

**Intercultural competence as part of a Finnish as a second
language educator's skillset**

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ABSTRACT

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Societies are becoming increasingly diverse, due to migration and globalization (Jokikokko, 2010). Hence, individuals will have increasing interactions with those from countries and cultures that are outside their own. Intercultural competence, the skillset needed to effectively communicate in a multicultural environment is one of the more sought after and increasingly needed skillset educators, who work in multicultural environments must possess.

The aim of this study is to explore and better understand Finnish as second language educators' practice and understanding of intercultural competence. There were two participants in this study and in-depth interviews, as well as classroom observations conducted by the researcher. The questions of how intercultural competence is presented in the classroom and the understanding of intercultural competence by the educators were analyzed, with key extracts taken out.

Using Byram's model of intercultural competence, it is found that educators do practice successful intercultural communication in the Finnish as a second language classroom. The practice of intercultural competence was chosen and analyzed using Byram's model. Additionally, the complexities of the multicultural background of students is concluded and put forward as a challenge for the educators to create a successful curriculum and integration into society. Accordingly, suggestions on how to incorporate students understanding and beliefs of intercultural competence are put forward for future research that is conducted.

Keywords: intercultural competence, Finnish as a second language, teacher cognition, education

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1 INTRODUCTION

In a world where many are traveling and immigrating to countries, the country of Finland is no exception. Between February 2016 and January 2107, over 24,600 immigrants have settled in Finland (Finnish immigration service, 2017). While the reasons for these permits may vary from asylum to family ties to studies, there is one item they have in common, a need to learn the language. Those individuals who move to Finland under asylum or family ties will undertake a mandatory language program through the employment office. This program comprises of five days a week, six hours a day lessons in Finnish (Ministry of Employment and the Economy, 2016). Additionally, the program is about a year for everyone. The increase in applicants who desire to live in Finland is reshaping the landscape for language learning, placing a greater demand on those who are trained to teach Finnish as a second language.

Language acquisition, especially in the context of a second language, is taking the proverbial front stage regarding integration. Intercultural competence is at the core of these programs, as the educators introduce not only the language but the culture of the country, while also being accepting and open to the culture of the individuals in their classrooms. Moreover, Jokikokko (2010) suggests that intercultural competence is a must for educators because they are ethical professionals, responsible for the support of personal and academic growth of their students without judgement toward religion, background, language and so forth.

As these programs are the first interaction for many with the culture and community at large, it takes a very special skill set for an educator to fill this role. The educator is a counselor, life coach, and language teacher. Intercultural competence some argue is not something that may be gained through a onetime insession training. Rather, intercultural competence is a skill that is learned over the course of a lifetime and is largely influenced and honed through interactions with individuals in a multicultural setting (Jokikokko, 2010). Hence, this study

will investigate the instances in the educator's life and experiences that have potentially shaped the interest in being in such a profession.

The aim of this thesis was to better understand the intercultural competence and impact this competence has had on the careers of two Finnish as a second language educators. The understanding of this competence from the educators and if this had an overall impact on the way they approached teaching in the classroom environment. The significance of the thesis and research conducted is because the intercultural competence of educators who are Finnish as a second language educators, is not commonly investigated.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review provides a theoretical basis for the study with the aim of creating a framework for understanding what language teaching is like in multicultural settings. The review of the literature will start with group dynamics in the language classroom, with the specific intent of understanding how classroom environments and teaching methods impact the group dynamic.

Group dynamics can play an important role for language teachers. Dörnyei and Murphey (2003) describe it as one of the most useful, if not the most useful sub-disciplines in social sciences for language educators. The educators in this thesis are in the unique position of encountering individuals from across the globe, each of whom has a very different background and approach to cultural views, perspectives, and daily interactions. Throughout the observations that I conducted in the classrooms, the intercultural communication that existed between the educators, students, and their peers were based upon the group dynamic. As it will be shown in a later chapter, understanding the individual and how they work within a group dynamic setting, helped both educators in this thesis know how to position individuals in the classroom in paired activities, and even when it came to seating arrangements. Therefore, it is imperative that group

dynamics is discussed in this theoretical review to help create a framework for understanding.

Additionally, this thesis will discuss the view of Leo van Lier (2010) regarding second language acquisition through group dynamics arguing intercultural competence and skill set. The review finishes with intercultural competence, citing the works of Byram and Jokikokko to support the analysis of the data set.

2.1 Group dynamics

The study of group dynamics began in the 1940s with the works of Kurt Lewin, although it is still widely studied today. There has not been much research until recently for second language acquisition and the efficacy of group dynamics (Dörnyei and Murphey, 2003).

The interaction and communication of individuals within the classroom is greatly influenced by the organizational layout of the classroom environment. Something as simple as the placement of tables and chairs may impact participation, who takes leadership, and group dynamics. Furthermore, the distance between the learners determines the intimacy level of the learners. Too far away may create isolation, too close may cause discomfort. In the multicultural environment, the added element of potential conflicts between individuals in the classroom increases significantly. Certain individuals may not be keen to sit near another for cultural reasons (Dörnyei and Murphey, 2003). Such an instance was seen more than once in my observations in the second language classrooms. While it is more prevalent in Teacher 1's classroom, there were some hesitations still lingering in Teacher 2's classroom. One such example may be seen when three men were paired with a woman and were not inclined to move from their seats to meet her at the open area of desks next to her. Teacher 2 had to ask them to move almost in a joking sense, so that they were accommodating.

Temperature, lighting and even decoration are also factoring in learning. Even movement within the classroom, even if simply changing task partners is

important. It is important for educators to consider the group dynamics and switching task partners often, thus allowing individuals to learn from new experiences. These external elements also impact the group dynamics that exist within the classroom (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003).

Leo van Lier (2010) studied and coined the term ecological approach to the classroom environment. The ecological approach aims to “look at the learning process, the actions and activities of teachers and learners, the multilayered nature of interaction and language use, in all their complexity and as a network of interdependencies among all the elements in the setting, not only at the social level, but also at the physical and symbolic level” (van Lier, 2010, p. 3). In other words, the interactions between teacher and student, student to student and the group, are complex in nature and multilayered. This dynamic is made more complex using the entire setting, not simply the social setting through which the students are learning the language, but also the invisible and visible diversities that exist, which will be mentioned in-depth in another chapter, as well as the physical artifacts that are used for language development, such as cultural comparisons.

Most notable are Leo van Lier’s central concepts to this ecological approach. The relationships among elements in an environment, the complexity and how language maintains such relationships are key to the ecological environment. Moreover, that the quality of learning is not simply through the educator’s expertise, but also the well-being of the learners and learning opportunities. The final concept is the agency. In this, he describes agency as a movement. That may be viewed as the progress that a learner makes toward a certain goal or desire behind moving toward that goal or staying still (van Lier, 2010).

Relationships may be distinguished through the social, physical, and symbolic levels. These three levels interact in multiple ways, as is key to the concept of the ecological approach. One such example may be found in the classroom observations that I conducted. One class had returned from a work practice that was over the duration of six weeks, all the students in different places of work throughout the local city. A few of which, were placed in day-care

centers creating a common interest. On the physical level, these work practices were spoken about and written on sheets of paper put up on the walls. One student commented that she enjoyed working with the children as much as another person, who had written as such on their sheet of paper. This in turn, relates one person to another using language. Furthermore, it establishes attention to a joint physical property in the direct environment. While in this instance it is a sheet of paper with a common interest, it may also be considered the type of work placement they were placed in. This joint attention invokes further conversation between the two individuals and may create symbolic connections. Language and language acquisition, therefore, is paramount in establishing, maintaining and expanding relationships. The world in that essence, is full of many opportunities to establish relationships through aspects of the physical world, sociocultural world of artifacts, and social communities. Additionally, using symbolic world of histories, ideas, beliefs, and so on (van Lier, 2010).

The quality of learning in many ways is paramount in educational standards. However, the quality of learning is broadly defined and often neglected structurally (van Lier, 2010). While standardized testing, holding accountability to the educators and so forth create environments that enable students to learn and promote their well-being, there are also challenges present to make it so that this may not be a model that fits for everyone. When working in multicultural environments, it is highly likely that the educators will encounter individuals who do not have access to even basic level education. When I myself, was learning the language at the language center, I encountered peers who did not even have access to running water until they came to Finland. The concept of a sink, which for many is considered common, was new to some individuals. The future aspirations of the students, past experiences, personal preferences, and a mix of many other ingredients make up the concept of a student's well-being and opportunities to learn. Leo van Lier (2010) suggests shifting from a system that is dependent upon testing to "a more direct appraisal system addressing, documenting and promoting the quality of educational experience" (p. 4).

Essentially, it is to look at the individual as such, an individual person. This enables the individual to experience a quality educational experience that works for them and not something that is a one size fits all.

Agency according to van Lier (2010) is defined as “movement, a change of state or direction, or even a lack of movement where movement is expected” (p. 5). This can mean literal or figurative ways of movement. Such as listening to a story someone is telling about the troubles they have experienced in his or her life, one is moved to tears. The story is compelling and emotionally causes a shift. If a star were to shoot across the sky, one’s eyes would follow it, hence a movement. Agency regarding the learning environment, is central to learning at many levels and it manifests itself in many ways (van Lier, 2010). Regarding the second language environment, while it may be mandatory to attend certain courses it is the agency of the individual that ensures long-term success and learning. Those who attend with the attitude that they must be present, may simply only progress to pass the tests and the program. Others may make choices that promote agency toward self-directed ways and set goals and steps toward life-long learning.

