

RAISING INTERCULTURAL CONSCIOUSNESS THROUGH LITERARY DIALOGUE IN A  
SECOND LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

by

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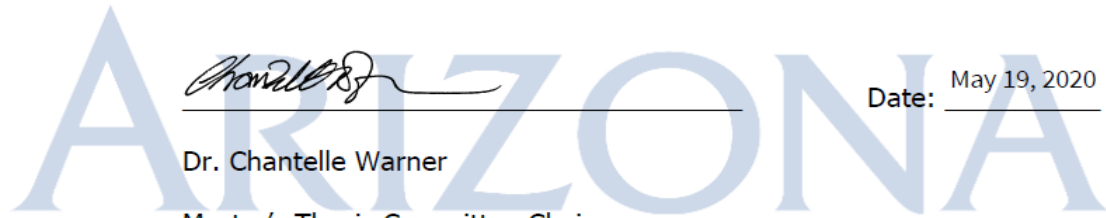
I hereby certify that I have read this thesis prepared under my direction and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the Master’s requirement.





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## **Dedication**

To Faith.

For helping me overcome every obstacle ever kept in my way  
and

To the Ijagbemi family  
For adopting this stranger.

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## Abstract

Scholars have long discussed the use of literature in (inter)cultural awareness raising/teaching in foreign language teaching. This MA thesis presents a study conducted in two beginning German language classes, in which literary texts thematizing minority perspectives were implemented in order to raise students' intercultural awareness. The classroom-based study combines literary reading, digital social media, and peer dialogue. Data obtained from learners' comments on google documents from classroom discussions, show evidence of learners' emergent intercultural awareness, and an analysis of student response surveys indicate that learners had a positive experience working collaboratively. This study therefore demonstrates that literary texts can be used in beginner classes in foreign language classrooms to teach intercultural awareness.

# Introduction

The teaching and learning of culture in the foreign language classroom has transformed over decades in relation to the educational and societal priorities at the time. The principles guiding the teaching of culture in language curricula has also been greatly influenced by perceptions of language in the field of foreign language teaching and learning and understandings of what it means to communicate in a language foreign to one's own (Fenner, 2017). In brief, the teaching of culture has shifted from the teaching of history, geography, literature and institutions of the target culture, which Kramersch (1996) succinctly described as the "historical and ethnographic phenomenon" of culture, to a focus on culture as the everyday life, attitudes, beliefs, conduct and interaction of a people (Fenner, 2017). Language textbooks symbolized changing trends in the teaching of culture, as cultural representations in language textbooks of the 1980s shifted from historic and static knowledge of culture, e.g. French's "*Civilisation*", German's "*Landeskunde*", monuments, regions etc., to culture in everyday language practices i.e. culture in communicating. With the attention to language use that has dominated the field since the 1980s, the trajectory of language teaching in North American language education has moved towards an interest in context. With regard to textbook design, this has resulted in the introduction of everyday situations and dialogues around themes such as restaurants, phone calls etc. that students were likely to encounter if they visit communities where the language, they are learning is spoken (Fenner, 2017; Kramersch, 1996).

The interest in how people interact in different contexts and how such interactions are embedded in cultural norms and practices, which has characterized second language teaching and learning in the past few decades, has led to a focus on preparing learners to be participants in social interactive contexts. Culture teaching came to be reconceptualized as intercultural learning, with an emphasis placed on understanding the new culture(s): by observing, analyzing and reflecting on the similarities and differences between and among cultures with the aim of being more aware of “self” and the “other” (e.g. Byram, 1997; Kramsch, 1994). A number of scholars (e.g. Gramling & Warner, 2012; Kramsch, 1995, 2006; Van, 2009; Warner & Gramling, 2014; Warner, 2009) have argued for the use of literary texts in teaching intercultural awareness, because literary texts allow for interacting and observing the small “c” of culture, doing away with over-generalized, homogeneous representations of culture as depicted in most foreign language textbooks (Fenner, 2017).

In this thesis, I first discuss the teaching of intercultural awareness by looking at scholarly definitions of culture and how some scholars have positioned literary texts within the context of teaching intercultural awareness in the second language classroom. I then highlight how peer dialogue and digital social reading have been used to advance critical reading of literary texts. Next, I present my study conducted in a beginner German class at a public university in the southwestern United States. I highlight how participants understood and positioned themselves as observers and critics of a new culture at various



moments in two lessons. Finally, I analyze my findings on the potential of literary texts in raising intercultural consciousness, a term I have coined here to mean a sense of intercultural awakening.

# Literature Review

## **Culture/Intercultural Teaching in Foreign Language Education**

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in Europe (Council of Europe 2001, 2018) and ACTFL's *Global Competence Position Statement* (2014) in the United States of America each posit intercultural awareness as part of the goal of language teaching and learning. The CEFR (2001) emphasizes the need for an intercultural teaching approach stating that "a central objective of language learning is to promote a favorable development of the learner's whole personality and sense of identity in response to the enriching experience of otherness in language and culture" (2001, p.1). In 2018, *Plurilingual Competence* was added to CEFR's statement; that is, the ability to mediate effectively between members of one's community and other communities, by taking into account sociocultural and sociolinguistic differences. ACTFL (2014) states that successful interactions among diverse groups of people can be achieved through global competence, which is the ability to communicate with respect and cultural understanding with people of diverse cultures. ACTFL's guiding principles for language learning (2020) added literacy in language learning to its principles stating that the "negotiation, analysis and awareness of audience (literacy knowledge) are as critical as understanding and creating a message" (linguistic and sociolinguistic knowledge). These approaches by CEFR and ACTFL demonstrate the importance of intercultural learning in foreign language teaching even if the ways in which it is approached differs.

With the rise of proficiency-based language teaching in the 1980s, came the emphasis on the teaching of language use in social contexts. Understood as the teaching of communicative competence, this approach focused on the appropriateness, for example, in forms of address and conventional expressions, between particular interlocutors in a given context. However, there was generally no attention given to a deeper understanding of the cultural structures that warranted the choices of language use, in other words, discourse. Since the mid-1990s, intercultural awareness began to take on educational importance in foreign language teaching, with the understanding that there is a need for learners to not only speak the language but to acquire the knowledge necessary to navigate intercultural communication in a foreign language. Many scholars have argued that this awareness can only be acquired through a deeper understanding of the cultural norms and practices of the foreign culture (see Byram, 1997; Kramsch, 1993; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013).

Byram (1997), one of the earliest theorists of intercultural communicative competence (ICC), argued that the aims of teaching language for intercultural competence include “linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse competence in language, combined with the discovery, analysis, comparison and critique of cultures” (1997, p. 48). He theorized that there are five elements of intercultural competence.

- Attitudes: openness and readiness and curiosity about other cultures;
- Knowledge: social practices and products of the target culture and of process of social interaction;
- Skills of interpretation and relation;

- Skills of discovery and interaction; and,
- Critical cultural awareness/political education (2000, p. 9).

Byram goes on to state that intercultural competence plus linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse competence leads to ICC, as ICC requires that speakers employ knowledge of a culture's societal and individual interaction in communication. The connection between linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse competence therefore connotes a special skill requirement in the second language that supersedes the mere act of using linguistic code. This connection between linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse competence points to an understanding of how linguistic codes are constructed and used within and among individuals in a context based on past and present social structures and codes of conduct not easily perceived by an outsider without the observation and reflection of the target culture.

In her early work on intercultural learning, Kramsch proposed a model that made the interdependence of culture and language even more clear, by associating the cultural and social aspects of language learning. She defines the sociocultural aspects of language as the "synchronic and diachronic context in which language is used in organized discourse communities" (1996, p. 2). Language-culture is thus dynamic, a phenomenon related to time and space and how language use varies over time, and between social actors, e.g. of different social classes. She draws upon definitions of culture in the fields of the humanities and social sciences. The concept of culture in the humanities is viewed as the

representation of self and the other in social groups “through its material productions like arts, literature, social institution or artifacts of everyday life, and the mechanism for their reproduction and preservation through history” (1996, p.4), while culture in the social sciences is regarded as the “attitudes and beliefs, ways of thinking, behaving and remembering shared by members of the community” ( p. 4). Both definitions, she further explains, derive their authority from the “discovery of laws that regulate social life” (p. 3). Language teaching, according to Kramsch, should therefore aim at discovering these laws. For if we agree that culture is dynamic both in the “reproduction of its material artifacts” and in the “behaving and remembering” of members of its community through “time and space” (p.2), the teaching of language, and by proxy, cultural awareness in foreign language therefore requires critical observation and reflection of how language is used. In short, Kramsch believes that the critical observation of how language is used in a culture will reveal deeper socio-cultural patterns in its communication system. She argues that the teaching of language as a reflection of culture is of importance in foreign language education, because language use symbolizes the social structure and patterns of a community, as “cultural characteristics are embedded within historical relations of power and authority, which secure social, professional, political, pedagogical status through the way of speaking of particular speakers in a particular time and from a particular space” (p. 7). Foreign language teaching should therefore be focused on the social processes of enunciation, through observation, analysis and critique, as this will reveal cultural patterns and codes within the given culture.

