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Author(s): Moloney, Robyn; Lobytsyna, Maria; Moate, Josephine

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Chapter 2

Looking for Intercultural Competences in language teacher education in Australia and Finland

Robyn Moloney, Maria Lobytsyna and Josephine Moate

Abstract

This chapter examines different perspectives on intercultural competences within foreign language teacher education in two case studies in Australia and Finland. The interview and narrative data came from a number of teacher educators, pre-service language teachers, and in-service languages teachers, in Jyväskylä, Finland, and Sydney, Australia. The chapter offers a critical cross-case dialogue which seeks to better understand the different perspectives of participants in their contexts. It highlights the way in which contextual factors, similarities, differences, contradictions and instabilities are present in and across perspectives. This cross-case study provides a critical perspective into the field of foreign language education as a community-based enterprise. The findings suggest that although the resources and experiences of individual participants in the field of foreign language education are recognised and valued, responses and experiences at a community level rarely get the attention needed to develop effective pedagogical practices that foster intercultural competences that include social justice and equality in foreign language education.

Introduction

Teacher education is crucial to supporting equitable educational outcomes and social justice in schools. In a global context of increasingly mobile and diversified school populations, pre-service teachers, and their students, need new capacities and strategies to counter racism and ethnocentric attitudes which appear to emerge in classrooms in many national contexts (Welch, 2016; Dervin, 2016). Intercultural competence has been discussed in many iterations in teacher education internationally for a number of decades. There have been many individual initiatives to devise programs in teacher education to impact pre-service teacher competences (for example, Dervin & Dirba, 2006; Jokikokko, 2005).

It is apparent that curricula in many countries feature, as a desirable outcome in student attributes, the development of a global cultural perspective. It is less common, however, for this goal to be well articulated in syllabus materials or teacher direction. Australia and Finland are no

exception. According to our previous investigations (Harbon & Moloney, 2013) the curriculum area where this ‘global perspective’ is often more concretely articulated, and appears to be an explicit responsibility, is that of foreign language (FL) teaching. FL education is in many ways concerned with the crossing of cultural boundaries, encountering different ways of being and communicating and building different types of relationships. This chapter thus examines FL teacher education as a site where one might expect explicit attention to be given to building intercultural competences in pre-service and in-service teachers.

This chapter examines the framing of intercultural competences in both Australia and Finland language teacher education from the perspectives of pre- and in-service FL teachers and teacher educators in Jyväskylä, Finland, and Sydney, Australia. The chapter begins by briefly outlining the different contextual factors that shape both the curriculum and educational outcomes in the two environments before introducing the methodology for data collection and analysis. Through the parallel cases our aim is to generate a cross-case dialogue to offer a new perspective in the field and to recognise that FL education is never undertaken in isolation from the wider world.

The two curriculum contexts of the study

For Finland the teaching and learning of foreign languages was a priority in the early stages of industrialisation and FL learning is a well-established feature of the national curriculum from the early grades of the comprehensive school system. As an officially bilingual country, all pupils have to learn Finnish or Swedish as a second language, and English has gradually taken precedence as the main foreign language learnt by most pupils (Ruohotie-Lyhty et al., in press). The most recent Finnish curriculum (FNBE, 2015) frames schools as a vital part of a contemporary multilingual society. FL education in the new curriculum has a clear mandate to strengthen students’ desire and ability to act in culturally, internationally and linguistically diverse environments and contexts. The students are ‘guided in reflecting on the significance of attitudes and values and developing their skills in acting constructively in different contexts’ and instruction should develop students’ ‘competencies of global citizenship’ (FNBE, 2015, p. 114).

The new curriculum refers to ‘knowledge and internationality’ (FNBE, 2015, p. 38) as a vital cross-cultural theme. The main objective is that Finnish students strengthen their ‘positive cultural

identity and knowledge of cultures’ and learn ‘to look at issues from the perspectives of other people’s life situations and circumstances, and develops skills in acting as a cultural interpreter’ (FNBE, 2015, p. 38). Therefore, FL learners are seen as actors ‘in the culturally diverse world in national, European and global communities’ (FNBE, 2015, p. 119). Linguistic diversity and proficiency are defined as ‘a tool for increasing cultural competence’ (FNBE, 2015, p. 124).

In the Australian Curriculum, ‘intercultural understanding’ is recognised as one of seven ‘general capabilities’ for twenty-first century education (Australian Curriculum: Languages, 2011) and is integrated as a background concept in every syllabus. With regard to FL learning in schools, Australia is caught in an apparent contradiction. A feature of Australia is its diverse multiculturalism, where, in cities like Sydney, 40% of the population speaks a language other than English and weekend schools for heritage language learning are growing rapidly at community level (Cruickshank, forth). However, English monolingualism is still a feature of sectors of the population and of educational leadership, and a ‘monolingual mindset’ (Clyne, 2007) limits the public perception of the value of school FL learning (Slaughter, 2009).

FL study is envisioned in the Australian curriculum as an ‘opportunity for students to engage with the linguistic and cultural diversity of humanity, to reflect on their understanding of human experience in all aspects of social life, and on their own participation and ways of being in the world’ (Australian Curriculum: Languages, 2011, p. 6). In language syllabuses, specific learning objectives promote individual reflection on ‘moving between cultures’, with embedded learning objectives and outcomes in intercultural learning.

This study aims to generate a cross-case dialogue between Finnish and Australian FL education and to demonstrate the value of looking *at* and *across* different contexts in the development of intercultural understanding (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 7). To avoid magnifying differences between contexts and reinforcing stereotypes, however, it is important to note that contexts and perspectives, as well as interculturality, are unstable and unfixed (Dervin, 2016) changing with the liquidity of modern society (Bauman, 2011). Moreover, we acknowledge our own diverse backgrounds, experiences and understandings are instrumental in shaping the design of the study, conduct of the research, and diverse interpretations of the data (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).

