

Cultural and Linguistic Identity Portfolio

Based on the Council of Europe's 'Reference Framework
of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC)'

Mari Varsányi



human-ed
Education that connects



"If you don't know where you come from, how will you know where you're going?"
- proverb -

Table of Content

Table of Content	1
Foreword	2
Rationale and Context	3
Theoretical Frameworks and Aims	3
Structure and Suggested Implementation	4
Learning Goals and RFCDC descriptors	5
Self-assessment - round 1	6
Activities	
1, What's in a Name?	7
2, Identity Card	8
3, My Body, My Languages	9
4, My Languages and I	10
5, Guided Imagery Meditation	11
6, The View from my Window	13
Self-assessment - round 2	14

Foreword

As a teacher, you have power. You have a choice. You can urge your immigrant / refugee / bicultural students to speak only the local / dominant language. You can banish their languages from your classroom. You can choose to educate them about - and only about - the local / dominant culture(s). You can ignore your students' identity. You have the power to.

Or you can embrace your students, as they are. You can show them that they matter. They *and* their cultural heritage, including their languages. You can let them speak their languages. You can let them teach, and learn from each other. You can let them share their stories. You can watch them thrive. You have the power to.

This portfolio is certainly not THE answer, but it matters. It matters because it opens up new dimensions in the student-teacher interaction. I encourage you to hand over the floor to your students, and sniff into the richness of your intercultural and multilingual classroom through these playful activities. Once there, you will not want to turn back.

This portfolio is dedicated to the teachers of DENISE, and to all teachers who affirm their students' sense of self. Special thanks go to the trainers of the Council of Europe's previous teacher training programme: the Pestalozzi Programme, especially to Ildikó Lázár and Pascale Mompoin-Gaillard. Their work, which lives on within Learn to Change, Change to Learn, and their [publications](#) have inspired several of these activities. Last but not least, I am grateful for the support of the coordinators of the NECE Focus Group on Competences for Democratic Culture: Patricia Hladschik and Claudia Lenz.

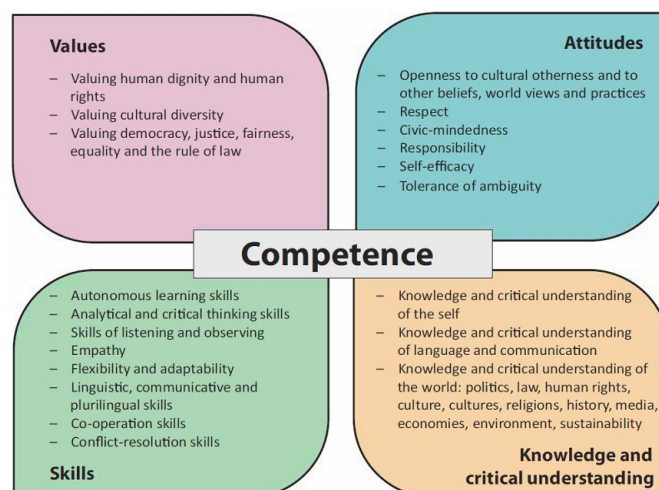
Rationale and Context

When it comes to today's increasingly diverse classrooms, there is a tendency to talk about difficulties and challenges, ignoring the arising opportunities that diversity brings along. This portfolio builds on the firm belief that students bring with them a rich cultural and linguistic heritage, and it is their teachers' task to tap into this, hereby helping their students feel at home, and create inclusive schools.

During my work of setting up, and teaching at the superdiverse bilingual school DENISE in Amsterdam, Netherlands, I kept looking for ways to help my students belong, open up and turn to each other with respect and curiosity. These activities - partly my own, partly inspired by the Pestalozzi Programme's training modules, and partly deriving from educational folklore - have helped me in achieving these goals. My colleagues who carried out the piloting phase, have reported similarly positive results. "We have seen that our students feel more comfortable when they can reflect on their linguistic and cultural background", one of the teachers, Petra van der Geest commented. "We need to make more space for these competences."

Theoretical Frameworks and Aims

The activities in the portfolio are derived from the fields of Intercultural Competence and Multilingualism, and are structured around the Council of Europe's Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCD). The descriptors chosen for this portfolio look at students' attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding. With the help of the portfolio, students work towards certain learning goals through selected activities, and reflect on the process.



