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# **Synthecultural Communities: What, How, Why, and Who Cares?**

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## **Abstract**

*Why is it that what leaders insist should be happening in education is not coming to fruition? What kind of grassroots endeavors can induce the first steps toward actualizing these convictions?*

*Synthecultural Communicative Competence (SCC) means application of integrated knowledge for productive fusion among people. Developing it starts with education in reference to fostering a certain sense of community. In schools, it requires teachers to employ intercultural communicative competence (ICC) skills (Byram 1997) to unite the languaculture (Agar 1994) being learned with cultures of technology, of students' peers and families, and of the school and teaching (Webber 2013). This notion relates to Risager's (2000) and Byram's (2009) works, considering a synthesis of people within a somewhat synthetic classroom culture, temporary and manufactured in nature; operating in conjunction with that are synergism of technology-facilitated global communication, discussed by Myers (2006), and teachers' attempts to constructively blend with a professional environment (Mungo 1983) while functioning through use of the languaculture being learned (LBL). Successful interplay among these cultural facets implies rapport among students, between teacher and students (Burke 2005; Savignon 1983; Victoria 1970; and Yam 1982, 1986), and with others inside and outside of school (PA Dept. of Ed. 2010; Webber 2013).*

*The value of SCC is that relevant skills can be applied to virtually any occupation, transferred to even the broadest venues for social and professional agility. Sample learning activities demonstrate that computers with Internet, plus not only the teacher but all persons present, may serve as resources for learning that can happen for every individual participating; and, curriculum design perpetuates learning outcomes that are persistently evolutionary rather than disposable in that they result in enduring relationships among interlocutors working across boundaries toward global well-being.*

Keywords: synthecultural communicative competence, language learning, teaching, community, Internet

## **Introduction**

In the United States of America (USA), teachers are expected to use the language they are teaching as they instruct (Savignon 1983; ACTFL 2012) a diverse student body and to leverage computers with online interaction potentials for the purpose of increasing educational affordances for themselves and for their students (U.S. Dept. of Ed. 2010). Given that teachers may not be native to the language in question or to the digital technologies with Internet access, meeting those expectations can be difficult; being a newcomer to pedagogy and being assigned to groups of students with whom s/he is not yet acquainted can further complicate a teacher's ability to adapt and function well in the instructional role (Burke 2005; Victoria 1970; Yam 1982, 1986).

In fact, pedagogy has been expressed as somewhat of a comparison with a languaculture being learned (LBL) in academic literature; assuming that this comparison is appropriate, Byram's (1997) concept of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is applicable to professional development for teachers

(Webber 2013). Some new teachers in the USA experience what has been referred to as “culture shock” upon entering the profession (Mungo 1983); similarly in Europe there is talk of “Praxisschock ... the assimilation of a complex reality which forces itself incessantly upon the beginning teacher ... must be mastered continually [sic].” (Veenman 1984, 144). Byram et al. (2002, 11) point out that first-time experiences in a novel environment may shock a person who will then need “to adjust ... it is never a completed process.” A person’s attitudes, knowledge, skills, and awarenesses are instrumental in their being able to cope with a novel context (Byram, 1997).

It has been noted that

“whether or not he intended to echo Dewey’s (1910, 13) ideas about ‘judgment suspended during further inquiry’ [reflection] and attitudes of directness, open-mindedness, whole-heartedness, and responsibility (1916, 204), Byram (1997) elaborates about intercultural communicative competence in a way that matches Dewey’s (1910, 1916) words regarding reflection. Byram (1997) says,

Attitudes which are the pre-condition for successful intercultural interaction need to be not simply positive, since even positive prejudice can hinder mutual understanding. They need to be attitudes of curiosity and openness, of readiness to suspend disbelief and judgment with respect to other meanings, beliefs, and behaviors. There also needs to be a willingness to suspend one’s belief in one’s own meanings and behaviors, and to analyze them from the viewpoint of the others with whom one is engaging. This is an ability to ‘decentre’ which Kohlberg et al. (1983) have argued is an advanced stage of psychological development and which Melde (1987) suggests is fundamental to understanding other cultures (c.f. Byram et al., 1994: 20-24). In an extreme case it can lead to a ‘re-socialization’, which Berger and Luckmann call ‘alternation’ (1966: 176), where individuals dismantle their preceding structure of subjective reality and re-construct it according to new norms. (p. 34)”

Teachers can grow within these areas to reconcile themselves better with their unique instructional situations and perhaps, in turn, positively affect cultural influences that bear upon their practice while they help their students to develop within these same categories (Webber, 2013). See Table 1, below, which is a summary of ICC as explained by Byram (1997).

