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Teaching Undergraduate Students about Cultural and Linguistic Diversity: Assessment and Pedagogical Challenges

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Abstract

Purpose: Diverse undergraduate students can play a critical role in increasing the number of culturally competent clinicians in the future. However, exploring how these students develop cultural and linguistic awareness is crucial. This study examined the development and assessment of cultural and linguistic awareness among a diverse group of undergraduate students who completed a dedicated course on cultural and linguistic diversity in communication disorders.

Method: We conducted quantitative and qualitative analyses to evaluate student growth. Ninety-seven undergraduate students from a public Hispanic-Serving Institution completed an adaptation of the *ASHA's Cultural Competence Checklist: Personal Reflection* at the beginning and end of a 16-week dedicated course. We analyzed the item responses using a paired *t*-test, and factor analyses were run to explore the potential presence of underlying constructs. We also analyzed open-ended students' reflections at the end of the semester.

Results: Students exhibited significant gains in cultural awareness. The exploratory factor analyses of the *Personal Reflection* responses at the beginning and end of the semester resulted in similar percentages of explained variance but by different item groupings. Students' reflections converged into two broad categories: (1) topics related to the *course content* and (2) student comments reflecting *internal processes*.

Conclusions: A dedicated course with relevant content may positively influence growth in cultural awareness in diverse undergraduate students. We discuss pedagogical challenges and potential mitigating approaches to develop and evaluate cultural awareness. Overall, our study offers insights into the development of cultural understanding among diverse undergraduate students and provides actionable recommendations for promoting a more inclusive and culturally responsive learning environment.

Keywords

Cultural and linguistic diversity, assessment, pedagogy

Cover Page Footnote

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In the United States, speech-language pathologists (SLPs) provide services to a growing number of diverse individuals. Challenges persist in meeting the needs of an expanding culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) client base, given the current homogeneity of SLPs. The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) reports that less than 9% of certified members self-identify as non-White (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association [ASHA], 2022a) and about 8% reported being multilingual service providers (ASHA, 2022b). Communication sciences and disorders (CSD) programs are increasing the number of diverse students they educate (Watts et al., 2023). In the 2020-2021 academic year, 32.5% of CSD undergraduate students and 25.2% of graduate students in SLP were from underrepresented backgrounds based on data from the Council of Academic Programs in Communication Sciences and Disorders (CAPCSD) and ASHA (Council of Academic Programs in Communication Sciences and Disorders [CAPCSD] & ASHA, 2022). However, in the general U.S. population, the percentage of self-identified non-White and Hispanic inhabitants is 57.8 (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.).

Professional organizations and higher education institutions worldwide recognize the urgent need to support and provide training in cultural competence (Gregersen-Hermans, 2017). Diversifying the educational pipeline is paramount to addressing the clinician-client mismatch in communication disorders (Pruitt-Lord et al., 2021). Diverse undergraduate students may be uniquely positioned to increase the number of culturally competent ASHA-certified members in the future. We need to understand, however, how these students develop cultural and linguistic competence. This study aimed to investigate the development of cultural awareness in undergraduate students with diverse backgrounds who completed a dedicated course, as well as the challenges involved in assessing this growth. To measure the students' self-perception of cultural awareness, an adapted version of the *ASHA's Cultural Competence Checklist: Personal Reflection* (ASHA, 2010) was administered at the beginning and end of the semester. Additionally, open-ended self-reflection prompts were given to students to gain a better understanding of their experiences, growth, and questions regarding cultural awareness. Methodological and pedagogical challenges in developing and evaluating cultural awareness among undergraduate CSD students are discussed, along with potential solutions to address these issues. Overall, this study provides valuable insights into the development of cultural understanding among diverse undergraduate CSD students and offers practical recommendations to promote a more inclusive and culturally responsive learning environment.

How We Educate CSD Students about Cultural Competence. In 1999, university programs began to revise coursework to meet the *ASHA-mandated* instructional standards for multicultural content in the curriculum (Stockman et al., 2004). Currently, the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (CAA) expects graduate programs to widely introduce theoretical and practical issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion across academic and clinical courses (Council for Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology, 2022). The implementation of multicultural instruction in CSD graduate programs has been primarily left to the discretion of individual universities, resulting in significant variability across CSD graduate programs. Currently, different frameworks for multicultural instruction, such as infusion, experiential, piecemeal, study abroad opportunities, and, to a lesser extent, dedicated courses are used in most graduate CSD programs (Alfano et al., 2021; Bradshaw & Randolph, 2021; de Diego-Lázaro, 2018; de Diego-Lázaro et al., 2020; Farrugia, 2021; Franca

& Harten, 2016; Matteliano & Stone, 2014; Pruitt-Lord et al., 2021; Stockman et al., 2008; Yoon, 2018).

Infusion of cultural competence in graduate courses refers to the intentional integration of knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to cultural awareness and responsivity across the curriculum. The different graduate courses may include topics such as cultural and linguistic diversity, cultural humility, social determinants of health, intersectionality, and culturally responsive assessment and intervention. Stockman and colleagues (2008) reported that although most of the faculty surveyed in their study preferred infusion instruction for practical reasons, more than a third recognized that infusion instruction alone is inadequate to train future culturally competent SLPs adequately. When Yoon (2018) conducted interviews with practicing SLPs regarding their graduate training experiences, the results indicated that infusion instruction only provides general information about diversity and lacks specific content and resources to address the unique needs of CLD populations effectively.

Experiential learning emphasizes hands-on and practical experience as a means of learning. Vale and Arnold (2019) examined how experiential learning, cultural and linguistic diversity, and clinical competence were integrated into one CSD course. Students participated as conversational partners with international students and completed pre- and post-surveys and post-experience reflections. The results indicated that experiential learning was an effective and accessible way to enhance students' cultural competence. Yoon (2018) similarly found that course assignments involving interaction with diverse communities could provide experiential and problem-based learning opportunities. Expanding the focus on diversity beyond international students to diverse local populations could further increase the effectiveness of this approach.

