Integrating intercultural communicative competence into the curriculum of a department of foreign languages: an exploratory case study

Terantino, Joe; Stura, Claudia; Smith, Sabine H.; Böttcher, Jeannette Ursula; Universität Paderborn, Deutschland, Kennesaw State University, Atlanta, Georgia

Integrating Intercultural Communicative Competence into the curriculum of a department of Foreign Languages: An Exploratory Case Study

Die Integration von interkultureller Kommunikationskompetenz in das Curriculum eines Institutes für Fremdsprachen: Eine explorative Fallstudie

Joe Terantino

Ph.D., University of South Florida, Director of the Foreign Language Resource Center and Assistant Professor of Spanish and Foreign Language Education at Kennesaw State University

Claudia Stura

Ph.D candidate in International Conflict Management at Kennesaw State University, USA

Sabine H. Smith

Professor of German and serves as Section Head of German Studies at Kennesaw State University (KSU)

Jeannette Böttcher

M.A., (ABD) teaches Foreign (English) Language Education at the University of Paderborn, Germany

Abstract (English)

This article presents an ongoing initiative to integrate intercultural communicative competence into the curriculum of a department of foreign languages. This work identifies and describes the nine emergent steps that were taken as part of the process, giving special attention to the challenges, failures, and successes encountered by the group. In addition, the authors articulate five lessons learned from the project so that other departments, from foreign languages or other disciplines, may learn from the experiences described. The authors conclude with a general statement about the relative difficulty of the project, highlighting the current status and future plans for the initiative.

Keywords: Curriculum reform, foreign language, intercultural communicative competence

Abstract (Deutsch)

Der vorliegende Artikel beschreibt die Initiative, interkulturelle Kommunikationskompetenz als festen Bestandteil in das Curriculum eines Institutes für Fremdsprachen zu integrieren. Zudem werden die neun relevanten Schritte, die während dieses Prozesses unternommen wurden, erläutert. Den auftretenden Herausforderungen, Niederlagen und Erfolgen wurde besondere Aufmerksamkeit gewidmet. Darüber hinaus präzisieren die Autoren die Erkenntnisse, die sie aus dem Projekt gewonnen haben, so dass sich andere Einrichtungen, wie z. B. Fremdsprachenabteilungen oder andere interessierte Institutionen, die hier gesammelten Erfahrungen zunutze machen können. Die Autoren schließen ihren Beitrag mit einer Ausführung über die Schwierigkeit des Projektes ab, beleuchten den derzeitigen Status und geben einen Ausblick auf zukünftige Pläne der Initiative.

Schlagwörter: Reform des Curriculum, Fremdsprachen, Interkulturelle Kommunikationskompetenz

1. Introduction

In a general, educational climate that promotes globalism and cultural diversity, the present case study focuses on the process of introducing intercultural communicative competence (ICC) into the curriculum of the Department of Foreign Languages (DFL) at a regional state university in the southeastern United States. The initiative, sponsored by the university, supported curricular review, assessment, and innovation in connection with the institution's strategic plan and the mission and vision of its College of Humanities and Social Sciences and the DFL. Specifically, the researchers in this case study drew from a major goal of the institution's strategic plan: "Goal #6: To promote an inclusive campus environment through the adoption of [...] curricula that are guided by the principles of diversity, equity, transparency, and shared governance" (KSU 2010:19).

In an ever more global world, and with institutional mandates of providing students with opportunities for intercultural learning, the time was right to launch this comprehensive curricular initiative that was guided by collaboration within the DFL. Because the department's degree program *Modern Language and Culture* is grounded in a proficiency-centered curriculum, instruction is facilitated as much as possible through the target language. Hence the initiative of exploring the role of ICC in the department was convened to examine the role of ICC as an integrated, developmental learning outcome for faculty and students in the department.

To date, a description of this process has not been documented, although an emergent body of scholarship is beginning to explore this visionary direction in the discipline of language study (Banks 2008, Deardorff 2009, Dupuy & Waugh 2011, Landis et al. 2004, Levine & Phipps 2012). This recent scholarship recognizes the approach by which DFL curricula prepare learners with skills, content knowledge, and dispositions related to the target language and culture. However, the literature does not show that programs systematically develop, assess, or measure the learners' progressive attainment of intercultural competence, i. e. the ability to navigate successfully any encounter with difference.