Literature review

Intercultural competences

Teachers and teacher educators have been shown to hold confused understandings of the polysemic terms ‘culture’ and ‘intercultural’ (Moloney & Oguro, 2015; Harbon & Moloney, 2013, 2017). Many definitions of intercultural competence highlight knowledge, skills and attitudes, as instrumental in the learning of respect, and tolerance of ambiguity (Deardorff, 2006). Linear models of intercultural competence have claimed to measure the success of the individual in ‘achieving’ levels of intercultural competence (Bennett, 1993). Such models have, however, encouraged linear and culturalist understanding, ignoring the essential role of the interlocutor and the social dialogic context in which interaction takes place (Dervin, 2016).

Kramsch’s (1995) notion of a ‘third space’ as a place of critical observation between languages and cultures and Byram’s (1997, 2011) components or knowledges (‘savoirs’) in intercultural communicative competence illustrate how understandings of interculturality have continued to develop. These conceptualisations acknowledge that intercultural competence is not just ‘acquired’, but must continue to respond to different contexts at different times. Along with other authors in this volume we refer to ‘intercultural competences’ in the plural, to signify a loose and complex construct. Drawing on Dervin’s (2016) principles for work involving intercultural competences, we have used four principles to frame our work. Our principles are: (1) the importance of situated individual perspectives, (2) the instability of phenomena, such as understanding and intercultural competence, (3) discourse as an indicator of a momentary position containing traces of earlier and emerging values, and (4) the value of dialogue to foster critical understanding by bringing contradictions and complexities into view. These principles are explained in more detail below.

Firstly, we recognise that teacher educators, FL teachers and pre-service teachers are individuals with their own personal perspectives of language education. Moreover, each individual negotiates multiple identities as they interact with others as well as in relation to their own experiences, the context they are living in, the affordances they have and the responsibilities they carry. An individual perspective, therefore, is always complex and contextualised. Secondly, contextualised perspectives are not inherently stable nor fixed, just as intercultural competence is not

a fixed capital, but rather is ‘composed of contradictions, instabilities, and discontinuities ...[with] ... instability of identifications, instability of discourses of culture’ (Dervin, 2016, p. 82). Thus, negotiated identities and perspectives are temporary and instable but can also be resistant to change or change in unanticipated ways. This suggests that within our investigation diverse understandings of culture will be present both within and between the different individuals and the two cases for our study.

Thirdly, different perspectives and understandings are constructed through the discourse of participants. Discourse contains traces of what has been, that is previous understanding, as well as anticipating future understanding (Dufva, 2003). Examining the discourse of language teacher educators, pre- and in-service teachers as indicators of current-yet-dynamic understandings brings contradictions and instabilities into focus, that is where change has taken place and what kinds of changes might be currently underway. The discourse of our participants, for example, might well contain traces of essentialist, knowledge-based understandings of intercultural competences, with individuals framed as ‘objects’ or ‘solid representatives’ of a (national) culture, race, ethnicity, religion or worldview. On the other hand, their discourse might frame intercultural competences as something that can help people to move beyond assumptions about us/them, encouraging participants to investigate the continuum of similarity-difference, and move away from the dominance of difference. It is unlikely that our participants adopt a clear-cut position, but the negotiation between these different perspectives and alternative understandings is worthy of careful examination. This connects with our fourth principle that values both individual dialogue, as well as dialogue across the two cases and between us as researchers. As different understandings are made visible, challenging assumptions and encouraging more critical reflection, so cross-case dialogue develops.

FL teacher education and FL teaching

In the university class for FL teacher education, enquiry and reflection are needed alongside the investigation of syllabus, policy, theoretical understanding of practice, and development of key skills (Kleinsasser, 2013). Pre-service teachers make an individual interpretation of the curriculum, according to their background beliefs and this is negotiated as a nexus between their professional and personal identity (Harbon & Moloney, 2013, 2017). Whilst pre- and in-service FL teacher

development has received a significant amount of attention (e.g. Ruohotie-Lyhty, et al. in press; Jokikokko, 2005) little attention has been paid, however, to the way in which FL teacher educators construct their understanding and experiences (Willems, Stakenborg, & Veugelers, 2000; Ben-Peretz, Eilam, Landler-Pardo, 2011).

In Australia the teacher educator designs tasks which may include reflective narrative (Moloney & Oguro, 2015), critique of textbooks, games, advocacy training, analysis of practicum experience, as well as lesson and unit planning. While exchange programs are encouraged, there is no mandatory requirement that FL pre-service teachers spend time in the country of their additional language(s). In Finland, teacher educators have similar responsibilities, but in addition emphasise research skills, to prepare teachers for the critical thinking skills they will need when implementing the curriculum in school. Finnish FL teachers are expected to be able to foster the cognitive, social and cultural competences, capacities and identity that pupils should develop through their education. Whilst the Finland curriculum outlines the learning objectives stipulated in educational policy, it is educational providers and teachers that implement the curriculum in response to local needs. This reflects the value placed on teacher autonomy and local decision-making in Finland (Bergroth, 2016).

Changes in FL pedagogy

FL teaching globally has undergone changes in the last 20 years. Pedagogy which focuses on communicative skills alone has been critiqued as failing to stimulate critical cultural understanding and to meet deeper student needs and expectations of constructivist contemporary education. As sociocultural understandings of language have broadened, initiatives have been undertaken to revise practice with, for example, an increasing number of new language textbooks (for example, Pagni & Popoli, 2016) explicitly model an ‘intercultural approach’ to language learning (Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009).