Other programs utilize a piecemeal approach by offering elective instruction on cultural competence to self-selected students (Franca & Harten, 2016; Matteliano & Stone, 2014). For example, there may be an opportunity for a bilingual or multicultural emphasis or a specialty track such as a bilingual certificate or specialization with set requisite courses (Pruitt-Lord et al., 2021; Quach & Tsai, 2017). Also, study abroad opportunities have been used to help students increase their cultural awareness and reflect on their personal and professional experiences upon returning state-side (de Diego-Lázaro, 2018; de Diego-Lázaro et al., 2020; Krishnan et al., 2017, 2021).

Additionally, other CSD graduate programs have stand-alone required classes on bilingualism or CLD topics in communication disorders (Stockman et al., 2008). A recent pedagogical innovation is the adoption of modules on cultural competence or intercultural learning developed by external institutions into CSD courses (Daughrity, 2021; Krishnan et al., 2021). Many CSD departments now introduce instruction on cultural humility, awareness, and competence at the undergraduate level since education alone at the graduate level may not comprehensively train culturally competent clinicians to treat CLD clients confidently (Farrugia, 2021).

How We Evaluate Growth in Cultural Awareness and Competence. Evaluating students' progress in cultural awareness and competence is challenging due to the lack of assessment tools to effectively measure these constructs (Fuertes et al., 2000; Kumas-Tan et al., 2007; Lin et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2014). A significant issue is that many of the existing instruments were developed for health professions without the input of clinicians from diverse backgrounds. As a

result, these measures prioritize assessing comfort and confidence in working with diverse communities over understanding or appreciating their cultural values, perspectives, and worldviews (Kohnert et al., 2003). Many assessment tools assume that culture is primarily synonymous with race and ethnicity, evaluated against white and Western norms (Kumas-Tan et al., 2007). This approach ignores historical racism, systematic ethnocentrism, and long-standing inequities. Additionally, it may result in social desirability bias, as many systematic reviews have shown an overestimation of cultural awareness, likely due to inaccurate self-reporting on sensitive topics (Kumas-Tan et al., 2007; Lin et al., 2017). Social desirability bias occurs when individuals report their views inaccurately to present themselves more positively (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960). Similar methodological challenges have been observed in studies of cultural competence education in other health professions. Multimodal evaluation, including both quantitative and qualitative data, is recommended to capture the impact of curriculum and/or learning experiences on students' cultural competence development (DiBiasio et al., 2023; Gallagher & Polanin, 2015).

ASHA's Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) developed cultural competence checklists that certified clinicians could use to heighten cultural awareness and self-reflection on service provision to CLD populations (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, n.d.). Of interest to the present study is *ASHA's Cultural Competence Checklist: Personal Reflection,* which contains multiple statements to be rated with a five-point Likert scale (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2010). In its original or modified format, this checklist has been used in research to evaluate graduate students' cultural competence. For instance, Quach and Tsai (2017) adopted numerous questions from the *Personal Reflection* form to assess the outcomes of *Project Tapestry*, a specialized graduate training program to prepare culturally competent SLPs. In 2021, ASHA revised the *Personal Reflection* form (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2021); however, to our knowledge, researchers have yet to use the checklist with undergraduate students.

Some items on the *Personal Reflection* checklist pertain to cultural and linguistic attitudes and beliefs. However, how these items are related or what constructs they represent is unclear. Additionally, it is unclear how these attitudes may change after gaining knowledge about diversity. To address these questions, we used factor analysis to examine changes in the *Personal Reflection* checklist items before and after an undergraduate dedicated course on cultural and linguistic diversity (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).

Pedagogical Strategies that May Support Cultural and Linguistic Diversity Instruction at the Undergraduate Level. At a Southern California public university, the undergraduate course *Cultural and Linguistic Diversity in Communication Disorders* is a designated CSD 3-unit core course, usually completed during the senior year. The 16-week course aims to facilitate students' growth in cultural awareness through introspection and evaluation of personal beliefs while exploring, integrating, and interpreting demographic data of surrounding communities. In alignment with the pedagogical framework recommended by Horton-Ikard and colleagues (2009), the course's six learning outcomes relate to *multicultural awareness, knowledge*, and *skill.* Learning outcomes for *awareness* are: (a) to identify the cultural and linguistic variables that affect communication disorders and (b) to demonstrate respect for diversity and empathy via perspective-taking. The learning objectives for *knowledge* are: (c) to determine the relevance of cultural and linguistic variables in the characteristics of speech and language disorders and (d) to contrast

monolingual and multilingual language development. The learning outcomes for *skill* include: (e) to differentiate between language disorders and language differences and (f) to integrate cultural and linguistic variables into the basic assessment and intervention principles of speech-language pathology and audiology.

A key signature assignment in this course is the *Neighborhood Diversity Project* developed as part of the City-Based Curricula Faculty Learning Community, a 2015 university initiative to promote community involvement and civic engagement among undergraduate students (Greene & Simon-Cereijido, 2019). In this experiential assignment, students select, explore, and investigate a neighborhood in their city or county and prepare a short presentation based on ethnographic principles. Through this experiential assignment, students can gain insights into the demographic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds of the populations they will likely encounter in their professional careers after graduation. Students are expected to: (a) access and summarize primary data about the demographics of a chosen neighborhood to learn about the cultural and linguistic diversity of the area; (b) locate neighborhood resources such as schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, clinics, medical centers, and after-school programs that may serve as valuable assets for individuals with communication disorders; and (c) interpret the significance of visual representations and cultural artifacts of a neighborhood, such as signage, billboards, restaurants, stores, and landmarks. Finally, students must create an "action plan" outlining the specific steps they would take to become competent and effective clinicians in the communities they are studying. This goal-setting assignment is crucial in guiding students to reflect on how they can best prepare themselves culturally and linguistically as future professionals. Structured experiential activities, especially when coupled with a written goal-setting assignment, offer valuable avenues for students to expand their understanding of diverse cultures, including their own. This assignment also helps facilitate engagement in self-reflection and class discussions during oral presentations (Darby & Lang, 2019; Lubinski & Matteliano, 2008).

