# Chapter 7
# Language and Culture Pedagogy

**Abstract** This chapter reviews literature related to culture in foreign language pedagogy, and describes what sets the DMLL apart from current approaches. It argues that while consensus is emerging about the importance of culture in language learning, existing approaches can be difficult to put into practice. They tend to be additive—cultural learning is seen as something that needs to be accomplished in addition to language learning. Goals tend to center on abstract notions that are hard to relate to day-to-day language practice, and they often do not make clear a developmental progression that can be related to foreign language learning. The DMLL is argued to help resolve these dilemmas. This chapter introduces dynamic skill theory, and argues that it can serve as a unifying framework to understand both language and culture learning pedagogy.

## 7.1 Approaches to Language and Culture Pedagogy

In recent years, there has been an increasing consensus that culture should be an important part of foreign language pedagogy (Byram et al. 2002; Byram and Parmenter 2012; Byram et al. 2017; Liddicoat and Scarino 2013). Many educators understand that cultural knowledge and insight is necessary to use a foreign language well, that language learning can lead to meaningful intercultural experiences, and that there is a need for greater intercultural understanding in a world marked by increasing conflict and division. Putting this insight into practice, however, can be a challenge. It's easy to get the impression that something is missing from foreign language pedagogy—that we need cultural learning goals *in addition to* language learning goals. From this perspective, cultural learning represents a new dimension of learning to incorporate, a new set of skills to be practiced, or a new form of understanding to focus on.

This *additive approach* can be found in much language and culture scholarship. Foreign language pedagogy has seen an evolution in learning goals. In the past, it centered largely on notions of *linguistic competence*—the ability to use language well. When this was found inadequate, learning goals were expanded, and increasingly talked about in terms of *communicative competence* (Canale and Swain 1980;

Canale 1983; Celce-Murcia et al. 1993; Hymes 1966)—the ability to use language effectively and appropriately in context. In recent years, however, learning goals have been expanded once again, and are increasingly talked about in terms of *intercultural competence* in the context of globalization (Alptekin 2002; Byram et al. 2001, 2002; Byram 1997, 2008; Kelly et al. 2001; Kramsch 2002, 1993, 2015). Byram (2002) speaks of the need to:

> give learners intercultural competence *as well as* (emphasis added) linguistic competence; to prepare them for interaction with people of other cultures; to enable them to understand and accept people from other cultures as individuals with other distinctive perspectives, values and behaviours; and to help them to see that such interaction is an enriching experience. (p. 10)

Byram's use of the words *as well as* reflects this additive approach—one that implies that previous learning goals have not been replaced, so much as supplemented.

Byram (Byram 1997; Byram et al. 2001; Byram and Parmenter 2012), conceptualizes this expanded set of learning goals in terms of intercultural communicative competence, which consists of communicative competence, (described as linguistic competence, discourse competence, and sociolinguistic competence). To this, he adds intercultural competence, which he describes in terms of skills (interpreting and relating, discovering, and interacting), knowledge of social groups and interactions, critical cultural awareness (the ability to evaluate different perspectives), and attitudes (e.g., curiosity and openness). These broad categories are broken down further, into nearly 30 sub-competencies. Byram's work reflects the heightened profile of culture in language education, and succeeds in drawing attention to the complex, multidimensional nature of intercultural abilities. His work has led the way in helping intercultural competencies become an explicit goal of educational policymakers (Bianco et al. 1999; Byram and Parmenter 2012; Byram 2008; Byram et al. 2002; Cunningham and Hatoss 2005; Risager 2006; Uchibori 2014; UNESCO 2003). This has, in turn, led to a growing body of work that seeks to bring an expanded set of learning objectives into the foreign language classroom (Alptekin 2002; Andersen et al. 2006; Byram 1997; Bianco et al. 1999; Byram et al. 2001, 2002; Corbett 2003; Crozet and Liddicoat 1999; Diaz 2012, 2013; Liddicoat and Scarino 2013; McConachy 2018; Risager 2015, 2007). As language teachers take on the challenge of encouraging intercultural understanding, it seems they are heaping more on their pedagogical plate than ever.