Furthermore, be it coincidence or not, there are parallels between Byram’s (1997) assessment matrix for ICC and the Pennsylvania Department of Education’s (2010) student-teacher assessment, as an example; therefore, teaching can be viewed as an endeavor requiring ICC, and pedagogy may be perceived as a type of languaculture in and of itself (Webber 2013). See Table 2, below, for words matching between the Pennsylvania Department of Education’s 430 evaluation form for pre-service teachers (PA Dept. of Ed., 2010) and Byram’s (1997) descriptors for assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence: knowledge of students / social group; knowledge of schools, events / knowledge of institutions; (re)sources; use of knowledge; engage; expectations; adapt; equitable / equality; appropriate interaction; procedures / processes; maintain rapport / maintain contact; questioning; formal / informal; assess / evaluate).

In keeping with the commonalities listed above, Webber (2013, 24) asserts that,

“Mastering pedagogy as akin to languaculture being learned may be considered similar to what Sercu (1998, 261) calls ‘intercultural language teaching,’ if one connects the idea with Byram’s (1997, 38) statement that someone who is able to be so diplomatic and to ‘mediate between people of different origins and identities is an ‘intercultural speaker.’”

Moreover, Webber (2013, 24) continues,

“Intercultural language teaching (ILT) was a focus of Myers’ (2006) intercultural online English as a Foreign Language project that resulted in his advice about digital technologies’ potential in providing a unique and previously unavailable space for ‘authentic communicative events’ (p. 8). Citing Sercu (1998, 261), Myers (2006, 8) expresses that fostering these skills toward building global citizens is increasingly necessary in the modern era and points out that this ‘critical understanding of otherness’ is a goal of intercultural language teaching.”

The table displays an abbreviation of Byram's (1997) Intercultural Communicative Competence.

<b>Attitudes</b>		Curiosity, openness, suspends disbelief about other and belief of own culture	
<b>Interest</b>	Tries to engage with others equally and personally, not to profit, aggrandize, mainstream, or glorify the exotic		
	Tries to discover perspectives of 'other' regarding phenomena from both cultures		
<b>Willingness</b>	Questions mores and assumptions inherent in customs of the 'other's' environment, compares and contrasts with one's own		
<b>Readiness</b>	Copes with states of adaptation (enthused, withdrawn) and experiences of being foreign (acceptance, rejection) while residing in 'other's' environment		
	Adapts; engages with rites and conventions of verbal and non-verbal communication; attends to expectations		
<b>Knowledge</b>			
Of social groups, products, practices, processes of interaction in own and other culture			
<b>Relations</b>	Significant current and past political and economic figures and events between cultures		
<b>Contact</b>	How to access 'others,' their environment, institutions of mediation		
<b>Misunderstanding</b>	Alternative interpretations of concepts, rituals; effects of behavior		
<b>Memory</b>	Portrayal of events and identity of culture through socialization, how perceived by 'others'		
<b>Space</b>	Borders, regions, dialects, identities, landmarks		
<b>Socialization</b>	National education system, religion, rites marking life cycle stages		
<b>Distinctions</b>	Clothing, food, language, and / or tradition differences between groups delineated by class, ethnicity, creed, gender, profession, age, etc.		
<b>Institutions</b>	Public / Private health, recreation, financial, media, education organizations affecting daily life within and between countries		
<b>Interaction</b>	Formality; taboos, norms of public / private meetings, use of transport		
<b>Skills</b>	<b>Interpreting and Relating</b>	<b>Documentation</b>	Locate ethnocentrism, explain origins
		<b>Dysfunction</b>	Explain breakdown in terms of errors re: nuance
		<b>Mediation</b>	Identify common ground, facilitate resolving conflict
	<b>Discovery and Interaction</b>	<b>Notice</b>	Indicate implicit reference to shared meaning
<b>Question</b>		Elicit allusions from informant, establish hierarchical links and cause / effect, test generalization	
<b>Awareness</b>	Critically evaluate with explicit criteria Ideologically analyze items, occurrences Anticipate areas of potential conflict Moderate toward accepting difference where incompatibilities exist	<b>Navigate</b>	Use venue-appropriate genre, avoid offending, utilize resources to find out more
		<b>Negotiate</b>	Intervene to mutual satisfaction of people involved; diplomacy
		<b>Maintain</b>	Continue acquaintance over time and distance

Table 1: Summary chart of ICC as explained by Byram (1997). Source: Webber (2013, 51).

