

## ABSTRACT

Title of Document:

**ASSESSING THE DEVELOPMENT OF  
LEARNERS' INTERCULTURAL  
SENSITIVITY AND INTERCULTURAL  
COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE: *THE  
INTERCULTURAL SPANISH COURSE***

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Our multicultural world increasingly demands that we learn foreign languages to be able to interact effectively and appropriately with members of other cultures. This is of particular importance in fields such as government, education, and commerce. Effective intercultural interaction entails developed intercultural sensitivity, knowledge of cultural aspects as well as the ability to communicate in the language. This is known as Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC). The study of effective intercultural communication should be taught alongside the linguistic aspect of language. Yet, the teaching of culture in foreign language classes is often superficial. There is no consensus with regard to how develop and assess intercultural sensitivity and ICC and in the foreign language classroom.

This study hypothesizes that an intercultural approach to teaching foreign languages facilitates the development of the learners' intercultural communicative skills and linguistic proficiency while raising cultural awareness, developing

contextualized cultural knowledge, and fostering intercultural attitudes of respect and understanding for one's own culture and the cultures of others. The study analyzes and assesses the development of intercultural sensitivity and ICC in a university advanced conversation and composition Spanish course called here the *Intercultural Spanish Course*. The curriculum for this course was designed specifically for this study and integrates linguistic and intercultural communication skills and knowledge.

A mixed methods design was used:

A) Quantitative instruments:

1. Hammer & Bennett's (2001) *Intercultural Development Inventory* (IDI)

B) Qualitative instruments:

1. Pre/post learners' questionnaires
2. Pre/post learners' journals

Bennett's (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) was used to analyze the IDI pre/post results. For the qualitative data analysis themes were categorized following Byram's (1997) Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (MICC).

The results of the study show that 50% of the learners developed their intercultural sensitivity toward an ethnorelative orientation whereas 50% moved toward an ethnocentric orientation. Learners developed their ICC as they (1) gained deeper cultural knowledge of Spanish-speaking countries; (2) developed critical thinking skills and skills to interpret cultural differences in a more ethnorelative perspective; (3) showed intercultural attitudes of understanding other perspectives, interest in engaging in conversation with Spanish speakers and willingness to

question their worldviews; (4) raised self-cultural-awareness; and (5) improved their language proficiency.