Reconceptualizing Critical Cultural Awareness for the Context of FL Literature Education: the Development of an Assessment Rubric for the Secondary Level

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Abstract

The construct of critical cultural awareness (CCA) is often regarded as an element pertaining to intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1997, 2021). In this model, CCA is defined as the ability to "evaluate, critically, and on the basis of a systematic process of reasoning, values in one's own culture and other cultures" (Byram, 2021, p. 90). Although the potential of literature to develop learners' CCA is widely accepted by intercultural education scholars, Byram's definition has some limitations as a theoretical basis for teaching students how to "evaluate and reason critically" about literary texts, as it does not take into account certain aspects of literary reading and critical interculturality that are essential in contemporary foreign language (FL) teaching and learning. This study aims to redefine CCA for the specific context of secondary literature education in a bottom-up manner, based on an analysis of student texts about migratory literature. To this end, 97 students learning Spanish as a FL in the upper forms of pre-university education (aged 15–19) at four schools in the Netherlands were asked to write an evaluation of two literary texts they read in class. Via qualitative analysis of these texts with Atlas.ti, three content categories—social justice, emotions and conflict—and two evaluative categories—cultural representation and transformation—were identified for CCA. The findings of this study have implications for other FL literature teaching settings, as a generic rubric for assessment of student texts was developed based on the criteria that emerged from the data.

Keywords: critical cultural awareness, critical interculturality, literary reading, foreign language teaching, intercultural competence

Introduction

The present article explores the construct of critical cultural awareness (CCA) in the context of teaching and reading foreign language (FL) literature. While different definitions of CCA exist, the construct is perhaps most well known as a component of Byram's (1997, 2021) influential framework of intercultural communicative competence. Language curricula in a number of countries now contain learning objectives formulated along the five dimensions of this model, which, in addition to CCA, includes *attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating and skills of discovery and interaction.* However, Byram highlights CCA as the most educationally significant element among these, linking it to the concept of "*politische Bildung*", which pertains to students' conscious and broad individual personality development through critiquing and challenging societal issues (Byram, 2021). According to Byram's definition, CCA is "an ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of an explicit, systematic process of reasoning, values present in one's own culture and other cultures and countries" (p. 90). However, it can be argued that this definition of CCA is too general for the context of literature teaching, as it does not make explicit what critical reasoning and critical evaluation of a literary text entails. Indeed, previous research has shown that conceptualizations of CCA can be improved when investigated in specific contexts (see Parks, 2020; Yulita, 2016). In this vein, the present article explores how CCA may be reconceptualized for the context of literature teaching, more specifically in relation to upper secondary level FL education in the Netherlands.

At present, major governmental plans to revise the Dutch curriculum are in preparation, and allegedly intercultural competence will have a prominent position in the future language curriculum (Curriculum.nu, 2019). However, the current curriculum standards lack intercultural objectives and merely contain core standards for language skills—reading, writing, listening, speaking—and literature. The core standards for literature require students to read three literary texts and refer to reading for personal development and knowledge of literary terminology and history (Meijer & Fasoglio, 2007). One of the most common practices to assess students' literary competence is to have students write a book report (Lehrner-te Lindert, 2018; Schat *et al.,* 2018). This assignment requires students to write a review of a literary text based on a textual analysis (*what is the text about?*) and a personal appraisal (*what do I think of the text?).* This book report is often graded with a mark that is based on a combination of writing proficiency and literary analysis, but which does not take into account the critical cultural understanding of these texts. However, if intercultural competence is to become a main objective of the national curriculum, teachers should also provide students with feedback on the criticality of their book reports, assessing CCA as reflected in their written texts. To our knowledge, there are no available criteria for this aim, neither in national curricular documents nor in international research. This is, perhaps, indicative of a broader trend in intercultural education, as there is an abundance of self-evaluation instruments for students (indirect assessment), but a lack of assessment instruments that teachers can apply (direct assessment) (Zhang & Zhou, 2019). Although teachers might instinctively evaluate what CCA in student texts consists of, and what counts as sufficient or inadequate, teachers need criteria on which to base their evaluations. Accordingly, teachers, in preparing students to write a "critical" book report on FL literary texts, should clearly define their expectations and understanding of what they regard as texts with a low or high level of CCA, and be explicit about that, if they are to improve students' critical evaluations of literature. The need for such criteria becomes even more urgent as the PISA report (Gubbels *et al*., 2019) has shown that regarding text comprehension, Dutch secondary school students scored significantly low on "evaluating and reflecting on texts" (p. 28).

As previously noted, Byram (1997, 2021) is not the only scholar to have conceptualized CCA (see e.g., Guilherme, 2002), and some even regard it as a distinct educational goal in itself

rather than as a component of intercultural competence (Guilherme, 2022). However, Byram's definition of CCA includes two objectives that have particular relevance for our study, as they pertain specifically to language learners' interaction with *text*[1]. Consequently, these objectives were deemed to be an apt point of departure for our investigation. Objective A refers to "the ability to identify and interpret explicit or implicit values in documents and events in one's own and other cultures: the intercultural speaker can use a range of analytical approaches to place a document or event in context (of origins/sources, time, place, other documents or events) and to demonstrate the ideology involved" (Byram, 2021, p. 90). Objective B refers to "the ability to make an evaluative analysis of the documents and events which is based on systematic and conscious reasoning: the intercultural speaker is aware of their own ideological perspectives and values and evaluates documents or events with explicit reference to them" (Byram, 2021, p. 90). When relating objective A to the setting of our study, students should be able to place the literary text in its context, reasoning about a literary text and its inherent values through a thorough textual analysis. When relating objective B to the setting of our study, students should be able to evaluate the literary text in a manner which takes into account and explains their own cultural standpoint, beliefs and values. In view of this, the present article aims to specify what it means to "critically reason about" and to "critically evaluate" (cf. Byram's definition of CCA) literature in secondary FL education. Through a qualitative analysis of students' book reports about a FL literary text, we set out to identify effective patterns for critical reasoning and critical evaluation. Our goal was to develop, on the basis of our findings, a rubric that teachers may use to assess student work. The research questions were as follows:

How can we redefine the construct of CCA in the context of FL literature teaching at the secondary level?