However, in considering agency, one must also consider identity as the two are intertwined with one another. Identity emphasizes the dialogical and social side of agency, but unlike agency it also depends upon the individual and the environment. In the language learning classroom, it is imperative that the curriculum supports promoting agency within the learners, so that they may be given the choice and opportunity to work as a member of a learning community (van Lier, 2010). This is evident in many respects throughout the classroom observations that I conducted, as the educators have given freedom in questions that are asked, conversations that are held, and the importance of the work practice that the students are able to participate in. Agency is tied to learning and there must be room in a learning environment for a variety of expressions of agency to flourish, for individuals to be successful (van Lier, 2010).

Therefore, if one is to look at group dynamics as an ecological theory, there are multilayered and complex natures that exist within each group dynamic.

Educators in many ways must understand the multifaceted nature of the groups, the relationships, the quality of learning within the group and the agency. In this respect, as Dörnyei and Murphey (2003) state, it is far easier to take on an autocratic role in educating in the group dynamic setting. However, if an educator may take on the democratic role and understand how to form correct groups within the classroom for learning efficacy, the individual possesses a unique skill set to help learners achieve more than they might have imagined.

2.2 Intercultural competence

There is not a consensus on the definition of intercultural competence. The understanding of intercultural competence is that it is multidimensional, and the terminology used to breakdown and define it is often open-ended and up to interpretation. While there are many definitions that may be addressed and discussed, there are two that will be used for the purpose of this study, one of which is widely accepted and utilized in the academic field.

According to Jokikokko (2005) intercultural competence is defined as an “ethical orientation, in which certain morally “right” ways of being, thinking and acting are emphasized” (p. 79). This is largely viewed as an individual’s sense of cultural identity and how it is applied in a group dynamic situation. This may also be referred to as cross-cultural competence, however, in many respects, intercultural competence is considered the proper format. There is no comparison of cultures per se, but rather a form of contact between cultures. In other words, two cultures are not pitted against one another and compared for the purposes of study or otherwise, simply two different backgrounds trying to connect through similarities. This may also be defined as an individual’s ability to communicate appropriately and effectively with people of other cultures and backgrounds.

Many may argue that intercultural competence is not a skill that is taught, but rather something that is learned and applied through life study and experience. Through these experiences and interactions, individuals may practice successful intercultural communication. Jokikokko’s (2010) study also showed

that strong, not so shocking triggers for individuals come from the mundane day to day routine that individuals encounter with the outside world. Such examples could be through discussions with someone who had a different religious or political background, or even two individuals from the same country who come from very different parts of the country (i.e. small town versus big town). However, many of these instances are also a form of self-directed learning. This comes from a willingness or openness, like that of Byram's model, which will be discussed at a later point, to interact in cultural situations. These day to day experiences and situations where they encourage the self-growth is a form of life long learning.

Jokikokko (2010) takes a holistic view to intercultural competence and argues that it should not be an additional part of a teacher's professionalism but rather it is the teacher's professionalism in intercultural contexts. That how the educator treats and responds to individuals in intercultural situations determines the ethical and professional level in which they conduct their teaching.

Such examples of holistic views are evident in her research studies of students that have recently graduated from the Intercultural Teacher Education (ITE) program in Oulu, Finland. A sense of self-reflection was evident amongst the participants, and the realization of one's "otherness - a person's own experiences of feeling different or thinking or acting in a different way compared to people around them - were an important part of teachers' intercultural competence" (Jokikokko, 2010, p. 61). When speaking about and defining intercultural competence, the data set were not speaking so much about intercultural competence in specific knowledge or skills, but rather a more holistic way of acting and thinking. The subject's responses then fall in line with the concept Jokikokko presents, which is that how one conducts their teaching is evident of intercultural competence and teacher professionalism.

Additionally, according to Jokikokko (2010) there is a need amongst educators for special sensitivity to recognize differences and intercultural competences. This ensures that the learner can grow as a student and individual. Thus, one may make an argument for the level of professionalism that exists

within the educator as a direct tie to the intercultural competence that is possessed. Intercultural competence for an educator is “an expanded world view, where the central principles are openness towards people and new ideas as well as the ability to listen to others, learn from each other and to care” (Jokikokko, 2010, p. 74).

2.2.1 Transformative learning toward intercultural competence

Transformative learning is one avenue toward intercultural competence. Transformative learning may be defined as “learning that transforms problematic frames of reference to make them more inclusive, discriminating, reflective, open, and emotionally able to change” (Mezirow, 2009, p. 22). That is, when one’s own ideas, assumptions, and their origins are critically evaluated and challenged, a person can evaluate the way these thoughts affect their behavior and thinking. Through acknowledgement and expanding the understanding of this, the change in attitude will come about. This is like that of Byram’s theoretical framework of intercultural competence. However, much of transformative learning is through self-reflection. This in some respects is like that of Jokikokko, who believes that intercultural competence must come with intercultural learning (2010). That for someone to be able to achieve a level of intercultural competence, there must be a willingness to understand and be aware of various cultural backgrounds and instances that may vary from what one is accustomed to.

Jokikokko recognizes that transformative learning can also be triggered by other non-formal means. Her research study reflects the experiences of “studying, living and working in developing countries particularly trigger powerful transformative learning processes. The culture shock not only took place in the foreign country, but upon returning to one’s home country, a person could also experience re-entry shock, especially when an individual’s world view had changed” (2010, pg. 64). These experiences made teachers critically evaluate and reflect on their own values, as well as those of their country and culture. Additionally, returning to one’s home country, if the

experiences one had could not be shared or understood faced its own challenge in re-entry shock. This in turn prompted the same transformative learning result.

In the Finnish as a second language classroom, educators draw on their cultural experiences in attempts to create culturally responsive educational decisions within the classroom. That is, they are each trying to help students understand the power relations, group dynamics, and social systems in how it impacts the cultural diversity that is apparent in the country and the classroom. Additionally, they are attempting to build a community within the classroom through the means of cultural artifacts, stories, narrative, and of course the language. This sense of cultural identity or cultural imagination (Mezirow, 2009), is imperative to the learning environment, as it can potentially lead to transformative learning. The program that I observed for this thesis is evaluated by the city and the company that owns it periodically. Additionally, students can give feedback at the end of their courses to help promote positive change within the program or address specific concerns. This is a form of self-reflection, however there is no form of further training or transformative learning that takes place through in-sessions, which is an increasing concern and challenge that the facility must rise to, to ensure successful intercultural communication in future courses.

Further emphasis on the necessity of preservice teachers or in-service teacher training programs to facilitate the potential for transformative learning is found through a study conducted by Polat and Ogay Barka (2014). This was a comparative study between preservice teachers in Switzerland and Turkey. The aim of the study was to determine the intercultural competence levels of these preservice teachers, prior to being placed in classrooms full-time. The findings suggest that understanding multiculturalism necessitates preservice and in-service teacher training programs. The reasoning for such, is that the self-perception of intercultural competence with the preservice teachers varied significantly between the two countries. In Turkey for example, courses were not even offered on multiculturalism (Polat & Ogay Barka, 2014). If self-

reflection is at the core of the concept of transformative learning, then one must be given the tools necessary to be competent at being self-reflective. Hence a need for educators in the Finnish as a second language program to have the tools necessary to respond to and create a culturally responsive educational classroom.

However, as further literature review and the findings of the thesis will suggest, such in-sessions are not the be all end all that one may need to become interculturally competent. An understanding of cultural identity and as Jokikokko suggests, life experience and life long learning, is also at the core of promoting intercultural competence or transformative learning.

2.2.2 Cultural identity

Intercultural competences in many respects must also be viewed with cultural identity. Cultural identity may be viewed as a more dynamic process than a fixed state of “being” and “having” (Jokikokko, 2005). Meaning, there is far more to an individual than what they have and whom they appear to be. In many respects, there is a lot more that is beneath the surface or exterior of an individual. In other words, when two individuals speak to each other, they are not simply speaking to each other, but they are also seeing one another. In seeing one another, they identify that person as an individual, but also place that individual within a social group instinctively. Thus, how they speak to one another is influenced and their interpretation of the conversation is also influenced. In a large way, the cultural identity of an individual is what is first represented in a meeting. In this respect, it is important that educators are aware of visible diversity and the invisible diversity that exists within students and the classroom environment

Visible diversity refers to those items or things about an individual that cannot change and are external in nature (Jokikokko, 2005). The main concept is that visible diversity is something that can be seen and heard almost immediately. The hijab that a woman wears of the Muslim faith is an external, visible form of diversity as one example. Other such examples may be physical deformities or

external representations of individuals with mental challenges, such as those with Downs syndrome.

Invisible diversity refers to the differences within individuals that are not immediately considered or noticed (Jokikokko, 2005). Such examples of these may be sexual orientation, learning styles, political opinions, and some personal beliefs. There are many individuals who do not come from what may be considered a “traditional household” and in many instances, this is considered an invisible diversity. Simply because individuals do not openly share family history upon first encounters or even after many subsequent encounters. It takes a safe, welcoming environment for many to feel the desire to share these invisible diversities. In understanding the visible and invisible diversity, the educator can recognize differences and intercultural competencies that exist within the individual and the group dynamic.

