Factors Affecting Success in Contemporary L2/FL Culture Acquisition and Guidelines Involved in the Factors

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Culture in L2/FL education has been subject to discussion among theorists and practitioners especially since the ‘sociolinguistic decade.’ However, not much attention has been directed to contextual factors which could facilitate successful L2/FL culture acquisition and serve to generate some guidance to the language practitioners with effective L2/FL culture teaching methods, practices/activities, materials, and appropriate ways to assess. To address this issue, this paper first examines theoretical and research literatures on the interdependence of language and culture and its implication for L2/FL education. It, then, investigates to see if existing studies in L2/FL culture teaching and learning could provide the facilitating contextual factors. Finally, the study enters into the discussions in which (1) guidelines for future research around the factors, (2) guidelines for appropriate cultural contents and information in L2/FL materials, and (3) some teaching principles in L2/FL culture acquisition methodology are suggested. This is all to make the factors more adequate in contemporary L2/FL education.

I. A CULTURE-BASED PEDAGOGY AND ITS IMPLICATION FOR L2/FL\(^1\) EDUCATION

Although it may have different meanings for different practitioners and theorists, culture defined in language education is seen as “a membership in a discourse community that

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\(^1\) In this paper, the term L2 (or SL) refers to a language that is widely accepted and used for education, government or business within a country where another language is spoken natively. The term FL, however, accounts for a language that has few immediate opportunities within a country where the other language is spoken natively.
shares a common social space and history, and a common system of standards in perceiving, believing, evaluating, and action” (Kramsch, 1998, p. 127). H. Brown (2000) views it as an overarching context to mold a shared knowledge, behaviors, and attitudes in a speech community. Wardhaugh (1992) also sees that culture, not genetically endowed, is a matrix upon which one knows or believes to operate or role in a manner acceptable to its members. Hymes (1972), within the sociolinguistic perspective, notes that culture is the one upon which all types of context (i.e., time, place, person, circumstances, etc.) of a speech community are constructed. Culture is central to providing the types of context with meaning, which is called ‘the cultural meanings of time, place, person, and circumstances.’ The term culture here is used in the sense of whatever a person must have in order to function and live in a particular language society.

Theoretical efforts on the interdependence of language and culture along with its implication for L2/FL education have been exerted and propelled by a number of different schools of thought. The theories of the culture-based pedagogy are as follows: semiotic framework; schema theory; cultural literacy; linguocultural didactics; cultivation theory; and sociocultural approach. Each theory is purely interdisciplinary since contributions to the knowledge base have come from psychology, anthropology, education, and intercultural communication to linguistics and language teaching or vice versa.

From the semiotic framework, language is social semiotic practice (Halliday, 1973; Ware & Kramsch, 2005). In other words, language is a symbolic expression manifested through texts, and culture is manifested through its situation. Meaning and interpretation are possible only through this text-in-situation. The proponents of the semiotic theory concur that there is a symbiotic relationship between human activities in a speech community and its language. Culture plays an underlying role in providing situations of whole speech events, upon which meanings are essentially construed. Therefore, L2/FL learners should learn and develop cultural competence of the target language community.

Based largely upon human cognition, the schema theory of reading plays a key role in linking culture and language (Vegas Puente, 1997; Tseng, 2002). Adherents of schema theory claim that humans store a mental structure, called schemata, which holds previously acquired information (or background knowledge). The two types of schemata have been so far delineated: they are, formal schemata (corresponding to the linguistic organization of texts) and content-schemata (corresponding to the content (or context) area of texts). These structures are held together to provide a fundamental role for background knowledge in the process of inference. In reading, readers who rely upon their knowledge of general schemata may infer many pieces of information from what they read. This means that if a transmitter and a receiver belong to different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, the receiver may find it difficult to comprehend a text. Learners who lack the target cultural background knowledge may be confronted with difficulties in learning the target language;
therefore, understanding the culture of the text is fundamental to obtaining maximum potentials in successful language acquisition.

The idea behind cultural literacy proposed by Hirsch (1989) is not unlike that of schema theory. Hirsch defines it as the common stock of relevant background knowledge of people, places, sayings, events and ideas, and all of which known by all the literate members of a speech community. This very commonly-shared background knowledge becomes part of the national cultural heritage and always finds its manifestation in any spoken and unspoken situations. This knowledge determines how new information is mapped on to existing knowledge and how it eventually ensures successful communication in the target language. Thus, it contributes to achieving L2/FL learners' communicative competence, even though it is not concerned mainly with the mechanism that enables them to reflect sociocultural values, norms, and rules in the use of the target language.

Since the 1960s, L2/FL practitioners in Russia have been using what Vegas Puente (1997) called the 'linguocultural didactics' or what Kodotchigova (2002) called the 'lingvostranovedenie' as a method of teaching Russian as a foreign language. The adherents of the method attest that language reflects sociocultural meaning; thus, in L2/FL education, practitioners have to emphasize the sociocultural mainstreams (i.e., values, norms, and beliefs) and variations (time, place, person, and circumstances) contained in the use of L2/FL language. Moreover, they must enable the learners to manage such information effectively when interacting with members of a target community. Within the framework of linguocultural didactics, language learning is a sociocultural learning, and the target language should become an important channel for achieving sociocultural competence.

