

# Implementing Multiculturalism and World Language Standards in Teacher Preparation Programmes

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## Introduction

During the transition years marking the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century a paradigm change has occurred in the teaching of World Languages in the United States when the national standards for the teaching of foreign languages reached full development and were implemented across all the states. The Five C's- Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons and Communities were incorporated in the program standards for the preparation of World Language teachers (Appendix A) and in their classrooms. Two of the five national standards were designed to promote an understanding of the culture of the target language. However, the interpretation of the concept of Culture within the standards can sometimes be evident at only a surface level, an approach which multiculturalism describes as the Four F's approach: Food, Fashion, Festivals, and Folklore (Banks 2002, Sleeter and Grant 2002). The purpose of this study is to bring together foreign/world language standards and multicultural research in an effort a) to determine how and if two groups of pre-service teachers of foreign/second language have come to understand the difference between a surface level approach vs. a multicultural approach to Culture supported by their teacher education programs; b) to understand how the foreign/second language students from two programs determine what type of approach is incorporated in the textbook adopted by their school district and used in their teaching practice and c) how a modified language curriculum impacts the integration of Culture and provides a multicultural perspective of culture in foreign/second language teacher interns' classroom settings.

In this study the researchers describe the results of a qualitative study conducted with teacher education participants enrolled in foreign/world language licensure programs in two different colleges located in the United States. The rationale for this study is based on the principles of critical pedagogy, multiculturalism, and metacognitive theory. Freire's concept of *conscientization* (1970, 1998) and praxis lead to self-awareness

and a cycle of action-reflection-new action that can transform one's reality as an agent of change in a teaching community (Diaz-Greenberg, Thousand, Cardelle-Elawar and Nevin 2000). It also connects to another recent study where professors adopted a dialogic approach to teaching content and culture that incorporated teacher candidate shared reflections to promote the acquisition of a culturally sensitive pedagogy. A primary goal of this study was to prepare language teachers to work with linguistically diverse students to promote deep multicultural understanding by incorporating a "power of perspectives" approach (Osterling and Fox 2004).

## Context and purpose of the study

In the United States, there are several tiers of foreign language Standards that frame our work with students. Working from standards for K-12 student learners, to teacher standards for knowledge of content and pedagogy, and then to teacher educational institution standards, each set is interconnected with the others in content requirements. These standards state clearly what students and teachers should know and be able to do (See Appendices A & B) helping to ensure the quality of the teachers who exit teacher education programs. These national standards that were written and adopted toward the close of the twentieth century created a paradigm shift from an emphasis on teaching to a focus on learning (Sandrock 2000, Shrum and Glisan 2005).

The Standards place a strong emphasis on the acquisition of cultural knowledge of the target language's culture(s). Just as learning a language means far more than knowing about its linguistic system, understanding another culture goes beyond being able to state facts about a country or exchange recipes of the food students enjoy. Teachers need to go beyond the mere surface level understanding of any culture

in order to engender in their students the growth of a deeper understanding of cultural knowledge, one that will foster sensitivity to the needs of all learners. "Linguistic and cross-cultural competence is both a pathway and a goal" (Osterling and Fox 2004) that should be actively incorporated in our world language classrooms, and most particularly in teacher education programs, to facilitate deep learning and actualize full language proficiency at all levels.

Culture is an essential part of the language classroom, and although considerable attention is paid to it in teacher education programs, it is the realization of the researchers that it should not necessarily be considered a given that just because teacher education programs espouse the importance of Culture that our teacher education candidates will automatically understand how to adequately and responsively integrate world culture into their own language classrooms so that its implementation is integrated in meaningful ways. In contrast to the goal of a deep and meaningful implementation of the Cultural Standard, according to Lange (1999), some foreign language teachers merely help students demonstrate an understanding of the practices, products, and perspectives of the culture being studied. This approach limits the definition of culture and trivializes culture's complex nature, reducing instructional content to what multiculturalists refer to as the 4 Fs approach: Food, Fashion, Festivals, and Folklore (Sleeter and Grant 2002, Banks 2002). The 4 Fs approach is superficial and assumes that the students will recognize their own stereotypes, put them aside, and then discern that their culture is not superior but only different from the culture of the target language. Making this leap can be a difficult task for students in the United States because, as Pufahl, Rhodes, and Christian (2000) state, "All too often U.S. parents and educators feel that they do not have anything to learn from other countries and must only look to other examples within our own country" (11).

