

CERCLL 2012

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Reconsidering crosscultural
abilities:
The link to language learning
and assessment

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Progression of the talk

- **Assessment as a way of supporting the educational goals of language teaching and learning**
- **Reconsider “intercultural competence”**
 - **less expansive, less comprehensive**
 - **more theoretically grounded, specific, transparent, linked to language instruction**

Moving from a broad, sociological, sociocultural, anthropological definition

to a

language-based definition

Simultaneously affirm two central humanistic educational goals

- The development of L2 language abilities to advanced ability levels|**
- The development of intercultural competence**

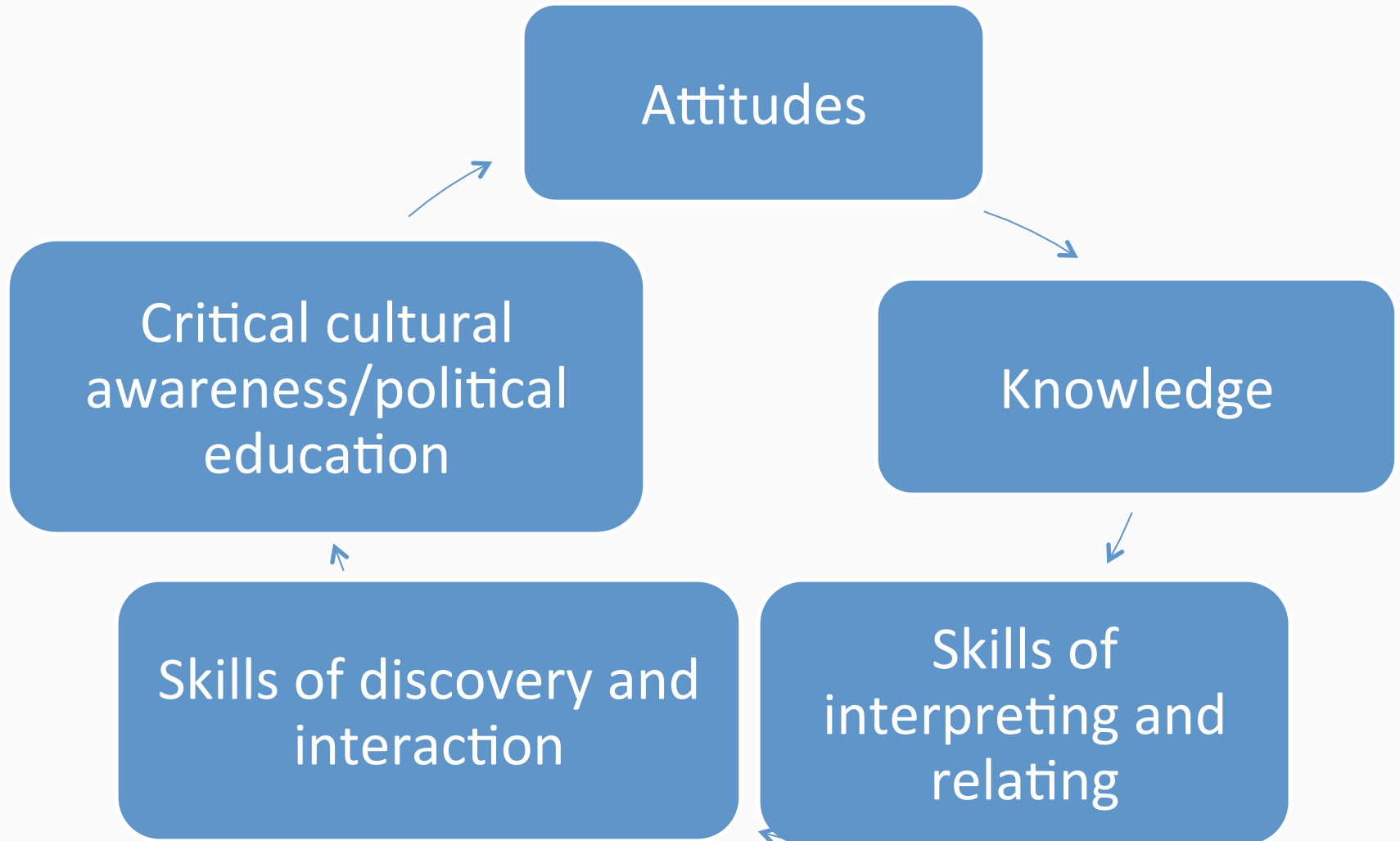
with the help of assessment

In short someone with some degree of **intercultural competence is someone who is able to see relationships between different cultures - both internal and external to a society - and is able to mediate, that is interpret each in terms of the other, either for themselves or for other people. It is also someone who has a critical or analytical understanding of (parts of) their own and other cultures - someone who is conscious of their own perspective, of the way in which their thinking is culturally determined, rather than believing that their understanding and perspective is natural.**