Further emphasis is given to dialogical relationships that exist within the classroom. These dialogical relationships are extremely important to intercultural competence and sensitivity building. This is the ability to create a safe, welcoming environment where everyone feels appreciated (Jokikokko, 2005). The ability for students to share regardless of cultural background or visible and invisible diversity that exists within the classroom gives insight into the individual and allows for intercultural competence and successful intercultural communications.

However, there are challenges to the educator in the second language classroom in accomplishing such a feat. When there are multicultural individuals in a room and there is no common language, it may be hard to have dialogical relationships or communications that are welcoming and considered safe. Moreover, when the students themselves have pre-conceived concepts of cultural stereotypes, these may influence the environment that exists within the classroom.

There is an emphasis for the educator to be aware of this situation and be cognitively able and aware to understand how to create such a safe dynamic within the classroom setting.

While there are pedagogical orientations to intercultural competence that Jokikokko (2005) references, it is also about an individual's sense of cultural identity and agency. Furthermore, how the educator responds to certain levels of diversity, be it visible or not.

2.2.3 Byram's intercultural competence

Intercultural competence according to Byram, Gribkova & Starkey (2002) is also rather fluid in nature. There is no set definition, but they reference specific components of intercultural competence, such as "knowledge, skills and attitudes, complemented by the values one holds because of one's belonging to a number of social groups" (p.11). They try to say that intercultural competence is not necessarily learned, nor is it considered a skill that may be mastered. Rather, it is a set of skills and components that must be applied in an intertwined effort to ensure successful intercultural communication. This thought is like that of Jokikokko (2005) who believes that intercultural competence is not a skill that may be mastered in one day but rather is over the course of a lifetime

Educators, specifically those who work in the second language field, are faced with a challenge of understanding, accepting, and attempting to be successful in intercultural communications based upon what is defined. Hence the question of what sort of special skillset does an individual possess, and what are the motivations behind such a specific and rather challenging profession.

Byram, Gribkova & Starkey (2002) emphasize that the foundation of intercultural competence lies in the attitude of the individual. This emphasis is the root of Byram's model of intercultural competence, an example of which is shown in Figure 1 below. The levels of diversity that Jokikokko (2005) discussed, are also a part of Byram's (1997) theory of intercultural competence. This model in comparison to Jokikokko's (2005) definition of intercultural competence consists of "linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and intercultural competence" (p. 49). In other words, there are five specific parts that comprise the model of intercultural competence. The levels of diversity be it invisible or visible would be a part of specific components of the

model, depending upon the circumstance. The five specific components of the model may be seen in the figure below.

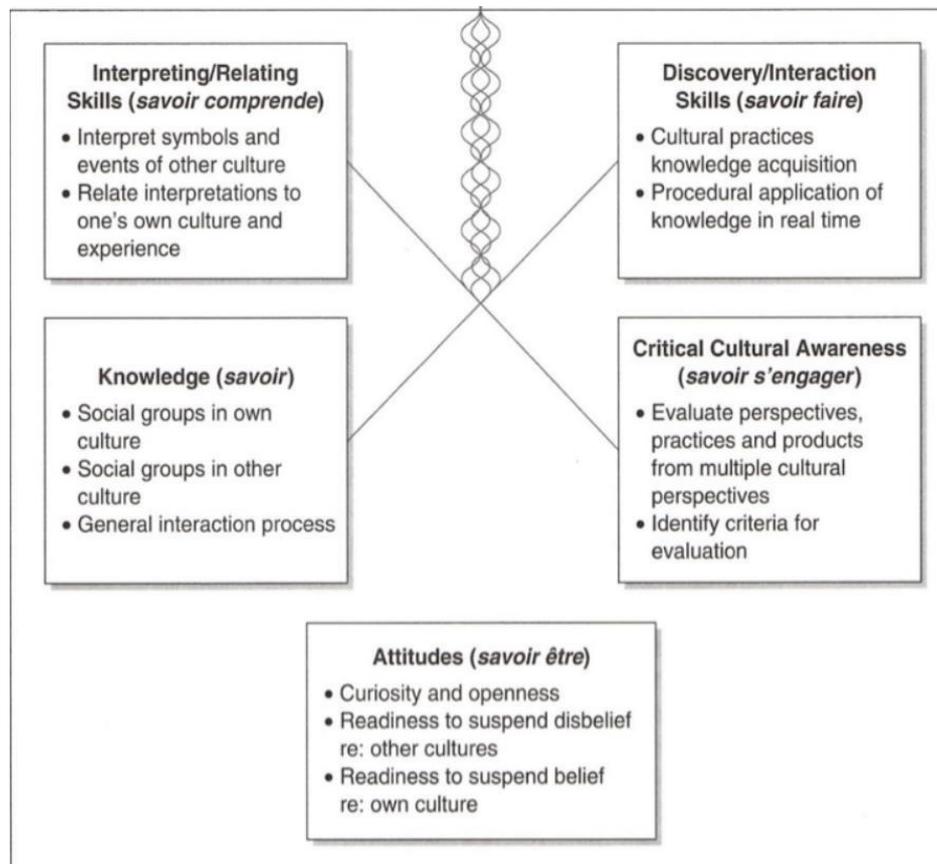


Figure 1. Intercultural competence model (based on Byram, 1997, p. 62)

As seen in Figure 1, this model is composed of knowledge of self and others (*savoir*), critical cultural awareness (*savoir' engager*), skills of discovering/interacting (*savoir apprendre/faire*), attitudes, valuing others (*savoir être*), and skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*) (pg. 34). Of these five components to the model, it is important to note that attitudes are the precondition that a person possesses, and critical awareness must be at the center of the model to be effective. Specifically, the attitudes are like that of pre-conceived notions or stereotypes about individuals who may be from different backgrounds. Critical awareness of these attitudes and how they impact intercultural competence is what makes it necessary for critical awareness to be at the center of the model, to be effective.

However, it is not simply attitude and critical awareness that are dependent upon one another. Each of these five components is interdependent upon one

another, as each influences the outcome of the other. In other terms, the attitude that an educator may possess toward specific cultures or even his or her own culture impacts the desire to gain knowledge of others and be accepting of said knowledge.

The foundation of intercultural competence lies in the attitude of the individual, hence making it a precondition and one of the largest impactors in successful intercultural communication. Byram (1997) labels attitude as “curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one’s own” (p. 57). In order to have successful intercultural communication, one must not only be aware of both negative and positive prejudice that the individual possesses, but also be willing to accept them as not the “only” or correct way of thinking. Essentially, to have a negative attitude toward an individual or cultural interaction is to be unsuccessful in intercultural communication. However, to assume a positive prejudice, for example, that all Canadians are too nice, is also to ensure there is an unsuccessful intercultural communication. Therefore, individuals must be able to understand and relativize one’s own beliefs or behaviors to have successful intercultural communication.

Knowledge in this instance is defined as “knowledge of social groups and their products and practices in one’s own and in one’s interlocutor’s country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction” (Byram, 1997, p. 58). Essentially, it is not simply understanding or knowing the culture from a generalized description or basis, but rather understanding how culture may affect language and communication. Ways in which you speak to a man or woman from a certain country may be considered inappropriate, hence finding a way that would be middle of the road for effective communication.

The skills of interaction and discovery include “the ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction” (p. 61). Discovery is essentially seeking out and attempting to understand and document specific knowledge from behaviors, beliefs and potential meanings. The skills of interaction are what one must be able to manage

when interacting with another individual, regarding perception and attitudes. This may also include certain time restraints, with which there is not enough time to effectively gain the knowledge one may seek through discovery.

Interpreting and relating skills are defined as “the ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents or events from one’s own” (Byram, 1997, p. 61). This, in many ways, is tied to what was mentioned above being skills of interaction and discovery. However, unlike the component of interaction and discovery, individuals can use current or previously learned knowledge to compare and interpret specific cultural behaviors. These skills are beneficial for resolving misunderstandings, as one may look at another cultural perspective for insight (Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002).

Critical cultural awareness is defined as “the ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one’s own and other cultures and countries” (Byram, 1997, p. 63). This is considered one of the foundations of the intercultural competence model. The awareness of one’s own values and beliefs is imperative to achieve successful intercultural communication because individual beliefs and behaviors are deeply ingrained and may be an influencing factor in just how aware, receptive, and understanding individuals are toward other cultures. It is easy to see how these components are interlinked with one another and complement one another. To have a cultural awareness of the level of one’s own beliefs and the beliefs of another individual, lead to better knowledge and social interactions, hence the effective intercultural communication. Furthermore, this distinct model is used as one of the more influential models amongst researchers, making it the best analytical tool for educators’ cognitive awareness of intercultural communication. The understanding of which is at the core of one of the research questions in this thesis, hence why this model was used to analyze the data received.

It is important to note that these intercultural dimensions should not be viewed as another method of teaching that one must familiarize themselves with, but rather a natural extension of the desire to already become interculturally

competent (Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002). In that respect, one must again wonder if it is a special skill set that an educator possesses, which encourages this desire to become interculturally competent in comparison to their counterparts or peers.

