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Illuminative Evaluation of an Intercultural-Competence-Focused First-Year Writing Curriculum

Abstract

This article explores illuminative evaluation as a method to reflectively assess a pilot implementation of an intercultural-competence-focused first-year writing curriculum at a US large public university. The goal of this curriculum is to promote integration of diverse student populations on our university campus, while developing all students' intercultural competence and writing skills. In this article, we present practitioner reflections on classroom experiences and collaborative design of our approach to data analysis. These reflections show how an illuminative, context-rich approach to an early phase of a writing pedagogy research project shapes a holistic curricular evaluation. Illuminative evaluation drew our attention to the interaction between teaching and curriculum evaluation as well as to how this approach promotes an invitational and exploratory approach to teacher research.

Introduction

This article reflects on the pilot implementation of an innovative first-year writing curriculum that integrates intercultural competence development into writing pedagogy. Intercultural competence is the ability to exhibit effective, contextually appropriate behavior and communication within an intercultural situation (Deardorff, 2011). Our research team – initially, two graduate students and a faculty advisor, later joined by two more graduate students and two undergraduate researchers – created, implemented, and assessed this intercultural competence-focused curriculum to promote integration of diverse student populations on our university campus, while developing all students' intercultural competence and writing skills. We implemented this first-year writing curriculum for three semesters at our home institution. Further development of this curriculum, including plans for implementation at other institutions, is ongoing.

In this article, we present reflections on the Spring 2017 pilot semester[1] implementation through the lens of illuminative evaluation, which considers the broad context within which educational programs function, focusing on learning from description and interpretation instead of measurement alone. The primary aim of illuminative evaluation is to create a comprehensive qualitative picture of an innovative program: "it attempts to discover and document what it is like to be participating in the scheme, whether as teacher or pupil" (Parlett & Dearden, 1977, p. 13). We view illuminative evaluation as intimately connected to reflective practice, and in this article present (1) the context of the project, research questions, and a brief review of the literature; (2) practitioner and researcher reflections on the learning milieu; and (3) conclusions interpreting what we have learned from illuminative evaluation of a novel program.

This illuminative evaluation suggests that our curriculum presents students with intercultural opportunities and intercultural challenges. The intercultural challenges instructors and students encounter can be catalysts for intercultural development—as can the opportunities, when

[1] We implemented this curriculum in two subsequent semesters as well, but we do not address those semesters in this article.

students are willing to engage them. In our context, conflict usually led to intercultural growth, when it was approached reflectively over a sustained period. The structure of the curriculum and the embedded reflective skills prompted student growth. Additionally, our reflective investigation indicated that our curriculum supported both teachers and students to navigate intercultural conflict. Specific parts of the curriculum—co-teaching, reflective writing, and the assigned readings—equipped students with the language to discuss cultural differences thoughtfully.

Illuminative approaches are invitational: the attention to the entire program and context offered us a chance to approach our research design and evaluation process with the same sustained reflection as the teaching. In this article, we discuss how a reflective approach to the process of collaborative research influences teaching, thus creating a dialogic relationship between classroom practice and research evaluation.[2] Because illuminative evaluation is a dialogic, reflective means of understanding a novel program, this article is presented in several voices. Most of the article is collaboratively written in our "team" voice; the two teacher reflections are written in individual voices of the instructors involved in initial implementation of the curriculum.

Project Context

We designed and implemented this curriculum at Purdue University, a US public university with a 2017 population of around 40,000 students (now, nearly 50,000). When we implemented this curriculum, a substantial portion of this population – approximately 23% – were international students (International Students and Scholars, 2020; Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging, 2020; Purdue University Admissions, 2021). International students make up 4.6% of the current American university student population (Silver, 2022); thus, Purdue is unusual. Like many American universities, Purdue has a first-year writing program. A first-year writing program offers courses that develop university-level writing and research skills, aimed for the general undergraduate population. Purdue offers general sections, accelerated sections, sections paired with a course from another department, and sections specifically designed for multilingual (mainly international) students.

Throughout our first years teaching undergraduate writing courses at this university, we noticed that students tended to both socialize and seek academic collaboration with peersof similar backgrounds to themselves although they were in an environment with substantial ethnic, linguistic, and national origin diversity. Saenz (2010) notes that university education is often one of the first times when United States domestic students from homogenous communities encounter significant cultural diversity. Similarly, international students at such universities (some of whom also have a relatively homogenous pre-college upbringing) experience daily contact with students from a variety of unfamiliar cultures. Students who had racially and/or ethnically diverse pre-college experiences have a distinct benefit when they encounter diversity in a university setting: they experience greater change toward positive perceptions of people different from themselves than do students with homogenous pre-college experiences (Bowman & Denson, 2012). However, US public and private K-12 schools experience substantial de facto segregation and few students have this chance for pre-college diversity encounters (García, 2020;

[2] (A more detailed discussion of the findings can be found in Banat et. al (2022) and on our website, https://writeic.org.)

Schaeffer, 2021). While the diversity picture is more complicated for international students, their pre-college experiences are not necessarily diverse.