This case study research operationalizes ICC and examines the steps taken to implement the deliberate and strategic inclusion of ICC as a learning goal in the DFL curriculum. The systematic description of the yearlong process is the subject of this case study. The article begins with an overview of the international call to include ICC in education. Then, there is a description of the nine emergent steps that were undertaken throughout the yearlong process, academic year 2010-2011. The final sections of the article relate the lessons learned from the initiative so that others may benefit from these experiences. This research and the lessons learned have led to one indisputable conclusion. An initiative for integrating ICC into the DFL curriculum is difficult, albeit not impossible, and it requires a more complex process than many would think.

2. Intercultural Competence in Europe and the United States

In Europe, with the Bologna Declaration in 1999, a decisive step towards the realization of comprehensive educational goals was taken. The progressing migration within the European Union has made the need for new requirements concerning language education obvious. Foreign language education has to be paired with "adequate intercultural competence" (Stier 2006:2). Furthermore, the old equation, grammar + vocab = language, no longer applies. Realization that a much more comprehensive approach to language education is needed has started discussions about new learning objectives including intercultural competence.

According to Byram, Nichols and Stevens, language and culture are regarded as an "integrated whole" (2001:1) and have been taught under different labels

for many years. Byram sees the focus no longer on training a grammatically perfect speaker, but on the development of an *intercultural speaker*. This intercultural speaker should have "the ability to interact with 'others', to accept other perspectives and perceptions of the world, to mediate between different perspectives, to be conscious of their evaluations of difference" (Byram and Zarate 1997:239ff. see also Kramsch 1998), which in time will help promoting *intercultural citizenship*.

In his article Internationalisation, intercultural communication and intercultural competence Stier (2006:8) proclaims that

> "there is a need for: (1) scrutinizing the ideological basis of higher education; (2) drawing from these ideologies, discussing the role of intercultural communication education in higher education; (3) identifying the cornerstones of intercultural competencies; and (4) proposing an adequate model for ICE." (Stier 2006:8)

However, he emphasizes that so far, neither the higher education institutes nor the teaching personnel is fully capable of meeting the needs of modern societies. Among the European intellectuals the discussion on what exactly ICC is and on how it should be integrated into the education system is far from over. The mission of the Bologna Declaration, however, is a vital step towards an "ideological convergence, a European sense of community and cultural conformity – and, consequently of social harmony" (Stier 2006:4). Ideally, says Stier, ICE should comprise the six 'i-characteristics': intercultural themes, investigative, interdisciplinary perspectives, interactive, integrated, and integrative views (ibid.:8). Once this six step *program* is completed, the outcome should equip the student ideally with the six 'c- characteristics': communicative competence, cooperative competence, confidence, commitment, critical thinking, and comparability (ibid.:9).

Similarly, in the United States the Modern Language Association (MLA) report of 2007 made specific recommendations for foreign language departments to adjust to a *changed world* and

pedagogical paradigm shifts so that foreign language learners would experience their studies as more coherent and integrated (MLA 2007:3), and as equipping students with skills that exceed and transcend functional proficiency in the target language and culture (ibid.:4). As the MLA report states, "language is considered to be principally instrumental, a skill to use for communicating thought and information", but also as "an essential element of human being's thought processes, perceptions, and self-expressions; and as such it is considered to be at the core of translingual and transcultural competence" (ibid.:2). According to the MLA report, the two-tiered configuration of language learning on the one side and literary studies on the other has surpassed its usefulness and should be "structured to produce a specific outcome: educated speakers who have deep translingual and transcultural competence" (ibid.:3). To achieve this goal, the MLA suggests offering students more general courses, like "language and cognition, language and power, bilingualism, language and identity, language and gender, language and myth, language and artificial intelligence, and language and the imagination" (ibid.:60).

With these worldwide movements for reforming language education to include intercultural competence as a major component in mind, the initiative to integrate ICC into the DFL curriculum began.

3. Methods

Based on a qualitative, case study approach, the objective of this study was to reach a full understanding of the process of integrating ICC in the DFL curriculum. Multiple methods of data collection were used for this study, including a questionnaire, a review of foreign language teaching materials and ICC based workshops and presentations, and in-depth readings and discussions. This approach allowed for understanding the process of integrating ICC in its full context (Merriam 1998, Patton 1990, Stake 1995, 2005). Interpretations culled from analyses, drawn

on comprehensive descriptions of triangulated data, were intended to offer new perspectives on this previously uninvestigated field. The purpose was neither to understand some abstract construct nor *theory building* (Merriam 2009), it was to understand this particular case, which may indicate starting points for future research. As the research question was the driving force behind this study, the purpose was to examine the steps taken in an effort to explore the integration of ICC into the curriculum of the DFL.