In 2006, Kramsch introduced the concept of symbolic competence, defined as a learner's manipulation and interpretation of semiotic signs across cultures to create and convey meaning. In 2008, she further developed this definition of symbolic competence as the ability to be aware of the historicity of words and to use that awareness in changing the context of interaction and positioning oneself advantageously. In 2011, she discussed three aspects of symbolic systems, that is, symbolic representation: a focus on what is said and what they reveal about the mind, symbolic action: a focus on what words do and what they reveal about human intentions and symbolic power; a focus on what words reveal about social identities, individual and collective memories and emotions and aspirations (2011, p.357), and illustrated with classroom studies how language teachers can model symbolic competence in language teaching by recognizing affordances in ongoing classroom discourse that creates room for the teaching of symbolic systems, and as a consequence symbolic competence. This critical pedagogical approach in foreign language, that focuses on the discovery, observation, comparison and critique of the target culture will slowly lead to a deeper understanding and evolving of intercultural awareness in learners of foreign languages, the aim of which should be the goal of a language teacher (Byram 1997).

### **Literature, Culture and Intercultural awareness**

Scholars have long discussed the potential uses of literature in foreign language classrooms (Fenner, 2001; Hoff, 2013, 2016; Rodriguez & Puyal, 2012;) as well as the use of literary or creative language in language development (e.g. Cook, 1994; Duff &

Maley, 1990; Hanauer, 2001; Van, 2009). In part, this has been connected to some of the same trends in intercultural learning already described. For example, it has been suggested that the use of literary texts in foreign language classrooms is one of the best ways to expose students to a new culture, especially when physically participating in the culture is impossible (e.g. Collie & Slater, 1987). It has also been observed that learners of foreign languages are more likely to interact with texts in the foreign language in their personal and professional lives than with members of the language community itself (Byram, 2013, p. 56 Byrnes, 1998, p. 4:).

Some have advocated for a content-based curriculum that includes literature (e.g. Rodriguez et Puyal, 2012) and have emphasized how literary texts can be used to develop intercultural awareness in the L2 as learners interact with the literature of the foreign language (Bobkina & Dominguez, 2014; Rodriguez & Puyal, 2012; Tayebipour, 2009; Van, 2009 ). Other scholars have discussed the use of literature in (inter)cultural awareness raising/teaching in foreign language teaching, because culture manifests itself and is “mediated, interpreted and recorded through language” (Kramersch, 1993, p. 4; see also Kramersch, 2013; Liddicoat, 2000). Literature in this view can be understood as an embodiment of cultural patterns in its factual and aesthetic form (see also Kramersch, 1996, 2011)

Rodriguez & Puyal (2012) strongly recommend the use of a content and language integrated learning approach for developing intercultural reflection. They claim that the use of literary texts can promote cultural literacy and fluency in the second or other language through the use of real-world topics reflecting different viewpoints. This helps

combine language and intercultural learning "...thereby affecting our conceptual mapping, modifying the way we think and broadening our thinking horizon" (2012, p. 109). They argue that fictional texts would fulfill intercultural objectives in the foreign language classroom if analytical and creative tasks were employed that enable learners to explore various cultural perspectives.

Hoff (2016, p.54) highlights the interaction between reader and text as a type of communicative dialectic relationship, whereby the reader is constantly creating their own meaning of the text. She goes on to state how reader and text interaction allows the reader to stop, reflect and re-read the text, an act that affords the reader the opportunity to take on different vantage points in the process of communication and thus, literary texts can be used to develop learners in foreign language as "intercultural readers". Relatedly, Bobkina & Dominguez (2014) state that students get more engaged in the plot and feelings of the characters in literary texts and that this creates a positive effect on learning.

Related to these discussions of how literature can be used to promote intercultural awareness, scholars have discussed and advocated in recent years for a primary role for texts and other authentic materials in foreign language classrooms, to develop learners' holistic literacy abilities (e.g Swaffar et al, 1991; Arens & Swaffar, 2000; Swaffar & Arens, 2005; Paeasni, Allen & Dupuy, 2015). Arens & Swaffar (2000), advocating for the early inclusion of authentic reading materials in language classrooms, describes how reading goals in foreign language teaching are integrally connected to the Standard for Foreign Language Learning's (1996) guidelines for curricular development in language programs



(1996), which treat language ability as not only the command of language forms but also as an integrated set of cognitive and cultural skills tied to various intellectual, social and cultural contexts (2000, p. 105). Arens & Swaffar go on to show how the symbolic relationship between language learners and "texts," whether written, oral or performed, are linked to the five language assessment categories stated in the Standard's guidelines, i.e. communication, connection, culture, comparisons and communities. They describe how reading can achieve the goals of each category by explaining the connection of three factors: the text and the reader, the context of verbal expression comprehension and practices and the outcome of focusing on a category (2000, p. 107). They go on to state that when readers read successfully, they draw upon a triad of any of these factors, which loosely outlines what a text can "mean" to an individual reader. As an example, a focus on the communicative category will mean that readers read the text and its world in order to build up on language registers and nuances. Their reading will therefore be successful if they can retell the story in recognizable terms. A focus on culture means readers look for patterns of ideas and concepts in the texts in order to compare them with their own and try to make connections between the text's culture and their own, while a focus on connection means readers either make connections between the situation in the text and their own lives or make connections between two versions of a story separated in time and space or in language and try to find patterns of how texts presents concepts of information as a pattern based in culture rather than information bit. Arens and Swaffar argue then, that integrating reading goals in early language classrooms will lead to a

holistic development of linguistic, cognitive and cultural skills across all five categories of Standards' guidelines.

In their book *A Multiliteracies Framework for Collegiate Foreign Language Teaching* (2016), Paesani, Allen & Dupuy describe what it means to be literate in the 21st century and illustrate how the use of authentic texts, that is, texts that are created by and for members of a target community, in language classrooms can be used to develop learners' literacy skills. To be literate, according to them, involves meaning making through linguistic resources, using and understanding cultural products, practices and perspectives that inform the context of texts and drawing upon cognitive abilities to understand a text. Literacy thus has three dimensions; linguistic knowledge where the learner is a code-breaker and maker, cognitive knowledge where the learner is a meaning maker who connects different pieces of information and constructs meanings, and sociocultural knowledge where the learner is a text-user and critic who is aware of the dynamic nature of culture and how culture influences the way we think (Kern, 2000). They then describe the notion of multimodality, which refers to the different ways of knowledge representation and meaning making, how language modalities complement and overlap with one another and how meaning-design is an active and dynamic process of making form-meaning connections that takes place as we connect the verbal, written, visual, gestural and organization forms of a texts and the role our own social and cultural knowledge and experiences play in interpreting information. A holistic literacy skill, to them, therefore entails being able to make all these connections in the target language and culture while interpreting and producing linguistic language forms. Although this

holistic literacy skill takes a more elaborate angle than Hoff's concept of the "intercultural reader" (2016), both literacy skill and intercultural reading skills/development stems from the notion that authentic materials, in which literature also forms a part of, are imbedded with cultural patterns (Kramersch, 2013; Liddicoat, 2000; Arens & Swaffar, 2000).

One of the affordances of literary texts noted by many scholars is that they provide richer, more dynamic and heterogeneous representations of culture, for example compared to language textbooks (Fenner, 2017; Rodriguez & Puyal, 2012;), and allow for individual encounters with the other culture (Fenner, 2017). Working against stereotypical views of culture should be one of the foreign language teacher's tasks (Fenner, 2017; Jackson, 2014) as this can hinder a deeper understanding of the culture. In this regard, Kramersch discusses efforts made in American foreign language teaching to "broaden and diversify traditional views of culture beyond the boundaries of nation states" (1996, p. 6). This notion of "multicultural education" attempted to expand the traditional curriculum by incorporating issues of race, class and gender in an effort to sensitize students to the unique historical realities that have shaped United States culture and other cultures (Kramersch, 1996).