We see these broader trends reflected at our institution. That is, students do not seem to know how to live integrated lives together. Often, they simply live nearby one another with polite but surface-level interaction. However, Saenz notes, 'In spite of students' segregated pre-college environments and experiences, public universities that are more structurally diverse and that foster more diverse curricular and co-curricular activities can positively affect students' levels of interactions with diverse peers' (p. 30). There are ways that we can help students live together more meaningfully. Interventions that support students' integration must be high-quality, intentional, overcome exclusion, and contain substantial intergroup interaction. Interactions missing any one of these facets often result in negative diversity interactions (Bernstein et al., 2019; Denson & Bowman, 2013).

University programs that promote meaningful cultural integration of diverse student populations are in short supply. Although students are expected to work in culturally diverse classrooms on short- and long-term projects, they rarely receive substantive instruction or support to navigate and thrive in culturally diverse environments (Morrow et al., 2000; Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2018). Further, institutional on-paper commitments to diversity (while important) often do not result in actual changes in the campus environment for minority students (Stewart, 2018). Instead, "diversity" activities can make White[3] students view diversity positively but passively, erasing rather than engaging difference. Lack of critical engagement with difference fosters an atmosphere with fictional equality that ignores social inequalities that accompany diversity (Hikido & Murray, 2016). Because we noticed these broader issues play out on our campus, we were motivated to use our specific instructional context – first-year writing courses – to address cultural integration of different student populations.

We believe that the affordances of writing classrooms support the development of intercultural competence interventions specifically. That is, we are not simply implementing an intercultural competence curriculum in first-year writing because that happens to be our disciplinary context. We chose this site because writing classrooms' language-rich environments offer a 'contact zone.' Contact zones are social spaces where cultures meet and grapple with one another (Pratt, 1991). Yet, contact zones—such as first-year writing classrooms—are also places with excellent opportunities for meaningful intercultural interaction. Pasterick (2019) points out that language classrooms where students and instructors come from different cultural and language backgrounds are especially important places to develop intercultural understanding and effective intercultural interaction skills. Language classrooms provide places for students and teachers to see how cultural issues are a part of communication settings, with opportunities to develop "critical cultural awareness" (2019, p.128). Thus, we designed our curriculum to respond to and advance these affordances.

Additionally, our teacher-researcher team is highly international: we have Vietnamese, Palestinian, Chinese, American, and Iranian members. Therefore, we consistently engage in intercultural collaboration and communication as co-researchers. To work together, we must

[3] The style guide for the American Psychological Association designates all racial and ethnic terms as proper nouns. Although there is significant editorial debate about capitalizing White/white, we follow the APA designation for consistency.

develop our own intercultural skills via reflective practice. We also know that our cultural backgrounds are at play in the classroom implementation of the curriculum. So, to further explore the implementation of the curriculum in our language-rich context, we turned to illuminative evaluation and reflective practice. Our qualitative approach enabled in-depth exploration of a novel curricular experience. These lenses allow us to first investigate the specific context of implementation and reflect on the experience of the curriculum and assessment, leading to our initial, two-part research question:

1. What does practitioner reflection via illuminative evaluation reveal about the experience of teaching a novel curriculum?
2. What does practitioner reflection via illuminative evaluation reveal about collaborative development of data analysis methods?

We offer a curriculum overview followed by a short literature review to contextualize our exploration of this research question.

Curriculum Overview

We designed our curriculum (Banat et al., 2022) to engage students in intercultural learning via several pedagogical interventions that we describe below. We implemented this curriculum in both general sections enrolling primarily but not exclusively domestic students and in second-language-focused sections enrolling international students. Our curriculum offers four critical interventions to develop students' intercultural competence during a semester-long university undergraduate writing course.

1. A linked-course model wherein a general and an L2 section taught simultaneously are paired for both small-group and large-group structured intercultural learning. These two sections meet for several co-taught sessions through the course and engage in structured, mentored intercultural interactions.
2. A multicultural reader that invites students to explore themes such as gender, power, language, nationality, and economics across different cultural contexts. This reader provides cultural exposure to difference via text, a lower-stakes way for students to engage with difference. Student demographics do not always reflect an ideal range of diverse cultural backgrounds; thus, we rely on a multicultural reader that promotes further exposure to writers from a variety of cultural and language backgrounds.
3. A research-based writing assignment sequence. These writing assignments promote thoughtful intercultural inquiry and require collaboration between students of different cultural backgrounds. The assignment structure balances research into unfamiliar cultural phenomena with interaction between students with different backgrounds who serve as cultural informants for each other.
4. A series of five reflective writings (four journal entries and a course reflection) purposefully embedded within the course's main interventions that invite students to engage with course themes and concurrent curricular experiences. These journal entries, assigned at multiple points during the semester, enable students to review their own intercultural and writing development and at the same time, allow us, instructors, to assess their trajectories of intercultural progression throughout the semester.

Our curriculum balances inquiry about culture and interaction with cultural differences because intercultural development requires both. Programs must move students past surface-level learning and into meaningful intercultural interaction (Deardorff, 2011).

Literature that Shaped Our Approach

Three areas of literature informed our initial design, implementation and assessment of the innovative curriculum in our institutional context: (1) intercultural competence; (2) illuminative evaluation; (3) practitioner research and teacher reflection. Herein, we discuss how this literature shaped our project.