This study explores through student teachers' reflections and responses some of the factors that are at play in the teaching of culture in the foreign language secondary school classroom in the United States. It reveals how two groups of teacher candidates perceive their own cultural and linguistic reality within the classroom and explores some ways that can promote the importance of a dialogic approach to learning with the goal of providing legitimization of voice in the educational system. This study aims to listen to the often silent voices of teacher candidates and learn from them. As Nieto (1994) pointed out, most studies do not include the students' perceptions of the problems, thus creating a gap: "Students perspectives are ... missing in discussions concerning strategies for confronting educational problems. . . . The perspectives of students from disempowered and dominated communities are ... invisible" (396).

### Research questions

Two questions have emerged to lead this study:

1. What are the perceptions of foreign language teacher candidates regarding Culture whose programs' formation is based on a dialogic approach to learning and an understanding of the contributions of critical pedagogists and multicultural education research (specifically the processes of *conscientization*, a concept from critical pedagogy) to promote culturally sensitive instructional practices (a concept from multicultural education)?
2. Will this understanding lead to teachers' deeper understanding and application of the foreign language standard for Culture in their work with language learners? If so, in what ways?

## Method

The methodology, data collection, and analysis procedures followed a narrative inquiry process in the qualitative analysis tradition (Bogdan and Biklen 1998, Maxwell 1996). Analysis was grounded in critical pedagogy and metacognitive self-regulated theory. It includes a) interviews using dialogic retrospection; b) reflective essays and class electronic posting based on questions posed about culture and classroom practices, background and student learning outcomes; c) analysis of the data for emergent themes (Wolcott 1990), coding (Seidman 1991) and clustering of themes, and e) analysis and organization of themes within and across programs to draw conclusions and answer the research questions.

Data were collected from both the East and West Coast participants during the 2004-05 academic year. The researchers first analyzed in their own institution the participants' written reflections from their course portfolios, electronic discussion postings on *Blackboard 6™* and transcriptions of narratives for generative themes using a constant comparison process in an iterative and recursive manner. They then compared the responses, looking for common themes. Once the generative themes were clustered the researchers correlated the themes and utilized them to answer the research questions. Conclusions were drawn and implications for teaching and research were outlined.

### Participants in the Study

The participants in this study include 22 foreign language teacher education candidates from two large universities. East Coast University (N = 13) is located in the suburbs of a large metropolitan area in the middle eastern coast of the United States; West Coast University (N=9) is located on the west coast of the United States. The professors from these two program sites have established in their coursework a dialogic approach to learning and incorporate performance-based assessments, experiential learning projects, and critical readings to promote dialogue and diverse perspectives in their coursework. In addition to written online and class reflections, three licensure candidates in each university were interviewed in order to extend the researchers' understandings of pre-service teachers' perceptions and to allow deeper discussion about online and reflection responses.

## Results and discussion

Four principle themes emerged from the narratives of the interviewees who were becoming foreign language teachers. Analysis of student reflections from their course portfolios, online discussions, and the interview data revealed large range of academic experiences for the pre-service teachers. For each theme, sample excerpts are provided to illustrate the nature of the theme's response.

