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## Intercultural teaching competence: a multi-disciplinary model for instructor reflection

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### ABSTRACT

This article presents a model for Intercultural Teaching Competence (ITC) that instructors may use as a tool for reflection as they prepare to facilitate learning across cultures. Building on previous research on intercultural competence, culturally relevant teaching, intercultural trainer competencies, and student-centred approaches to teaching, the model identifies concrete facilitation techniques for instructors who would like to further develop their own teaching practice or mentor colleagues in effective teaching across cultures. The model consists of 20 instructor competencies grouped into three categories: foundational skills, facilitation skills, and curriculum development skills for intercultural learning. While intended as a tool to guide instructors in individual and group reflection on inclusive teaching practices, the ITC model may also be used by educational developers to guide feedback during classroom observations or while supporting curriculum internationalisation initiatives. Recommendations for use in faculty learning communities and workshops are included at the end of the article. The ITC model will benefit instructors in a variety of disciplines who teach in diverse and multidisciplinary classrooms, discuss global or social justice issues in their class, and those who seek to include intercultural and Indigenous perspectives in their curriculum.

### KEYWORDS

Intercultural competence; teaching; higher education; reflective practice; international curriculum; culturally relevant teaching; global learning

### Introduction

The cultural landscape of Canadian university classrooms has changed significantly in the past 20 years. The contemporary classroom is an interdisciplinary community of diverse learners and instructors who bring with them rich and multifaceted identities, both individual and group, that encompass a variety of assumptions about the nature of learning and the role of faculty (Wu 2002). This range of assumptions includes varied expectations for collaborating in groups, demonstrating mastery of knowledge, and communicating with peers and instructors in class (De Vita 2000; Watkins and Biggs 2001).

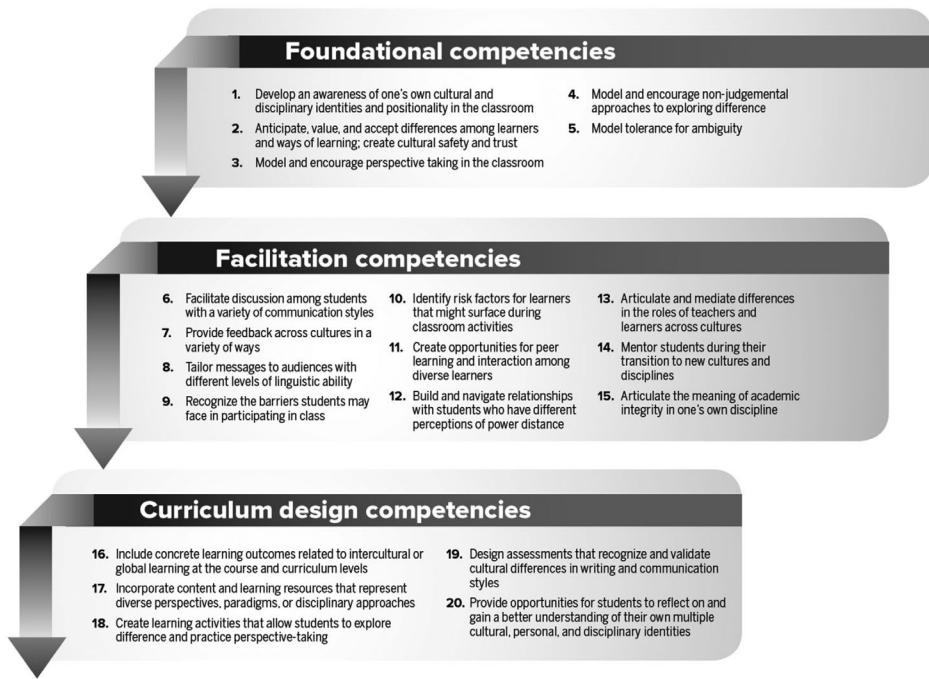
Perceived distances between 'home' and 'abroad' are further collapsing as universities seek to internationalise their campuses as well as their curricula. Faculty are tasked with nurturing diversity in their classrooms through inclusive teaching practices and preparing graduates to engage effectively in a globally interconnected world (Hermida 2010; Garson

2013). Instructors facilitate learning, create community, and build bridges across many dimensions of difference that are salient for class members including, but not limited to, language, culture, ethnicity, race, ability, discipline, class, gender and national origin (Gay 2010). Most university instructors have not received any formal training for intercultural learning or inclusive education (Paige and Goode 2009), so they often feel unprepared for this task, learn by trial and error, and seek support for this work from teaching and learning centres at their institutions (Dimitrov and Haque, 2016). Whether instructors teach an Engineering course with a large number of international students, discuss Indigenous ways of knowing in a research seminar, or design a new course on the role of women in international development, navigating the complex landscape of cultural issues and identities in a way that supports all students requires intercultural teaching competence (ITC) (Deardorff 2009; Dimitrov et al. 2014).