Source: [Council of Europe's Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture](#)

The Cultural and Linguistic Identity portfolio (CLIP) has been developed in order to:

- offer students a smoother transition to their new environment, by reflecting on their (changing) identity
- boost students' self-confidence by letting them stay connected with, and live their identities
- help teachers gain a better understanding of their students' background, so as to be able to build on it

Structure and Suggested Implementation

The portfolio consists of two main parts: the self-assessment sheets at the beginning and at the end of the portfolio, and the activities themselves. The activities are formatted as hand-outs that are ready to be used by the students.

The pre-and post activity self-assessment tools consciously focus on the RFCDC descriptors, to help students reflect on their potential growth regarding the given competencies. Both versions are meant to be filled in and kept, so that the students can compare their results once they have finished with the portfolio.

Ideally, all the handouts are kept by students in a folder, to allow for continuous reflection. You might want to ask students to create artistic cover pages for their portfolios, using [identity self-portraits](#) or specific prompts, such as Frida Kahlo's 'Self Portrait On The Borderline Between Mexico And The United States' or Chagall's 'The Fiddler'. Most importantly, feel free to enrich the portfolio with your own ideas. Enjoy!



Source: Wikimedia Commons

Learning Goals and RFCDC descriptors

The portfolio focuses on the following descriptors deriving from the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture:

ATTITUDES

Openness to Cultural Otherness

21 Shows interest in learning about people's beliefs, values, traditions and world views

Tolerance of Ambiguity

52 Is comfortable in unfamiliar situations

SKILLS

Skills of Listening and Observing

71 Listens attentively to other people

KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge and Critical Understanding of the Self

109 Can reflect critically on himself/herself from a number of different perspectives

Self-assessment - round 1

1 - never 4 - often	2 - rarely 5 - always	3 - sometimes	1	2	3	4	5
I enjoy hearing about other people's beliefs, values, traditions and world views							
I feel comfortable in new, unfamiliar situations							
I listen attentively to people							
I know myself well							

1, What's in a Name?

CDC Components

- Can reflect critically on himself/herself from a number of different perspectives (109)
- Listens attentively to other people (71)

What is your full name? How do you like being called? What does your name mean? Who were you named after? What do/don't you like about your name? Your name can tell a whole story. Take notes and share your story with the rest of the class.

Consider the following prompts:

- Full name
- Nickname(s)
- Ways in which your name is used/pronounced in different contexts
- The way in which you would like your name to be used/pronounced
- The meaning of your surname(s)
- The origin of your surname(s)
- The meaning of your first name
- The origin of your first name
- The origin of your second name(s)
- Cultural influences in your name
- What you like/dislike about your name

What's in a name?

2, Identity Card


CDC Components

- Can reflect critically on himself/herself from a number of different perspectives (109)
- Shows interest in learning about people's beliefs, values, traditions and world views (21)

What are traits/stereotypes that others associate with your culture, assign to you based on your looks / name / accent, etc.? Which of these traits don't you identify with (ascribed identity)? List them under "I'm not".

What are traits/communities/titles that you identify with (avowed identity)? List these under "I am". You might want to use some of these prompts, or any other ones:

- roles / relationships
- communities you identify with
- characteristics
- nationality
- religion
- places
- languages
- hobbies
- view on life

