

IF INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IS THE GOAL, WHAT ARE THE MATERIALS?

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Language educators argue that foreign language learning in the United States should increase students' intercultural competence (IC), which will allow them to see relationships among different cultures, mediate across cultures, and critically analyze cultures including their own. Qualitative research investigating students experiences with such cross-cultural conversations in study abroad and Internet collaborations raises questions about how well prepared students are to converse in a manner that is likely to increase their intercultural competence. To begin to explore the quality of cultural content language learners are exposed to, I examined Canadian cultural content of beginning-level French books used in the United States in view of its potential for developing intercultural competence. Findings reveal some examples of potential intercultural competence-building content, particularly pertaining to Quebecois identity and French maintenance in Canada, but also point to missed opportunities.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPING IC

Study abroad and, more recently, Internet collaborations are recognized as important experiences for helping learners to develop their intercultural competence through communication with speakers of the target language and culture. However, research that carefully examines learners engaging in such experiences finds that despite the structural opportunities they provide, students are typically not prepared to benefit fully because of their lack of basic political and cultural information about their own country and that of their interlocutors.

In research investigating students on study abroad in France, Kinginger (2008) found students unprepared to gain insight from the potentially rich opportunities because students "do not necessarily understand the local meanings of events and interactions" (Kinger, 2008, pp. 11-12). She found that when students were called upon to talk about their political and ideological perspectives, they were challenged because "they had given little thought or effort to the achievement of informed personal views on

current political events. As a result, when asked to articulate their perspective, they reported feeling doubly challenged: to develop such a perspective in the first place and then to give expression to their views in French” (p. 64).

Similar findings were reported from a multiple case study investigating the motivations of students who persisted in studying Spanish in the United States beyond two years (Shedivy, 2004). In interviews, all five of the students mentioned their lack of historical and political knowledge about the countries that they visited. One of the participants pointed out, “I think it’s unfortunate that the Spanish major in college is a literature major, so the professors don’t really go into a lot of political issues. It’s really only at the discretion of the professor if any political issues are discussed at all” (Shedivy, 2004, p. 114). The students recognized as they embarked on their study abroad program in Latin American countries that the United States is a controversial and, in some cases, unpopular force in this part of the world. These students, like the American (from U.S.) study abroad students in France discovered their lack of knowledge about their own country and its foreign policy for the first time as they were confronted with issues outside the US. Shedivy’s findings prompted her to recommend that “aspects of political controversy, including those that might position the US in an unfavorable light should be part of the foreign language curriculum as well” (p. 118).

One suggestion Kinginger made is that students might engage in Internet telecollaboration before study abroad. However, research examining students’ cross-cultural conversations taking place as part of language learning activities on the Internet notes similar barriers to attaining benefits from cross-cultural conversations in second and third year language classes. Kramsch and Thorne (2002) investigated the Internet communication between students studying French in the United States and students studying English in France. They identified points of conflict in the conversation that likely arose because of the students’ differences in their experience and orientation to using the Internet for communication as well as their lack of cultural understanding of each other. Examining linguistic signals of intercultural competence in Internet collaborations, Belz (2003) found that the opportunities that teachers aimed to create for students were frequently not realized in part because of students’ inability to suspend their certainty and be open to alternative perspectives.

Ware and Kramsch (2005) examined misunderstandings between an American student of German and a German student of English in one such exchange. The causes of the miscommunication, which ultimately led to a communication breakdown, were complex, but partly a result of the students’ lack of understanding of each others’ histories and communication styles. In reflecting on the miscommunication, Ware and Kramsch pointed out that typically students learn about culture “as the national social institutions and dominant ways of life in a given country” (Ware & Kramsch, 2005, p. 199), but that

such Internet collaborations actually require more of students because they need to have a “willingness to imagine another person as different from oneself, to recognize oneself, to recognize the other in his or her historicity and subjectivity, and to see ourselves through the eyes of others” (Ware & Kramsch, 2005, p. 202).

Researchers’ discussion of such communication breakdowns does not suggest that all miscommunication or points of cultural conflict should be avoided, but rather that learners would ideally be able to recognize them and to learn from them. Moreover, teachers should help students to learn from such points of miscommunication. As Ware and Kramch put it, teachers need to help students see “ways of imagining the logic of another person by interpreting his or her utterances, according to evidence from external facts and from on-going discourse, not random speculation” (2005, p. 203).

Kinginger (2008) interprets the research on study abroad as providing implications for “the relevance of training and projects involving language awareness and of guidance in the interpretation of culturally grounded misunderstandings.” (p. 13). The teacher is crucial in this process, but one would hope that language textbooks and other materials learners use from the first weeks of their language study would contain aspects of cultural content. Byram and Risager (1999) identified topics such as political systems, history, daily life and routines, shopping and food and drink, youth culture, and literature that would ideally be included in language courses. Such issues might help to provide some of the background knowledge for students, but the question is what are the specific themes, topics, and perspectives that should be included in text books to help students move toward intercultural competence. The need for reanalysis of foreign language curriculum and materials in view of the cultural content is a topic of current concern (Modern Language Association of America, 2007; Risager, 2007; Schulz, 2006).