The potential of fictional texts in the development of critical awareness, which in turn leads to intercultural awareness has been highlighted in a number of publications (e.g. Phipps & Gonzalez, 2004; Zacharias, 2005). While emphasizing that reading of literature should be valued on its own rights and not as a support skill for other instructional goals, Byrnes advocates for enhancing students' cultural understanding through literary texts, which are seen as an embodiment of the other culture (1998, p. 6). She emphasizes how

reading literary texts in the foreign language contributes to cultural knowledge and awareness, and remarks that the relationship of language and culture and the reading of literature “build on and express deep underlying cultural assumptions...as what is being said or not said and how something is said may be more revealing of the second language culture than factual statements that deals with its achievements” (1998, p. 23).

In a somewhat parallel approach, several researches have described the affective interactions between learners of the foreign languages and the literature of the foreign language (Giovanelli, 2010; Hanauer, 2001; Kramersch, 2013; Liddicoat & Crozet, 2000). Interwoven within the observation and reflection of cultural similarities and differences is the ability of literary text to evoke multiple interpretations and meaning constructions which can lead students’ enhanced interaction with the text (see Widdowson, 1982; Kern, 2000; Kramersch, 2011) and further intercultural awareness. The imaginative power of literary texts and their potential personal relevance to the reader's life experience makes it easier for a reader to relate their affective interaction with the text to previous experiences or background knowledge in real life contexts (Bobkina & Dominguez, 2014; Maley, 1989).

With a comparable emphasis on the relationships between learners as readers and literary texts, Warner (2009), drawing from literary pragmatics, explores how literary language reflects “social acts of interactive communication” (2009, p.162) and can be used to promote learners’ linguistic awareness of the foreign language in ways that make visible the complexities of language use between interlocutors and what that tells us about the ways speakers position themselves in language use. In their model of “contact

pragmatics,” Gramling and Warner (2012) and Warner and Gramling (2013) explore foreign language learners’ positionality as interpreters of (foreign) literary texts, who dialogically bring into play sociocultural knowledge and experiences from their known and new cultures as they interact with literary works.

### **Dialogue and Digital Social Reading**

Working with literature in the classroom requires collaboration and dialogue. Studies have shown that peer-directed discussions of literature can promote not only comprehension but also student engagement and increase critical thinking skills (e.g. Almasi, 1995; Klinger, Vaugh & Schumm, 1998). Vygotsky (1978) in his theory of social development highlights the role of talk (dialogue/ discourse) in sharing knowledge and constructing meaning. His theories, which are the basis of contemporary sociocultural approaches, treat teaching and learning as a social activity and as a form of interaction among learners that furthers knowledge. Fenner (2017, p. 210) states how participating in dialogue could mean different things: to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree, and so forth. Dialogue in this sense, can be said to connote the questioning of ideas or perspectives in interaction with another and through careful deliberation, arriving at an agreement or not. Scholars have also argued that learners have to be active participants in the process of their own learning with the role of the teacher as that of a facilitator that organizes learning situations and mediates student learning process in order for intercultural awareness to take place (e.g Bokina & Dominguez, 2014; Fenner, 2017). This means that how learners participate and engage in the act of learning plays a vital role in how they acquire intercultural competence skills. Fenner (2017) mentions the role of peer-led

dialogues on literature in the classroom and how intersubjective processes may influence the formation of values and democratic thinking. In this sense, actively contributing to peer discussion in class can lead to the formation of new perspectives.

The emphasis on dialogue in scholarship on literature and language teaching connects these discussions with another set of conversations within foreign language teaching and learning, namely, research in foreign language teaching and learning on the use of digital social media (Blyth, 2008; Blyth, 2013, 2014; Gao, 2013). In a research study that focused on teaching literature with digital social media, Blyth (2014) found out that both students and teachers had positive experiences working with a digital social tool called eComma. The research focused on how teachers' perceived students' participatory culture with the use of digital social media as a tool for learners' collaboration while working with literary text. While teachers used different pedagogical instructions when working with digital social media, all of the teachers in the study felt that digital social media allowed students to interact with the text at various levels at the same time. Furthermore, the distribution of cognitive load enabled by dividing sections of a text among groups, increased students' interaction with the text because learners were able to easily search for information online simultaneously. Other high points of the study were that it afforded the teacher a means of synthesizing reading activities that would normally be divided in stages. This allowed the instructor the opportunity to observe learners aggregate reading behavior and reading pattern and helps create a zone of proximal development (ZPD) for less expert readers. ZPD is a process by which individual problem solving is assisted by guidance or collaborative work (Vygotsky, 1978). This creation of a ZPD while working

with a literary text is of importance, because it has been observed that readers who have different background knowledges and language profiles are likely to have different reading comprehension abilities (Byrnes, 1998, p.13).

The teaching of intercultural awareness through language (Hoff, 2016; Kramersch, 1993: 1996: 2011), the affordances of authentic text in developing learners literacy skills (Arens & Swaffar, 2000; Warner, 2014; Paesani, Allen & Dupuy, 2016), the various positioning that learners of a foreign language assume while interpreting a literary text in the L2 (Warner & Gramling, 2013; Warner, 2009), and the platform that digital social media provides in creating a social collaborative atmosphere where learners can not only work and learn from one another but also debate for and against point opinion and negotiate moments of uncertainties (Blyth, 2014) were the ideas that laid a foundation for my study. Based on the findings of these previous studies, I developed a study which I discuss in detail in the next chapter.

# Research Design and Methods

## **Selected Texts and Class Context**

This study was conducted in two second-semester German classes at a large public university in the American Southwest. The study focuses on lessons conducted over the course of multiple days. Two days for the first part of the study and three days for the second part of the study. The second-semester German course was designed for learners with little knowledge of German. Both classes met fifty minutes four days a week for sixteen weeks. The course curriculum employed the regular use of authentic texts. The textbook used for this course, "*Augenblicke: German through Film, Media and Texts*", is a textbook developed for introductory and intermediate German instruction (Frei, Swanson, & Levine, 2018). Lessons and activities in the textbook are structured around four modes of communication: interpretative: that is, cognitive strategies needed to interpret authentic materials; interpersonal: the ability to communicate with others; presentational: the ability to share one's perspective with others through written, spoken and digital presentational modes; and the reflective mode: that is, reviewing and reflecting upon one's belief about culture and critically examining previously learned world knowledge. The interpretive, interpersonal and presentational modes are the three modes of communication which ACTFL provides as its three organizing principles for describing language performance across its novice, intermediate and advanced level. The reflective mode was introduced by the authors of the textbook and this served as a fertile ground in this study as learners in both sessions were accustomed to interacting with authentic



texts with lesson activities that made learners reflect on cultural practices, products and perspectives in a way that deviated from teaching culture as homogenous and static. As an example, at the beginning of each module, learners wrote a short reflection about their personal perception or experience related to the topic. These varying views served as the foundation for discussing and teaching the topic in the classroom. We then related student perspectives to other points of view encountered in the authentic materials used in the curriculum.

The focus of the module at the time the first study was conducted was titled "Was, wie und warum wird gefeiert?." This was the second module of a total of four modules to be taught in the semester. The unit's learning outcome focuses on making learners reflecting on how holidays and festivals are representations of cultural practices and beliefs by looking at where, why and how celebrations are held. The first part of the chapter was designed to make learners conversant about major holidays in Germany and some of the traditions, superstitions and beliefs linked to certain holidays. Then lessons shifted to a more intercultural focus as the class looked at how certain holidays, like New Year's Eve, are celebrated differently in various parts of the world. This led to discussions of celebration practices and how they are linked to cultural beliefs. It is safe to say, that learners had already developed a certain level of critical thinking related to how holidays are linked to our understanding of self and our beliefs. While conducting the second study, the module that was being treated was themed "Wie bestimmt die Vergangenheit unsere Gegenwart?." This module focused on the retelling of legends and myths, over centuries, the various interpretations and social uses of myths and legends and how such

stories are shaped through culture and transcends a culture over time. Similarities among legends and how this influences our actions and beliefs was also highlighted.

The overarching goal of my first action research study was to raise learners' consciousness of minority cultures often hidden behind the bigger "national face" of culture in German language textbooks and materials. This aim was born out of the notion of multicultural education that tries to diversify and broaden traditional views of cultures beyond the boundaries of nation states (Kramersch, 1996). The lesson plans and materials were designed to subvert homogenous representations of culture in most language textbooks and sensitize students in beginner German class to culture as being heterogeneous and dynamic (see Kramersch, 1996; Rodriguez & Puyal, 2012; Fenner, 2017). Creating dialogue in the classroom around themes such as cultural integration and interculturality was a major focus of the lesson plan for this study as it relied on critical reading of the literature to raise dialogue concerning minority groups in Germany, their festivals and practices and how second or third generation immigrant might position themselves in a foreign country. Consideration was also given to the level of appropriateness of the text (sentence structure) for the class and the length of the text-factors that will influence the time frame needed to work with the text in class.