Cultivation approach also provides another rationale for the importance of culture in L2/FL education. Borrowing from Lorraine Strasheim (cited in Tseng, 2002), Tseng (2002) claims that learning about culture "changes [or cultivates] a person from a naive individual into one who understands the ways in which he [or she] is shaped by cultural forces, and thus, able to accept the diversity of those forces" (p. 13). It is interesting to notice that cultivation approach stresses that all human beings are, indeed, cultural beings. The realization of oneself as a cultural being and of others as their own across cultures is fundamental to conditioning a positive attitude toward other cultures. It is essentially facilitative to L2/FL acquisition process.

Lastly, perhaps, the most coherent culture-based framework in L2/FL education is the sociocultural approach. Incubated from the sociolinguistic foundation, this approach supports that certain ways of thinking, behaving, and using a language are a direct result of sociocultural values, norms, and beliefs of a speech community along with its variations (i.e., the sociocultural meanings of person, place, time, and circumstances of the speech
community) (Brown, 2000; Heath, 1986; Hinkel, 2001; Hymes, 1974; Lee, 2005a; Savignon, 1972, 2001). In culture learning, the sociocultural approach, first, emphasizes the acquisition of intercultural competence. It is important for both L2/FL practitioners and students to be aware of general empathy and openness toward other cultures. They should also face up to having a positive intention to suspend any judgments and the possibility of cultural differences. Based upon that intercultural communicative awareness, L2/FL teachers and learners enter into manifestations and outcomes of sociocultural values, norms, and beliefs of a target group's speech and behavior. In this manner, obtaining the sociocultural background competence of the target culture is expedited; thus, so is successful L2/FL acquisition.

The culture-based theories here are all truly interdisciplinary with one another in the sense that they all emphasize the importance of culture in the process of successful language acquisition even though their goals and contexts are different. From the theories, it should be noted that successful communication with people from a target language society depends on two factors. Firstly, it is the level of L2/FL learners' understanding on the intercultural dynamics (i.e., intercultural knowledge, behavior, and attitude) of human interaction and communication. Secondly, it is their socio-cultural competency (i.e., knowledge, behavior, and attitude of/toward the sociocultural norms, value, and standards) of a target speech community. Thus, it is no wonder that L2/FL instruction must provide the students with opportunities to the learning of the intercultural communicative competency and that of sociocultural knowledge, behavior, and attitude of a target speech society. This will result in the increase of L2/FL learners' maximum potential in achieving communicative competence.

II. INVESTIGATION OF FACTORS GENERATING SUCCESSFUL L2/FL CULTURE ACQUISITION AND THEIR RATIONALS

In L2/FL acquisition, the factors that most facilitate to get a success in the acquisition of the language have been actively designed and experimented. The following six contextual factors seem to have been reported (Brown, 2000, 2001; Kitao & Kitao 1997; Lee, 2005b; Mitchell & Myles, 1998; Park & Kim, 1997) to be the best: setting, learner, teacher, textbooks (or instructional materials), teaching methodology (or approach), and assessment practices.

However, factors generating a successful degree in L2/FL culture competency have not been actively planned nor experimented with. Given the situation, the present study sets out to investigate theoretical and research literatures related to L2/FL culture teaching and learning to understand and determine if existing studies could provide contributing
contextual factors. The present study believes that the factors serve to generate some guidance about effective L2/FL culture teaching methods, practices/activities, materials, and appropriate ways to assess for the language practitioners.

Throughout this research and investigation, a deeper realization emerged that the context of L2/FL culture acquisition is inevitable and, at the same time, an umbrella concept which subsumes many other factors including the environment; the learner; the teacher; the instructional textbook; the teaching methodology, and the assessment practice.

The following section will provide the rationales in details for the six most contributing contextual factors.

1. Environment

In L2/FL education, the environment (or setting) factor has been classified into two parts: naturalistic setting (i.e., study in a host country) and structured setting (i.e., classroom settings), and an abundant amount of research related to the naturalistic setting has been documented (Brown, 2000; Celce-Murcia, 2001; Paige, Jorstad, Paulson, Klein, & Colby, 1999) due not only to the fact that the language programs have been of interest to researchers in education, psychology, and linguistics, but also to the growing interest in international education with its large international flow of students.

Although not many, studies revolving around the environment as a primary focus on L2/FL culture competency manifest that it does play a key role in learners' acquisition of L2/FL culture. Brown (2000) notes that "perhaps, the best model of the combination of second language and second culture is found among students who learn a second language in a country where that language is spoken natively" (p. 189). The researcher seems to believe that environments could best facilitate L2/FL and its culture acquisition.

Armstrong's (1984) study in Mexico finds that naturalistic settings influence favorable attitudes toward other cultures and a greater level of cultural awareness. Carlson et al. (1991, cited in Lange & Paige, 2003), involving 400 US and European students together with a control group, disclose that some amount of the experience of studying abroad enhances more of cultural interest and 'peace and cooperation' in the intercultural sense than non study-abroad group.