Intercultural Competence: An Internationalization at Home Approach

Our approach to intercultural competence is grounded in the scholarship of Deardorff (2011) and Milton and Jane Bennett (J. M. Bennett, 2015; M. J. Bennett, 2016). Deardorff's (2011, p. 66) articulation of intercultural competence focuses on action and behavior: "intercultural competence is defined as effective and appropriate behavior and communication in intercultural situations." Deardorff further explains that there are specific, observable behavioral indicators that characterize intercultural competence. Intercultural competence thus requires that people can see from the perspectives of others, and then choose appropriate ways to interact with people from a variety of cultural backgrounds. These interculturally appropriate choices are behaviorally observable.

Additionally, we follow an internationalization-at-home model (IaH) as articulated by Nilsson (2003). IaH models emphasize that internationalization should encompass the entire university—not just the segment of students and professors who will at some point travel abroad. Internationalization matters for the entire university because intercultural interaction is not limited to study abroad. Further, understanding the perspectives, values, and histories of other cultures is deeply important for forwarding a peaceful, socially just community – inside or outside a university. Nilsson (2003, p.31) defines an internationalized curriculum as 'a curriculum that gives international and intercultural knowledge and abilities, aimed at preparing students for performing (professionally, socially, emotionally) in an international and multicultural context.' Because first-year writing is a widely-required course in the United States, its intercultural interventions reach a broad swath of undergraduate students. First-year writing IC curricula can support an IaH model of internationalization. We believe that an IaH model for intercultural learning is a more socially just model as many students do not have access to study-abroad programs; additionally, it shows that intercultural learning is not an addition to a college program but an integral part of higher education. As we discussed above, we have noticed on both our campus and in the literature that colleges can be a site for intercultural learning but often do not effectively integrate diverse student populations. Thus, an intercultural approach to first-year writing benefits students in the long term, because it fosters the understanding of cultural differences and the ability to communicate within and across cultural contexts.

Illuminative Evaluation

To reflect more effectively and gain insight into our initial implementation of this curriculum, we searched for a framework that would resonate with our reflective commitment to holistic

evaluation and teacher research. We selected illuminative evaluation (Parlett & Dearden, 1977; Richards & Schmidt, 2013). This approach to evaluation supports deep reflection on how a curriculum is experienced by the people who teach it in a specific context. Illuminative evaluation was developed as a method to assess curricula and education programs in a holistic, qualitative way. It prompts teachers and researchers to look beyond quantitatively measurable learning outcomes and consider the entire institutional context of a program (Parlett & Hamilton, 1972). Illuminative evaluation requires that attempts to measure educational products are either replaced by, or in our case supplemented with, intensive study of the entire program: the rationale, its evolution, and how it operates, as well as its achievements and struggles (Parlett & Hamilton, 1972). Illuminative evaluation is a general research strategy, an exploratory stance toward evaluation, rather than a specific package of evaluation tools (Sloan & Watson, 2001). It rests on a rich description of the educational context being evaluated — and it supports a reflective approach for practitioner researchers.

In line with Parlett and Dearden (1977), our team views illuminative evaluation as reflective consideration of an entire program and its implementation – including what happens in the classroom, how we develop as teachers, and our collaborative and reflective mode for creating the methods we use for the long-term evaluation of the next phases of the project. It is a naturalistic and exploratory form of enquiry. Like responsive and naturalistic approaches broadly, illuminative evaluation includes a significant focus on the social and interpersonal dimensions of evaluation (Abma, 2011). Unlike many other approaches to evaluation, an illuminative approach does not focus on quantification of outcomes, but on the perspectives of individuals who experienced the program (Chirwa, 2013; Clemow, 2007). Further, illuminative evaluation brings to the fore the interrelationships between program structure, content, and context (Parlett & Hamilton, 1972).

As teacher-researchers committed to illuminative evaluation, we consider the student outcomes at the end of the semester alongside the holistic experience of implementation, including the project motivations, teachers' reflections, and the process of teaching itself. This method of inquiry focuses on evaluating the experience of the educational intervention from the point of view of the participants, including teacher-researchers. This orientation suggests the effectiveness and appropriateness of an intervention for its specific context, rather than arguing for broad generalizability (Chirwa, 2013; Mason, 2010; Parlett & Dearden, 1977).

Practitioner Research and Teacher Reflection

As writing teachers and scholars of intercultural competence, we are committed to teaching students how to reflect thoughtfully as a part of growing as writers and individuals who collaborate with people from different backgrounds. Our curriculum design incorporates reflection for students. Similarly, our attention to reflective practice includes a strong commitment to teacher reflection, including the illuminative evaluation we describe here.