If it isn't tested, it's not taught

- **People teach (only) what is tested!**
- **If it isn't tested, how do we know that it was taught "right"?**
- **If it isn't tested, how do we know that it was learned?**
- **If "it" isn't tested, how do we really know the "IT" that was to be taught and learned?**

Five elements in intercultural competence



Approaches to the assessment of intercultural competence

(As modeled within the CEFR)

➤ Portfolio assessment

➤ Passport section

provides overview of proficiency in different languages
(self-, teacher-, institutional assessment)

➤ Language biography

Learner involvement; emphasis on linguistic and cultural
experiences, inside and outside the classroom

➤ Dossier

Documentation, illustration of experiences/
achievements

Example

Self-assessment of intercultural experiences

Interest in other people's way of life

Daily life, unknown to outsiders,
Daily experience of various social groups

Ability to change perspective

Understanding through taking on a
different perspective on other culture and
my culture

**Ability to cope with living in a
different culture**

With a range of reactions , physical and
mental discomfort, homesickness

**Knowledge about another country
or culture**

Facts about living in other culture, country,
state, people
Engage in conversation

**Knowledge about intercultural
communication**

Resolve misunderstandings arising from
different viewpoints; discover new info

**How is this related to language and foreign
language learning ?**

Some observations

- **Use of self-assessment**
- Central role of values, beliefs, attitudes; interpersonal positioning and acting
- Assumption of in-country sojourn, perhaps over a longer period of time
- Appreciation of long-range development of intercultural competence, potentially over a life time

“Unique to portfolio assessment are the positive and motivating can do checklists, created from over four hundred illustrative descriptors and the critical approach to examining one’s cultural interactions

*Where the American foreign language standards urge us to understand culture as **products, practices, and perspectives** (Standards) the European concept of interculturality suggests learners look at **how they use language to negotiate meaning and understanding in a context that demonstrates awareness and appreciation of our own and the other’s culture.**”*

Bott van Houten, 2007

Further considerations

- Centrality of attitudes, knowledge, beliefs, skills, viewpoints, that are **not linked in any systematic way** to language abilities and language use
- **No discernible relationship between language development and the development of intercultural abilities** except, presumably, in terms of 'more is better'
- **No principled tie-in of self-assessment with curriculum and instruction** such that the assessment might to inform the improvement of curriculum and instruction (no potential for washback)

IN SUM:

Prone to ad hoc listing of endless scenarios

**Limited usability or usefulness for instructed
language learning,
Particularly foreign language learning**

**No tie-in with literacy phenomena; essentially works
off a framework of communicative competence that
is likely to be insufficient for educational settings,
particularly for adult learners**

✓ A big dilemma: REASON?

Language teaching and learning generally does not work with a **functionally oriented theory of language**, that is, we do not generally consider the consequences of the fact that language is a **meaning potential**, that it is a **resource** for creating meaning from which we make **choices**.

A functional theory is not just about how people **use** language – it is a theory about the **nature** and **evolution** of language **as a semiotic system**, explaining why the system works the way it does.

✓ A big NEED

**In the conceptualization and practice of foreign/
second language teaching and learning that is
interested in the development of intercultural
competence,**

**need to work with a “new” theory of language
AND**

a “new” theory of culture,

**where both can be linked in a principled fashion
such that **attention to language development is
prioritized.****

Systemic functional linguistics (SFL) as an education friendly, functional theory of language that posits three metafunctions:

the ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions

It is a text-oriented theory, dealing with oral and written texts.

Its focus is on relating sociocultural contexts and the cultural content that is likely to be enacted to particular preferred, probabilistic wording bundles in language, the registers.

On that basis we can arrive at rich accounts of semantics and lexicogrammar, that is, how language construes a particular social situation and what formal features are prototypically associated with that construal.