However, the findings from the research literatures are not consistent in that the learning environments always best promote culture learning. Spada (1987) and Freed (1991) suggest that some negative experiences among L2 learners while studying abroad could also be a force to dominate the person's perspective about the new culture, as Halliday (1989) terms the notion as the 'intertextual context' (i.e., one's previous experience helps to shape all other similar contexts) and can act as a possible obstacle to language acquisition and culture learning. In addition, Byram, Esarte-Sarries, Tayler and Allatt (1991) in their
Durham project stress that one negative experience could cultivate negative generalizations.

The structured setting refers to classrooms, especially immersion programs for culture acquisition in L2/FL classrooms. Some studies, not many though, on the role of the classroom regarding its contribution to FL/L2 culture learning have been conducted. Damen (1987), Mitchell (1988), Kramsch (1993), and Brown (2000) all document that classrooms are protective settings where L2/FL learners could feel free to make mistakes without any lasting repercussions. This sense of protection in classrooms enables the learners to safely experiment with the language and thus encourages them to make sense of the language and possibly its culture for themselves. In addition, according to Edwards and Rehoriick (1990), immersion classrooms can make the difference that it has accelerated L2/FL culture acquisition.

However, Ellis (1992) criticizes classrooms as an environment for culture learning by pointing at the rigidity of control over the discourse in the average classrooms by teachers, who decide who to talk and when students start and stop. This decreases not only the opportunity for the learners to learn how to appropriately engage or disengage with the communication process but also the process of interaction and socialization upon which sociocultural values and norms could be best acquired. In addition, Robinson-Stuart and Nocon (1996) claim that culture learning in classrooms is only "cognitive boundary crossing," and, without direct experience of the culture, the acquisition of a "scholarly skill" can leave the learners' previous beliefs and attitudes unexamined (p. 434).

For promoting successful L2/FL culture acquisition, the environment (i.e., naturalistic and/or structured settings) factor in the research literatures has been sought and emphasized. Some degree of immersion in L2/FL culture, whether it is in natural L2 settings or in immersion L2/FL classrooms, does indeed accelerate the language learning and, thus, the culture acquisition.

2. Learner

Even though learners, by nature, are "elusive and difficult to identify" (Paige et al., 1999, p. 101), they are the important contributing factor that could best offer a condition for nurturing successful L2/FL cultural competency. The research on this factor has mostly centered on learner’s motivation and attitude. Since the cornerstone study conducted by Gardner and Lambert (1972), a number of follow-up studies have been successful in examining some existence of linguistic gain from L2/FL learner’s increased motivation and positive attitude. For L2/FL culture learning, Robinson-Stuart and Nocon (1996) investigate students’ motivation for language and culture study. The idea behind the researchers' ethnographic experiment is that a systematic inclusion of cultural components
in a language course will increase motivation to study the language or support adaptation to the culture of the people who speak that language (in their case, Spanish). For the systematic procedure, the researchers include training the students (a third semester of Spanish at San Diego State Univ.) in the following three ethnographic techniques: (1) in-classroom training, (2) in-the-field interviews, and (3) the pre- and post-surveys of the students. From the ethnographic techniques and strong encouragement on face-to-face contacts, there has been a strong positive effect on the student's desire to study the language and use it to communicate. The desire to communicate with the local Spanish speakers helps the students enhance a positive attitude not only toward their own (US) culture but also toward the lived culture of the local Spanish speakers. These results from the ethnographic experiment seem to indicate the "positive perceptual, affective (i.e., attitude), and cognitive (i.e., knowledge) changes" (p. 443) for students in L2/FL classrooms. The results also re-open the theoretical possibility between contact with people of the target culture and a positive attitude, either in the school context or in the target culture while the causality (i.e., exposure to a target culture) is far from being unidirectional (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993). That is mainly because there are a number of other variables in learner factor: e.g., learning style, previous language background/xperiences, language aptitude and strategy use, intelligence, and other characteristics such as age, gender, and socio-economic status, all of which do influence linguistic and cultural outcomes in formal and informal language teaching and learning contexts. It seems that favorable contacts lead to the discovery of cultural similarities and of our common humanity (Kramsch, 1991; Robinson-Stuart & Nocon, 1996).

3. Teacher

Teachers (or practitioners) could best promote L2/FL culture competency in the language classrooms. Byram et al. (1991) find that their students become more ethnocentric in their attitudes toward the target culture with no active teachers' involvement and that the students reflect one of the teacher's roles as the deliberate assistance for them with their process of cultural analysis. The research by Robinson (1978) discloses that the role of teacher of L2/FL classrooms (i.e., their goals, attitudes, and priorities on culture teaching and learning) is a crucial consideration in the process of culture acquisition on the learners. Cook's (1996) study also reveals that the role of teachers is viewed by the students as the most valued source of cultural information if the teachers are equipped with expertise in L2/FL language and culture. In addition, there has been a consensus among most of the L2/FL teachers (Robinson, 1981) that language study is considered to be more than just learning a language. It is an important way of discovering other ways of living and "understanding [other] people[s]" (p. 22). Recently,
Ware and Kramsch (2005) suggest that as learners (i.e., between learners of English in Germany and those of German in US) explore the nature of language and communication across cultures through web-based interactions, "teachers are pivotal in helping them take an intercultural stance" (p. 190).