The table displays words matching between the evaluation rubric for pre-service teachers (PA Dept. of Ed., 2010) and Byram's (1997) descriptors of assessing intercultural communicative competence.

<b>PA Rubric</b>	<b>Words Matching in Communication as Interaction</b>	<b>Byram's Descriptors</b>
	Engage	
<b>Of students, schools and events</b>	Knowledge	<b>Of social groups, institutions and products, processes of interaction</b>
	Use knowledge to function	
	(re)sources	
	Expectations	
	Adapt	
	Equitable / Equality	
	Appropriate	
	Procedures / Processes	
<b>Rapport</b>	Maintain	<b>Contact</b>
	Formal / Informal	
	Questioning	
<b>Assess</b>	(Appraise)	<b>Evaluate</b>

Table 2: Teaching as a process involving ICC. Source: Webber (2013, 23).

Webber (2013, 2014) and Webber & Rudnik (2014) suggest that to conceptualize pedagogy as an LBL may aid post-secondary instructors for teacher education and K-12 language teachers in providing for their students the opportunity to develop what is called synthe-cultural communicative competence (SCC), that is widely useful and applicable in the current era. Simply put, SCC in this case is "application of integrated knowledge toward productive social fusion in learning communities" (Webber & Rudnik 2014).

### **What: Origins and Aspects of Synthe-cultural Communicative Competence (SCC)**

SCC (Webber, 2013) is in part a proposed interpretation of what Risager (2000, 1) introduced but did not bestow with a specific title: "a particular type of intercultural competence, namely that which the teacher of foreign and second languages needs to develop." Risager (2000, 3) explains, "Intercultural competence is an active and productive ability, for, in actually using it, we create culture, i.a. in the classroom" and specifies that "language teachers ... have special opportunities to contribute to developing the global vision and involvement of their students..." (2000, 4). Likewise, Byram (2009, 9) elaborates,

"Some teachers – usually in secondary schooling – tend to identify strongly with their (one or two) subject(s) whereas others tend to identify with their role as pedagogues and the sciences which underpin pedagogy. As gatekeepers to the cultures of subjects, teachers act as mediators, inter alia by making the language of the discipline accessible to learners. Teachers of foreign and second languages are more aware of this role than other teachers because it is explicitly part of their training and the definition of their subject: to introduce learners to the cultures of other groups who speak the language in question."

Risager (2000, 8-9) says that this special brand of

“intercultural competence has to do with the ability to establish cross-cultural movements, organisations and institutions that can fight for a better world and seek to prevent the great social and environmental problems that researchers can already predict but that ‘we’ refuse to take seriously.”

She concludes that implementing this type of intercultural competence “ought to be the most long-term aim for teacher education and for school language teaching” (2000, 9). Webber’s (2013) follow-up with SCC indicates that at first Byram (1997) speaks of intercultural competence (IC) without the word ‘communicative,’ yet Byram’s (1997, 70) explanation of IC pertains to functioning with and among native speakers, and ICC is doing that while using the native speakers’ language as well. Byram (1997, 3) acknowledges that “the phrase deliberately maintains a link with recent traditions in foreign language teaching, but expands the concept of ‘communicative competence’ in significant ways.” This makes sense when one again considers the expectation that teachers utilize the language they are teaching during their instruction. See Figure 1 below for Webber’s (2013) combination of these ideas in the form of a sample matrix of SCC with its overlapping aspects, which would appear ideally in three dimensions (3D) rather than two.

The figure displays aspects of SCC for teaching Spanish.

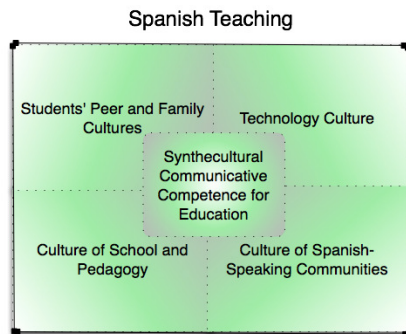


Figure 1: Matrix of SCC for education – Spanish teaching. Source: Webber (2013).