A particular instance of meaning-making in spoken or written language is seen as the **result of choices from the resources the learner has available and/or chooses to deploy.**

A performance can then be **assessed according to specifiable, language-based criteria that inextricably link culture and content.**

(Note: SFL has no separate “pragmatics”)

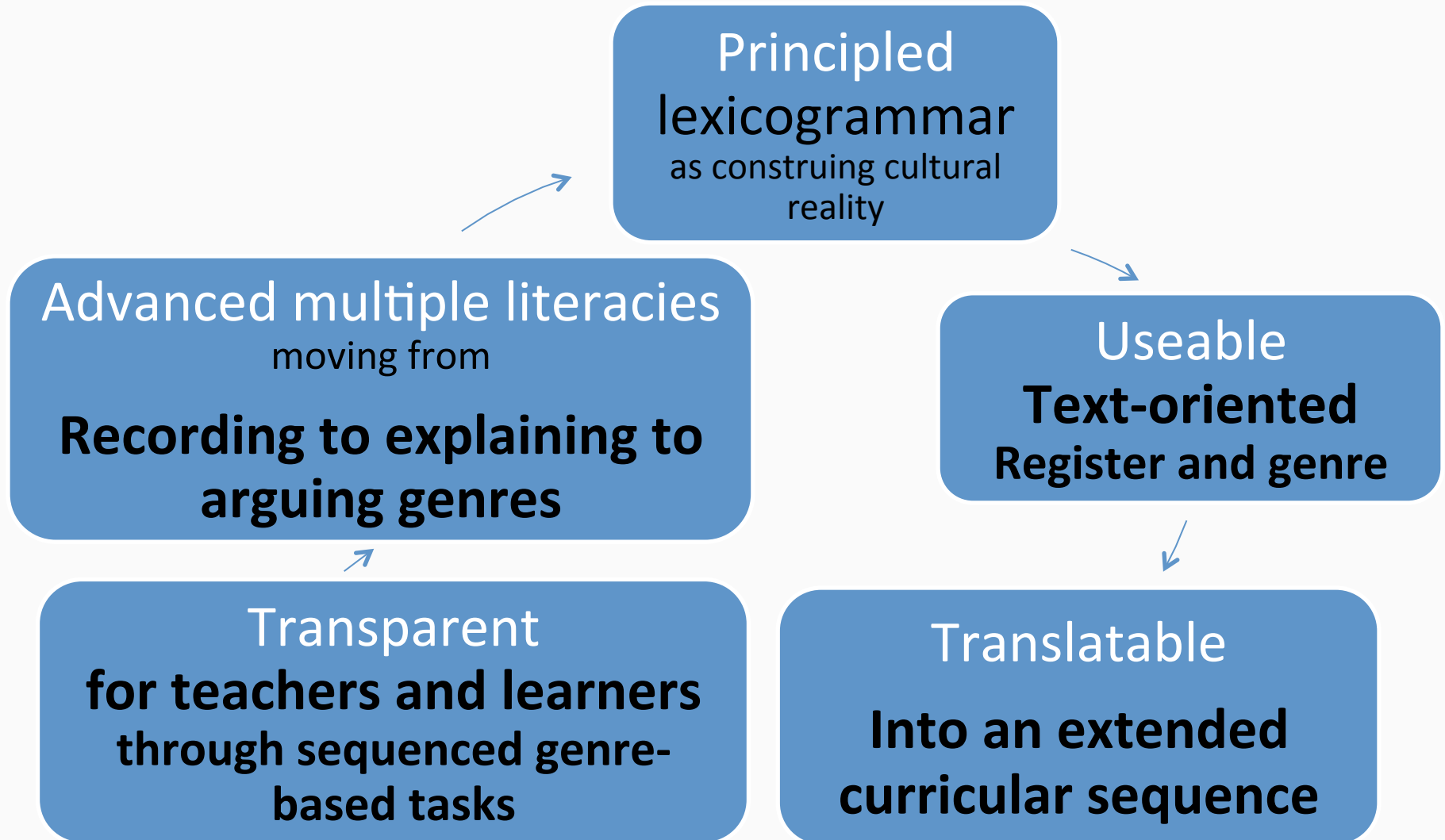
✓ In short, we can address the need and resolve the dilemma:

by linking culture and language

- in a principled fashion that is
- useable/useful in diverse educational settings,
- though not limited to that use,
- translatable into a developmental, that is, curricular progression,
- can become transparent for teachers and learners,
- in order to facilitate advanced ability levels in **both intercultural competence and L2 language use.**

- **'Trans'cultural literacy, expanded symbolic competence, intercultural competence**

Responding to the challenge



✓ A CLAIM

- ✓ **The GUGD has translated these ideas into a collegiate FL department, creating an explicit curricular sequence, using genre and genre-based tasks for sequencing decisions**
- ✓ **Established the efficacy and efficiency of such an integrated approach over an entire undergraduate program**
- ✓ **Provided extensive evidence in the area of L2 writing development through classroom and research-oriented assessment practices**

Byrnes, Maxim, Norris, 2010, *Modern Language Journal*

✓ And what's missing?