We developed this project as a teacher-researcher project, to understand the impact of research-based interventions in the writing classroom, within our specific context. Phelps (1991) articulates three hermeneutic phases of a teacher-researcher project: (1) attunement, (2) critical examination, (3) practical experimentation. Drawing on Hans-Georg Gadamer's (1977) hermeneutical approach to theory-practice relationships, Phelps offers a vision of these three phases of teacher research that recognizes how teachers engage disciplinary theory and personal practice. Through alertness to their context, critical reflection, and classroom implementation,

teachers are knowledge-makers, interpreting and discerning meaning from the cultural experiences of teaching. Phelps further points out that collaborative reflection moves teacher-researchers beyond a mere awareness of context into an intersubjective creation of the context. In line with this vision, our project arose from a specific contextual problem on our campus: the division between international and domestic students and the parallel worlds in which they live, ithin the same campus. We combined this contextual problem with our knowledge about how scholarship both inside and outside our field could be leveraged to address this problem — via classroom practice.

Some benefits of this teacher-research approach include immersion in the research field as well as the opportunity to understand human activity 'in situ and from the perspective of participants' (Borko et al., 2007, p.5). Classroom teaching is a complex activity, as is evaluating what happens in the act of teaching. Teachers experience classrooms in ways outside researchers may not; teacher-researchers can provide insight into data informed by active experiences. Leveraging the integration of these two positions offers depth to both the practice of teaching and the practice of research.

Teacher-researcher work is sometimes thought of as dialectic, boundary-crossing work (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Through periodic reflection, teacher-researchers observe themselves and study their own practices to create feedback loops that support context-embedded evaluation. Our experience suggests that this dialectic, boundary-crossing work can support intercultural development.

This literature on intercultural competence, teacher reflection, and illuminative evaluation shapes not only our approach to the design of the curriculum, but more importantly, shapes our enactment of the curriculum. For example, we do not see our context as an absolute entity, but as a fluid situation that we both respond to and shape by our teaching and student interactions. The process of evaluation and improvement is both recursive and iterative. In the following reflections, we show how this understanding of context developed through our experience of enacting the curriculum.

The Learning Milieu: Reflection on Curriculum in Context

Illuminative evaluation involves practitioner reflection on interactions experienced within the learning environment (Parlett and Dearden (1977) call this the "milieu"). In this section, two practitioner-researchers who taught the course offer insights about the first semester of curriculum implementation from instructor perspectives, illuminating the classroom experiences. Rebekah Sims is a White American instructor teaching an international/second-language section; Hadi Banat is a Palestinian international instructor teaching a group of primarily – but not exclusively – domestic students. At the time of implementation, both instructors were doctoral students. Each reflection is offered in the first-person voice of the instructor.

Runnels & O'Dwyer (2020) explain that teacher reflections on the learning context provide critical insight into what contextual factors shape the implementation of the intervention. These illuminative reflections show how the interventions and the learning milieu are experienced by two practitioner-researchers implementing the curriculum. Rebekah and Hadi point to the ways that classroom contexts interact with the structure of the curriculum and the cultural identities of

instructors and students. Specifically, they show how challenges the instructors encounter can be catalysts for intercultural growth — for both the instructors and the students — due to the structure of the curriculum and the commitment to reflective engagement.

Rebekah Sims – International/Second-Language Section

As I think back to my own experience with the curriculum the first time, at the opening of the semester, I remember being apprehensive about two things. First, what would happen if (or when) conflicts surfaced in the classroom? Having previously taught high school, I was not unfamiliar with classroom conflict, but I was worried about navigating intercultural conflict specifically. Second, while I believed deeply in the importance of this curriculum, I wondered whether students would see its value. On the first day of class that semester, two things happened that increased my apprehension. It turned out I had only one female student in the class. I also had one student who displayed polarization towards a Chinese sociopolitical hegemony and defensiveness against an independent Taiwanese existence. His perspective created the strong potential for conflict because the class also included a student who had a distinctive Taiwanese identity.

On the first day of class, my female student humorously called attention to the gender imbalance in the classroom. Throughout this semester, she showed resilience even when this gender imbalance presented difficulties. We had several readings that addressed gender in different cultural contexts, and she seemed to connect to those readings as a vocal participant. Importantly, these readings also allowed my male students to see certain experiences through the various lenses of women writers, taking some of the pressure off this student (and me) to always be the voices representing women. I realized why it was important to offer a set of readings on themes such as gender, language, and globalization across different cultures: readings and thoughtful discussion guidance allowed students to explore cultural interaction in a more low stakes way, and gave students a break from having to represent some aspect of their own identity or culture to peers, especially if they were the only 'representative' of some identity in the classroom.

This student later chose rape legislation as her topic for the research-based writing sequence. At the end of the semester, she gave an excellent oral presentation on this topic in front of an audience of men peers, displaying rhetorical confidence and keen analytical ability. I learned a great deal from my students as I recalled that while I was primarily responsible for the classroom environment, students brought remarkable personal resources to the classroom magnifying the asset-based nature of this approach to internationalization. Our class was enriched by these resources, especially if I trusted my students to deploy them. I felt that the curriculum invited students to articulate their resources and bring them into explicit conversation. Where I sometimes initially felt an urge to jump in and resolve conflict right away, I learned to resist that urge and allow students to navigate intercultural dialogue and some conflict. They were equipped for such dialogue by the structure of the curriculum and could draw on their own resources as well.