Whilst the trends outlined above are also familiar within the Finnish language teaching context, FL education in the upper secondary school builds on continuity of earlier language learning and resulting proficiency. As the material for language lessons, it can draw on the wider themes of the curriculum, such as Society and the surrounding world, Science, economy and technology, as well as popular culture. Cultural Studies is a compulsory course in the upper secondary school curriculum

with specific attention given to different literary forms including stories and poems, as well as music and art. In addition to textbook materials, authentic materials are used as an opportunity to explore cultural differences, to develop cultural sensitivity and to become aware of the culturally bound nature of their own actions and evaluations. FL teaching in Finnish upper secondary school is not solely responsible for the cultural development of pupils but shares this responsibility with other subjects.

At the intersection of these concerns and theoretical understandings, the research question addressed in this chapter is: How do FL teacher educators, pre-service teachers and teachers perceive intercultural competences in two sample case study contexts in Australia and Finland?

Methodology

Our constructivist epistemological understanding is that claims of knowledge are not infallible when it comes to the behaviour and actions of people. Research centred on meanings, and the understandings of phenomena as experienced by participants, demands a qualitative approach (Creswell et al. 2011). The sociocultural theoretical lens is concerned with multiple perspectives created through interaction. This research has employed research tools of interview and written narrative to access descriptions and interpretations of the lives of the interviewees (Kvale, 1996).

The three levels of participants, teacher educators, pre-service teachers and in-service teachers, provide a multi-layered picture of intercultural competences. The perspective of FL teacher educators, for example, includes the responsibility of setting new directions in teacher training; the pre-service teacher perspective involves negotiating the theory and practice of FL education as part of a new professional identity; the in-service teacher perspective, however, involves negotiating the demands of professional development as part of an established professional identity. The data were collected in 2016. The aim was to analyse whether and how intercultural considerations are perceived at each level, and how intercultural competences are perceived in Australian and Finnish language teacher education.

For the Australian case, the teacher educator and pre-service teachers were affiliated with Macquarie University, and the in-service language teachers from a Sydney metropolitan school. For the Finnish case, interviews took place with pre- and in-service teacher interviews at the University of Jyväskylä Upper Secondary Teacher Training School, and with a language teacher educator at the

Department of Teacher Education, the University of Jyväskylä. The teacher interviews for both cases took place within the school environment. Interview questions invited teacher educators and teachers to describe their practice and perceptions of culture and intercultural, within their teaching. All interviews were conducted in English and the interviews were recorded and transcribed. Pseudonyms are used for participants. Table 2.1 displays the numbers of participants in the two contexts.

Table 2.1 **Number of participants in the study**

<i>Participants</i>	<i>Australia</i> <i>N=</i>	<i>Finland</i> <i>N=</i>
Teacher educators	1	1
Pre-service teachers	9	5
In-service teachers	5	5
TOTAL	15	12

Data analysis

The interviews were read and coded for repeated ideas, themes, and narratives about particular experiences. Through this thematic analysis approach (Ryan & Bernard, 2000; Ezzy, 2002, p. 90) themes and sub-themes around culture and intercultural competences were developed within and between the different data. As the key themes were developed, the data were grouped and differentiated as categories were formulated. Once the key themes had been developed, the final step was to focus in on individual pieces of texts, particularly those that seemed to contain contradictions or convictions in order to try to ascertain the different cultural discourses present in these texts.

Findings

We present the data, examining extracts from participants' interviews and narratives, from the two contexts separately, in order to provide a multilayered picture of the issues, values and practice of the different perspectives. This is followed by cross-cultural dialogue in the discussion section.

Australia: (a) Teacher educator

The Australian teacher educator, Sarah, shared that her early understanding of culture as a school language learner was as artefacts with lessons on maps, rivers, festivals and food. She graduated as a teacher of French and German without having left Australia. Later, she travelled many times to Japan, and here she recognised the 'invisible' culture of her life in Australia (Lo Bianco, et al. 1999). She was thus attracted to the emerging pedagogy of intercultural language learning (Liddicoat et al. 2003), for this potential to help young Australians to learn about themselves, while learning about life in

Tokyo or Paris. She became committed to professional development in this new intercultural approach to language learning and joined a team which developed national intercultural language teaching resources. And yet, she added

teachers seemed to struggle with it, they often couldn't let go of the exclusive culture-as-artefact teaching. They really thought they were 'doing intercultural' when they were just delivering cultural information. (Sarah)

Sarah moved to tertiary teaching as a FL teacher educator, particularly wanting to train new teachers to grasp this critical approach. Thinking about how she developed her Teacher Education pedagogy, Sarah noted:

I have three core messages for my pre-service teachers ... the first is to take every possible opportunity to spend time in the country ... it is transformative and essential for intercultural learning ... the second is that they need membership of a professional community ... and the third is the importance of skills in critical cultural enquiry and reflective knowledge of the self. This is the hardest. (Sarah)

Sarah expressed the continuity of her personal and professional learning in her transfer to her pedagogy as a teacher educator, and her 'vision' of the intercultural development of her pre-service teachers. She explained:

I really want my pre-service teachers to 'get it', and to grow in intercultural competence ... my workshops and assessments include autobiographical narrative exercises to elicit critical awareness of intercultural competence. But they make their own individual response, and, in their narratives, some still write stereotypical things, without digging deeper ... there has to be diversity of response, I can't expect the same cut-out. (Sarah)

The discourse of this teacher educator focuses largely on enabling her pre-service teachers to think interculturally as a personal intellectual and developmental exercise in becoming a critical teacher.