- ✓ **Evidence** for the critically important second claim of the integrated curriculum that
- ✓ **language development** would go hand in hand with the
development of cultural literacy
in a way that leads toward
- the **overarching educational goals** of the program framed in terms of the humanities.

The “Humanities Assessment Project”

2010 - ??

Collaboration with Hawai'i Resource Center, John Norris

➤ Re-examining our educational goals for the integrated curriculum: “Language +”

➤ Content learning

with emphasis on historical information, especially on 20th and 19th century events in the German-speaking area in relation to Europe

➤ Multiple perspectives on that content

No “Leitkultur” notions

➤ Self-reflective stance by students

many of whom have diverse multilingual/multicultural experiences and backgrounds, but all of whom are learners at a U.S. university


Step 1

- **Clarify goals of the assessment project**
- **State the intended uses of the assessment**
- **Determine the focus of the assessment**
 - (“intermediate”: end of College lang. requirement;
 - “early advanced”: School of Foreign Service requirement)
- **Establish criteria for capturing the learning outcomes**
- **Gather information from the focal curricular levels**
 - Thematic unit by thematic unit, genre by genre, task by task, Spring 2011

Establishing Criteria for Capturing Learning Outcomes

Level: _____ Theme # and Name: _____

Topic # and Name: _____

		Humanities Learning Goals			Critical Thinking
		Goal I: Cultural Content	Goal II: Multiple Perspectives on German Culture	Goal III: Reflective Stance/Global Citizen	
"Text" (including video clip, film)	Genre	 Descriptors, including pedagogical approaches/foci			
1.					
2.					
3. etc.					

Spring 2011

- Gathering descriptions for Levels II, III: e.g., **Topic “Migration”, Level III,**

Text	Genre	Goal I: Cultural Content	Goal II: Multiple Perspectives on German culture	Goal III: Reflective Stance
1. Statistiken, Grafiken zu Migration / Statistics and graphs	Graph	Various statistics/tabulations related to ethnic/demographic diversity, immigration, citizenship, asylum and the social/political consequences for the development of a multicultural society	Inherent in the different graphs	Instructor should be alert to the possibility of steering class conversation after the presentations to broader comparisons with events in the U.S. and globally
2. <i>Alltag in der 2. Heimat/</i> Every-day life in the second homeland	Journalistic Text, addressing the situation of 3 different immigrant groups	Representation of the lives of three different immigrant families (Turks, ethnic Jews, and returning East European ethnic Germans); struggles, different status and support networks, educational level, language issues, integration, generational differences	Inherent in the text. Particular attention is given to the interplay between private and public issues; official voices and private voices	Make it a point to connect to how these issues are treated in the U.S.

Step 2

- Look at the data from the perspective of a number of developmental continua
e.g., from **informal knowledge** to more **systematic knowledge** to **transformative** knowledge through critical framing; from **multiple perspectives across texts to multiple perspectives within texts**
- Drafting of humanities learning goals statement for Level III
- Collect prototypical performance writing tasks at the end of focal curricular level; decision to focus initially on Level III (spring and fall 2011; 28 writing samples at Level III = early advanced)
- Analyze data with respect to identified learning goals;
holistic data analysis and discussion ongoing spring 2012

Theoretical and Educational Issues

To capture the link between language and cultural literacy
as specified by the curriculum

- Foreground the development of **multivoicedness, multiperspectival viewpoints, heteroglossia**
- Work with the construct of *ENGAGEMENT* in SFL, part of the *APPRAISAL* system of language resources
- Proposal for a **language-based micro-analysis** developed summer 2011
- Creation of **holistic assessment criteria** and socialization into rating abilities, along a Likert scale 0 – 3
- Planned follow-up with an investigation whether the holistic ratings are **corroborated by specific language-based features**

Use SFL and its insights regarding appraisal “*APPRAISAL* theory”

- ❑ The evaluations people make
 - Attitude (Affect, Judgment, Appreciation)
- ❑ How these can be upgraded or down-graded
 - Graduation (Force, Focus)
 - ❑ with resources for building the ‘authorial self’,
- ❑ particularly in dialogic interactions with others
 - Engagement (Monogloss, Heterogloss)