For the first study, the poem "Du Verstehst?" by Manfred Sandheigl (1984) was chosen as the focal text for two reasons. The language used in the poem, although simple, can be read as provocative depending on who one interprets the speaker to be. This allowed learners to put their assumptions in dialogue with the poem. Additionally, the language of the poem is both standard and colloquial, in a way that demands a close reading of

the text for beginning learners of German, especially because they are not usually exposed to non-standard German in the classroom. The poem, which is written in a (one-way) conversational style, in which the speaker tells the other (person spoken to) what cultural practices they need to change, presented a platform for raising discourse surrounding ethnocentrism, discrimination and cultural assimilation and integration. One of my aims was to make students reflect on these issues and ask themselves why they feel the way they do. This in turn brought into dialogue the various discourses surrounding cultural differences, 'self' and 'other' and cultural superiority.

Yoko Tawada's "Erzähler ohne Seelen" (1996) was used for the second study. This text provides a symbolic representation of the effects that reading, travelling, and cultural assimilation can have on one's identity of self. The text depicts symbiotic relationship between the 'soul' and body of the author and how this relationship is affected by traveling through and across countries. This thematic aspect of the text was my focus in the second study as I hoped to highlight forms of culture we may interact with in our daily lives and raise discourse around how our identity can be formed through interaction with different cultures. Discourse surrounding how our identity is formed connected to the unit topic at the time which questioned how past (experiences, interactions) influenced the present (our present identity). Although the unit focused on the retelling of legends and myths over the century and how stories are shaped through cultures, Yoko Tawada's text made it possible to direct these same questions to how personal identities are constructed over time.

As an overarching pedagogical goal, my aim was to explore the subjective and emotional experience that literary text affords in negotiating and renegotiating learners' dialogue with values and worldviews inherent in the both texts (Hoff, 2016). Thus, at the start of the lessons, no background information was given to learners about either texts' publication year or authors' biographical details. The reason behind this is that the aim of the study was to push learners to critically interact with the text itself, how it made them feel and how it brings real life experiences and dialogue into play. I also wanted learners not to automatically dive into their own interpretations, without the influence of the author's biographical information. Instead I wanted learners to explore the imaginary world of literary text, whose detailed description of characters and settings often lead and made readers to discover and characters' personalities and imagine themselves in characters' worlds (Bobkina & Dominguez, 2014; Maley, 1989). This imaginative power of text and its sometime personal relevance to the readers' own life experiences makes it easy for a reader to relate their affective interaction with the text to previous experiences or background knowledge (see Bobkina & Dominguez, 2014; Kramersch, 2006: 2008; Maley, 1989). This affordance of literature was the fertile ground I wanted to explore in order to link "text world" to "real world" and thus create a platform for intercultural consciousness raising dialogue in the classroom. In this way, this is an exploratory study of the potential pedagogical affordances that literature provides in raising intercultural consciousness related to minority cultures.

The following are my research questions for this thesis

- How do learners respond and make sense of the texts in the two studies and what evidence does this show of intercultural consciousness?
- How do learners understand their own learning related to these texts?

The pedagogical tasks I designed relied heavily on Swaffar's "initial reading" matrix (2005). I incorporated three stages of literature reading: pre-reading, reading and post-reading stages. This has been shown to provide a good scaffolding for linking literature to real life issues. A collaborative document using Google was also used in the first and last stages of the study to allow learners to work collaboratively on the text as this allows learners to easily blend other digital tools, such as search engines, into their learning process, acts as an effective way of distributing the cognitive load of analyzing a text and provides a platform for dialogue among learners at every stage of the reading (Blyth, 2014). My aim was also to see how learners interacted with the text and to provide a written discourse platform that encouraged expressiveness with less concern for facework. In this way, I hoped to build a more relaxed conversation on the next day, since classroom dialogue was to serve as a nexus between literary reading and intercultural consciousness raising.

To begin each study, the title of the text was first introduced, and learners were asked what they expected from a text (poem) with such a title. Next a quick explanation of how to navigate google documents - specifically how to highlight text, leave comments and respond to comments - was given. Learners first interacted with the text by reacting in a comment to anything they found interesting. This was done on a google document shared by all members of the class. Afterwards, learners were required to respond to specific

questions that pushed them to do a closer reading of the text. Learners were continually encouraged to comment, ask questions, react to comments made by their colleagues, and react to the text as much as possible as there was no right, or wrong answer and the aim of the exercise was to critically reflect on the poem. Then came the post reading stage. Some words and expressions were analyzed to clarify uncertainties related to grammar and expressions in the text. Then questions were asked that linked the textual world to the real world. Students discussed each question in pairs first before we discussed it as a class. Finally, students were told to choose an image from the internet that represents a lesson learned from working with the text. Afterwards, learners participated in a questionnaire of 10 questions (Appendix I). The language of use in the questionnaire was English, thus learners could express themselves more freely while completed the questionnaire.

For Study 1 (Sandheigl poem), a total of 30 participants partook in the questionnaire, while a total of 27 participants partook in the questionnaire for Study 2 (Tawada text). In order to evaluate how learners responded and made sense of the texts and to better understand learners' developing intercultural consciousness, two things were considered : first was the discussions on the google document and second was the learners re-created meaning making of the text, which was done in groups of three to four members. Finally, survey data collected after each study asked learners about their experience interacting with the text, working with colleagues and also their personal perception of their takeaway from the study.

## Data Collection

Data was collected from two classes (Class A and Class B). Each class period lasted for 50 minutes. Class A had a total of 19 students. 10 males and 9 females, while Class B, had a total of 17 students. 7 females and 10 males. Participants in both classes were a mix of learners from different academic levels, i.e freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors. Study 1 was conducted over a period of two days while Study 2 was conducted over a period of three days. In Study 1, the Sandheigl poem, "Du Verstehst?" was used, while an excerpt of Tawada's "Erzähler ohne Seelen" *was* used for Study 2. At the end of both studies, participants created their own interpretation of the focus text in groups of 3 to 4 members.

In order to address the first research question, the comments made by learners on the google documents were used as evidence of thematic patterns that came up as learners interacted as a class during the study, how these patterns indicate a consciousness raising of interculturality and how learners respond and make sense of the texts. Data from a survey was also collected anonymously. The questionnaire contained ten questions (Appendix I). The questions asked learners to rate their engagement in class during the study, their experience working with the google document, their experience working collaboratively with colleagues on the google document and during class discussions and their take away from the lesson. Responses from the survey were used to gauge learners' experience working collaboratively using digital social media and how learners understand their learning around the texts. Data from the google documents were analyzed based

on patterns that indicate an awareness of cultural differences/ multiculturalism and (positive/negative) attitude to other culture. Data from the surveys were used to answer the second research question, which aimed to find out how learners understood their own learning around the text. To this end, learners' responses in the survey were used to assess learners' perception of their experiences and what they learned during the study.



# Data Analysis

## **Discussion in the Google Docs**

In the first study, which focused on the poem "Du verstehst?", there were a total of ninety-eight (98) comments in the google doc in class A and a total of one hundred twenty-three (123) comments in class B. Most comments focused on which cultures were represented in the poem, cultural assimilation, identity of the speaker and the addressee and negotiating the meaning and intent of language used in the poem. Below, I analyze how each class negotiated these intercultural aspects of the text in different ways.

### **Class A**

The majority of the students in class A identified the cultures represented in the text in broad and specific terms by highlighting the various foods, holidays and practices in stanzas three and four of the poem. Four students noted explicitly that a main theme in the poem is cultural difference. Two students wrote: "I think the point the author is trying to get across is cultural differences. They give many examples throughout the poem". "Maybe his point is to try to mix his previous culture with the new German culture in a poem form" Other comments on such threads indicated that students had a broad understanding of the presence of other cultures within Germany. Some students suggested more specifically that the poem was a reference to Middle Eastern cultures and Western (European) cultures. One student wrote, "I have a feeling it (the text) is about the fairly recent increase of refugees."

## **Tensions between cultures**

Students' interpretations of the poem highlighted the tensions between cultures within the text. The first student who noted this tension, identified the speaker as the person who is pressurized to assimilate a western culture. She states: "Speaker is likely a Muslim immigrant from a non-German speaking country - discusses pressures to celebrate Christian traditions and eat German food, etc. but not their own." Two of her colleagues responded to her thread in agreement, one of whom asked if the speaker, an immigrant, was discussing with other immigrants like himself. Two other students responded to this comment stating simply that the speaker seemed "really close to the topic." The first student then further commented that the poem might be about a Turkish migrant in Germany telling other Turkish immigrants how to integrate into a German culture "What if it's a Turkish who already integrated into a German country and is telling other Turkish immigrants to do the same?." In the next threads, two other students reaffirmed the speaker's need (force) to assimilate into a new culture by questioning the value and fact of the situation. "The speaker had to give up his culture in order to be accepted. I feel like he is basically saying is it worth it?" A student responded to her comment pointing out that it might not be a question of it being worth it but "more that this is the reality of the situation". The third student agreed with the second student stating: "Like maybe they are saying, "This is how things are and you just have to deal with that. You understand?"

