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Multi-competence and language teaching

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A second language is not just adding rooms to your house by building an extension at the back: it is rebuilding all the internal walls.
(Vivian Cook 2005)

In his 2005 presentation at the Second Language Research Forum at Columbia University in New York, Vivian Cook used this clever image to help us envision the mind as a house with more than one language under one roof. The house-as-mind evokes an ecosystem in which languages live in mutual interdependence; the doors in the house connect all the rooms so that movement is effortless and uninhibited. Above all, it offers a picture of all the languages a person knows and uses living in the same house, with none consigned to the extension at the back. This image captures Cook's notion of the multi-competent mind that accommodates the knowledge and use of more than one language.

This architectural metaphor has dwelled in my imagination for nearly a decade and the construction project is far from complete! I am still grappling with questions related to how the multi-competence framework offers us different ways of thinking about classroom foreign language learning. In particular, I have tried to envision the classroom as part of the main house and not as the "extension at the back." All too often real language learning (or acquisition) is believed to occur in natural, immersion settings outside the classroom; the classroom, by contrast, is largely considered an artificial setting for language learning. At best, it may be viewed as the staging area for real language use in the natural setting of the target culture. What if we didn't privilege the natural, immersion setting over the formal, instructed setting? What if the classroom were the house and not the extension?

In this chapter I argue that the foreign language classroom is a privileged environment in which extraordinary learning experiences can transpire. Rather than concentrate with single-minded attention on the development of monolingual target language proficiency, I propose that the

classroom is the ideal setting for teachers and students to address the broader implications of language learning. In order to make this case, I use Cook's definition of the multi-competent L2 user to theorize a multi-competent L2 learner. I then suggest the ways the multi-competence perspective can be put into practice in the foreign language classroom. Because I consider intentional, guided reflection to be at the heart of what it means to be a multi-competent L2 learner, I explain what I mean by "reflection" and "awareness" in this context. Finally, I review a study designed to assess the effects of awareness on students' sense of themselves as multi-competent L2 users. I conclude with an argument that the multi-competence perspective is central to ethical and principled language education, and ultimately to social justice in the world.

21.1 Defining the multi-competent L2 learner

Multi-competence concerns the mind of any user of a second language at any level of achievement.

(Vivian Cook, Chapter 1, this volume, p. 000)

Multi-competence, as defined by Cook in this volume and elsewhere, is the overall system of a mind that knows and uses more than one language. Rather than a theory or model of second language acquisition, it is a perspective, or a way of looking at acquisition and use of multiple languages. "Multi-competence is a way of looking at things from another angle rather than of exploring the implications and contradictions within the same perspective" (Cook, Chapter 1, this volume, p. 000). This perspective maintains, above all, that people who know more than one language have a distinct compound state of mind that is not the equivalent of two (or more) monolingual states. It is a holistic view of language development and use that eschews bilingualism or multilingualism as some idealized condition characterized by advanced language proficiency in more than two languages. Multi-competence is a dynamic system that accounts for the natural ebb and flow of a person's native language as well as other languages in various stages of development (Scott 2010, p. 17). Moreover, "Multi-competence affects the whole mind, i.e. all language and cognitive systems, rather than language alone" (Cook, Chapter 1, this volume, p. 000).

The most important contribution of the multi-competence perspective is the notion of the L2 user, defined as "any person who uses another language than his or her first language (L1), that is to say, the one learnt first as a child" (Cook 2002b, p. 1). The L2 user is, therefore, a unique, individual speaker-hearer of a second language who stands in contrast to a native speaker of that language. It is important to note that although the term "native speaker" is part of common parlance, many current

practitioners consider it an inadequate and perhaps even unacceptable description. As Kramersch (1998) noted:

The “native speaker” of linguists and language teachers is in fact an abstraction based on arbitrarily selected features of appearance and demeanor . . . The native speaker is, moreover, a monolingual, monocultural abstraction: he/she is one who speaks only his/her (standardized) native tongue and lives by one (standardized) national culture. In reality, most people partake of various language or language varieties and live by various cultures and subcultures. *(Kramersch 1998, pp. 79–80)*

Given this understanding, multi-competent L2 use, rather than native speaker-ness, is the standard. Idiosyncratic second language use at any stage of development by a particular individual in a specific context takes precedence over idealized native language use; the local L2 user supplants the universal native speaker.