In the case of the student who was quite vocal about his anti-Taiwan views of China — and had limited intercultural awareness generally — over the course of the semester, he mellowed out a little and through engagement with the curriculum and fellow students, significantly developed his intercultural mindset. Through the pilot semester, I learned to trust the curriculum that we

had developed, trust my students, and trust myself and Hadi (my paired instructor) as teachers. Through the experience of co-teaching with Hadi – two instructors, teaching together in the same classroom – we became aware that the co-teaching part of our curricular structure was indispensable: we were demonstrating for our students the kinds of intercultural interactions we asked of them. As the semester progressed, we found ourselves verbally describing our collaboration with each other to our students. These reflections suggest that teacher-research can enable close examination of the experiences of students and teachers during the course of research study, in their day-to-day teaching and learning environments.

Hadi Banat – General Section

I was excited about the level of innovation in the curriculum as it pragmatically facilitated internationalizing writing programs and influencing students' exposure to and interaction with other cultures. However, I did have doubts and fears about how students would perceive me, perhaps as an outsider from the Middle East trying 'fix' his American students and use them as guinea pigs. Careful description and gradual delivery of the curriculum helped us, teachers and students, to acculturate and collaborate in order to maximize the benefits for all involved stakeholders. Two interventions worked well to my advantage — the co-teaching space and embedded reflective writing. By co-teaching with my paired instructor, Rebekah , five times a semester, we showcased live scenarios from internationalized workplaces where collaboration across differences was necessary. We modeled behaviors in front of our domestic and international students, and increased the credibility of our curriculum and its interventions.

Systematic reflective writing offered students the space and affordances to voice their concerns as they interacted with various interventions, and helped create dialogues between instructors and students. Students' reflections helped shape lesson plans and activities, and teachers' feedback encouraged students to consider their reflective writing tasks as safe zones where they could liberally express their views, experiences, affinities, thoughts, concerns, doubts, struggles, challenges, and criticisms. I often think of Kathleen Blake Yancey's (1998) suggestion that student writers are agents of their own learning and not objects of study. From this perspective, reflection records and documents processes of learning as students practice skills they have built and develop processes of inquiry for sophisticated learning.

In the pilot semester, I encountered one unique case of a student who resisted my practices and my approach to intercultural competence in the writing classroom. The curriculum seemed to cause him discomfort. He was vocally aggressive in reflective writing. The content of his reflective journals was shocking, but his polarized ideas encouraged me to intervene in ways that met him where he was in terms of his intercultural development. My feedback to his reflective writing tasks were direct responses to these polarized ideas, and I always focused on alternative perspectives supported by evidence to explain my claims. The process took six weeks, and it was daunting and exhausting. However, the faculty mentor of the project, who was the writing program administrator, encouraged me to sustain this dialogue as our curriculum was not only designed for students who are willing to embrace it, but for those who resist it. My co-teacher and co-researcher Rebekah was also encouraging, and she read some of my student reflections to deliberate over the most suitable approach we can adopt with this student.

The openness my student and I maintained in our dialogue through reflective writing encouraged him to visit my office after six weeks to explicitly vocalize the reasons behind his resistance. As

I got to know him, I found that his prior military experience serving in a war-torn country, prior interactions with his high school writing teacher, his rigorous sports training as a student athlete, and familial expectations about his future profession were factors that prompted resistance to my teaching practices. Our face-to-face conversation made me realize the power of reflection as a transformative writing genre since it offered my student the opportunity for enacting the deliberate practice of rhetorical listening, observing, interpreting, analyzing, evaluating, and relating, instrumental skills for building intercultural knowledge.

Interpretation of Teacher-Research Reflections

Rebekah and Hadi's reflections focus on navigating conflict — conflict between identities, especially. The reflections also point out specific parts of the curriculum that equip teachers and students to address identity conflict: co-teaching spaces, reflective writing, and the assigned readings. In some ways, this curriculum is a risk because it invites students to explore aspects of themselves and of others that open avenues for conflict. Yet, when navigated thoughtfully and without panic — such as when Hadi saw conflict as an invitation to reflectively consider what factors shape his students' defensive reaction — the conflict can lead to interpersonal, intercultural development for both teacher and student. As Rebekah learned, sometimes intercultural growth occurs when the teacher steps back from a need to jump into conflict with explicit mediation. Students' personal resources, prior experiences, and interactions are mediated by the curriculum which provides a vehicle for ongoing exploration of present or potential cultural conflicts. We believe that we observe intercultural development because the curriculum and our reflective approach helped students and teachers slow down a little to consider the whole situation, rather than reacting to the immediate source of conflict. Illuminative evaluation helps us understand why the curriculum promotes such reflective, considerate engagement with other people. What we've learned from navigating conflict within the milieu of this program can inform our teaching and research lives beyond this one project.

As we returned to the classroom reflections – originally written in 2018 – in 2022, amid the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, themes of conflict negotiation and collaboration stood out to us – probably because throughout the last two years, we have been living through global conflicts, and finding collaboration more challenging as physical togetherness is less possible. In response to the pandemic and the inequities it made visible, Deardorff (2020, p. xv) posed the question, "what does it mean to live together, especially now?" While we have been asking ourselves this question since 2016, when we initially designed the curriculum, returning to our earlier pre-pandemic experiences over the past few months convinced us that intercultural interaction is even more important now, after the political and cultural divisions that the pandemic has exacerbated. After all, intercultural competence is not solely about skills of interaction, but more deeply about living together and seeking justice and peace.