1. How do students critically reason about a literary text and what categories and levels can be distinguished in their textual analyses (objective A)?
2. How do students critically evaluate a literary text and what categories and levels can be distinguished in their personal appraisals of the literary text (objective B)?

Theoretical Background: Conceptualizing CCA

Although Byram's conceptualization of CCA provides a theoretical point of departure for the present study, our aim is, as described above, to add new dimensions to this construct by specifying what it entails in a specific context. As we do this in a bottom-up manner through an investigation of effective patterns in student texts, the categories emerging out of our data may involve aspects of criticality and literary reading which are not captured by Byram's definition. In this connection, it is relevant to acknowledge some limitations of Byram's definition as well as to consider alternative theoretical perspectives which can inform the interpretation of our data.

Critical Interculturality

A different definition of CCA has been offered by Guilherme (2002), who describes it as

> a reflective, exploratory, dialogical and active stance toward cultural knowledge and life that allows for dissonance, contradiction and conflict as well as for consensus, concurrence, and transformation. It's a cognitive and emotional endeavor that aims at individual and collective emancipation, social justice and political commitment (p. 219).

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1 Or, in Byram's words, *documents*.

Although neither one of these two definitions rules out the other, Byram's is more procedural and stresses evaluation through comparisons and reasoning, whereas Guilherme's is more substantive and coins content matters of critical interculturality. The "critical turn" (cf. Dervin, 2017; Díaz & Dasli, 2016) in intercultural pedagogy research has led to an increased interest in the impact of power imbalances and conflictual dimensions of intercultural communication, and scholars from this field of research have argued that Byram's definition of CCA lacks a truly critical perspective as it does not explicitly address such issues (Guilherme, 2022). For instance, while CCA as defined by Byram definitely carries a political dimension through its focus on explicit and implicit values, it does not expressly include the ability "to question who has the power to define culture, what discourses on culture are trying to achieve and who these discourses include or exclude" (Parks, 2020, p. 27). In addition, while several scholars (Hoff, 2014, 2020; Kramsch, 1996) posit that conflict and the incompatibility of cultural values raise opportunities for intercultural learning, Byram's (2021) definition of CCA implies shirking conflict, arguing that the intercultural speaker "is aware of conflict" but "is able to negotiate agreement" (p. 90) on issues of contention. To quote Guilherme (2022), "his critical and political approach to CCA remained very much tied with communication, while action and transformation are left within the constraints of social and political systems in place, more clearly, without envisaging structural changes in power relations" (p. 106).

In this sense, it may be argued that Byram's definition of CCA represents "criticality light". Where his definition mentions conflict but focuses on "awareness" and "getting along", critical interculturality explicitly draws attention to conflict in intercultural settings and aims to uncover power relations that shape exchanges between cultural groups and individuals. McConachy (2018) has argued that "reflection takes on its most overtly critical orientation when learners are able to articulate a clear and supported stance on the value or legitimacy of cultural content" (p. 79). Regarding literature education through a critical interculturality lens, we can thus argue that FL literary texts carry cultural representations and that teachers must stimulate their students to "critically" examine these representations by paying attention to power relations. In this view, CCA not only means "to use a range of analytical approaches to place a document or event in context … and to demonstrate the ideology involved" (Byram, 2021, p. 90), but also to critically analyze the cultural content in these "documents" from a social justice perspective, exploring cultural conflict in the text and making visible how notions of power may hide inside various discourses.

Literary Reading

In redefining CCA for the context of literature teaching, we must also pay specific attention to literary reading, and how reading literary texts differs from reading "documents" in general. Byram's definition of CCA is very apt for educational settings in which non-creative texts are analyzed and evaluated based on a "systematic process of reasoning" (Byram, 2021, p. 90). Literary texts evidently also require this analytical approach, but as literary reading elicits emotional engagement, the inclusion of an emotional response to a text in students' evaluations of literary texts is indispensable. While the CCA definition of Guilherme (2002, p. 219) puts yet more emphasis on this twofold aspect describing it as a "cognitive and emotional endeavor", the model of the Intercultural Reader (Hoff, 2016), which allows for this emotional response besides interpretation based on cognition, may give direction to how to connect CCA to literary reading. In this model, five elements for a competent intercultural reader are distinguished. Intercultural readers regard (1) "the reading of FL literary texts as a form of intercultural communication" which takes place at three levels—through their engagement with the text, with other readers and with other texts. Moreover, they view (2) "conflict and ambiguity" as essential elements to their emotional response as well as "inherent aspects of the text itself". In addition, they are aware of (3) how literary texts communicate with other texts, and of (4) the effects of narrative style, and (5) question previously acquired understandings to construct new, creative interpretations (p. 61–62).

In relation to that last point, it can be argued that besides being an emotive experience, another distinctive feature of literary reading is that it can be transformative. During the reading of literary texts students are pulled into a simulated world, in which they can experience situations or perspectives that may coincide or contrast with their own lives. Reflecting on such issues can be "transformative" as it changes insights into themselves and into themselves in relation to others (cf. Schrijvers *et al.*, 2019). In research on the topic of transformative literature education, Schrijvers *et al.* (2019) distinguish between three reasons for reading: reading for pleasure (hedonic reasons), reading for plot (story-driven reasons) and reading for insight into human nature (eudemonic reasons), with the latter being described as a potentially transformative exercise. As allowing for transformation is a key aspect of CCA (Guilherme, 2002), a reconceptualization of CCA for the context of literature education must thus take into account the emotional experience students may have with a text, and also how that experience may change them.

Besides the subjective and transformative aspects of literary reading, literary texts—more than informative texts—give the reader many insights into the ways emotions are experienced by others through their encounter with literary characters, and also enable readers to experience feelings of others through, for example, a narrative voice. Nemouchi and Byram (2019) have argued that empathy is a missing *savoir* in Byram's intercultural communicative competence model when it comes to literary reading. The RFCDC (Council of Europe, 2018) describes empathy as a skill and distinguishes three different forms:

1. Cognitive perspective-taking—the ability to apprehend and understand the perceptions, thoughts and beliefs of other people;
2. Affective perspective-taking—the ability to apprehend and understand the emotions, feelings and needs of other people;
3. Sympathy, sometimes called 'compassionate empathy' or 'empathic concern'—the ability to experience feelings of compassion and concern for other people based on the apprehension of their cognitive or affective state or condition, or their material situation or circumstances (2018, p. 47).