The research on study abroad and Internet collaboration might be interpreted in a way to contribute to the analysis by offering some suggestions. First, students have difficulty in understanding local meanings of events and interactions, which is at least in part due to their lack of historical and political knowledge, as well as their lack of understanding of political and ideological perspectives. Second, students may have difficulty in suspending their certainty and their own way of interpreting what they see and hear around them, which makes it difficult to imagine “the logic of another person” and may result in culturally grounded misunderstanding. Third, students lack knowledge about their own country and international political controversy pertaining to the United States. These three areas suggest Canadian themes that would lay a foundation for development of intercultural competence for students of French in the United States.

CANADIAN THEMES

Ideally, foreign language students could be exposed to materials and take part in experiences that would prepare them for cross-cultural conversations from their first encounters with language learning. With respect to Canadian content, at least three broad areas seem like obvious possibilities: 1) issues in Canadian identity, 2) areas of ideological difference between many Canadians and Americans, and 3) points of contact in the ongoing relationship between Canada and the United States.

Canadian Identity

The study and exploration of Canadian identity is a topic that extends beyond academic circles in Canada into public discourse. Therefore, in cross-cultural conversations between Americans and Canadians, most Canadians will be able to draw upon an understanding of who they are and their place in the world. At least two strands of the Canadian identity scholarship might be useful for American students of French.

One strand is Canadians' understanding of their not being American as central to their identity. According to one Canadian studies scholar, "the Canadian identity question, for many, can be reduced to a simple and straightforward question: 'What, if anything, makes Canadians different from Americans?'" (Resnick, 2005, p. 18). Most Canadians will readily agree that there are important differences—so much so that an advertising campaign for (Canadian) Molson beer became extremely popular through a television ad consisting of a Canadian on stage proclaiming contrasts between himself and Americans (e.g., "I speak English and French, not American."). The ad touches on some caricatures about Canadian life (e.g., I don't live in an igloo). "I am Canadian," the speaker proudly proclaims. According to Cormier (2004), the scene was set for such an ad by an explicitly orchestrated social movement in Canada in the 1960s and 1970s, the Canadianization movement, which was aimed at strengthening the cultural border between the two countries in part by limiting the number of American professors at Canadian universities.

Another relevant strand of Canadian identity is the relationship between Quebec and the rest of Canada (ROC). Any attempt to understand the relationship between Quebec and the ROC requires a historical perspective beginning with Canada's two founding peoples from Europe, the French and the British. With the aim of outlining the relevant episodes in a 400-year history, Warren (2003) highlights the salient events in the ongoing relationship between Quebec and the ROC. Warren's account hints at the complexity of the issues, which are situated in the political systems and ideological bases of Canadian culture. Yet, some understanding of this past is essential if students are to interpret, in Kinginger's words, "the local meanings of events and interactions"

(2008, pp. 11-12) of daily life in Quebec, where local knowledge is in part historical knowledge.

Canadian Differences

Some of the ideological differences one finds between Canadians and Americans pertain to language, and therefore these seem like relevant, if not, necessary themes for inclusion in French materials. Beginning-level students spend plenty of time using their French to talk about speaking French, and speaking other languages, but do they have an opportunity to explore what language learning means in the other culture? Three strands of a language-ideology connection are relevant.

First, students might be exposed to the connection many Canadians make between bilingualism and patriotism. The bilingualism-patriotism link stems directly from the Official Languages Act passed by the Canadian Parliament in 1969 (Churchill, 1998). Aimed to ensure an equitable environment for French and English speakers in Canada, the act has promoted an ideology that figures strongly into Canadian identity by most analyses (including the authors of the Molson beer ad). The result is a national language ideology that contrasts with that of the United States, where some attempt to link monolingualism and English Only to patriotism. The U.S. English website, for example, displays the motto, “The United States of America: Built, powered and made great by immigrants who learned English” (US English, 2010). This link between one language and country is seen as natural to many Americans, and therefore the idea of the Canadian bilingualism-patriotism link offers an alternative perspective on an assumption that has probably not been analyzed by students.

A second, and related, language ideology issue is the assumption that it is normal to learn another language. The federal bilingualism policy in Canada helps to frame normality in Canada differently from what is “normal” in the United States. “In the case of language, the common assumption in our [US] society is that monolingualism is both typical and ‘normal.’ Thus, bilingualism or multilingualism are atypical and, in some sense, ‘not normal’” (Regan, 2002, p. 17). Canadian views on the importance of learning French or English as a second language and the possibility of doing so present an alternative. Language education is an important part of educational policy throughout Canada (Netten & Germain, 2004), and underlying the inclusion of language education in the broader picture is the assumption that students should learn an additional language. Heller (2002) even analyzes the value placed on bilingualism as commodification in Canada.