## 7.2  An Ambitious Undertaking

It's worth reflecting on the challenges of setting such ambitious and complex cultural learning goals. Most simply, an additive approach risks creating an increasingly long menu of learning objectives—Byram's taxonomy, for example, is elaborated in great detail. This sheds light on the complexity of cultural learning, but also makes it easy

to lose sight of the forest for the trees. It would be difficult, for example, to deal with every goal mentioned within one course of study. In addition, many intercultural learning objectives are defined using terms (e.g., critical cultural awareness, global citizenship) that are both abstract and idealized—something akin to a moral education for a global age. Such aspirational ideals can seem far away from day-to-day language practice, or the goals that learners have for themselves (e.g., to remember vocabulary, to speak fluently, to improve listening skills). This means learners must not only learn irregular verbs and practice dialogues, but they must also do so while reflecting on intercultural understanding and gaining a more global sense of ethics (Singer 2002).

This wide range of learning goals—from concrete to abstract—makes it even more difficult to overcome the gap between ambitious culture learning objectives, and the nuts and bolts of classroom practice. Diaz describes three major stumbling blocks to overcoming the "difficulties of realizing this vision in everyday practice" (Diaz 2013): conceptual, relational, and developmental. The conceptual stumbling block refers to limitations to the ways in which intercultural competence is conceptualized. The relational stumbling block refers to a lack of clarity about how different elements of intercultural competence relate to each other. The developmental stumbling block refers to a lack of a clear sequence for how intercultural competence is developed over time—the outcome is defined, but not the steps that are needed to reach this state. In short, while it's relatively easy to agree on a need for intercultural competence in language learning, it can be difficult to define learning goals in a way that can be put into practice.

These challenges are compounded by a more fundamental difficulty—connecting cultural learning goals to our understanding of language learning processes. Language learning itself is so complex that even specialists do not claim to have successfully modeled learning processes. On the contrary, despite an enormous body of research into second-language acquisition, "all commentators recognize that … we have not yet arrived at a unified or comprehensive view of how second languages are learned. … No single theoretical position has achieved dominance and new theoretical orientations continue to appear" (Mitchell et al. 2013). Increasingly, the processes involved with language learning are seen as being so complex as to defy linear models and cause-and-effect reasoning (Larsen-Freeman 2011, 2006). Because of this, there is no single methodology or pedagogy that can be declared superior to all others (Lightbown and Spada 2013; Mitchell et al. 2013; Nation and Macalister 2010; Richards and Rodgers 2014). A unified understanding of language and culture learning processes must first grapple with the complexity of language learning itself.

Recent scholarship has seen attempts to relate intercultural understanding more closely to language learning. McConachy (2018) draws on the notion of pragmatic awareness and argues that it is "possible to create opportunities for meaningful learning even with conventional materials such as coursebooks" by getting language learners to "analyze and reflect on their interactional experiences"(p. 9). Liddicoat and Scarino argue against the notion of finding a *method* for integrating language and culture learning. They argue for the adoption of an *intercultural perspective* toward language teaching and learning (Liddicoat 2005; Liddicoat and Scarino 2013), one in

which the cultural self-awareness of the language teacher is central. This implies that there is "no ready-made, one-size-fits-all way of developing intercultural capabilities through language education" (Liddicoat 2013) (p. xii) and that teachers must find an approach that suits their context, and their understanding of language and culture learning processes. They identify principles they see as preconditions for teaching and learning languages from an intercultural perspective. These include: *active construction*, the idea that both language and culture learning involve an active process of engagement, interpretation and meaning-making; *making connections*, the idea that language and culture are learned and experienced in relation to others as an experience with the new; *social interaction,* the recognition that language and culture learning is fundamentally interactive, and involves a continuous process of negotiating meaning; *reflection,* the recognition of a need to become aware of how we think about and learn a language, and additionally, culture; *responsibility*, the recognition that learning depends on a learner's attitudes and values, including a responsibility to develop intercultural sensitivity and understanding. They describe intercultural learning in terms of four processes—*noticing*, *comparing*, *interacting,* and *reflecting*—that learners engage in as they experience language, culture, and relationships. The classroom pedagogy they describe centers on designing classroom interactions and experiences, and an expanded view of learning tasks.