2.2.4 Deardorff's intercultural competence assessment

Intercultural competence according to Deardorff (2011) is very similar to that of Byram. However, in contrast to Byram, Deardorff speaks about how to assess intercultural competence, whereas Byram speaks of a model to achieve intercultural competence. Moreover, he simplifies his view and states that intercultural competence applies to "any who interact with those from different backgrounds, regardless of location" (p. 66). Rather than focus on the definition of such a term, he focuses on the overall desired outcome of intercultural competence. That is defined as "effective and appropriate behavior and communication in intercultural situations" (Deardorff, 2011, p. 66). His process orientation of intercultural competence can be split into four specific sections. The first of which, is knowledge and comprehension. That is, individuals should be given opportunities to assess and reflect the development of their own intercultural competence over a period. The importance of this assessment, however, lies in the fact that it should be through targeted interventions, such as in-sessions. Secondly, criticalthinking skills play a critical role in an individual's ability to evaluate and acquire different knowledge. Hence, critical-thinking assessment should be an important part of intercultural competence assessment (Deardorff, 2011).

Third, attitudes, with respect, openness, and curiosity serve as the foundation of this model. He argues that these have an impact on all the other aspects of intercultural competence. This is like that of Byram's model, where attitude and critical awareness are considered the foundation for intercultural competence. Finally, is the ability to see from another's perspective. This is not simply surface level understanding of one's culture, be it food, clothing, and history. This is a deeper, more holistic approach to understanding culture

through more indepth means (Deardorff, 2011). He argues a point that is brought up frequently within the literature review, which is that knowledge alone is not enough for intercultural competence development. One must develop skills to think interculturally as well.

2.3 Summary

In looking at the previous research, most studies are concerning understanding the educator's conceptions of intercultural competence through theoretical analytical means. Very few researches as of late, focus on how the educators utilize intercultural competence within the classroom and how this has an impact on the dynamics with said classroom environment. This is especially true when it comes to the Finnish as a second language classroom. Further, the results of the literature review show that while it is important to have access to preservice or in-sessions to promote intercultural competence, there are no such programs readily available now that fit an international format.

Even the recently graduated teachers who attended the Intercultural Teacher Education Program were also relatively unprepared when they completed their studies and entered the workforce. Some felt rather shocked and left with little to no support after leaving the proverbial nest (Jokikokko, 2010). However, further literature review argues that experience and lifelong learning is far more comparable to in-sessions that are provided. This thesis endeavors to explore the possibility that experience does in fact, outweigh in-sessions but that both are necessary to achieve intercultural competence and successful intercultural communication.

3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study aims to investigate the role that the educator's intercultural competence plays in the interaction in the Finnish as a second language classroom. Specifically, how it is applied within the classroom and the impact

that it may have on the classroom environment and interactions in the classroom environment. Furthermore, to understand if the educator is aware of his or her own intercultural competence. Because being a second language educator requires interaction with individuals from many different backgrounds, when working in this case study, I also wanted to see if there were any motivations for the career choice. As the job requires balancing intercultural competence and an understanding of successful intercultural communication. Based on the literature review introduced previously, the following research questions were used to develop the foundation of the current study.

1. What type of role does the educator's intercultural competence play in the interaction between student and educator in the Finnish as second language classroom?
2. What understanding of intercultural competence does the educator have?

The first research question attempts to utilize the literature review of the socialcultural theory and group dynamics to see how intercultural competence is used in the classroom for interaction purposes. Because the group dynamic may change the success of intercultural communication simply by how an individual is positioned in the classroom, it is important to study the impact it may have.

The second research question utilizes Bryam's model of intercultural competence to understand the level of cognition the educator has about intercultural competence. Furthermore, how such competence is utilized in the classroom. There are lingering curiosities if there is a connection between skill sets the educators possess and motivation level that may be present to teach in such a field. I used a combination of the interviews and classroom observations to answer these research questions. Additionally, the observations served as support to the interview responses, to ensure validity.

4 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STUDY

Considering the research questions that were presented previously, this study was created with the intention of analyzing intercultural competence on a cognitive understanding level, as well as how it is implemented in the second language learning classroom environment. Therefore, this thesis is qualitative in nature. The teaching practices and responses to the interview questions, as well as the observations conducted, will be analyzed using Byram's model of intercultural competence, as was mentioned in a previous chapter. Additionally, the data will be analyzed using the thematic narrative phase set out by Braun.

There is no solution that this thesis is necessarily striving to find, simply a better understanding of what makes these individuals the way they are. As I was shaped and molded integration wise by Finnish as second language educators, I find there is an importance to draw upon the skillset of these educators and utilize them to their fullest capacity.

4.1 Ethical Considerations

As with all research of this type, it is important to consider the ethical implications before conducting research. It is imperative that informed consent is given to the researcher prior to participation in the study. I should note that anonymity will not be perfectly achieved, especially when research is conducted in smaller community sizes. However, it should be expected that all is done to protect the participants' identity and privacy, while also protecting the integrity and value of the data.

Prior to starting my data collection, I initially reached out to the two individuals at the school they were teaching at. As I have a prior working relationship with them, be it a former student to each of their classrooms, I made a visit to everyone personally. When I was shown interest by both educators for participation, I created a consent form for the educators, detailing the purpose of

my study. This consent form may be found in the appendix. These were then turned into the educators and the principal of the school for signed consent.

This thesis respects confidentiality, thus the names of the two individuals who participated in the case study shall remain anonymous. For the sake of clarification throughout the thesis, they shall be named teacher 1 and teacher 2 respectively. Furthermore, the location of where these two individuals work shall not be mentioned to keep their level of anonymity and protect the program of which they are a part of. The names and location of the individuals are not necessary to protect the integrity and value of the data, hence that is not at risk should the participants' information remain anonymous.

4.2 Data collection

The data was collected from two participants who work for the employment office as Finnish as a second language educators. Specifically, they were a part of the integration program that was previously discussed for individuals who take up residence in this country through resident permits. Permission was also granted by the administrator of the program before the data was collected. It was important to me that I had previous knowledge of the program and of the educators that I would be interviewing and observing, as that enabled a more comfortable environment for the flow of conversation and ease of observations.

4.2.1 Interview Method

The interviews were conducted in September of 2018 in the classroom environment of each participant during school hours for the educators. This was because time was an issue for both individuals due to full schedules and prior obligations. While the educators responded to the questions in Finnish, I in turn used English to ask questions and make comments. Each interview was then translated from Finnish to English by the researcher, me. Each interview lasted about an hour and a half. It was important to me that the interviews were

conducted in an environment that the participants felt comfortable in, as this ensures the responses would be more open and honest.

Galetta (2013) references that the semi-structured interviews provide a range of possibilities. Moreover, that the semi structured interview allows specific topics to be addressed in relation to the study, while also leaving the space available for the participants to add new meanings to the study in focus. Therefore, the interviews were semi-structured with questions prepared beforehand, to guide the direction of the interview. However, there was the space available to ask follow-up questions and clarification on responses that seemed unclear. It was important to me that, should they feel inspired to add on to the conversation or the question at hand, there was the freedom and time available to do so, as this created a richer dataset. This created an extended narrative, as the educators were given the freedom to shift from the question at hand and share additional experiences that they felt enriched the story they were telling.

Additionally, email exchanges and visits were readily available, should I find that I needed further clarification or understanding on what was said.

The questions that were asked of the participants reflect the aim of the study and research questions. Furthermore, the questions reflect the experience and knowledge of the participant in their field of expertise. The questions that were asked encouraged the participants to explore their views on the Finnish as a second language integration program, their previous experience as both second language learners and educators, their present roles, and future hopes for the program and professional endeavors. Both participants were asked the same set of questions.

The interviews were not recorded. Instead, I took detailed notes which took some time as I wanted to be certain that I had represented the teachers' words as accurately as possible. In hindsight recording the interviews and transcribing them later would have been more effective for time. The responses to the interviews, as well as the field notes from observations, were carefully transcribed and analyzed.

4.2.2 Classroom observations

To gather the data, I observed the classroom of teacher 1 totaling twenty hours over the course of two weeks. I also attended classroom observations and one social outing of Teacher 2, totaling twenty hours over the course of two weeks. These were conducted in September of 2018, as the courses had just started for the year and both educators were available at that time. The notes that were taken were largely field notes, with the research questions and my theoretical framework kept in mind. My observations were based upon the interactions with the students in the classroom from the educator, the group dynamics of the students in pairings, participation, and overall mood of the environment. Additionally, how the educator moved within the classroom, the tone of voice, and even expressions when certain comments arose about cultural differences or personal questions that were asked. Moreover, when conflicts arose within the classroom or certain cultural references came up, I made observations and notes of the responses. Many of the examples of the conflicts were in Teacher 1's classroom when it came to group pairing, as individuals there were newly accustomed to working with other cultures and backgrounds.

I largely tried to stay in the background, although there were instances where Teacher 1 utilized me as a different person to interact with for the students, answering questions, and assisting in the lectures at hand. One such example is when she was trying to teach the students the difference between conjugating verbs, such as "käy", which is I visit, loosely translated in English and "mennä" I go, loosely translated in English. The sentence structure and ending of certain words is adjusted based upon how the verb is used and which verb is used. When I was used as an example in this instance, it would be having me speak the correct format for the word that was at hand, such as a doctor's office or store.

The classroom observations were utilized to ensure the validity of the response given by the educator in the interviews. Hence, the classroom observations proved to be a valuable tool for analytical purposes. While I did not doubt the validity of the responses in the interviews, I wanted to ensure that the practice in theory of what was said, is implemented.

4.2.3 My role in the interviews and classroom interactions

My role as a researcher and an interviewer was to try to create as comfortable of an environment as possible for the participants. I allowed them to choose where the interviews were conducted, made myself available to their schedules, and tried to keep the environment as relaxed as possible. My overall goal was to allow the participants to share their past experiences and beliefs through stories, which meant that I only spoke when needing clarification on certain topics, as they spoke in Finnish for the duration of the interview.