A third language-related ideological contrast is the Quebecois idea that French should be protected legally rather than being left to unregulated processes of language choice, which has resulted in the dominance of English in North America. Many Americans, if

they thought about it, would probably assume the disappearance of French in Canada to be an inevitable part of the language evolution in North America. It is this assumption—and the conviction that it must not turn out to be correct—that empowers those who protect French in Quebec today. In the 1960s, official recognition was made of the problems inherent in letting nature take its course with respect to the linguistic evolution in Canada and Quebec. In the 1970s, Bill 101 was established in Quebec making French the official language of the Province and specifying rules for language use that would create a clearly francophone linguistic landscape in Quebec. For Americans with a liberal *laissez-faire* view of the world, the idea of language laws is antithetical to values of individual freedom. As a consequence, creating understanding of an alternative perspective about language laws is an idea for enabling students of French to imagine the logic of another person.

Canadian-US Relations

If language learners are to engage productively with Canadians on current issues, they need to have some knowledge of the geopolitical relationship between Canada and the United States. Americans tend not to acquire much knowledge of Canada-US relations from exposure to the media in the United States, and therefore any material that would provide learners with some knowledge of the issues in this domain would be useful. In response to the need for students to be exposed to controversy that shows US policy in a negative light, any of the research that investigates opinions of people on both sides of the Canadian border would be pertinent. For example, Haglund and Massie (2009) examined the attitudes of people in Quebec and the rest of Canada toward the US invasion of Iraq in the months leading up to that event and just after, with particular focus on the issue of multilateralism. This approach to the study of difference offers an additional type of data that students can work with as they attempt a more sophisticated understanding of difference than what can be gained from speculation.

Even American students who study Canadian Studies have a difficult time understanding Quebec, according to anecdotes of professors of Canadian Studies in the United States. One reason students do not understand Quebec may be that the Quebec issue in Canada is largely a language issue, and to American students language is simply not an issue. Perhaps due to structural factors in the United States (Veltman 1998), immigrants shift to English if they are to succeed and in such an environment, the idea of language maintenance is not widely recognized. The idea that language loss is a genuine danger calling for government action is not obvious to American students, for whom Quebec is difficult to understand.

A second important point of connection between Canada and the United States is the story of immigration to the United States by several waves of Quebecois citizens. The geographical places of New England, the Midwest and Louisiana are named for the

French and French Canadian explorers, refugees and immigrants whose ancestors still live in the United States (Ancil, 1993). Some French language remains in parts of Louisiana as a result of the Acadians who were expelled from Canada by the British. Some French is spoken in New England as well, but it is for the most part lost in the Midwest. In Michigan, for example, *Le Courrier du Michigan*, ceased publication in Detroit in 1957, and the French Canadian heritage in the region has given way to assimilated English-speaking descendants of the immigrants (Dulong, 2001). Immigration and language loss in the United States is one aspect of the US-Canada connection that may help students to understand Quebec (Collin, Letourneau, & Buck, 2006).

These are some of the themes that could be introduced as part of the cultural introduction to Canada in beginning level textbooks in order to provide a basis for students to engage in future cross-cultural conversations with Canadians. The purpose of this study was to examine the presentation of Canada in widely-used beginning-level university French books to see to what extent any of these seven themes appeared: identity of not being American, the relationship between Quebec and ROC, bilingualism and patriotism, the possibility of second language learning, the need to maintain minority language, the relationship between the US and Canada, and the loss of French in the United States.

METHOD

Ten textbooks used in beginning-level French classes at large universities in the northern part of the United States were chosen for analysis (see Appendix A). References to Canada were identified in the textbooks by two raters who read all sections of the books containing language intended for expression of content other than language explanations. This included, for example, reading and listening passages, exercises requiring manipulation and completion of sentences or texts, as well as cultural information and notes in both English and French. The agreement between the raters was very high, ranging between 98.4% and 100%. The few discrepancies were resolved by examining the section of the text in question. The quantitative findings from this process are reported by Chapelle (2009).

The sections containing a reference to Canada were typed into a word file where they could be examined manually and searched for specific terms. I developed a tentative list of categories of Canadian content areas by reading all instances of Canadian content. Two raters reviewed all the content and placed each piece into one of the eight categories in Table 1. In this process, initial decisions of the raters were not always the same because of overlapping categories, but through discussion, decisions were

reached about the best choice of category for each piece of Canadian content. The content in these categories was then reviewed in view of the Canadian topics that may be useful for developing intercultural competence, as outlined above. This methodology allowed me to extend the analysis beyond looking at what Canadian content was in the textbook to looking for Canadian themes that were not present.

RESULTS

A majority of the textbooks contained some aspects of Canadian culture falling within the categories shown in Table 1. Eight books contained basic demographic data on Canada and Quebec typically indicating how many French speakers live in each region of the country. Six books contained some content about education and family life in Quebec. Eight contained information about the French presence in North America; five of those include the story of Jacques Cartier's founding of Canada, but others selected from a variety of historical facts and information. Nine of the books present issues associated with the language-identity connection in Quebec. The amount and specific topics covered varied across books.

The categories in Table 1 are descriptive of the type of content found in the textbooks, and do not correspond directly to the themes that I was looking for, which appear in Table 2. Three of the themes appear in the textbooks examined—the relationship between Quebec and the rest of Canada, the need to maintain French, and the loss of French in the United States—whereas the other four were not found.

