



Intercultural Understanding

Building student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect.

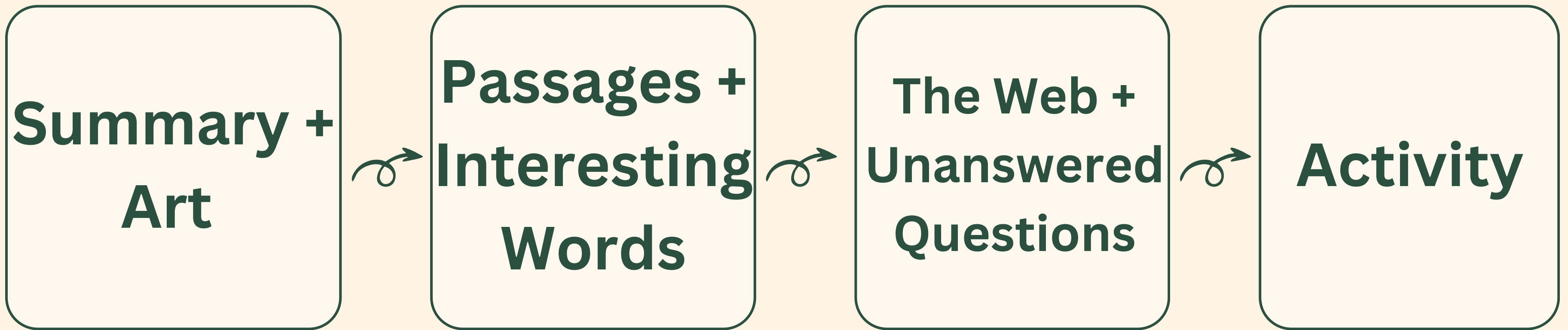
By Makenna, Carson, & Brooke C.



Land Acknowledgement

We would like to acknowledge that we are gathered on the unceded territory of Tk'emlúps to Secwepemc within Secwepemcúl'ecw. It is a privilege and an honor to work, learn, study and play on this beautiful land. We recognize our responsibility to the land and to the people, as well as a responsibility for reconciliation. We are committed to teaching, learning and studying within this territory in a manner that is respectful, mindful, and thoughtful.

Overview



* Summary

This article expresses the importance of the development, assessment, and conceptualization of intercultural competence, communication and understanding. Intercultural competence is the ability to communicate successfully and appropriately across cultural boundaries, including cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects. The authors, Perry and Southwell, make a distinction between intercultural competency and related ideas, such as, intercultural communication and comprehension. They show that intercultural competence covers knowledge, attitudes, abilities, and actions by using models such as Deardorff's pyramid model and the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity. The article explores how intercultural competence can be developed through educational strategies like the International Baccalaureate curriculum and practical learning opportunities like study abroad programs. Although these educational environments provide valuable experiences for developing intercultural competency, Perry and Southwell argue that additional observational study is required to determine their efficacy. Additionally, they express that allowing ethnic variety in schools does not guarantee intercultural awareness because children may only engage with people from similar cultural backgrounds. The authors also go into how to measure intercultural competency both qualitatively and quantitatively using assessment strategies, such as, the Behavioral Assessment Scale for Intercultural Competence and the Intercultural Development Inventory. Although these assessment tools offer valuable insight, they may not fully capture the complex nature of intercultural competence. To improve our understanding and assessment of intercultural competency, especially for elementary students, they encourage more research and efficient teaching techniques (Perry & Southwell, 2011).

Visual



Passage #1

“Teaching ‘culture’ (e.g. the institutional, historical and political aspects of culture) is not enough, and that the development of intercultural competence requires the teaching of subjective culture, in which the focus turns to exploring alternative worldviews and cultural self awareness... Students must critically examine culture, not just accumulate facts and knowledge about a culture, to develop intercultural competence” (pg. 456-457).