As was mentioned previously, I did my best to refrain from interacting with the classroom observations, although in certain instances it could not be prevented. However, I feel that this allowed for a richer dataset, as I was able to interact not only with the participants but the students as well creating a unique environment in the group dynamics. Regarding the interviews, I believe that my personal relationship with the participants was beneficial for the aim of my study. The level of trust and mutual respect that was present enabled the participants to speak more openly about their stories and histories.

4.3 Data Analysis Procedure

The field of qualitative research is rather expansive and diverse. According to Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) qualitative research is “research that involves analyzing and interpreting texts and interviews in order to discover meaningful patterns descriptive of a particular phenomenon” (p .1). Moreover, some can argue that a large amount of data may be collected at one point and time through an in-depth interview or questionnaire. Therefore, it is important that correct decisions are made to properly outline a method of extracting the correct data from the source. This thesis collected a large amount of data, falling in line with the argument made above. Given the interviews were extended narratives, the approach for the data analysis begins with the understanding that it will become a thematic narrative qualitative thesis.

Elliott (2005) stresses three key features of narratives. First, that they are chronological, meaning a sequence of events. Second, they are meaningful, and third they are inherently social in nature, in that they are produced for a specific audience. Within sociology, there is an understanding of the importance of attempting to understand the meaning of experiences and behavior from the perspective of the participants. Moreover, narratives provide a space for individuals to share their stories, which can be used as reference point to reflect and compare between their past, present, and future experiences. These experiences can explain who they were, who they are now, and who they wish to become in the future (Holstein & Gubrium, 2015). This act of sharing, storytelling if one will, is personal and allows the individual to provide an honest and open representation of who they are.

The aim of my study is to provide insight into the intercultural competence the educators in the Finnish as a second language program, possess. Specifically, how events throughout their lives, interactions with individuals from backgrounds across the globe, and other experiences have helped shape their intercultural competence, develop their cultural identity, and potentially led them to choose the profession they are in. Narrative analysis enables the research to use a more personal approach that is necessary to have a better understanding of each participant both as individuals and in a holistic view.

This method of narrative analysis accounts for the way some individuals wish to be perceived, in how they share their story. Moreover, it does not assume that information shared by the participant in relation to stories are true, but recognizes that “memory is selective, we remember what “we can” and some events are deliberately or unconsciously forgotten. In this perspective, the important thing is that the person recorded in his/her history, what he/she experienced, what is real to him/her and the facts themselves (past versus history)” (Muylaert Sarubbi, Vicente, Gallo, & Neto, 2014, p. 186). These memories shared through the narrative are also what helps shape and define the sense of identity that Jokikokko references in her research. Hence, I want to stress that

does not mean that what is shared is untrue, simply how it was perceived and recalled by the participant.

4.3.1 Thematic Narrative Analysis

Qualitative approaches are vastly diverse and thematic analysis should be a cornerstone method for qualitative analysis (Braun, 2006). Thematic analysis is a method for “identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data” (p. 79). Themes capture something important in the data with relation to the research question and shows a level of patterned response within the data set.

Braun (2006) suggests phases of thematic analysis as a guideline to approach how to analyze the dataset. Phase 1 is familiarizing with the data, meaning transcribing, reading and re-reading the data. Additionally, writing down initial ideas that may come to mind when transcribing. Phase 2 is generating initial codes, which is coding interesting features of the data in a fashion that is systematic for the entire dataset. Phase 3 is gathering the data and collecting the codes into potential themes. Phase 4 is reviewing the themes, checking to make sure the themes are in relation to the coded extracts and generating a thematic map of the analysis so to speak. Phase 5 is defining and naming the themes, in other words continuing to analyze to refine each theme and generate clear definitions for each theme, as well as a name. Phase 6 is producing the report, which entails compelling text extracts, relating the analysis to the research question and literature review (Braun, 2006).

The theme in this thesis is regarding intercultural competence and the skill set the educators possess that led them to make the career choice they are in, and if this has an impact on how they conduct their teaching and the relationships in the classroom. Moreover, the research questions of this thesis attempt to understand and find correlations between the educators past and present experiences to their understanding of intercultural competence. The questions that were asked in the interview were created in a way to draw out responses that would allow for potential connections to be made on a deeper level, rather than

simply on the surface. The phases suggested by Braun were kept in mind when analyzing the data set for the thesis for potential themes.

4.3.2 Analysis Steps

While in-depth interviews were utilized to gain an understanding of the two educators' awareness of intercultural competence, classroom observations were also conducted. These observations will not only be analyzed to gain an understanding of the educator's implementation of their understanding of intercultural competence but also how certain environmental factors impact the relationships between the educator and student. The interviews that served as the main part of the dataset for this thesis are used as the narrative analysis. The themes that were chosen for this thesis were related to Byram's model of intercultural competence and my interpretation of the model's core concepts. Therefore, the narrative analysis and the thematic analysis are interconnected to one another, as the thesis means to tell a narrative and use this narrative to answer the research questions, through existing themes that are common in the dataset.

During the interview process, I made notes of interesting comments and ideas that the participants mentioned, especially if there were similarities between the two participants. This served as one of the main themes or focuses of my data analysis procedure. For example, both Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 in their respective interviews say "taking into account the individual needs of the students but knowing when to intervene and say this is not right" when there are differences between individuals in the group dynamics.

Moreover, Teacher 1 describes herself as a "counselor to the students, as I am the first encounter with the culture and community for them." While this is not the way Teacher 2 described herself, it may be because of the language variations in the classroom environment. This is interesting to me, as there are stark contrasts between how the educators approach their students in certain situations, because of the level of language learning each classroom has. Therefore, it is not only experience and understanding of the educator that must be taken into consideration but also the levels of language capabilities of the

students in the classroom. The comparison and contrast between the two educators are made even more clear because the levels of Finnish learning were just beginning with teacher 1's classroom and advanced with teacher 2's classroom. Hence, the approaches and environments had a direct influence on intercultural competence and practice.

In utilizing Braun's model of phases of thematic analysis, I was able to create a step by step outline of my own data analysis. In transcribing the interviews and the notes that were conducted throughout the interviews and observations, certain themes were readily apparent through the coding process. Through this process I was able to build narratives for both participants and select quotes that were representative of a theme or the strongest to portray their story and personality.

In order to effectively analyze for intercultural competence that may be present, it was also important that I kept Byram's model in mind. In other words, focusing on the attitude of the instructor and the knowledge based on Byram's scale would help provide insight into how intercultural competence was practiced inside the classroom and influential in the interviews and observations. Additionally, asking where and how intercultural competence is present and how it is utilized by the educator. This key factor or key questions help keep a narrow view on the dataset and not allow for distractions or potential misinterpretations.

4.4 Reliability and validity

Reliability and validity are key components that qualitative researchers should be concerned with while designing, conducting, and analyzing a study (Patton, 2002). In general terms, reliability is the "extent to which a measurement procedure yields the same answer however and whenever it is carried out" (Kirk & Miller, 1986, p. 1). Validity is how well a piece of research represents the reality it presents (Hayashi, Abib, & Hoppen, 2019). That is, how accurate the telling of a story may be or the view of that reality may be. The data collected may contain

a fair amount of information, although it is up to the researchers to define and determine what will be used in the analysis process with reliability in mind. Thus, it is imperative that the research questions are kept in mind for the analysis and choosing the information from the data that may be deemed relevant. In other words, there must be careful consideration in examinations and explanations of the steps taken in obtaining and analyzing the data, for the reliability to remain intact. Reliability, as referenced by Alasuutari, Bickman, & Brannen (2008) is a necessary precondition for validity, as certain tests or datasets may be considered reliable but not valid.

There has been much debate over the years regarding qualitative studies and how to appropriately analyze datasets that are presented. The empirical paradigm believes that one can essentially, explain, predict, and control (Neufeld, 1988). In other words, that real entities are made up of different subsystems and the researcher or observer has no influence about the subject of the observation. Moreover, that statistical analysis is used and there are generalized statements from specifics. If this were to be the case for the existing dataset in the thesis, there would not be much to say. Qualitative data is also interpretation of the data through application of observation and experience. While the researcher must be aware of the influence, he or she can have on the outcome of the data or even of the observation subject, it must also be understood and accepted that there is such an influence that does exist. In knowing what data is relevant to the proposed research outcome, there is a level of influence that is present. While this is ethically addressed and measures are taken to ensure the validity and reliability of the dataset through the analytical means, it is still evident.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) attempted to redefine this approach and create a new standard for the reliability and validity of datasets under qualitative analysis. They coined the term the naturalistic evaluation. This paradigm has existed for numerous decades and has been used as a reliable methodology of analysis for some time. In stark contrast to the empirical paradigm, the naturalistic paradigm is understood as there being multiple realities, which come about from the different perspectives of all the individuals involved (Lincoln &

Guba, 1985). Additionally, that encounters with other individuals are assumed to be interactive, and therefore the influence of the subject and inquirer must be taken into consideration. Such examples are evident in the classroom observations that are conducted, as I was asked questions and on a couple of occasions in Teacher 1's classroom, asked to help participate in language development by answering questions that were formed by the students. As was mentioned previously, it is important to consider and understand that there are both external and internal influences that must be taken into consideration, due to the interaction between the individuals of the research subject.