Table 1. General categories of Canadian topics appearing in ten French textbooks

Topics	Number of textbooks (n=10)
1. Demographic data on Canada and Quebec	8
2. Education and family life in Quebec	6
3. The French presence in North America: history and present	8
4. French in Quebec and French identity	9
5. French Canadian linguistic features	6
6. Specific aspects of Quebecois and Canadian culture	8
7. Immigration of Francophones to the United States	7
8. Trips to Quebec from the United States	7

Table 2. Intercultural competence building themes

Foundational intercultural competence theme	Appearing in any textbook?	Textbooks
Identity and Ideology		
<i>Not being American</i>	No	---
<i>Relationship between Quebec and the rest of Canada</i>	Yes (6)	<i>Contacts, Entre Amis, Invitation, Mais Oui, Paroles, and Rond Point</i>
Differences from the United States		
<i>Bilingualism and patriotism</i>	No	---
<i>Possibility of second language learning</i>	No	---
<i>Need to maintain minority language</i>	Yes (8)	<i>Chez Nous, Contacts, Entre Amis, Invitation, Mais Oui, Paroles, Rond Point and Vis-à-vis</i>
Points of contact: US & Canada		
<i>Relationship between the United States and Canada</i>	No	---
<i>Loss of French in the United States</i>	Yes (5)	<i>Chez Nous, Deux Mondes, Entre Amis, Invitation and Voilà</i>

Potential Intercultural Themes in Textbooks

Content pertaining to the relationship between Quebec and the rest of Canada appears in six of the textbooks in a variety of ways within the general category of French in Quebec and French identity. Specific topics reflecting the theme of the relationship between Quebec and the rest of Canada include English-French tensions in Canada and historic English domination (*Entre Amis* and *Mais Oui*), separatism politics including the 1995 referendum (*Contacts, Mais Oui, and Rond Point*), and the motto “je me souviens” (*Contacts, Invitation, Mais Oui, and Paroles*). Examples 1-3 illustrate how these topics are presented. Example 1 presents a conversation with a Quebecois man

who is being questioned about some aspects of politics in Canada. This provides a current picture of what is going on politically in Canada whereas Examples 2 and 3 touch on relations between Quebec and the rest of Canada through historical notes.

Example 1: Dialogue in *Contacts* touching upon the relationship between Quebec and Canada

Julien: Mais est-ce que tu penses qu'il soit possible de maintenir votre culture et votre identité dans un pays à majorité anglophone? [*Do you think it is possible to maintain your culture and identity...?*]

Jean-Paul: Bien sûr que oui! Il ya a une quinzaine d'années, beaucoup de gens chez nous pensaient que la solution idéale était l'indépendance du Québec. Mais tu sais peut-être qu'en 1980 les Québécois ont rejeté l'idée du séparatisme en votant pour le maintien de l'unité du Canada. [*.... Yes! many people in Quebec thought the ideal solution was independence.*]

Julien: Oui, je me souviens d'avoir étudié ça...

Jean-Paul: Aujourd'hui, nous considérons les choses différemment: il y a encore des indépendantistes, mais de plus en plus de <<souverainistes>>, surtout chez les jeunes: ils souhaitent que le Québec conserve des rapports de partenariat avec le reste du Canada, sur le plan politique et économique, mais ils veulent aussi que le Québec ait ses propres lois, par exemple. [*More and more there are now sovereignists, ... they want to keep a political and economic relationship with the rest of Canada but they also want Quebec to have its own laws, for example.*]

Stéphane: Oui... Vous avez organisé un référendum à ce sujet, il n'y a pas très longtemps...

Jean-Paul: C'est exact... En 1995, les souverainistes ont presque obtenu la majorité: 49,52 pour cent! Et puis aux élections de 1998, le parti politique séparatiste, qui s'appelle le parti Québécois, a maintenu son contrôle sur la province. On dit qu'il y aura bientôt un nouveau référendum au sujet de la souveraineté. [*The separatist political party, which is called the Parti Quebecois.*]

Julien: Eh bien! Je vois que tu es drôlement au courant de ce qui se passe chez toi!

Stéphane: Il faut dire que Jean-Paul veut faire carrière dans la politique, figure-toi.

Jean-Paul: C'est vrai. Mais d'abord, il faut que je termine mes études.

Julien: Et tu fais des études de quoi?

Stéphane: Devine! Droit et sciences politiques, voyons!

(Valette, J.P. & Valette, R. p. 484-485)

Example 2. *Mais Oui!* A note about the tensions between French and English Canada

" Je me souviens. "

La présence du passé se manifeste certainement dans la devise officielle du Québec, << Je me souviens >>. De quoi les Québécois se souviennent-ils? De leurs origines françaises, d'un pays qui de 1535 à 1763 s'appelait la Nouvelle-France, de la domination anglaise (1763-1867), puis de la création de la Fédération du Canada permettant aux << Canadiens français >> une certaine autonomie. Depuis 1974, la seule langue officielle du Québec est le français, mais les tensions linguistiques et culturelles entre les francophones et les anglophones continuent. [*The only official language of Quebec is French, but the linguistic and cultural tensions between the Francophones and the Anglophones continue.*] Comment la devise << Je me souviens >> peut-elle aider les Québécois à préparer leur avenir?