In this study, we report how diverse undergraduate students who completed the *Cultural and Linguistic Diversity in Communication Disorders* course rated their self-perception of cultural awareness at the beginning and end of the semester. In particular, we analyzed their responses to an adaptation of the *ASHA's Cultural Competence Checklist: Personal Reflection* and explored the potential presence of underlying constructs. We also analyzed open-ended responses to a self-reflection prompt at the end of the semester. Finally, we discuss the pedagogical challenges of developing and evaluating cultural awareness and competence.

Methods

Participants. This study received Institutional Review Board approval and was conducted over two semesters in Fall 2016 and Spring 2017. Two of the authors were the undergraduate course instructors and shared the *Cultural and Linguistic Diversity in Communication Disorders* course syllabus, materials, and assignments across both semesters.

A total of 112 students completed the course; ninety-seven signed the consent forms and agreed to participate in this study. Although individual demographic information was not collected for this study, the University Institutional Effectiveness dashboard indicates that the university serves as a predominantly Hispanic-Serving Institution, with the CSD department student body self-reporting

as 71.8% and 73.2% Hispanic each semester. About half of the department students were first generation college students (i.e., their parents did not attend college), and a third were eligible for Pell grants (i.e., students who display exceptional financial need; Federal Student Aid, n.d.) (see Table 1).

Table 1

Demographic Breakdown of the Department Student Body in Percentages During the Study

Race and ethnicity	Fall 2016	Spring 2017
Hispanic	71.8%	73.2%
White	8.3%	7.5%
Asian American	7.5%	7.7%
Black	3.2%	2.6%
International	4.0%	4.3%
Pacific Islander	0.2%	0&
Two or More races	2%	1.7%
Unknown	3%	3%
Parental Education		
First Generation Student	47.6%	50.2%
Parent with some college or a two-year college degree	26.7%	25.4%
Parent with a four-year college degree or higher	20.6%	20.1%
Pell eligibility		
Eligible	64.3%	63.1%
Non-eligible	35.7%	36.9%

Procedures. At the start of each semester, the instructors introduced the study to the students, explained the consent form procedures, and gave them time to review the form and decide whether to participate or not. The instructors emphasized that participation was voluntary and confidential to avoid any pressure to consent. All students, whether they participated or not, had to complete the same coursework to meet the course requirements. The instructors did not know who signed the consent form to participate in the study when grading the students' work. Grades were posted before conducting any data input or analysis.

Students completed an adaptation of *ASHA's Cultural Competence Checklist: Personal Reflection* (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2010) at the semester's start and end; the forms were stored for later analysis in sealed envelopes. At the end of the semester, students could respond to a self-reflection prompt; the responses were stored for later analyses as well. The prompt was ungraded to reduce the students' anxiety about getting the "right" answer. After posting course grades, we assigned an identification number to those students who signed the consent form and reviewed the *Personal Reflection* checklist responses and prompt answers. We exercised attentive care to remove any potential identification from the raw checklist forms and prompt reflections.

ASHA's Cultural Competence Checklist: Personal Reflection (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2010). ASHA developed this form to heighten clinicians' awareness of how they view clients/patients from CLD populations. The 44 items in the checklist are to be rated using a Likert scale from 1 (*Strongly Agree*), to 5 (*Strongly Disagree*), including a rating of 3

(*Neutral*). We deemed 12 of the 44 items suited and relevant to be answered by undergraduate students without clinical experience (see Table 2). The selected items were modified and edited to be suitable for undergraduate students. For example, the first item (i.e., "I treat all of my clients with respect for their culture") was changed to "I will treat all of my clients with respect for their culture."

A total score was calculated by adding the 12 individual item scores. Total scores could range from 12 (high agreement) to 60 (low agreement). Low scores indicate high cultural awareness, while high scores indicate low cultural awareness (see Table 2).

Self-reflection prompt. At the end of the semester, students had the option to respond, without any grading consequence, to the following ungraded prompt: "Please choose one item from the checklist and explain how this course content has modified your understanding since the beginning of the semester." This prompt allowed students to reflect on course content, activities, and assignments, including the *Neighborhood Diversity Project*. Thirteen out of 97 participants opted not to respond to this prompt. We carefully read and transcribed the prompted reflections for coding and analysis.

Data Analysis.

Quantitative analysis. The total scores on the baseline *ASHA's Cultural Competence: Personal Reflection* checklist were compared across the two semesters and across instructors using independent *t*-test analysis. Paired *t*-test analyses were run to compare pre- and post-course total scores. We also calculated the percentage of students whose checklist total scores changed at the end of the semester. We classified students into three groups: those showing no change, those showing increased agreement or awareness as indicated by lower scores at the semester end, and those showing decreased agreement or awareness by having higher scores at the end of the course (refer to Table 3).

Two separate factor analyses of the *Personal Reflection* checklists were conducted. For each dataset, we inspected the bivariate correlation matrix to determine whether there was a need to eliminate items. If an item had eight or more correlations below .25, it was eliminated from the factor analysis. The factor analyses aimed to explore the potential explanatory constructs in the *Personal Reflection* checklist at each timepoint (beginning and end of the semester). Since measuring cultural and linguistic awareness is challenging, identifying factors in the checklist could help us understand the constructs that support awareness in CSD students. After completing the course, the factor loadings may change and explain a different proportion of variability (see Table 4).

