

## Unmasked: Designing Inquiries into Languages-Cultures for the Foreign Language Classroom

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*How long is't now since last yourself and I  
Were in a mask?*

*(Romeo and Juliet, Act I, scene 5, v. 30-31)*

### Abstract

The paper introduces the mask inquiry project, a thematic instructional module designed in the context of a secondary world language methods class. The mask inquiry project aims to promote pre-service language teachers' engagement with inquiry and to advancing their understanding of intercultural competence in theory and in action. The mask inquiry project involves three phases: (a) a discovery phase for investigating the multiple meanings of mask across languages, cultures, and lived experiences; (b) a description phase for discussing the findings of the inquiries; and (c) a design phase for transforming the findings of the inquiry into thematic and integrated classroom tasks. The mask inquiry project

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capitalizes on reflective practice to build knowledge, dispositions, and experiences of intercultural competence. This paper summarizes the literature on intercultural inquiry in the context of teacher preparation and professional development; three pre-service teachers of Italian, Spanish, and Mandarin describe their perspectives on the processes and benefits of participating in the mask inquiry project.

### Introduction

The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) position statement on global competence emphasizes the need for deeper engagement with languages and cultures (ACTFL, 2014). To honor this mandate, language educators

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are seeking curricular and programmatic avenues that promote an understanding of the products, practices, and perspectives of the first and target languages and cultures and of their interrelationships. This article introduces the mask inquiry project (MIP) as a mode of access to personalized content, and as an instructional strategy that facilitate pre-service teachers' engagement with target cultures. Specifically, this paper reports on the development and implementation of the MIP in a secondary world language methods class. Three teachers of Spanish, Italian, and Mandarin share their investigations and their findings in first-person narratives.

Overall, their reports underline the potential of inquiry can provide for understanding intercultural competence in theory and in action, and for promoting the development of an intercultural stance in foreign language teaching and learning.

The mask inquiry project (MIP) relies on definitions of intercultural competence as embodied practice, as a way of looking at oneself and at others, and as a way to engage and act with others (Byram, 1997; Kramsch, 1993). Byram's well-established model of intercultural competence includes the will, the dispositions, and the skills to communicate and engage with others, and to critically reflect on the social construction of one's identities and positionings in context (Byram, 1997). Byram's model proposes to parse the complex and multi-faceted construct of intercultural competence into five components (Attitudes, Knowledge, Skills of Interpreting and Relating, Skills of Discovery and Interaction, and Critical Cultural Awareness) and twenty-nine sub-components. Using inquiry as a mode of learning, the MIP specifically addresses the three following main components, referred to in terms of *savoirs*: Knowledge (i.e., *savoirs*), Skills of Interpreting and Relating (i.e., *savoir comprendre*), adapted by the methods' instructor as 'Interpreting and Connecting', and Skills of Discovery and Interaction (i.e., *savoir apprendre/faire*). For the purpose of the MIP, the Critical Cultural Awareness/political action (i.e., *savoir s'engager*) component was reformulated as critical and ethical engagement, and connected to the Attitudes (i.e., *savoir être*) component.

Students enrolled in a first-semester methods courses in a school of education, the context for this study, have rarely come across the construct of intercultural competence, let alone engaged with the notion in theory or in practice. For this

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reason, Byram's construct represents a good introduction to the complexities of intercultural competence, and is used as such in the MIP. However, the multifaceted construct of intercultural competence remains difficult to capture, measure, and assess. Perhaps, as Stolzenberg (2001) suggests for the notion of culture, educators should "stop thinking of [intercultural competence] as a name for a thing, and come to view it instead as a placeholder for a set of inquiries—inquiries which may be destined never to be resolved" (p.144). This paper adopts such a view of culture as inquiry and of inquiry as a mode of access to intercultural competence. Byram's model is used as a guide and the components of his model

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as placeholders during the inquiry process. For the language classroom, this means that pre-service language teachers need to practice asking questions, conducting inquiries about language and culture, and critically reflect on the products and processes of such inquiries. In doing so, they expand their role as educators beyond that of experts who provide answers (Scarino, 2014). The MIP was designed with such goals in mind, aiming to introduce first-year pre-service teachers to intercultural competence early in their professional development career, and then advance their understanding of intercultural competence in theory and in action. This goal is shared among teacher educators, and the article begins with a review of projects and programs that focus on interculturality and inquiry in foreign language teacher preparation. This review anchors the Mask Inquiry Project in classroom-based literature on teacher preparation. Next, the MIP is presented in context and in detail. The report is organized around the three main phases of the mask inquiry project: (a) Discovery; (b) Description; and (c) Discussion & Design. Each phase of the MIP is illustrated by the narrative accounts of three pre-service teachers who conducted the MIP. Their contributions reflect their personal and professional engagement as participants in the class, but also as authors of this paper, and as growing reflective practitioners.