The teacher educator explained her perspective:

There are lots of reasons to be discouraged in Australian language teaching, poor policy-making, falling numbers in elective language study, low achievement, little public perception of any 'need to learn'. But, maybe this is one thing we can do, the intercultural. I have great belief in individual teachers and their continual advocacy and energy. One child's life, and thinking, is still changed by one great teacher. (Sarah) This extract exemplifies the striking contrast between the paucity of FL education as a system in Australia and this teacher

educator's commitment to the value she ascribes to intercultural competences. The shift in her understanding of culture provides the basis for her pedagogical approach to pre-service teachers. As a tool for self-knowledge, she promotes critical reflection, both domestically and in travel and learning outside the university. Most of her discourse is focused on this as the prime source of learning. Her discourse is largely focused on the individual and does not contain reference to critical discussion of social issues or politics as a vehicle for critical intercultural work.

Australia: (b) Pre-service FL teachers

The data in this section was generated from written narratives, written at the beginning of 2016, in the fourth and final year of study, and used with permission. The nine pre-service teachers (six female, three male) positioned their intercultural exploration at the individual level, through examination of their family history, immigration, language learning, and travel. Of the nine students, six were from families with immigrant backgrounds and family heritage backgrounds.

Some of the pre-service teachers described how the negotiation of their hybrid identities has shaped their understanding of intercultural competences. Adelaide is 'caught in the middle' of her father's Croatian background and her mother's Maltese background, in her recognition of her 'self' and her relationship with Australia. She concluded at a young age that the conflicting different meal-time etiquettes of these two groups meant that 'neither way was right or wrong, it is just a matter of perspective'. But through a relationship with a French friend, she 'discovered so much more about myself, about life in Australia, and my perceptions were constantly remoulded and reshaped'. For Adelaide it is the fluidity of identity that she discovered 'through intercultural competence' that she intends to convey to her future students:

I realised there is no one Australian. What unites us is our openness to the world ... I move fluidly between multiple spheres that overlap. I found myself through intercultural competence. But I'll never find a community of people exactly like me. That's what it is to be human: unique. It's about recognising shared values, accepting others, including yourself, and seeking our own individual meaning to life. My understanding is not static, but constantly transforming. (Adelaide)

Lilly is from Taiwan, but has settled permanently in Australia. She wants to replicate her self-discovery for her students, through language learning:

Being in Australia made me realise that everyone is a distinctive individual and also allows me to find my own characteristic and value ... In language teaching, it is essential that students are able to see themselves from a different angle, then to find their own identities beliefs and values by reflecting on language and cultures. (Lilly)

The pre-service teachers variously share a sense of vision about their future work:

It's not really about the language itself, it's about learning to live together, it has both educational and social purpose. (John)

The narrative extracts show that these pre-service teachers' discourse reflects some of the aspects of intercultural competences supported by this volume. They use critical perceptions of themselves, their interactions and failures. Their discourse illustrates Abdallah-Pretceille's (2004) assertion that the key question in the intercultural is the relationship with the other. They dig deep, to reveal their failures and the ongoing instabilities in their intercultural competences. Most of the experiences they recount are close to home rather than dependent on overseas travel. We note that these responses have been created, however, as individual reflections, rather than emerging from class community activity. The participants' abstract future application and educational vision suggests there may be a gap between the vision and pedagogical practice potentially undermining the implementation of the vision (Buchanan, 2015).

Australia: (c) In-service teachers

The discourse of the participant Australian FL teachers focuses on the belief that study of cultural material and artefacts facilitates intercultural competences. Teachers suggested that, through observing information about the target culture, intercultural competences may be shaped through watching YouTube clips, documentaries, films in the targeted language, interviews and discussions on culture and socio-cultural topics provided in the textbooks. This practice, however, does not preclude an enquiry perspective. One teacher noted:

With the Internet we use many YouTube clips and sites with advertisements, news reports, articles, etc ... We also look at it from a philosophical point of view in that the French do not see the world necessarily as we see it and why. (Cori)

Through 'authentic texts', that is materials developed for and by members of a particular cultural context (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013: 95), teachers believe they can encourage critical reflection in

students on cultural content. As in the example above, where the teacher Cori supposes a monolithic world view possessed by ‘the French’, this may clearly still support polarisation and essentialised perceptions. Teachers were keen to acquire (and deliver) knowledge about the target language country, and referred to institutions where they can access authentic resources, such as Goethe-Institut and Alliance Francaise (Mary, Cori).

Some teachers expressed the belief that the teaching of pragmatics (greetings and other etiquette scenarios) represented the core of intercultural competences. Robin explained that teaching pragmatics can help students explore behaviour in another place, and to interact with people appropriately. Although Robin recognised that intercultural competence ‘can be difficult to teach explicitly,’ she also shared how she addressed this in practice:

We explore the different ways to be polite in Spanish [and compare them to how we do this in English] ... I understand intercultural competence, to be the ability to communicate appropriately. Intercultural competent communication involves an understanding of the cultural norms pertaining to relationships, gender, power, age, politeness (and face), among other things ... (Robin)

While this focus on pragmatics is valuable to the language user, this approach may retain an exclusive focus on the other and on difference, limiting personal investment or reflection. Another important theme in the teachers’ discourse was the belief in overseas exchange programmes to produce a sense of belonging to a global world. As Cori comments, ‘Learning a language helps students belong to a global world in that they go on exchange’, although how these experiences transform into global belonging or critical intercultural competence was not addressed. Nevertheless, the discourse of most of the teachers included the objective of students developing tolerance and a non-judgemental attitude to the target culture through language.