Qualitative analysis. After carefully reading the prompt responses, we generated initial codes associated with students' responses and determined that the responses best converged into two broad code types: (a) codes related to the *course content*; and (b) student comments reflecting *internal processes* such as self-awareness, attitude changes, respect, perceptions about the role of course activities, and plans for future actions. After more detailed analysis and consensus, we identified specific topics within the two broad codes and recurrent words within the topics (see Table 5).

Table 2

Adapted ASHA's Cultural Competence Checklist: Personal Reflection (ASHA, 2010) Item Means and Standard Deviations at the Beginning of the Semester and at the End of the Semester

Item number	Adapted Statements	Beginning of the semester *Mean (S.D.)*	End of the semester *Mean (SD)*
1	I will treat all clients and students with respect for their culture	1.05 (0.22)	1.03 (0.17)
2	I do not impose my beliefs and value systems on friends, other students and future clients, their family members, or their friends	1.38 (0.57)	1.21 (0.43)
3	I believe it is acceptable to use a language other than English in the U.S.	1.20 (0.45)	1.14 (0.50)
4	I accept other people's decisions as to the degree to which they choose to acculturate to the dominant culture	1.57 (0.75)	1.29 (0.59)
5	I will provide services to clients and students who are GLBTQ (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, or Queer) once I am a clinician	1.11 (0.38)	1.05 (0.22)
6	I am driven to respond to others' insensitive comments or behaviors	2.36 (0,98)	2.21 (1.18)
7	I am aware that the roles of the family members may differ within or across culture or families	1.16 (0.37)	1.09 (0.29)
8	I recognize family members as decision makers for services, education, and support to clients.	1.36 (0.54)	1.19 (0.39)
9	I respect non-traditional family structures (e.g., divorced parents, same gender parents, grandparents as guardians and/or caretakers).	1.10 (0.37)	1.07 (0.30)
10	I understand the difference between a communication disability and a communication difference.	1.44 (0.66)	1.10 (0.31)
11	I understand that views of the aging process may influence the clients'/families' decision to seek intervention.	1.38 (0.60)	1.13 (0.34)
12	I understand that there are several American English dialects.	1.34 (0.59)	1.09 (0.32)
	Total Score	16.46 (3.34)	14.61 (3.07)

Results

Quantitative analysis. The initial *Personal Reflection* checklist total scores were not significantly different across semesters, $t(95) = .669$, $p = .505$, or instructors, $t(95) = .679$, $p = .499$. Thus, pre- and post-course checklist results were compared for the complete participant set ($n = 97$). After completing the course, students showed increased cultural awareness, with higher agreement with checklist statements ($M = 14.61$, $SD = 3.07$, range = 12-27) compared to the beginning of the semester ($M = 16.46$, $SD = 3.34$, range = 12-27). The difference between pre- and post-course responses was significant, $t(96) = 6.157$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.58$. Item 6, "*I am driven to respond to others' insensitive comments or behaviors*," had the lowest agreement at both timepoints. See Table 2 for means and standard deviations of total scores and individual items at both timepoints.

At the beginning of the semester, a small proportion of students (9.3%) strongly agreed with all statements on the *Personal Reflection* checklist. This number increased to 29.9% by the end of the semester, indicating potential growth in cultural competence and awareness. However, the initial number of students who strongly agreed with the statements suggests the possibility of a social desirability bias (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960). Table 3 displays the percentage of students who increased, decreased, or did not change in their agreement with the checklist items from the beginning to the end of the course among the 88 students who did not strongly agree with all items initially.

Table 3

Percentage and Number of Students who Increased or Decreased Their Cultural Awareness Among Students who Did Not Strongly Agree with All Items at the Beginning of the Semester

Participants who …	Percentage (*n*)
Increased awareness	70% (62)
Decreased awareness	20% (17)
Did not change	10% (9)

Note: n = 88

We examined the intercorrelations between variables before performing the baseline checklist factor analysis. Due to their low correlations, we excluded five items (items 4, 6, 8, 10, and 12) from the baseline checklist matrix. We repeated this step independently for the post-course checklist responses and found that only one item (item 1) needed to be excluded from the matrix.

We first analyzed the baseline checklist responses. A principal axis factor analysis was conducted with varimax rotation. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis, KMO = .759, and all KMO values for individual items were greater than .69 (above the acceptable limit of .5 (Field, 2013). The Bartlett's test of sphericity, $\chi^2(21) = 122.686$, $p < .0001$, indicated there were patterns between the items. Two eigenvalues above Kaiser's criterion of 1 explained 54.07% of the combined variance. The scree plot, which was used to identify the number of optimal factors with strong relations to the checklist items, justified the presence of one factor in the analysis of the participants' responses before the course. Table 4 shows the factor loadings of the baseline checklist after rotation; bold items indicate the factor

criterion of >.5. Factor loading, which is analogous to a Pearson correlation between a factor and a variable, provides information on the extent to which a variable contributes to a given factor (Field, 2013). Factor 1 can be interpreted as "respect for diversity" as it includes positive attitudes towards non-traditional family structures, gender diversity, cultures, and speakers of languages other than English.

A second factor analysis was performed using the participants' post-course responses, following the same procedures as before. The KMO measure was .819, and the KMO values for individual items were greater than .772. The Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant, $\chi^2(55)=354.174$, $p<.0001$. Two factors were identified as optimal for the analysis, and a different combination of items loaded onto each factor compared to the baseline analysis. Together, the two factors explained 50.86% of the variance in the responses (see Table 4). Factor 1 included three items with factor loadings exceeding the .5 criterion. The items that loaded highest corresponded to topics explicitly covered in the course, such as awareness of diverse family roles, respect for non-traditional family structures, and understanding of English dialects. Factor 2 had four items that loaded above the criterion. The two items with the highest factor loadings were related to acceptance of different levels of acculturation and gender diversity. The other two items were cross-loaded and referred to course content, such as understanding the difference between a communication disability and a communication difference and the aging process. The presence of cross-loadings made it challenging to interpret the unique relationship between items and factors 1 and 2, as both factors included items that referred to specific course content as well as respect for diversity. We then conducted a reliability analysis to measure the consistency of the factors at the two timepoints. Table 4 shows the factor loadings after rotation, eigenvalues, and percentage of explained variance for the two factor analyses in addition to Cronbach's α for the factors. The factor with an acceptable reliability coefficient was Factor 1 from the *Personal Reflection* checklist at the end of the semester.