The work of Byram and others has raised the profile of culture in language pedagogy, and created a sense of mission in culture and language pedagogy. It has provided a set of goals to work towards. Current scholarship seems increasingly focused on finding new perspectives and putting idealized goals into practice. Diaz's work identifies many of the challenges of integrating language and culture pedagogy. The work of Liddicoat and Scarino helps clarify the foundational principles for an integrated view of language and culture learning. It also provides a way to approach pedagogy in terms of learning processes, and relates cultural learning to the language learning process, including differing metaphors that can be used to understand language learning. Work by McConachy and others provides approaches to classroom practice that integrate cultural learning with language practice. It seems there is an increased consensus on what we are trying to achieve, and an increasing body of work that attempts to put these ideas into practice.

## 7.3   Developmental Models

Despite such progress, there are still big challenges remaining with current approaches to language and culture pedagogy. One key challenge is a lack of models that lay out a developmental progression of language and intercultural learning. That is, they do not provide a conceptualization of differing levels of intercultural learning as it relates to levels of language learning. We can track a learner's progress learning a foreign language, but it's hard to map that progress onto an understanding of levels of intercultural learning. In theory, an integrated, developmental learning model would make it possible to say that a given student, for example, has a high

degree of linguistic ability, but a lower level of cultural understanding. Or, perhaps a learner has limited linguistic ability, but a high level of intercultural understanding. Existing paradigms do not lend themselves to this sort of comparison.

The challenge of integrating a developmental understanding of language and culture learning has been articulated by Diaz (2013), who states:

> Translating the language and culture nexus, or in this case, linguaculture, into an incremental learning progression is challenging. The lack of developmental notions of linguaculture learning make it difficult to map a coherent, progressive path from ab initio, beginning levels—the largest in most language programmes—to advanced levels. (p. 34)

Diaz offers an approach to defining such a progression—one that revolves around the notion of reflectivity and perspective transformation. She proposes a hierarchy of levels of reflectivity consisting of four major categories—basic level of awareness; complex level of awareness; mega-cognitive level of awareness; epistemological level of awareness. These are said to lead from consciousness to a critical consciousness as it relates to linguaculture. She relates this ability to the concept of a 'dynamic in-betweenness' in which speakers can "consciously manage their alternative frames of linguaculture reference in intercultural encounters."

Diaz connects cultural learning goals directly to language practice. Drawing on work by Liddicoat et al. (2013), she describes a process of sociocultural acquisition, in which learners develop an understanding of the practices in the target culture. As learners gain linguistic proficiency through interaction with target language speakers, they also can gain sociocultural proficiency and higher levels of linguaculture awareness. By raising learners' reflective awareness in foreign language learning contexts, this process can be facilitated. Diaz describes language and culture learning as an interrelated process of increased awareness that contributes to linguistic fluency that develops in conjunction with cultural fluency and intercultural awareness. In this view, language practice with target language speakers serves as a form of intercultural learning.

The current work shares Diaz's conviction that language practice can constitute a form of cultural learning. It also shares a concern for defining a developmental progression of linguaculture learning. It differs, however, in its approach to conceptualizing levels of learning. Diaz conceptualizes intercultural learning in terms, such as consciousness and reflectivity, that are hard to relate to the developmental progression of language learning. Consciousness and reflectivity are abstract qualities that can seem far removed from the knowledge and skills orientation of many language classes. This work takes a different approach. It describes both language and culture learning as being fundamentally similar—they both involve the embodiment of dynamic complex systems of meaning. This deep form of learning results in intuitive understanding, insight, fluency, and the mastery of new linguistic and cultural domains. What is needed, then, is to define a developmental paradigm that can help us understand this deep learning process.

## 7.4   Linguaculture Learning

Despite the persistent gap between ideal outcomes and classroom practice, a more integrated understanding of language and culture is increasingly accepted among language teachers. Reflecting this, the idea of *linguaculture/languaculture* has become increasingly influential in the field of foreign language education (Diaz 2013; Risager 2006, 2007, 2015). Risager (2006, 2007, 2015) proposes a detailed conceptualization of languaculture (or *linguaculture*) that is informed by a sociolinguistic perspective. She is interested in issues of pedagogy in the context of globalization. She describes three interrelated perspectives of languaculture (languaculture in linguistic practices, in linguistic resources, and in linguistic systems), each of which has three dimensions: semantic and pragmatic dimension, the poetic dimension, and the identity dimension. This provides a useful taxonomy for understanding the multidimensional implications of conceptualizing language and culture in a unified way.