I'M NOT		I AM
		

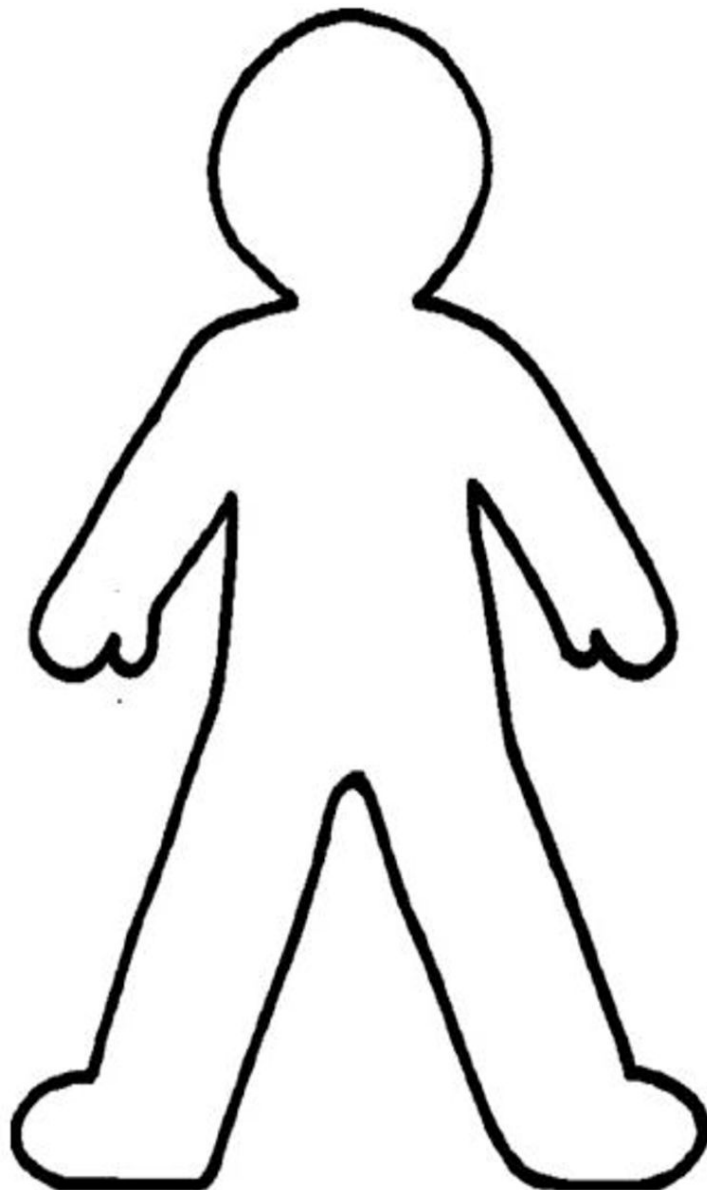
3, My Body, My Languages

CDC Components

- Can reflect critically on himself/herself from a number of different perspectives (109)
- Listens attentively to other people (71)

Which languages do you speak? Choose a color for each language, and create a legend to show which language each color stands for.

Color in your body outline, showing where the languages belong in your body.



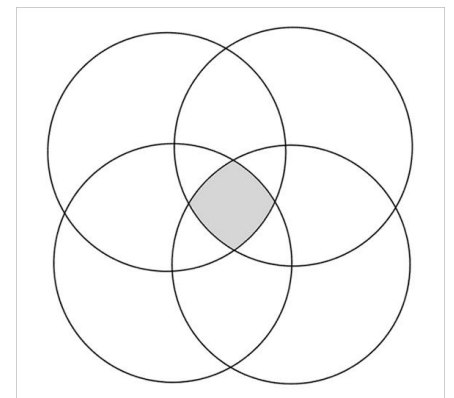
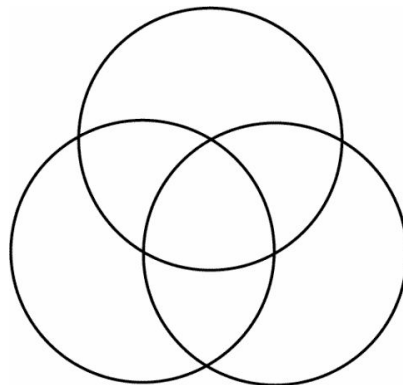
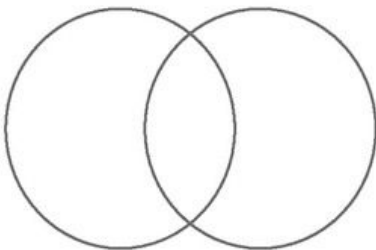
4, My Languages and I

CDC Components

- Can reflect critically on himself/herself from a number of different perspectives (109)
- Listens attentively to other people (71)



What language do you dream/think/love/eat in? Create a VENN diagram with the languages in your life. Use a separate colour for each circle, and label them to show which language each circle stands for. Then fill them in with activities you do. Pay attention to overlapping circles: you might have to put 'think' and 'speak' in more than one circle, if you speak and think in more than one language. Below are examples of VENN diagrams for 2, 3 or 4 languages. Once done, share your VENN diagram with the class.