The Australian teachers also acknowledged the potential of the multicultural class in Australia, that is, exploring intercultural competences locally. They desire to build a classroom community where students can negotiate meaning and participate in critical intercultural interactions. Mary wanted students of immigrant backgrounds to be able to share their individual intercultural experience, and to have their intercultural perspectives valued:

It is hard to recreate such situation in a class ... It is something students can get from their experience overseas or in a local community here. Some have actually gone through that, kids who have moved to Australia ... I really try to encourage them because they do not often realise why it is important. They just sort of laugh about things but I actually feel they want to talk about them instead, and they just have not had a forum for that. (Mary)

Teachers refer to the local ethnic communities or to those students who have recently migrated to Australia. Mary, for example, recognised critical breakthroughs in learning encounters between her students, in the breaking down of norms, but seemed to lack know-how in facilitating this in class, falling back again on experience outside the classroom:

I believe there is some sort of thing that clicks in their minds when they start to understand the world ... you can't understand why someone else does something unless you have realised somehow in your own mind there is no such thing as "normal" for example, or "right". It is hard to recreate such situation in a class, it is something they can get from their experience overseas or in a local community here. Some have actually gone through that, kids who have moved to Australia ... Not all of them have travelled or have had much contact with other cultures, but the ones who have, can give to the others. (Mary)

We note the incidence in the quotes above of the use of the words 'hard' and 'difficult' in referring to enabling pedagogy for intercultural competences. Some Australian teachers also suggested some anxiety and isolation due their own limited professional opportunities for travel.

By coincidence one of the Australian language teachers had come from Finland many years before and she offered a sharp perception of the difference in the FL learning climates:

The attitude in Finland is different. Languages are as important as Maths and English. Also the teachers are very well trained. They have to stay overseas in a target language country. In Australia the language teachers are dedicated, they are working against the whole society. They have to be very driven to be doing it. Otherwise you would not last for very long because people do not value your work ... (Kirsti)

The perceptions of this teacher above resonate with the discourse of the other Australian language teachers. In the teachers' discourse, contradictory currents of critical approaches and essentialised notions of culture and intercultural competences collide. Although the discourse suggests awareness of the value of exchanging perspectives within the classroom, how this is realised through pedagogical practice is left unsaid. Their students make observations of culture represented in films

and YouTube clips, but may not know how to engage in deeper critical reflection. The concreteness of ‘authentic’ materials is an important resource for the teachers, and perhaps goes some way to support and even counter the feelings of isolation intimated in their discourse, as the sole proponent of intercultural competences within their school.

In sum, across the different perspectives in the Australian case, there is some commonality in the recognition that intercultural competences, however understood, are central to their mission as language educators. The common understanding is that intercultural competences exist both as syllabus goals and as the result of personal experience in both teachers and learners. The teacher educator and the pre-service teachers appear to share some common critical framing of intercultural competences as an individual, unstable, uncomfortable change process. In-service teachers believe that intercultural competence may be produced by critical observation of culture within artefacts and media, and in some cases by supporting classroom student discourse. There is some recognition of the intercultural potential in exploring internal local diversity within the multicultural Australian classroom, yet little talk of social justice or broader aspects of intercultural competences globally, and only limited reflection on pedagogy which may enable deeper understanding of encounters with others in the local community and/or further afield.

The Finnish case

Finland (a) Teacher educator

The Finnish teacher educator Tiina described the scope of the five year teacher education program incorporating both Bachelor and Master’s level study and research projects for language pre-service teachers at her university. Finnish language teachers major in the language which they teach, and complete pedagogical studies in the Department of Teacher Education. Cultural knowledge is part of studies in both Department of Languages as well as in the Department of Teacher Education:

We discuss it in the language pedagogy, plus we look at it in the curriculum, we discuss it in the learning targets ... We discuss how the students see it, understand it ... It depends how much they think about it, and also their own experience ... Culture can be present as much or as little as you want. (Tiina)

Tiina's discourse reflects the flexibility within the Finnish system for teacher educators to cover the broad strokes of language pedagogy with pre-service teachers and to focus on the parts that seem most meaningful to a particular group of students. They trust that what should be covered, will be covered through the combined efforts of different departments. Tiina recognised that whether intercultural competences are fostered in teacher education largely 'depends on the teacher educator, [and] on how well they [the pre-service teachers] can build them.' Tiina continued that 'culture' may take on a different meaning related to 'difference' when discussing the teaching of a culturally and linguistically diverse class and, for example, recently arrived refugee students:

We speak about it. If you are teaching a heterogeneous class, teaching students of various backgrounds. Teaching Finnish as a Foreign Language, it's not only about language study, but the whole thing. (Tiina)

Tiina suggests that the increasing diversification of the classroom has created a new demand for pre-service teachers with skills for intercultural encounters by cooperating with different stakeholders (parents, colleagues, pupils), being sensitive to different levels of language ability and being prepared to be responsible. The impetus to address intercultural competences is more keenly felt when considering new arrivals in Finnish society. This discourse suggests that it is this new tension about the 'other' that prompts specific pedagogical action regarding the development of intercultural competences.