Reflection

This passage is significant for our roles as teacher candidates and future teachers as it helps lay out the fundamental understanding of intercultural competence. It challenges the way in which many of us were taught which often included memorizing cultural traditions and historical facts with no deeper understanding and connection with the students. It pushes future teachers to think about other ways to present cultural content in the classroom that goes away from the classic textbook and focuses more on engaging activities that help encourage critical thinking, discussion, and self-reflection. Bringing in strategies such as place-based learning, primary source analysis, and collaborative projects could help the students develop and explore diverse perspectives and begin questioning and challenging their assumptions; Which all help develop intercultural competence in a much more impactful way. By doing this we also help students develop knowledge, curiosity, and the ability to see issues from multiple viewpoints which are essential in today’s multicultural world.

Passage #2

“Researchers have theorised that attending a culturally diverse school has the potential to develop students’ intercultural competence. This belief was also found among teachers and students from international schools who perceived school cultural diversity to be the most important school-based influence on the development of students’ intercultural understanding and competence... However, it is plausible that even if school cultural diversity has the potential to develop students’ intercultural capabilities, it does not automatically guarantee that it will. Studies have shown that students tend to limit their interactions to fellow students from the same cultural background or from only one other cultural group” (pg. 459).

Reflection

This passage helps show that just simply being in a diverse environment, although it can be beneficial, does not guarantee intercultural growth. It demonstrates that we as future teachers can’t simply assume that the standard for intercultural competence is being met if we are teaching in a diverse environment that provides opportunities for intercultural interaction. The passage pushes the idea that we need to come up with structured activities that help engage intercultural interactions that are meaningful to the students. Even simply just implementing class discussion that is centered around their perspectives, traditions, and experiences in a way that pushes for understanding and breaks down stereotypes can help greatly. Lastly, the passage also made me reflect on our roles as teachers to model intercultural understanding. If we as teachers expect all our students to appreciate and have an intercultural understanding then we need to demonstrate this ourselves through curiosity, respect, and openness to other perspectives while we are teaching.

✦ 3 Interesting Words

01 Ethnorelative

Definition: A mindset or perspective that recognizes and respects cultural differences without judgement

Example: After working abroad for numerous years, I developed an ethnorelative perspective, appreciating cultural norms and not judging them based off of my culture

02 Adroitness

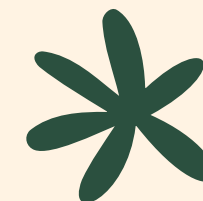
Definition: Skillfulness or cleverness, particularly in handling situations or communicating effectively.

Example: Bob showed great adroitness when he quickly replaced his tire without needing assistance

03 Ambiguity

Definition: Uncertainty or lack of clarity, where something can have multiple meanings or interpretations

Example: The teacher's instructions had some ambiguity, leaving the students confused on if they could work in groups or not



Intercultural Understanding

What is effective?

Cognitive (Knowledge & Awareness)
Includes knowledge about the similarities and differences between cultures. (p.454)

ISS
1.interaction enjoyment
2.respect for cultural differences
3.interaction confidence
4.interaction attentiveness (p.454)

Measuring Intercultural Competence
Quantitative measures rely too heavily on self-reporting. Further research is needed. Examples: the IDI, the ISS, the BASIC, the CCAI. (p.462)

Measuring Intercultural Competence
Qualitative data like written reflections, observations, interviews, and portfolios. Portfolios better represent the complexity of the cross-cultural experience; capture aspects of intercultural learning. (p.462)

Intercultural Understanding
Knowledge about someone's own culture as well as other cultures; knowing the similarities and differences between cultures. Knowledge is not enough. (p.454)

Intercultural Communication
The ability to effectively and appropriately communicate with people from different cultures (Arasaratnam 2009). (p.456).

