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When in Spain: Intercultural Competence in Hemingway’s *The Sun Also Rises*

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1. Introduction

The idea for this project first came to me several months ago while I was living in Spain as a study-abroad student. Between attending classes, making friends with locals, and living the European lifestyle, I spent some of my free time reading Ernest Hemingway’s *The Sun Also Rises*, one of my favorite novels. Although I had read the novel once before, there were particular descriptions that caught my attention in new ways—descriptions of how the characters in the novel experienced Spain, which is the central setting of the narrative. Having experienced and lived in Spain myself for several months, I felt a certain connection to the narrator’s descriptions of street life, scenery, and everyday customs. These descriptions were familiar to me, and were—as far as surface details—representative of what I saw in my everyday life in Spain. Even the narrator’s description of the bullfight seemed like Hemingway had been describing the exact scene that I had witnessed at a bullfight some days earlier.

This striking familiarity caused me to wonder: if the descriptive details of Hemingway’s narration of the bullfights are so accurate, how accurate are the other details relating to other events in the novel? After taking a class on intercultural competence studies, I also wondered about the characters of the novel; they seemed to interact well with the native Spaniards, but how
I wanted to know how they measured up to today’s standards of intercultural competence. Thus, it seemed intriguing to conduct a research project combining my knowledge of the Spanish culture with a familiar text set in Spain and intercultural competence studies literature. To give my research a more scholarly basis, I decided to explore academic opinions that already existed about Hemingway and his relationship to Spain. Among Americans, Hemingway is considered to have brought the Spanish culture to the United States through his writings; but what does the author’s real life actually tell us about his connection to Spain?

I chose to use *The Sun Also Rises* in my analysis because, having been published in 1926, it is one of Hemingway’s first published novels, and the first of many to be set in Spain. My research process consisted of a close reading of the text of *The Sun Also Rises*, along with a search of current literature on intercultural competence meanings and methods. Additionally, I conducted a literature search on articles, documents, and newspaper columns relating to Hemingway and his connection with Spain.

In this paper, I will provide a basic introduction to intercultural competence studies along with some theories and models that are widely accepted in the field. I will then apply those concepts to a cross-cultural group interaction between the non-Spanish characters of the novel and Spanish citizens. Additionally, I will look closely at selected characters of Hemingway’s *The Sun Also Rises* and analyze how effectively each character interacts with the Spanish culture. Finally, I will present the connection between Ernest Hemingway and Spain, arguing that Hemingway’s own levels of intercultural competence influenced the cross-cultural interactions of his characters in a way that suggests successful surface-level interactions without much profundity.
2. Analysis

a. Intercultural Competence

Although in the year 1926 intercultural competence was not a formally defined concept, Jake Barnes, the main character of *The Sun Also Rises*, recognizes that in order to thrive in the world, there must be some sort of “how”; some method or set of guidelines that individuals must follow in order to be successful in communicating and discovering how to live in the world. “Maybe if you found out how to live in [the world],” remarks Jake philosophically, “you learned from that what it was all about” (119). In today’s ever-globalizing world, it is nearly impossible to go through a single day of life without having some kind of cross-cultural encounter. Workplaces, schools, and communities comprise a multitude of nationalities, ethnicities, religions, languages, and social classes. Along with this diversity come numerous differences as well; and where differences exist, communication may be hindered. How an individual perceives, interprets, and reacts to these differences is not only worthy of consideration, but demands it.

Out of this necessity was born intercultural competence studies, a field of studies that has been growing for nearly 40 years. Intercultural competence is defined as “connecting people with different characters and cultures through a process of facilitating communication and achieving understanding between them” (Elsen, 23); or, more simply, “an individual’s ability to function across cultures” (Leung, 490). To achieve intercultural competence, that is, to successfully communicate in intercultural contexts, an all-encompassing set of abilities is needed. These abilities include cognitive knowledge, affective flexibility, and certain skills and strategies (Elsen, 26). The term *intercultural* refers here to comparing cultures in relation to each other, which, according to recent intercultural competence literature, “helps [individuals]…gain orientation and insight into the realities each [culture] represents” (Elsen,
Just as it is easier to detect the differences and similarities between two photographs when holding them side by side, so comparing cultures “side by side” helps to highlight differences and similarities that exist between them.