*Theme 1: Licensure candidates presented a deep understanding of Culture, discussed the intertwined nature of culture and language, and talked about the importance of embedding culture into their foreign/world language classrooms.*

One of the fundamental goals shared by both researchers is that licensure candidates exit their programs with a deep concept of what cultural understanding is. According to Brown (2004), teacher education programs "designed to examine self-concept, perception, and motivation will generate a more receptive attitude toward multicultural tenets" (326). Candidates wrote that they view culture as an integral part of language. One licensure candidate captured the point of view of licensure peers when he says,

*You can't just teach a language as a set of rules and like something 'over there.' Language is a living thing, something that is changing all the time, just like the people who speak it. My culture is still with me, even if I now live here and not in my home country. Culture is part of us, it is in our hearts and in who we are, and in the words, the beautiful words. I want my students to understand that, even if my country [El Salvador] is now so dangerous, it is a beautiful place. I cannot teach the language without the culture, they are one together.*

In order to achieve a deep understanding, teacher candidates must have structured opportunities for critical reflection on the ways in which culture affects language acquisition and behavior, particularly when teaching students from backgrounds different from their own. Students responded to Jose's electronic posting by sharing their own thoughts and asking more about his experiences and that of his family. This type of exchange is essential for students who may not have lived or attended school in another state or part of the world. If teachers are to help their students understand culture, they must first understand it themselves.

Connie talked about the French that she used in Niger while in the Peace Corps and found that her students' interest was raised when she infused new parts of the world into their daily study. In a recent unit on francophone countries, she not only shared with her class some of the items she brought back from her stay in Africa, but she also invited several African-born students in her school to come in and talk with the class. Connie's said that she is using the same dialogic approach in her classes to promote understanding as she did in her licensure program classes.

In collaborating on the data analysis, the two researchers see a positive progression in the understanding of culture over the past four to five years as the Standards have come more to the forefront of our teaching at all levels. Four years ago, licensure candidates were aware of the Standards, but they did not reveal evidence of a deep understanding of them or some did not actively incorporate them in an integrated manner. For us, the data suggest that the targeted work we are doing and the approach to integration of the Standards that are now embedded in our coursework is providing research-based results we can now share.

*Theme 2: Foreign language student teachers were able to differentiate the "4Fs approach" from the 5Cs approach recommended by the World Language Council of 1996.*

Connie reports that she is working hard to move beyond Culture as 'a study about it' thing. She has invited some Senegalese students to her class to talk about similarities and differences in the French they spoke in their home country and what they hear in U.S. classrooms. Lise spoke of how she is "embedding" Culture in her classes through dialogue and learning experiences where she uses as much authentic realia as possible. In addition to actively incorporating Spanish television and news broadcasts, she has visited several Latino stores to get Spanish magazines to entice her heritage language class to read more. She said, "I don't want culture to be a 'study it on Friday' thing."

*Theme 3: Textbooks tended to dictate the type of teaching activities that student teachers were able to use in the classrooms, but most candidates from these programs applied new approaches to supplement the text.*

Reflections and interviews revealed candidate thoughts and opinions about their textbooks' approaches to teaching culture. Many of them spoke of needing to create their own activities to supplement the text, while others felt overwhelmed with the

rigors and demands of daily teaching. These latter licensure candidates were not able to supplement the text, or felt that the text was doing an adequate enough job of presenting the concept of culture to their students. Wanda commented that she wished the textbook and the curriculum would allow time for more "experiential learning, like we did in our program... We have so much to cover in order to meet all the standards, well, we just don't have time to do much beyond what is already there. I just didn't have time this semester to do much, I was overwhelmed."

Bridgett commented, "The book contains "Encuentros Culturales" which are pages dedicated to going into more details regarding culture and that particular chapter. In a twenty-seven-page chapter there are approximately three pages worth of culture. I feel that this does not adequately represent culture, especially if culture is supposed to be one fifth of what we teach. If this is true, then there should be about five full pages worth of "culture" in a twenty seven-page chapter."