## **Identity of the speaker**

Students negotiated the identity/nationality of the speaker by focusing on how the narrator uses the German language. Highlighting the phrase *du müssen* in the poem, a student states: "I think the use of *Müssen* in this form shows that the author does not know the rules of German grammar very well." Another student who agreed with the first student's theory responded, "yes he probably doesn't know German grammar very well or he could be doing it on purpose to try to make a point". Another student responding to this comment questioned what the motive of the author is by using nonstandard German grammar. To which a new student responds that the author is "criticizing the cultural expectation to assimilate" and that the repetition of the title of the poem at the end of each stanza "shows how much the author feels condescended to about it". One student who reacted to the use of this repetition in the poem felt the author wanted it to be affective to the reader and not as an indication how he, the author, felt: "I had a similar point of view, it's almost accusatory in that it sounds as if they're trying to get the reader to think about their actions and how they've affected the writer and the writer's culture".

## **Addressivity of Du**

Learners speculated about the singular and plural representations/connotations of "du" in the poem by considering the phrase structures *du müssen*, *du verstehn* and also the affective implication of *du* on the reader. The student who started this thread, speaking for her partner and herself, stated: "We think the author is saying 'du' to effectively target

the reader. Saying 'you must do this' is much more effective than saying 'the people must do this.'" Three other students affirmed this same position stating that the use of du "confronts the reader to look at what the immigrant experience is" and makes "the poem more personal" by "referring directly to the speaker." In a new thread, another student felt the use of 'du' was a reflective experience for the author, almost like a conversation within the narrator that conveys an experience of how the narrator was "pressured, implicitly or not, to give up elements of their own culture in order to integrate into German society". To this, a new student responds that "Or it might be a subtle jab at the people who force these ideas onto the speaker."

## **Class B**

### **Tension between cultures**

Four students in this class who started the first thread of comments felt the poem was a type of "directions' or "guidelines." A new student, who started a new thread felt the poem was about recent events of refugee influx into Europe and its implication on the need for rapid cultural assimilation. He wrote: "Due to the refugee crisis of people coming from the mid-east area to Europe, I believe that this poem is written by one of these refugees. These refugees are encouraged to assimilate into German society as quickly as possible so that they may become self-sufficient and no longer have to rely on government funding and housing to get by." This observation by this student led to a series of confirmational replies from other students in the classes. For example, two

students discussed the experience of migrants in Germany and related this to the United States by comparing perceptions of the Turkish population group in Germany to that of the Mexican population in the United States. One of the two students noted: "could refer to foreign people, most notably the Turks, the predominant minority group living in Germany. They deal with the societal oppression similar to what Mexicans face in the United States."

### **Identity of the speaker and addressivity of "Du"**

Similar to class A, a majority of the students in class B also approached questions of the identity of the speaker by referring to the speaker's use of language in the poem. Some comments showed that students had a presumed intercultural consciousness of how a non-native speaker is likely to use a language. For instance, one student commented "Yes, maybe conjugating incorrectly is a sign the speaker is not well versed in German, thus from outside of Germany. The part though is the line 'unsere cultura,' which is our culture, so maybe they are German?" to which another student responded "I agree, after reading the poem I believe that it was intentional to showcase that the speaker is not a native German but possibly a Turkish refugee that fled to Germany." These two comments indicate that learners not only considered how a non-native speaker might use a language, but they also tried formulating a profile of the type of non-native speaker the speaker is within the context of the poem. Other comments on such threads showed that other learners relied heavily on observing expressions used by the speaker such as *du müssen* and *du verstehn?* to identify both the identity of the speaker and the addressee.

Four different students made the following comments on a thread, which relate to this aspect of the poem:

- "you must, but conjugation is for Sie not du",
- "Maybe they are trying to refer to a specific reader who represents a larger group"
- "Yeah, it's mixing and matching conjugations. I wonder if it is trying to act as though it is talking to one person but is actually referring to a group"
- "I think so. Kanake is a derogatory word to describe said peoples. But is a more normal self-denomination term in Turkish-German culture."

For these students, the use of unconventional grammar by the speaker might be a poetic strategy to generalize and also personalize the message to the addressee in the poem. This line of thought is slightly different from how students in class A perceived the role of 'du' as having a more affective effect on the reader. Also, the fourth student's comment about the derogatory use and meaning of the word *Kanake* which he researched online while working on this poem, solidified other students' guess about the addressee being of Turkish descent and the context of the conversation in the poem.

### **What evidence does students interaction with the text show of Intercultural consciousness?**

Students' interaction with the poem shows that students observed cultural tension between western and middle eastern cultures. Learners seemed to be already aware of cultural differences and issues related to cultural pluralism within Germany. This observation brought up the discourse of other related issues such as the identity of the

speaker and the addressee, how language is by the speaker and the author's motive in the use of "voice," i.e direct speech and the use of "du" in speculating the overall message the author aimed to convey. Students also negotiated the meaning of words like *kanake* and unconventional grammar phrase construction, such as *du müssen* and *du verstehn* and how these play a role in the overall tone of the poem, as well as the sociolinguistic effects/ implications of such language. Thus, by observing cultural tensions in the poem made evident by language use and by reflecting on the function of word choice such as *du müssen*, *du verstehn*, and *kanake* these students exhibited an understanding of varied cultural presence in Germany and with this knowledge, reflected upon the sociolinguistic aspects of the language of the poem. Such interaction and study experience by students from and in a different culture, afforded learners' a personal insight, based on Sandheigl's poetic style and themes, into some ways and forms through which interactions between persons of the same or varied ethnic community might interact within the German community.

## **Discussion in the Google Doc: Study 2**

In this study, there was a total of 21 threads and 78 comments on the google doc for class A and a total of 15 threads and 54 comments for class B.

### **Class A**

In the second study, students in class A in which students worked with Yoko Tawada's text "Erzähler ohne Seelen," 11 students posed questions reflecting on the connection the author is making between the soul and modes of transportation. The following are some examples of these student comments:

- "What does a soul have to do with an airplane and why are they talking about that?"
- "why is the soul being compared to different moving vessels. what kind of comparison is the author exactly looking to make?"

Like these two comments, other similar comments indicated that students struggled at the beginning of the lesson to interpret the message of the text. Also, unlike the first study where students immediately became engaged with the text, a majority did not comment on the google doc as quickly in this study. It is safe to say that the abstractness of Yoko Tawada's text "Erzähler ohne Seelen" was a challenge for students to interpret as students' questions indicated that they first struggled to interpret what it means for the soul to be separated from the body and to travel like mediums of transportation. Subsequent comments by student which followed, focused on the influence or effect of



travelling on the soul and the connection between these two, i.e. what it means for the soul to be separated from the body. One student speculated in form of a question that the abstract meaning of the soul in its relationship to the body and travel might indicate an abstract Indian experience of adventure. She states: "Keeping in mind that this is a story from the Indians, this whole soul theory may just be a means of maintaining the adventure and experience of the journey itself maybe?" A colleague of hers agreed with her stating that the author might be "alluding to life in general." Only one student directly connected the meaning of the text twice to literary devices, the first time as a metaphor and the second time as a personification:

- "It may be a metaphor for the narrator losing himself/his soul (or her soul) through constant travel. He/she is never home"
- "Personification of narrator's soul- narrator "out travels" his own soul. He is possibly traveling through life so quickly/focusing so much on work, etc. that he has relinquished some of his humanity?"

While this student focused more on the metaphorical meanings, seven additional students felt that the detachment of the soul from the body had a more literal meaning and looked to other readings to construct explanations for this. One wrote, "I think that this, in combination with the modern travel theory would work in tandem to explain the loss of a 'soul'." The second connected the text to the story of Peter Pan: "I think that maybe it's similar to in peter pan [sic] where his shadow is not connected to his body, maybe our souls are not connected to our bodies. And while we now physically travel at very high speeds all the time our souls have yet to catch up because they cannot travel that

fast." As demonstrated by these comments, the discussion was generally not related to particular cultures or places; however, one student commented on the voyage across countries referenced in the text. "[I]t talks about the trans-Serbian railroad, traveling across Europe and into Asian (Japan)." This led two other students to reflect upon how cultures in these different countries played a role in what it means for a soul to travel.