As CCA requires analytical distance to evaluate a viewpoint through systematic reasoning, but emotional engagement and perspective-taking are key elements to literary reading, a new CCA conceptualization for the specific context of literature teaching must not only address the reader's empathy but also take into account the students' critical awareness of how a narrative voice may evoke these emotions.

Aims of the Study

In response to the absence of instruments for direct assessment that teachers can use to evaluate student products in the field of intercultural education (Zhang & Zhou, 2019), this study explores how CCA is manifested in student texts to redefine CCA and develop a rubric which may be used as a pedagogical tool. While CCA has been defined in many different ways (e.g., Byram 1997, 2021; Guilherme, 2002), all definitions of the construct refer to utterances which contain some kind of judgment based on sound reasoning, and which take into account the cultural frameworks by which judgments are made. Dasli (2012) argues that CCA "invites language learners to speak out their concerns when entering the intercultural public sphere by means of reasoned debate and logical thinking" (p. 95). Thus, when asking students to write a book report of a FL literary text in a language they are still learning, they are invited to speak their minds about a cultural artifact from a society that they most likely recognize as being different from their own, and to formulate their personal judgment based on sound reasoning, while at the same time taking into account, and explicitly referring to, their own cultural perspectives.

This makes these book reports highly appropriate data to redefine CCA in a bottom-up manner for the specific context of secondary literature education, uncovering criteria in the textual analyses (objective A) and appraisals (objective B) present in their texts.

Methods

Participants

In this study, six classes from four secondary schools in the Netherlands participated, consisting of a total of 97 students and 6 teachers. The students were involved in Spanish as a FL classes and were in their last two years of pre-university education[2]. The participants included 62 females and 35 males, ranging in age from 15 to 19. All six teachers were experienced teachers (M = 15.8 years; SD = 8.3).

Materials and Procedure

Based on pedagogical principles we formulated in an earlier study (Schat *et al*., 2021), we selected two literary texts that share migration as a theme but present different angles on this topic from within the Spanish speaking world: *Caravana al Norte* (Argueta & Monroy, 2019) and *Abdel* (Páez, 2015). While the first recounts the experiences of a young Salvadorian boy who migrates to the United States, the latter recounts the experiences of a Tuareg boy who migrates to Spain. Vega-Durán (2016) has argued that migrant narratives are highly interesting texts to stimulate critical thinking about cultural representations: because they present Western cultures as foreign, they have the potential to make Dutch adolescent readers rethink their own identities and evaluate the legitimacy of such representation and cultural representation in general. In the school year 2019–2020 students read *Caravana al Norte* (B1), and the same cohort read *Abdel* (B1+) in 2020–2021. As a final task, students were asked to write a book report in the L2 on each of the literary texts, that should contain at least a textual analysis of the literary text and an appraisal. They were instructed to write a minimum of 80 words, but no maximum was given. Although the lessons prior to the final task embodied an intercultural approach to literature, students were not informed about what CCA entails nor that the teacher would be looking for evidence of such competence in their texts. In May 2020, a total of 77 texts on *Caravana al Norte* were collected, and 96 texts on *Abdel* were collected in April 2021. Missing texts on the first title were mostly due to COVID-19 regulations. In June 2021, after all the student texts had been collected, the first author of this article marked parts of the data which she considered to pertain to objective A (textual analysis) and to objective B (appraisal). Five texts were excluded from further analysis as they did not comply with the task instructions.

As we wanted to identify effective CCA patterns in these texts, the remaining 168 were ranked according to three levels (third level–second level–first level) by the first author in compliance with Byram's CCA definition (2021, p. 90). She was following her own judgment and ranked them instinctively, assessing if they contained no aspects (third level), some aspects (second level) or several aspects of CCA (first level). As it was not in our reach to analyze all 168 collected student texts, we opted to use a smaller, representative sample of 60 texts with an equal amount of third level, second level and first level texts for our study. We used the program Research Randomizer (randomizer.org) to randomly select 10 third level texts, 10 second level texts, and 10 first level texts for each title. Thereafter, two independent teachers of Spanish ranked the student texts. Both assessors received the same group of the 60 randomly picked texts and were asked to rank them instinctively in equal portions of third

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2 The Dutch core standards for FL (Meijer & Fasoglio, 2007) expect students in their last year to reach at least at a B1 level for writing proficiency and B1+ level for reading proficiency.

level, second level, and first level texts. We are aware that instinctive assessment of levels of CCA in L2 student texts is challenging, as writing about literary texts in an L2 is a high cognitive demand task that depends on different variables particular to the individual student, for instance, general L2 language proficiency, text interpretation skills, reading motivation, and intercultural competence. The quality of writing also depends on other variables during the performance of such a complex cognitive task, for instance, the time of day, class attendance, materials, and concentration. Therefore, during the ranking of these L2 texts, the researcher and the participating teachers focused as much as possible on aspects of CCA in the content and not on linguistic features. Moreover, as student texts were digitized and anonymized prior to the ranking procedure, we confined our ranking merely to the actual performance—the student text—and not to the individual competences of the students, or to other variables involved. The percent agreement between the two raters and the researcher was 83% which is regarded as sufficient. Values from 75% to 90% demonstrate an acceptable level of agreement (Stemler, 2004). Hereafter, the 30 texts on *Abdel* and the 30 on *Caravana al Norte* were combined and analyzed as one sample. Thus, the final sample contained 60 texts from 50 students (31 male and 19 female), as ten students were drawn twice. The percentage division across the schools was 21, 32, 32, and 15%.