Multi-competent L2 use refers to both the total knowledge of languages in one mind and the use of a second language that is not an imitation of one’s first language but rather operating on its own terms alongside the first language (Cook 1995). These multi-competent L2 users can be found everywhere in cities across the world. In my own region I interact regularly with a variety of multi-competent L2 users who speak southern American English: my friend’s husband, an Ethiopian taxi driver; my Korean–American daughter-in-law’s mother, owner of a laundry facility; a Haitian medical practitioner at our university hospital; my Parisian colleague, a professor of French feminist thought; my Chinese graduate student studying second language acquisition and foreign language pedagogy in preparation for his return to China to teach English. All of these people have marked non-native accents and make repeated, systematic errors when they speak English; all of them are successful and productive members of our community who speak, read, and write English with varying degrees of accuracy.

Multi-competence is, by and large, a term that refers to people who are using their languages in real-life settings in order to get along. They are very likely motivated by both the need and the desire to communicate with the people they encounter in their daily lives. Much of this language use is likely to be spontaneous and produced in response to immediate, real-life stimuli. Although there may be some conscious reflection about what it means to know and use several languages, I would argue that multi-competent L2 users in immersion settings are mostly unaware of the ways their languages operate in tandem. Even if they are studying in a classroom in order to improve their proficiency in the target language – for example English, in the case of my friends mentioned above – they are likely to be oblivious to their multi-competence. They have no reason to think about it.

Unlike people in an immersion setting, the foreign language learner in a classroom may have fifty minutes three times a week to hear and practice the target language. Although learners come to the language classroom

with a wide variety of goals (i.e., completing a school requirement, getting a good grade, wanting to travel, hoping for a good job), the principal goal of their work in the classroom is not survival. They (and their teachers) are generally focused on developing monolingual, target language proficiency. As I stated in *Double Talk*, “Achieving some level of bilingual functioning is clearly a valid goal of foreign language instruction; however, it is ironic that becoming bilingual often means engaging primarily in a monolingual encounter with the target language” (Scott 2010, p. 3). If we agree that multi-competence is a compound state of mind that is not the equivalent of two (or more) monolingual states, and the foreign language classroom generally privileges a monolingual approach, I would argue that foreign language learners in a classroom do not spontaneously become multi-competent L2 users. Instead, many of them abandon their studies, doubting their abilities to learn a foreign language and feeling like perpetually deficient native-speakers.

Although Cook rejects the term “L2 learner” because he thinks it relegates people to a subordinate status of learners as opposed to L2 users (see Cook, Chapter 1, this volume), I regard the classroom as an ideal setting for exploring the essential connections between the L2 learner and the L2 user. Understanding that a successful L2 user is not a deficient native speaker can be enormously empowering to a foreign language learner. Likewise, exploring the theoretical construct of the multi-competent L2 user can inspire foreign language learners to continue their studies, even when faced with the inevitable challenges of language learning. In my work (Scott 2010) I use the term “multi-competent second language learner” to describe learners who reflect critically about language learning and language use. Rather than thinking of native-like speech as the central goal (an unattainable goal for many learners), the multi-competent L2 learner understands what it means to be an L2 user and is using the classroom to develop an understanding of who they are in our multilingual, multicultural world. Ultimately, I would argue that teachers should incorporate an intentional focus on developing multi-competent L2 learners so that the classroom becomes the place where multi-competent L2 use emerges organically.

21.2 Multi-competence and the classroom

As the multi-competence approach developed and broadened, it became evident that it was more a perspective from which to view the acquisition and use of multiple languages than a theory or a model. (Vivian Cook, Chapter 1, this volume, p. 000)

This volume is devoted to defining and assessing the many and varied implications of multi-competence, and the contributors would all likely

agree that multi-competence is a notion that has value and contributes to a rethinking of language acquisition and language use. However, multi-competence as a “perspective from which to view the acquisition and use of multiple languages,” as Cook states in the quote above, is not a concept that has informed foreign language teaching practice. In general, current practice adheres to a chiefly monolingual encounter with the target language and students are encouraged to focus on developing proficiency in the target language. Moreover, this monolingual approach is often designed to promote native-like target language proficiency: “the goal set for students was mostly to get as close as possible to monolingual native speakers” (Cook 2002c, p. 329). If we consider multi-competence to be a valid, natural, and even desirable state of being, then both the approach and the learning goals for classroom foreign language learning must be re-envisioned.