### Inquiry and Interculturality in Foreign Language Teacher Preparation

In a French teacher preparation program, Hoyt (2012) proposes to use interviews as an instructional strategy to advance her students' engagement with culture. To this end, Hoyt (2012) and her colleagues designed and implemented the Francophone Interview Module (FIM) as a course assignment in a teacher preparation class. Through the design and conduct of cross-cultural interviews in the target language, the pre-service teachers build their oral proficiency and concurrently learn to de-center and negotiate various meanings attached to cultural products, practices, and perspectives. The FIM relies on the development of a community of inquiry in the teacher preparation module. Although the trajectories of participants differ, Hoyt (2012) reports a positive impact of the FIM experience on the pre-service teachers' overall cultural awareness. In addition, some of the comments shared by participants underline the benefits of the interview process and highlight the importance of inquiry in the professional development of student-

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teachers. However, additional research is needed to better understand the impact of this module on the participants' overall growth. In future studies of the impact of the FIM on pre-service teachers, Hoyt (2012) suggests foregrounding the voices of practitioners, a direction that this paper further explores.

Nugent and Catalano (2015) focus on the development of critical cultural awareness, the fifth and last component of intercultural competence as outlined by Byram (1997) in his inaugural model. Nugent and Catalano (2015) suggest tasks for advanced learners and provide several examples of critical inquiries into the nexus of connections between cultural products, practices, and perspectives. For instance, they propose that a French “classroom can embark on a research study on the ways that the French language has been transformed in Paris due to immigration” (p. 75). To perform this inquiry, the two scholars propose that students “can search for ways that different cultural groups have adopted the French language and how this affects traditional social actions in Parisian society” (p. 75). Furthermore, Nugent and Catalano (2015) underline how a reflexive dimension of such inquiries is to be maintained, for the purpose of connecting one's own positioning and meanings to the target language-cultures revealed through inquiry and interaction (Byram, 2009). The authors suggest that such intercultural and intracultural inquiries can be combined with introspective inquiries, which support a reflection on identity. For instance, in the German language classroom, Nugent & Catalano (2015) suggest that students investigate “how they view themselves as German speakers or how others perceive them as they speak German” (pp. 20-21).

Introspective inquiry is also an avenue proposed by He (2013) as she investigates the intercultural journeys of pre-service English as a Second Language teachers working with multilingual community members in the context of a service-learning program. In her mixed-method study, He (2013) developed the Appreciative Inquiry project, a four-step introspective inquiry project, to scaffold the development of student-teachers' dispositions toward culturally and linguistically diverse students. She shows how teacher candidates evolve from a deficit mindset to a more affirmative stance toward linguistic and cultural diversity as they conduct interviews with community members and families, and thus develop their knowledge in action.

Finally, *The Cultura Project* is the quintessential illustration of a collaborative inquiry model for language education (Furstenberg, 2010). The project initially grew out of Furstenberg's French classroom, in which French and American students were paired in an online platform. Focusing on topic and themes generated by students and/or their teachers, such as family, money, individualism, work ethics, and so on, students respond to a series of questionnaires, sentence completion tasks, artifacts, and text analyses, shaping their own understanding of these notions. Then, they are paired with students from the same target language and culture and together, using their first language(s), they negotiate, reflect, and inquire into these themes, meanings, and interpretations. Furstenberg (2010) explains that such intercultural classrooms are built upon an atmosphere of inquiry and curiosity, where the syllabus is collaboratively established by learners

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and educators, and the contents elaborated as the inquiry progresses. Furthermore, Furstenberg (2010) argues that using inquiry as a pedagogical approach deeply engages students with the target languages and cultures. She notes, that, “by virtue of engaging learners in a dynamic process of inquiry, discovery, exploration, and interpretation, together with learners from another culture, such a project invariably favors a collective, constructivist approach to learning” (p. 56).

In Furstenberg’s *Cultura* class, as in Hoyt’s (2012) FIM module, and He’s (2013) Appreciative Inquiry project, intercultural learning is achieved through collaborative inquiry and through direct interactions with speakers of a target language-culture, who themselves constantly reflect on their own cultural products, practices, and perspectives. The contents of the inquiry and the orientation of the dialogic conversations are driven by the findings and interrogations of the investigators. In practice, this exciting unpredictability means that participation in such projects requires learner autonomy, openness to a certain level of uncertainty, and dispositions that are related to intercultural competence. However, these skills and dispositions are not always easy to implement in usually short and tightly packed instructional sequences. The mask inquiry project (MIP) builds on these innovative programs, modules, and reports. The next section describes the MIP in detail, and explains how the development of the mask inquiry project.

### **Context and Description of the Mask Inquiry Project**

The Mask Inquiry Project (MIP) is a three-part course assignment designed for pre-service world language teachers enrolled in a secondary world language methods class. In Spring 2015, a small group of nine pre-service world language teachers enrolled in the class and participated in the MIP. Several languages and cultures were represented in the class, including Spanish, Mandarin, Italian, French, German, and English. After the completion of the inquiry and the coursework, three pre-service teachers—Italian, Spanish, and Mandarin—self-selected to collaborate with the methods instructor on a conference presentation. This successful collaboration was further extended to the authorship of the present paper, after the pre-service teachers had graduated from the teacher education program. This extended time frame provided a unique opportunity for the authors to engage in reflective practice, as illustrated in the body of the paper. The design and delivery of the project are explained below.

The MIP is designed as a three-part course assignment that intends to activate and foster intercultural awareness and dispositions through inquiry. It is framed by Byram’s intercultural competence model, and by reflective practice as a strategy for teacher development. Byram’s 1997 model was used to provide a set of common conceptual and discursive tools prior to the start of the inquiry. During the inquiry, Byram’s model was used by the methods instructor to provide instructional guidance and to elicit reflections on the processes and outcomes of the inquiry. Finally, Byram’s model was used as reference for planning, as the pre-service teachers turned their inquiries into tasks for their high school students. Using inquiry as a way to access personalized content, the MIP promotes three modes of inquiry: intercultural, intracultural, and introspective. The mask inquiry

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project relied on reflective practice, or introspective inquiry, as a mode of learning.