Qualitative analysis. Two broad code types were identified in the students' reflections: codes related to *course content* and *internal thinking processes*. The words most frequently mentioned concerning *course content* included the following nouns and adjectives: "different/differences," "dialect/dialectical," "language/languages," "culture/cultural," "English," and "bilingual/ bilingualism." For instance, English dialects were the topic of 41% of the responses, with students acknowledging the existence of various English varieties, including African American English, Chicano English, and regional dialects like Southern California English. Roughly one-third of these responses emphasized that English dialects are rule-based, and some students rejected negative views of non-Standard dialects. Difference was discussed in 38% of the responses, with students emphasizing the importance of distinguishing language differences from language disorders and avoiding overidentification of disorders. The topic of culture was mentioned in 34% of the responses, with comments highlighting the importance of cultural competence, varying degrees of acculturation, and diversity in values. Students also contextualized cultural diversity within larger constructs, as evidenced by references to Greenfield's social change and human development continuum (Greenfield, 2009) and distinctions between urban, suburban, and rural communities. Regarding bilingualism, students expressed appreciation and respect for other languages and bilingualism. Some students valued readings about bilingualism in individuals with communication disorders, such as bilingual children with language impairments, hearing loss, or Down syndrome.

Table 4

Summary of Factor Analyses Results for the Personal Reflection at the Beginning and End of the Semester

Item number	Adapted Statements	Beginning of the semester		End of the semester	
		Factor 1	*Factor 2*	*Factor 1*	*Factor 2*
1	I will treat all clients and students with respect for their culture	**.545**		-	.-
2	I do not impose my beliefs and value systems on friends, other students and future clients, their family members, or their friends		**.815**	.381	.375
3	I believe it is acceptable to use a language other than English in the U.S.	**.501**		.336	.462
4	I accept other people's decisions as to the degree to which they choose to acculturate to the dominant culture	-	-		**.635**
5	I will provide services to clients and students who are GLBTQ (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, or Queer) once I am a clinician	**.562**	.403		**.604**
6	I am driven to respond to others' insensitive comments or behaviors	-	-		.324
7	I am aware that the roles of the family members may differ within or across culture or families	.457		**.887**	
8	I recognize family members as decision makers for services, education, and support to clients.	-	-	.437	.446
9	I respect non-traditional family structures (e.g., divorced parents, same gender parents, grandparents as guardians and/or caretakers).	**.620**		**.521**	
10	I understand the difference between a communication disability and a communication difference.	-	-	.322	**.601**
11	I understand that views of the aging process may influence the clients'/families' decision to seek intervention.	.354	.340	.336	**.539**
12	I understand that there are several American English dialects.	-	-	**.721**	.351
	Eigenvalues	2.767	1.018	4.442	1.153
	% of variance	39.53	14.54	40.38	10.48
	α	.644		.789	.677

Note: The items with a hyphen (-) had 8 or more low correlations (lower than .25) with the other items and were excluded from the factor analysis. Factor loadings over the .50 criterion appear in bold.

The most frequently used words in the participants' comments regarding the *internal thinking process* code were "respect" and "future." A large portion of the students (69%) demonstrated self-awareness by comparing their thoughts before and after the course. Learning about English dialects' linguistic characteristics and regularities was a recurrent topic in comments related to self-awareness and change. Additionally, 17% of students explicitly connected their insights to the *Neighborhood Diversity Project*. For example, one student stated that the project made them realize the importance of considering various factors when assessing and treating bilingual children (i.e., "*It gave me insight to many other different neighborhoods and how their factors differ from my own. It's important to know the types of people living in a certain neighborhood so that you can be a competent SLP*.") Many students (38%) discussed the topic of respect, including respect for gender diversity and non-traditional family structures. Moreover, 38% of students included plans for their future, envisioning how they would apply the course content in their future careers. Table 5 provides samples of student prompt responses.

Discussion

In this study, we explored how undergraduate students from diverse backgrounds exhibit changes in their cultural awareness after completing the undergraduate course *Cultural and Linguistic Diversity in Communication Disorders*. Overall, our findings suggest that a dedicated course incorporating relevant content supplemented by two key pedagogical course components may positively influence growth in cultural awareness in diverse students. The two components include (a) an experiential signature assignment, the *Neighborhood Diversity Project,* where students had a unique opportunity to complete an ethnographic investigation and explore aspects of the cultural and linguistic diversity of a neighborhood, followed by a goal-setting written assignment, and (b) a self-reflection on their experience through surveys (such as an adaptation of *ASHA's Cultural Competence Checklist: Personal Reflection)* and prompts at the beginning and end of the course.

Changes in self-perception of cultural awareness. Participating students' perceptions shifted towards explicitly acknowledging cultural and linguistic variability and respecting diverse clients' and family's perspectives as measured by the *Personal Reflection* checklist (see Table 2). Seventy percent of students increased their awareness (see Table 3). However, the item that promoted a commitment to respond to others' insensitive comments or behaviors consistently maintained the lowest level of agreement at both timepoints.