The following is the conversation they had in the annotations:

- "Do you think where he traveled has a significance on the meaning of the story?"
- "Europe and Japan are very different places. It's not easy [sic] feel comfortable after a dramatic change of environment"
- "I think this person is saying that he travels so much that he loses [sic] his soul because he is never in one place so no where [sic] feels like home."
- "I like this theory as well. I think the idea of the soul "catching up" because our souls aren't really confined to time like our bodies are."
- "The author does talk about traveling from Japan and back constantly which strengthens your point"
- "The traveler has to make the journey without his soul but it's because he's using forms of modern transportation maybe? The idea is to travel and experience, but the intervention of innovation may hinder the process from a traditional point of view?"

Again, students were asked to recreate the activity from the lesson, by working in groups of three or four to choose an abstract image from the internet that represented their

understanding of the text. A total of 5 groups explained in short sentences why they chose the image.

- Group 1: "The photo is from one of my favorite films. The director was banned from Soviet Russia and fled to Europe. His family were not allowed to follow him. The story follows a character who has to fight with his homeland and his purpose in life."
- Group 2: "It is a different perspective, because the author of *Reisen* has made a new perspective. With *Reise* the author has made understanding of other people. In this example, the author is the golf ball and the reason are the countries."
- Group 3: "The text says that when we travel our soul, or a piece of our identity can be lost. We have chosen this picture because it shows someone who feels alone in an unknown place. If you give yourself to another culture, it can feel lonely and confusing for your identity."
- Group 4: "The picture shows a lost soul wandering alone. The soul is not connected to its surroundings. We have chosen this picture because it represents not being fully present."
- Group 5: "The picture is a representation of life. We do not understand where we are driving but we have to experience life as it is. The picture also shows how disoriented it is to move between many things."

In this class, each group's comment revealed how students in the group interpreted the text. While group 1 associated their interpretation of the text to a director, whose life story they felt was similar to the text, groups 2 and 3's comments indicate that members of those group interpreted the movement from one place to another and the experience of new cultural encounters as an experience that alters one's perspective and personal identity. Groups 4 and 5 interpreted the text as a wandering being.

### **Class B**

Unlike class A where students initiated reflecting on the Tawada text by directly posing critical questions regarding the text to peers, a considerable amount of students in Class B approached the text by first translating parts of the text to English, other students then reacted to the translation by stating how they personally interpreted the specific part of the text. What then became salient in this class was that students immediately started to negotiate the interpretation of various aspects of the text. As an example, regarding how travelling influences an individual, this interaction transpired between some students. As an example:

- "You become emotionally absent when you reach your destination"
- "It might not be so fatalistic. Possibly the intended meaning is that you leave a little bit of your soul behind whenever you travel somewhere. Like you always have a piece of your soul to come back to?"
- "When they get to the final destination part of them feels left at the starting destination? Maybe that is home and they feel lost"

- "This person flies so much that even his own soul no longer knows what is straight"
- "Going back and forth to Japan, he no longer knows where he belongs"
- "Lost between the worlds, lost his soul, doesn't know where he belongs now because he doesn't know who he is"
- "Losing who he is with the customs perhaps"
- "I think they are trying to be more esoteric (sic) than just talking about jet lag. Could be wrong though"
- "Then when I drove farther with the train (Bahn), was my soul set in the direction (Richtung) of Europe."
- "What was so special about Europe that made him feel this way?"
- "He was enchanted by Europe perhaps"
- "I wouldn't say it was necessarily a specific love for Europe, but more a preference. It isn't stated, but perhaps Europe is their homeland, and thus they feel it to be the one place they relate to the most"
- "A few students followed a different route. They stated their interpretation of a part of the text and other students responded to their comment by stating their personal interpretation. As an example"
- "After travelling so much one can potentially lose who they once were?"
- "Yes, or maybe it is just explaining jet lag"
- "Maybe. Absorbing so many other cultures, one can get swayed by other opinions and practice something new."

In class B, students' comments in the recreated activity reveals that most learners' meaning making were around themes such as "new perspective, self- identity and culture mix" as an example

- Group 1: "You learn more as an individual when you travel "
- Group 2: "It is another perspective because the author gained a new perspective by travelling. The author, by travelling, came to understand other people."
- Group 3: "The smoke from the plane shows the heart. The soul is similar to the heart. The soul here represents the author's association of travel to their identity. When one travels to a new place, one loses (leaves) a piece of themselves behind."
- Group 4: "This dark picture represents how you, as a whole, lose yourself when you travel. The focus of the picture attracts you and makes you feel like you are losing yourself because you cannot see it."
- Group 5: "This picture shows the people who travel. Mostly they are tired and rest when they travel from place to place."
- Group 6: "I chose this photo because it is a real photo of the Trans-Siberian Railway, and because it looks isolated."

Members of groups 1 and 2 read Tawada's text as an expression of the influence that travel can have on a person's perspective and self-identity. Groups 3 and 4 interpreted the text from a perspective of how travel and by proxy new culture influences an individual's perspective and/or identity. While members of the groups 5 and 6 both related interpretation of the text to the experience of physical travel. Members of other groups

## **What evidence does students interaction with the text show of Intercultural consciousness?**

Although students tried negotiating the meaning of the Tawada text together, they each came up with varied interpretations of the text as is evident in comments they made on the google doc. This might be due to the abstractness of the text that does allow for varied interpretations. Most of the interpretations were not entirely tied within the countries in the text, i.e. Japan and Europe. Despite this, some students were conscious of the effect and influence that travel and cultural encounters can have on one's identity and perspective. In this regard, it's safe to say there was an iota of intercultural consciousness of how new cultures modifies one's perspective and identity.

## **Survey Data**

### **Student Understandings of their Learning**

Data from the questionnaire/survey (see Appendix 1) was used to determine how learners perceived their experience in both the studies. The survey engine used allows one to send the questionnaire via email, shows total and individual data in graphical representation, and allows one to view individual responses as well. For the first study, a total of 30 responses were collected for both sessions of the second-semester German classes and a total of 27 responses was collected for the second study. The other five questions (4, 5, 6, 7) were open ended questions and aimed to assess how learners understood their own learning around the text and classroom dialogue. These questions were posed as questions 4, 5, 7, 9 and 10 in the questionnaire.

1. Please feel free to comment further on your experiences working with the text.
2. Please briefly state what you learned from the lesson?
3. Please comment on your experience connected to discussions done on the 2nd day of class.
4. Which activities, questions or discussions did you find most helpful? (Be as specific as possible.)
5. Which activities, questions and discussions conducted in class did you find least helpful? (Be as specific as possible.)

In their responses to the five open ended questions in the questionnaire learners understood their learning around the text and classroom discussions around the personal



perspective of the authors and linguistic aspects of the texts. In answer to Question 2, seven participants linked their lessons learned to culture learning. An additional participant, indirectly linked the lesson to culture, referencing particular aspects of society which echoed the comments in the google docs, "I learned one perspective about how the Germans feel about the Middle Eastern immigrants and how they might feel if they were them." In Study 2, a total of 27 responses were received for the same question. 10 of the participants' linked lessons learned to self-identity and perspective, e.g.

- "I learned about identity and perspective."
- "I learned a bit of perspective of somebody who travelled to Germany from Japan..."
- "I learned more about perspective and identity in writing."

Judging from these comments, it appears students reflected upon the author's perspective only and did not relate this to their personal lives. This reiterates their perception of their learning based upon how they interpreted the meaning of the text in the recreated meaning exercise done as a post-task.

Not all students focused on the cultural aspects of the texts. Nine of the participants viewed linguistic interpretation, that is, analyzing the meaning of words and sentences in the poem as what they learned from the lesson. Some of the comments here focused more on the language of the poem, for example "I learned more about how metaphor is implemented in German." Another 10 participants emphasized poetic stylistics as their take-away from the study. One student wrote, "Poems are subjective and symbolized no

matter the language.” This indicates two things: that some learners place more emphasis on the linguistic acquisition of language and that some learners are also drawn and are conscious of the aesthetic features of text. I believe this is a positive finding because this makes it potentially easier to combine the intercultural and linguistic aspects of language teaching.

In response to survey question 1 for Study 2, two students used the following phrases “deep, finding deeper meaning” to describe their experience working with the texts. Another student states “I think every time we work on a poem; we are able to think outside of the box which helps us look at German in a different way”. The use of the phrases “finding deeper meaning’ and “helps us look at German in a different way” indicate that learners were aware of critically interacting with the literary texts. One participant’s response explicitly expressed the importance of critically working with literature by stating the importance of critical thinking to language learning. “I think that this kind of analysis is critical for the understanding of a language, as interpretations that are “outside the box” so to speak, are difficult for most people even in their native language, let alone one they are trying to learn. I think that exercises like this are crucial to the ability to really learn more conversational and casual forms of the language and are therefore very important to be able to decipher.” This response indicates that the learner seems to be aware of critically interacting with the texts and also understand critical thinking as components of language learning; components that are vital in understanding language use as a medium and representation of cultural ways of thinking.