Before discussing how to communicate effectively across cultures, it is necessary to first define the concept of “culture.” Culture can be objective or subjective depending on the context in which the word is used. Objective culture refers to the recurrent systems and behaviors of a group of people. This may include art, literature, drama, dance, or even linguistic, social, economic, or political systems (Bennett, 3). Subjective culture refers to “the psychological features that define a group of people” and is defined as “the learned and shared patterns of beliefs, behaviors, and values of groups of interacting people” (Bennett, 3). In more detail, Elsen et al define an “anti-essential dynamic” perspective of culture, where an individual’s “personal identity…is created in the crucible of cultural encounters rather than expressing a set of crystallised [sic] cultural orientations” (Elsen, 25). That is, instead of being determined solely and definitely by ethnicity, nationality, or language—inevitable characteristics from birth—one’s culture depends on additional dynamic factors such as one’s own individual life experiences, education, religion, social class, generation, and family experiences (Elsen, 24). I agree with this definition and will consider this to be the working definition throughout the entirety of this paper whenever culture is referred to.

Intercultural competence answers the question “What does it take to communicate effectively across cultures?” From an interdisciplinary perspective, intercultural competence comprises three main factors that include intercultural traits, attitudes, and capabilities. Traits in this context are personal characteristics that determine how an individual will typically behave in cross-cultural interactions. These traits may include open-mindedness, patience, flexibility,
emotional resilience, and a desire for adventure (Leung, 490-491). An increased measure of these traits leads to more effective intercultural interactions.

Intercultural attitudes can range from positive to negative. A positive attitude toward a culture different from one’s own correlates to more successful cross-cultural experiences. Similarly, an individual’s worldview, or, “psychological perspective of the world that determines how we think, behave, and feel” (Mio, 71) can range from ethnocentric to ethnorelative. Interculturalists such as Milton Bennett, who focus mainly on one’s worldview as the ultimate determiner of one’s level of intercultural competence, differentiate between “ethnocentric” and “ethnorelative” worldviews. An ethnocentric worldview is “using one’s own set of standards and customs to judge all people” (Bennett, 26), or “seeing the world from one’s own cultural worldview” (Leung, 491). This can be harmful when attempting to communicate across cultures, since it often leads to a sense of superiority toward one’s own culture, creating prejudices against “other” cultures and misunderstandings in cross-cultural situations. In contrast, an individual with an ethnorelative worldview is “comfortable with many standards and customs” and has “an ability to adapt behavior and judgements to a variety of interpersonal settings” (Bennett, 26). Furthermore, they are able to “emphasize the complexity and contradictions of different cultures and countries” (Leung, 491). This latter worldview is ideal for communicating across cultures: it allows individuals to be flexible and open-minded toward different cultural settings and creates a sense of equality among cultural groups, diminishing biases and prejudices.

The third component of intercultural competence, intercultural capability, focuses on what an individual is realistically capable of doing in order to communicate effectively in cross-cultural interactions. While linguistic skills are considered to be one of these capabilities, they are not the only necessary factor. Social flexibility, cultural intelligence, and knowledge of other
countries and cultures are also examples of capabilities that enable effective intercultural communication (Leung, 491). As with intercultural traits, the greater the magnitude of these qualities an individual has, the more effective they will be in communicating across cultures.

The transition from an ethnocentric worldview to one that is ethnorelative is not a simple two-step process. Rather, it has been described as a continuum of six distinct stages, describing the various levels of intercultural competence an individual might possess.