The checklist responses and written self-reflections indicated that students had improved their understanding of English dialects, bilingualism, and cultural diversity. For example, they reported understanding that all speakers, including English monolingual speakers and speakers of languages other than English, use different dialects and that those dialectical differences do not indicate language disorders. Many bilingual students reflected on their linguistic experiences and appreciated reading about multilingualism and specific communication disorders. We, as instructors, observed how diverse undergraduate students actively engaged in course activities, experiences, and discussions of their own culture, neighborhoods, and family perspectives. By connecting the course content to the students' communities and experiences in the *Neighborhood Diversity Project*, we were able to facilitate the early development of cultural awareness.

Table 5

Exemplary Samples of Participants' Responses from the Self-reflections by Themes

Initial Code	Theme	Exemplary samples of students' responses
Course content	Dialect/ dialectical differences	*Before this class I believed that there was only one appropriate way to talk because that was what I had been taught… I learned that there are **different** types of **dialects**, and it is NOT considered wrong, it's just a **different** way of speaking.* *Without knowledge of the **different** American-English **dialects**, we would wrongly diagnose a client with language impairment instead of a **dialectical difference**.*
	Bilingual language	*I learned about effective ways to determine whether a **bilingual** child has a communication **difference** or **disability.*** *I've learned that **code switching** is a normal process…not an issue of proficiency at all - a message I've already passed on to my family.* *Like most others, I held the belief that **bilingualism** negatively impacted a child when learning English academically. I now know **this not to be true.*** *The studies on how children with Down syndrome and language impairment can successfully **learn two languages** has really opened my mind to the idea that most children have the capacity to **learn multiple languages**.*
	Culture/cultural	*It is good to learn about other **cultures** to be a better clinician.* *There is NOT one right way to be a **family**.Part of being **culturally competent** is respecting **non-traditional family structures**.*
	English	*I feel like my **dialect** in my daily life is a mix of **Chicano English** and **California English**. This course has given me the metalinguistic abilities to be able to talk about language and how I think about language.* *Throughout this semester, from learning about different **English** dialects such as **Chicano English** and **African American English**, I have grown to understand that each dialect has its own structure and appropriate and "correct" in its own context.*
Internal thinking processes	Respect	*As a clinician one must **respect** their culture values and learn about all surrounding cultures to better **respect** and understand ones' upbringing.* *I believe it is important to **respect** members of the LGBTQIA+ community in general. In this class we have learned to **respect** everyone's culture and community. Part of being culturally competent is **respecting** non-traditional family structures.*
	Future	*As a **future** clinician, I hope to **improve** services for multilingual populations by supporting the different language needs of culturally linguistically diverse students* *I should not aim to make a **future** client use my own preferred dialect of English.* *I will definitely apply these concepts to my **future** practice.*

The quantitative analyses revealed that the *Personal Reflection* checklist is a general tool to assess broad gains in cultural awareness for this group of students. However, it does not appear to be a reliable tool for the measurement of underlying constructs of cultural awareness. First, at baseline, several checklist items did not correlate to others suggesting poor reliability, potentially due to inconsistent responses, the impact of social desirability, or even a limited understanding of the meaning of the statements. Correlations were more robust in the dataset at the end of the course, which suggests more consistency potentially related to a better understanding of the statements and the content.

The factor analyses compared what items from the checklist seemed to better explain changes in the variance of the cultural awareness scores from the beginning and the end of the semester. These analyses revealed that similar percentages of the variance were explained at both data points. The only difference between the scores at the beginning and the end of instruction was the different item groupings (see Table 4). At the start of the course, the checklist responses indicate the presence of a factor related to respect for diversity. However, at the end of the semester, the items that carried larger weights pertained to course content and explained a larger percentage of the variance. There were more cross-loadings of items at the end of the semester. These results suggest that the checklist may not be robust enough to identify what specific items indicate changes in cultural awareness after a semester-long instruction. Still, the assigned pre- and post-course checklists may have facilitated learning and likely support the future development of clinical knowledge and skills. Using ungraded checklists or surveys at the beginning and end of a course can help students overtly integrate new ideas into previous knowledge (Boettcher & Conrad, 2016).

The qualitative analysis of students' responses revealed two key points: active self-awareness of course content and an explicit desire to apply this knowledge in the future. Through the *Neighborhood Diversity Project* and the goal-setting written assignment, students were encouraged to express a vision of their professional future as clinicians in the CSD field. Setting up personal goals and action plans serves as a motivating factor and an incentive for self-accountability for college students (Darby & Lang, 2019).

There was a sizeable percentage of students whose perceptions, as measured by the checklist scores, did not change from the beginning to the end of the semester (see Table 3). Cultural competence does not develop at once, but is the outcome of a dynamic learning process along a continuum (Howells et al., 2016; Shen, 2015). For these reasons, we can assume that a single semester class may not provide enough time for students to deeply understand all fundamental concepts and critical issues associated with cultural competence. It should also be noted that high levels of agreement due to undeveloped knowledge or limited understanding of the concepts conveyed in the statements may have also affected the quantitative analyses.

Self-rating of cultural awareness and competence is also susceptible to social desirability effects and may not fully reflect actual skills and understanding (Howells et al., 2016; Stanhope et al., 2005). Previous studies reported evidence of overestimation of skills or the Dunning–Kruger effect (Kruger & Dunning, 1999), where less skilled practitioners rate themselves higher than more experienced ones. In a study of 60 first- and second-year SLP graduate students at an Australian university, many graduate students showed high interest but moderate confidence in working with

people from CLD backgrounds (Howells et al., 2016). Results clearly showed how the second-year cohort reported lower confidence levels than the first-year cohort. Researchers posited that this difference might be due to "conscious incompetence." This response pattern was also observed in *Project Tapestry*, a federally funded specialized training program for graduate SLP students to meet the needs of school districts with large populations of English language learners or children with disabilities (Quach & Tsai, 2017).