The choice of mask as a topic for the inquiry was the methods course instructor's response to several requirements, which included finding ways to articulate the notions of rigor, curricular constraint, creativity, and imagination when designing learning environments and gathering content materials. As objects, masks are ambiguous and mysterious, thus holding the potential to puzzle and to enthrall investigators. The practices associated with masks are multiple and also intriguing, from the masquerades and carnivals around the world, to the theatrical performances of actors and dancers across cultures, to Halloween, death masks, and allegorical representations on tombs, to their therapeutic uses with veterans, or included by artists in the circus, and so on. Discussing masks was also an opportunity to metaphorically approach issues of identity in general and pluricultural teacher identity in particular.

The implementation of the MIP involved three main phases: Discovery, Description, and Discussion and Design. Each phase culminated with the completion of a specific task and resulted in the design of an artifact. First, *Discovery*, a phase during which pre-service teachers investigated the multiple meanings of mask across languages, cultures, and lived experiences. This investigation started in class as the pre-service teachers completed a semantic map, and later took a field trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. This lively and intensive phase of Discovery continued at home for eight weeks. The findings and reflections on the processes of the inquiry were collected in inquiry journals, blank books provided by the instructor (See Appendix A).

In the second phase of the MIP, *Description*, the findings were discussed informally on a weekly basis at the beginning of the methods class, which culminated in an individual presentation of the findings and of the inquiry journals. For that specific assignment, pre-service teachers became informants and prepared short presentations for their peers in which they outlined their findings and discussed the contrasts and similarities with the findings of their peers across languages and cultures. A one-on-one meeting with the course instructor supports this process. (See Appendix B).

The last phase of the MIP, the *Discussion and Design* phase, focused on transforming the findings of the inquiry into thematic and integrated classroom tasks. With support from peers and their instructor, the pre-service teachers turned these findings into instructional tasks and lesson plans. A component of the method class is the practicum placement in a secondary school. For their practicum, pre-service teachers spend fifty hours observing world language classrooms and teach three mini-lessons under the supervision of their cooperating teacher and their methods instructor. Some pre-service teachers were able to pilot their MIP tasks in their Spring semester practicum placement. Two of the three teachers report on these experiences as part of their engagement with the MIP. Although the MIP is presented here in chronological and sequential fashion, the delivery of the MIP was rather fluid and the pre-service students' engagement with the MIP remained high throughout the semester.

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The next section of this paper describes the processes of developing and implementing the MIP from the perspective of the pre-service teachers. The three teachers participating in this study share their journeys following the progression of MIP, from Discovery, to Description, and to Discuss and Design.

### **Mask Inquiry Journeys**

#### *Discovery: Starting the Inquiry.*

Using first-person narratives, a pre-service teacher of Italian, a pre-service teacher of Spanish, and a pre-service teacher of Mandarin share their experiences of the Discovery phase of the MIP, based on their journal entries, class discussions, and continuing reflective practice.

*Italian.* When first faced with the objective to interpret the meaning of masks, I instantly pictured physical masks. I then started to think of deeper meanings of the word and quickly realized how layered one word could be. Starting the Mask Project from the Metropolitan Museum of Art allowed me to experience and interpret various forms of masks across cultures in order to expand my thinking before approaching the project from my target language and culture. In looking at artifacts such as physical masks I dwelled on their origins and their uses. How did they come to be in this certain culture and what use did they serve? These were some of the questions that drove the next step of the inquiry process.

With the final goal of creating an Italian language thematic unit, I approached the Mask Inquiry Project (MIP) by looking at masks as cultural products and practices, and reflecting both material and immaterial aspects of Italian cultures. The completion of my semantic web led me to ideas such as Italian identities/stereotypes, the Renaissance and arts, and la Commedia dell'arte. Having personally experienced the Venetian Carnival celebration, I decided to inquire further into the origins and meanings of the festivities, as well as its use of masks. I felt confident that moving further into my inquiry I would find ways to connect my point of departure in the target language to diverse cultural frames, and to expand cultural awareness among my students. For example, I would be able to make students aware of the various cultures, including their own, that share traditions such as the ritual of carnival. By focusing my inquiry, and later my thematic unit, on the role of masks in Venetian Carnival, I could guide my students' inquiry towards the history of carnival and better yet, that of a hidden society.

*Spanish.* At the time of deciding on the direction of my project, I visited the Modern Museum of Art in New York City and came across a painting involving masks created by James Ensor, a Belgian artist. The work was called *Masks Confronting Death*, and I was left with a sense of wonder and fascination by this author's intention to juxtapose the subject of death with a festive representation of a mask that he himself associated with "freshness of color" and "exquisite turbulence" (Ensor, 1888). While I could recognize Ensor's hope to challenge the notion of mortality through his creative choices, I would not have been able to determine the author's objective without reading the title first. To me, the central figure did not stand out as the character of Death but rather looked like one of the

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human participants wearing a carnival mask to partake in a grandiose celebration. In that moment, I was reminded of the fact that while an artist may have a vision and a specific meaning to grant his or her original work, the audience is free to see and interpret it from a radically different perspective. Furthermore, each viewer is going to have his or her own unique take on a given product because no person has been shaped by the same exact environment or experiences, and possessing a unique set of character traits only further ensures this naturally occurring pattern of discrepancy among opinions when interacting with the same object or phenomenon.