There is no question that classroom foreign language learning should focus on helping students learn the target language. However, there is little consensus about what actually constitutes success. That is, what does it mean to be a successful language learner? Success may be measured by achievement in a particular course of study or scores on a standardized test; it may be assessed by a student’s level of proficiency (novice, intermediate, advanced, superior, distinguished) in particular skills according to the ACTFL scale. Macaro (2010b) challenges us to think carefully about what constitutes language learning success and how we can measure it. He argues that research has yet to fully explore the notion of the “good language learner” and the criteria used to characterize good language learning:

An understanding of the meaning of language learning success, just like an understanding of what it is to really know a word, is fundamental to language teaching pedagogy. For a teacher to have a clear idea of what the end and intermediate goals of learning are is crucial to the relationship s/he builds up with his/her students and to the possibility of adapting his/her language curriculum and pedagogy. (Macaro 2010b, p. 304)

Although there are no simple answers to questions regarding what we should be teaching in the foreign language classroom and how we should measure success, I believe the multi-competence perspective offers us a framework for this rethinking.

Assuming a multi-competence perspective in the foreign language classroom involves a careful reconsideration of three key issues. First, teachers must adopt a multilingual stance rather than a monolingual stance. That is, teachers should see learners as individuals who are already members of a community that uses more than one language rather than as monolinguals who are adding a new language to their first language. A classroom that uses multi-competence as its framework treats “the diverse languages of the community as a coherent whole rather than separately” (Cook, Chapter 1, this volume, p. 000). In practical terms, this principle involves listening to the language stories of the students in a classroom, of creating

a community of learners who know about one another's language histories – the languages spoken by parents or grandparents, incidental encounters with speakers of other languages, feelings about speakers of particular languages, and so on. Acknowledging that the target language is not the only language present in the classroom is essential and can sensitize students to the notion of multi-competence. This multilingual stance is not a one-time community-building activity; rather it should be cultivated throughout a course of study, with each new topic (linguistic or cultural) being considered through this lens. At times these discussions may be in the shared language of the students (English in the US classroom), whereas at other times it may be possible to use the target language. Regardless, this multilingual stance endorses the legitimacy of all languages – those spoken by people in power as well as those spoken by marginalized people – thereby creating a community of learners who learn to respect L2 use in its many forms.

It is worth mentioning that foreign language teachers are often reluctant to use the L1 in the classroom for fear that students will fall back on the L1 and circumvent the L2. Cook (2002c) has argued that we should adopt a bilingual approach to teaching, arguing that teachers “should develop the systematic use of the L1 in the classroom alongside the L2 as a reflection of the realities of the classroom situation, as an aid to learning and as a model for the world outside” (p. 332). This approach may seem counterproductive to many teachers, especially given general consensus about the importance of input and interaction in the target language. However, it is Cook's use of the word “systematic” that must be considered carefully. Random and arbitrary use of the L1 should be discouraged. For example, a teacher who consistently translates what s/he says or offers regularly to be a “walking dictionary” does not help students use their intuition and problem-solving skills to decipher and interpret the target language. Rather, teachers should bear in mind the ways that L1 and L2 are used in real life by people who speak the same languages; bilingual people engage in word play, they code-switch, and they search for novel and creative ways to communicate a message. The L1 should be acknowledged and present in the foreign language classroom, but teachers and students alike should have a conscious understanding of why and how it is to be used.

The second issue for consideration with regard to multi-competence perspective in the classroom involves Cook's notion of the L2 user, defined as a person who uses a language other than his/her first. An L2 user is not the equivalent of two monolingual native speakers; rather s/he is a unique person who has a distinct set of language experiences that come into play when s/he uses the second language. Classrooms are full of people who are L2 users in their daily lives yet the formal learning environment typically rejects the value of L2 user-ness and reveres the idealized native speaker. Appreciating the L2 user would require that classroom teaching not focus

on native speakers of one standardized version of a particular language, such as Parisian French or British English.

Students need to be shown the richness of L2 use. Rather than a few L2 users stumbling through conversations with powerful native speakers, they need to encounter the language of people who use the language effectively as a second language, who, because they speak two languages, can say things that monolingual native speakers can never say.