First conceived by Bennett in 1986, the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) is used in the field of intercultural competence studies as a way of measuring the changes that occur within the mind of one who is becoming more interculturally competent. The three stages considered to be in the “ethnocentric” category include denial, where an individual cannot distinguish cultural differences and frequently uses stereotypes to describe other cultures; defense, where an individual sees all differences as negative, has a positive perception of their own culture, and a negative perception of other cultures; and minimization, where an individual attempts to bury differences by finding familiarity and similarities. When an individual begins to have an “ethnorelative” worldview, the stages of development include acceptance, where an individual recognizes cultural differences and is comfortable with ambiguity; adaptation, where an individual has some cultural knowledge and modifies their behavior to adapt to other cultures; while being sensitive to other cultures; and integration, where an individual interprets the world from many cultural frames and often does not identify with either their own culture or the target culture (Bennett, 26-30). The stages of Bennett’s DMIS are widely used in intercultural competence curriculum today. However, it should be noted that an individual does not necessarily experience each of these stages in the exact order that Bennett’s model suggests. In fact, some individuals may even experience some but not all of the stages in their transition
toward an ethnorelative worldview. Therefore, simply identifying the stage of Bennett’s DMIS that an individual exhibits is not enough to diagnose where they are at in their worldview transition; contextual evidence and examples of cross-cultural interactions must also be considered. In the next section, I will present how and to what extent the characters in *The Sun Also Rises* exhibit the Bennett’s stages of “defense” and “minimization,” along with contextual examples of cross-cultural behaviors.

Intercultural competence is a necessary concern in today’s world as businesses, schools, workplaces, and communities become more culturally diverse each day. Developing higher levels of intercultural competence benefits individuals by also “developing sensitive and tolerant attitudes to cultural difference” (Elsen, 27). Intercultural competence is even being integrated into foreign language-learning pedagogy, as it not only strengthens an individual’s knowledge of particular cultures and countries, but also “breaks down prejudice” (Elsen, 27) among cultures and individuals.

b. Intercultural Interactions in *The Sun Also Rises*

While Hemingway sets his novel in two different European countries—partly in France and partly in Spain—I will focus here only on the characters’ time spent in Spain. The latter encompasses a larger part of the novel than the former, and the variety and depth of the intercultural interactions among the characters while in Spain are much richer than when they are in Paris. The cast of characters includes Jake Barnes, an American expatriate living in Paris; Lady Brett Ashley—or Brett, as she is affectionately known—a sassy yet strong woman who hails from England and is one of Jake’s closest friends; Robert Cohn, a socially awkward American who also identifies as Jewish; Bill Gorton, an American friend of Jake’s visiting in Europe; and Mike Campbell, the fiancée of Brett who is from Scotland and loves to drink.
Looking at big-picture group settings, we can more clearly compare and contrast each of the main characters along with their personality traits and varying levels of intercultural competence. A closer analysis of some of the individual characters reveals the strengths and weaknesses of each individual regarding intercultural competence.

i. Group Intercultural Interaction: The Wine Tavern

A major group cross-cultural interaction occurs in Pamplona on the very first day of the fiestas. Amidst excited singing and dancing in the streets, Brett is swept up in a circle of dancers, as well as Jake and his good friend Bill Gorton. Jake reflects, “they took Bill and me by the arms and put us in the circle” (124). A moment later, the gang is “rushed...into a wine shop” (125) where “they had Brett seated on a wine-cask” while “teaching her to drink out of the wineskins” (125). From an outsider’s perspective, it looks as though the local Spaniards are accepting of Brett and are including her in their celebration. The inclusion of Brett into the Spaniards’ festivities is a sign of cultural integration and perhaps a symbolic acceptance of Brett into the Spanish culture—even if it is temporary. Jake finds favor with a Spanish man selling wineskins. “’What are you going to do? Sell them in Bayonne?’” asks the wineskin man, testing Jake’s motives. “’No,’” responds Jake, “’drink out of them.’” The seller’s response reveals a positive judgement of Jake’s character: “’Good man. Eight pesetas for the two. The lowest price’” (125). A nearby local confirms that “Eight pesetas is cheap” (125). In the narrative, Jake also relates multiple instances of Spanish men wanting to pay for his drinks during that same afternoon. “I put money down for the wine, but one of the men picked it up and put it back in my pocket” (125). The fact that Spaniards want to pay for Jake’s drinks is a sign that Jake has been accepted by the Spaniards into the Spanish cultural in that moment.
The other non-Spaniards in the group are treated in various ways by the locals. Bill Gorton—a fellow American and close friend of Jake—does not get the special attention that Brett does, but is still included by a Spaniard at the wine-shop who was “teaching Bill a song. Singing it into his ear. Beating time on Bill’s back” (125). While this may be an act of drunkenness, the person shows acceptance of Bill by letting him in on a small piece of the Spanish culture—a traditional song.