*Theme 4: Student teachers saw that other in-class practices could be used as a basis for cultural understanding, such as critical analyses, thematic instruction, and hands-on learning projects.*

Laura shared: "Well, I am teaching from ... and the cultural aspects from this book are not reflective of what I have learned in my program and of the Latino culture present in California and the United States. They are very European (all from Spain) and very dry. Culture, as I like to teach it and how I learned to teach it through my methods classes and [bicultural] courses, needs to be real and dynamic and should be presented in a relevant way. There is no right or wrong way to look at culture and nothing is set in stone. I like to bring in authentic sources, literature (children's books typical of the culture of choice) so that students have a more broad view of what it is like to be part of this other culture."

Lise had shared a similar point in her interview, as had Connie about francophone countries in regard to world French. They have students discuss their perspectives on political events, point of view about a literary passage, or why a certain custom is important. Wanda said that she had contacted several embassies to help her provide artifacts from countries, and four talked about using the internet to help their students connect with the broader world perspective through email with classes in a country where the target language is spoken. Another intern said that her Spanish students had many questions for fellow teens from a school in Argentina.

## Discussion

Why are these four themes from these foreign language student teachers important for foreign language professors? The researchers found it compelling that candidates from both coasts of the United States stated similar dilemmas they faced when entering the classroom and using their texts on a daily basis. They all revealed a strong awareness of the importance of integrating culture and infusing it into their work on an ongoing basis. Experiential learning opportunities provided licensure candidates with realistic cultural connections. Although both professors felt that they had prepared their candidates thoroughly, they were surprised to find that some were not aware of the content of the textbooks used by surrounding school districts. Colleges of Education might help their licensure candidates carefully evaluate the texts used in the surrounding school divisions and help them learn about the approach to culture that text might take, and thus prepare them to make additions or create supplemental learning experiences in advance of their internship and teaching.

Second, data show that with proper advanced planning and awareness supported by the licensure program, language

teachers even at the student teacher (or intern) level can tie in the teaching of culture using the Five Cs approach even when their textbooks might be actually presenting the Four Fs. Bridget's words reflect the dichotomy faced by many foreign language student teachers as they enter the field of education. On the one hand they are eager to apply the principles of Critical pedagogy which they have learned in their coursework; on the other hand, they find themselves tied to a specific approach as presented by a given textbook. Bridget's words on how it is the teacher, and not the textbook, that should guide the teaching of culture, suggest the importance of incorporating multicultural education and critical pedagogy in a teacher's preparation program. This was echoed by Laura and Nina who describe actions that show foreign language teachers can build authentic classroom experiences from the sometimes "dry" textbooks at their disposal

Laura's words exemplify one of the main problems in the teaching of culture in the foreign language classroom. She points to the textbook's emphasis on the culture of Spain rather than the culture of all other Spanish-speaking countries, regardless of the fact that, most of the foreign language students in the United States are closer to Mexico and Central America than Spain. Lise was able to bring in her insider knowledge as a Spanish speaker from South America. Connie was able to bring the perspectives and cultures of the African francophone countries into her French classroom. Thus, the cultural base of the teacher can often influence (unconsciously) the perceptions and subsequent presentation of the cultural norms of the other culture.

What can foreign language professors do to prepare their candidates to develop and deliver well-articulated, integrated lessons designed to address the complex nature of culture instead of trivializing it or making it mere exposure? They can promote a dialogic approach to provide multiple perspectives, thus capturing the backgrounds of the individuals in the class and drawing on personal experiences (Osterling and Fox, 2004) and funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff and Gonzalez, 1992). This also provides a model teacher candidates can use in their own classrooms. Professors can be encouraged by the emerging literature on critical pedagogy that suggests ways to tap into the struggle for self-awareness (*conscientization*) (Kluth, Nevin, Thousand, and Diaz-Greenberg, 2002; Seufert, 1999; Florez, 1998). In addition, the dialogical approach and the incorporation of critical pedagogy in licensure programs enabled our candidates to experience this approach to learning about the deeper areas of culture and consider its role in their learning.