Our primary goal with the development of the ITC model is to provide a reflective tool for instructors who would like to further develop their own teaching practice or to mentor colleagues in effective teaching across cultures. As a term, 'ITC' has been mentioned in the literature by a number of scholars (Zeichner and Melnick 1996a, 1996b; McCalman 2007; Deardorff 2009), but has never been formally defined or incorporated into a comprehensive model that would identify its key components or articulate how instructors may develop these competencies. Our intention in creating a model of ITC was to synthesise recommendations dispersed in the literature across several disciplines (intercultural training, educational development, pre-service teacher training, and international education) and to create a reflective tool that identifies concrete teaching strategies that instructors can easily apply in their own classroom through critical reflection and feedback (Brookfield 1995). For example, although intercultural training literature has previously identified the key competencies of effective, ethical trainers for facilitating intercultural learning (Paige and Martin 1996) and summarised intensity factors that may influence student learning in intercultural classrooms (Paige 1993), this literature is not commonly used by faculty developers who prepare university instructors for teaching in diverse classrooms.

The ITC model was first presented in a conference paper focusing on teaching development for graduate teaching assistants in 2012 (Dimitrov 2012b). Since then, it has been used to research the impact of an international teaching assistant training programme enhanced with intercultural communication components (Dimitrov et al. 2014), been presented at conferences on intercultural learning (Dimitrov 2015), and used to guide workshop design with faculty developers who facilitate intercultural teaching initiatives at their own institutions (Dimitrov and Haque 2016). The revised model in this article significantly expands our first model of ITC: it includes seven new skill areas; distinguishes between foundational, facilitator, and curriculum development competencies; and provides recommendations for incorporating the model into faculty development programmes and learning communities. The results from a qualitative research study on how faculty from over twenty disciplines employ the ITC model in their teaching practice is forthcoming in a book chapter (Dimitrov and Haque 2016).

On the following pages we first define intercultural competence, describe how it is informed by the literature in multiple fields, provide a detailed description of each of its components with examples, provide recommendations for how it may be used, and, finally, identify directions for future research on ITC.



**Figure 1.** Components of intercultural teaching competence.

### **What is ITC?**

ITC enables instructors to achieve two key goals: first, to facilitate learning effectively in classrooms made up of a diverse community of learners (that is, in most classrooms today), and, second, to engage students effectively in global learning. Our understanding of global learning is informed by the American Association of Colleges and Universities' (AACU) Global Learning Value Rubric:

Global learning is a critical analysis of, and an engagement with complex, interdependent global systems and legacies (such as natural physical, social, cultural, economic, and political), and their implications for people's lives and the earth's sustainability. Through global learning, students should (1) become informed, open minded, and responsible people who are attentive to diversity across the spectrum of differences, and (2) seek to understand how their actions affect both local and global communities, and (3) address the world's most pressing and enduring issues collaboratively and equitably. (AACU 2013)

Given the two goals of the ITC model, we define ITC as: first, the ability of instructors to support the learning of students who are linguistically, culturally, socially or in other ways different from the instructor or from each other across a very wide definition of perceived difference and group identity; and second, the ability to engage students effectively in global learning (Dimitrov et al. 2014). Interculturally competent instructors can bridge cultural, linguistic, or other differences in the classroom, help students communicate successfully across disciplinary cultures, and establish meaningful relationships with and among students in order to facilitate learning and promote student engagement (Bennett 2009; Arkoudis et al. 2013). When interculturally competent instructors engage students in global learning, they are able to model intercultural competence for students in the classroom and facilitate

dialogue about global issues using respectful, inclusive, and culturally relevant teaching strategies (Gay 2010). Interculturally competent instructors are open to diverse ways of knowing (Archibald 2008; Haig-Brown 2008), are reflective in their approaches to assessment and curriculum design (Paige 1996; Hermida 2010), and are able to promote multiple perspectives when they select content, readings, and learning activities (Deardorff 2009). The development of ITC is a lifelong process of discovery in the same way that the development of intercultural competence is a lifetime of continuous learning (Deardorff 2006; Bennett 2009); therefore, interculturally competent instructors will continue to adapt their practice to the changing needs of the student communities they work with.

The ITC model consists of 20 key instructor competencies and teaching strategies, grouped into three interrelated categories: foundational competencies, facilitation skills, and curriculum design competencies. *Foundational competencies* focus on instructor self-awareness and the ability to model intercultural competence for students. *Facilitation skills* build on the foundational competencies, allowing instructors to interact with students and encourage interaction among students in ways that are respectful of diversity. Finally, *curriculum design competencies* reflect the skills of instructors who not only respond to diversity in their classroom, but also intentionally engage students in global and intercultural learning activities or discussions of social justice issues in order to promote global learning outcomes (Figure 1).

ITC is a meta-level teaching skill that may enhance the practice of instructors who already use student-centred teaching approaches and are aware of learners' needs (Felder and Brent 2003; Trigwell 2010). The ITC model is an analytical lens that instructors can use as they internationalise the curriculum and design learning experiences that promote global engagement in their classroom (Harlap 2008; AACU 2013). As a tool for reflection, ITC allows instructors to: (1) recognise ways in which they already model ITC; (2) identify areas in which they can further develop their skills; and (3) discover new facilitation strategies they can add to their teaching repertoire.