Mike Campbell and Robert Cohn do not integrate as successfully as their comrades, however. Mike shows off some linguistic skills when trying to communicate with the locals at the wine-shop. “‘Where is the drunken comrade?’ he asked in Spanish” (125). This is evidence that Mike possesses some intercultural capability, which seems to gain him some friends among the locals. “Mike was sitting at a table with several men in their shirt-sleeves, eating from a bowl of tuna fish, chopped onions and vinegar. They were all drinking wine and mopping up the oil vinegar with pieces of bread” (124). Mike even refers to these recent acquaintances as his “friends” (124). Although he may be following false notions, he at least feels welcomed and accepted by the Spaniards. Meanwhile Cohn, having passed out from an overdose of strong alcohol, is found “sleeping quietly on some wine-casks” (125) covered with a coat and wearing “a big wreath of twisted garlics” (125) around his neck. The locals have clearly accepted Cohn into their festivities, as evidenced by the traditional garlic wreath, but instead of actively partaking in the event, Cohn is isolated and asleep. Cohn’s isolation is perhaps symbolic of his “being in the dark” about the Spanish culture, not knowing much. His isolation represents his personal isolation from the Spanish culture. He shows no interest in learning the language or interacting with the locals during his time in Pamplona. Each character in the group of non-Spaniards, while behaving in varying manners and with varying levels of intercultural
competence, is accepted by the Spaniards and included in their festivities. Despite the questionable worth of the cross-cultural interactions that take place in the wine shop, the episode ends on a positive note, as the group leaves the wine shop: “we said good-bye to many people and shook hands with many people and went out” (127).

ii. The Characters: Lady Brett Ashley

As soon as the characters arrive in Spain for the week of the fiesta, it is apparent that Brett does not “fit in” with the other Spanish women. This is her first time being in Spain, and it is apparent that she “is in a world she does not understand” (Nagel, 495). Although she tries to blend in with the locals by wearing “a Basque beret” (107), her short, boy-like haircut and bold disposition attract negative attention; in fact these characteristics may have been “offensive to the women of Pamplona” (Nagel, 495). As the gang walks through the streets of the city, Jake notices as “three girls came to the window and stared. They were staring at Brett” (110). Later, Brett remarks that even her newfound Spanish lover, Pedro Romero, “was ashamed of me for a while” and “wanted me to grow my hair out” (194). Although Brett’s physical factors have nothing to do with her level of intercultural competence according to the aforementioned models, it demonstrates how cultural differences can greatly affect an individual’s intercultural attitude toward another culture. In this case, the Spaniards recognize that Brett is a “foreigner” simply by seeing her physical appearance. Brett in turn recognizes this and tries her best to fit in by wearing a style of beret typical to the region.

Brett has more success integrating into the culture through her relationship with the young bullfighter Pedro Romero. After being introduced by Jake, the two start a love affair and eventually run away together to another city elsewhere in the country. Brett cannot speak
Spanish and knows nothing about bullfighting prior to her week in Pamplona. According to studies of intercultural competence, a lack of linguistic skills as well as a lack of cultural knowledge signify a shortage of intercultural capabilities, which suggests a lower level of intercultural competence in an individual (Leung, 491). Although Brett seems to be well-integrated by having an affair with Romero, it is only Romero with whom she becomes close; the other Spaniards in the narrative clearly disapprove of the relationship. This disapproval is evidenced by hostile attitudes toward Brett from other bullfighters (170), as well as Montoya’s treatment of Jake after he introduces Romero to Brett. Jake recalls, “[Montoya] started to smile at me, then he saw Pedro Romero with a big glass of cognac in his hand, sitting laughing between me and a woman with bare shoulders, at a table full of drunks. He did not even nod” (141). To Montoya, a Spanish man with deeply-held values of bullfighting as a sacred and honored concept, Brett was contaminating Romero—a young, pure Spanish bullfighter.