(Thompson & Phillips, 2004, p. 354).

Example 3. Paroles. Explanation of the meaning of « je me souviens »

Héritage français: Découvert pour la France par Jacques Cartier en 1534, le Québec est un territoire français jusqu'à la défaite du général Montcalm par les armées anglaises du général Wolfe à la bataille des plaines d'Abraham, tout près de la ville de Québec, en 1759. Par le Traité de Paris de 1763, la France cède le Canada à l'Angleterre, mais les Québécois français, << les habitants >>, gardent certains droits, tels que l'emploi de leur langue, assurés par l'Acte de Québec signé en 1774. Quand les Québécois disent << Je me souviens >>, ils pensent à leur héritage, leur histoire, leur langue, leur lutte contre la majorité anglophone. [*When the Quebecois say "I remember," they are thinking of their heritage, their history, their language, and their struggle against the Anglophone majority.*]

(Magnan, Berg, Martin-Berg & Rochette Ozzello, 2007, p. 396)

All of the examples provide interesting and useful background on the Canadian context as well as an explanation of the important phrase “je me souviens,” which students will see on license plates in Quebec. The conversation in Example 1 is notable in that it demonstrates how people talk about the current political situation. Even more revealing to American students might be a conversation with an American, and other Canadians discussing this issue. Americans visiting Quebec to study French are likely to find themselves in such conversations as they, with their peers from the rest of Canada, are members of a group of French language learners in Quebec.

The need to maintain French and Quebecois culture in Canada is the most strongly presented theme and the most consistently appearing of the seven themes. All but two texts (*Deux Mondes* and *Voilà*) contain some topics that help to develop this theme about the need for French maintenance in Quebec. This theme is introduced through topics such as official French in Quebec as well as Quebec identity and nationality. Example 4, with the beginning of the dialogue that was shown in Example 1, demonstrates how the characters entered into the political discussion that appeared in Example 1. Jean-Paul explains that it is really important that that they preserve their identity and culture in Quebec.

Example 4. Dialogue in *Contacts* concerning French maintenance

Aujourd'hui 25 pourcent des Canadiens sont francophones, c'est-à-dire d'expression française. Ces Canadiens francophones vivent pour la plupart dans les provinces du Québec, de l'Ontario et du Nouveau Brunswick. [*25% of Canadians are francophone.*]

Un jeune Québécois, Jean-Paul Bousolette, est à Paris depuis quelques jours. Aujourd'hui, son cousin Stéphane lui a proposé de l'accompagner visiter son université. Là, ils rencontrent Julien, un ami de Stéphane. [*Jean-Paul Bousolette, a young man from Quebec has been in Paris for a few days.... There, they meet up with Stéphane's [Jean-Paul's cousin] friend Julien.*]

Stéphane: Julien, je te présente mon cousin Jean-Paul.

Julien: Alors, c'est toi, le fameux cousin du Québec? [*Oh, so you're the famous cousin from Quebec ?*]

Jean-Paul: Eh oui! Un Québécois à 100 pour cent! Je suis né à Québec et j'habite à Québec. [*Oh yes ! 100% Quebecois. I was born in Quebec and I live in Quebec.*]

Julien: Et tu parles anglais aussi? [*and you speak English too?*]

Jean-Paul: Oui, je suis bilingue, comme un certain nombre de Québécois. Mais je parle surtout français...même avec mes amis anglais. [Jean-Paul :Yes, I am bilingual, like a number of Quebeccers . But I mostly speak French....even with my English friends.]

Julien: Pourquoi?

Jean-Paul: Tu sais, à l'heure actuelle, il est vraiment important que nous préservions notre identité et notre culture. Pour ça, il faut absolument que nous maintenions nos traditions et, en particulier, que nous continuions à parler le français, qui est notre langue. [Jean-Paul : It is really important that we preserve our identity and our culture. In order to do that, we absolutely have to maintain our traditions and, in particular, we must continue speaking French, which is our language]

(Valette, J.P. & Valette, R., p. 484-485)

Rond Point retells a brief version of the history of the struggle between the English and French in Canada prior to the section that is shown in Example 5, which introduces students to Bill 101, the law establishing French as the official language in Quebec. The description goes on to describe the current situation in Quebec, which suggests that despite Bill 101, English is still present in Quebec, and it is intended that the First Nations (native/indigenous Canadian) people have the right to keep and use their native languages, as well. This brief passage is titled “Questions d'Identités” [questions of identity], and it includes a single question asking students if they are familiar with such identity issues in their countries. A French instructor who was knowledgeable about issues in Quebec and Canada could use this as a point of departure to discuss the Quebecois perspective on language maintenance, thereby introducing students to perspectives on language that would most likely be new or unexplored.