Intercultural Competence
Hiller and Wozniak (2009) A tolerance for ambiguity, behavioural flexibility, communicative awareness, knowledge discovery, respect for others and empathy. (p.455)

Intercultural Competence
Lustig and Koester (2006) describe intercultural competence as requiring knowledge, motivation, skills in verbal and non-verbal communication and appropriate and effective behaviours. (p.455)

Intercultural Competence
Each definition recognizes that individuals who are competent interact effectively and appropriately with people from other cultures. (p.455)

Intercultural Competence
Teaching intercultural competence requires the development of critical cultural awareness.(p.456). Four dimensions – knowledge, attitude, skills and behaviours. (p.455)

Intercultural Sensitivity
A person's active desire to motivate themselves to understand, appreciate and accept differences among cultures. (p.455)

Positive Attitudes:
Showing empathy, respect, and curiosity towards other cultures. (p.454)

Intercultural Sensitivity (2)
Also defined as the experience of cultural difference, an experience that is dependent on the way a person constructs that difference. (p.454)

DMIS
Includes 6 stages, from complete denial to complete acceptance of cultural difference (p.455)

DMIS
Explains how people understand or view cultural difference and was developed by M.J. Bennett (1993). (p.454)

International Schools
Attending a culturally diverse school has the potential to develop students' intercultural competence (p.459)

Ethnocentric vs. Ethnorelative
Ethnorelative peers are interculturally sensitive, while ethnocentric are less so. (p.454)

Cultural Difference
Understanding differences to appreciate diversity and avoid biases and stereotypes. Dependent on the way a person constructs that difference (p.455)

Social Studies
Intercultural competence is typically embedded within SS classes (p.458)

Language Classes
Can involve exposing students to a variety of representations of a culture in order to develop students' understanding of the cultural aspects of language and culture (p.458)

Inquiry-Based Learning
Used to help students understand that people can hold different world views, to examine those views and respect them, although not to necessarily accept them." (p.458)

Experiential Learning
More effective for learning about a culture than sitting in class. (p.458)

Intercultural Competence at School
Depends on the curriculum & its orientation (p.458).

Teaching & Learning
This can be done at primary and/or secondary level. Instructional methods: Lectures, class discussions. (p.457)

Web-Based Technologies
Ex.: blogs used to connect language learners in Spain & US. Effective? Biases still prevalent.

Intercultural Training
The training of adults whose work requires them to interact with people from other cultures (p.457)

Unanswered Question (1)

Is there enough training and educating available for teacher candidates to prepare us for teaching intercultural competence in Canada, a place that is vastly diverse in terms of culture?

With such an emphasis on the importance of intercultural competence, it is surprising that teacher programs perhaps overlook these areas somewhat. Other areas of teaching (science, math, etc.) take precedence. However, this has to be looked at as we think about the BC Curriculum as well. So to answer this question, I think I would have to say no. Of course we do get to learn about inclusive education, UDL, DI, FPPL, Indigenous teachings, and so on, but I believe there is a lack of understanding in how we can truly incorporate intercultural competence. This grey area is tricky because the program is following government standards. This leads me to question two.

In both contexts, the assessment of intercultural understanding needs further consideration. Most importantly, without further elaboration of ICU curricular outcomes and teacher professional development, there is a risk of ICU being addressed in a tokenistic manner in its implementation rather than fulfilling its potential as a goal for sustainable development. (Fielding et al., 2024)

Unanswered Question (2)

How can we as future teachers effectively and appropriately “train” students to have intercultural competence in a way that fits in with BC’s curriculum? Are we seeing this already with the government curriculum?

It’s important to offer choice to students, especially as we look at language classes in the elementary grades. Perhaps instead of French being mandatory so early on, choices of other language classes can be offered and encouraged (earlier than grade 5) to allow students to explore other cultures and languages should they wish to do so. This would allow teachers to integrate some intercultural training into language classes more often. Also, since the importance of intercultural competence is vastly increasing with all of the immigration in Canada, perhaps a new and permanent subject on intercultural understanding for students at the elementary and high school level would be beneficial within the curriculum all together.

Volunteer Abroad Program



<https://www.planmygapyear.com/?msclkid=78aaf0a57f01143ae46b971b67941d87>

Activity Time!

<https://dashboard.blooke.com/set/67aa5e1de32e1d43341986a9>



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