ITC will benefit educators engaged in one or more of the following activities: instructors who (1) teach in diverse classrooms or multidisciplinary settings; (2) teach about global or social justice issues, explore cultural difference and want to practice culturally relevant teaching in their discipline; (3) seek to include intercultural and Indigenous perspectives in their curriculum, including teachers involved in internationalisation at home initiatives and those who facilitate experiential learning with diverse communities; and educational developers, facilitators and trainers who (4) facilitate programmes that support faculty members in these endeavours.

### ***How the model builds on the existing literature***

The impact of culture on teaching and learning in the higher education classroom has been explored through a number of scholarly lenses, including culturally relevant or responsive teaching, intercultural fluency in the classroom, inclusive education, social justice education, critical pedagogy, decolonising the classroom, and transcultural education, among others. Each of these approaches provides unique perspectives on teaching and learning in global classrooms. While ITC has been informed by the values and goals of all these literatures, four areas of scholarship have shaped the model the most: Geneva Gay's conceptualisation of culturally relevant teaching (2010, 2013); Darla Deardorff's process model of intercultural

competence (2006); the work of Michael Paige and colleagues in the area of intercultural trainer competencies and intensity factors in intercultural learning (1996); and research on the experience of international students in university classrooms (Ryan 2011; Arkoudis et al. 2013).

Several components of the ITC model are inspired by the strong emphasis on social justice and academic equity embodied in Geneva Gay's definition of culturally responsive teaching and her emphasis on the instructor's role in mediating power imbalances and creating caring learning communities. She argues that culturally relevant teaching is

contingent on ... seeing cultural differences as assets; creating caring learning communities where culturally different individuals and heritages are valued; using cultural knowledge of ethnically diverse cultures, families, and communities to guide curriculum development, classroom climates, instructional strategies, and relationships with students; challenging racial and cultural stereotypes, prejudices, racism, and other forms of intolerance, injustice, and oppression; being change agents for social justice and academic equity; mediating power imbalances in classrooms based on race, culture, ethnicity, and class; and accepting cultural responsiveness as endemic to educational effectiveness in all areas of learning for students from all ethnic groups. (2010, 31)

Gay (2010) further outlines four principles designed to help instructors put culturally responsive teaching into practice in the classroom: developing a cultural diversity knowledge base, designing culturally relevant curricula demonstrating cultural caring, building a learning community, and cross-cultural communication. The ITC model intersects with Gay's four principles in that it expands on her assertions of the importance of intercultural competence in the classroom and delineates in greater detail the instructional skills and strategies that foster inclusion at both the class and curricular levels.

The ITC model builds on several existing models of intercultural competence. While many conceptualizations and models of intercultural competence exist (Sinicrope, Norris, and Watanabe 2007; Spitzberg and Chagnon 2009; Perry and Southwell 2011), Janet Bennett argues that 'there is emerging consensus around what constitutes intercultural competence, which is most often viewed as a set of cognitive, affective and behavioural characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts' (2009, 122). The ITC model shares its goals and outcomes with these models, including: respect for otherness (Stone 2006); tolerance for ambiguity (Paige 1996; Deardorff 2006); behavioural flexibility (Bennett and Bennett 2004; Deardorff 2006); knowledge discovery; communicative awareness (Byram, Nichols, and Stevens 2001); empathy (Stone 2006); centring culture and difference in the classroom, teaching for equity and social change, and empowering learners (Banks and McGee Banks 2010).

In particular, the ITC model is informed by Darla Deardorff's process model of intercultural competence (2006) in several ways. The foundational competencies of ITC incorporate key attitudinal components of her model, mapped onto the teaching behaviours of an instructor who approaches difference with respect (competency #2 – accept, anticipate, and value difference), openness (competency #4 – model non-judgmental approaches to discussing difference), curiosity, and discovery (competency #5 – openness to ambiguity). The ITC facilitation skills map onto the knowledge component of Deardorff's process model, particularly sociolinguistic awareness. We argue that teachers do not only need to be able to communicate effectively in intercultural situations themselves (the desired external outcomes in the model), but that they also need to be able to model effective intercultural interaction and guide students in their intercultural development through feedback and interaction in

the classroom. In a 2009 article, Deardorff identified key questions that instructors in Social Science may use as they reflect on their intercultural competence in the classroom. Instructors are encouraged to reflect on issues such as: 'Do I engage in active observation in my classroom, paying attention to subtle nuances of and dynamics among my students, and in my interactions with my students?' or 'Am I able to be flexible in responding to students' learning needs, seeking to understand those needs from their cultural perspectives?' (Deardorff 2009, 5, 6). Questions are grouped to explore: instructor attitudes, knowledge, and skills; internal and external outcomes in the development of intercultural competence; and to focus on instructor self-awareness and communication. The ITC model expands Deardorff's conceptualisation of intercultural competence for Social Science instructors with facilitation and curriculum design skills for promoting global learning in any discipline, not just in Social Science. The addition of student-centred teaching approaches that build community and encourage interaction between students matches the needs of instructors who facilitate learning in team and lab-based disciplines in Science and Engineering and the needs of instructors in the Humanities or Social Sciences who facilitate discussions about 'difficult knowledges' or identity-probing topics that explore students' conceptions of self, others, and the world. The addition of curriculum design competencies highlights the importance not only of instructor self-awareness and communication, but also the role of instructors in promoting intercultural learning outcomes among students.