Finland (b) Pre-service teachers

The Finnish pre-service teachers feel they are encouraged to bring an individual set of skills and knowledge to the language classroom. They feel they bring their own cultural identity as a frame for their pedagogical practice. Kreeta is a third year student, majoring in German and Swedish, and believes that the teacher's personal choice of authentic texts is important. Kreeta integrates her favourite German songs into language teaching:

I use my favourite German music that I like at the moment ... I think students better understand and like it because it is modern. (Kreeta)

The Finnish pre-service teachers suggest that creative activities can be vehicles for sharing the way in which they currently understand and relate to intercultural competences in language education. For example, Saara, also majoring in German, experimented with 'drama and movement' in the language

classroom to develop her pedagogical practice. More proficient levels of communication will enable learners to understand changing cultural landscapes, to enhance their social skills and also their knowledge and understanding of modern culture/s of the target language. They also acknowledged the challenges of getting out-dated with their limited knowledge of current socio-cultural and political aspects of life in Germany. They communicated a strong responsibility to be competent in leading and participating in discussions, and to have up-to-date opinions and knowledge, about current affairs such as terrorism and politics. They believe the only way to achieve effective integration of intercultural competences into teaching is through critical knowledge and personal experiences in the target language countries. As Kreeta explains,

Cultural knowledge is important. This is why we went to Germany. At the university you learn a lot but you cannot really have a modern picture of what Germany actually is, unless you experience it for yourself. Our teachers are German but they have been living in Finland for 20-30 years ... We get a lot of information but it might not be true anymore. (Kreeta)

Several of the Finnish pre-service teachers stated that they have gained cultural and global awareness through working with the country's values and customs, and it is their desire to share this enquiry with their students. In terms of identity, they reported that their time spent abroad had a transformative effect and increased self-confidence.

This on-site development is promoted through a mandatory stay in the target language country for a minimum of two months during their studies. They can choose to study or work during this time. A graduating teacher referred to the transformation of her personal and professional self through working in France, which changed her perceptions and gave her a desire to grow more:

I spent one year in France as an Erasmus student, seven months as an assistant teacher in Northern France (English). These were the best experiences of my studies, I learned so much through these experiences ... Then it is up to you how much time you want to spend there if you want to study or to work. (Mari)

The discourse from this small sample suggests that this personal experience plays a major role in their development of intercultural competences and in the formation of pedagogical practice. Their idea is that FL learners in Finnish classrooms practice intercultural communication by sharing, discussing and communicating their broader knowledge and understanding of people and issues in other places,

including current socio-political affairs. One further example of this is Juuli, a pre-service French teacher in her fourth year. She emphasised the importance of learning experience in the current socio-political context. For her, using media-based texts, especially news stories, became a priority in her pedagogy.

It is important to learn about cultures and not only about stereotypes, like France, for example. It is also important if you have your own experiences or connections and you bring them to your students. It is also important to follow the news or action [current military conflicts and terrorism issues] and to know about history behind. How to make it happening, how to bring it to the class? It needs more work from the teacher. I want to do it somehow ...

(Juuli)

The discourse of the Finnish pre-service teachers offers a new perspective on intercultural competences in language learning, seeing this being developed through socio-political discussion exploring current global questions. This is made possible by advanced levels of FL comprehension and oral production. Their aim is to situate language in the modern, meaningful and rich cultural context. These Finnish pre-service teachers repeatedly commented that languages are about people: they wanted to become language teachers because they were interested in working with people within the broad community:

I always liked languages and wanted to work with people, especially young people. (Juuli)

I applied for English, German and Swedish and got German. I always found interesting how humans work and how they interact and how communication works. So I thought the language studies will be the road in that direction. (Saara)

They also understand that communication requires social skills and intercultural competence just as much as linguistic knowledge. This discourse suggests that these pre-service teachers perceive their professional and individual growth as individual yet within a wider context. As Ruohotie-Lyhty and Moate have written: ‘the *who* cannot develop in isolation from the *how* of educational community ... the *how* of the immediate community, however, is not isolated from the broad array of experiences that inform pre-service teachers’ notions of what it is to be a teacher prior to formal studies’ (Ruohotie-Lyhty & Moate, 2016, p. 319). The discourse of the pre-service teachers illustrates the way in which they draw on their own experiences in relation to others in the formation of their pedagogical

practice. Unlike their Australian counterparts, the pre-service teachers focus more on the relationship between the individual and the socio-political make-up of different communities, rather than their personal relationship with and experience of their local communities.

One Finnish pre-service teacher, Melissa, was training as a teacher of English and Spanish and had come from Somalia with her family ten years previously. She reported feelings of alienation as the only African-born student in the unit and her goal was to bring more socio-cultural awareness and empathy to the language classroom. Her discourse includes self-reflection and careful observation of her local environment:

I want my language students to engage in meaningful socio-cultural discussions, to think about other people in the world, to discover their own beliefs in life. I am also interested in social justice. (Melissa)

Melissa's discourse goes beyond knowledge or cultural understanding of others to a responsiveness to the immediate environment and a sense of responsibility for those with whom one shares life. Melissa's insights connect with the new impetus in teacher education to more consciously address intercultural competences as Finnish society diversifies. As with the other Finnish pre-service teachers, Melissa suggests that personal experiences are important material in the formation of pedagogical practice. But students do not appear to have a clear framework of pedagogical knowledge for how to promote critical reflection. This is a point we return to in the discussion of our study.

Finland (c) In-service teachers

The discourse of five Finnish FL teachers is similar to the Australian teachers with a shared faith in studying cultural material/artefacts to facilitate intercultural competences. Teacher discourse included the notion of intercultural competences being shaped through exposure to music (including major music festivals such as Eurovision), YouTube clips, documentaries, films and literary works (short stories, poetry, songs) in the target language. Their use of such resources seems to be for linguistic content and cultural 'knowledge'. As Karin observes, 'Students can learn much more when they hear German music or when they watch German films.'