Moreover, that the focus of a research inquiry only has meaning within a specific individual and specific environmental context. Should the individual or environmental context be different, the inquiry would inevitably change. The basis of this thesis could take on a different context or meaning if applied to a situational setting that had to do with native individuals to the country learning English as a second language. The cultural dynamics and group dynamics would be vastly different, impacting the basis of the study. The reasoning then is that the methods used involve an interconnected and interactive process of data gathering, data analyzing, and re-analyzing to gain an understanding of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Guba and Lincoln developed a set of criteria to ensure rigor, which they termed trustworthiness during qualitative inquiry. This trustworthiness becomes the reliability and validity of the object, as the two are interconnected. In turn, this is to evaluate the transferability, credibility, dependability, and trustworthiness of the final product. Moreover, they argue that this is comparable to that of the quantitative criteria of internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). Credibility (internal validity for quantitative) refers to prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, which will also be discussed later in this chapter, negative case analysis, referential adequacy, and peer debriefing. Transferability (external validity) is a thick description that is "essential for someone interested (p. 316), to transfer the original findings to another individual or context. In other words, gaining the

trust and building a rapport with the person you will be interviewing will assist in gathering richer data than simply interviewing someone you have no outside connection to. Dependability (reliability) is achievable through credibility, in duplicating the analysis. Finally, confirmability (objectivity) is utilizing the strategies of triangulation (Guba & Lincoln, 1985).

The criteria for analyzing are intertwined with one another and more flexible for analytical proposes that involve datasets with observations and interviews. Additionally, it is understanding of the concept that there are influences that factor into the analysis process, although there are measures throughout to ensure the reliability and validity of the data. The reliability of the naturalistic paradigm has proved itself over the course of the past few decades and individuals such as Hayashi, Abib, & Hoppen (2019).

Lincoln and Guba coined trustworthiness as a term to show and emphasize that reliability and validity are interconnected. This naturalistic paradigm is taken a step further with Hayashi, Abib, & Hoppen who attempt to expand upon the view of validity in qualitative studies for improvement. According to Hyashi, Abib and Hoppen the most important types of validity are descriptive, theoretical, and interpretive validities (2019). Descriptive validity is when the researcher does not embellish or distort the situations or information, and facts that are reported are those that are heard and seen (Hayashi, Abib, & Hoppen, 2019). In other words, there is no data that is made-up to potentially benefit the results of a research question, but rather the situations or information from the data collected is reported truthfully.

Theoretical validity is in reference to how much a theoretical explanation “that is developed through research analysis is consistent with the data” (Hayashi, Abib, & Hoppen, 2019, p. 100). Essentially, this is implying that the theoretical foundations, meaning the literature review should be valid when relating and interacting with the data set. There must be some validity to using Byram’s model in this thesis as a foundation for evaluating the interviews and classroom observations for intercultural competence.

Interpretive validities refer to the researcher's mental processes and sensitivities in order to capture and interpret "the meaning of the objects, events and behaviors of the people engaged and involved in the studied phenomenon" (Hayashi, Abib, & Hoppen, 2019, p. 100). It is not just the conscious level that must be considered, but also preconceived beliefs, values, and hidden intentions. Therefore, while there is an emphasis on the educator to practice intercultural competence, the researcher must also be culturally aware of how the data collection may be impacted. This is consistent with Byram's (1997) model, with critical cultural awareness. To be able to critically analyze and begin to understand intercultural awareness in educators, researchers must also be able to critically analyze the beliefs, perspectives, and hidden intentions they possess.

Another such method to improve validity in qualitative studies is considered triangulation. This was also previously referenced by Guba and Lincoln (1989) as part of the naturalistic paradigm. Patton (2002) states that "triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods. This can mean using several kinds of methods or data, including using both quantitative and qualitative approaches" (p. 247). This thesis combines the efforts of classroom observations and interviews, which support one another to see the educator's understanding of intercultural competence and how it is applied in the classroom environment. Hence, data triangulation was used to increase the reliability and validity of the study. With the theoretical framework in mind, the following account is based upon Hayashi, Abib, & Hoppen's (2019) discussion of validity in qualitative research. Specifically, a mix between descriptive and interpretative validities.

5 FINDINGS

This chapter will use examples from the interviews and observations of the participants to show their intercultural competence both in cognitive understanding and physical representation in action. It is important to note that

the observations are a basis and point of comparison to the interview questions, a base to see what was said in the interviews in action within the classroom setting. Therefore, when analyzing the data set, they were not analyzed separately from the interviews themselves but rather used to supplement what was stated.

I begin by exploring and answering the first research question of what type of role the educator's intercultural competence plays in the interaction between student and educator in the Finnish as a second language classroom. The questions in the interview were targeted to understand the participants views of their own teaching style, their background, and the influences of group dynamics in their view, as well as previous history, has on the interaction within the classroom setting. These will be addressed throughout the course of the findings, using the observations as additional comparison. Furthermore, the research questions will be answered utilizing the common themes between the two participants, which are emphasized in italic headings. The consideration for the themes were largely based upon Byram's model of intercultural competence and the importance of each section of this model. In understanding the awareness or openness to new situations and experiences, or attitude as it is referenced in Byram's model, I was able to interpret that toward motivations that were present. As one of the questions in the interview asked about the reasoning for becoming a Finnish as a second language educator, this was also more readily apparent. The teaching style of each educator was a common theme throughout the interviews and classroom observations based upon the questions from the interview as well as the theoretical framework that was referenced in this thesis. Additionally, per Byram's model this is linked to discovery and interpreting and relating skills. The relationship with the student's theme speaks to the knowledge of the educators that is present, throughout their experience in working and also personal interactions.

The findings will continue with exploring and answering the second research question of what understanding of intercultural competence does the educator have. While there was inquiry made as to their understanding of the

theory, the findings also set out to show that experience and lifelong learning through interaction are as beneficial to an educator for successful intercultural communication, rather than an in-session. This in turn fits with Jokikokko's thesis that intercultural competence is a lifelong skill set that one masters, not something learned seemingly overnight. The final section of the findings will conclude with any common themes that may be present between the two educators and the implications of such.

5.1 Classroom environment

Dörnyei and Murphey (2003, suggest that the organizational layout of the classroom influences the effectiveness of the communication that is present. This layout may reference how closely placed the desks are to one another or the positioning of the educator's seating to the students. Moreover, that movement within the classroom is important. This may be on the part of the educator or the students switching task partners, so they are with someone different during pairing exercises. The first evidence of this is seen when you enter the hallway where the classrooms are in the building. There is a hanging sign that states in both Finnish and English quite clearly, that this is a non-discrimination zone. It is a not so subtle reminder that the classrooms are intended to be a safe, welcoming environment.

Another example is evident in the classroom observations of Teacher 1. In doing a simple group task, there is a clear divide between those who understand and those who do not. The result of which, is that Teacher 1 spends a lot of her time trying to keep the faster pair more engaged and involved in other activities, such as pointing out places on the globe and trying to use the Finnish name for these countries. This gap seems to narrow in Teacher 2's classroom as the understanding of Finnish increases. Although, intercultural communication issues are still present regardless of how long one has lived in Finland and associated with people from various backgrounds. This in turn creates another layer of challenges for the educator in implementing the curriculum and group work because they must be culturally aware of issues that may arise with pairing.

This atmosphere is also externally evident by the posters, charts, and key concepts that furnish the walls in the classroom of teacher 1. This is quite like that of teacher 2's external classroom environment, which has work practice posters on the walls. The students write about what they did during their work practice, post photos, and what they liked and did not like about the work practice in Finnish. This promotes the group dynamic and a large sense of self because there is a certain level of pride in what is accomplished. It is intentionally placed where it may be visible to promote positivity in the classroom.

This concept is further evident in the classroom observations, as both instructors do not stand or sit idle unless conducting a lecture that requires being at the projector screen. Rather, there is consistent movement through the classroom and interaction with students. In addition, the desks are placed close enough together and to the front of the classroom to promote a sense of unity without being offensive to those who are newly adjusting to life co-existing in the same room with those of the opposite gender. Oftentimes, pairing for conversational tasks is based on random number assignments. While both classrooms had a diverse set of students with no similar backgrounds, it was important that they did not partner with the person sitting next to them frequently.

5.2 Teacher 1

Teacher 1 teaches beginning students to the language. They have just started the program and have no knowledge of Finnish or very little, meaning a few words. Teacher 1 works for the local city this research was conducted in as a Finnish as a second language educator. She grew up in a city that is three hours away from where she works and has been teaching with this program for the past 19 years. She has a personality that is rather open, bubbly as it can be called, and always willing to have a conversation or a laugh. It is a welcoming sight, given the perception of some foreigners coming into Finland is that Finns are very private and do appreciate silence or minimal small talk.

Motivation

Motivations for Teacher 1 and 2 are being referenced as motivation for choosing the profession, so an adaption of the term and not so technical. Teacher 1 cites her motivations to work as a Finnish as a second language educator as a mix between previous studies and teachings. She references one such example by stating, "my high school Finnish teacher was an important example for me, he was an excellent teacher and always encouraged students."