Risager (2007) proposes that language and culture pedagogy should be informed by a view of linguaculture as complex and dynamic, rather than as closed national systems. Diaz (2013) uses Risager's conceptualization as a starting point for her *languaculture pedagogies*. Her focus is on cultural differences that affect verbal interaction and relationships, and she proposes a taxonomy with seven steps of languaculture awareness. Like Risager, she takes linguaculture/languaculture as a starting point for foreign language pedagogy—one that makes explicit the starting assumption that language and culture need to be considered as a unified whole. Such terminology encourages educators to go beyond general statements about the strong connection between language and culture, and find ways to operationalize them.

This work adopts the term linguaculture as a way of drawing attention not only to the integrated nature of language and culture, but also to the psychological demands of language and culture learning. The linguistic and cultural patterns we are exposed to growing up influence us in fundamental ways. The first language we speak becomes part of the socio-cognitive architecture of our mind, just as the cultural communities we are raised in shape our mental processes, identity, and worldview. This implies that both language learning and deep culture learning are disruptive to existing patterns of cognition and self. Fundamentally, then, linguaculture learning requires a deep-rooted process of change and adjustment.

## 7.5   In Search of an Integrated, Developmental Model

This work takes on a challenge central to an integrated language and culture pedagogy—the creation of a model that situates language and culture learning within a single developmental framework. Ideally, it should allow us to think about language and cultural learning as interrelated domains. That is to say, they can be considered separately if necessary, but also can be seen in relation to each other. By way of example, math and science can be treated as separate subjects, yet they are

ultimately interrelated—math is, so to speak, the language or the yardstick of science—and thus math and science can be taught using integrated pedagogy. Arguably, science is the broader learning category, since math can be taught separately from science in abstract form, whereas the formal learning of science requires knowledge of quantification and measurement that is allowed for by mathematics. While this may not be a perfect comparison, it demonstrates that two domains can be closely interrelated—able to be conceptualized as separate, or as an integrated whole. Creating an integrated developmental model for language and culture learning would provide a similar flexibility—the choice to focus on language and culture separately, or together, as needed.

A primary stumbling block to an integrated view is contrasting notions of language and culture learning. Language learning is often conceptualized as a form of *acquisition*—a taking-in of knowledge or the accumulation of communicative skills. The field of second-language acquisition has this assumption built into the very terminology that defines the field. Cultural learning, on the other hand, is most typically discussed more in terms of *awareness*—some higher level critical, cognitive, or reflective ability that leads to intercultural competence. Learning processes are typically conceptualized in ways that do not easily map onto the developmental progression of language learning. In other words, while we may have a sense for how learners develop linguistic ability, and for how they can develop intercultural awareness or understanding, it's still hard to see how these two processes relate to each other. This is the core dilemma that this work seeks to address.

## 7.6   Dynamic Skill Theory and the DMLL

Finding a single conceptual framework that can incorporate both language and culture learning requires finding a broader view of learning. This work finds this in *dynamic skill theory* (DST), a neo-Piagetian approach to describing learning in multiple domains. DST was developed as a way of understanding the developmental processes of childhood, but can be applied to complex skills more generally. Put simply, DST helps us understand learning in terms of complexity—the way that simpler knowledge self-organizes at higher levels of sophistication. A fundamental insight of DST is that complex knowledge is not built up in a linear process of accumulation. Rather, simpler elements of knowledge are mapped together, and self-organize, emerging as a stable yet dynamic system that functions in a way that is greater than the sum total of its parts. This is similar to the way that internalizing the rules of a card game, such as poker, for example, allows us to play the game with others—to *become* a poker player and to express ourselves through the medium of poker. The game of poker emerges from knowledge of the rules and the playing of the game.