Teacher's perception (Ryan, 1994); for example, teachers who perceive culture as 'the daily life of people,' are willing to highlight the importance of culture learning in their English classes in Mexico, is an important factor in FL/L2 learners' culture acquisition. Teacher's attitude (Cooper, 1990); for example, teachers with experience with Texas (i.e., the place where teachers live around the multilingual community) are more culturally sensitive and willing to encourage different point of views in the classroom than the Minnesota ones (i.e., the place where teachers live in the monolingual community), is also a significant factor in culture teaching. Besides, teacher's knowledge (Byram et al., 1991); for example, the lack of teachers' experience with French culture hinders their ability to help students bridge the home and the target culture, becomes a significant consideration. Again, teacher's perception, attitudes, and knowledge of/toward/about the nature of culture and cultural diversity appear to have had a consequential impact on their instructional behaviors and methodological choices in L2/FL classrooms.

The research by Paige et al. (1999), however, reports that teachers' insufficient knowledge of and preparation for the task of teaching culture have been prevailing in L2/FL classrooms. According to the researchers, that is mainly because, for a majority of the teachers, not only is culture teaching a relatively new and unfamiliar attempt, but also they have not had any clues on what aspects of culture and how to deliver them to teach in their classrooms.

4. Textbook

Instructional textbooks could provide a context to best foster L2/FL culture acquisition for the learners. Byram et al. (1991) report that instructional textbooks function as an influencing force in most of the internalized knowledge that their students had of French culture. Kramsch and McConnell-Ginet (1992) claim that L2/FL instructional textbooks today still play a fundamental role as the main source of the culture acquisition. In his study of the issues related to adolescent EFL conversation textbook development in South Korea, Lee (2003) contends that activity- and task-oriented EFL conversation textbooks carefully designed for cultural awareness are the best sources that could lead the learners to acquire not only intercultural competency but also the sociocultural mainstreams (i.e., deeper sense of culture such as value, norms, and beliefs) of a target speech community. Also, Mckay (2000) claims that the use of cultural contents in EFL/ESL textbooks provides exposure to living language that learners lack and fosters their motivation.
However, many L2/FL instructional textbooks are problematic in their treatment of culture education (Kramsch, 1987; Kramsch & McConnell-Ginet 1992; Robinson-Stuart & Nocon, 1996; Paige et. al., 1999; Sercu, 2000; Lee, 2005a; Wieczorek, 1994). According to these researchers, one critical problem is rooted in the context of the history of FL/L2 pedagogy. For the last 50 years, L2/FL pedagogical instruction has chiefly focused on the four individual skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking, separately or often times, integrally. When culture is occasionally addressed in textbooks and other instructional materials, it, however, has come down into a body of facts that frequently deal with foods, festivals, simple customs, arts, and other great visible social contributions of the target language society. In such L2/FL textbooks, culture is treated simply as "addendum to the 'real' focus of language study" (Robinson-Stuart & Nocon, 1996, p. 434), and this tendency is based on the assumption that "language can be 'taught' and culture can be 'caught'" (Ibid., p. 434).

Some more complex matters have emerged especially from EFL classrooms where the cultural homogeneity between teachers and learners is mostly prevalent. In the study of EFL classes in South Asia, Canagarajah (1993) discovers that the learners often feel alienated and negative toward the target language culture mainly due to the implicit Western bias of the instructional materials and of instructors. Reinforced by the fact that the sociocultural context of a specific situation in the materials has never been explicitly discussed, the learners feel both anxious and disassociated from the target language and culture. For this, the students indicated that they favored the more traditional approach of learning English: that is, the grammar and a list of vocabulary dislocated from contexts.

With respect to the treatment of culture in existing textbooks, Paige et al. (1999) report that all of the culture information contained in the textbooks is "shallow and superficial," only including the Big "C" domain (i.e., such basic and visible social information as foods, dress, holidays, simple customs and etiquettes) from the culture-specific aspect of culture learning. To the researchers, the findings do come as "no surprising given that the majority of textbooks approach [L2/FL] culture learning as the learning of target culture facts" (p. 102).

Recently, Lee (2005b) analyzes the treatment of culture in 11 high school English conversation textbooks being used in Korea and reports that the textbooks have all undermined both the culture-general aspect (or intercultural) aspect of culture learning and the small "c" domain (i.e., underlying sociocultural mainstreams such as values, norms, and beliefs which are all reflected in the use of the language) from the culture-specific aspect of culture learning. The researcher, therefore, claims that "the 11 high school conversation textbooks might be 'communicatively incompetent'..." (p. 156). He also finds that most of the textbooks except one (publisher, Jihaksa) have uniquely referred all of the Big "C" cultural information (i.e., social customs, etiquettes, dresses, foods, arts, housing,
road and postal systems, shopping, etc.) to the US society. For this, he notes that the majority of the textbooks seem to have constructed the US culture to serve as the supreme source of reference for contemporary Korean EFL learners' understanding of English speaking communities. Such treatments of L2/FL culture in most of L2/FL textbooks may impede the development of positive cultural (including intercultural) understanding (Kramsch, 1987) and fossilize preexisting assumptions and stereotypes (Wieczorek, 1994).