Implications for the assessment of cultural competence. Measuring students' cultural awareness and competence is complex (DiBiasio et al., 2023). Because cultural competence is an ongoing and dynamic process, users and designers of cultural competence tools may benefit from frequent appraisals of the measures to identify misleading statements. This study's factor analyses revealed that the *Personal Reflection* checklist items did not load onto easily interpretable factors. Overall, the *Personal Reflection* checklist broadly captured a general change before and after the course; yet, it is unknown as to the extent and the degree to what attitudes and beliefs were actually changed. Therefore, more fine-tuned tools are needed to capture growth over time. This is of utmost importance due to the current accreditation standards that require graduate programs to include diversity, equity, and inclusion content in academic and clinical courses and collect evidence for accreditation. When designing new assessments, we suggest using cognitive interviewing to ensure the intended interpretation of cultural competence statements and reduce response error due to social desirability bias, overestimation, or underestimation (Jobe & Mingay, 1989). Moreover, a combination of both quantitative and qualitative measures is recommended across allied health professions (DiBiasio et al., 2023).

Many resources could be tapped including ASHA's Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA), which serves as a good starting point for professionals, students, and CSD programs interested in exploring resources for assessing and developing cultural competence, including sample syllabi for multicultural and multilingual issues (http://www.asha.org/practice/ multicultural). Faculty may also visit the Center for Urban Education from the University of Southern California (cue.usc.edu) for equity tools and the Association of College and University Educators (acue.org) for resources and tools to enhance student success, equity, and inclusion across the curriculum.

Pedagogical Recommendations. Another finding from this study suggests that diverse CLD undergraduate students hesitated in moving from awareness to action: there was no significant change in scores at the end of the semester for the item related to responding to others' insensitivity. This finding concurs with observations from the previously mentioned *Project Tapestry* graduate participants who reported feeling less comfortable or competent in responding to others' insensitivity (Quach & Tsai, 2017). In our study, 45.4% of students at baseline and 37.1% at the course end reported being neutral, disagreeing, or strongly disagreeing with this statement. The few self-reflections on this checklist item mainly indicated ambivalence to take action under duress or during uncomfortable situations.

This points to the need for additional instruction to help students respond to insensitive comments and behaviors from others, as Quach & Tsai (2017) noted. Faculty may have to teach content and explicit strategies to move students beyond diversity awareness in the direction of advocacy. This type of instruction could promote inclusive environments for all and provide resources that students can use to manage thoughts, words, and actions when an individual is disrespected. It may

also be necessary to co-develop and share sample scripts with students that will help them move from awareness to action through class simulations of professional and clinical interactions. This content may even be more relevant for diverse students or those who elect to participate in piecemeal programs at the graduate level. Recent findings from a survey study demonstrate how undergraduate and graduate students from underrepresented backgrounds expressed concerns specific to microaggressions experienced in their CSD university programs (Abdelaziz et al., 2021). Respondents expressed significant concerns across four central themes specific to feelings of otherness, damaging generalization, mistreatment from faculty, and maltreatment from student peers. Microaggressions towards CSD students from diverse backgrounds warrant much-needed attention and systematic reform. Current accreditation standards require content related to the impact of both implicit and explicit bias (Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology, 2022). Based on the empowering feedback from a small group of undergraduate students who completed an intercultural learning module in a CSD program (Krishnan et al., 2021), we hold a positive outlook that these skills can be effectively taught to undergraduate students.

Another pedagogical recommendation based on our findings is related to the design and content of course syllabi. A syllabus can be a powerful instructional tool to set the tone and establish the value of diversity and inclusion during the first meeting of the class. The syllabus can be a model of inclusion and welcoming communication by using inclusive language, clearly stating what student efforts are required to meet learning outcomes, what supports will be provided, and how to access them (Hazel et al., 2010). Such documents can also signal that: (a) diversity and inclusion are valued in the department, (b) faculty and students are expected to behave respectfully, and (c) every member of the department community, including students, faculty, staff, clinical faculty, and clients, is supported. The tone of syllabi may sometimes suggest a deficit-minded perspective of student success by emphasizing policies with intimidating language rather than care for inclusion and learning (from MacNair et al., 2020). See the Appendix for the template for the *Cultural and Linguistic Diversity in Communication Disorders* course syllabus.
Faculty have a unique opportunity to counter non-inclusive practices by ensuring that all students, including underrepresented students, are reflected in the syllabus, assignments, and materials and by not evading discussions of racism and discrimination (e.g., immigration policies, racial profiling). Also, faculty can evaluate whether their course materials and assignments are relevant to minoritized or diverse populations.

Limitations and Future Directions

Findings from the study should be interpreted with caution. The study participants represent a segment of a diverse undergraduate student body in communication disorders and may not represent most students across other programs. It likely included a small number of male respondents, although this shortcoming is representative of the CSD field in general. This study did not have a control group, and a future study with an experimental design could better inform the role of the content and teaching strategies of this course. Procedures can also be modified to minimize the perceived expectations of the researchers. Caution should be taken with the statistical analyses related to the exploratory nature of the factor analyses and the sample size. Findings should not be extrapolated to other participants or populations.

There are some limitations related to the adaptation of *ASHA's Cultural Competence Checklist: Personal Reflection* used in this study. As discussed above, over-estimation of skills is a frequent limitation of this type of survey. Additional measures, such as in-depth interviews and focus groups, may reveal better descriptions of cultural competence development. Moreover, cultural competence can also be surveyed in other required CSD courses, particularly courses aiming to weave in cultural diversity and competence.

Aside from these limitations, our results suggest that the development of cultural competence in students is an ongoing process of growth that relies on exposure, introspection, understanding of personal apprehensions, self-reflections, and experiences of the local environments. Dedicated courses in cultural and linguistic diversity combined with experiential assignments like the one discussed in this article can provide insight into CSD students' perceptions and development of cultural awareness at the undergraduate level. Low-stakes or ungraded surveys and reflections and goal-setting activities are teaching tools helpful in developing cultural awareness and competence. We also recommend continued exploration of educational approaches to help all students grow from being aware of cultural and linguistic diversity to being active inclusion supporters and participants.