What follows are examples of ways in which a teacher residing in the center of this matrix can effectively respond to the needs of the enmeshed cultures shown above.

## How: Sample Learning Activities

### Cross-Continental Blogging for Undergraduate Language Teacher Preparation

After Elola&Oskoz (2008) associated blogging for language learning with Byram’s (1997) ICC by tracking blog interaction between undergraduate students learning Spanish at-home and those studying abroad, Webber (2010) described a project in which undergraduate students who were aspiring to teach Spanish, French, or German blogged amongst each other from their respective study abroad countries for a semester. As part of a larger world language education program, the aspiring teachers were awarded course credit for weekly entries, including obligatory topics and commensurate responses, which were aggregated on a supervising Instructor’s Web page. See Figure 2, below, for bloggers’ locations.

The Figure maps the location of aggregate blog and each study-abroad blogging participants in Webber (2010).

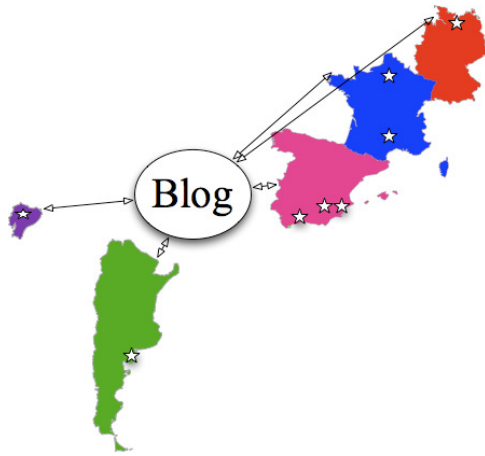


Figure 2: The blogging context for study abroad. Source: Webber (2013).

The following is a list of blog topics included in Webber (2010):

- Arrival: the Expected, and the Unexpected
- Family: Nuclear, Extended, Comparison with own
- Food: Yum, Yuck, Surprise! / I miss. . .
- Home: Accommodations description, Comparison with U.S., I wish . . .
- Routine: Personal care / health / safety, Daily schedule, Environment
- Extracurricular: Activities, Sites, Surrounding communities
- School: Classes, Teachers, Peers (Comparison with expectations)
- Town: Getting around, Costs / Money Issues, If I had only known . . .
- Entertainment: TV, Movies, Theatre, Fashion, Art, Music (Choose 3)
- Traditions: Customs, Holidays, Societal structure / Roles / Relationships
- Other topics: Current Events: Politics, Economy, Sports, other
- Status Check: What's annoying, What's funny, What I need to do better
- Big Picture: Values & Priorities, the Law, International Relations
- Leaving: I can't wait to . . ., I will miss . . ., I have changed regarding...

Preliminary results suggested significant benefit from this activity for the teachers-to-be and for the K-12 students who were their subsequent field-experience participants during the full-time internship semester in a secondary school classroom.

Webber's (2013) later report of an individual study (Yin 1994, 2003) from within the aforementioned group specified that online development and demonstration of IC and problem solving transferred from words in the virtual world to actions in the actual classroom setting. Particular issues addressed by the case study, who was a Spanish teaching candidate, were: seeking extra practice, engaging more deeply, and calculated risk-taking with a native culture to become less overwhelmed with multitasking during interactions and with homesickness in general; discovering the nature of culture, and accepting rejection and awkward physical contact to become more tolerant; and creating alternative to past patterns of behavior to mediate dysfunction in surroundings that had been alien to the individual in some respects at the start of the experience. While there were differences between the Elola&Oskoz (2008) and Webber (2010, 2013) investigations with respect to structure and blog topics, fundamental principles were aligned and similar results were found: bloggers confirmed expansion of their intercultural competences in part by way of deeper reflection prompted by others online, and they appeared to appreciate these unusual educational opportunities.

To clarify the relationship between academic instruction and homesickness, consider Byram's (2000, 6; 2002, 19) warning that the latter has the potential to overwhelm a person and cause a degree of disengagement with the learning environment (Webber 2013, 20). Optimally, one would explore and improvise, resisting the temptation to cling to what is familiar, or remain a tourist, or gravitate toward a commercial approach when interacting with a culture that is different from one's own (Byram 1997, 50). Webber's (2013, 160) case study individual alluded to the optimal by claiming commitment to freedom from old teaching habits at the end of the project; she stated, "I think people teach the way they were taught because it's habit and it's easy. I'm working toward breaking the mold because ... our students deserve better." The extent of pedagogical transformation on behalf of such post-secondary research participants remains to be seen, and prospects are good for the next generation of pre-service teachers if current evolution in pedagogical innovation for even younger language students is any indication.