3.1. The Case Study Approach

To gather the necessary data to depict the department's approach to integrating ICC, the research paradigm for this study was qualitative, utilizing the case study method. The qualitative paradigm was chosen for this research because it is intended to form an in-depth understanding of the case being investigated. Yin states that a case study "investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (2009:13). Observing the participants in a situated social context was essential for this research. In this study the researchers attempted to describe the case, analyze the themes present in the description, and ultimately make some interpretations from the data. By incorporating data from multiple sources, the object was to reach a full understanding of the phenomenon. In accordance to Yin's (2009) case study method, the scholars studied certain decisions in the process: why they were taken, how they were implemented and with what result. Hence, this study examined the following research question: Which steps may be taken to explore the integration of ICC into the DFL curriculum?

3.2. Role of the researchers

It is important to note that the primary researchers in this study also served as participants in the faculty learning community (FLC) under examination. Because of this dual role as researchers and participants, they began the study with existing relationships within the department and the broader university community. These relationships facilitated the study by providing ease of access and a familiarity with the inner workings of the department. It was also essential for the researchers to acknowledge their role in data collection and analysis. Morse and Richards (2002) refer to this as awareness of self. In this manner knowledge was socially constructed by the researchers as they participated in the faculty learning community.

3.3. A Description of the Setting and the Participants

The setting of this study was the DFL at a large, southeastern university during the academic year 2010-2011. This department offers a major in Modern Language & Culture. Spanish is the predominant language taught by the department, and French and German are also offered as options for the major. In addition, Chinese, and Italian are choices for a minor.

The unit of analysis in this case study consisted of FLC members, taskforce members, workshop participants, and interested DFL faculty members. These participants consisted of a diagonal cut of the department's administrative and teaching faculty, lecturers, part-time instructors, and a graduate research assistant with foreign language expertise and a research focus in intercultural competence. Multiple languages were represented in this community including: Chinese, French, German, Italian and Spanish. In addition, several of the faculty participants held joint appointments in a foreign language and in foreign language education. Last, it is important to note that both the members of the faculty learning community and the task force received incentives provided by grant funding. These incentives included book purchases for readings and discussions and participant stipends. They were also required to attend 80 percent of the seminars and workshops and to engage with reading materials.

3.4. Data Collection

For this case study data were collected throughout the academic year 2010-2011. Data were collected primarily through an initial survey, a review of teaching materials and reading-based discussions related to ICC researcher journals, and an end-of-the-process evaluation. As several case study researchers have stated (Gillham 2000, Stake 1995, Yin 2009), it is very important to have multiple sources of evidence in case study research. In this manner a combination of data sources provide a clearer description of the department's approach to integrating ICC in the teaching methods.

The initial survey was administered during a department faculty meeting in the fall 2010 semester. It was conducted among the DFL teaching faculty to gauge faculty awareness and attitudes toward teaching ICC, their knowledge of it as well as assessing their teaching strategies, preferences and materials. Other segments of the questionnaire evaluated the instructors' perceptions of the students' knowledge, skills, and dispositions at the beginning and at the end of a *typical* class. Last, the survey was also used to gauge faculty interest in integrating ICC in the DFL curriculum and examined their support of the project. The questionnaire included 14 questions including several sub-questions. In developing the questions the researchers consulted the work of Banks (2008), Bennett (2010), Byram (1997), Kramsch and Whiteside (2008), the National Standard in FL Education Project (2008) and Schulz (2007). Responses were marked on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from (7) most likely / often to (1) least likely / often. This allowed the authors to make the answers directly comparable to those of other respondents (Beiske 2002).

The review of teaching materials took place throughout and after the duration of the faculty learning community. A review of the teaching materials was conducted to gather data related to the inner workings of the department. In addition, participant-observations were used extensively throughout the research process. The questionnaire and reviewing material played only a supporting role in gaining an in-depth understanding of the case, because the investigators aimed to discern the process mainly by observing participants' behavior as it occurs and make appropriate notes on it. Moreover, observational evidence was used not only to gain a deeper understanding about the process, but also to add new dimensions for understanding the phenomenon being studied (Yin 2009).