In addition, learners' responses in both studies indicated that classroom dialogue and working collaboratively on the google document played an important role in the raising of intercultural consciousness.

- "I did thoroughly enjoy going over the poem as a class rather than individually or in larger groups. I think it helped to bring in everyone's life experiences and inferences about the poem, so we all felt comfortable with what was being discussed and we were all on the same page."
- "I felt something was added to the discussion when we researched certain terms from the poem. It revealed important cultural information."
- "Collaborating kept me more engaged in the process and I was able to make connections to the material."
- "I thought it was very interesting how our knowledge of the poem, as a class, increased as time went on and we ended up being experts by the end."
- "The comments of at least some of my peers was very insightful into what they think about the current immigration situation in Germany today."
- "I enjoyed the process of working as a class on translating and interpreting the document."
- "I think what was most helpful was being able to talk with my peers to figure out what we thought the poem meant."
- "Allowing the entire class to comment on the same document and building off of each other's ideas is a really good process that actually helped us all."

- “Commenting on the poem itself with classmates and seeing their comments and thoughts on certain parts of the poem.”
- “Reading the poem together.”
- “Discussing in groups and as a class.”
- “Collaborating and making comments on the document.”
- “I most enjoy writing my own comments and questions on the google doc and having them be answered by me peers or by you.”
- “I think everyone else input about what they thought the poem meant really helped because it made me personally think of other possibilities the text could be saying.”

These comments indicate that majority of the students felt that peer dialogue written on google document and done orally through peer discussion, played an important role in their interpretation process. As evidenced in comments made on the google documents, students actively negotiated poetic stylistics in Study 1 and possible literal and figurative meanings of the text in Study 2 together.

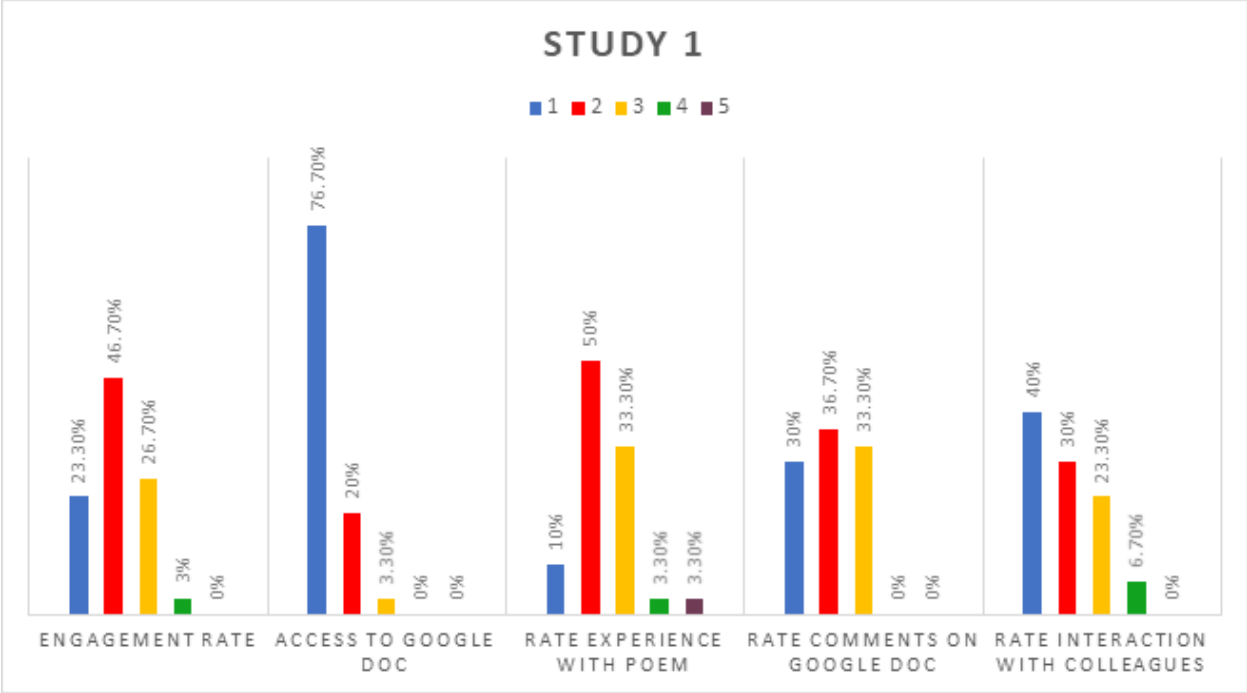
Similarly, some of the responses to Question 4 also emphasized the role of dialogue and collaboration.

- “Group discussions were helpful, as well as being able to see and talk about the comments everyone made, allowing us to better understand each other’s point of view.”
- “I felt that being able to comment and answer other people's questions allowed to have discussions with each other that we normally would not have in class.”

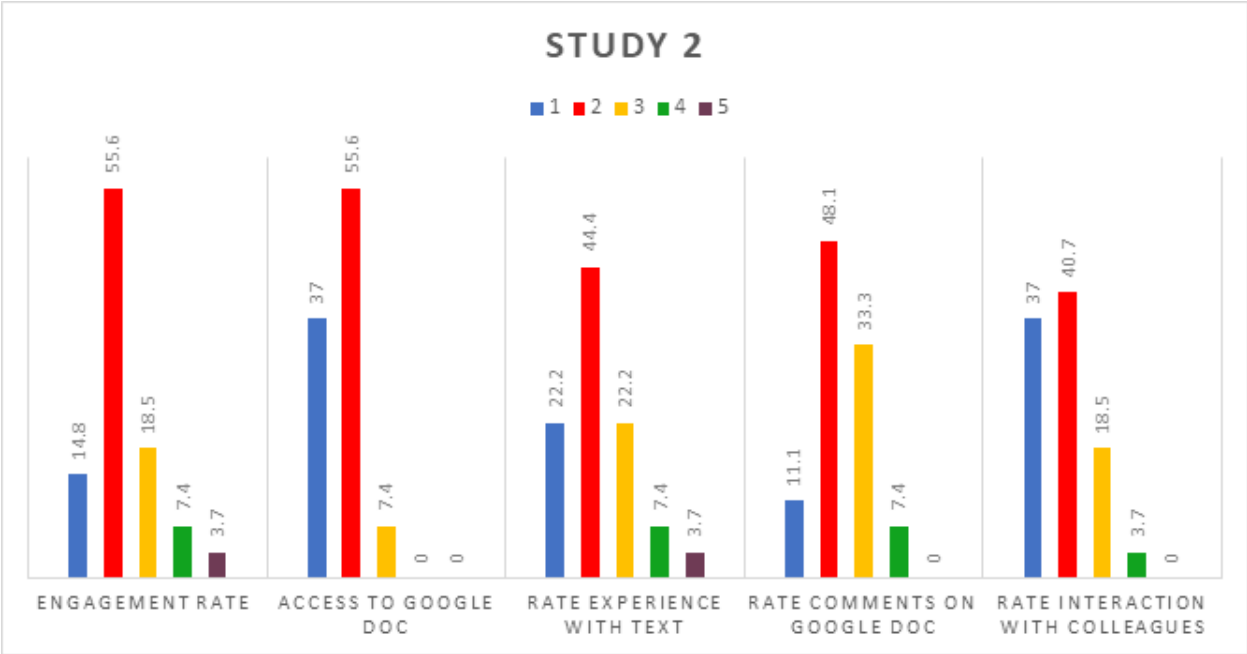
- “I found the class comments followed by group discussion to be the most helpful because it gave us a chance to express our thoughts individually and then to recap on what everyone else was thinking about the texts.”
- “I think everyone communicating and being able to express how they feel and being able to write what we thought as well.”

And while two participants in Study 1 and three participants in Study 2 felt some of the discussions were “confusing, and unnecessary,” the majority, felt it was the most helpful activity for them. 19 participants in Study 1 and 13 participants in Study 2 found discussing with peers and working together on the google document the most helpful activities.

In order to find out how learners perceived their experience working with the google document and interacting as a class during the study, five questions asked students to rate their experiences on a 5-point Likert scale measuring the level of agreement (Table 1).