Another similarity between the discourse of the Australian and Finnish FL teachers was use of greetings and other pragmatic scenarios to provoke discussions and critical reflections on ethical issues:

We don't have a greeting culture in Finland. But in many other countries they do. For example, I start my class and I say 'Buenos dias', hello everybody. And nobody answers. I can ignore that, sometimes I do, or I say once more, Buenos dias, hello everybody, once more. And then perhaps five students say something or everybody says something. I say, 'if you don't answer, if you don't greet me, it's so impolite. You can't do it in Spain. So, let's practice it'. (Jaana)

When asked about intercultural competences, some teachers immediately referred to their own travels abroad, a long-standing requirement in Finnish language teacher education. The teachers discourse associated culture with the experience of social interaction and intercultural knowledge, that is, how to communicate with '*different*' nationalities or ethnicities. Milla openly shared insights she had gained from her own travels, learning through trial and error as well as self-reflection:

I must have made some errors in different countries. I have done something in the very Finnish way not realising it. For instance for the first time I visited some schools in France. There are all these different names whether you are the Head teacher of Upper Secondary school or the Head teacher of Primary school ... you should use them. I did not know these titles, I was not culturally appropriate: [the French would say:] 'this Finnish lady who visited us last week was a bit rude'. (Milla)

Whether teachers are able to use these experiences to inform pedagogical practice remains unclear, however, as few explicit connections were made between the teachers' intercultural experiences and their pedagogy. The teachers did, however, highlight exchange programs as something that complements classroom learning. Through exchange experiences, the teachers believe that students will gain from language learning and will learn to 'survive in the world':

It's very efficient, very useful for them to learn as many languages as they can ... to really use it, a functional purpose, to be able to communicate about whatever you want to. It's not only the language but the way you try and survive in the world where you don't know the language that well. (Emmi)

<text_fullout>The teachers emphasises the need for ‘real-life’ experiences achieved beyond the classroom to fulfil the intercultural aspect of the curriculum, a discourse that appears to be contrary to their enthusiasm for the role of material artefacts. As Milla observes:

I think that the Intercultural aspect is built in our curriculum but of course it sort of depends on how to make it real ... If you read a text about some cultural aspect it may be a bit dry and people do not necessarily understand what it means and what the differences are. (Milla)

This remark underscores the dilemma faced by language teachers in both Finland and Australia; both groups highly value authentic cultural encounters and understanding, but the pedagogical challenge of how to recreate or fully capitalise on cultural experiences within the classroom remains unresolved. This dilemma is perhaps exacerbated by some teachers’ anxious and ambivalent discourse around the intercultural requirements of the curriculum. This teacher’s language shows her resistance to the moral obligation she sees in the curriculum:

What is written in the curriculum is that we should be more tolerant, more respectful of other countries, and we do not necessarily have to adopt their ways, but to a certain degree to understand them and to respect them ... We should be culturally sensitive and not only think that our way is the only way or is the best way. But our way is our way. (Milla)

The notion that it is the arrival of immigrants which has imposed the necessity for greater international understanding and knowledge is repeated here. Intercultural competences remain framed as being only about the ‘other’:

Of course because now we have more immigrants in Finland we really have the need for international understanding and for also international information. If you do not know about the different customs ... then it is easier for you to be prejudiced because then you just think they behave in a really weird way and that’s it! (Milla)

In this uncomfortable discourse, ‘international understanding’ suggests that background knowledge can reduce prejudice. This discourse problematically objectifies the other and assumes all Finns see themselves the same way (Dervin & Layne, 2013). This private discourse highlights the dilemmas that such teachers face. A complex personal negotiation may get in the way of teaching interculturality (Emmi) in relation to the curriculum, the surrounding society, their pupils and themselves. This negotiation is more complex and threatening if teachers (mistakenly) believe that they should be the source of knowledge.

An initiative which allows for more independent student exploration is, however, the creation of student research portfolios in the Finnish Upper Secondary School language courses. In the portfolios, students may optionally choose to explore their own ‘intercultural dimension of the world’ (Juanita). Juanita framed this as an opportunity to develop a sense of self, where pupils can gain awareness of their own culture before embarking on discovering a second culture. The teacher discourse indicates how complex this process is. It is interesting that in this task, the responsibility for fostering intercultural competences is accorded to students, rather than as a community or pedagogical responsibility, escaping from being a wider dialogue within Finnish language education. It is this challenge that we take up in the cross-case dialogue in the discussion below.

In sum, within the Finnish context the teacher educator, pre-service teachers and language teacher perspectives firstly recognise intercultural competences as part of broad Finnish education, not solely language education. In teacher education, the degree of attention given depends on the interest of the teacher educator. Secondly, Finnish participants’ discourse suggests belief that intercultural competences are informed by personal experience (rather than pedagogical strategies) and are important in mediating encounters with others. Thirdly, the use of artefacts and authentic resources is popular pedagogic practice to observe cultural practice.

The discourse of the Finnish pre-service teachers differs from the teachers in that the pre-service teachers appear to recognise culture not merely as something represented by artefacts, but dynamic and mediated by personal engagement. One pre-service teacher only, who had come from Somalia, recognised the potential of language education and intercultural competences, to address social justice. What is not clear in any of the perspectives from either context, however, is confident critical understanding of a role in fostering intercultural competences within language learning.

Discussion: Developing a cross-case dialogue

This study sought to examine how different perspectives within FL teacher education frame intercultural competences in two contexts from Australia and Finland. This discussion briefly reviews the multiple answers to the research question before outlining how the cross-cultural dialogue is supported when these two cases are placed side-by-side. This raises further questions and calls for wider critical dialogue of intercultural competences in FL education research.

Issues associated with FL education in Australia and Finland

In both the Australian and Finnish cases the language educators' relationship with the wider community was strong, although in different ways. In the Australian case the three perspectives communicated a sense of urgency that intercultural competences need to be understood and shared with students, and that FL educators are responsible for this task. Their commitment starkly contrasts with their often isolated status and lack of support from educational authorities. The in-service teachers recognise the connections between their roles and the diversity of students they work with daily and the pre-service teachers recognise their personal learning in intercultural competences, but are frustrated by how to transform this personal capacity into pedagogical practice.