For these reasons, I decided to focus on investigating masks and their symbolic dimension in visual arts, music, and literature. Such an approach would provide an unmatched opportunity for extensive research into the concept of identity, which is constructed and performed by an unconventional artifact. I immediately recognized that delving into this topic could lead to the development of unique semantic connections due to the myriad of existing symbolic perspectives attached to masks as products. Finally, my personal preference for interaction with multiple creative media and a strong interest in the integration of complex topics into the secondary-level curriculum served as an incentive to interpret masks as symbols in the selected works.

*Chinese.* In the class in which I student-taught, my cooperating teacher and I encouraged students to speak almost 100% of the instructional time in Chinese, and we had a mixture of Chinese level 2 students who ranged from Novice-Mid speakers all the way to Intermediate-Mid students, who were usually heritage speakers. I faced several challenges related to students' engagement in Chinese class, tied to the lack of individual connections to the target language and culture, and the disparities between English and Chinese phonetic and writing systems. How could I show my students the meaning of a mask? I wanted my students to be able to touch, feel, and see a mask that was unique in the culture of the language they were trying to learn. With this desire in mind, I decided to focus on the physical aspect of a mask and came across a cloth face mask, one that looks similar to a surgical mask, that I had purchased several months ago in Taiwan (see Appendix D).

During my summer visits to Taiwan, I always have a mask ready in case I catch a slight cold or happen to come across an area where I feel that the air quality was not the best. However, I never wear a cloth mask in the United States. I thought about the significance of the mask in terms of its symbolism in cultural identity as well as the possible functions it provides. After some consideration, I looked into some aspects of its history and was intrigued by the possible connections it had with environmental awareness. Through this physical mask object, I connected the use of face masks in several Asian countries to environmental pollution and environmental protection at the global level.

### *Description: Reporting on the Results of the Inquiry*

In the following section, we hear again from the pre-service teachers of Italian, Spanish, and Mandarin, as they share the results of their inquiries in the



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Description phase of the MIP. Their reports are based on their journal reflections and the on presentations that concluded the Description phase.

*Italian.* In researching the origins of carnival and its practices in Venice I came across a book titled *Venice Incognito: Masks in the Serene Republic* by Johnson (2011). This book served as my primary resource into this inquiry project and really guided my learning of new cultural practices and perspectives. If it wasn't for this inquiry project and coming across this book I would have never learned about a society in Italian culture that lived behind the anonymity of masks. I organized my inquiry and findings by looking at the aspects of carnival and its origins. I then looked for references to masks and its incorporation into carnival and its effects on the Venetian society. I learned that the Venetian cultural practice of carnival was revered as a celebration of transformation from a very early stage in its history tracing back to the thirteenth century (Johnson, 2011, p.4) and the concept of transformation specifically tying into the religious acts of purgation before Lent (Swarzenski, 1951, p. 2). The incorporation of masks into the celebration of carnival added a level of secrecy that attracted various travelers from around the world. In the late seventeenth century, at the height of its popularity, anonymity became a huge appeal for the citizens of the Serene Republic. Venetians began wearing masks in public for six months of the year, much longer than the originally celebrated practice, up until the fall of the Republic in 1797 (Johnson, 2011, p. xi). At this point in my inquiry I was shocked to never have learned this cultural and historical piece of information about Italy. I knew the common knowledge about masks and its use during carnival, but not once did I think that a society of people lived their daily lives behind masks.

I started to brainstorm the different implications that would arise from a society living in anonymity. These questions would eventually be condensed into my essential question for my thematic unit, which was "Why hide behind masks?" This essential question perfectly reflected the rise and fall of a society that hid its identity within itself. The attractions of carnival brought people of all social classes together to use masks as a physical cloak to conceal identity and social status during everyday interactions. The ritual of carnival freed its participants from inhibitions and permitted them to act on impulse, which tied into the origins of purgation with Shrove Tuesday. Here, I noted that my students would be able to make a connection to this cultural practice with America's cultural practice of Mardi Gras.

The use of masks and masquerade among Venetians served many purposes and the practice was extended to all social groups. Venetian patricians and diplomats wore masks to solemn receptions and state ceremonies. Masks were also present among royalty, such as foreign princes, who attended meetings wearing masks. Masks were also used by spectators who would watch plays and attend operas. Due to its gift of anonymity this also meant that the use of masks was transgressive and granted participants social immunity. For instance, many Venetians used masks to protect their anonymity as they visited brothels, a traditionally accepted yet stigmatized practice among the Venetian elite (Johnson, 2011, p. xi). As a result, the boundaries of hierarchy were momentarily suspended among mask wearers.

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In finalizing my inquiry, I organized my research and notes to develop strategies and goals I would incorporate in the Discuss & Design phase.

