieux que les Américains' (Routard.com, n.d.). *Le Guide USA mode d'emploi*, published for French citizens living in the United States (*France-Amérique*, 2004), offers short texts explaining such topics as American regional differences, attitudes toward the law, and driving habits. Reading the outsider's view (in English or French) and understanding it as a particular cultural 'take' provides good food for thought. As a pre-reading activity, students can be asked to imagine, on paper or in conversation with a classmate, how someone from another culture might view the particular habit or ritual described in the text.

Finally, students can interview immigrants or foreign residents in the community, focusing on issues of cultural adaptation. As a whole-group activity, class members brainstorm ideas for a list of customs, rules of social behaviour, and/or elements of language (e.g., the functional value of expressions such as 'See you later' or 'Let's have lunch!') that might prove ambiguous or misleading to outsiders. Students subsequently interview their informants to learn about cultural similarities or differences they found surprising and other experiences in adjusting to life in a new cultural environment.

Culture-specific language behaviour

Consideration of speech acts such as extending, accepting, or refusing invitations; apologizing; and offering or receiving compliments provides a glimpse into the rich field of intercultural pragmatics. Students analyze how these acts are usually accomplished in English in contexts familiar to them (e.g., among friends, in student-teacher interaction, with acquaintances, or among strangers). Following this, they view segments of television programs or films to listen and look for ways in which

speakers of French behave in similar contexts. Interviews with native speakers focusing specifically on pragmatic issues are another alternative.[10]

Cross-cultural misunderstandings

Students work together to analyze critical incidents related to interaction in daily situations, in an attempt to identify cross-cultural issues or misunderstandings at work. DeCapua and Wintergerst (2004) and Brown and Eisterhold (2004) provide numerous scenarios and suggestions for discussion or written reflection relating to cross-cultural miscommunication. Platt's (1996) *French or Foe?* offers an intelligent discussion of the norms of interaction in an affiliation culture, where being known matters, and provides entertaining examples of typical misunderstandings and infractions of these norms by foreigners, in service encounters and other situations. Advanced students might also share personal examples of critical incidents or cultural problems encountered during a cultural exchange or study-abroad program.

C2 and L1

The importance of maximizing target-language input and practice in the classroom is an accepted maxim in L2/FL pedagogy. Instructors may understandably be reluctant to use class time for spoken interaction in English, particularly in courses with relatively few contact hours. When culture learning enters the mix, however, the need to maintain *le bain linguistique* becomes less obvious even in more traditional formats, given that a significant portion of textbook cultural material is written in the L1. Chapter themes may be introduced by means of short texts or questions in the L1, leading students to think about cross-cultural issues, for example. A number of L1 reading and writing activities can be assigned as out-of-class work, to be sure. But conducting classroom discussion of potentially complicated issues using the L2 alone is not always practicable, even at intermediate levels.

Discussion of cross-cultural issues in the L1 at early stages of L2/FL study has the advantage of allowing for a more sophisticated approach, engaging students intellectually and preparing them for important aspects of the language and culture learning process. It is probably unrealistic to attempt to 'do it all' in this sense; choices must be made, priorities carefully thought through. That said, it is certainly feasible to

judiciously integrate the L1 into classroom interaction, for limited periods and for specific purposes, if students clearly understand the contexts in which it is allowed. Coherence and discipline on this issue are more easily maintained if the activities or situations in which the L1 can be used are completely routinized and predictable.

A modest proposal

If the goals of culture learning are less tied to coverage of content and more allied with the notion of engaging students' interest in and appreciation of cultural identity and difference as such, instructors and students alike may feel less overwhelmed. Practically speaking, the goals of a curriculum oriented toward cross-cultural awareness are in some sense more modest, but arguably more salient, than those of a traditional content orientation. The reality that culture as content or product cannot ever be adequately 'covered' is important to recognize; acceptance of that reality can free educators to focus on fostering understanding of the cultural dimension of thought, values, and communication. Cultural understanding is not an automatic by-product of language study (Brière, 1986, p. 205), and it is therefore important to accord it more emphasis in early stages of instruction. For students who study a second or foreign language as a requirement, a module of this kind may well be a unique, formative opportunity to reflect upon the nature of language and culture itself and on the cultural dimension of their own identities. For instructors, the challenge is to understand and acknowledge learner attitudes that are foreign to us and to understand and reveal ourselves to our students as cultural subjects, explaining our own personal history of cross-cultural learning experiences and evolving attitudes toward other cultures.[11] If students emerge with a sense that culture is *here* as well as *there*, if they begin to recognize the differences that reside within self and home, and can respect rather than fear the unfamiliar, they will have crossed an important educational threshold.

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Notes

1 See, for example, the insightful analyses of Americans' long-standing images of France by Verdaguer (1996), Rosenthal (1999), and, most recently, Knox (2002).

2 See also Kramsch's discussion of cultural authenticity as a relational concept (1993, pp. 178-180).

3 The Web-based Cultura Project at MIT, in which American intermediate students of French communicate electronically with students of English in France, analyzing and exchanging their perspectives on concepts and issues such as suburbs, individualism, freedom, and parenting, is an exceptionally rich model of relational cultural analysis (Furstenberg 2003).

4 See Nemni (1992) for an important discussion of the dangers of an intercultural discourse that reifies both self and other by conceptualizing homogenous, unchanging cultural identities.

5 A number of scholars and educators have argued for an enhancement of cross-cultural education in foreign language departments. See, for example, Byrnes (1990) on the need for a cross-cultural component in international studies programs; Rivers's (1993) proposal of a combined linguistics and anthropology course for undergraduates; and Jurasek's (1996) ideas for 'learning-to-learn subsets on culture' in intermediate language coursework.

6 See also Galloway (1999, p. 166) for an activity in which students create personal lists of factors that determine their identity; Mantle-Bromley (1992, pp. 123-124) for activities to help students understand the nature of culture-bound behaviour in general and constitutive elements of their own culture in particular; and DeCapua and Wintergerst (2004) for a wide array of 15- to 20-minute simulations and activities designed to foster cross-cultural awareness, including understanding of stereotypes and cultural miscommunication.

7 See Damen (1987, pp. 64-69) on ethnographic inquiry; Hickey (1980, pp. 479-480) for suggestions of topics to investigate and descriptions of elicitation techniques; Allen (2000) on interview assignments; and Barro,

Jordan, and Roberts (1998) for ideas on ethnographic projects for language learners.

8 Kappler (2002) describes a cultural discovery assignment in which students abroad 'take pictures of things that surprise them, disappoint them, or make them homesick, or interview an experienced staff member about their adjustment experiences' (cited in Paige et al., 2002b, p. 52). In this task, students articulate what cultural adjustment means to them personally and discuss ways in which cultures differ from one another, as well as strategies to understand and cope with these differences.

9 Knox's (2002) analysis of the characterization of France in the *New York Times* headlines of recent years offers avenues of thought for this kind of exercise.

10 Washburn (2001) suggests using TV situation comedies to raise awareness of cross-cultural pragmatics, and Tanaka (1997) outlines projects in which learners interview native speakers about L2 sociocultural speaking norms. See Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989) for studies of requests and apologies in Canadian French; for spoken French in France, textual analysis such as that found in Carroll's (1987) chapter on French conversational norms and Wieland's (1995) study of complimenting behaviour offer additional material for discussion.

11 See Byrnes (1990) on the value of an instructor's personal experience in teaching cross-cultural awareness.

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