(Cook 2002c, p. 338)

It should be noted that many foreign language teachers are L2 users – that is, not native speakers of the language(s) they teach – and may have distinctive accents and possibly unique writing styles. L2 user-ness is not a shameful condition but rather normal, natural, and even creative. With regard to classroom practice, accepting L2 use means that pronunciation and linguistic accuracy cannot be the principal measures of success. Teachers must emphasize the many kinds of L2 use: listening to authentic texts of all kinds, reading for information and for pleasure, browsing the internet, chatting informally using social media, and so on. Ultimately, as Macaro states,

As language teachers we should, of course, be trying to create bilinguals and not native speakers of the L2. This requires a fundamental shift in how teachers need to conceptualise the L2 learning curriculum and pedagogy.

(Macaro 2010b, p. 301)

Awareness is the third and most important issue when adopting a multi-competence perspective in the foreign language classroom. Learners in a classroom do not spontaneously become multi-competent L2 users; in fact, a monolingual target-language classroom environment can inadvertently impede the development of multi-competence. Multi-competence is a state of mind and foreign language teachers need to cultivate an awareness of that state of mind, of that perspective, of that stance, for themselves and for their students. In my view, we need to train people to think differently about language learning and language use; awareness, or a conscious understanding of the notion of multi-competence, is at the core of this approach.

21.3 Language awareness and the multi-competent L2 learner

[T]he task for the language educator is above all to educate, to promote an ability to change perspective and to challenge what is taken for granted.

(Byram 2008, p. 17)

Fundamental to the multi-competence perspective in the foreign language classroom is the idea that teachers have a responsibility to do more than teach the target language. As indicated previously, developing multi-

competence in the classroom involves adopting a multi-lingual stance, validating the L2 user, and helping students understand who they can be as multi-competent L2 users. Although teachers might argue that these tasks are beyond the scope of foreign language teaching, I would argue that we are ideally suited for this work precisely because we are language specialists who care about how our students conceive of themselves as users of their newly learned second languages. Byram's (2008, 2012) distinction between language learning and language education clarifies the point. He contends that language learning involves the development of proficiency in a particular language whereas language education has social and political purposes. Language education goes beyond the scope of language learning and seeks to raise students' awareness about what it means to be a member of a linguistically and culturally diverse world. To achieve the goals of language education, Byram proposes a model that "represents language and culture competence holistically and shows the relationship between language competence - including language awareness - and intercultural competence, including cultural awareness" (Byram 2012, p. 6). This distinction between language learning and language education challenges foreign language teachers to take a broader view of their role and to address both dimensions.

In my view, language education, with its focus on fostering language awareness, is an essential part of a multi-competence perspective in the foreign language classroom. Although there are several definitions of language awareness, including a person's declarative knowledge of underlying systems of language (i.e. grammar), I am using the term "language awareness" to refer to "a person's sensitivity to and conscious awareness of the nature of language and its role in human life" (Svalberg 2007, p. 288). To understand multi-competence and the notion of a multi-competent L2 user, students must be guided to reflect critically about themselves and others. Most students in a language classroom are unaware of how they feel about the target language and its speakers, or why it is important to know and use a second language. Beyond the concrete goals of learning grammar and vocabulary, they have a largely limited sense of themselves as language learners and varying perceptions of what language learning encompasses. Helping students engage in critical reflection is, however, a somewhat elusive endeavor.

Dörnyei's (2005, 2009, 2010) work on individual differences among foreign language learners and the "self-framework" offers a compelling way to conceptualize an approach to developing students' awareness. He proposes a system of the human mind that involves cognition, affect, and motivation and their dynamic interplay. He states that "Each of the three mental dimensions can be viewed as dynamic subsystems that have continuous and complex interaction with each other and which cannot exist in isolation from one another" (2010, p. 261). Dörnyei uses this tripartite system to theorize the notion of the "possible self" and notes that "From an

educational perspective the most important possible self is the ‘ideal self’ (2010, p. 265). In Dörnyei’s view, the notion of the “ideal self” is central to understanding why learners are, or are not, motivated to succeed in a given endeavor. That is, if a person has a vision of who s/he is and who s/he wants to become – a possible future self, or an ideal self – the foreign language learning task becomes integral to that person’s sense of self.

The ideal L2 self is the L2-specific facet of one’s *ideal self*, which refers to the

representation of the attributes that someone would ideally like to possess ... The theory suggests that if the person we would like to become speaks an L2, the ideal L2 self is a powerful motivator to learn the L2 because of the desire to reduce the discrepancy between our actual and ideal selves.