Example 5. An excerpt from a text in *Rond Point* explaining the history and present language situation in Quebec

Depuis l'arrivée au pouvoir du Parti québécois, en 1976, la politique linguistique du Québec a pris un tournant décisif. La charte de la langue française, plus connue sous le nom de << loi 101 >>, adoptée en 1977, assure la prédominance de la langue français. Mais quelle est la réalité linguistique actuelle? [Since the Québécois Party came to power in 1976, the linguistic policy of Quebec has taken a decisive turn. The charter of the French language, more known under the name of Bill 101, adopted in 1977, assures the prevalence of the French language. But what is the current linguistic reality?]

Le français est la langue officielle du Québec, mais la situation réelle est un quasi-bilinguisme. Le français est devenu la langue de la législature et de la justice, de l'administration publique, du travail, du commerce, des affaires et de l'enseignement. La langue parlée dans 82% des foyers est le français. Mais, si un anglophone au Québec veut que ses enfants aillent dans une école anglophone ou qu'on lui parle en anglais dans les services publics, il a le droit de l'exiger. *[French is the official language of Quebec, but the real situation is a quasi-bilingualism. French became the language of the legislature and justice, of public administration, of work, of trade, of business and education. The spoken language in 82% of homes is French. But, if an anglophone in Quebec wants his children to go to an anglophone school or to be spoken to in English in the public services, he has the right to ask for it and get it.]*

À travers la loi 101, le gouvernement du Québec a aussi voulu que les populations autochtones puissent parler leur langue maternelle, c'est à dire l'algonquin, l'attikamek, le micmac, le montagnais et le mohawk. Cette loi insiste sur l'importance de l'utilisation des langues amérindiennes dans l'enseignement public dispensé aux Amérindiens. (Flumian, Labascoule, Lause, & Royer, 2007, p. 175). *[Through law 101, the government of Quebec also wanted the First nation populations to be able to speak their native tongue... This law insists on the importance of the use of the Amerindian languages in the public education provided to the Amerindians.]*

Six texts contain something about immigration of French speakers from Canada in the past or the loss of French, either of which might be developed into a discussion of language loss in the Anglophone American context. Five books contain something about French in Louisiana and the forced migration of the Acadians (*Chez Nous, Deux Mondes, Entre Amis, Invitation, and Voilà*), but they do not explicitly introduce the subject of language loss, except for the description of the Acadian writer in Louisiana shown in *Chez Nous* (Example 6). *Contacts* contains a statement about immigration from Quebec to the United States during the industrial revolution “[The French presence] even increased in New England as the Industrial Revolution attracted French-speaking Canadians, who came there by the hundreds of thousands until the 1930s” (Valette & Valette, p. 38).

Example 6. *Chez Nous*—Description of a Francophone writer in Louisiana

Je suis cadien

A. Avant de lire. The title of this poem, *Je suis cadien*, gives you essential information about the poet, Barry Ancelet (who takes the pen name Jean Arceneaux). He speaks le français cadien, and he is a descendant of French

speakers who fled to Louisiana in the eighteenth century from the Canadian province of Acadie after refusing allegiance to the British crown. Since the poet has announced his Cajun French identity at the outset, are you surprised, looking at the first lines of his poem to see that they are in English? Why do you think the poem is written in two languages, French and English? Can you put yourself in the poet's place, identifying with his feelings as a Louisiana schoolboy? What message do you think he will attempt to convey? (Valdman, Pons & Scullen, 2006, p. 273).

Example 7 from *Deux Mondes* shows the most explicit presentation of the issue of language loss in the United States. It contains an introduction of a French speaker in New England who talks about the challenge of French maintenance. This speaker sees his family's roots as being in France rather than Canada, but he describes the challenge for "Franco-Americans" of regaining their pride in their language and their uniqueness and of resisting assimilation. This story could prompt complementary ones of the French Canadians who did assimilate, if a teacher were aware of such stories.

Example 7. *Deux Mondes*--Description of a Francophone in New England trying to maintain his French

Les francophones sur le vif

Paul Boudrault, 48 ans, menuisier, Bangor, ME

Vous avez un nom français. Quelles sont vos origines? [*Where are you from?*]

Ma famille fait partie d'un groupe qu'on appelle les << Franco-Américains >>, ou << Francos >>; nous sommes plusieurs dizaines de milliers en Nouvelle-Angleterre, mêlés à la population anglophone, depuis le XVIIIe siècle. Nous n'avons jamais cessé de parler français à la maison, mais cela devient de plus en plus difficile de maintenir notre langue et notre patrimoine culturel. [*My family is part of a group called "Franco-Americans" or "Francos." There are a few tens of thousands of us in New England mixed in with the Anglophone population since the 18th century.*]

J'ai parfois l'impression que nous sommes invisibles: beaucoup de gens ignorent que nous existons! Peut-être est-ce parce que nous n'avons pas de grande manifestation folklorique comme le mardi gras, ni de musique ou de cuisine particulièrement médiatiques, comme les Acadiens de Louisiane. De plus, notre français est considéré comme <<impur>> parce que nous y incluons des mots et structures de l'anglais; en fait, c'est une langue originale et créatrice – et tant pis si l'Académie française n'est pas d'accord! Notre défi à nous, le Francos, c'est de redevenir fiers de notre langue et de notre particularisme, et de résister à

l'assimilation à la culture anglo-saxonne sans prétendre devenir Français; vous voyez, ce n'est pas simple... (Terrell, Rogers, Kerr & Spielmann, 2005, p. 171). [*The challenge for us Francos is to regain our pride in our language and our uniqueness and to resist assimilation....It's not easy.*]