Disclosures

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Appendix

Cultural and Linguistic Diversity in Communication Disorders (Template)

COURSE INFORMATION

Instructor Information

Instructor:
Office Location:
Voice Telephone:
E-mail:
Student Hours via Zoom or in person:

General Course Information
Class Days/Time:
Location:
Zoom Meeting ID:
Prerequisites:

Course Description
University Catalog Description: [Insert]

Course Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify the cultural and linguistic variables that affect communication disorders
2. Determine the relevance of cultural and linguistic variables in the characteristics of speech and language disorders
3. Contrast monolingual versus multilingual language development
4. Differentiate between language disorders and language differences
5. Integrate cultural and linguistic variables to the basic assessment and intervention principles of speech-language pathology
6. Demonstrate respect for diversity and empathy (perspective-taking)

Program and Student Learning Outcomes

Below you will find the BA Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) and the Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs). These outcomes are to be mastered by the end of your bachelor's program.

The individual SLOs apply to many of your courses and are thought to be achieved at different levels throughout the program. The levels are I: Introduced, D: Developed, and M: Mastered. Here's the list of PLOs and SLOs corresponding to this course: [Insert]

Course Structure

This course is a Face-to-Face course. You will use the University learning management system (LMS) to participate in the course. During the week, you will read the assigned materials and complete the assignments independently. **Weekly materials will be available on Day mornings, and the assignments are due on Day at 8:59 pm**.

⏰ Why 8:59 pm? So that you can sleep well! Study a little bit every day!

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS

Textbook

Other Required Readings

Computer Requirements

You will need to have an up-to-date browser, operating system, and basic word-processing software on your computer to take this class. Check the ITS Helpdesk Student Resources page. Some of the documents in this course will be available to you in PDF form. You will need to download and install Adobe Acrobat Reader software on your computer.

COURSE POLICIES

Please follow these policies this semester:

- Use your **@university.edu** e-mail address.
- Come to class on time.
- Turn cell phones and messaging off during our Zoom meetings. It's distracting!
- Finish assignments, read chapters or handouts before attending class, and participate in class discussions and projects. We want to hear your insights.
- Absences are discouraged.
- Make sure you understand what academic dishonesty is and what its consequences are.

Department Equity and Diversity Statement

The Department stands against racism and stands in solidarity with our Asian American and Black colleagues, students, and community members, along with all marginalized groups. The Department condemns discrimination, hatred, and racial violence. We are committed to continuing to listen, learn, and act to address these issues.

COURSE COMMUNICATION

Communication between us

I will make every effort to communicate frequently with students through announcements and postings. Send me the questions of a more personal nature via e-mail.

As a student, you should expect to receive assignment feedback and responses to postings within 24-48 hours. I will post an announcement alerting the students if I will be unavailable for more than a day. I will return long assignment feedback within 1-2 weeks of

the due date.

Questions

In courses, it is normal to have questions about things that relate to the course, such as clarification about assignments, course materials, or assessments. Please post these in the *Ask or Answer a Question* discussion board.

Netiquette

When posting on discussion boards, it is important to understand how to interact with one another online, ***netiquette***! You can read more about the rules of netiquette at 15 Rules of Netiquette for Online Discussion Boards.

Virtual Student Hours

I will be available for a virtual student hour using ***Zoom Meeting*** on Day/Time and by appointment. You can find the link in our LMS course and on top of this syllabus. Please send me a brief e-mail message or text message if I am not responding. Thanks!

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING POLICY

Students will demonstrate their learning and the achievement of course outcomes through the following activities. Activities are aligned with the course learning objectives. Below you will find the list of activities with the assignment weights (for a total of 100%).

In-Class Participation, Attendance, and Surveys: 10%
Los Angeles Cultural Diversity Project: individual assignment, research, presentation, and action plan (see LMS for specific instructions) 15%
Quizzes: online quizzes (see LMS) 25%
Midterm and Final Exams: multiple choice and short answer exams (25% each) 50%

Grading Criteria

You will be graded based on the project, quizzes, participation, and two exams. I collapse activities into categories and give them the appropriate weight, as stated above and in the table below.

You can view your grades using the GRADES button in the LMS course navigation. Again, note I do the weight calculations manually on my Excel sheet. Please check your grades regularly to make sure that I have received all your assignments. If you have a question about a grade, e-mail me. Please do not post personal concerns in a discussion forum.

Tasks	Percentage
Midterm Exam	**25%**
Quizzes	**25%**
Los Angeles Cultural Diversity Project	**15%**
Final Exam	**25%**
Participation, attendance, and surveys	**10%**
Total:	**100%**

Grading Scale

Rubrics

For some discussions and assignments, I will use rubrics. Read the rubrics carefully; they will help you complete the tasks.

HELPFUL STUDENT RESOURCES

Technical Resources

Student Support Resources

Academic Support Resources

LMS Student Support

Other Resource Center

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Student Conduct

Dropping and Adding

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Academic Honesty

Many incidents of plagiarism result from students' confusion about what constitutes plagiarism. You can learn more about it. Remember you are expected to familiarize yourself with the expectations. When you submit your work, make sure that it's all your own scholarly and creative efforts.

The university defines plagiarism as follows: "At University, plagiarism is defined as the act of using ideas, words, or work of another person or persons as if they were one's own, without giving proper credit to the original sources."

Course Schedule

Week	**Topic**	**Required Reading**	**Assignments (from previous week) Due on Day at 8:59 pm**	**To Do during the week**
Week 1				
	Course overview – Culture and cultural dimensions	#1	☐Course orientation	☐Cultural dimensions quiz ☐Cultural introduction with peers ☐Are you ready for the semester? quiz ☐Syllabus quiz
Week …				