Looking at Brett’s intercultural competence, she exemplifies the “minimization” stage of Bennett’s DMIS (Bennett, 27). Individuals at this stage “recognize and accept superficial cultural differences such as eating customs and other social norms, but they assume that deep down all people are essentially the same—just human” (Bennett, 27). After knowing Romero for less than a week, Brett embarks on a romantic relationship with him. Having an affair with Romero within days of meeting him implies that Brett was probably relying on assumed similarities between her and Romero, seeing him not as a young Spaniard with all of his cultural idiosyncrasies, but simply as a human man who wants one thing from Brett—just like every other man in her life. Brett also shows signs of “reverse defense,” an adaptation of the “defense” stage of Bennett’s DMIS. In this stage, individuals “vilify their own culture and become zealous proponents of an adopted culture” (Bennett, 27). Although Brett does not explicitly “vilify” her
fellow Brits, she does seem eager to adopt the Spanish culture and the culture of bullfighting. She remarks that bullfighting is “simply perfect. I say, it is a spectacle!” (132). She becomes so absorbed in bullfighting that on two separate occasions Romero presents her with the ear of a bull that he has just killed in the ring (158, 176). In traditional Spanish bullfighting, the ear of the dead bull is the “premio” or prize, denoting a “buena faena,” or good performance (“Ritual”). In one of the last bullfights before the couple leaves for their getaway destination, Romero also allows Brett to hold his cape on her lap (170), a symbolic gesture reserved for close friends and family of the bullfighter. Although Brett gains the respect of the young Spanish bullfighter, she is not successful in interacting cross-culturally with the other Spaniards in the novel.

Looking at her intercultural competence in general, we see that Brett does have some intercultural traits. She clearly has a desire for adventure as she goes head over heels into a relationship with Romero; and she shows emotional resilience by not allowing herself to become too deeply involved in the drama that is occurring within the group of friends. Examining her worldview, Brett reacts to cultural difference with “minimization” and “reverse defense.” Based on Bennett’s DMIS, she still holds an ethnocentric worldview; although her attitude toward the Spanish culture is overall positive. Brett lacks the intercultural capabilities of linguistic skills and cultural knowledge, as shown by her inability to speak the Spanish language and her unawareness—or ignorance—of the code of honor surrounding bullfighters.

iii. The Characters: Jake

Jake Barnes is the protagonist of the novel and may be considered the character with the highest level of intercultural competence, albeit not astounding. He is an American living as an
expatriate in Europe, and has established a lifestyle in Paris with an apartment and a job as “an expatriated newspaper man” (TSAR, 92). In Spain, however, he is merely a tourist. He has never lived in Spain, but has been going there for several years to enjoy the festival of San Fermín in Pamplona. One of the advantages that Jake possesses to a greater extent than any of the other characters while in Spain is his ability to speak Spanish. In fact, he is able to speak the language well enough to converse with border guards, waitresses, and mail carriers throughout the novel. Leung et al categorize linguistic skills as an intercultural capability, which factors into an individual’s level of intercultural competence. Because Jake has linguistic skills in Spain, his intercultural capabilities are increased, theoretically increasing his level of intercultural competence. However, Jake is not an expert in the Spanish language. His deficiency shows in a conversation he shares with Pedro Romero, the young Spanish bullfighter of the narrative.

“[Romero] was anxious to know the English for corrida de toros, the exact translation. Bull-fight he was suspicious of. I explained that bull-fight in Spanish was the lidia of a toro. The Spanish word corrida means in English the running of the bulls….There is no Spanish word for bull-fight” (139). An initial warning sign is that Jake is trying to place English words on a purely Spanish concept. The corrida de toros or, running of the bulls, originated in Spain and is still a major part of the Spanish cultural tradition today. While the commonly used English term for the concept is not an exact translation, it is culturally insensitive to say that there is no word in a country’s own language for an event that originated in that country. Jake displays poor cultural knowledge here, which hurts his level of intercultural competence.