The four-level structure of the DMLL is adapted from DST. Each level represents more sophisticated levels of socio-cognitive processing and embodied complexity as conceived through the conceptual lens of DST. These are represented at the bottom
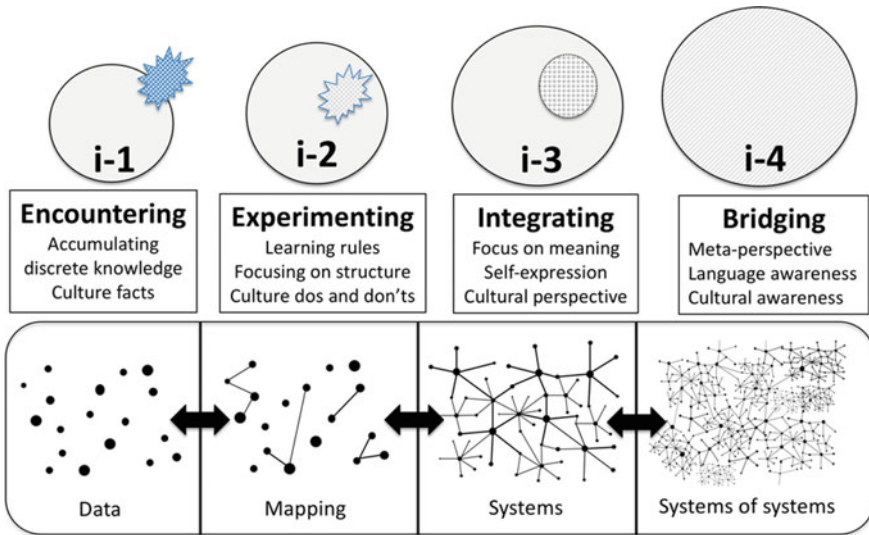
**Fig. 7.1**  The developmental model of linguaculture learning

of in Fig. 7.1. The lowest level of complexity (i-1) entails learning discrete data—individual bits of knowledge or single skills. The next level of learning involves (i-2) mapping—making mental connections such that more complex knowledge structures emerge. The third level of learning (i-3) involves a dynamic systems-level understanding—when knowledge comes together in a holistic, creative form. The fourth level of learning (i-4) involves a systems-of-systems understanding that creates bridges between different domains and engages more meta-level processes. According to DST, these four levels can be used to understand learning generally, not simply children's development. This makes DST a flexible theoretical starting point for an integrated model of language and culture learning.

The levels described by DST describe all complex skills—abilities for which the whole is greater than the individual parts. Both language and cultural ability are complex skills in this sense—they are systematic, yet creative domains which are experienced intuitively once they have been integrated into our socio-cognitive systems. Thus, the four levels of the DMLL can act as a framework for making sense of both language and culture learning—bringing them together under one rubric. The DMLL assumes that at these deeper levels of understanding, linguistic and cultural knowledge are closely related. A more detailed argument to this effect can be found in Chap. 8. The levels of the DMLL are described in greater detail in Chaps. 10 and 11, and application of these ideas into the classroom are discussed in Chaps. 12–14.

## 7.7  An Intercultural Adjustment Perspective

The developmental levels of the DMLL are grounded in an understanding of neural networks, but it would be reductionist to describe learning solely in relation to changes within the brain—in effect, it's not the brain that learns, it's people that learn. This is why the four levels of the DMLL are represented visually in two ways: (1) as increasing levels of complexity (the bottom portion of Fig. 2.1), and (2) in terms of how the learner experiences the learning process (the four circles at the top of Fig. 2.1). To understand the phenomenology of language and culture learning, the DMLL draws on an intercultural adjustment perspective. In brief, this assumes that any time we learn something new we are changing ourselves in some way. The four levels of the DMLL represent the increasing sense that previously foreign linguaculture patterns are becoming an integral part of the self. What is first experienced as external and foreign, gradually becomes part of the architecture of the mind, the territory of the self, and a medium for self-expression.