Facilitation competencies in the model are also informed by intercultural training skills and principles for ethical intercultural facilitation practices identified by Paige and Martin (1996) as well as Paige's intensity factors involved in culture learning (1993), particularly competencies #9 (recognise barriers to student participation) and #10 (identify risk factors for learners). The basic principles of facilitating learning in an intercultural classroom are not unique to diverse classrooms *per se*, but there is a significant overlap with the practices of instructors who use student-centred approaches to teaching (Brookfield 1995; Trigwell, Prosser, and Waterhouse 1999). Additionally, interculturally competent instructors should have some knowledge and awareness of the existence of cultural differences (without necessarily having deep knowledge of specific cultures) and an awareness of the limits of their cultural knowledge. The latter allows instructors to create a climate of openness in their classes where they are able to acknowledge the limitations of their knowledge of societies or social justice issues around the world, but are able to welcome contributions from students who bring knowledge of these issues to the classroom. In this way, instructors and students can work together as a community to include voices and perspectives otherwise missing from the curriculum (Dimitrov and Haque, [forthcoming](#)).

Finally, the model incorporates teaching strategies that have been identified by researchers exploring engagement between local and international students (Arkoudis et al. 2013) and the experience of international students (Ryan 2011), and articulates teaching approaches that support international students in the classroom. These areas of research contributed to our conceptualisation of facilitation techniques for the intercultural classroom, particularly competencies #11–#15, including helping students manage their transition to a new culture and articulating a common understanding of academic integrity in diverse classrooms.



## **Assumptions of the model**

We make several assumptions about the audiences who will use the model. We assume that those seeking to incorporate this model into their teaching already embody a relatively advanced level of general intercultural competence (Deardorff 2006) or intercultural sensitivity (Bennett and Bennett 2004). As a result, the model presupposes that readers, as a starting point, already demonstrate the internal outcomes represented in Darla Deardorff's (2006) process model of intercultural competence, including openness towards students from other cultures and valuing the non-Western knowledges that their students bring to the classroom (Rizvi 2011). Exploring dimensions of similarities in conjunction with differences is an important step in the development of intercultural competence, and we assume that instructors are aware of the value of both (Bennett and Bennett 2004; Berry 2004).

We expect that instructors already facilitate learning in a student-centred classroom (Trigwell 2010) and are familiar with active learning strategies (Felder and Brent 2009), conduct pre-assessments of students' prior knowledge, use classroom assessment techniques to determine what students are learning (Angelo and Cross 1993), and are comfortable seeking feedback from their students. They are also mindful of differences in approaches to learning and the ways in which students process information (Ambrose et al. 2010), and recognise that strategies that support diverse learners (e.g. scaffolding assignments or bringing together diverse ways of knowing) enhance the learning experience for *all* students (Carroll and Ryan 2005).

Lastly, we recognise that instructors who use the model will likely identify with a variety of nomenclatures: some will feel comfortable with the term 'intercultural competence', while others may prefer alternative terms such as 'intercultural fluency' or 'culturally relevant teaching' to describe their practice.

## **Components of ITC**

The following section provides a detailed description of the 20 key components of ITC, and each competency is illustrated with examples drawn from a variety of disciplines.

### **Foundational competencies**

Foundational competencies focus on an instructor's own intercultural awareness and ability to model intercultural competencies for their students. To this end, interculturally competent instructors are able to:

*1. Develop an awareness of their own cultural and disciplinary identities and positionality in the classroom*

A foundational principle in the inclusive teaching literature is the ability to reflect on how one's cultural identity influences cross-cultural interactions in the classroom in multiple ways (Gay 2010). Sometimes referred to as 'self-reflexivity' or the ability to 'interrogate positionality', this skill refers to an awareness of how one is perceived by cultural others as well as an understanding of the extent to which the perceptual lenses created by one's race (Nakayama and Martin 1999), power, socio-economic status, sexual orientation or own ability to speak the dominant language can influence classroom dynamics (Ouellett 2005; Harlap 2008; Bennett 2011). For example, a Pakistani-Canadian instructor teaching a Post-Colonial Studies



course about Bollywood cinema to a group of international students from India (offered through a Canadian college) would need to be mindful of the complex power dynamics inherent in her classroom; while the instructor is situated in a diasporic context, her students have lived experiences of the post-colonial nation that is the subject of study in the course.

In our model, we would further like to highlight how disciplinary cultures can manifest themselves as markers of identity (Becher and Trowler 2001). Because disciplines function as micro-cultures with accompanying norms and expectations of how to think, write, defend arguments, and present, instructors need to be aware of the implicit positive bias they may hold towards their own disciplinary modes of communicating or conducting research (Benninghoff and Sormani 2008; Dimitrov 2012a). For example, an undergraduate Biochemistry student enrolled in a Literary Studies course might follow different norms when it comes to formulating and defending a thesis statement and her direct, scientific approach to writing may be perceived negatively by the instructor. For this reason, self-reflexivity must encompass an awareness of how differences grounded in contrasting disciplinary approaches impact teaching and learning (Boden, Borrego, and Newswander 2011).