Additionally, she had an interesting experience teaching Finnish as a second language to adult deaf in a course that lasted a month. This in many respects for her is what she considers to be the turning point in making her decide she wanted to teach Finnish as a second language to adults. She did not know the sign language at the time, so she had an individual who would translate for her. He would often tell her that "they do not understand what you say. Explain it again and in a different way." To her, this was a new concept and she stated that she realized in "concrete terms that the Finnish language teaching perspective is different depending on the target group (native versus non-native). I liked the new challenge and wanted to understand how this language could be taught if it is not one's mother tongue."

While Teacher 1's training is in Finnish as a second language, she has traveled extensively during her time in University, even going to France to learn the language and study. She cites her father as well as part of her motivation to teach, as she was often told stories of his about his time living in Asia and Africa. She carries his advice with her throughout her career. She states his doctrines were brief "be brave in dealing with the locals, talking to people, listening to them, thinking positively, being polite and friendly, and don't wonder if you speak English correctly. Also, a sense of humor often helps in problem situations." This sense of humor has been applied in classroom observations when cultural references were made and utilized to create a learning lesson about the culture, which will be discussed at a later point in the summary.

Relationship with students

Teacher 1 views her relationship with students as one who wears many hats. She is in some respects a counselor to these individuals, life coach, cultural representation, and at the very core, their teacher. However, she cites one of her most important duties as “taking care of the peace within the classroom and creating a suitable environment to work.” While she likes to be democratic in her teaching, her relationship with her students in the beginning is very strict, as it is necessary to establish the ground rules. She states it is important to present the “different working methods and the principles of Finnish working culture very quickly: everyone works with everyone; work in pairs, small groups, as a whole, and with other groups.” The students having such a diverse background is a source of wealth to her, but also a lot of work. The cultural sensitivity can be very different in people and the presence or lack thereof, of cultural sensitivity in the students can impact the group dynamics and the ground rules that are established from the beginning.

One such example is evident in the classroom observations that were conducted. Teacher 1 mentioned that there are difficulties at the beginning of the language learning, especially when it comes to pairing. The issues reside in individuals who come from cultural backgrounds that have gender rankings. In other words, men in certain cultures who are ranked higher in the societal order than women, prefer not to work in pairs with a woman, as that is culturally offensive. When asked how she respects this cultural difference, but also tries to incorporate the Finnish model of equality, she stated a large part of it is due to experience and using her “feelers.” That is, she takes the time to understand the individual person and their capacity to adjust, while also respecting the cultural differences. However, this is not a situation that will be allowed to continue for the duration of the course. Teacher 1 stated that for the moment, they are new, and it is about understanding their language capacity. Although in the future she will force the pairing to happen. The reason for such is because “this is Finland, where they reside now. Finland treats people with equality and there may be a

situation during the work practice, which is mandatory for this program, where the man may have a female supervisor.”

It is evident there is cultural awareness present with teacher 1, which in turn represents itself in a higher cognitive awareness toward a delicate situation for individuals whose first encounters with various backgrounds are this classroom environment. Additionally, per Borg’s (2003) research, there is evidence to support her level of cognition in certain ways impacts her teaching practices. This awareness or attitude as per Byram’s (1997) model, shows that while she is accepting and critically aware, she will also not allow for one-sided communication to occur. Through learning about and understanding the individual first through their invisible and visible diversity, she is making attempts to have successful intercultural communication.

Teaching style

Teacher 1 describes learning as two-ways. She says, “the teacher constantly learns new things from different cultures and can be involved in the discussions.” Essentially, she is saying that the educator is constantly involved in discussions that enable her to learn from new cultures and develop deeper understandings of individuals that are outside the visible diversities. She views herself as fair and democratic, believing it is important that everyone in the group can have a say and participate. Additionally, that the hour is successful when “people talk – things can be different, not much can be done, but people do not argue.” This is quite evident in the classroom observations that I conducted. Many of my observations resulted in the planned lesson not being finished on time and needing to be reviewed or continued the next day. Although there is not a strict guideline on finishing a certain task that day as there may be with a mainstream classroom curriculum. Questions in many instances during my observations arose and she took the time out of the lesson to answer them. Often, these questions turned into more abstract thinking and side lessons in other areas of life not pertaining to the lesson of the day. However, some of these side lessons are important to understanding and having successful intercultural competence,

as it allows for a spontaneous sharing of cultures and communications. One such example was evident when a student commented that Finland is the “safest country ever.” Teacher 1 took the time out of the lesson to reaffirm that there are issues in every country and to take items with them they do not want to lose when they go on break because there have been instances where items were stolen.

In these side lessons, she is showing she is aware and understanding of cultural communication and severe conflicts that may exist in another country, but also that she is critically aware of her own culture and its faults. Additionally, she tries to bring some life lessons into the lessons, such as how to express situations where the person may not be somewhere. For example, to say I am not here, or I am not home. She referenced not to post on public spaces like Facebook when you are not home because someone may rob you. A subtle, joking reminder to individuals from the previous conversation that the country is not entirely safe. In addition, as per Byram’s (1997) model, there is discovery and interaction through these conversations about culture. The inquiry of students through questions and the answers that are given by teacher 1 is a form of intercultural communication as comparisons are drawn between two external cultures. However, one is not made to appear better than the other, so there is a critical awareness of cultures that is practiced. Hence, it would be fair to argue that successful intercultural communication between the group dynamic and the educator is achieved.

The verbal feedback she has received over the years from her students describe her as friendly, a good sense of humor, energetic, and happy. This teaching style is a source of pride for her. She likes to recount the time she encountered a previous student who thanked her for being the first Finnish national to treat her as a human being and not a “stupid immigrant.”

Understanding of intercultural competence

Teacher 1 understands the definition of intercultural competence, based upon my own interpretation and what has been researched. She determines intercultural competence to be the skills to understand people in the broader

sense. However, she states that many people look more for “discrepancies than similarities” in society today, which proves to be an interesting insight. Her view and understanding of intercultural competence on a personal level is that of a genuine interest and knowledge in other cultures, as well as interactions with people from different cultural backgrounds. In many respects, this fits with the theoretical viewpoints of Jokikokko, who believe interaction, experience, and a desire to learn are the core foundations of intercultural communication.

5.3 Teacher 2

Teacher 2 works for the local city this research was conducted in as a Finnish as a second language educator. She grew up in the city she works in and has been teaching Finnish as a second language for almost ten years. While her personality is rather refrained and quiet in nature, she is very welcoming in her actions and responses in conversations. She is very empathetic in nature. She uses the joking side of life to incorporate intercultural competence in tense situations, to not appear too offensive, as she is not trying to be.

Motivation

Teacher 2 cites her motivations to work as a Finnish as a second language educator from a unique source, her mother. She never pictured herself as being a teacher in the typical classroom setting. While she wanted to work in education in some capacity, she never saw herself in the role of an educator.

In some respects, she says she sort of “fell into the job. My mother’s colleague asked me to be a substitute for her course and I liked the job.” She previously had completed a work practice in 2008 that she enjoyed, which also may have been a precursor to her decision in accepting the substitute position to start with.

While she has traveled for pleasure to many different countries, these are not a source of motivation for her regarding her teaching. After so many years of

teaching Finnish as a second language, the motivations to her are now when she can “gradually see students integrate into their new homeland and dare to start using the language, even though it initially feels difficult.” She is also motivated by the various backgrounds that she can encounter through her work, in getting to know people and see them thrive outside of her program, knowing she had some role in that in the beginning.

Relationship with students

Teacher 2 views her relationship with her students as rather relaxed. She does not view herself as that of an authoritarian and focuses on making the atmosphere as relaxed as possible. While she admits that those who are bolder and more social do have more voice in the conversation, she tries to “encourage quieter students to participate and feels that in an open atmosphere, this is easier to do.” This sense of understanding and promoting self-confidence is apparent through the observations I conducted in her classroom.

One such example of this promotion of self-confidence is found through how she structures the classroom environment. Group dynamics are impacted not only by invisible and visible diversities, but also the external environment. Teacher 2 is careful in desk placement to ensure that the seating brings them to the front of the classroom, without individuals being too far in the back. This allows for everyone to communicate effectively amongst one another and more importantly, with her directly. This also creates a sense of togetherness, as there is no single individual sitting outside a certain distance.

In learning past tense or “*imperfekti*” as it is called in Finnish, the quieter students in the classroom showed some difficulties in grasping this concept. In her interview she stressed the importance in trying to encourage these students to use their voices and she is very willing to take the time and follow-up to ensure that they do feel valued when questions arise. One such example is found when a student has a question about how to say “I did not read” in Finnish, using past tense. While for some individuals in the classroom this is review, this individual was a rather quiet person in many of my observations, never voicing much of an

opinion or rarely asking a question. She takes the time out to address the question and write out how to change various types of verbs based upon the conjugation. Rather than give a direct answer she is utilizing what they already know on past tense or “imperfekti” to help them build upon their knowledge and achieve the correct answer for “I did not read.”

In many respects the example given above about imperfekti is ensuring the students feel valued and heard, creating a relaxed environment which she hopes to have. Additionally, it is encouraging them and letting them know that they can make mistakes and would not be teased or wrong for making mistakes. Furthermore, in many respects it is being culturally aware and appropriate to ensure no one is embarrassed for speaking up. Through my own observations, my interpretation is that it is evident that there is cultural awareness that is present with Teacher 2, which presents itself in a higher cognitive awareness toward those who may struggle to keep up with the pace of some of the faster learners of the language. She respects the invisible diversity that is present and tries to apply a level of empathy and understanding toward the situation, while still reinforcing the enablement to learn from the individual.