(Dörnyei 2010, p. 257)

Having a sense of self as a multi-competent L2 user does not come about spontaneously and cannot be assumed in the classroom setting. Research in psychology confirms that a person’s self-image is highly complex and that people differ in their abilities to generate a successful sense of self. Dörnyei (2009) notes that “even if the self image does exist, it may not have a sufficient degree of elaborateness and vividness to be effective” (p. 19). Every student in a foreign language classroom has a unique sense of self and varying ways of envisioning his or her ideal self. The kinds of (utilitarian) tasks that are typical in the foreign language classroom do not inherently promote self-reflection about who students want to be as L2 learners or users. Therefore, the ideal L2 self must be envisioned in the classroom and brought into conscious awareness. The multi-competent L2 learner creates a vision of his/her ideal L2 self; s/he engages in conscious reflection about multi-competence as opposed to monolingual native speaker-ness. This multi-competence approach to education places critical reflection about oneself, one’s own language and culture, and the target language and culture at the heart of the foreign language curriculum.

21.4 Research on language awareness and multi-competence

This LAF [Language Awareness Forum] has taught me that learning French does more than just teach us about the French language or even about French culture. It teaches the more general ability of learning how to be multi-competent and how to live in the third space, an ability that one can then apply to other languages and cultures.

(Student quote from Scott et al. 2013, p. 98)

In an effort to explore the notion of the multi-competent L2 learner who has an increasing ability to imagine herself as a multi-competent L2 user, we designed a series of three classroom presentations for novice learners

of French called the Language Awareness Forums (Scott, Dessein, Ledford and Joseph-Gabriel 2013). The goal of each LAF is to engage students in discussions about the role language learning plays in their sense of self. Above all, the aim of these presentations, spaced out over the course of a fifteen-week semester, is to help students generate a vision of their ideal L2 self in an effort to empower them as lifelong multi-competent L2 users.

The first LAF deals with the topic of language and identity to develop students' awareness of the ways learning a second language shapes their sense of self. The students begin by exploring three guiding questions: (i) What does "identity" mean? (ii) What are the experiences that have shaped your identity? (iii) In what ways might your identity change by studying French? Following both small-group and full-class discussion of these questions, the teacher engages students in an interactive PowerPoint presentation about research in the area of identity formation. The focus of the presentation involves the dynamic and fluid nature of identity; students are guided to discuss the idea that identity is not considered to be fixed or static, but rather as changing during the course of the lifespan. They explore how studying French makes them confront their preconceived notions about how French-speaking people look, dress, and speak; they also examine whether they want to speak/act/be like French-speaking people or whether they want to establish a boundary between themselves and French-speaking people. Through this discussion, each student is guided to explore ways his/her sense of self is being shaped by being a French language learner.

The second LAF explores definitions of bilingualism with the intention of helping students understand that being bilingual means much more than having full mastery of two languages. Following the same format as the first LAF, students work in small groups to discuss three guiding questions: (i) What does it mean to be bilingual? (ii) Are you bilingual? (iii) Do you expect to become bilingual by studying French? During the subsequent teacher-led discussion, students who grew up in families where languages other than English were spoken are encouraged to talk about how, when, and where they use their two (or more) languages. It is especially important for all students to understand that bilingual people use their two languages differently, depending on the context. This realization makes them aware that being bilingual does not mean having full proficiency in two languages. During the PowerPoint presentation, students learn that there are many different definitions of bilingualism and that there is no agreement among linguists regarding precisely what bilingual means. This discussion serves to demystify bilingualism and to make students aware that no one has the same level of proficiency in two languages; bilingual people understand, read, write, and speak a second language to varying degrees. They are introduced to Cook's notion of the L2 user who is able to use a language other than his/her native language at any level for any purpose. In addition, this LAF includes a close analysis – or

deconstruction – of the term “native speaker” to ensure that students understand that studying French will not make them native speakers of French. The discussion of what it means to be a native speaker is brought to a theoretical level by asking students to explore what “native speaker” means in our twenty-first century world in which people speak varieties of French (or English, or Spanish, etc.).

The third and final LAF focuses on intercultural awareness and global citizenship. The three guiding questions are:

- (i) What would it mean to develop “intercultural awareness”?
- (ii) What experiences in your life have helped you develop intercultural awareness?
- (iii) What kinds of learning experiences in our French class might promote intercultural awareness?