5. Teaching Methodology

Teaching methodology is also influential in leading to successful acquisition of L2/FL culture. This is chiefly, according to Brown (2001), because it provides the language teachers with a pedagogical practice which includes the nature of language/culture and language/culture learning (i.e., approach), a general set of teaching specifications for accomplishing linguistic/cultural objectives (i.e., method), a design for carrying out particular language/cultural aspect (i.e., curriculum/syllabus), and a wide variety of exercises and activities (i.e., technique). However, the research examined on L2/FL culture teaching methodology is problematic mainly because seriously few studies have existed, and most of them have focused predominantly on the definition and scope of L2/FL culture teaching and learning. Virtually, there have scarcely been any methods, designs, and exercises/techniques (except for few works designed and conducted by Fantini (1997), Ramirez (1995), and Cullen & Sata (2000) carried out in the classrooms.

The earliest works conducted by Crawford-Lange and Lange (1984), Kramsch (1993), and Byram (1988) remain in defining culture and delineating a culture learning process. To all the researchers, L2/FL culture acquisition is based upon the following three essential processes: (1) the learning of students' own cultures; (2) the understanding of the relationship between language and culture; and (3) the learning of the ability to analyze and compare cultures. The center of such a culture learning pedagogy suggests meta-awareness (i.e., the learning of culture that is more generalizable in nature and transferable across cultures, not a particular culture group or community) and cross-cultural comparison.

The study by Robinson-Stuart and Nocon (1996) has been to turn to intercultural language learning by using the ethnographic techniques in and outside the classroom. In the technique, the researchers actively encourage the students to experience the process of observing, participating, describing, analyzing, and interpreting. The researchers, in turn, saw that the learners progressed toward the development of intercultural competence. Byram (1997) outlines the features of intercultural education in his book. The features are grouped into knowledge, skills, attitudes, and critical cultural awareness.

Recently, Lange and Paige (2003) propose a model conceptualized for integrating
language and culture teaching, and much of it seems to share a common conceptual core with Byram’s (1988, 1997) and Kramsch’s (1993) previous works. However, Lange and Paige’s model seems to serve as a benchmark for L2/FL culture teaching and learning because one of their major conceptual distinctions deals with the specific aspects of culture learning that are considered to be important in L2/FL acquisition; thus, to be listed in the language education curriculum. The aspects are referred to as both the culture-specific (especially the small “e” domain - value, norms, and beliefs) and the culture-general domains (or intercultural dynamics) of culture learning. The other conceptual distinction made by the researchers is the goals/outcomes of their culture learning and teaching; that is, “It is a dynamic, developmental, and ongoing process which engages the learner cognitively, behaviorally, and affectively” (Lange & Paige, 2003, p. 50). These cognitive (or knowledge), behavioral (behavior/act), and affective (attitude) domains of culture learning appear to deserve appreciation.

6. Assessment

Successful L2/FL culture acquisition could also be facilitated through the assessment practices of the culture learning (or learning process). This is mainly because what is tested in the educational purpose comes from what is taught, and what is taught should be assessed by tests. Indeed, assessment practices could have an enormous power to control learners of L2/FL/EFL culture to what to study or not (Lee, 2005b). It is also, according to Valdes (1990), because the assessment of culture learning gives feedback to L2/FL learners as to the validity of their cultural understanding and informs the teachers about the nature of the cultural understanding.

However, like the other five contextual factors, much of what the present study has found from the assessment practices of L2/FL culture acquisition looks inadequate and problematic. Lange and Paige (2003) ascribe the problems embedded in L2/FL assessment practices to such rigid Western assessment values as ‘fairness’ and ‘objectivity,’ in which L2/FL students are directed only to study the target culture objectively like a set of memorized facts (i.e., simple social customs, geography, foods, and festivals). Other L2/FL researchers (Robinson-Stuart & Nocon, 1996; Royer, 1996) also criticize the objective assessment practices in FL/L2 culture acquisition, because the practices are opposed to "experiencing culture as a process of producing meaning regarding each other's way of being in a world" (Robinson-Stuart & Nocon, 1996, p. 444). Additionally, Kramsch (1991) notes that the assessment of L2/FL culture learning in the US is a setback and still remains quite disappointing. This is because there is a vast discrepancy between guidelines made by most states and assessment practices conducted in most FL/L2 classrooms. While the guidelines stipulated in most states emphasize L2/FL learners'
"cultivating international understanding, responsibility and effective participation in a global age," (p. 221) the prevalent assessment practices still rely on discrete elements of observable cognitive knowledge of L2/FL culture (i.e., tests on historical facts, trivia items, toponyms, vocabulary, and familiarity with the arts, geography of the target language culture).