A possible explanation for Jake’s misunderstanding can be explained by a theory that exists within intercultural competence studies stating that an individual’s “language structure and habits influence...how they view the world” (Elsen, 28), which directly influences their level of
intercultural competence. This is a connection often studied in the context of foreign language-learning. Elsen et al remark that “it is natural for [foreign language] learners to carry over their own culturally-conditioned L1 [first language] concepts to the corresponding L2 [second language] forms they are learning” (Elsen, 28-29), like Jake trying to find an equal concept for *corrida de toros* in the English language. The same authors warn, however, that “without awareness of the culturally different dimensions of words, there is a real risk of misunderstanding” (Elsen, 29). This is evidenced in Jake’s statement about the word for “bull-fight” in the Spanish language. He clearly misunderstands the cultural significance of *corrida de toros*, and consequently misinforms Romero and the reader.

Another aspect that factors in to Jake’s level of intercultural competence is his friendship with Mr. Montoya, a native Spaniard and the owner of Hotel Montoya in Pamplona. Most of the relationship has already been developed at some time earlier than the scope of this novel. By the time the reader first meets Montoya, Jake has already known him for “several years” (*TSAR*, 106) and the two have already established a good relationship. The text implies that the main basis of this relationship is a mutual passion for bullfighting. Jake reflects, “[Montoya] always smiled as though bull-fighting were a very special secret between the two of us; a rather shocking but really very deep secret that we knew about” (105). Although Jake and Montoya are members of two different ethnic cultures, they share the mutual culture of *aficionados*, or passionate experts, of bullfighting. By choosing to describe the friendship primarily in this way, Jake is exhibiting a common reaction to cultural difference by emphasizing the similarities between him and Montoya in order to suppress the differences. This is characteristic of the “minimization” stage of Bennett’s DMIS (Bennett, 26). Highlighting the similarities between the two men may allow their friendship to seem intimate on the surface, but it is not a profound
interculturally effective connection, as Jake makes it seem. This becomes evident later in the narrative when Jake introduces Pedro Romero to his loud, drunk, non-Spanish friends:

“[Montoya] started to smile at me, then he saw Pedro Romero with a big glass of cognac in his hand, sitting laughing between me and a woman with bare shoulders, at a table full of drunks. He did not even nod” (141). It is clear that Jake’s actions cause the demise of the respect and friendship he has gained from Montoya. Moments earlier, Montoya discloses to Jake a negative intercultural attitude toward American culture, advising Jake that Romero “ought to stay with his own people. He shouldn’t mix in that stuff” (138). When Jake introduces Romero to his outlandish group of non-Spaniard friends, Montoya sees this action as an offense to the sacredness and honor that surround the concept of bullfighting. In Montoya’s eyes, Romero is a young, pure, Spanish bullfighter, holding a profession with one of the highest honors in the culture. By getting mixed up with Brett, Jake, and the gang, Romero is being morally contaminated, and the aficionado code of honor is broken. Jake’s breaking of this “code of honor” is an example of a cultural misunderstanding, where Jake has either misunderstood or chosen to ignore Montoya’s values. The hotel owner evidently respects aficionados, since “those who were aficionados could always get rooms even when the hotel was full” (106) and “Montoya could forgive anything of a bull-fighter who had afición” (106). Therefore, Jake not only offends Montoya, but the other true bullfight followers as well. Jake reflects on his feelings as he understands the implications of his cross-cultural mistake: “The hard-eyed people at the bull-fighter table watched me go. It was not pleasant” (149). Jake’s lack of cultural knowledge causes him to be quickly rejected by Montoya and the other aficionados, a culture that Jake claims to be part of earlier in the narrative.
Looking at Jake’s level of intercultural competence in general, he displays the intercultural trait of emotional resilience as he perseveres through the several mishaps that occur throughout the novel regarding his drunken group of friends and his loss of friendship with Montoya. He reacts to cultural difference using the “minimization” strategy, suggesting that he still holds an ethnocentric worldview. Like Brett—and perhaps more evidently so, his attitude toward the Spanish culture is overall positive. His major intercultural capability is his use of the Spanish language, which proves to gain him only limited success with his cross-cultural interactions in the novel.