Data Analysis

The student texts were coded[3] using the qualitative analysis software Atlas.ti (Friese, 2021), and were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach as described by Clarke and Braun (2017). Their six-phase model was used to analyze the data qualitatively. This consisted of: (1) familiarization with the data, (2) coding, (3) generating themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) writing up. After the random selection, the first author coded parts of the data as objective A and objective B, and then searched for and reviewed the main themes. After the main themes were discussed and named, the data was explored for subthemes, and these were defined. One could thus argue that a combination of inductive and deductive thematic analysis was used. A deductive approach was used, as we used objective A and B as derived from Byram's CCA definition (1997) to categorize the student texts beforehand, bringing to the data a theoretical concept and two predefined categories to group and interpret the data. On the other hand, specific themes for literature teaching were identified within these categories on the basis of participants' texts, analyzing the data content in an inductive way. The findings emerging out of both the deductive and inductive analysis are interpreted in the light of critical interculturality and literary reading theory.

Results and Discussion

Objective A: Textual Analysis

In our initial analysis stage of objective A, we distinguished five main themes: theme, characters, narrative voice, setting, and plot. It is no surprise that these main themes emerged at this stage of the data interpretation process, as a text analysis approach to literature, which is generally based on an exploration of these five components, is very common in Dutch FL education (Bloemert *et al.*, 2016). At a second stage, we found three subthemes within our five main themes, pertaining to social justice (within theme and characters), emotions (within characters and narrative voice) and conflict (within setting and plot). Figure 1 visualizes the three stages of analysis. The subthemes will be discussed below.

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3 For illustrative purposes, this paper includes excerpts of coded data which have been translated into English. The original versions in Spanish are provided in the Appendix for the sake of transparency.
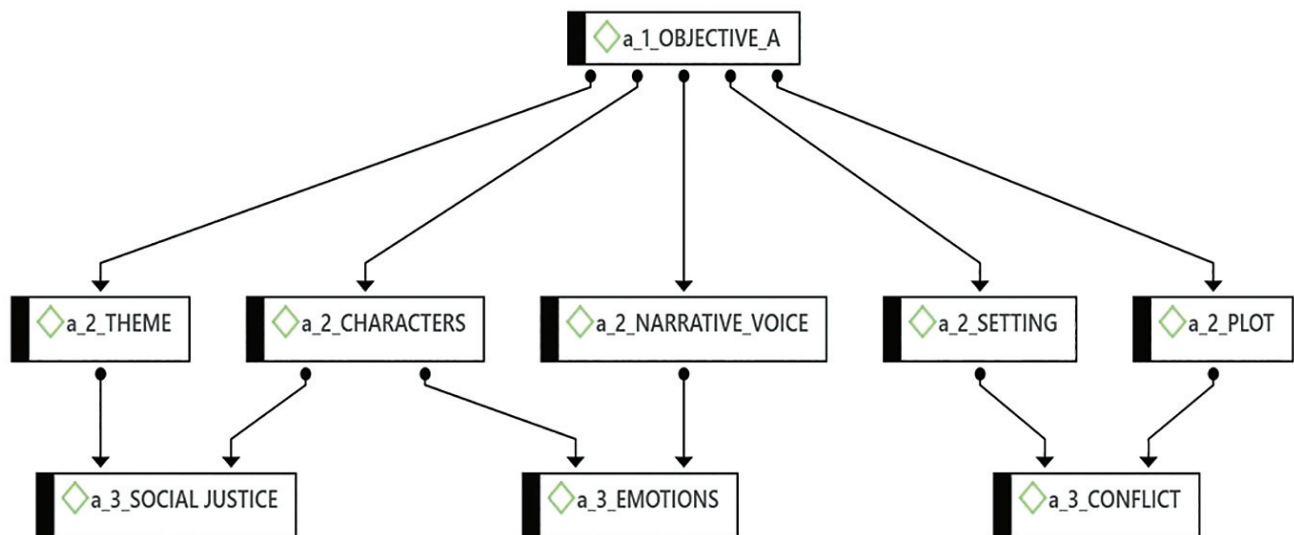
Figure 1 *Graphical visualization of objective A*

Social justice (theme, characters). We see that the so-called third level texts at the low end of the scale often do not mention the theme of the literary text explicitly. If mentioned, they often do not discuss it, and only indicate that migration is the theme or explain the theme confined to the events of the literary text, arguing that the theme is migration because the story is about a character who migrates. Moreover, not much context is brought to the characters. The following excerpt is a typical example in that respect:

> DATA 1 "*The theme of the book is immigrants because the main characters, Abdel and his father, are immigrants in Spain.*"

Most second level texts, on the other hand, discuss the theme and characters by relating them to events and human experiences in the real world. They reason that the theme is migration because the story recounts a fictive migratory experience, or that the theme is relevant and important because it happens in real life:

> DATA 2 "*The theme of the book is immigration and the book shows an event that is just like the reality in the world. Many people go to another country for a better life.*"

By describing migration as being motivated by a quest for "a better life", it can be argued that this student implicitly acknowledges this as a human rights issue and thereby puts both the theme and the literary characters in a broader social justice context.

In many first level texts, we observe that students do not only contextualize the theme and characters by relating them to social justice issues, but they also try to explain the discourse of the literary text by juxtaposing and comparing it with other texts on the topic:

> DATA 3 "*It seems to me that the theme of this book is the life of immigrants. In the newspaper or on the news it is often suggested that immigrants only migrate for economic reasons. In contrast, this book shows that it is not always for economic reasons that people migrate. Abdel and his father are oppressed, because they have no country of their own. Because there is no place for them, life is very difficult. Fleeing to Spain was their only hope for a good life. The book also shows the difficulty of this journey.*"

In this example, the intertextual references to various news outlets indicate that the student not only has an awareness of different discourses on the topic of immigration but also of how structural inequities can be maintained in the media, including or excluding people. Hoff (2019) has argued that the exploration of intertextual relationships may play an important role in the development of students' intercultural competence, as this can promote their awareness of parallels and contrasts in discourse through multiple voices. Interpreting these findings in the light of critical interculturality (Dervin, 2017; Díaz & Dasli, 2016), we argue that while second level critical reasoning about literary texts means to approach theme and characters through a lens of social justice, first level critical reasoning also means to elaborate on how a literary text relates to other texts and reflect on how dominant forms of knowledge such as the media can maintain inequalities.