4. Data Analysis

The methodological approach for this study was exploratory in nature. The general data analysis processes of this research drew heavily from the work of Miles and Huberman (1994:10ff.), which describes qualitative data analysis in three phases: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. First, data reduction allowed data collection and analysis to become more manageable for the researchers. Second, data display aided in further data reduction and viewing the data in a more organized manner, which also enabled drawing conclusions from the research process. Third, conclusion drawing and verification was used to apply knowledge taken from the literature review to draw conclusions about the faculty learning community and the members' approach to integrating ICC.

More specifically, the study included observations and analyzing documents, as Merriam (1998), Patton (1990) and Stake (2005) recommend. Document analysis was used to review the teaching materials and discussion forums posted on the website, grant documents, the agendas and minutes of the meetings, the assigned readings, and the researcher journals. This form of analysis was used in accordance to Yin to "corroborate and augment evidence from the other sources" (2009:103). Furthermore, the authors aimed to make inferences from the documents about what happened when, how often, and in which regard.

5. Results and discussion

This exploratory case study focuses on the steps that emerged in a process geared towards integrating ICC into a department of foreign languages. Throughout the study chronology of the academic year 2010-2011, nine steps emerged in the course of this process. The following sections address these steps and their role in the overall process.

5.1. Emerging steps

- Step One: Introductory Presentations

Charged by the institution's Office of Diversity and Institute of Global Initiatives, the Chair and graduate research assistant (GRA) of the initiative developed two introductory presentations in early fall 2010. They introduced the faculty to the concept of ICC by offering an overview of theoretical concepts and a suggested definition. Furthermore, by identifying possible intersections between participants' work in the initiative and performance areas in faculty review (teaching, supervision, and mentoring; professional service; research and creative activity), the faculty members were asked to consider participating in the work groups related to integrating ICC into the DFL curriculum.

- Step Two: Incentive Grants

After the initial introductory presentations, and to further incentivize faculty participation in the ICC work groups, two mini-grants were secured. The institution's Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) sponsored a seven-member faculty learning community, and the institution's Office of Diversity and Institute of Global Initiatives sponsored a thirteen-member task force. Both grant sources funded copies of literature, travel stipends, access to dissemination of new knowledge via conference and workshop attendance and participation. The group leader pursued incentives because it was thought incentive grants might motivate participants to commit to sustained and active participation. In fact, the incentives offered throughout the yearlong process appeared to affect the participants differently. One person indicated, "For me personally, they did not have a part in my decision to join this group" (Interviewee 9). On the other hand, one participant describes the stipends as an essential factor in the process:

> "Personally, I have to admit that the possibility of earning a stipend to participate attracted me more than if there were no stipend. I feel this also is indicative of our university culture in which many faculty worry about completing work towards Tenure and Promotion requirements, and often things like this are secondary and of less importance. Offering an incentive also aided in creating buy-in on behalf of those participating and receiving the stipend." (Interviewee 7)

Throughout the year it became evident that not all participants were motivated by the grants and subsequent incentives. The researchers also noted that not all of the participants received a stipend. Furthermore, not everyone, who was eligible to receive a stipend, claimed one.

- Step Three: Questionnaire

In an effort to assess the status of DFL faculty's perceptions of ICC, an initial questionnaire was designed and distributed to the faculty. The 14-item questionnaire was crafted: 1) to document DFL faculty's responses with respect to their students' knowledge, skills, dispositions at the beginning and end of a typical class; and, 2) to have DFL faculty identify the most frequently used and effective teaching strategies and tools in advancing students' cultural knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Participants were asked to answer closed-ended questions on a Likert scale (1= fully aware/most often/most likely; 7= totally unaware/never/least likely). 18 faculty members responded to the questionnaire.

Descriptive statistics data analysis was applied. First, in response to seven hypothetical statements a student might make, which were gleaned from work

by Bennett (1993) and are reflective of identifiable ICC stages, most respondents thought that students are likely to have demonstrated surface understanding of complex and important elements in a culture. With respect to faculty's assessment of a typical student at the end of a course the majority of responses identified students as having developed most likely cultural knowledge and interpersonal communication skills.