After discussing these questions, students are led to examine Kramersch’s (1998, 2009a) notion that studying a second language involves language crossing, or living, speaking, and interacting between spaces, across multiple languages or varieties of the same language. According to Kramersch, this language crossing puts learners in a “third space,” or a privileged position located between one’s own culture and the target culture. Students are sensitized to the ways that inhabiting this privileged third space gives a person a new perspective of oneself and one’s relation to both cultures. In conjunction with this notion of third space, this LAF presents the notion of multi-competence which accounts for a person’s knowledge of his/her first language and a developing understanding of a second language. Instead of thinking about individual languages as separate in the mind of one person, students explore the ways that all the languages a person knows interact, mutually influencing each other. Ultimately students are led to think about the connections between the notion of third space and the multi-competent L2 user.

Although we are in the very earliest stages of this research, our preliminary findings suggest that the LAFs offer students opportunities to grapple with ideas that go far beyond the scope of a traditional foreign language classroom. Some of the most important questions students discuss during the LAF presentations include:

- In what ways are the languages you speak part of your identity?
- What is the difference between your language and your nationality?
- What is a “native speaker”? Are you a native speaker of a particular language?
- How does your native language give you a sense of power, or a sense of belonging to a group?
- Have you ever felt like a “language outsider”?
- What languages are/are not “cool”? Why?
- What languages might give a person access to power?

- Name some languages spoken by people in power. Name some languages spoken by marginalized people.
- Describe stereotypes associated with particular language groups.
- What languages are stigmatized?
- In what ways can learning a second language give you power?
- What does it mean to be “a global citizen”?

Individual teachers may adapt these questions and include additional questions that reflect their own areas of interest and concern.

Students’ written reflections about each of the LAFs suggest that they engage in exploring the relationship between language learning and identity construction, they deconstruct preconceived notions about what it means to be bilingual, and they discover that learning French can foster awareness about language learning that is transferable to an encounter with any new language or culture (Scott et al. 2013). These initial findings have been somewhat limited in part because assessing the desired outcome, namely a sense of self as multi-competent L2 user, is elusive. We are continuing to investigate ways to isolate and assess specific dimensions of the development of an ideal L2 user self. Using an adaptation of the scale developed by MacIntyre, MacKinnon and Clément (2009), we hope to further our understanding of how the LAFs change students’ sense of self, and in particular, how it shapes their understanding of their “ideal selves” as multi-competent L2 learners. In addition, we are conducting interviews with students to gain a better understanding of how the LAFs affect individual students; we have preliminary evidence suggesting that multilingual students respond quite differently to the LAF presentations than monolingual students. These interview sessions are informed by Ushioda’s (2009) notion that individuals must be studied in their particular contexts. She stresses the importance of

a focus on real persons, rather than on learners as theoretical abstractions; a focus on the agency of the individual person as a thinking, feeling human being, with an identity, a personality, a unique history and background, a person with goals, motives and intentions; a focus on the interaction between this self-reflective intentional agent, and the fluid and complex system of social relations, activities, experiences and multi micro- and macro-contexts in which the person is embedded, moves, and is inherently part of. (Ushioda 2009, p. 220)

Ultimately, we believe that the foreign language classroom experience can affect a person’s ability to imagine a more vivid L2 self. There is still no clear understanding of how to engage students in this process; however, we consider the LAFs to be a step in the right direction. We agree with Dörnyei, who proposes that learners can be motivated by imagining who they are as language learners: “the first step in a motivational intervention following the self approach is to help learners construct their Ideal L2 Self, that is, to *create their vision*” (2009, p. 33).

21.5 Final thoughts

The purpose is not to replace the familiar with the new, nor to encourage identification with another culture, but to de-familiarise and de-centre, so that questions can be raised about one's own culturally determined assumptions and about the society in which one lives. (Byram 2009, p. 199)

Students come to our classrooms with varying levels of competence in the target language. They may also come to us as multi-competent L2 users of many different languages. In other words, they may already know and use two or more languages when they arrive in our classrooms to learn another one. In general, however, students are not aware of what language use entails or how the languages in their minds relate, interact, or cooperate. Their pre-conceived notions, as well as their teachers' beliefs about language learning and teaching, do not typically foster multi-competence. Multi-competence is a state of mind that exists subconsciously; for it to be productively operative, multi-competence must be taught, learned, modeled. The foreign language classroom is the ideal place for this work. Multi-competent L2 learners are students in foreign language classrooms where multi-competence is a clearly operating perspective. In this kind of classroom setting, multi-competent L2 learners are emergent multi-competent L2 users.