Emotions (characters, narrative voice). We observe that third level texts mostly describe characters in a depersonalized way and only mention the narrative voice sometimes:

> DATA 4 "*The story is about a poor young boy who has high hopes for a better life. You read the story from the boy's perspective. The boy tells what he is going through.*"

In this example, the main character is described without a name, and while the narrative voice is mentioned, its effect is not discussed explicitly.

Second level texts, on the other hand, always mention the narrative voice and sometimes describe its effect:

> DATA 5 "*Misael is often very tired from walking a lot and is often scared. The story is told in the first person, so it is easy to understand.*"

This student describes the main character in a more personalized manner, as an individual with a name and emotions, and also acknowledges the effect the narrative voice has on how the reader perceives the story.

First level texts move beyond this type of reasoning by emphasizing emotions—not only of the characters but also of the reader—and relating these to the narrative voice. Some only elaborate on how the narrative voice helps them to understand the feelings or actions of the characters, while others explicitly focus on how the narrative voice affects them personally in terms of their own emotions. In the following example, emotions are emphasized in several ways:

> DATA 6 "*The story is told through Misael's eyes. This allows you to empathize with him. It shows many of the reasons why the characters feel the need to leave, and you experience the hope and the sadness of leaving their homes.*"

The student explains that the reader experiences everything from the main character's perspective and how that enables the reader to identify with the emotions of the characters. With reference to the previously mentioned definition of empathy as provided by the Council of Europe (2018), our analysis has thus shown that while second level texts approach characters and narrative voice through a lens of emotions and reason how literature can stimulate cognitive or affective perspective taking, first level texts also describe the reader's "empathic concern" and explicitly address how a narrative voice is able to stimulate the reader's personal emotional engagement. Adding the reader's awareness of how literature can manipulate empathy development as a key element to our reconceptualization of CCA, will embed our new definition stronger in the context of literary reading but also stimulate students to approach emotions and empathy development from a more analytical stance.

Conflict (setting, plot). What we observe regarding setting and plot, is that most third level texts give a minimal description of the place and time—omitting reasons for migration—and sum up events:

> DATA 7 "*Abdel and Abdel's father are refugees in Spain. They looked for a job, but then their first boss cheated them. Abdel's father goes to jail. Abdel makes new friends and prepares plans for revenge, but the plans fail.*"

In this example, the main characters' country of origin is not even mentioned, nor the reason for migration; the plot description contains an exclusive focus on the "adventures" experienced by the protagonist.

Second level texts tend to summarize in more detail—recounting the plot from a helicopter view—and focus on difficult situations refugees encounter, as reflected in the following excerpt:

> DATA 8 "*The book is about migration in Europe. The main character is Abdel. Abdel is a young man who wants a better life in Europe, but the way is very dangerous and hard.*"

Although difficult aspects of the journey are mentioned in this example, it still lacks a focus on the conflictual dimensions of the setting. Data 8 also illustrates another typical trait of second level texts, namely a tendency to mention the reasons for migration briefly, explaining that the protagonists live in unsafe conditions or that they want a better life, but failing to elaborate on such aspects.

In contrast, most first level texts tend to make explicit reference to diverse reasons as to why the protagonists leave their home country and analyze the plot by paying attention to cultural conflict and power relations, as seen in this example:

> DATA 9 "*The story is about the life of the main character, Abdel. He is descended from the Tuaregs, a nomadic tribe in the Western Sahara. His mother was killed by the Moroccan King Hassan II, when Morocco conquered his country. Because they are unable to live in freedom in Morocco, Abdel's father decided to flee to Spain. The journey was terrible, and their lives did not improve. When Abdel and his father arrive on the Andalusian coast, they have to flee from the police. With some difficulty they find work, but in a short time they realize that they are linked to drug trafficking...In the end, Abdel finds the situation difficult, in which he has to testify against his father, to improve their lives.*"

By noting the unstable geographical situation of the Tuaregs, in part caused by persecution and violence, as well as clashing perceptions of the protagonists' intentions and actions (while for Abdel the border crossing was a terrible experience, Spanish police consider it a crime; while Abdel and his father only want to work, Spanish court tags them as drug traffickers), the description of setting in and plot in this example has a strong focus on cultural conflict and notions of power. Based on our analysis and the scholarly literature that stresses the ability to deal with conflict and ambiguity in constructive ways for 21st century intercultural learning (Hoff, 2020), we can argue that to critically reason about literary texts entails approaching the plot and setting through a lens of conflict: while second level critical reasoning refers to merely describing difficulties related to the migratory experience, first level critical reasoning entails analyzing how this experience is affected by cultural conflict and power imbalances.

Objective B: Appraisal

In a first analysis of objective B, we found that students evaluated the literary texts roughly with three types of appraisals: arguments based on literary imaging (*I liked the book because it reveals ...*), arguments based on cognitive gains (*I liked the book because I learned ...*) and based on a more personal response to the literary text (*I liked the book because I felt ...*). Thus, we distinguished three main themes. In a subsequent analysis, two subthemes for CCA emerged from the data within these main themes: cultural representation and transformation. Figure 2 visualizes the three levels of analysis. The two subthemes will be discussed below.
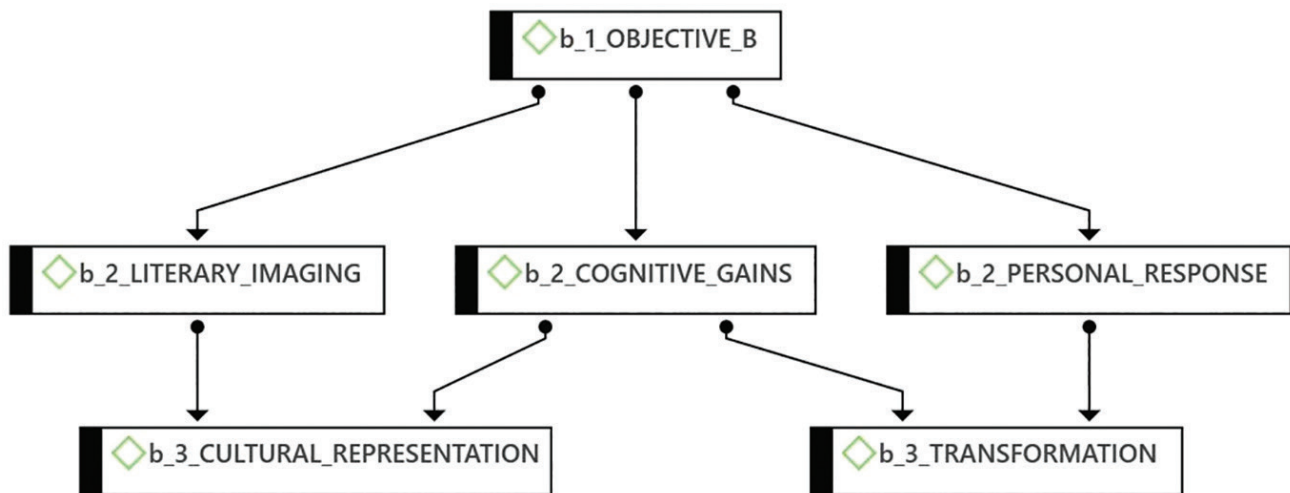
Figure 2 *Graphical visualization of objective B*