Some researchers (Bennett, 1993; Damen, 1987) urge that the new assessment tests be developed to measure L2/FL culture learning. Such assessment tests should aim to measure L2/FL learners' ongoing, cognitive, behavioral, and affective knowledge in terms of intercultural competency and the deeper sense of a specific target culture. Bennett's (1993) assessment design, called the Intercultural Development Inventory, seems promising in that it is intended to measure the respondents' degree of intercultural sensitivity which is on an eight stage developmental continuum. Alternative assessment practices (e.g., self-report, role-play, simulations, and essay writing) conducted by Damen (1987) are also invigorating in that they provide L2/FL and culture practitioners with practical practices away from traditional paper-and-pencil-tests.

III. DISCUSSIONS

This paper investigated the nature and scope of L2/FL culture teaching and learning from existing studies and delineated the following most influential contextual factors: i.e., environment (or setting), learner, teacher, instructional textbooks, teaching methodology, and assessment practice. These six factors, among other contributing ones that have not been claimed yet, have all been reported to play a pivotal role in facilitating a success in L2/FL cultural competency. Here, taking these factors into consideration, the current study designs the following guidelines for future research. The study also attempts to draw on both guidelines for appropriate cultural contents and information in L2/FL materials and some of the teaching principles in L2/FL culture acquisition methodology. This is all to make the factors more suitable in contemporary L2/FL education.

1. The Environment Factor

The following guidelines need to be addressed:

1) more studies on the structured setting within the framework of learner variables (i.e., aims, needs, previous academic experiences, age, gender, socioeconomic status, etc.) should be followed,
2) more studies on the specific models of the structured setting (i.e., submersion, immersion, sheltered and bilingual programs) and on each model's association with successful L2/FL culture acquisition should be conducted:

(2-1) further research of what impact such different structured settings can exert on the acquisition of the deeper sense of culture learning should be conducted,

(2-2) further research of the relative impact of such different structured settings on the acquisition of intercultural competency should be conducted.

As for the environment factor, the major emphasis in the research literatures has been the naturalistic setting rather than the structured setting. Many of the studies regarding naturalistic settings report that it can accelerate L2/FL and its culture learning. However, it, by itself, does not vouch for increase in either the language or culture learning. The two conditions seem to have been important. Firstly, it depends upon learners' motivation along with existing language experience/proficiency. Secondly, it is important that learners' immersion experience in the target culture is positive. But what the present study has found is that there has not been much of the research focusing on the structured settings that attempts to create a target culture environment and see its impact on L2/FL culture acquisition. More studies involved in the structured settings - whether they are immersion or submersion settings or sheltered or bilingual programs (see more from Brown, 2001, pp. 121-123) - should be encouraged in association with the following learner variables: 1) L2/FL learners' aims and needs, 2) their previous learning background/experience, and 3) their characteristics (i.e., age, gender, family and socioeconomic background, etc.).

2. The Learner Factor

The following guidelines need to be addressed:

1) further research on the association in which enhanced L2/FL culture competency is the direct benefit of learners' increased motivation and positive attitude needs to be followed,

2) more studies on the correlation between learners' voluntary contact not only with native speakers but also with authentic materials and L2/FL cultural competency should be conducted,

3) depending upon the learner variables, studies on 1) whether or not cultural information will be given and 2) on what cultural information and how much of it will be needed should be conducted,
4) most importantly, research and methodology of how to assist L2/FL learners to move from the ethnocentric to the ethnorelative stage must be designed and actively experimented.

Under the learner factor, the emphases on learners' motivation and attitudes have been noticeable to a large extent that they have an effect on L2/FL. But, scant research indicating that enhanced L2/FL culture acquisition is the direct benefit of learner's increased motivation and positive attitudes has been found. There has also been a lack of the research on the association between learners' voluntary contact with 1) native speakers, also with 2) authentic materials and L2/FL culture acquisition. There should also be other variables in the learner factor to be considered: i.e., learners' aims and needs, their previous learning experience, and socio-economic-and-cultural characteristics. This is to decide whether or not cultural information will be given, and what cultural information and how much of it will be administrated in the language teaching process. The research of motivation and attitude gravitating around the notion of contact and its role in intercultural development is seen as the "embryonic stages" (Paige et al., 1999, p. 85). The question, as posited by Kramsch (1993) and Savignon (2001), is then how to assist learners of FL/L2 to move beyond the still ethnocentric stage of intercultural development into a more promising ethnorelative stage of intercultural development where understanding, acceptance, and adaptation of cultural differences are highly valued and become a norm.

3. The Teacher Factor

The following guidelines need to be addressed:
- various avenues (i.e., seminars, conferences, and teaching methodology) to solidify teachers' positive perception, attitudes, and knowledge of/toward/about the relationship between language and culture and its implication on L2/FL competence must be sought.