Second, to advance students' cultural awareness most effectively, survey participants shared that they use partner / group discussion, followed by film / visual prompts / illustrations and lecture / verbal description/explanation. Results for faculty preferences with respect to teaching the social context of language and nonverbal behavior (voice, body, space) were similar: lecture / verbal description / explanation, followed by film / visual / prompts / illustrations. The data also suggest that faculty tend to teach culture in very similar ways to other course material, preserving preferences for teaching strategies.

- Step Four: Limited-access Website

Building on the information gathered by the initial questionnaire, the DFL faculty was then asked to share information and teaching materials related to ICC. A plethora of materials was collected from the department, and thus, a discussion took place as to how to organize and share the materials with the entire department. In response to this a limited-access website was created on the institution's Blackboard server. It was accessible to all of the DFL faculty and instructors. The site contained all resource materials collated from study participants and DFL colleagues. Stored in folders and updated on a monthly basis, these materials included grant documents, agendas and minutes, and resource repositories with both discipline-specific and trans-disciplinary content. For example, the folder *Activities* housed proficiency-level-specific course assignments ranging from online exercises to cultural simulations. *Background Reading and Bibliographies* hosted both annotated reference lists

and scanned articles in PDF format. In the discussion section, faculty posted and blogged about assignments and work in progress, e. g. revisions of the DFL curriculum assessment plan.

There were 309 total user sessions, which resulted in nearly 50 hours of total use. The average use length for the individual was five minutes and nineteen seconds, and the site averaged three sessions per day. 1157 content folders were viewed and 424 files were viewed. More specifically, tools such as the individual files and folders, the discussion board, and email were used most often.

- Step Five: Discussion Meetings

In addition to constructing the limited-access website to organize materials related to ICC, in monthly two and three-hour seminars, study participants met to discuss relevant readings, best practices, and works in progress. The participants took turns in presenting instructional materials and theoretical concepts culled either from individuals' research, instructional practice, or the grants-sponsored ICC literature. They discussed numerous reading assignments, including documents by Bennett (2010), chapters in Deardorff's *The SAGE Handbook of Intercultural Competence* (2009) and Lustig's and Koester's *Among US: Essays on Identity, Belonging, and Intercultural Competence* (2006). The main focus of these discussion meetings was to introduce a variety of disciplinary perspectives on ICC with the goal of identifying relevant strategies and tools for use in the DFL curriculum.

While observing the discussion meetings, the four researchers noted that in the beginning the discussions did not advance toward the goals of accomplishing the necessary steps in identifying aspects of ICC that would be beneficial to the process nor to articulate a plan for introduction and integration. As all four researchers indicated in their notes, the discussions remained rather general. However, after the yearlong process had ended, several participants expressed their perception about the overall im-

portance of the discussion meetings. In particular, one participant indicated:

> *"I had the impression that the discussion of the literature review was a door opener to the topic, especially people that were rather reserved in regard to the topic approached it by looking at the language they teach and what has been published in conjunction of ICC." (Interviewee 4)*

Furthermore, the authors noted the following as benchmark themes in the discussion meetings: the students' process of becoming intercultural competent, how to apply ICC in the classroom, the development of a model and check points for tracking student development of ICC during their foreign language studies, and aligning specific ICC concepts with the DFL curriculum.

- Step Six: Conference Presentation

Early in spring 2011, the study participants synthesized their understanding of ICC with respect to the DFL and presented on the process of integrating ICC into the DFL curriculum at a regional conference organized by the institution's Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. It forced the group to come together to deliver a product representing the culmination of their work. As one researcher remarked, "The CETL conference presentation was very eye opening to me because it was the first time that I was able to see the department's treatment of ICC as a whole" (Interviewee 7). Another participant of the study also noted:

> *"Presenting parts of our work to a bigger audience at the CETL conference was a good opportunity for us to take stock of what we had done so far. Also it became obvious once again that there is no straight forward plan on how to integrate ICC into any curriculum and that it will take a combined effort to achieve this goal." (Interviewee 5)*

By participating in the CETL conference the work group was exposed to the idea of integrating ICC in other teaching fields. Furthermore, it became obvious through discussions with the CETL attendees that although many think integrating ICC into a department of foreign languages curriculum should be easy, it remains a difficult task.

- Step Seven: Subcommittee Work

Towards the end of the scheduled discussion meetings, it was determined that to effectively conclude the yearlong process of integrating ICC into the curriculum subcommittees were needed to perform more specific tasks. Among these tasks were: to develop an ICC assessment plan for the DFL curriculum, to design and create a public website to share the work related to ICC, and draft a grant-mandated summary report and subsequent scholarly article.