### *2. Anticipate, value and accept differences among learners and ways of learning in order to create cultural safety and trust*

Effective instructors approach all groups of learners with the expectation that there will be a diversity of views, prior knowledge, backgrounds, assumptions, and approaches to learning both among group members as well as between group members and the instructor, and that these differences are an asset to learning (Rizvi 2010). Instructors are mindful of the differences between the way they, as master learners in the discipline, approach knowledge and scaffold assignments for novice learners (Ambrose et al. 2010). In order to harness the wealth of cultural knowledge in their classes, instructors may conduct pre-assessments to find out types of prior knowledge students bring to the class and how they can contribute to the learning of others. For example, in an Intercultural Communication course at an American university, a Hmong student volunteered to share her experience with arranged marriage during a one-hour living library session (Wentz 2013). Her peers practised ethnographic interview skills as they explored the concept of the bride price and learned how arranged marriage practices changed during the Hmong community's transition from Laos to the United States.

### *3. Model and encourage perspective-taking in the classroom*

The ability to analyse events, social phenomena, and motivation from multiple perspectives is a fundamental component of intercultural competence and an important intended outcome of global education (Deardorff 2006; Merryfield and Subedi 2006; Haigh 2009). Interculturally competent instructors recognise when students approach global issues from monocultural perspectives and encourage them to consider alternative explanations (Bond, Qian, and Huang 2003; Bennett and Bennett 2004). Instructors can also model openness towards diverse methodologies by demonstrating how to respectfully critique Euro-centric paradigms in the field (Smith 1999; Ryan and Louie 2007; Haig-Brown 2008). For example, in a Literature or History course, instructors can privilege Aboriginal models over Western models of analysis when interpreting class texts. Such an approach would foreground Indigenous ways of knowing and initiate a discussion on the importance of diversifying the methodologies we use to make sense of the world (Archibald 2008; Haig-Brown 2008; Debassige 2010). Other examples include Haigh's (2008) study of student reactions to a learning activity that asked them to apply Samkhya's three modes of nature, from Indian philosophy, to assess the

emotional impact of a habitat in a Geography course and Winter's (2007) use of social justice issues to internationalise the curriculum of the advanced mathematics classroom.

*4. Model and encourage non-judgmental approaches to exploring cultural, social, or other types of difference*

Interculturally fluent teachers encourage students to first observe and understand differences in behaviours and values before evaluating their meaning. When students first encounter difference, their initial response is often evaluative – either positive or negative. Instructors may use a version of the *Describe-Analyze-Evaluate* model (Nam and Condon 2010; Nam 2012), an intercultural training strategy used to model the skill of withholding judgement until one has had a chance to explore alternative explanations and different attributions of individuals' behaviour in a situation that involves cultural difference. This model is useful when asking students to rephrase comments based on an uncritical assumption of cultural superiority, such as when students describe ways of living in overseas communities as 'inefficient' or 'unorganized' (Bennett and Bennett 2004). Effective instructors also observe and manage their own and their students' affective responses to challenging or biased student comments in the classroom and carefully debrief these to create opportunities for learning, rather than avoiding them and moving on (Paige 1996).

*5. Model tolerance for ambiguity and help learners deal with the uncertainty involved in exploring difference*

Students who are not yet comfortable with the ambiguity involved in culture-crossings tend to prefer what is familiar, seek clear categorisations of people and events, have a strong need for certainty, experience difficulty in seeing shades of grey and judge people and events on a dichotomous good versus bad scale (Bochner 1965). Case studies that do not have a clear, single solution promote tolerance for ambiguity as do brief simulations that explore non-threatening, non-identity involving cultural differences in non-verbal behaviours such as personal space or eye contact (Paige 1996; Bennett and Bennett 2004) or ambiguous expectations for social interactions (Thiagarajan 2006). For example, in the personal space exercise, students are asked to observe their affective, cognitive and behavioural responses to a situation in which other students violate cultural norms for conversational distance (e.g. stand too close or too far). Other examples include simulations of international decision-making (e.g. model UN or international criminal court) that provide students with an open-ended situation and a complex problem that they have to navigate over several class sessions as they produce policy documents.

## **Facilitation competencies**

Facilitation competencies encompass the instructional skills necessary to recognise learners' needs, build community in the classroom, create shared academic expectations, as well as the ability to facilitate active learning with diverse audiences. Within this category, interculturally competent instructors are able to:

*6. Facilitate discussion among students with a variety of communication styles*

Interculturally fluent instructors recognise cultural differences in turn-taking, manage interruptions and demonstrate patience with longer or high-context comments in class or with circular and linear contributions from students (Wieland 1991; Bennett 2011). For example, a student from a culture that relies on storytelling may make a long contribution without

explicitly stating the 'lesson' implied by the story. An interculturally effective instructor may validate this approach by saying:

Thank you, Rose, for that really interesting example. I appreciate how you used the story about the transformation in your home town to illustrate the models that we are discussing. And I just want to check in with the class: can anyone identify the key issues in water management that Rose's story identified?