### International Instant Messaging for Learning Spanish at the Secondary School Level

Webber & Rudnik (2014) provide evidence that synthetic cultural communicative competence can be increased for high school students who instant message LBL members regularly and debrief afterwards during class time. Students were permitted to use whatever platform they could access in order to 'chat' with a Spanish-speaking peer, copy and paste it onto a digital document, and submit it electronically to the teacher for review and feedback about culturally salient points along with items pertaining to grammar and vocabulary. The case study individual's self report confirmed that she gained knowledge and skill through technology-enhanced personal engagement about themes within the following choices: the first week of classes, clothing, gossip, homecoming celebration, school dances, humor, Columbus Day, Spanish class itself, Day of the Dead and Halloween, birthdays, the town, the Latin Grammys, Thanksgiving, emotions, snow days, in-service days, the mid-year transition, priorities, nature, Valentine's Day, Carnival, politics, the economy, Easter, 'senioritis,' Prom, and graduation. Chat partners were usually personal contacts of the teacher and / or students, such as exchange students, people met during travel, or local community members.

A checklist comprised of Table 1, shown on the second page of this document, was used to analyze how the dialogue touched upon Byram's (1997) ICC descriptors. While exchanging both factual information and the expression of sentiment, the interlocutors avoided offending or aggrandizing the mainstream and glorifying the exotic, they compared and contrasted one another's cultures through questioning, tested generalizations, raised awareness of ideologies and occurrences, and attended to appropriate verbal and non-verbal conventions such as turn-taking, spelling, and length of responses; some expectations involved in the interaction were technology-related and others were related to the Spanish-speaker's particular culture. What is more, this unscripted discourse is generative for extends language learning (Hokanson & Hooper 2004). The discussion is more natural than typical classroom communication (Kramsch 1983), and the change in dynamic is what makes it more meaningful.

The relevance of this activity to SCC is punctuated by the fact that it comprises each aspect of the matrix for education in Figure 1 on page four of this paper. After freshman year in college, the case study individual used Skype to video-conference and chat from her study program in Mexico to introduce her host friends to her former Spanish teacher's class. She also hosted a guest from Mexico and brought him to the former teacher's class to teach about their intercultural experience. She continues to utilize various technologies to dialogue with peers in Spanish-speaking countries, has been accepted for a full-year study abroad program, and is now interested in becoming a Spanish teacher. The investigation of her progress will continue and updates will be presented.

In summary, the two learning activities described thus far model ways in which all participants may serve as resources for learning on behalf of everyone involved, and that modern curriculum design that perpetuates persistently evolutionary rather than disposable learning outcomes results in enduring relations among people working across boundaries to benefit society. Such curriculum would be created and implemented by a synthetic culturally competent teacher. A third SCC-building activity description is given below.

### Blogging Before, During, and After a High School Exchange for Language Learning



During the 2010-2011 academic year, the author and colleagues arranged for two 10-day exchange stays between nine Mexican and nine USA high school students; in April the Mexicans traveled to their USA counterparts and vice versa in August. The USA and Mexican teachers in charge were matched by a local university professor who offered professional development credit to the USA teachers, and those from Mexico volunteered their involvement. The adult delegates visited one another's communities before students joined in.

USA students who intended to participate attended a meeting during which they were told that qualified students would be motivated, dedicated, compassionate, open-minded, and invested. They were also informed that benefits of the experience would include skills, knowledge, great opportunities, and lasting relationships. They were shown an agenda in which groups would attend one another's schools and visit points of interest each other's geographic areas.

USA students of the author were offered an extra credit on their transcript through the school's Learning Enrichment (LE) system. The goal of the course was to facilitate learning the languaculture of Mexico. Before leaving their home country, they researched and reported about their chosen topic with respect to the vicinity they would visit, filled out a survey (see Appendix) and were matched with the most compatible partner, and engaged with that partner in online dialogue.