3. Hemingway and Spain

It is no secret that the novel’s main character Jake Barnes is a loosely autobiographical character of Hemingway himself. His time spent as a soldier in World War I, his job as an expatriate newspaper journalist in Paris, and his eclectic group of friends all reflect aspects of the writer’s true life story. In fact, each character in the novel is based on one of Hemingway’s actual friends in his group of expatriate comrades (Nagel, 488). Knowing that *The Sun Also Rises* is based so closely on Hemingway’s own experiences, I postulate that the levels of intercultural competence of the characters in his novel may be influenced by Hemingway’s own ability to communicate across cultures.

Most Americans view Hemingway as the author who brought Spanish culture to America. In the 1920s, when traveling was reserved for privileged folks, Hemingway’s writings allowed Americans to experience a fiesta in Pamplona or nightlife on a Spanish plaza without leaving the country. But to what extent was Hemingway himself an expert on Spain? His story with the country begins in 1920, when a young Ernest started his writing career as a journalist for the
Toronto Star, Canada’s largest newspaper. His columns appeared in the Toronto Star Weekly, a smaller weekly publication of the company. Working as the Star’s “European correspondent” (Schiller) from 1920 until 1924, Hemingway wrote on a variety of topics, including living abroad, traveling, and the best locations for trout fishing. He wrote from the perspective of an American living in Europe, providing the Canadian people with what might have been their first glimpse of the land “across the pond,” not unlike the effect Hemingway would later have on the American people through his works of fiction. It was in a column for the Toronto Star Weekly that Hemingway first began writing about Spain, and specifically about bullfighting (“Pamplona”). The first inklings of Hemingway’s passion for bullfighting can be seen in an article written in 1923, after his first visit to Spain. Hemingway relates his initial feelings of anticipation while waiting to see his very first Spanish bullfight: “It was very exciting, sitting out in front of a café your first day in Spain with a ticket in your pocket that meant that rain or shine you were going to see a bullfight in an hour and a half” (“Bullfighting,” 340). From that moment, Hemingway’s love affair with Spain grew deeper with the passing years.

The plot of The Sun Also Rises was inspired by Hemingway’s voyages to Spain in the years 1924 and 1925 (Nagel, 489). Not only were the people and events inspired by these excursions, but also the tone of the novel. The work has even been categorized by one scholar as an “experiential travelogue” (Field, 30). The Oxford English dictionary defines “travelogue” as “a film, book, or illustrated lecture about the places visited by or experiences of a traveller [sic]” (“Travelogue”). It is true that the movements of Hemingway’s characters in the novel are often described as routes along streets, with mention of sites along the way. These scenic descriptions are especially evident at the beginning of the novel when Jake is still in Paris. “I went out onto the sidewalk and walked down toward the Boulevard St. Michel, passed the tables of the
Rotonde, still crowded, looked across the street at the Dome, its tables running out to the edge of the pavement” (24). By naming specific streets and names of cafés, Hemingway provides the reader with a step-by-step guide through Paris. Additionally, Field notes that the restaurants and bars described by Jake are typical of the American expatriate crowd (Field, 33), a subculture to which Hemingway certainly belonged. Hemingway’s descriptions make Jake seem like a tour guide to his friends while in Spain—and also a tour guide to the reader. In one example, Jake describes a typical night scene in Pamplona. “In the evening was the paseo. For an hour after dinner every one, all the good-looking girls, the officers from the garrison, all the fashionable people of the town, walked in the street on one side of the square while the café tables filled with the regular after-dinner crowd” (120). Jake’s description of the paseo, a typical part of the Spanish culture, is aimed at readers who have assumedly never been to Spain. The awe-stricken tone of amazement coloring the descriptions in Jake’s narration, as well as the details Hemingway chooses to highlight—names of restaurants, bars, and streets—are more characteristic of a tourist than of an interculturally competent traveler. Referring to The Sun Also Rises, one critic says, “Hemingway’s wide-awake senses fully evoke an American’s Paris, a vacationer’s Spain” (Young, 89). Additionally, Field notes that The Sun Also Rises is “a novel that depicts travel as the permanent state of its expatriate protagonists” (Field, 33). Hemingway himself was never a permanent resident of Spain, but traveled to the country for a few weeks or months each year. He once said, “All you have to do is write one true sentence. Write the truest sentence that you know” (“Ernest”). By writing of the places and events that he saw in an itinerary-like way, Hemingway was in fact being true to his experiences as a tourist to Spain.