Inviting the class to synthesise a circular contribution welcomes differences in patterns of communication and also helps the class appreciate the characteristics of a circular or indirect approach.

#### *7. Provide feedback across cultures in a variety of ways*

Effective facilitators adjust their feedback style to the needs of learners and recognise differences in the way feedback is offered and received in the learners' home cultures (Laroche 2003). Some learners are comfortable with and may even be motivated by very direct or negative feedback, while others prefer a balance of constructive and supportive comments that emphasise saving face and preserving interpersonal harmony in the process. Effective facilitators (and graduate supervisors) are able to 'turn up' the metaphorical volume of feedback and soften it as needed for each individual and each situation (Dimitrov 2009).

#### *8. Tailor messages to audiences with different levels of linguistic ability*

Effective instructors limit the use of jargon and colloquialisms that may interfere with the audience's understanding of a message, especially in interdisciplinary contexts (Cushner and Mahon 2009). They are able to explain complex concepts to novice learners in simple language by using analogies, concrete examples, and a low context approach. They are also able to convey the same information to experts using more technical language and a higher context approach that assumes a higher level of prior knowledge (Dimitrov et al. 2014). When speaking to diverse groups, instructors can highlight and define key terms for students in writing to underscore their verbal message (e.g. on PowerPoint slides or handouts), contextualise references to popular culture, or paraphrase and repeat difficult concepts so that students have multiple opportunities to understand key points (Ryan 2005). It is also important to explain the discipline-specific uses of terms that may have different or negative connotations in lay language or in other disciplines (e.g. the use of the term 'bias' in statistics as a systematic rather than random deviation from the true value versus racial bias or perceptual bias in lay language).

#### *9. Recognise the barriers students may face in participating in class*

Learners may be uncomfortable participating in class for a variety of cross-cultural reasons (Jones 1999; Turner 2013). For example, students who experienced teacher-focused, information transmission approaches to teaching during their early education (Trigwell 2010) may initially be unfamiliar with expectations for participation in group work or class discussion (Brookfield and Preskill 2012) and may need encouragement in order to participate. Students might feel it is rude to disrupt the entire class with personal opinions, or they may fear a loss of face if they make linguistic errors. Strategies to support these students include explaining the benefits of class discussions and articulating the role that active learning plays in learning and retention (Brookfield and Preskill 2012). Providing examples of the kinds of comments students can offer will help boost their confidence to speak, while building reflection into the discussion process will provide students with an opportunity to think through the topic more deeply before offering a response. Discussion models that alternate

small and large group conversation include think-pair-share or quescussion (discussion through questions) and can help students to overcome barriers to participation.

#### *10. Identify risk factors for learners that might surface during classroom activities*

Conversations about culture, identity, and difference may feel threatening to learners, and every active learning activity involves a certain amount of risk for those who participate in it. Examples of risk factors for class participation include loss of face, loss of group identity, conflict avoidance, and risk of self-disclosure related to culture, religion, sexual orientation, or socio-economic background (Paige 1993). One strategy to reduce the level of risk in the classroom is to sequence learning activities in a way that moves from low- to high-risk disclosure, concrete to abstract concepts, personal to institutional examples, structured to unstructured activities and to sequence topics from low emotional intensity to higher emotional intensity. This allows learners to develop trust with the class before they critically examine deeply held assumptions or participate in self-disclosure that they may perceive as risky (Bell, Griffin, and Adams 2007).

Instructors may also want to be cautious when discussing traumatic events such as war, genocide, or terrorism in a classroom where students may have personal experiences of these events. While some students will relish the opportunity to share their perspective on reconstruction after the Rwandan genocide in a Political Science class or to discuss the structural reasons behind the World Trade Centre's collapse in a Civil Engineering course, other students may find these memories extremely traumatic. Allow students to volunteer their experiences, but do not force them to self-disclose. Warning a class before you show videos with difficult content and allowing students to opt-out if they feel uncomfortable will scaffold their exposure to new and ambiguous situations and help them grow.

#### *11. Create opportunities for peer learning and interaction among diverse learners*

When difference is acknowledged in the classroom, it forms the basis for mutual understanding and reciprocity and allows students to learn from each other and share the wealth of cultural knowledge they bring to class. Meaningful interactions among students must be mindfully designed and scaffolded by instructors, as a number of studies reveal that both local and international students prefer low levels of interactions with each other when it comes to collaborating in the classroom (Volet and Ang 1998). Researchers at the University of Melbourne have compiled a variety of learning activities that instructors can use to encourage interaction between local and international students in the classroom (Arkoudis et al. 2013). These activities include problem-based learning projects with purposefully constructed diverse groups, peer interviews, and including sessions dedicated to peer learning to ensure that students have the team skills necessary to succeed.

#### *12. Build and navigate relationships with students who have different perceptions of power distance*

Teachers and students may have varied expectations of how respect and authority are conveyed in the classroom (Eland 2001). Students from high power distance educational cultures may be uncomfortable with an instructor's use of informality (such as humour) in the classroom if they are accustomed to interacting with instructors in more formal ways. Similarly, student behaviour that is understood as respectful in one culture (such as avoiding eye contact with the instructor) may be misinterpreted as disrespectful in another. For this reason, instructors need to be aware of how their own perceptions of power distance impact their interaction with students in the classroom and examine their initial attributions of student behaviour carefully (Yook and Albert 1999; Eland 2001).