Deardorff invites her readers to consider intercultural competence and global citizenship efforts as part of an interconnected commitment to being a good global neighbor who values the welfare of other people. We note that in the teacher reflections, we've voiced concerns about the welfare of the students in our classes — those who are the "only" of some kind of identity, those struggling with juggling multiple pressures, those who feel uncomfortable or perhaps defensive. Concern for the welfare of these students requires us to explore the conflict rather than avoid it. We believe that our reflective approach to teaching and our illuminative evaluation lens moves us away from conflict strategies such as confrontation or avoidance. Instead, illuminative

evaluation suggests that we need an invitational stance toward conflict — that is, exploration and thoughtful negotiation of the conflict situation. Ideally, exploration can lead to growth. An explorative and reflective approach to conflict, supported by illuminative evaluation, may be useful on a broader scale to teachers and researchers who encounter fraught spaces and divisive rhetoric.

Researcher Reflection: Developing an Approach to Data Analysis

As teacher-researchers, we strive to bring this illuminative and reflective approach to our work in and beyond the classroom. For us, reflecting on the integrated pedagogical research project is part of an illuminative evaluation because such evaluation is designed to be holistic, not to separate teaching and research. Illuminative evaluation considers every facet of the educational experience — and for us, this includes development and implementation of data analysis methods. As discussed above, an illuminative approach should be an invitational one. An invitation approach offered chances for exploration rather than a reductive and immediate resolution. In our teaching and research, we ask students and each other questions and invite dialogue rather than searching for an immediate solution. These invitations to dialogue illuminate what is happening in a given situation.

In this section, we discuss how illuminative evaluation and reflection formed our collaborative approach to developing data analysis practices, and how the data analysis development impacted our teaching. Rather than a traditional discussion of research "findings," we focus here on how illuminative evaluation and the classroom experience inform our approach to our research design and work as collaborative teacher-researchers.

During the second semester of curriculum implementation in Fall 2018, we were concurrently developing our data analysis design, getting to know each other as teammates, and preparing two more practitioner-researchers to join in implementing the curricular approach. Our team worked for several months to develop a grounded-theory coding scheme (Tran et al., 2019) to trace aspects of intercultural competence in our data and determine whether students developed their intercultural competence. Research using grounded theory is very compatible with illuminative evaluation (Gordon, 1991), a benefit for us as our methods for evaluating intercultural competence in the student writing we collected were created from a grounded theory approach. Guided by Saldaña (2016) and Geisler & Swarts (2019), we formed our analytical approach, determining how to apply intercultural competence scales to reflective writing and how to validate our practices to achieve interrater coherence among ourselves. We intensively discussed themes and patterns in student reflective writing, selected the specifics of our approach to coding, and by connecting our experience in the classroom to the literature on intercultural development, determined how our work spoke to the larger field. The genesis of these conversations often happened in the coding documents themselves, offering time to reflect on our own thinking and on the thoughts of teammates before we had a face-to-face or real-time discussion. We believe that our commitment to extensive documentation of our analytical approach in writing promoted rumination on intercultural development, so that we eventually reached a point of more illumination and better insight on what we experienced in the classroom and saw in the data. Like the curriculum itself, our approach to data analysis was underpinned by reflective writing.

This same reflective approach shaped development of our grounded theory coding scheme that facilitated analysis of writing skills and intercultural development. Our team spent a significant amount of time, both in person and digitally, coming to agreement on what the codes meant and resolving differences. In the semester we focus on in this article, eight student participants agreed to submit their reflective writings – five per participant – for our analysis as researchers. Our analysis of student writing included detailed sentence-level thematic coding as well as holistic ‘mapping’ of each piece of writing onto an intercultural development spectrum (M. J. Bennett, 1993). The four graduate researchers coded every piece of writing, and then one graduate researcher reviewed and resolved coding differences. Because since our pilot semester participant pool was small, this enabled all of us to spend a significant amount of time with all of the student writings, so that each researchers’ perspective was a part of the initial analysis. We believe that this deeply detailed collaborative work created a more valid coding scheme and facilitated our interrater agreement. Smagorinsky (2008) points out that such collaborative approaches have strong benefits for all researchers. He further points out that coding is a manifestation of theory — a belief we agree with and intentionally operationalized in our coding practices, which show our emphasis on collaboration, reflection, and responsiveness to our instructional context.

During the early phases of data analysis, we generated a protocol (Sims et al., 2019) to determine how (or if) students’ writing demonstrated different phases of intercultural development. To do this, the four graduate researchers met together to reach consensus through discussion of a small set of student writings from the pilot semester of curriculum implementation. Our approach to analysis was intentionally dialectical, seeking to articulate how students’ experiences of the curriculum and their experiences of the greater learning milieu of our institution, represented different levels of intercultural competence, and intercultural development or lack thereof. While this process allowed us to move toward a procedure for evaluating the outcome measures of the curriculum, we could not do such evaluation without being grounded in an illuminative and reflective approach. We generated a body of descriptive data from the transactional field (Gordon, 1991) that allowed us to interpret and explain intercultural development in a writing classroom. Significant questions arose during this phase of evaluation that we had not considered before, including:

1. To what extent is students’ discussion of characteristics of writing also a discussion of culture?
2. Are empirically accurate generalizations cognitively similar to stereotyping, or do they indicate something positive about intercultural development?
3. How do we analyze the role of self-reflection on one's own home culture as a part of developing intercultural competence?
4. Are we teaching reflective writing explicitly enough and consistently across sections, and how might inconsistency shape what we learn (or cannot learn) about students’ intercultural development?