4. Conclusion
In the episode illustrated by the epigraph to this paper, Robert Cohn struggles to see his identity as a foreigner in Spain. This signals the larger issue of being unable to identify cultural differences when they exist. This inability is still relevant some 90 years later, and is today an indication of a lack of intercultural competence. In today’s ever-globalizing world, an inability to communicate cross-culturally is a severe limitation that could lead to prejudice, negative stereotyping, and misunderstandings across cultures.

Applying the theories of modern intercultural competence studies to two of the principal characters in Hemingway’s *The Sun Also Rises* reveals that, while appearing to integrate well into the Spanish culture, the characters do not actually have very high levels of intercultural competence by today’s standards. Jake, an American who thinks of himself as a friend of Spain, exhibits signs of the “minimization” stage of Bennett’s DMIS, which is on the “ethnocentric” side of Bennett’s continuum. Considering also Jake’s interactions with the Spanish characters in the novel, Jake still holds an ethnocentric worldview. Like Jake, Brett demonstrates the “minimization” stage of Bennett’s DMIS, as well as “reverse defense,” where she perceives her own culture negatively and is eager to adapt to the target culture. While these two characters have more interactions with the Spanish culture than any of the other characters, they do not exhibit very high levels of intercultural competence. In fact, neither Jake nor Brett exhibit any reactions to difference found on the “ethnorelative” side of Bennett’s scale, supporting their unsuccessful cross-cultural interactions and the inference that they still hold ethnocentric worldviews. The rest of the non-Spanish characters in the novel are even less successful in interacting cross-culturally. This lack of success would suggest that the relationships formed between the Spanish and the non-Spanish characters were actually not profound and therefore
not interculturally successful. While seemingly cordial and authentic, the relationships often resulted in misunderstandings and offensive actions.

The quotation in the epigraph perhaps reflects Hemingway’s own attitude toward his cherished Spain. Having traveled to Spain multiple times throughout his life, gaining language skills and friendships along the way, Hemingway must have felt that he was no stranger to Spain. However, by technical definitions he was definitely a foreigner. In fact, Field argues that “Hemingway wrote of experience and contributed to the experiential travelogue, but has himself become a monument” (Field, 41). The low intercultural competence levels of the novel’s characters can be traced back to Hemingway’s own experiences in Spain. Like the characters, had seemingly meaningful relationships with certain Spaniards and appeared to be integrated into the Spanish culture through his passion for bullfighting. His exposure to Spanish culture was limited, however, as one scholar notes that Hemingway had an “almost exclusive interest in the bullfight when visiting Spain” (Twomey, 30). Based on this and other evidence, it can be inferred that Ernest Hemingway never surpassed the status of “visitor” to Spain. At times, the style of the novel more closely mimics a travel itinerary, or “travelogue,” than a work of prose, reflecting the simple truth that Hemingway wrote as he saw things, in the truest manner he knew: as a tourist to Spain. Despite the positive impression that most Americans may have toward Hemingway and his portrayal of Spain, the characters in *The Sun Also Rises* never fully reach intercultural competence with the Spanish culture and therefore more accurately exemplify tourists than competent travelers.
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Works Cited


**Works Consulted**