### *13. Articulate and mediate differences in the roles of teachers and learners across cultures*

Cultural differences in teacher and student roles that impact classroom interaction frequently include differing expectations with respect to learner initiative (Cryer and Okorochoa 1999) and differences in students' orientation to rules and rule following (Nisbett 2004). For example, at the graduate level, a high level of initiative is expected from doctoral students at North American universities, whereas graduate supervisors in a number of Middle Eastern cultures expect to have a greater degree of control over their students' work, particularly in Engineering, resulting in difficult supervisory relationships (Dimitrov 2009). Similarly, students from some cultures may perceive rules and policies as set in stone, and not even attempt to ask for accommodation in the case of a health emergency, while students from other cultures perceive all rules as flexible and open to bargaining based on individual consideration (Nydell 2012).

### *14. Mentor students during their transition to new cultures and new disciplines*

Explicit instruction is required to socialise students to the norms of academic and disciplinary cultures (Dimitrov 2012a). This includes strategies such as clarifying discipline-specific writing styles, research and critical thinking processes, sharing exemplars of student writing, and modelling how to read analytically (Gardner 2010; Boden, Borrego, and Newswander 2011). Clearly explaining assessment criteria to students further helps to demystify what constitutes scholarly excellence in the discipline (Lovitts 2007). These approaches will help students become familiar with new academic norms and also mentor students who are new to the discipline, especially at the graduate level (Gardner and Mendoza 2010).

### *15. Articulate the meaning of academic integrity in their discipline*

Norms around attribution of authorship vary across cultures and across disciplines (Pennycook 1996; Russikoff, Fucaloro, and Salkauskiene 2003; Sutherland-Smith 2005). Various studies have suggested that the concept of plagiarism does not carry the same moral implications in collectivistic cultures as it does in North America (Schmitt 2005; Paltridge and Starfield 2007). Additionally, it is not just lack of language proficiency or familiarity with the academic culture that may result in unintended plagiarism. Many studies have found that lack of familiarity with disciplinary discourse can also pose challenges to common attribution practices even for students who know basic plagiarism rules (Pennycook 1996; Leask 2007). As a result, providing concrete examples of good academic practice will help *all* students bridge cultural and disciplinary divides and learn appropriate attribution norms. This includes providing concrete examples of appropriate and inappropriate paraphrasing and discussing common discipline-specific issues, such as obtaining permission to reproduce or alter figures or graphs.

## **Curriculum design competencies**

Curriculum design competencies include the ability to create alignment across the curriculum between learning activities and assessments in order to help students achieve global learning outcomes. Effective instructors are able to critically evaluate the curriculum and create learning materials that transcend the limitations of monocultural disciplinary paradigms, scaffold student learning so students have a chance to master intercultural skills relevant to their discipline, and design assessments that allow students to demonstrate learning in a variety of ways. Intercultural competence in curriculum design includes the ability to:

*16. Include concrete learning outcomes related to intercultural or global learning at the course and curricular levels*

Many universities explicitly identify global understanding (University of Guelph, Canada), intercultural understanding (University of British Columbia, Canada), and the development of global perspectives (Alverno College, USA), or international perspectives (Quest University, Canada) as strategic goals and important outcomes of a university education that will enable students to participate meaningfully in a global society (Garson 2012). Interculturally competent instructors make these learning goals explicit and ask students to reflect on their progress towards these goals. At the course level, for example, students might be expected to identify 3–5 ways in which professional practices in their field vary around the world (e.g. differences in ethical principles that guide the work of professional engineers across cultures) or be able to describe considerations for working with immigrant populations in their discipline (e.g. in public health or elementary education).

*17. Incorporate content and learning resources that represent diverse perspectives, paradigms, or disciplinary approaches*

Instructors may accomplish this by including readings that represent Indigenous values and knowledge or challenge dominant paradigms in the discipline (Banks and McGee Banks 2010; Gay 2010). For example, a research seminar in a largely quantitative field could include examples of qualitative studies, or students could find and share research published in the additional languages they speak. In Psychology, students have been encouraged to test their hypotheses across cultures (Nisbett 2004), while in Math, instructors have used advanced mathematical models to calculate the global disease burden of malaria or the impact of fertilisers in Sub-Saharan Africa in an effort to incorporate social justice perspectives into the curriculum (Winter 2007).

*18. Create learning activities that allow students to explore difference and practice perspective-taking*

Role-plays, simulations and experiential learning activities allow students to reflect on power, privilege, or access to information from perspectives other than their own. Methods such as the human library or living library (Wentz 2013), participant observation of community events, or interviews with individuals who are different from students on a dimension of identity that is relevant to the outcomes of the class are a few examples of how to encourage perceptual flexibility (Hermida 2010). A critical instructional component of these activities includes an acknowledgement that it is never possible to completely step into the shoes of another or to embody their lived experiences of oppression; indeed, this is not the intended outcome of activities that encourage perspective-taking. Instead, these exercises offer an opportunity for students to develop empathy and consider multiple viewpoints on important issues (Merryfield and Subedi 2006).