The major emphasis from the teacher factor is that the role of teacher is crucial for L2/FL culture learning because teachers' knowledge of, attitudes toward, and beliefs about the nature of culture and intercultural understanding affect the choices of their instruction and methods in the classrooms. The majority of the research notes that most L2/FL teachers perceived that culture instruction was indispensable for successful L2/FL learning, but they were not equipped much with a sufficient amount of culture methodology. Interestingly, the present study has found no research studies reporting that there has been a great deal of demand from L2/FL teachers on intercultural and the culture-specific aspects (i.e., the small "c") of culture learning. Along with that, there has not been more
effort to assist the teachers to learn ways to teach L2/FL culture. As Byram (1998) and Paige et al. (1999) reasoned, it is because L2/FL culture education is a relatively new and unfamiliar attempt, and many of the language practitioners have no simple clues when it comes down to L2/FL culture teaching and learning. Hinkel (2001), Lange and Paige (2003), and Lee (2005b) still maintain that teachers, even though they recognize the importance of L2/FL/ELT culture acquisition when communicative competence is at the core of the language classrooms, have scarcely been offered of any conceptual models suggesting which aspects of culture and what cultural topics related to the aspects of culture are important and, thus, to be listed in L2/FL culture acquisition syllabus. How to deliver them for learners in actual classrooms also needs to be addressed.

4. The Instructional Materials Factor

The following guidelines need to be addressed:

1) designing L2/FL culture teaching/learning pedagogy stressing on both the intercultural aspect of cultural teaching/learning and the deeper sense of a target culture should be conducted,

2) more research on the construction of authentic materials via both on- and off-line for L2/FL culture teaching/learning should be conducted,

3) specific guidelines generating appropriate and effective cultural contents and information in L2/FL textbooks used in contemporary classrooms should be designed.

The research literatures on instructional materials stress the importance on the role of textbooks in the acquisition of L2/FL culture. However, the majority of the textbooks still seem shallow and superficial regarding their treatment of L2/FL culture. They approach culture acquisition as merely learning cultural facts of a target speech community. The deeper sense of a target culture and intercultural aspect of culture teaching/learning have been virtually non-existent in the textbooks; thus, they are not appropriate to L2/FL culture teaching and learning. In addition, there has hardly been any research on the use of alternative textbooks (e.g., authentic materials) for teaching L2/FL culture since the materials are fully and authentically accessible on the Internet. Studies of such materials in classrooms must be further researched in light of their place in L2/FL curriculum.

Moreover, the research on appropriate cultural contents for contemporary L2/FL education has been remarkably scant. The present study made an attempt to design some of the impending guidelines for the cultural contents or information needed in instructional materials. They are as follows:
1) cultural contents or information should address specific learners and situations (e.g., L2 or FL situations or EFL or ESL situations),
2) materials containing L2/FL cultural contents should provide information and suggestions about how the cultural contents may be used and appropriately handled (i.e., classroom instructions, the role of teacher and students, etc.),
3) cultural information needs to be attached with some comments and illustrations, so learners can easily understand,
4) cultural contents should be presented with follow-up exercises or activities, so learners get more motivated and thus involved,
5) cultural contents or information should address what learners are supposed to do, so they can use it actively in interaction or just know them for a better understanding of the target culture,
6) cultural contents should be suitable for the learners in a particular class. The materials using cultural contents or information should notify that the cultural contents are the reality about the target culture or the author’s view (i.e., where are the cultural contents taken from?),
7) cultural contents should not be limited to some particular social groups of the target language society, and they should not be stereotyped,
8) cultural contents must include generalizations (i.e., what is true of the parts is not necessarily true of the parts) about the target culture.

5. The Assessment Factor

The following guidelines need to be addressed:

1) further research on methods of assessing behavioral and affective aspects of L2/FL cultural competency should be followed,
2) developing detailed methods to assess intercultural knowledge, behavior, and attitude in L2/FL education must be conducted,
3) more studies to find out how well the methods of assessment are valid for actual L2/FL classrooms and how much the students, taking the learner variables into consideration, can take them should be needed,
4) further research on how well alternative methods of assessment work for both intercultural and culture-specific aspects of culture learning should be conducted.

In the assessment factor, most of the research literatures criticized the objective testing, which has been used commonly and widely in L2/FL culture testing because the testing is easy to distribute and score in learners' simple cognitive knowledge about a target culture.
This illustrates one of the Western methodological biases on assessment practice - only centering on cognitive knowledge and not on behavioral and affective gains in learning. The present study has found far less research on the methods of assessing behavioral and affective domains of L2/FL cultural competency. The recent attempts of the Intercultural Development Inventory designed by Bennett (1993) seem invigorating for L2/FL culture practitioners because they test learners' intercultural and deeper cultural knowledge, behavior, and attitude. But more research of developing detailed methods of assessing intercultural dynamics (i.e., knowledge, behavior, and attitude) in L2/FL education must be followed. In addition, the alternative methods of assessment have been introduced into L2/FL classrooms (Damen, 1987; Fantini, 1997; Ramirez, 1995). They all seem to be interesting and promising, but no research on how well they work (i.e., their reliability, validity, and practicality) in contemporary L2/FL classrooms and on how much the students in L2/FL situation can take them have been found. There virtually have been no studies centering on how well alternative methods of assessment work for intercultural and culture-specific aspects of culture learning.