The first subcommittee compared and contrasted the scholarship ICC experts to propose a developmental model of ICC for the DFL curriculum. The model aligned identified learning outcomes for linguistic proficiency (following national standards for the profession) with correlational learning outcomes for ICC based on ICC scholarship. The model specified an articulated sequence of ICC target goals for learners during and at the end of the DFL curriculum in correspondence with completion of 1000-level, 2000-level, and 3000-4000 level coursework. The schema also provided details on students' cultural content knowledge, communicative skills, and ICC. Since the DFL assessment plan is trans-disciplinary and comprehensive, it identified courses for initial, formative, and summative assessments of specified student learning outcomes and provided suggestions for including sequenced ICC assessments in the extant plan. Last, a rubric for assessing students' levels of ICC at the end of the 2000-level courses was drafted.

The second subcommittee designed and created a public website to share all work related to the ICC integration project (https://sites.google.com/site/icctoolkit/). It features select ICC resources collected by study participants in a format that is easily accessible. The resources exhibited here will serve as a user-friendly toolbox and searchable repository for foreign language educators interested in ICC. The third subcommittee drafted and submitted a

summary report of the groups' work to the grant-funding agencies. In addition, this subcommittee began working on scholarly articles to further document the ICC integration project.

- Step Eight: End-of-the-year Evaluation Instruments

Two online assessment instruments were used to gauge study participants' responses to ICC at the end of the yearlong process. First, all study participants were granted access to the online assessment instrument developed by Hammer, The intercultural development inventory (IDI). In confidential sessions, IDI certified colleagues at the institution provided feedback to the study participants during summer 2011. Second, the study participants were invited to respond to a summative questionnaire posted online. This survey was intended to gather the participants' thoughts about the yearlong process of introducing ICC into the DFL. The results of this survey indicate that the participants found the grant-funded incentives, the discussion meetings, and the subcommittee work to be the most valuable steps in the process of integrating ICC in the DFL curriculum. In addition, a majority of the participants indicated on the final survey that they benefited *very much* from taking the IDI assessment and participating in the follow-up interview.

- Step Nine: Planning for Curriculum Integration

To round out the yearlong process of introducing ICC into the DFL, a final step was designed for early fall 2011. In a DFL faculty retreat, study participants summarized the work completed and submitted for peer review and approval three items: A) an ICC definition for adaptation in the DFL; B) a revised DFL curriculum assessment plan with initial, formative, and summative assessments of ICC; and C) a public website with ICC resources, linked to the DFL homepage. In addition, the following steps in the integration process were shared with the faculty and subsequently approved: A) charge the DFL's

curriculum committee to develop and approve ICC-related learning objectives; B) charge the DFL's assessment committee with developing level-appropriate assignments, assessment instruments, and rubrics.

5.2. Lessons Learned

The nine emergent steps chronicled in the previous sections, which relate to the yearlong process of integrating ICC into the DFL curriculum, have enabled learning several valuable lessons. Sharing these lessons here may further discussion of integrating ICC into foreign languages and other fields. Furthermore, the successes and shortcomings experienced may shed light on other academic fields and educational settings.

- Lesson number 1

Try to determine what will stimulate faculty buy-in and motivation. Based on the findings related to the role of the incentive grants in this study it was determined that the members participating in the process had different motivating forces behind their work. Some were interested in developing teaching materials related to ICC, while others were genuinely curious about an unexplored topic. Subsequently, the varying motivating factors may also affect the roles the members take in the group. Try to establish direct connections between these factors and the work of the integration process. In addition, the findings from this phase of the research appear to support previous research regarding the role of incentives. MacLeod (1995) explains how the impact of incentives is not always consistent across the members of a particular group or situation. As was seen in this research, often it is the strong players who gravitate, or are reassigned by task leaders, to the incentive-based work (Burgess et al. 2010). Thus, incentives alone cannot be the only motivational force.