*Spanish.* My research process involved multimodal resources in the form of books, articles, and online websites. Early on, I discovered that in his cubist period, Picasso represented the human features of his figures as segmented and, therefore, masklike. In his portrait of Gertrude Stein (1905), Picasso depicts a female whose *real* eyes lie behind an unreadable mask, representing a glimpse into her “true” self in distinction to the “false” mask that both shields and blocks Stein’s essence. For the artist, a mask can create an image of otherness and duality by embodying both genders (ambiguity due to male features on women’s faces), underscoring the falseness of modern society’s duality-based methods of authentication, and symbolizing the social constructs one must “wear,” while simultaneously challenging the very nature of these constructs. *Les Demoiselles d’Avignon* (Picasso, 1907), one of Picasso’s most famous paintings, now exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, offers another interesting approach to masks. The painting *Les Demoiselles d’Avignon* brings in the aspect of otherness due to de-gendered and de-raced female figures wearing “primal” masks to ward off others. At the same time, there is a strong sense of unification because all humanity in the shape of African and Iberian women is concerned by the violence of this scene. Picasso himself commented on his creative process, and revealed how traditional African masks and sculptures were the source of his inspiration for *Les Demoiselles*. He states:

[Masks] weren’t just like any other pieces of sculpture. Not at all. They were magic things... [They] were *intercesseurs*, mediators; ever since then I’ve known the word in French. They were against everything—against unknown threatening spirits... I too believe that everything is unknown, that everything is an enemy! [The masks] were weapons. To help people avoid coming under the influence of spirits again to help them become independent! (as cited in Alarco, Warner, and Seraller, 2007, p. 87)

This quote was a revelation to me. Beyond the spiritual role of masks assigned by Picasso to these objects, I saw a metaphor of what I thought a language teacher should be, an *intercesseur* or a “mediator.” This finding and this quote became a starting point for the design of my thematic unit as I attempted to craft a lens for exploring further mask-related artifacts.

In my search for symbolic representations of masks, I found that the figure of an Harlequin or a clown was a frequent motif in visual culture that originated in Spain, and this character wore a mask with a purpose of shielding one’s conflicted and fragile self. For instance, the writer Francisco García Lorca created self-portraits as a sad clown, representing his own attempt at keeping up a public image that differed from his own troubled self. In this case, a mask is a “social self” that conceals the “solitude behind” (Oppenheimer, 1987, p. 50). After investigating these works around contrasting emotions mediated by masks, collecting and analyzing each text individually, I started thinking of ways I could include these findings into a thematic unit.

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*Chinese.* I focused my inquiry on the use of protective masks against air pollution in Taiwan. The use of such protective masks became very popular around 2003 in Taiwan, during the outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), a viral respiratory illness. The mask was widely used since SARS was transmitted by close person-to-person contact. Several years later, around 2009, the protective masks gained worldwide popularity due to the outbreak of H1N1 influenza virus, known as swine flu, which shared the characteristics of transmission as seasonal flu viruses. Again, the masks were utilized in hopes of containing the possible spread of the virus by limiting the scope and intensity of person-to-person contact.

These protective masks are made of cloth or cotton and considered to be items of daily use. They are believed to protect the users against diseases and pollutants. Mostly, they are used to prevent the spreading of germs. In crowded public spaces such as the metro or night markets, it is not uncommon to see people wearing masks. Wearing a protective mask is also a form of politeness. When someone is sick or has symptoms of sickness, it is an unspoken rule of politeness to wear a mask to prevent other people around you from getting sick. It is frowned upon when people do not follow this rule, and it is considered common courtesy to put on a mask even if you have a slight cough. Appendix E illustrates these practices, and represents a picture of a multimodal and plurilingual public sign that I found in the Taiwan Metro Lines. The “Respiratory health and cough etiquette” multilingual and multimodal sign in Appendix E, illustrates the required use of a protective mask in public spaces, in case of illness. As I reflected on the intercultural dimension of the protective masks and on public health education, I found a sign that identified cough etiquette in a local shopping mall in New Jersey (see Appendix F). In both American and Taiwanese contexts, public information about health is a common practice, as texts such as the ones presented in Appendix E and F are commonly found in public places. However, the use of protective mask is unique to the Taiwanese context. The New Jersey public information board encourages different practices, such as coughing and sneezing in sleeves, not hands. Both public health campaigns recommend frequent and thorough hand-washing. The underlying perspectives and concerns for public health are shared, yet the practices and products involved are different. There are additional practices associated with the protective mask in Taiwan and in Asia. Masks can be used as a method of retaining body heat during cold temperatures, for blocking UV rays, be reinterpreted as fashion items, and for avoiding attention. For instance, when someone is arrested in Taiwan, they are usually given either a motorcycle helmet or a mask to keep their face from being seen. In my inquiry journal, I used face masks as products and practices to discuss air pollution and as an entry into my thematic unit on environmental protection, in which students would learn about the multiple factors of pollution locally and globally, and what can be done to take action.

*Discuss and design: Reflecting on the inquiry and creating tasks*

The last phase of the MIP is called Discuss and Design, and resulted in the development of tasks and a lesson plan. The three focal teachers share the interpretive tasks they designed for Italian, Spanish, and Mandarin.

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*Italian.* One of the interpretive activities I developed for my inquiry-driven thematic lesson was to have my students look at a painting of Venetians wearing masks and interacting in a social setting. The goal of the activity was to introduce the students to the history of masks in Venetian culture. I opened the activity by asking students to compare and contrast their personal meanings and attachments to masks in order to juxtapose cultural facts. In looking at the painting I would ask my students to interpret what they believe to be occurring in the painting. I would ask my students why they believed everyone in the painting was wearing masks to elicit conversation on the impact of anonymity. After having students discuss with one another and share their interpretations of the painting, I would explain in detail the history behind the painting and masks in Venetian culture.