Our program completers have been able to utilize some of those strategies and techniques in their own K-12 settings. Seufert (1999) lists several methods that have a solid research base for improving language proficiency in speaking and using the language: "Freirean and participatory approaches start with real issues in the learners' lives and develop the curriculum and language skills to address those issues, such as advocating for children, speaking up on the job, or dealing with legal problems." Diaz-Greenberg (2003) provides a well-articulated example of applying a Freirean approach to the foreign language classroom. Kluth et al. (2002) described two participatory methods many educators use to increase awareness of social justice issues and at the same time address the more traditional achievement of course objectives and standards: *Dialogue Teaching*, and *Critical Literacy*.

People learning a new language have the opportunity to read the world in a new way, through the words of the new language, and thus potentially transform their personal experience of the world, and ultimately use this experience to inform decisions. At the heart of a critical pedagogy approach, there is a subtle but important shift of attention to the student

and the student's culture. Meeting the Cultural Standard in foreign language education classrooms should transcend the checklist approach. Culture should be studied, experienced, applied, and utilized to inform knowledge and contextual learning. A cultural perspective should be both the approach and the goal. Fox applies a dialogic learning model into her courses that incorporates a "power of perspectives" approach to teaching and learning (Osterling & Fox, 2004). As students use their own cultural and linguistic backgrounds to provide connections and insight into theory or a topic being discussed, they also begin to establish a community of learners and become a set of resources for one another. The current study provides case evidence of the impact of this approach on the teacher candidates as they begin their teaching careers in foreign and second language classrooms.

Teacher candidates must have structured opportunities for critical reflection, particularly when working with candidates from backgrounds different from their own. Opportunities for honest discussion and presentation of varying perspectives help to open others' eyes. Adopting a dialogic approach to teaching requires that teachers make a fundamental shift from being a principal performer to being a participant learner. By valuing the voices of students, all students and faculty become contributors of knowledge, which strengthens engagement and deepens the knowledge gained.

## Conclusions and implications

The authors' experiences with their teacher candidates ring true when combined with emerging literature from other sources. For those of us in teacher education in the United States, meeting the Standards is an essential goal for our students and our programs. Being able to meet a Standard successfully should include not only discussions about the degree to which that standard is met, but it should also include dialogue and discussion about the pedagogical pathways that serve its implementation. Teacher education programs should look deeply at what their candidates say and how they are implementing the Standards in their classrooms. Only then can we measure what worked and why, and what didn't work and why.

We put forth the idea that all teacher candidates should carefully examine and experience textbooks used in their local school divisions, searching for areas where they might augment the learning experiences of their P-12 students in meeting the standards. This is particularly true when infusing cultural connections into the curriculum on an ongoing basis. If teachers are to reach beyond the "4 Fs," they need to begin to think early in their career about how they are going to accomplish this and begin to establish and share ideas with peers. Textbook companies, teacher education institutions, and school divisions should discuss actively the content of the texts used in the K-12 language classrooms and look at their impact on both teachers and students.

We believe that foreign language professors can positively meet the challenge of preparing their graduates to teach a diverse population of immigrants, children of families displaced by war, children from ethnically and linguistically diverse backgrounds. We need to continue to collaborate across programs, and states, and countries to learn from one another. When professors become liberatory educators on behalf of people from ethnically and culturally diverse populations as well as people who speak a multitude of different languages, the advantages and benefits of education can be more equally distributed to all the people. Meeting the Standards in the area of culture and connections can become an attained goal, one that is experienced on a daily basis in all our classrooms

and upon which language proficiency and authentic learning experiences can continue to be built.