The Finnish case suggests, however, that it is not only the relationship with educational authorities, but the individual relationship with the wider community that can hinder pedagogical practice. Unlike the Australian case, the perspectives of the Finnish participants express little urgency regarding the responsibility to develop intercultural competences. Although intercultural competences belong to the remit of FL education, they also belong to the wider curriculum and FL education has a secure position within that curriculum. The tension in the Finnish case, however, is found in the discourse pertaining to the perceived changes in Finnish society. Whereas in the Australian case the multicultural society is understood to be an intercultural pedagogical resource, in the Finnish case the increasing diversity of society is seen as problematic. Rather than being a global outlook, the challenge has been moved closer to home suggesting a disjuncture in Finland, in the framing of intercultural competences, between what has been and what is now becoming.

Values associated with intercultural competences in FL education

In the Australian case intercultural competences are understood as grounded in personal experiences. Participants understand that intercultural competences change the way they perceive themselves in the world. Interculturality was part of who and how they were as individuals in relation to their families, friends and local communities. In this discourse the individual is always in relation. Although teacher educator Sarah emphasised the value of travel and encounters away from home, her perspective suggested a significant shift towards understanding that intercultural competences mediate everyday life.

The values associated with intercultural competences in the Finnish case are somewhat different. Whilst intercultural competences are the assumed responsibility of educators, personal experience adds meaning and aids interpretation, for example, of artefacts. Moreover, personal experience is something that is gained outside the classroom and brought to the classroom. How to value personal experiences as pedagogical resources, however, is less certain. Not all pupils have the chance to travel nor do all pupils that travel necessarily gain intercultural competences through their experiences. In neither the Finnish nor Australian cases the value associated with personal experience are not partnered by a similar value ascribed to critical reflection on or pedagogical ways of maximising intercultural competences for all. FL education values and benefits from disparate personal experiences outside the classroom but perhaps does not value as highly pedagogical ways and means of working with these experiences. It is at this point that we turn to the practices associated with intercultural competences in the two cases.

Practices associated with intercultural competences

The perspectives shared by the participants in both contexts suggest that intercultural competences are developed through travel and social interaction. At each level in both contexts there is a strong belief in personal experience as an important aspect of intercultural competences. From the perspective of pedagogical practice, however, a significant gap seems to exist between personally significant individual experiences and the development of pedagogical practice that can transform individual experiences into community resources. In other words, the challenge from a practice perspective is how to make intercultural competences personally meaningful in the classroom without having to rely on experiences outside the classroom.

The pre-service teachers in both contexts seem to represent fresh understandings. Finnish pre-service teachers were keen to be able to lead political discussion as part of their language pedagogy to facilitate intercultural competences. This suggests a sense of continuity between their personal and professional selves and that their own competences will be an active part of their future classroom. The Australian counterparts also recognised the capital of their personal and professional intercultural competences developed in relation to family and friends, and contemporary society. Drawing connections across the two contexts, the Australian pre-service teachers recognise the interculturality

of their lived experience within diverse local communities, while their Finnish counterparts locate intercultural learning in discussion of unfolding socio-political developments beyond their borders, in the broader European arena. The perspectives of the in-service teachers in Finland and Australia, however, suggest that practices can ‘solidify’ and become unintentionally reductive.

In this small cross-case study of FL teacher education in Australia and Finland, the FL teacher educator perspectives share a common goal to produce beginner teachers who have intellectual depth and critical capacities. Whilst this perspective aligns with the curricular goals in both contexts to develop interculturally aware citizens, the creation of equity in education and social justice in society receive little attention from this perspective. As FL teacher educators and researchers, these findings challenge us to reconsider how the wider community of FL educators is responding to this challenge and is supporting the ongoing development of pedagogical responses to the world in which we live and would like to live. It is our hope that the findings from this study, as well the other studies included in this volume, support the recognition of new questions we now face in FL education. We turn to these questions in our conclusion.

Conclusion

As FL education researchers we might wish that all practitioners have moved beyond narrow perspectives. We acknowledge, however, that the significant challenges the teacher participants face have shaped their practice to a significant degree. In the Australian context, isolated FL teachers struggle with the responsibility of sustaining pupil interest in (non-compulsory) language study. In the Finnish context, teachers struggle with the disjuncture between what have been the established norms of education (e.g. shared responsibility for intercultural competences) and the realisation that society is changing, necessitating a new response. By placing these different perspectives side-by-side, we can perhaps better understand why teachers hold on to older approaches and why the development of pedagogical approaches is challenging. It is striking that the perspectives from both cases, however, emphasise individual experience and understanding. Little has been said regarding how as a community of FL educators we build understanding of possible pedagogical responses. We hope that by presenting the disparate and uneven perspectives involved in FL education in this contribution we begin to build a shared understanding.

Another question that is raised is *why* has the development of an appropriate pedagogical response been so difficult? It is not a new realisation that education should be meaningful nor that the role of the teacher is to make experiences available to pupils to develop dispositions such as intercultural competences, and understanding (e.g. Dewey, 1938/2007). The participants in our study readily recognised and appreciated the transformative potential of experience outside of the classroom, as do we, but we also wonder whether the significant appreciation of experiences beyond the classroom casts pedagogical efforts inside the classroom as poor reflections of ‘genuine’ encounters. Should we as language education researchers turn our attention to the potential of classrooms full of pupils with diverse experiences and teachers committed to language education? An important follow-up study from this small-scale investigation might examine the range of stories, experiences and intercultural encounters present in a ‘regular’ language class. Such a study might help teachers to better conceive of the actual resources pupils provide, in turn contributing to a more appropriate pedagogical response as we better understand and work together to develop intercultural competences in a diverse world.

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