This content in the textbooks demonstrates some of the potentials for bringing important cultural themes to students even at the beginning level in textbooks. The topics are presented as facts in English, characters who speak their opinions in French in conversations about important topics, and poems with accompanying explanations, for example. At the same time, if authors were to write these materials with the aim of amplifying certain topics for learners, key themes could undoubtedly be presented more fully. For example, the idea of the need to preserve French legally in Canada might be presented more forcefully with a more explicit treatment of the loss of French in the United States.

What could be added to these spotty presentations of French in the United States is a glimpse of the past French presence in North America. One might look at the newspapers that were published in French such as *Le Courrier du Michigan* or *Le Canadien* of St. Paul, Minnesota. The latter, for example, published a brief report in 1900 from a correspondent who was reporting on French-Canadian cultural activities in Escanaba, Michigan. The report concludes his list of activities with the following observation: "Quand on va retremper son patriotisme au sein d'une population si essentiellement française, on ne doute plus de l'avenir de la race française sur le continent américain" (*Le Canadien*, July 16, 1900). [*When you reinvigorate your patriotism through mingling with a population that is so fundamentally French, you no longer doubt that the French race has a future on this continent.* This vibrant French Canadian landscape of the early 1900s is all but gone. The MLA language map (last updated March, 2006) shows Delta County, where Escanaba is located, as having between 100 and 499 French speakers, which is less than 1% (MLA, 2010).

Themes Not Appearing in Textbooks

Four of the themes identified as potentially useful for developing intercultural competence were not found in the textbooks. The books did not provide any indication to learners about the importance of not being American as an integral part of Canadian identity. When the issue of identity is explicitly raised in the textbooks, the focus is Quebecois identity related to French and Quebecois culture. This is obviously an important and interesting aspect of identity, but from the perspective of developing intercultural competence, it is also important for American students to be introduced to the idea that Canadians define themselves as non-American. If this issue were raised, a number of potentially productive discussions might follow: Why is not being American such an important dimension of Canadian identity? Does pride in not being American

mean that Canadians are anti-American? Do Americans define themselves as not being Canadian? Why or why not? In view of the facts that both Canadians and Americans live in North America but Canadians do not consider themselves American, what does being American mean?

The bilingualism-patriotism connection was another theme that did not appear in any of the texts. In one textbook, *Chez Nous*, Canadian national bilingualism is mentioned, as shown in Example 8, but the bilingualism-patriotism link is not made. Factual demographic data are provided about bilingual English/French speakers in three books, but this information does not even hint at the ideological issue—i.e., the belief that many Canadians hold about bilingualism as a responsibility as a Canadian citizen. Presentation of this Canadian belief would create an opportunity for showing a contrast between national language ideologies in Canada and the United States, where some people draw links between English monolingualism and patriotism. This would create an opportunity for exploring questions about the link between language, citizenship, and patriotism. Do people connect language to patriotism in the United States? Does the language people speak really make them more or less patriotic? Does the United States have a language policy that should be adhered to in order to be patriotic? These questions have not crossed the minds of most American students.

Example 8. *Chez Nous*—Mention of official bilingualism in Canada

Les Francophones au Canada

Canada is officially bilingual, and almost seven million of the country's 30 million citizens speak French as their native language. Most French Canadians live in the province of Quebec, where approximately 85% of population is French-speaking. Montreal is the second largest Francophone city in the world, after Paris. In this lesson we will review some of the history of French speakers in Canada and explore what it is like to live, study, and work there today. (Valdman, Pons & Scullen, 2006, p. 134)

The third intercultural competence theme that did not appear in the texts was second language learning and its importance in Canada. Some of the characters appearing in dialogues mention that they speak English (e.g., Jean-Paul in the dialogue in Example 5) in addition to their French, and the language demographics in some texts indicate that bilingual individuals exist in Canada. However, being bilingual is not the same as going through the long, frustrating process of learning a language—the process that any student studying from these texts may be starting. If the issue of second language learning in Canada were raised in the texts, it could provide a different perspective on the challenge of second language learning because of the way it is taken up in Canada with optimism, seriousness of purpose, and success. Why is becoming bilingual in

Canada seen as a normal and plausible goal whereas in the United States it is unusual to find individuals who have had any success in learning a second language?

The historical and current relationship between Quebec/Canada and the United States is not mentioned in any of the books. As illustrated in Example 9, students are invited to make comparisons about education and family in the United States and Quebec in *Chez Nous*, and a trip from the United States to Canada is mentioned in three books (*Deux Mondes*, *Invitation*, and *Vis-à-vis*). However, nothing appears in the texts about a geopolitical relationship between Canada and the United States. Therefore, these texts would not provide a basis for helping French students overcome their lack of understanding of the good, bad, and indifferent aspects of the relationship between the United States and Canada before they enter into conversations with Canadians. If students were prompted to look at Canada as a national entity with its own political and national interests, they might begin to look at issues of interest to the two countries and be in a position to talk about them with Canadians.