## Appendix A

### Student Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the United States, American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, [www.actfl.org](http://www.actfl.org)

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| <p><b>Standards for Foreign Language Learning</b></p>   | <p><b>CONNECTIONS</b><br/><b>Connect with Other Disciplines and Acquire Information</b></p> <p><b>Standard 3.1:</b> Students reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through the foreign language<br/><b>Standard 3.2:</b> Students acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and its cultures</p>    |
| <p><b>COMMUNICATION</b><br/><b>Communicate in Languages Other Than English</b></p> <p><b>Standard 1.1:</b> Students engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions<br/><b>Standard 1.2:</b> Students understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics<br/><b>Standard 1.3:</b> Students present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics.</p> | <p><b>COMPARISONS</b><br/><b>Develop Insight into the Nature of Language and Culture</b></p> <p><b>Standard 4.1:</b> Students demonstrate understanding of the nature of language through comparisons of the language studied and their own<br/><b>Standard 4.2:</b> Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own.</p> |
| <p><b>CULTURES</b><br/><b>Gain Knowledge and Understanding of Other Cultures</b></p> <p><b>Standard 2.1:</b> Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied<br/><b>Standard 2.2:</b> Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied.</p>   | <p><b>COMMUNITIES</b><br/><b>Participate in Multilingual Communities at Home &amp; Around the World</b></p> <p><b>Standard 5.1:</b> Students use the language both within and beyond the school setting<br/><b>Standard 5.2:</b> Students show evidence of becoming life-long learners by using the language for personal enjoyment and enrichment.</p>  |

## Appendix B

### The ACTFL/NCATE Teacher Standards (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages/ National Council on the Accreditation of Teacher Education Teacher Standards, [www.actfl.org](http://www.actfl.org) and [www.ncate.org](http://www.ncate.org)).

#### Standard 1. Language, Linguistics, Comparisons

Candidates a) demonstrate a high level of proficiency in the target language, and they seek opportunities to strengthen their proficiency; b) know the linguistic elements of the target language system, recognize the changing nature of language, and accommodate for the gaps in their own knowledge of the target language system by learning on their own; and c) know the similarities and differences between the target language and other languages, identify the key differences in varieties of the target language, and seek opportunities to learn about varieties of the target language on their own.

#### Standard 2. Cultures, Literatures, Cross-Disciplinary Concepts

Candidates a) demonstrate that they understand the connections among the perspectives of a culture and its practices and products, and they integrate the cultural framework for foreign language standards into their instructional practices; b) recognize the value and role of literary and cultural texts and use them to interpret and reflect upon the perspectives of the target cultures over time; and c) integrate knowledge of other disciplines into foreign language

instruction and identify distinctive viewpoints accessible only through the target language.

#### Standard 3. Language Acquisition Theories and Instructional Practices

Candidates a) demonstrate an understanding of language acquisition at various developmental levels and use this knowledge to create a supportive classroom learning environment that includes target language input and opportunities for negotiation of meaning and meaningful interaction; and b) develop a variety of instructional practices that reflect language outcomes and articulated program models and address the needs of diverse language learners.

#### Standard 4. Integration of Standards into Curriculum and Instruction

Candidates a) demonstrate an understanding of the goal areas and standards of the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* and their state standards, and they integrate these frameworks into curricular planning; b) integrate the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* and their state standards into language instruction; and c) use standards and curricular goals to evaluate, select, design, and adapt instructional resources.

#### Standard 5. Assessment of Language and Culture

Candidates a) believe that assessment is ongoing, and they demonstrate knowledge of multiple ways of assessment that are age- and level-appropriate by implementing purposeful measures; b) reflect on the results of student assessments, adjust instruction accordingly, analyze the results of assessments, and use success and failure to determine the direction of instruction; and c) interpret and report the results of student performances to all stakeholders and provide opportunity for discussion.

#### Standard 6. Professionalism

Candidates a) engage in professional development opportunities that strengthen their own linguistic and cultural competence and promote reflection on practice and b) know the value of foreign language learning to the overall success of all students and understand that they will need to become advocates with students, colleagues, and members of the community to promote the field.

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