The DMLL draws on an intercultural adjustment perspective. Intercultural adjustment refers broadly to the psychological challenges of adapting oneself to a foreign environment, most typically through a stay in a foreign country (Matsumoto et al. 2006). Scholarship in this area largely focuses on the stresses and coping mechanisms of intercultural adaptation (Wong and Wong 2006); an understanding of the adaptation process (Berry 2005; Kim 2001a; Lewthwaite 1996; Shaules 2007; Ward et al. 1998, 2001); how intercultural experiences can lead to intercultural awareness (Bennett 1986; Paige 1993); the effects of such adjustment on identity and sense of self (Bennett 1993a, 1998), and issues of globalization (Friedman 1994). Such scholarship is typically intended to inform intercultural education and training, to help sojourners better deal with adjustment stresses, and to find ways to identify and measure the qualities that are associated with successful sojourns (Matsumoto et al. 2006, 2001).

The scholarship of intercultural adjustment has not been a major source of inspiration for language educators. Intercultural adjustment, after all, often centers on the challenges of foreign sojourns. It is associated with terms such as *culture shock* and coping with the stresses of life in a foreign country (Furnham and Bochner 1986; Goldstein and Smith 1999; Matsumoto et al. 2006; Oberg 1960; Ward et al. 2001). Much foreign language education, on the other hand, takes place in L1 cultural environments, e.g., Chinese speakers learning English in China, or Russian speakers learning French in Moscow. Many foreign language learners may never have used the L2 outside of the classroom. Unless language teachers are teaching immigrants a local language, or preparing students for a trip abroad, intercultural adjustment challenges may appear to be something that is off in the future. The process of learning a foreign language in the classroom, and the stresses of intercultural adjustment, can easily be seen as separate challenges.

The intercultural adjustment perspective reminds us that involvement with a new cultural community has psychological consequences. A central concern of such scholarship relates to psychological demands placed on us by foreign experiences.

For example, Berry (1997) (Berry et al. 1987) describes differing psychological reactions to the demands of acculturation, including *assimilation*, *integration*, *separation,* and *marginalization*. Kim (2001b) speaks of intercultural transformation that results from an ongoing process of adjusting to the host environment. This process is affected by factors such as host conformity pressure, or the individual's preparedness for change. Shaules (2007) describes a process of *resistance*, *acceptance,* and *adaptation* to foreign experiences—each of which can be relatively more surface or deep. What all of these conceptualizations share is a concern for the psychological impact of foreign experiences.

## 7.8   Transformational Learning

The DMLL assumes that both language and culture learning are transformational. In educational psychology, saying that learning is transformative has been referred to as "a deep, structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically and permanently alters our way of being in the world" (Morrell and O'Connor 2002) (p. xvii). In this work, the notion of transformation refers more narrowly to a change in how the foreignness of new linguaculture patterns is experienced. The negative attitudes of resistance can inhibit learning, or engagement can open us up to a new sense of self as a foreign language speaker or a cultural bridge person. Transformation does not mean that one becomes a different person—rather, the way one experiences a new language or culture changes. As we gain intuitive mastery of a new domain, it becomes a part of us. We go from learning tennis to being a tennis player; we go from learning to cook to being a chef; we go from making lesson plans to being a teacher. Transformation refers to this process of going from doing, to becoming, to being.

In general terms, of course, it's easy to agree that language learning and foreign experiences can be disruptive, and at times transformational. The stresses and rewards of both are well known. What's less clear, however, is: (1) how such a perspective can inform our understanding of SLA, (2) how it can lead to a more unified view of language and culture learning, and; (3) how it can inform language and culture pedagogy. There's a large gap between the general proposition that language and culture learning involves adjustment, and a more fully articulated model of language and culture learning. The overall goal of this work is to fill that gap.

**The relationship between language and culture** This chapter has put the ideas in this work in the context of existing language and culture pedagogy. The DMLL builds on the insights of existing scholarship, and is in broad agreement with existing approaches to intercultural education. What's new in this work is the neurocognitive perspective, the focus on language learning as a form of intercultural adjustment, and an understanding of deep learning as informed by dynamic skill theory. The DMLL attempts to describe, in integrated form, two processes that are often conceptualized

separately—(1) mastering a foreign language, and (2) gaining intercultural understanding and insight. This premise—that language learning and culture learning are fundamentally similar processes—rests on this neurocognitive view of language, meaning, and mind. The following chapters provide the theoretical foundations for this perspective, starting with a core issue explored in the next chapter—the relationship between language and culture.

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