Example 9. *Chez Nous*--Comparison of education system in Quebec with that in the US

Le système éducatif au Québec

The educational system in the province of Quebec is organized somewhat differently from the system in the United States. Secondary school usually lasts five years; students normally graduate at 17 and then spend two years in a CÉGEP (Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel). Afterwards, many continue at a university where they may complete un baccalauréat (un bacc), une maîtrise, and un doctorat. These are equivalent to the American Bachelor's, Master's, and Ph.D. degrees respectively. As in American universities, students in Canadian universities may choose highly specialized degrees in one discipline or they may choose to have a major (une majeure) in one discipline and a minor (une mineure) in another.

Et vous?

1. Does your region have any institutions comparable to the CÉGEP in Quebec?
2. How is your campus similar to a French campus, and how is it different? You might compare location, size, type of buildings, and general campus layout.
3. Are students' living arrangements at your university similar to or different from those of typical French students? (Valdman, Pons & Scullen, 2006, p. 107).

CONCLUSION

This exploration of Canadian content in French textbooks from the perspective of intercultural competence found that such content is included in some beginning-level texts. This finding was the strongest and most consistent for the theme of needing to maintain Quebecois culture and French language, which appears in eight of the ten books. The other theme that appeared less consistently was the relationship between Quebec and the rest of Canada and the loss of French in the United States. These topics were presented through characters in dialogues, short expository texts, and cultural notes. The latter two might appear in either English or French. Although some examples of these three themes were identified, overall the instances where such topics appear are very rare. The instances of Canadian content I have discussed are short segments, which appear interspersed with a lot of other content, very little of which is about Canada.

The study also identified four important themes that did not appear in the texts at all: the issue of Canadian identity as non-American, the bilingualism-patriotism link, the normalcy of additional language learning, and the geopolitical relationship between Canada and the United States. These findings interpreted with the backdrop of the study abroad case studies suggest that there remains considerable scope for increasing the valuable cultural content pertaining to Canada in French textbooks used in the United States.

The findings from research on study abroad and Internet collaborations were useful in helping to identify general themes that might help students with their cross-cultural conversations later in their language study. To identify specific themes about Canada, however, it was necessary to engage the research and findings from Canadian Studies. The combination of results from second language studies and those from Canadian Studies was useful in identifying what was missing in the textbook content rather than relying on an analysis or critique of what appears. In this sense, the pragmatic question about materials development posed in this study—if intercultural competence is the goal, what are the materials?—required a cross-disciplinary inquiry to yield results that suggest directions for language materials development.

At the same time, the limitations of such suggestions for developing learners' intercultural competence should be noted because textbooks are only one component of the complex dynamics that come into play in classroom language learning. The role of the textbook depends on individual teachers and learners, their understanding of and interest in the materials, and their ability to meet the content part way in terms of comprehending and exploring it. In particular, pertaining to Canadian content, it is worth noting that Americans, including French students, tend to have little knowledge of or interest in Canada (Gecelovsky, 2007; McCormick & Chapelle, 2009). Therefore, the

extent to which the existing or potential intercultural topics might be understood and exploited in the classroom is probably limited.

Failure to learn intercultural lessons from Canada is unfortunate given the potential insight Canada offers about a multilingual world that escapes understanding for most American university students. For example, Canadian Studies researchers argue that an appreciation of the Quebec-ROC dynamic is extremely useful for developing a broader understanding of a multicultural modern world: "Whether Canada remains united or fragments into two (or possibly more) independent nation-states merits the attention of nations the world over that are becoming increasingly pluralistic by the day" (Fairfield, 2000, p. 92). What is of interest is how Canada's multicultural project, which only begins with Quebec, is carried out. What strategies are used to create a nation with an appropriate balance of individual and collective rights?

How does one move beyond superficial reactions to unfamiliar ideologies to an understanding of the legitimate bases for differing perspectives. For example, the first reaction many Americans have to the idea of language laws in Quebec is that they are extremist and reflect anti-Americanism. This is, therefore, an issue on which a teacher might provide sufficient background to help students move from their immediate reaction to understanding the perspectives of others. For American students of French, it is hard to imagine a francophone context better suited to such productive analysis, but the analytic tools enabling students to see another perspective can be used throughout many circumstances and contexts. In other words, the themes I identified pertaining to Canada, if understood by students, might serve as potentially helping them to move toward intercultural competence across many contexts.

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APPENDIX A -- Beginning-level French books used in the study

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Flumian, C., Labascoule, J., Lause, C., & Royer, C. (2007). *Rond point* (Edition nord-américaine). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall.

Heilenman, L. K., Kaplan, I., & Tournier, C. T. (2006). *Voilà: An introduction to French* (5th ed). Boston, MA: Heinle.

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