- Lesson number 2

Try to document all work. Creating a receptacle shell, the limited-access site, served as a valuable resource for this

integration process. As materials were collected, meetings were held, and notes were taken, everything was documented and subsequently posted to the site. For example, at the beginning of the integration process the members of the DFL faculty were asked to share teaching materials related to ICC. Many members of the faculty were willing to share, and the limited-access site served as an easy-to-use resource for this purpose. Furthermore, it allowed the researchers and all those involved in the initiative to look back and track the progress that was made. Upon reviewing the course shell usage by the participants of the work group and the other faculty members, it became apparent that the nature of its use evolved as the process transpired throughout the year. Although the shell began as a receptacle of information in which relevant materials were stored, by the end of the year the participants were actively engaged in discussions and individual members posted files for others to review. In addition, reviewing the process through the information posted in GeorgiaView Vista, the university course management system, allowed the researchers to track the process step by step as it developed over the year.

- Lesson number 3

Try to move from ICC as a general concept to specific parameters for its integration. The results of the initial questionnaire pointed out how perceptions among faculty in one department varied widely, especially with respect to the importance of teaching culture and ICC as part of a language major. For this purpose the research team determined that reaching a consistent and agreeable definition for ICC was an important step in the process towards integration. This lesson was confirmed by one of the participants of the work group:

> *"For me personally the reading and subsequent discussions were of great value. Getting more specific details about the topic at hand was very important. I think this is where most of our collaborative work took place in defining ICC and more specifi-*

cally how we can approach its integration within the department." (Interviewee 3)

Although it was a difficult and time consuming step, establishing the general concept allowed the faculty members to move in unison towards more specific parameters related to the integration of ICC. It is possible that moving directly to the curriculum reform, without first addressing the general concept, would have led to more conflict and confusion.

- Lesson number 4

Try to present and evaluate progress of the work at various stages in the process. At the midpoint of the initiative several faculty members of the work group presented the work in progress at the CETL conference. This step allowed the group to synthesize the work that had been completed up to that point. In addition, in this type of conference forum faculty from a range of colleges and universities and from an assortment of disciplines were exposed to our process of integrating ICC into the curriculum. Their participation in the conference presentation provided the opportunity to receive feedback from outside of the work group.

- Lesson number 5

Try to balance the workload between individuals and subgroups of the faculty group. Throughout this process a conscious effort was made to include a diagonal cut from the DFL faculty. This enabled the formation of a particular group dynamic, which included a voice from all of the respective sub-sections within the department. For this reason, it is important to take into consideration different communication styles and collaborative grouping. For example, splitting the larger work group into subcommittees proved to be an effective strategy for this process. It appeared to allow the subgroups to focus more intently on specific aspects of the tasks required to integrate ICC into the DFL curriculum.

6. Conclusion

This case study research, which took place over the academic year 2010-2011, revealed that integrating ICC into an existing DFL curriculum can be a complex process. For the department, using a faculty learning community approach proved to be an effective, yet time consuming method. In fact, it is still an ongoing initiative. In August of 2011 the DFL faculty decided to further develop the plan by charging the DFL's curriculum committee to develop and approve ICC-related learning objectives and charging the DFL's assessment committee with developing level-appropriate assignments, assessment instruments, and rubrics. As a result the following Specific Student Learning Outcomes (SSLOs) were crafted for the Modern Language & Culture major in the academic year 2012-2013:

- SSLO ML&C 1d: Demonstrating Intercultural Communicative Competence.

Candidates demonstrate appropriate use of language in real-time intercultural interaction, adjust behavior appropriately in intercultural situations, respond with sensitivity to situations of intercultural misunderstandings, and demonstrate critical reflection when faced with unexpected intercultural situations (Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes).

- SSLO ML&C 2c: Demonstrating Intercultural Understanding.

Candidates recognize and understand differences within and between cultures; they interpret a variety of cultural documents and events and new cultural knowledge; they analytically evaluate cultural generalizations, and distinguish cultural generalizations from cultural stereotypes (Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes).

Furthermore, in the academic year 2012-2013, the department created and piloted several assessments to enable tracking the realizations of these SSLOs. Even though the curriculum reform process is still ongoing, the following suggestions are offered: plan specific ICC objectives, link the ICC objectives to the department's overall assessment plan, and link the ICC objectives to specific courses. Last, it is important to note that the findings of this research reflect data collected from a specific department housed on a particular university campus, and they may not be comparable to data collected from other departments or university settings. Although the results of this research are not readily generalizable, they do provide a rich and valuable description of integrating ICC into a university foreign language department. In addition, as several case study researchers note (Stake 1995, Yin 2009), generalizability is not the goal of case study research. This type of research has the potential to offer a new perspective of an uninvestigated field by providing thick descriptions, and it serves as a starting point for future research.

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