**Table 1**



**Table 2**

The tables above represent the responses for both studies for survey questions 1,2,3,6 and 8 (Appendix 1). Learners were asked to rate the following: their engagement in class during the study, access to google document during the study, their experience working with the text in class, how comments on google document helped with the text and how helpful interaction with colleagues were. The blue bar (1) represents the highest positive frequency, the red bar (2) represents the second highest positive frequency, the yellow bar (3) represents a neutral in-between frequency and the green (4) and purple (5) bars represents the two lowest frequencies respectively.

The number of learners who felt positively engaged during both studies seem to remain relatively the same as an addition of the percentage of the blue and red bar in both studies approximates to almost the same percentage. 10% of learners in Study 2 however rated their engagement negatively compared to Study 1. Learners rated their access to the google document positively in both studies. A slightly higher number of learners of 11.1% (green and purple bars) in Study 2 expressed frustration working with the text than the 6.6% who did in Study 1. Regarding how comments and discussions on the google document was helpful in interacting with the text, learners rated this positively in both studies, except for 7.6% learners in Study 2 who felt it was mildly frustrating and unpleasant. 6.7% of learners in Study 1 felt interaction with their colleagues was unhelpful and boring. This ratio reduced to 3.7% in Study 2. The tables above therefore indicates that a higher percentage of learners reacted positively to the study. This indicates that many learners enjoyed working with literary texts with peers. Working on the google document collaboratively and discussing in peers and as a class might have

directly influenced learner's active engagement in class and helped in viewing and understanding the text from a different perspective.



## Conclusion/Discussion

This thesis project focused on raising intercultural consciousness in two beginner German language classes over the course of a semester. It combined literary reading, digital social media and peer dialogue in teaching intercultural consciousness. Data was collected to evaluate how learners perceived their experience working with the texts. Data analysis obtained from learners' comments on google documents and a questionnaire indicate the majority of the participants had a positive experience working collaboratively on a text via commenting on a single google document and there is evidence of learners' noticing personal cultural perspectives and the influence other cultures can have on our perspective.

The results show that, working collaboratively on the texts as a class allowed many students to draw from what they already know while interacting with the text. This provided valuable insights for the class to negotiate what cultural diversity might look like in Germany. By reflecting upon what linguistic forms and structure of the language in the first text was doing, students were able to reach/propose several possible stories/scenarios about what the choice of linguistic forms used in the text told them about the addresser and addressee and also the context of the conversation. In the second study, by negotiating possible literal and figurative meanings of the connection of the soul to travel and cultural contact and experience, students were able to come up

with varying interpretations of the text. Discussing these interpretations with peers provided insightful angles from which interpretations spring from.

Data from the questionnaire show evidence that the majority of the students had a positive experience working collaboratively. While a lot of students commented to have understood their learning around poetic stylistics and linguistic awareness and a fewer number of students commented to have gained cultural insights based on the personal perspectives of the authors in the text, this presents two different realities. The first reality is that by observing linguistic forms, e.g., *du müssen* and the derogatory connotation of the word *Kanake* and also how language is used in the first study, learners became conscious of symbolic representation in language and what possible information the language reveals about the speaker and the addressee. This observation and reflection on how language is used and how that reveals cultural patterns is an intercultural aspect of language learning and teaching which Kramsch calls "symbolic competence." The second reality lies in the ways interpretations of texts sometimes reinforces or promotes stereotypical notions of culture. Some students felt the personal perspective of the author was representative of individuals in the target community. An assumption which furthers the promotion of stereotypical assumptions.

Observing how undirected guidance working with text can reinforce stereotypical notions has influenced how I will conduct future studies. As the instructor in this study, I took on a moderator role and directed class discussion by question prompts. This prompt served as activities in the post-reading phase of the study. In future studies, I will guide students' interaction with the text in the first phase of the lesson by using questions prompts. This

will hopefully nudge students towards discourse that challenges stereotypical assumptions. This study also did not afford me the opportunity to direct students' attention towards other areas of discourse. For instance, in the first study, talking about second and third generation migrants would have shed more light onto how multifaceted cultures within a nation can be. I noticed also that students interacted with the Tawada text differently. This might have been because this text has an abstract language that can be interpreted in various ways that might sway learners away from perceiving its intercultural aspect. I will be more conscious of text choice and how it suits/relates to the unit being treated. To better observe the process of students' learning process and how they negotiate meanings in their peer groups, I will incorporate recordings of in-class interactions to better observe how the various stages of students collaborative learning process.

Although this was a small project study of two lessons over the course of a few days, the connections some of the learners made by working with peers and reflecting upon/observing how narrators of these works communicated their personal perspective, may have helped learners begin to develop an intercultural awareness of the sociolinguistic aspects of language in ways described by Kramsch (2011). That several students were able to grasp the connections between language, culture, and aesthetics also suggests that this awareness can be fostered at these early levels, and that dialogue can help students to expand their individual first impressions. Future research will show that literature presents a platform to observe and reflect upon cultural patterns evident in language and how different interventions from the instructor and/or additional activities

affords learner an avenue of interacting with cultural perspectives in literary texts that are different from their own in ways that raises intercultural awareness.

## Appendix A - Questionnaire

1. Overall, how would you rate your engagement during the 2 days you worked with the Text?
2. Were you able to easily access and navigate the Google doc you worked with (the text, comments and image upload)?
3. Overall, how would you rate your experience working with the Text in class?
4. Please feel free to comment further on your experiences working with the Text.
5. Please briefly state what you learned from the lesson?
6. Overall, how would you rate comments and discussions on the Google doc?
7. Please comment on your experience connected to discussions done on the 2nd day of class.
8. Overall, how would you rate the interaction working with your colleagues in class?
9. Which activities, questions or discussions did you find most helpful? (Be as specific as possible.)
10. Which activities, questions and discussions conducted in class did you find least helpful? (Be as specific as possible.)

1) Overall, how would you rate your engagement during the 2 days you worked with the poem?	1 Very engaged 2 Engaged 3 Somewhat engaged 4 Not very engaged 5 Bored
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<p>2) Were you able to easily access and navigate the Google doc you worked with (the text, comments and image upload)?</p>	<p>1 Yes, all of the time  2 Yes, most of the time  3 Some of the time, but I also had difficulties  4 I generally had trouble accessing the google doc  5 I could not access the google doc</p>
<p>3) Overall, how would you rate your experience working with the poem in class</p>	<p>1 Very enjoyable and interesting  2 Enjoyable and interesting  3 Neutral  4 Mildly frustrating, unpleasant or uninteresting  5 Frustrating, unpleasant and/or uninteresting</p>
<p>6) Overall, how would you rate comments and discussions on the Google doc?</p>	<p>1 Very enjoyable and interesting  2 Enjoyable and Interesting  3 Neutral  4 Mildly frustrating, unpleasant or uninteresting  5 Frustrating, Unpleasant and/or uninteresting</p>
<p>8) Overall, how would you rate the interaction working with your colleagues in class?</p>	<p>1 Very helpful and interesting  2 Helpful and Interesting  3 Neutral  4 Somewhat unhelpful, uninteresting or boring  5 Useless, uninteresting or boring</p>

## Appendix B – Sandheigl's Text

### **Du verstehn?**

Du müssen ers ma  
assimilieren,  
integrieren  
unsere Kultura,  
dann du Mensch,  
mensch,  
du verstehn?

Du müssen ers ma  
lieben  
Hunde, Katzen  
nix Kinder,  
du zuviel Blagen,  
du verstehn?

Du müssen ers ma  
essen  
Kartoffeln nix Kümmel,  
Sauerkraut nix Knoblauch,  
Schweinefleisch nix Hammel,  
du vertsehn?

Du müssen ers ma  
feiern  
Ostern, Pfingsten, Weihnachten,  
Karneval nix seker bayrami,  
dann du kultiviert,  
dann du Mensch nix Kanake,  
du verstehn?

## **Erzähler ohne Seelen** (Auszug)

Ich habe in einem Buch über Indianer gelesen, daß die Seele nicht so schnell fliegen kann wie ein Flugzeug. Deshalb verliert man auf einer Flugreise seine Seele, und man kommt seelisch abwesend an dem Zielort an. Sogar die transsibirische Eisenbahn fährt schneller als eine Seele fliegen kann. Ich habe bei meiner ersten Fahrt nach Europa mit der transsibirischen Eisenbahn meine Seele verloren. Als ich dann mit der Bahn wieder zurückfuhr, war meine Seele noch in Richtung Europa unterwegs. Ich konnte sie nicht fangen. Als ich erneut nach Europa fuhr, war sie auf dem Weg nach Japan. Danach bin ich so oft hin- und hergeflogen, daß ich überhaupt nicht mehr weiß, wo meine Seele gerade ist. Auf jeden Fall ist das ein Grund dafür, warum einem Reisenden meist die Seele fehlt. Die Erzählung über eine große Reise muß deshalb ohne Seele gemacht werden



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