As teacher-researchers who desire to link classroom practice and research assessment, these four questions shaped our emerging analytical approach as well as our teaching. We concluded that reflective writing required more pedagogical attention in the classroom: inconsistent reflective skills may prevent us from understanding whether a participant is truly demonstrating a low level of intercultural competence or whether they have experienced more nuanced development but are not able to display those skills in their reflective writing We also decided that more time in

class should be given to the link between becoming more culturally self-aware and how to use that self-awareness as a catalyst for better intercultural interaction. Reflective cultural self-awareness is foundational to building intercultural competence. We came to these realizations because of our collaborative, recursive approach to data analysis as well as our concurrent classroom experiences.

Based on further analysis of reflective writing from the later data sets, we were able to clarify distinctions between stereotyping and generalizations, which both play a role in intercultural understanding. Specifically, we identified that generalizations are not necessarily stereotypes nor are they always a bad thing. The generalization accuracy, though, is not the measure of intercultural competence. Instead, we needed to attend to the depth and nuance of the reflection on these generalizations, pushing students past reporting generalizations about a population (e.g., it is common for Americans to get a driver's license as a teenager) and into reflective analysis (e.g., the importance of driver's licenses demonstrates American individualism because independent transportation is the norm, with many places in the US lacking public transit). For example, one student wrote a piece about racism in the US. He accurately described examples of racism, concluding that persons of color are often the victim of racial discrimination because many White Americans view them as a threat and treat them differently. While the journals described generalizations, he was not stereotyping, but instead using generalizations to reflect on an aspect of American culture that was new to him.

Teacher-research is a two-way street. As noted above, our data analysis shaped classroom practice. It is significant that our analytical methods were developed while we were in our classrooms, teaching the curriculum during the second and third semesters of implementation. Thus, our analytical approach was not only formed based on the data we had collected in previous semesters, but by our day-to-day classroom experiences — what we were observing our students doing and the challenges we faced. Although students' reflective writing is a rich data source for our project, it captures only part of the impact of the curriculum. Our attunement to the entire experience as teacher-researchers helped contextualize our analysis of reflective writing. For example, our analytical approach to participant students' reflective journals revealed a pendulum swing (Acheson & Schneider-Bean, 2019) in intercultural development: when students are challenged, they sometimes cope by regressing slightly. Yet, through navigating many intercultural experiences, students have net gains. Had we only seen this in the reflective writing, without the classroom contexts, we might have been puzzled or found it odd. However, we observed this same pattern in students' interactions and even in our own responses to conflicts or challenges in our classrooms. Here is a place where the teaching context helped us interpret and make sense of the data we were analyzing from a previous semester.

The development of analytical procedures and qualitative evaluation might be an example of Gordon's 'practice milieu' wherein the illuminative approach brings "clarity to value issues, process difficulties, investigator and worker influences, communication gaps, and numerous other aspects of a practice milieu that elude research based on the classical experimental paradigm" (1991, p. 373). In the dialogic process of building a shared, coherent analytical approach, we had to clarify our implicit understanding of student learning, test our assumptions about what we had experienced in the class, learn how to communicate more effectively as a research team, and understand how our own cultural identities influenced our experience of the curriculum.

As noted above, our commitment to creating effective documentation helped us engage in this dialogic process of organized illuminative evaluation. For example, as we engaged in collaborative coding, we wrote coding memos (Saldaña, 2016). We planned lessons together and created clear documentation from strategic meetings. While this collaborative approach was time and labor-intensive, we felt that it was worth the effort because it made our teaching and research skills stronger – and thus, we think the project outcomes are more valuable. We were also willing to make this commitment because we enjoy one another's company: graduate school is best traveled with intellectual companions and friends.

As we have traveled through the different phases of teaching and researching together, this documentation made illuminative evaluation possible and sustainable because we were not just depending on memory but on documented evidence of our work processes, agreements, disagreements, and decision making. The documentation also made the process of work visible to all team members and contributors. Even when we were in different countries – or unable to meet in shared physical spaces due to the Covid-19 pandemic – we could build on each other's work and progress through reviewing documentation. Our lively conversations and evolving thinking on pedagogy for intercultural competence are thoroughly documented and archived in our shared digital workspace so that we can reflect on our own learning as practitioner-researchers and on the results of our ongoing research. Multiple semesters of implementation of the curriculum alongside these in-depth conversations helped us refine our reflections over a long period of time, which we believe increased the quality of the teaching and research.