*19. Design assessments that recognise and validate cultural differences in writing and communication styles*

One strategy to build flexibility into assessment is to weigh student mastery of the learning outcomes of a particular assignment more highly than the perfect use of language. This means that students who demonstrate deep understanding of the material or who reflect keen critical thinking in their assignments will not be penalised for grammatical mistakes that do not impede with meaning (MacKinnon and Manathunga 2003). Another technique to validate cultural differences in assessment design is to be open to Indigenous or non-Western ways of presenting knowledge by, for example, recognising oral storytelling as a form of research



(Archibald 2008) or to be open to the use of inductive or deductive logic and circular rather than linear reasoning in student responses (Eland 2001; Bennett 2009). Assignments that allow for alternative formats to traditional essays, such as presentations, videos, or oral storytelling further allow for inclusivity at the assessment level (Hermida 2010). Authentic assessments such as blogs, videos, and presentations allow students to gain confidence in communicating knowledge in academic contexts, prepare them for future writing tasks, and learn about writing expectations for real-life contexts (Fox 1994; Janesick 2006).

*20. Provide opportunities for students to reflect on and gain a better understanding of their own multiple cultural, personal, and disciplinary identities*

While the first component of the ITC model relates to instructors' ability to reflect on their own cultural and disciplinary identities, the last one is their ability to promote this same skill among their students as a way of mentoring students in their intercultural development. Encouraging students to better understand their own cultural identifications could be as simple as asking students to reflect on how their beliefs impact what they are learning. Such an opportunity for reflection is critically important when the subject matter has the potential to threaten student values (e.g. asking Education students from Saudi Arabia to compare the social implications of educating girls and boys separately or together in high schools). Cultural self-awareness is an important first step in the intercultural development of students as a stepping stone towards intercultural competence, empathy, and perspective-taking (Bennett and Bennett 2004; Spitzberg and Chagnon 2009). These reflections may take the form of individual or small group discussions; for example, students may complete identity wheels that capture their most important identifications in order to reflect on how their identity relates to their experiences in society. In large groups, students may discuss and share artefacts that represent dimensions of identity and unpack how these artefacts came to hold those meanings.

### **How to use the model**

The ITC model can be used as a tool for individual reflection or as a tool for guiding discussion in learning communities and workshops about teaching across cultures. It is *not* intended to be a rigid prescriptive formula for either developing or assessing ITC.

When using the model for *individual reflection*, instructors can identify the components of ITC that contribute to their strengths as educators and set goals for enhancing their practice (McAlpine and Weston 2000). Instructors may also choose to use ITC as a model when articulating a teaching philosophy for the intercultural classroom to be used as part of their teaching dossier.

As a tool for *group reflection*, learning communities may work to identify the components of the model most relevant to their particular discipline and share their most effective strategies in these areas by using an appreciative inquiry approach (Watkins, Mohr, and Kelly 2011) or a transfer group approach (Horisberger and Tribelhorn 2010). For example, participants may share examples of either successful or challenging teaching situations and work with the group to develop strategies for inclusive, interculturally competent facilitation in these situations.

In extended faculty development programmes, the model can be used as a tool for peer observation of teaching. For example, instructors can either visit each other's classes and



provide feedback (through a teaching squares model) or facilitate 20–30 min discussions with faculty peers on a global issue in their discipline (through a micro-teaching model). After facilitating the lesson, the instructor receives feedback on their use of ITC, such as their ability to support ESL learners during an advanced Math class or to promote perspective-taking in a Biology course.

We recommend a longer session length than the ten minute traditional mini-lesson used in teaching development programmes because discussions related to issues of identity and difference require sufficient time for learner reflection, self-disclosure, and debriefing at the end of the session (Thiagarajan 1993, 2006). Experienced intercultural facilitators may choose to explore hypothetical scenarios with the peer group and ask instructors questions such as: How would you have responded if you encountered a lot of learner resistance? What would you say if you discovered that the students held strong stereotypes and used evaluative language that may cause pain to others in the class? Trainers who are comfortable with facilitating intercultural dialogue may also consider using the model as a debriefing tool after attending theatre of the oppressed (Boal 1979) or other educational theatre sessions. At our own institution, faculty have responded very positively to workshops that explore diversity in the classroom through educational theatre.

### ***Further development of the model***

The ITC model has helped frame our research on the impact of teaching development programs for novice instructors in Canada (Dimitrov et al. 2014) and we have used it in faculty development work at several Canadian universities as well as in workshops for educational developers. The next step in the development of the ITC model is to explore its application across the disciplines. We have recently conducted focus group interviews with university faculty members to explore ITC in more than fifteen disciplines in Science, Engineering, Arts and Humanities, Health Sciences and the Social Sciences in order to compare how faculty members navigate diverse learning environments across the disciplines (Dimitrov and Haque, forthcoming). Further research may explore the following three areas: (1) How the model is used in faculty reflection on teaching; (2) How the model is used by educational developers to support faculty; and (3) How the use of ITC by instructors is perceived by students, including how students experience the classroom of an interculturally competent instructor and what impact this has on student learning.

### **Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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