Choices of report topics ranged from geography (boundaries, administrative divisions, topography), major historical events, natural resources, population (characteristics), major cities, societal issues, technology status, economy, government, major policy (national, international), to current events like sports, weather, or other. Discussion topics to be addressed with the exchange partner then shared at subsequent meetings were: categories of potential culture shock and how to decrease tension created by differences; how long it takes for our ears and mouth to keep up with the stimuli we field and the thoughts we want to express, and what one can do in preparation to reduce that adjustment time; inexpensive and simple things that one can do to be a gracious and unobtrusive guest, to blend more seamlessly into the local scene; the most valuable tools used to navigate that particular social and academic context; what concerns there are about such an impending experience and what one can do reduce anxiety; how the experience might change a person, why, and what ramifications that may have on stereotypes and international relations.

While in the other country, LE students kept a journal, then uploaded it to a Web page that could be seen by peers and the teachers. At home, they wrote a complete reaction about their hosting experience from start to finish. The objective was to articulate a comprehensive, realistic and socially-responsible presentation about the exchange based upon the information the student was able to gather before, during, and after this intercultural travel engagement; describe the ultimate exchange experience (characteristics, behaviors, activities of participants), and explicate strategies that could be used to achieve it. The presentation could be given to any Spanish or Social Studies class.

Many of the exchange students and others associated with the exchange keep in contact together, and many have ventured to various other countries. One of the USA exchange participants spent a leap year in Chile after graduating high school, and returned to his former teacher's class to tell her students about the experience. He now attends university in his hometown. The investigation of progress in cascading mentorship, dissolving stereotypes, and sharing will continue and updates will be presented.

## **Why: The Value of SCC**

A Synthe culturally competent teacher can facilitate achieving the Council of Europe's mission, of which Byram (2009, 7) reminds us: "intercultural dialogue ... fundamental in creating and maintaining social cohesion ... 'the capacity of a society to ensure the welfare of all its members, minimising disparities and avoiding polarisation' Council of Europe" (2008, 11). S/he responds to the United States Department of Education's (2010, 4) analogous axiom: "a generation of young people who are capable of navigating an interdependent world and collaborating across borders and cultures to address today's great problems." Moreover, a teacher who implements SCC properly also employs technology judiciously. In other words s/he along with pre-service teachers and K-12 students transcend the mentality of using computers to

achieve more, faster, and better; rather, the focus is on changing the entire dynamic of teaching and learning to make it different. Online interaction can be used to do this (Thorne 2004), especially with a when teachers regard technology with a cultural perspective (Topper 1998). The difference is a priority on having genuine conversation and sincere activism toward resolving humanity's big conundrums; being versed in whatever subject matter, building upon whichever aptitudes, and overcoming physical and other constraints is crucial for a smooth flow of pertinent data between the indoor classroom and the outside world. See Figure 3, below, for an illustration of said interactivity.

The Figure illustrates technology's potential contribution to information flow for positively transformational purpose.

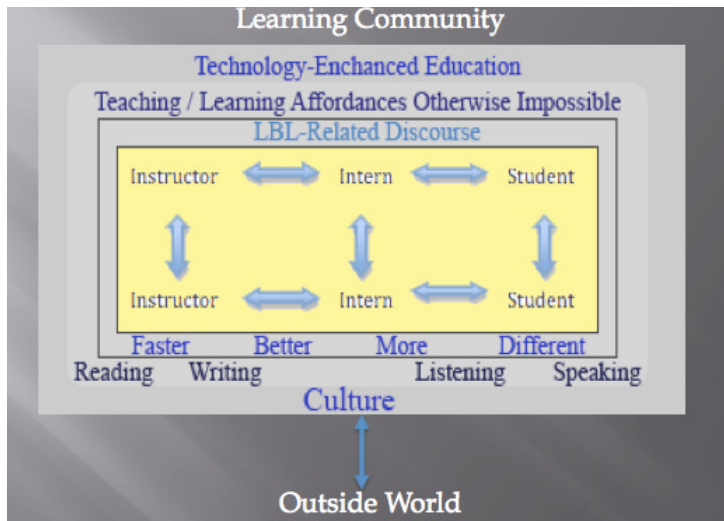


Figure 3: Technology enhanced education analysis tool for interactivity. Source: Webber (2013).

This quality of curricular work can be a universal culture, a synthesis of cultures toward a wellness that is thorough and complete instead of sporadic and unsound. Yes, it is utopian but it is a worthwhile and necessary aspiration. It is a consideration of all individual cultures and group cultures at the same time, it is an immense undertaking; but it is incumbent upon us, and frankly we cannot afford to not attempt it.