Cultural representation (literary imaging, cognitive gains). In the evaluative part of the texts, students often refer to what the literary text has shown them and what they have learned from it. While third level texts tend to evaluate the literary text based merely on perceived educational benefits, second level and first level texts describe how it depicts culture and include cognitive arguments referring to learning about other cultures. Particularly important for a critical approach is that students can evaluate or give a reasoned judgement about cultural representation.

Third level texts mostly omit cultural aspects of the literary text, as illustrated by the excerpt below, which focuses on the book as a linguistic resource:

> DATA 10 "*I think this book is very important in Spanish class. It is interesting and very good to learn the language.*"

In comparison, the following example shows how second level texts touch upon cultural representation within the literary text:

> DATA 11 "*You learn about the life of fugitives and that fugitives don't have an easy life. For that reason, I find the book very special and I think the story of the book is very important because it is realistic as well.*"

This student argues liking the literary text for being a true-to-life and educational representation of the daily experiences of refugees. In other words, the excerpt reflects an understanding of these representations as reality, and they are not critically analyzed.

In contrast, first level texts often question the cultural representations found in the book:

> DATA 12 "*One theme of the book is stereotypes. The father is in jail for drug trafficking. Actually, the rich man has ordered a package and hasn't told the father about the contents. The bad character is the rich man. He is not a refugee. Who are the police going to trust: a refugee from Africa or a rich man from Spain? It is clear, the police will trust a rich man from Spain. I like the book for that reason. It shows the life of a refugee. Many people don't know about that and many stereotypes exist.*"

This student argues that the theme is not migration as such, but rather stereotyped images concerning the topic. Furthermore, the student evaluates the literary text in terms of how it deconstructs such images, arguing that it not only contributes to an understanding of others but also reveals stereotyped perceptions about cultures. Based on these findings we can argue that CCA manifests itself through an awareness of the fact that a literary text is not an accurate or complete representation of a culture, as it only portrays "slices" of cultures through, for example, the behaviors of various characters or through the multiple literary voices of the text. The development of CCA thus presupposes a careful examination and questioning of these cultural representations. As CCA requires the ability "to critically assess images of others by the media and deconstructing those imposed images often prevalent in popular discourse" (Matos & Melo-Pfeifer, 2020, p. 11), we can argue that second level critical evaluation means to discuss how literary texts carry cultural representations, i.e., images of the Self and the Other, whereas first level critical evaluation also implies questioning these representations and elaborating on how literature can construct but also deconstruct cultural stereotypes.

Transformation (cognitive gains, personal response). Student texts often evaluate the literary text stressing its value for learning from another angle about a worldwide social justice issue, such as migration. They often describe the literary texts' value in terms of getting to know an otherwise unfamiliar story. Besides these cognitive gains, students also evaluate the literary text based on a more personal reception.

Third level texts mostly contain an unreasoned personal response, using many rating words but without justification, as seen here:

> DATA 13 "*As I said before, I like the book because it is very exciting. The end of the story has some exciting moments for example. I think the story is intriguing and I like that aspect of the book.*"

In other words, students describe their personal response to the literary text, but do not elaborate on this. In second level texts students refer more strongly to how the text stimulates conscientization:

> DATA 14 "*I would definitely recommend reading this book, because you get a completely different view of migration.*"

This student describes how the literary text presents the migratory experience in a different way than how the topic is often treated (e.g., in the news) by presenting it through the migrant's own point of view, but it does not elaborate on how it affected perceptions of the self. In first level texts on the contrary, students not only describe how the literary text can challenge perceptions about migration but also how the text has changed them personally. The following example illustrates this well:

> DATA 15 "*Also, throughout the book, you learn more about immigration. It is a very important topic to learn about, because it is something that not many Dutch people know anything about. The book tells the story of Misael and the impact it had on his life.*"

> *I was surprised, because I didn't know that immigration was so hard. I loved the book, because it made me look at the matter in a different way*."

This excerpt shows that after the reading of a less common story, the student became aware of another reality, causing them to reconsider their position on the topic of immigration. Moreover, the acknowledgement that "many Dutch people" are not aware of this reality might indicate that this student recognizes that change in the self is not only needed for themselves personally, but also on a broader societal scale. When we interpret our findings through the lens of transformative reading theory, we can argue that in third level texts, mostly hedonic or story-driven reasons are raised. Based on the observation that second level texts describe how reading literary texts can challenge assumptions about others, and first level texts also provide detail on how they give insight into the Self, we argue that critical evaluation consists of applying eudemonic reasoning by elaborating on how the text changed insight "into oneself, into characters inhabiting the (fictional) story world, and into others in the real world" (Schrijvers *et al.*, 2019, p. 2). As a critical perspective on interculturality puts more emphasis on transformative learning, adding transformation as a criterion to our new CCA definition might bring attention to how also literary texts can contribute to that aim and help to provide a bridge between theoretical perspectives on critical interculturality and literary reading.