Use the **ENGAGEMENT** component of **APPRAISAL**

Christie & Derewianka, 2008; Martin & White, 2005)

- ❑ Link between SFL and Bakhtinian dialogism
- ❑ Indicative of cultural norms, but also writer's (interpersonal) style and rhetorical strategies,
- ❑ Strong indications of developmental aspects, at the clause level (MOOD system), but, more important, interclausally and textually
- ❑ Link between lexicogrammatical resources and meaning-making in texts that reveals intercultural competence
- ❑ Expected development from the unmediated expression of personal feelings and behavior to more judicious evaluation of phenomena based on institutionalized (cultural) norms → **increasing heteroglossia**

An overview of the ENGAGEMENT system

ENGAGEMENT system and examples (Martin & White, 2005)

- Monogloss → bare assertions
- Heterogloss
 - Contract → disclaim
 - proclaim (concur, pronounce, endorse)
 - Expand → entertain
 - attribute (acknowledge, distance)

Alternative analytical division (Coffin & Hewings, 2004)

Hearsay (unattributed community view, as claimed by the writer in relation to her/his position)

Pronounce (unambiguous statement of writer position, potential excess of authorial position)

Progression: Bare assertion -> hearsay -> contextually appropriate authorial voice, using a range of ENGAGEMENT resources

Learning Goals: Level III Prototypical Performance Writing Task

Holistic Rating on meeting the expectations of the learning goals statement (highest 3 -> 0).

Provide justification why/why not expectations were met.

CONTENT

Students have a good understanding of the following issues

1. Increasingly multicultural society in Germany as a result of an opening toward Eastern Europe, the influence of the EU, and changing labor markets
2. Social, cultural, economic, educational, and linguistics challenges in the life of immigrants of various descent in Germany (e.g., Turks, Jews, Vietnamese, East European ethnic Germans)
3. Problem of integration
4. German citizenship laws and procedures for applying for citizenship

MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

Students are able to identify various facets of the content and differentiate between contrasting standpoints, viewing cultural historical content as constructed from a variety of points of view:

- German, American/international
- German, migrants
- personal, public
- abstract, concrete
- contemporary, historical

REFLECTIVE STANCE

Students take a reflective stance on the thematic issues foregrounded in the course:

1. Recognize the contextual dependency and inherent ideological underpinnings of knowledge construction and knowledge constructors
2. Can contextualize, compare, contrast, interpret, and evaluate the content
3. Develop their own opinion on the issues
4. Question their own, the texts', and the readers' assumptions
5. As learners express their own voice, they actively engage with the perspectives of others in such a way that the process of negotiation between their own ideas and those of others becomes evident

Findings and Discussion (1)

- ❑ **Affirmation of the intricate relation** between lexicogrammatical resources and textual meaning-making that shows ‘humanities learning’
- ❑ **Need for a certain textually oriented lexicogrammatical base**, particularly flexibility with complex clausal structures and various resources for sequencing of events, comparison and contrast, cause and effect, APPRAISAL and ENGAGEMENT, that can be deployed at the whole text level
if valued humanities learning is to be traceable

Findings and Discussion (2)

- ❑ **Intricate interrelationship** among all three areas for evidence of humanities learning (content, multiple perspectives, reflective stance).
- ❑ **Advantage of having shared textual sources** for a composition that is to be used for assessment
- ❑ Importance of a sophisticated ability to move back and forth between the general and the specific, the conceptual and the 'real' for exemplification, the personal and the public. **Literacy phenomena**
- ❑ Potential usefulness of an **essay written in the L1**, using the same textual sources because of importance of L1 literacy abilities when L2 resources are fragile

Findings and Discussion (3)

IMPLICATIONS

- ❑ Importance of a well specified curricular context in order to be able 'read' the findings and, and more important, to be able to support further development
- ❑ Impact of text selection in order to get at a multiplicity of perspectives
- ❑ Beyond that, importance of more explicit **pedagogy that highlights the humanities goals of the program nature of that multiperspectivalism in terms of the language being used to express those multiple views**

... and some final comments:

- If it **IS** tested it's likely to be understood better and taught better
- Think through and specify the “it” you want to assess on your terms
- Curricular thinking is not an option
- Linking language and cultural content is not an option

It is the unique intellectual contribution of foreign language study in the academy.

Everyone “trades” in culture.

We trade in language AND culture!



THANK YOU!