After conducting my inquiry and finishing my unit I really learned about the importance of inquiry and research and how it can be used to build on world language education. The process I underwent was fun because I was able to learn new and exciting information otherwise not presented to me. The act of going on an exploration of information is something I believe students will enjoy doing just as much as I did. Reflecting on the inquiry projects of my peers I was also prompted to think of the other personal attachments to masks among other cultures. The Spanish teacher's inquiry especially touched upon the themes of self and self-reflection. This connection between masks and self reflection was something I enjoyed because I felt it held a place in my lesson, which led me to brainstorm ways I could incorporate these concepts into my own.

*Spanish.* I interpreted how masks represented multiple dimensions of self, and used visual arts, poetry, and song lyrics to illustrate this perspective in my unit. In the beginning, I asked students to share their associations with the concept mask and later introduced it as a symbol through an analytical activity that required students to examine Salvador Dalí's *Soft Self Portrait with Grilled Bacon* (1941). Learners were to write down a thought, a feeling, and a question related to the painting after viewing it. While students found the interpretive task challenging, they generated a variety of questions and felt curious about the answers. As a result, I motivated students to voice their own ideas and consult with classmates, only stepping in as a facilitator. Although I possessed the background knowledge about Dalí's identity and his symbolic work, it was my intention to have students take on the role of meaning-makers and have them drive the discussion forward. Later, I supplemented it with facts while validating my students' opinions, which displayed their unique perspectives on the contemporary art piece and led to a much richer interpretation of the artifact. Similarly, students went on to interpret Frida Kahlo's *Self-Portrait with Cropped Hair* (1940), now assuming even more responsibility for the findings. These successive tasks exposed students to multiple examples of the way masks could be associated with identity, and in the process, they were familiarized with the visual strategies for visually organizing their self-portrait. This newly-acquired knowledge culminated in their own production of a self-portrait, combining ways they see themselves, ways they would like to be seen, and ways they think others see them. In my work, I drew connections between Spain and the U.S. through the international experiences of Dalí and Lorca. I would have liked

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to mention information about masks in other parts of the world to provide a more inclusive presentation of the topic to enhance my students' global competence.

*Chinese.* I had the opportunity to include some aspects of the mask inquiry into my student teaching experience, when I taught in an eighth grade Chinese II class. I proposed an object-based interpretive activity to the group to work on questions and hypotheses. At the beginning of the unit, I showed students a plaid cloth mask. Holding it up, I asked the students to discuss what they thought it was and what they thought it was used for. I gave them three choices: to clean, for fashion, or for health reasons. The students were excited to be able to debate and argue why their choices were correct. After explaining that cloth masks were used for both aesthetic reasons and for health reasons, I presented several pictures of cloth masks and all their different uses. From there, I tied in the use of masks to air pollution, pollution in general, and protecting the environment. The theme of my thematic unit revolved around the idea of environmental protection in which students would learn about the different kinds of pollution, what causes the pollution, and what can be done to take action. I believe that this theme could not only broaden students' perspectives and knowledge, but also allows them the opportunity to reflect what they have learned specifically in the aspect of "taking action" where students can make changes either in their viewpoints, in their schools, and/or in their communities. Environmental protection concerns are both local and global and should be addressed across the curriculum.

To further develop these ideas, the class completed an activity that revolved around the idea of individual and global responsibility. For this task, I took a picture of a large cartoon Earth and cut out puzzle pieces for the class (Appendix G). Each student took one puzzle piece and, on the back, wrote two things that they could do to contribute to or advocate for environmental protection. When all the pieces were put together, they completed a puzzle (Appendix G). The goal was to first have the students practice writing complete sentences in Chinese using the vocabulary words, and also to show that environmental protection requires teamwork and is everyone's individual responsibility.

### **Reflections on the Journey**

As they conducted the MIP, the pre-service teachers engaged with Byram's five interdependent dimensions of intercultural competence and provided insight into their learning process. For the three pre-service teachers who shared their journeys, the knowledge (i.e., *savoirs*) dimension of the model was indisputably the most rewarding. All three reported on expanding their content knowledge about the languages and cultures they were preparing to teach. The Italian teacher noted that, "if it wasn't for this inquiry project and coming across this book I would have never learned about a society in Italian culture that lived behind the anonymity of masks." (DM, inquiry journal notes). The process of inquiry, and conducting the inquiry, which are related to the intercultural competence skills of understanding (i.e., *savoir comprendre*) and learning to learn (i.e., *savoir apprendre*), also generated enthusiasm. The Spanish teacher evoked an "unmatched opportunity for extensive research" when discussing the inquiry processes (NK, inquiry journal notes).

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The inquiry products and processes seemed to foster dispositions of openness, curiosity, and engagement with difference (i.e., *savoir être*). These dispositions are difficult to capture outside the format of an empirical study, but are made visible through the small and large group conversations that took place over the semester and through personal reflections. The “revelation” shared by the Spanish teacher here is testament to her self-awareness and her emerging identity as an intercultural mediator. Commenting on a quote by Picasso, the Spanish teacher remarked earlier: “I saw a metaphor of what I thought a language teacher should be, an *intercesseur* or a ‘mediator.’” (NK, inquiry journal).