5, Guided Imagery Meditation

CDC Components

- Can reflect critically on himself/herself from a number of different perspectives (109)
- Shows interest in learning about people's beliefs, values, traditions and world views (21)
- Is comfortable in unfamiliar situations (52)



Choose a place that you know very well. Either your hometown or a place where you lived for many years. Close your eyes for a few moments, and imagine you're in that place. What can you see, hear, smell, touch and taste? Open your eyes and note down your answers.

I'm in

I can see:

I can hear:

I can smell:

I can touch:

I can taste:

You will now write a "guided imagery" script to describe this place. Edit the template below. Go into details. What you want to end up with is a description that can help people that have never been to this place feel as if they were there for the first time. When you're finished with your script, take turns to lead each other through your journey by holding guided imagery meditations.

Change the words in *Italics* to describe the place you're thinking of

Imagine you are... walking toward *the ocean.... walking through a beautiful, tropical forest....*

You can hear *the waves up ahead....* you can smell *the ocean spray....* the air is *moist and warm....* feel a *pleasant, cool breeze blowing through the trees....*

You walk *along a path....* coming closer to *the sea....* as you come to *the edge of the trees,* you see *the brilliant aqua color of the ocean ahead....*

You walk out of *the forest and onto a long stretch of white sand....* the sand is *very soft powder....* imagine *taking off your shoes, and walking through the hot, white sand toward the water....*

The *beach is wide and long....*

Hear the *waves crashing to the shore....*

Smell the *clean salt water and beach....*

You gaze again *toward the water.... it is a bright blue-green....*

Up ahead is a *comfortable lounge chair and towel, just for you...*

Sit or lie down in *the chair, or spread the towel on the sand....* relax on the *chair or towel....* enjoying *the sun.... the breeze.... the waves....*

You feel peaceful and relaxed.... allow all your stress to melt away....

When you are ready to return from your journey, do so slowly....

Bring yourself back to your usual level of alertness and awareness....

Keep with you the feeling of calm and relaxation.... feeling ready to return to your day....

Open your eyes, stretch your muscles... and become fully alert... refreshed... and filled with energy.

This template is adapted from

<https://www.innerhealthstudio.com/visualization-relaxation.html>

6, The View from my Window

CDC Components

- Can reflect critically on himself/herself from a number of different perspectives (109)
- Listens attentively to other people (71)
- Is comfortable in unfamiliar situations (52)



During this activity you will be talking about a place where you have lived for a longer time, by describing the view from your window over there. You will work with a partner. Your partner will listen to you closely, and will draw your described view. Make sure to give a detailed description, and indicate where each item should come (e.g. “In the bottom left corner...”). You shouldn’t look at your partner’s drawing until it’s ready, but your partner can ask you questions (e.g. “What color are the leaves on the tree?”)

Once your partner’s done with drawing the view from your window, have a look and discuss what looks similar and what looks different in reality. If you have a photo, show them. Then swap roles.

As a follow-up, you can make an exhibition using the drawings, and - if you have them - photographs of the actual views. For the exhibition you can also put up a world map on the wall, and connect the “windows” to the appropriate location with the help of some string and pins.

Self-assessment - round 2

1 - never 4 - often	2 - rarely 5 - always	3 - sometimes	1	2	3	4	5
I enjoy hearing about other people's beliefs, values, traditions and world views							
I feel comfortable in new, unfamiliar situations							
I listen attentively to people							
I know myself well							

The Cultural and Linguistic Identity Portfolio (CLIP) is a hands-on tool meant for culturally diverse schools to invite their students' complex identities into the classroom.

Through the six imaginative activities of the portfolio, students reflect on their cultural heritage, while at the same time getting familiarized with that of their peers, this all resulting in a happy intercultural buzz. However, the portfolio goes further than celebrating diversity, as it also actively challenges stereotypes and dismantles the harmful taboo on multilingualism by giving space to students' languages.

Impressum

Mari Varsányi: Cultural and Linguistic Identity Portfolio
Based on the Council of Europe's 'Reference Framework
of Competences for Democratic Culture' (RFCDC)

Human-ed, 2020
Herculesstraat 43 A2, Amsterdam, 1076SB, The Netherlands
info@human-ed.org
<https://www.human-ed.org>

This publication was developed in the course
of the NECE Focus Group on Competences for Democratic Culture
(<https://www.politik-lernen.at/necefocusgroupcdc>) with financial support
of the Federal Agency for Civic Education/bpb (Germany).



human-ed
Education that connects