### Who Cares?:So What?

A joined force of syntheiculturally competent language teachers would serve to break the ties that world language instruction currently has with economically unsustainable and globally impractical education in the USA and elsewhere. See Figure 4, below, for a diagram of the potential positive effects of syntheicultural interactivity through the use of computers in teaching and learning Spanish as an example.

“If teachers of other academic areas were empowered similarly, education would result in automaticity of technology-facilitated communicative skills that could [result in greater contribution] than what can be achieved within the persistent teacher-centered, text book-oriented, factory-like system that yields unprepared teachers and unskilled students.” (Webber 2013)

Additionally, a blank SCC template (Figure 5, below) is a tool for illuminating the links that bond one occupation with the others to start cooperation on a firm foundation. Adding or subtracting aspects, filling it out according to one's personal context, comparing it with that of others, and brainstorming next steps is a beginning that holds promise for collaboration.

The Figure diagrams potentials of syntheicultural interactivity via computer use in teaching / learning Spanish.

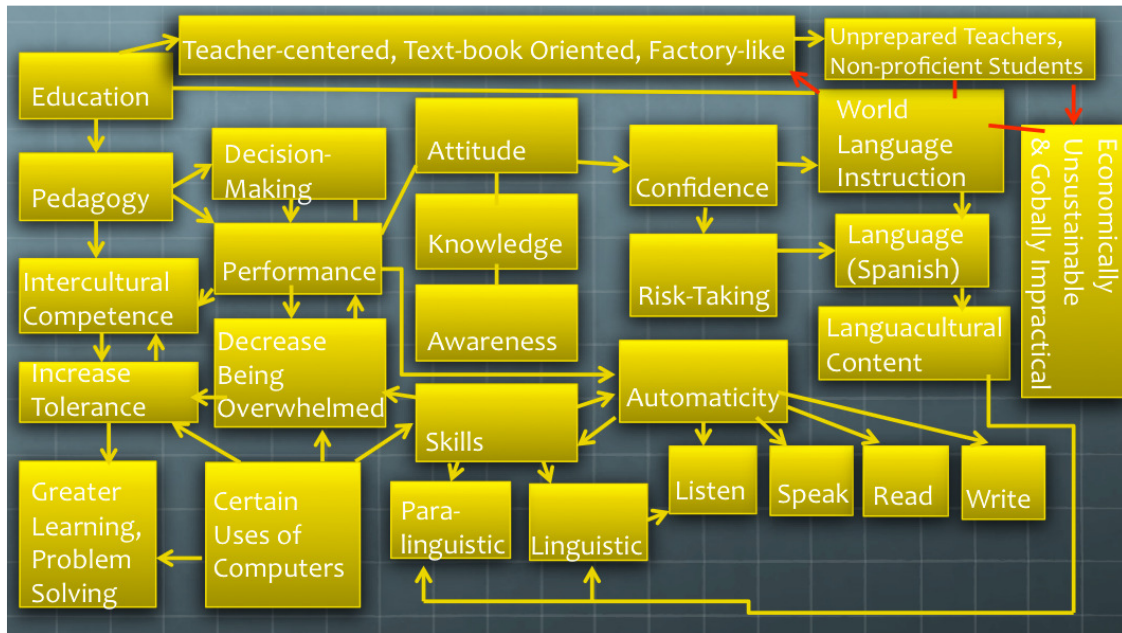


Figure 4: Potential positive effects of certain uses of computers in education. Source: Webber (2013).

The Figure is an alterable blank SCC template for illumination of circumstance, cooperation, and collaboration.

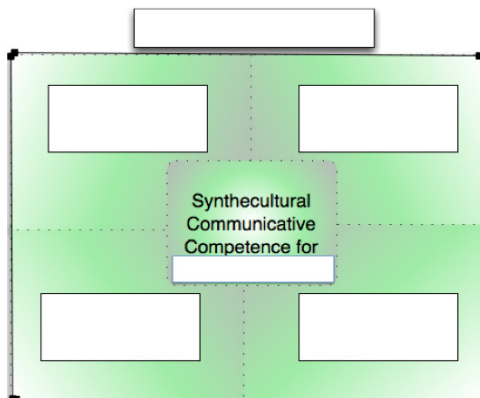


Figure 5: Blank SCC template to be filled out individually, then compared and contrasted with others for bonding.