Finally, the Chinese teacher’s instructional tasks dealt with the protection of the environment. Her tasks included critical and global dimension, and oriented towards critical cultural awareness (i.e., *savoir s’engager*), or the capacity to act and engage with the world in an ethical way. These five features of intercultural competence were displayed by the three pre-service teacher candidates involved in the project, albeit differently, they each emphasized specific areas of growth. This is a reminder that every journey toward intercultural competence is different and unique, and that teacher educators should embrace and scaffold these individual journeys.

### Implications

The completion of the MIP invited pre-service teachers to be creative and to include their personal interests. However, the MIP learning activities have several limitations. The most salient limitation is that all pre-service teachers could not implement their tasks and lessons in a classroom at the time, and they all had to design with an ideal classroom profile in mind. For this reason, the importance of teaching research skills in secondary grades was often overlooked in their lesson plans. Learning environments that promote inquiry and imagination should provide students with research skills to perform these inquiries (Scarino, 2014). As such, they require teachers to emphasize support in the planning stages, but to take a step back as mediators and facilitators during instruction. The learning goals, therefore, should be modified and adjusted to specific classroom environments and proficiency levels. In addition, the inquiry itself should be scaffolded, modeled, and monitored closely. The various tasks could be sequenced to address multiple standards and proficiency levels, including the 21<sup>st</sup> century map skills (ACTFL, 2011). When the ACTFL Can-Do statements for intercultural communicative competence are fully developed, the instructional tasks designed by the three pre-service teachers can be calibrated to address both learning goals and Can-Do statements (ACTFL, 2016). Reflection should play an integral role in the process to provide insight into the pre-service teachers’ development and growing expertise; reflection also serves to help teacher educators identify gaps in understanding.

The overarching goal of the MIP was to advance the pre-service teachers’ understanding of intercultural competence in theory and in action, through inquiry. The methodology classroom was a privileged space in which creativity, contemplation, criticality, and compassion could be expressed, and activated

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(Levine & Phipps, 2012). While engagement was an obvious benefit of the project, it was also inspiring to see pre-service teachers develop a sense of ownership over time. The narratives shared in this paper reflect the pre-service teachers' experiences and interpretations of intercultural competence, in theory and in practice. These narratives show promise as empirical data and call for a more systematic and rigorous qualitative analysis of the pre-service teachers' experiences to (a) assess the MIP as a pedagogical avenue for approaching intercultural competence in theory and in action; and (b) articulate the ways pre-service teachers build their knowledge, dispositions, and experiences of intercultural competence. This paper is, therefore, a modest contribution to classroom-based reflections on the development of intercultural competence in teacher education. We are hopeful that this work-in-progress is also a promising prologue to more systematic investigations, fruitful collaborations, and sustained opportunities for professional dialogue in world language education.

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### Appendix A. Guidelines and Rubric for the Discovery phase and the Inquiry Journal

#### You will complete an inquiry journal on the topic of *Masks!*

Your instructor will give you a blank journal for you to complete. This research journal is your yours for this research project. It is the place where you document your research findings and processes. At the end of your journal, you will include your analysis, in the form of a research paper.

#### Phase 1: Documenting your inquiry

This phase of your inquiry is best conceptualized as a “think aloud” process. You are going to document how your thinking about *Masks* is evolving. To do so, you should take the following steps:

- Complete a semantic web/concept map in class and include it at the beginning of your journal;



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- What questions should you ask? Make a list of questions about masks and try to answer them based on your own personal experience;
- Identify products associated with masks in your languages and cultures. Add pictures and descriptions of these products. Engage with these products and research information about your favorites;
- Identify practices associated with *masks*.
- Select a text (i.e. image, literature, film, object, etc.) that will help you jump start your inquiry. Analyze this text: why is it relevant, interesting, what meanings are salient, what is your interpretation of this text, how could you use this text as a preview activity, within an inquiry?

Identify the products and practices related to masks that are associated with this text. What meanings are associated with these products and perspectives? Start writing down hypotheses about these meanings.

- Find additional texts (as data) that will expand your understanding of the cultural context. Which of these texts can you use in your class? Why? Remember to consider size, format. For the ones you have selected, engage in description, comparison with other texts and interpretation. For instance, you can use statistical information, translation of texts into the target language and analysis of differences, web pages and blogs, newspaper articles, photographs, and so on.
- Find an entry into the large topic of mask and explore further. You need to select a small topic that will challenge what you (before the inquiry) and your students think they know about their own and the target languages and cultures. What are the possible interpretations? How is it challenging the status quo? How is this topic taking you from products, to practices and to perspectives?

### *Rubric (/100)*

Criteria	Outstanding – A (25 points)	Good – B (16-24 pts)	Needs Work – C (11-15pts)	Does not meet the Standards – D/F (0-10 pts)
<b>Visual presentation</b>	Extensive use of color, and art. The inquiry journal is attractive	Some use of color and art. Could be more attractive with extra attention to detail	Some use of artwork and color, little attention to detail and organization.	No use of color, artwork, no attention to presentation and organization.
<b>Organization of information</b>	All items in the book at clearly labeled and organized by section, question, theme, topic, etc.	Some organization and some labeling.	Random collection of facts, not organized or labeled	Rare facts, books barely completed.