Rubric

Based on our findings, we propose a rubric as presented in Table 1, as having five criteria (social justice, emotions, conflict, cultural representation and transformation), distributed across two objectives (critical reasoning and critical evaluation), and according to three levels (third level, second level, first level). While one might object to a distinction between different levels in intercultural learning, not only from an ethical perspective but also because intercultural learning is not a linear process from one level to the next (Borghetti, 2017; Hoff, 2020), Holmes and MacDonald (2020) point out that when referring to "good" interculturalists, one must be critical about the meaning of "good" and make explicit what this constitutes. Our rubric does not generate a grade (third level, second level, first level) without further feedback, but makes explicit what CCA entails for the context of literature education. It can thus be used to identify strengths and weaknesses of a task, to provide evidence for students' learning but also as a guideline for teachers to embed critical interculturality more strongly in their literature classes.

Table 1 *Rubric for Critical Cultural Awareness in Student Texts About Literature*

	Third level	**Second level**	**First level**
A. Critical reasoning: theme, characters, narrative voice, setting and plot	*Students reason about the literary text through a textual analysis that contains some of the five elements.*	*Students reason about the literary text through a textual analysis that contains most of the five elements.*	*Students reason about the literary text through a textual analysis that contains all five elements with a focus on subjectivities.*
1: social justice	Students describe theme and characters as they merely appear in the story.	Students explain theme and characters relating it to issues of social justice in the world.	Students analyze theme and characters through juxtaposing various discourses on social justice issues and expose how they reflect notions of power.
2: emotions	Students describe the characters' roles in the story and sometimes mention the narrative voice.	Students describe how they understand the emotions of characters and explain the effect of the narrative voice.	Students problematize characters with a focus on emotions, explain the narrative voice in terms of effect and affect and also address their personal engagement.

3: conflict	Students describe setting superficially, and plot as an enumeration of events.	Students describe setting and plot through a lens of conflict.	Students explain setting and plot paying attention to conflictual dimensions and constructively analyze cultural conflict by recognizing and exploring power relations.
B. Critical evaluation: literary imaging, cognitive gains and personal response	*Students evaluate the literary text with respect to what they learned from it and how they liked it.*	*Students evaluate the literary text with respect to what they learned from it, how they liked it and what it showed them.*	*Students evaluate the literary text with respect to what they learned from it, how they liked it and what it showed them and include how it can be of value to other readers.*
4: cultural representation	Students mostly omit cultural aspects of the literary text.	Students pay attention to the fact that a text is a representation of culture but do not question cultural representations in the text.	Students question and examine cultural representations in the literary text, often explicitly addressing and challenging stereotyped images.
5: transformation	Students apply story-driven or hedonic reasoning.	Students apply eudaemonic reasoning, explaining how the text gave greater insight in fictional others and others in the world at large.	Students apply eudaemonic reasoning, explaining how the text gave greater insight in fictional others and others in the world at large but also in the self.

The categories which emerged from our analysis illustrate how critical reasoning about and evaluation of literature involve aspects of learning which move beyond Byram's definition of CCA. Some categories are clearly associated with a critical interculturality perspective (social justice, conflict and cultural representation), while others are more specific to literary reading (transformation and emotion). We thus propose a redefined conceptualization of CCA as "*the ability to critically reason about a literary text through a lens of social justice, emotions and conflict, and to critically evaluate it, examining cultural representations in the text and taking into account its potential for transformative reading*", and argue that this definition is more specifically operable in the context of literature teaching.

Conclusion

As there is a need for tangible criteria for 21st century intercultural teaching and learning (Hoff, 2020), we would argue that our CCA definition is highly concrete and has large implications for the "implemented" and "attained" levels of curriculum design (cf. van den Akker *et al.*, 2006). Regarding the former, we propose that these criteria can support teachers as guidelines for how to approach CCA in the literature lesson, actively stimulating their students' critical stance. Teachers who are interested in using literature in the language classroom not just for language proficiency or literary analysis but also with more social objectives, can use the criteria as a tool to inform their teaching, turning "language teachers into agents of social change" (Kramsch, 1996, p. 8). When looking at the attained level, students can use these criteria as guidelines in preparation of task execution. It can show them that CCA is not about simply comparing cultures but implies juxtaposing cultural discourses and representations and analyzing these to identify power imbalances, and that literature can be a means to touch upon such issues. As we focused specifically on the content and not on the linguistic features of the student texts, the criteria can also work as guidelines for other types of tasks, such as speaking tasks, or for oral assessment. Thus, independent of how teachers and students make use of the proposed tangible categories for either lesson content, assessment criteria or as guidelines for writing and speaking about

notions of culture in literary texts, using them will embed CCA more strongly in the domain of literary pedagogy, promoting literature education that is not so much focused on cultural information, but rather on transformation.

Some possible limitations of our study must also be acknowledged. As the rubric has arisen from a specific Dutch secondary education classroom setting and pertains to a particular literary genre, it will not automatically be appropriate for evaluating all written products in any FL literature class. In this study, only two specific Spanish language texts with a migration theme were used, both written from an anti-discriminatory perspective toward refugees. Different types of literary texts, with other themes, written from different perspectives, might yield another type of rubric. Although this may limit the practical applicability of the assessment rubric, we argue that migration is an important global human rights issue to consider in critical intercultural education. Moreover, although the rubric has arisen from an A2-B1 level Spanish as a FL class in the Netherlands, it is generic in such a way that it can also be applied to FL literary texts with social justice themes for other language teaching settings. Another limitation to be aware of was that the research was conducted with students with A2-B1 level writing skills who were not informed about what CCA entails. This may have limited the extent to which they were able to formulate a critical argument in a refined or detailed way. Although some of the students (second level – first level texts) were able to articulate considerable, relevant aspects of CCA, our rubric might have yielded different criteria if this research had been performed among students with higher L2 levels or students who had been taught about criticality prior to the task. It is therefore relevant to do further research at level B2 and investigate texts of students who were informed about CCA beforehand.