Multi-competence is a state of mind and it affects the whole mind (Cook, Chapter 1, this volume). Cognition, affect and motivation are all fundamental characteristics of the multi-competent mind. Teachers need to address this whole person, with his/her unique language stories. The goals of foreign language teaching should include an intentional focus on how this whole person views him/herself and others in our multicultural twenty-first century society. If a learner is aware of the role that language plays in his/her life, and feels that knowing a second language can be an important part of his/her ideal self, s/he will be motivated to participate in the community of multi-competent L2 users. Byram (2009) urges us to consider the importance of education for intercultural citizenship; rather than concentrating on foreign language study for instrumental purposes, such as for travel or work, foreign language study should focus on the ways it "can take learners beyond a focus on their own society, into experience of otherness, or other cultural and belief values and behaviours" (2009, p. 198). Similarly, Kramersch states that:

An education based on the transmission of information or on communicative training does not prepare the new generation adequately for the complexities of a multilingual world. The competencies required to become a multilingual subject are of a much more symbolic nature than has been acknowledged up to now. (Kramersch 2009b, p. 190)

Her notion of “symbolic competence” in language education is a reframing of her notion of “third space” or “third culture” in an effort to stress “a dynamic, flexible, and more contingent competence” (p. 199). I would argue that this contingent competence is multi-competence – a competence that “focuses on the subject position, or the relation between L1 and L2, C1 and C2, NS and NNS, Us and Them, etc.” (Kramsch 2009b, p. 199).

These are lofty goals, but they are worthy ones. If we agree that the goal of foreign language learning is not to approximate the native speaker, we must be able to offer an alternative vision. I believe this vision can be based on the multi-competence perspective. There is no question that evaluating this multi-competent L2 learner is elusive; however, drawing from Dörnyei’s tripartite view of the human mind, we might envision focusing on three different areas: cognition, affect, and motivation. Although these three areas are mutually interdependent and cannot readily be isolated one from the other, assessment might be based on what students know about the language system (cognition), their emerging feelings about L2 use (affect), and the degree to which they are invested in developing an ideal L2 self (motivation). If we focus on more than spoken language and grammatical accuracy, and broaden our understanding of what it means to be an aware multi-competent L2 user, then we can make room for exploring the ways second language learning shapes one’s sense of self; analyzing when and how people use the target language and the ways it shapes their values, traditions, and institutions; and, ultimately, recognizing why this kind of learning is valuable and relevant.

We do not want to turn away from what we are doing in our foreign language classes. Helping students develop the necessary language skills to understand, speak, read and write in the target language is certainly a worthy goal. It is, however, a limited goal. Those skills will serve students only if they are taught as part of an overarching goal to promote intercultural awareness. As Byram states:

One of the outcomes of teaching languages (and cultures) should be the ability to see how different cultures relate to each other – in terms of similarities and differences – and to act as mediator between them, or more precisely between people socialised into them. This also includes “mediating” between oneself and others, i.e. being able to take an “external” perspective on oneself as one interacts with others and to analyse and, where describable, adapt one’s behaviour and underlying values and beliefs. Thus at any given point in time, the individual is bringing into contact through their own self, two sets of values, beliefs and behaviours.

(Byram 2008, p. 68)

The ability to learn languages, to become a plurilingual “language person” with a range of competences to different levels in different languages, needs to be the focus of language teaching just as much as the ability in a particular language being taught at a particular time. *(Byram 2008, p. 17)*

This approach to teaching presumes that being a plurilingual language person with certain attitudes, knowledge and skills is a valid goal; it also presumes that these traits must be learned. Ultimately, this approach is founded on the notion that learning to think differently will enable a person to act differently.

Finally, returning to Cook's house metaphor, a second language lives in the main house alongside any other languages in the mind of one person. The foreign language classroom is also part of the main house which accommodates the greater community of languages and language users. The foreign language classroom is not the extension at the back, but rather an integral part of the ecosystem ("eco" from the Greek word *oikos* meaning "household") that survives when its constituents work together to promote awareness and inclusivity for the betterment of the world. Given this understanding, a multi-competence perspective is central to our mission as language educators.

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