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<b>Lines of inquiry and data</b>	Multiple and multimodal texts (more than 10) are described, labeled, and analyzed	Multiple texts included (more than 10), labeled and dated. Texts are briefly analyzed.	5 to 10 texts included, some labeled, dated, and described.	None or fewer than 5 texts.
<b>Evidence of inquiry</b>	The topic of mask is thoroughly investigated; products, practices and perspectives are addressed.	Topic of mask is investigated. Products and practices well documented. Perspectives not fully addressed or researched.	Topic of mask is investigated on the surface level. Only products or practices are documented.	No investigation. Collection of information gleaned from websites used as data.

### Appendix B. Guidelines for the Preparation of the mask Inquiry Presentation

You will present the findings and processes of your inquiry to the class. You are responsible for designing the contents and the delivery of the presentation in a timely manner. You will have 10 minutes to present your findings, followed by 5 minutes of questions. There are two requirements for the contents of your presentation:

1. Your presentation should reflect the findings of your inquiry;
2. Your presentation should highlight your reflective practice processes. Some of these processes should be discussed in terms of Byram's five components of intercultural competence.

In order to complete this task, you will first meet individually with your instructor to discuss all or some aspects of your inquiry, and your plan for the presentation. You will receive individual advice from your instructor in the preparation of your presentation. Following this meeting, you will have two weeks to design your presentation.

You will present your findings in class and get feedback from your peers. You will have 10 minutes to present your findings, followed by 5 minutes of questions. The following rubric will be used to assess your performance in the debriefing session with your instructor, and should serve as guidelines for your preparation.

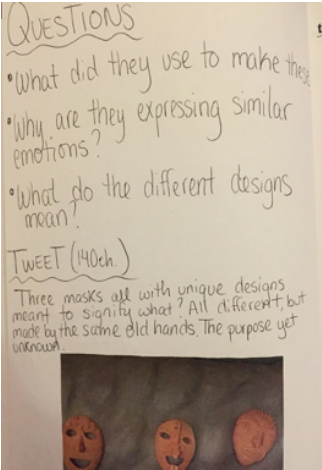
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Criteria	Outstanding – A (25 points)	Good – B (16-24 pts)	Needs Work – C (11-15pts)	Does not meet the Standards – D/F (0-10 pts)
<b>Content (student explains the inquiry process and the findings, which result in learning)</b>	Clearly defines topic and creatively;  Supports key findings with relevant and accurate evidence;  Multiple and varied sources cited;  Evidence of complex problem solving and intercultural competence self-assessment;  Provides new insights into the topic.	Clearly defines the topic;  Supports key findings with evidence;  Multiple sources cited;  Evidence of problem-solving; evidence of self-assessment of intercultural competence;  Offers insights into the topic.	Somewhat defines the topic;  Little evidence to support the topic;  Limited sources for evidence;  Reviews existing ideas;  Summarizes but does not analyze; limited self-reflection on intercultural competence components.	Topic not defined;  No or very little evidence to support the topic;  Opinion not analysis;  Absence of reflection and self-assessment of personal trajectory.
<b>Language use and delivery  (student communicates ideas effectively)</b>	Speaks clearly, effectively and confidently;  Eye contact (no reading)  Engages audience;  Attention to language use (TL and English, translation for non-speakers, quotes and explanations).	Speaks clearly, eye contact (no reading).  Takes steps to engage the audience;  Attention to language use most of the time.	Speaks clearly most of the time but no eye contact (reading);  Audience not engaged;  Little attention paid to language use and code-switching.	Reading text;  Audience not engaged;  No attention paid to language use.

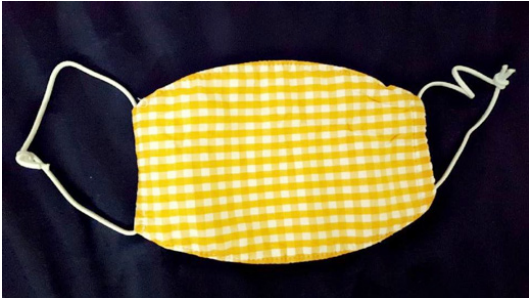
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<p><b>Organization of the presentation (student has clear and logical organization)</b></p>	<p>Topic is introduced clearly</p> <p>Key points presented and transitions between points are smooth</p> <p>Conclusion is relevant and logical.</p>	<p>Topic introduced clearly</p> <p>Most transitions connect key points</p> <p>Conclusion is based on evidence</p>	<p>Topic is introduced</p> <p>Some transitions are connected to key points</p> <p>Conclusion uses evidence.</p>	<p>Topic not clearly introduced</p> <p>No connected transitions</p> <p>Ends without a conclusion.</p>
<p><b>Questions and Answers</b></p>	<p>Student can answer questions confidently and precisely.</p>	<p>Student can answer questions accurately</p>	<p>Student struggles to respond to question but is accurate and responds to feedback</p>	<p>No knowledge of the topic reflected in inaccurate responses to questions or feedback.</p>

**Appendix C. Picture of the Italian teacher’s inquiry journal**



**Appendix D. Cloth face-mask**



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### Appendix E. Respiratory health and cough etiquette in Taiwan's subway stations



### Appendix F. Health sign in Woodbridge Mall, NJ (April, 2015, photo credit: YCL)



### Appendix G. 8<sup>th</sup> grade Chinese II class exit ticket and discussion activity (front and back)