Moreover, we do not wish to neglect some limitations of using rubrics for literature teaching in general. A rubric is merely a tool, and may guide, but not prescribe, literary interpretation. We wish to emphasize that every text allows different kinds of interpretations, and readers are entitled to their own. In addition, every teacher has different purposes for using a literary text in class. Nevertheless, when teaching in the classroom focuses on criteria as described in a rubric, and that rubric is used to determine to what extent these criteria are reflected in student outcomes, the rubric has a significant impact on pedagogical practice as both teachers and students tend to pay more attention to the key objectives of a task by focusing on what is considered most important. As opposed to instrumental uses for psychometric testing, the purpose of our rubric is educational, and it guides students and teachers in conceptualizing literary reading as a doorway to CCA. Thus, despite the limitations of our study, the rubric has widespread implications, and two promising lines of future work are suggested by the present results. As a first line, we suggest that it would be valuable for researchers to explore how teachers make use of the described categories in their lessons and to investigate empirically how such pedagogical practice can contribute to higher levels of criticality. Secondly, we propose that future research explores how this rubric can be applied or improved to also cover other types of literary texts. Setting out these lines of research may elaborate more in depth on how the notion of critical interculturality can be adapted in pedagogical practice which focuses on the development of CCA and eventually embed our field of research—literature teaching—even more strongly within this paradigm.

This study has explored how CCA is embodied in student texts and formulated a set of tangible criteria—presented in a rubric with five categories (Table 1)—as to what a critical student text entails. As it has been addressed by many scholars that a critical intercultural stance will not be developed by merely exposing students to FL literary texts, this study has translated the definition of CCA into concrete descriptors which are suited to serve the secondary FL teaching classroom. It is exactly the product that resulted from this study, the rubric, which may facilitate FL teachers to guide their students with a clear expectation of what critical literary reasoning and evaluation consists of, and that CCA in a literature teaching context can be expressed through different parameters. While we are fully aware that various scholars have questioned the need to assess levels of intercultural communicative

competence (Borghetti, 2017; Hoff, 2020), and that literature educators tend to teach literature for reasons of *subjectification*, more than for *qualification*, we believe that the development of this rubric can offer guidance for literature education in which the notion of CCA is preeminent.

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Appendix

DATA 1: El tema del libro son los inmigrantes porque los protagonistas, Abdel y su padre, son inmigrantes en España.

DATA 2: El tema del libro es inmigración y el libro muestra un acontecimiento que es igual a la real-idad en el mundo. Muchas personas van a otro país por una vida mejor.

DATA 3: Me parece que el tema de este libro es la vida de los inmigrantes ilegales. En el periódico o las noticias se sugiere a menudo que los inmigrantes solamente emigran por razones

económicas. En contra, este libro muestra que no siempre se emigra por razones económicas. Abdel y su padre son oprimidos, porque no tienen un propio país. Porque no tienen un lugar para ellos, la vida es muy difícil. Huir a España era su única esperanza de una buena vida. El libro también muestra la dificultad de este viaje.

DATA 4: La historia trata de un pobre joven que tiene muchas esperanzas de una vida mejor. Lees la historia desde la perspectiva del niño. El niño cuenta lo que está pasando.

DATA 5: A menudo Misael está muy cansado de caminar mucho y está a menudo asustado. La historia se cuenta en la primera persona, por lo tanto es fácil de entender.

DATA 6: La historia se cuenta con los ojos de Misael. Esto te permite empatizar con él. Se muestra muchas de las razones por que los personajes sientan la necesidad de irse, y percibes la esperanza, y la tristeza de abandonar sus hogares.

DATA 7: Abdel y el padre de Abdel están refugiados en España. Ellos buscaron un trabajo, pero entonces su primera jefe engaña ellos. El padre de Abdel ir en la cárcel. Abdel reconocí nuevos amigos y prepara planes de venganza, pero los planes fallar.

DATA 8: El libro es sobre migración en Europa. El protagonista es Abdel. Abdel es un hombre joven que quieres una vida mejor en Europa, pero el camino es muy peligroso y duro.

DATA 9: La historia trata sobre la vida del protagonista, Abdel. Desciende de los Tuaregs, una tribu nómada del Sahara occidental. Su madre murió por el rey marroquí Hassan II, cuando Marruecos conquistó su país. Como no pueden vivir en libertad en Marruecos, el padre de Abdel decidió huir a España. El viaje fue terrible, y no mejoran sus vidas. Cuando Abdel y su padre llegan a la costa Andaluza, tienen que huir de la policía. Con alguna dificultad encuentran trabajo, pero en poco tiempo realizan que son ligado con el tráfico de drogas ...Al final, Abdel encuentra la situación difícil, en la que tiene que declarar contra su padre, para mejorar sus vidas.

DATA 10: Me parece que en la clase de español este libro es muy importante. Es interesante y muy bien para el dominio del idioma.

DATA 11: Aprendes sobre la vida de los fugitivos y que los fugitivos no tienen una vida fácil. Por eso razón, encuentro el libro muy especial y pienso que la historia del libro es muy importante porque es realista también.

DATA 12: Un tema del libro es estereotipos. El padre está en la cárcel por tráfico de drogas. En realidad, el hombre rico ha pedido un paquete y no ha dicho el padre sobre el contenido. El personaje malo es el rico. No es un refugiado. A quién la policía va a confiar: ¿un refugiado de África o un hombre rico de España? Es claro, la policía va a confiar en un hombre rico de España. Me gusta el libro por eso. Mucha gente no sabe nada sobre esta vida y hay muchos estereotipos.

DATA 13: Como ya dije, me gusta ese libro pues es muy emociante. El fin tiene unos momentos muy emociante por ejemplo. Creo que la historia es muy conmovedor y me gusta ese aspecto del libro.

DATA 14: Definitivamente recomendaría la lectura de este libro, porque se obtiene una visión completamente diferente de la migración.

DATA 15: También, durante todo el libro, se va aprendiendo más sobre la inmigración. Es un tema muy importante para aprender, porque es algo de que no muchos holandeses saben nada. En el libro se cuenta la historia de Misael y el impacto que tuvo en su vida. Me sorprendió, porque no sabía que la inmigración fuera tan dura. Me encantó el libro, porque me hizo ver el tema de una manera diferente.