Reflective learners are able to, as Vollmer (2011, p. 48) observes, move "beyond first impressions and intuitive responses… [and] move through the initial discomfort of uncertainty to a level of comfort with complexity and ambiguity." Our commitment to documentation helped us reach comfort with ambiguity, especially in moments when we did not yet understand something in the data or in the classroom. Our first impressions were documented, but we then circled back to our initial thoughts and could reconsider them in light of more experience. We could document our (mis)understandings or partial thoughts and return to them later, as we gained more experience and insight. Practitioner researchers further benefit from "an increased understanding of content and pedagogy… and willingness to listen to and learn from students and others" (Borko et al., 2007, p. 6). For us, a reflective approach to illuminative evaluation attunes us to listening and learning from our students, even when we experience conflict and discomfort in the classroom. As we also approached developing assessment procedures from a reflective practitioner stance, we committed to learning from one another in addition to learning from our students. As with the teacher reflections, the researcher reflection suggests that exploring conflicts reflectively — rather than looking for immediate "solutions" — promotes stronger analytical practice and strong intercultural collaboration among diverse team members.

Conclusion: Illuminating Initial Implementation

As we show above, the goal of illuminative evaluation is not to track changes on outcome measures (Sloan & Watson, 2001) – though, over the long term, our team does that kind of evaluation – but to take a broader view of the experience of the educational intervention in its context. We found that an illuminative evaluation approach in the early phases of our project helped us focus on our unique institutional context, and alerted us to some of the ways that the interaction of curriculum, learner, teacher, and context can offer opportunities to explore conflicts instead of reacting to them. A reflective, illuminative approach also raised some new

questions about evaluating intercultural development in first-year writing, that we had not anticipated before we began curriculum implementation. We found, as have other teacher-researchers, continuous exchange between our research practices and teaching practices (Jankens, 2019). We think we should view teaching and developing analytical procedures as sources of meaning making for ourselves as reflective practitioners. Reflective, illuminative evaluation supports meaningful development of both in the local context.

Our own experiences as instructors have helped us trust the curriculum in action, and trust the abilities of our students to navigate cultural conflicts in the classroom. We're able to see the extent to which conflicts — between students and ourselves — are an integral part of developing intercultural competence for some, though not all, students. This facet of intercultural development was not always revealed in student participants' reflective writing samples, and without the instructor reflections, we might have missed it. In the subsequent semesters of implementation, our instructors learned to navigate classroom conflicts more effectively and leveraged conflicts for intercultural development. We also came to understand the deep connections between classroom interactions, concurrent campus experiences, and reflective writing. Reflective writing offers students the opportunity to make meaning from their experiences — just as our own reflections on teaching do for us. As Chirwa (2013, p. 101) notes,

> Illuminative evaluation focuses attention on describing classroom practice as it actually occurs, to match descriptions against what was intended and recorded in the curriculum blueprint as ground for adjudication. It also focuses on issues which emerge during an evaluation to progressively focus on them for further in-depth investigation and understand what is explicit and what may be hidden in a curriculum.

Our curriculum is explicitly focused on intercultural competence and on university writing skills; what was hidden (to us, at first!) was the extent to which conflict negotiation would be a part of our practices. Issues that emerged during the illuminative, exploratory phases included navigating conflicts but also the relationships between the quality of reflections and the quality of intercultural growth, the role of generalizations in intercultural reflections, and the dynamics of gender in our classrooms. Chirwa (2013) points out that curricula are transformed in the process of implementation – they are not stable entities. Thus, evaluators must consider both contexts and curricula as dynamic in illuminative evaluation.

One of our challenges as a team is balancing the extent to which our novel curriculum is a response to an institutional context with our desire to advocate for integration of intercultural competence into writing courses across our fields, composition studies and second language studies. However, the illuminative evaluation phase of the project reported here was a critical step to understanding the local experience of implementation that necessarily preceded more systematic evaluation of subsequent semesters. Our illuminative evaluation has also influenced our in-progress work to share a version of our curriculum for implementation beyond Purdue. Our reflective, context-embedded early approach allowed us to understand how the curriculum worked in our context, preparing us to do the type of assessment necessary for broader generalization.

An illuminative evaluation cannot serve as an argument for direct generalization of the curriculum to other contexts. We do believe, however, that what the process of illuminative evaluation reveals about "living together" can offer guidance for teacher-researchers, particularly

those who want to consider intercultural-competence-based approaches. Through our reflective illuminative evaluation, we noted that it takes real courage and involves risk to enter into conflict exploration while focusing on the welfare of others, especially “others” who are unlike ourselves in some way. For example, Hadi and his initially-defensive student displayed such courage: they built understanding, empathy, and the ability to work together. This is the core work of intercultural competence. It is the core work, too, of illuminative evaluation, which invites teacher-researchers to consider deeply the impact of a novel program on all who encounter it.

Illuminative evaluation on intercultural endeavors leads us to insightful reflection on Deardorff’s (2020) question: how do we live together, now? We hope that our reflective, intercultural work encourages our pedagogical, scholarly communities to translate principles to living together with justice and peace into programmatic and pedagogical decisions that benefit diverse student populations. We do not want to implement intercultural competence and measure it so that we serve the purpose of internationalization that makes money for universities, but as a genuine commitment to forwarding communities where members can be good neighbors and look out for one another's welfare — a life-long endeavor that requires the complex skills of intercultural competence.

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