6. The Teaching Methodology Factor

The following guidelines need to be addressed:
- designing a L2/FL culture teaching/learning model is inevitable with the following questions taken into consideration:

a) Does the model hold to its underlying principles?
b) Does the model articulate its clear goals and outcomes for L2/FL education?
c) Does the model offer what aspects of culture learning are important; thus, to be taught?
d) Does the model provide specific cultural topics (or themes) to accomplish each aspect of culture learning?
e) Does the model easily incorporate some teaching methods, practices/activities to carry out the cultural topics, and appropriate ways to assess?
f) Is the model holistically presented with a flow of directionality (i.e., L2/FL cultural acquisition is designed in a smooth and stable step-by-step continuous flow)?
g) Above all, is the model realized within a symbiotic relationship with the other five contextual factors?

The teaching methodology is seen as the most significant facilitator of L2/FL culture acquisition; however, the research literatures reviewed on the factor are remarkably few. The earliest works conducted by Crawford-Lange and Lange (1984), Kramsch (1993), and
Byram (1997) dealt mainly with defining culture and delineating features (i.e., knowledge, skills, and attitudes) in L2/FL culture teaching/learning process. The conceptual model designed by Lange and Paige (2003) seems encouraging in a way that offers theoretical contributions to our understanding of L2/FL culture learning as well as practical implications for the teachers: that is, which aspects of culture teaching/learning in L2/FL education are considered to be important. However, it should be pointed out that there are some problems implementing the conceptual model in actual L2/FL classrooms. This is mainly because the model did not offer a general set of specific topics to accomplish the particular aspects of culture learning. It also did not shed a light on kinds of tasks and practice activities to carry out the cultural topics in the classrooms and with materials.

It, in turn, seems clear to suggest that the most urgent work for L2/FL culture acquisition is to develop a new conceptualized model. The model should, first, uphold underlying principles which support the model timelessly in L2/FL classrooms. Here, the present study outlines some of the principles:

1) it is important to note that culture is 'not' shaped as fixed or invariable rules that direct all the members of a speech community. This is to realize the construct of the cultural generalization in which it is indeed descriptions of the patterns commonly detected from the members of one speech community; however, they may not hold for every member of the speech society. The conceptual model should be clear that cultural generalizations are so different from cultural stereotypes (i.e., exaggerated images and beliefs),

2) no culture stands alone as superior and inferior. There are only differences. All learners of L2/FL are encouraged to see them, as Robinson-Stuart and Nocon (1996) argue, through the overlapped lens for better and effective interactions,

3) a culture does not explicate all behaviors in a speech community even though it does greatly in a systematic manner influence behaviors, interactions, and viewpoints. Here, to many L2/FL educators, within a single speech community, there are dynamic sociocultural variables such as age, gender, ethnic groups (if the community is ethnically heterogeneous), personality, socioeconomic and educational levels, all of which, in fact, come down into play in the language use along with pragmatic purpose,

4) too much focus on either cultural contrasts or similarities may not be viewed as best even if the following has been proven (Kramsch, 1987) to be effective – that is, appropriate amount of high-level contrastive relational analyses has helped the learners to better understand how culture influences people and their communication with others. Too frequent stress on differences between cultures may function as a catalyst stimulating especially children and adolescent learners of L2/FL to close
their eyes to what is common to every human being. Too much focus on similarities between cultures may also generate the ignorance of flavors, distinctiveness, and the uniqueness of the other speech community.

5) Finally, the model, above all, should hold that even though there may be some learners who feel the fear of assimilation into what they perceived as something different, it is important to encourage learners of L2/FL to feel that learning of the other speech community culture is for the best and that successful interactions with members of a given target culture are fun, interesting, and ultimately, enriching to the quality of one’s life.

Secured by these principles, the model manifests its vivid goals and outcomes. The goals spell out the aspects of culture learning, as Lange and Paige (2003) postulated. Then the model specifies cultural topics (or themes) through which each of the particular aspects of culture learning could be implemented. The goals envision possible outcomes.

The model should serve as a directive in which a teaching design (i.e., curriculum/syllabus) for carrying out the particular cultural topics and a wide variety of exercise and activities in L2/FL classrooms can be molded, as Brown (2001) noted.

The model needs to be holistic in a sense that provides a natural order (i.e., a flow of directionality) for the successful acquisition of L2/FL culture. This is for that teachers should consider which aspect of culture along with its cultural topics may have to be taught first and then, next, or both could be taught at the same time.

Needless to say, the model should be planned, designed, and implemented by taking the other five contextual factors into full consideration. Thus, learners of L2/FL culture could best demonstrate not only their cognitive knowledge but also behavioral and affective gains through the language proficiency.

REFERENCES


to Speakers of Other Languages


Applicable levels: secondary, tertiary, and more advanced L2/FL/EFL/ESL/EIL education

Key words: L2/FL culture acquisition; contextual factors for L2/FL culture acquisition; culture-based pedagogy (semiotic framework, schema theory, cultural literacy, linguocultural didactics, cultivation theory, sociocultural approach); guidelines for future research in contextual factors.

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