## Conclusion

A distinct effort is necessary to truly extend the utility of our daily occupations and make a definite investment in the future. Diverting our current route even by just a few notches may avert disastrous consequences that can come from abiding ignorance, burying our heads in the proverbial sand, or succumbing to the delusion of ‘playing school.’ This is to concur with the younger generation that our students unequivocally merit honestly superior performance from those to whom their care is entrusted.

In closing, another reference to Dewey (1916, 4-5) is suitable: “There is an inextricable link between communication, education, and maintenance of a civilized society” (Webber 2013, 13). Dewey (1916, 6-7) believed that “... all communication (and hence all genuine social life) is educative ... Only when it becomes cast in a mold and runs in a routine way does it lose its educative power.” It logically follows that combining established principles of procedure with methods in trial and error fashion for a decision-making toward an explicit mutually-valued cause is to be encouraged (Webber 2013, 13). We must transcend the

habit of just 'going through the motions' and establish a supportive international community of practice (Wenger 1990) and implement intentional guidance of qualified mentors (Meskill et al. 2002).

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## Appendix: Mexico Exchange Survey Issues to which Students Responded via Qualtrics®

Personal Interests, Habits, and Preferences: free time ... Reading (Mystery, Short story, Historical fiction, Science fiction, Other fiction, Non-fiction, Poetry, Fantasy, Romance, Horror, etc.), Writing (same genres as aforementioned), Watching TV (Action, Adventure, Anime, Cartoon, Comedy, Drama, Thriller, Soap Opera, Family, Game show, News, Reality, Cooking, Nature, Documentary, Travel, Talk show, etc.), Gaming (Abstract, Adapted (from pencil and paper or card or board games or table top), Adventure, Simulation, Chase, Collecting, Combat, Racing, Educational, Quiz, Rhythm, Sports, etc.), Art (Painting, Sculpture, Portraits, Crafts, Aboriginal, Abstract, Academic, Still life, Folk, Impressionist, Expressionist, Modernistic, Baroque, Renaissance, African, Japanese, French, Italian, Greek, Roman, Egyptian, etc.), Listening to / Playing Music (Ambient, Bluegrass, Blues, Celtic, Classical, Rock, Classic Rock, Country, Disco, Electronica, Folk, Gospel, Jazz, Doo Wop, New Age, Broadway, Rap, HipHop, Reggae, etc.), Socializing on the Internet (Facebook, etc.),

Extra-curricular: organized sports and activities ... Football, Soccer, Basketball, Wrestling, Baseball, Rugby, Tennis, Ice Hockey, Field Hockey, Volleyball, Gymnastics, Ultimate Frisbee, Swimming, Dancing, Horse Riding, Track, Kayaking, Hang Gliding, Sky Diving, Yoga, Weightlifting, Skiing, or Habitat for Humanity, Amnesty International, Key Club, Best Buddies, Yearbook, Rocketry,  Student Government, Debate, Students Against Destructive Decisions, Environmental Club, Model United Nations,  Journalism, Broadcasting, Acting, etc.

Religious Fellowship: Buddhist, Hindu, Christian, Islamic, Jewish, Scientologist, Wiccan, etc. Do you attend services regularly, and if so would you expect your guest to accompany you?

Other hobbies: leisure ... Fishing, Hunting, Chess, Ping Pong, Computing, Architecture, Engineering, etc.

Jobs: Babysitter, Lifeguard, EMT, other; Siblings: Number, Age, Gender; Hosting preference: Boy, Girl, either; Pets: Dog, Cat, Bird, Fish, Rodent, Reptile, Insect, Rabbit, Other; Special Diet: Kosher, Vegetarian, other ... ability to accommodate a guest's dietary restrictions

General Tendencies: Habits ... Reserved, Outgoing, Night Owl, Early Bird, Smoker, Non-Smoker, Procrastinator, Accelerator, Obsessive, Independent, Dependent, Relaxed, Stressed, Physically Active, Physically Inactive, Crazy, Subdued, Well-balanced.

Language Proficiency and degree: Spanish, French, German, Latin, Arabic, Mandarin, Russian, Turkish, Korean, Vietnamese, Swahili, Italian, other

Medical: Critical Health Issues (seizure, diabetes, etc.) Allergies, if so then what kind ... and which medications are used?

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