Teaching style

Teacher 2 refers to herself as a “more democratic teacher, who is trying to take into account the individual needs of the students.” However, while she may be democratic and rather relaxed in her approach to teaching, she is also very firm that students are responsible for their own learning. In keeping with her relaxed atmosphere, she does assign homework, but she does not openly check to ensure everyone has done so. The reason for this she says is because students oversee their own learning, and that in turn is represented in their study habits.

Her teaching style is reflected through how she interacts with her students, according to my classroom observations. Teacher 2 is often putting aside the more lecture-based approach to incorporate more interaction amongst her and the students through tasks that are assigned. These tasks are often completed in pairs or smaller groups inside of the larger group. She states that this “gives the

students a chance to use their communication skills, while giving me an opportunity to see their level of understanding.” Should there be a lecture-based approach, the materials that are given to the students are necessary for the lesson of the day or even the week. She tries not to overload them with unnecessary information for what they may be learning for the duration of the course. Even these lectures may not be completed to their entirety, as students can ask questions, which in turn may lead to off-topic conversations. However, to Teacher 2, this is also an effective way of utilizing Finnish and culture in the environment, hence she does allow it to continue for a brief period.

One such example is found through papers handed out that have a photograph on them where the group must describe what is going on in said image. One may be a cruise ship, the Eiffel Tower, or a rock concert. When the rock concert one is put up on the projector screen to describe, she references the Suomi Pop festival that is held every year in the summer. While the lesson was sidetracked to look up the concert, it became a cultural teaching moment. The students learned about a part of the Finnish music scene and utilized some Finnish when Teacher 2 asked how much the tickets cost, which was listed on the site, for example. Although it may create a side conversation, it relates to cultural awareness, while also reinforcing the lesson that is at hand.

Understanding of intercultural competence

Teacher 2 does not have what one would call a book definition of intercultural competence. However, she believes that it is about how a person works with individuals from different cultures. On the surface, this would be appropriate and, in many respects, having a surface understanding of intercultural competence is simply the tip of the proverbial iceberg. Moreover, the importance of understanding intercultural competence with her is through her actions and how intercultural competence is practiced within the classroom environment.

One such example with Teacher 2 is seen with trying to build a dialogical relationship to encourage sensitivity building and intercultural competence.

While she is interacting and moving throughout the classroom during group activities, she will ask questions of the students to check for understanding. If something is said incorrectly, rather than say that it is wrong outright, she will suggest “perhaps but what are some alternatives”, as a question format. This ensures that the individual is not necessarily put down or made to feel inferior but also keeps the dialogue continuing. When I asked why she did not say the answer was wrong, she informed me that certain individuals in the classroom take being told they are wrong very negatively. It is almost as if she is telling them that they are a terrible person. Hence, she’s trying to be aware of the invisible diversities of the individuals by redirecting to the correct answer through other means.

5.4 Summary

The themes that will be discussed in this chapter are linked to intercultural competence through the revised model of Byram’s that will be expanded upon in the discussion. The motivations for becoming an educator are linked to the attitudes portion of Byram’s model. The openness and curiosity necessary to desire to work in such a position, is at the core of intercultural competence. The relationships and teaching styles speak to the critical cultural awareness, discovery, and interaction, as well as interpreting.

Motivations

Borg (2003) references that a teacher’s experience can either hinder or promote the education of intercultural competence. Both teachers cite role models as the reason for why they became educators of Finnish as a second language. While the extent of the motivation to start may be different, the initial motivation was enough to push both in a positive direction. With both educators it is apparent that the experience the teachers have both in their personal lives and careers, has promoted the education of intercultural competence, not only on a personal level but an academic one.

It has been emphasized throughout the course of these findings that these educators are the first encounter of the culture many who take part in this program, have. In establishing the ground rules early on, such as Teacher 1 does, to encouraging questions about culture and making it a teachable moment, such as Teacher 2 does, they are taking steps to promoting intercultural competence. There are multiple reference points throughout the observations that show how these two individuals utilize their motivations and backgrounds to further themselves and their students along the way.

Relationships with students

While both Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 tend to have semi-formal, at times almost casual relationships with their students, it is understood that the final say or the “glaring eye of authority” as Teacher 1 references, belongs to them. Both agree that their role is one of many hats and juggling many responsibilities for these individuals who come from such diverse backgrounds of both culture and education. It is not simply about meeting the needs of the students in terms of their academic goals, but also being situationally aware of the group dynamics based upon the layout of the classroom.

Teaching style

Both educators who were interviewed suggested that they are democratic in nature with their teaching practices. The use of democratic roles is made apparent through the classroom observations, perhaps to a degree that may be too democratic in some instances, as referenced in a previous chapter. In comparison to Teacher 1, Teacher 2 is a little stricter about the direction of topics when questions arise. Perhaps this is because the individuals in Teacher 2’s classroom have been studying the language and the culture at large for over six months. Teacher 1’s students at the time of my observations had only started learning the culture and language two weeks prior to my first observation.

While the lessons are structured, it is important that there is flexibility and democracy present so questions may be asked. These off-lesson responses in

many ways are still learning the language, although through the cultural perspective. Byram's model of intercultural competence is in practice in these side topics because critical cultural awareness and the skills of interaction are present in introducing cultural differences. In addition, these invisible diversities are a part of what makes up the cultural identity, as referenced by Jokikokko. Furthermore, it takes a holistic approach to intercultural communication and awareness, encouraging the visualization of Teacher 1's sense of self or professional identity.

However, not all encounters in group dynamics are positive. Teacher 1 stated that if there are negative changes within the group, it is the educator's responsibility to intervene. While she prefers to be democratic with her teaching practices, she references there are times, especially in adult education when it is necessary to be authoritarian. In these instances, however, there is still cognitive awareness present in understanding when it may be best to intervene or to watch from the "sidelines" as stated, to see if it may be resolved between the group. This is like that of Leo van Lier's (2010) belief that the autocratic role of an educator is far easier to portray when trying to understand the multilayered and complex nature of group dynamics. Moreover, using Byram's model of intercultural competence and a critical evaluation of one's self show that it is possible to be democratic in nature and have successful intercultural communication.

Neither educator references a period where they felt the leadership role was in question because of cultural differences and views toward women in certain roles. Rather, these instances where a male would not associate with a female partner was an instance where that individual would be considered an "equal" because they are on the same level of learning. Intercultural competence is consistently used for interaction purposes within the classroom. Both educators keep sensitivity in mind but also a firm sense of self and cultural self when applying lessons and interacting with students daily.

Understanding of intercultural competence

Intercultural competence and an educator's cognition are intertwined if

Byram's (1997) model is to be understood. The cultural awareness and attitude toward multicultural situations are a level of understanding and cognition on the part of the educator. Furthermore, it is understanding the cultural identity one possesses, as referenced by Jokikokko (2005). In other words, it may be fair to argue that identity, teacher cognition, and intercultural competence are interconnected.

While both have a basic understanding of intercultural competence, neither has openly studied the concept. Surprisingly, neither has received training through their work on intercultural competence. Rather, both educators have learned to work with individuals from various backgrounds through their work and for Teacher 1 it is also her previous travels.

Teacher 1's sense of intercultural competence is more detailed and fuller, although that may be associated to her travels both as a child and during her university years. She lived abroad frequently and often had interactions with individuals from other cultures that would place her in a position to practice successful intercultural communication. In contrast, Teacher 2 believes that the individual is more important, especially their personality. In many respects though, this invisible diversity is at the core of intercultural competence and communication. As she is looking past the obvious visible diversity to the hidden parts of the individual and who they truly are. Through the interactions within the classrooms from the observations, I concluded that both educators are interculturally competent and make active steps to practice critical awareness of both their culture and the individuals they encounter. These steps are taken through utilizing the skill of discovery, relating, and many instances of interacting within the classroom. Additionally, the awareness of one's self and beliefs as they apply to an individual outside of a culture from their own is evident in how they speak to and interact with the students daily. This is also further evidenced by the curriculum that is established in each classroom for the needs of the students.

Both educators stressed that one of the biggest challenges to their jobs is the multicultural backgrounds. The reason for such is because the students have very

different backgrounds. There is not only a lack of common language between the majority, but many also have life issues that are rather harsh for living conditions upon entering the country. Additionally, some students are well educated, and some are just learning to read when they enter the country, which is an example given by Teacher 2. The level of education varies quite widely, making it a challenge for educators to establish a curriculum for learning the language that may fit everyone but also meet the needs of everyone. While after several years it may be easy to establish a certain framework for language development, it must also be adjusted based on these personal needs and levels of cognition the students possess.

In being able to create, incorporate, and educate individuals in a group of at least twelve requires a high level of cognition and intercultural competence. While it was stated previously that Teacher 2 prefers to look at the individual personality rather than associate it with intercultural competence, it is even more evident that it truly is intercultural competence. Byram's model emphasizes that the individual's attitude is at the center of intercultural competence. This is referenced as a curiosity or openness, as well as the ability to suspend one's own beliefs about one's own culture. Both educators possess this attitude of openness or curiosity toward other individuals and intercultural communication. One such example is referenced with Teacher 1 in a previous chapter. While she had a determination to force a pairing to happen further into the learning process because the country considers individuals equals, she is also willing to suspend that belief until she can understand the individual and see if they in time come to that conclusion before a force pair occurs. In other words, she is willing to suspend her own beliefs to benefit successful intercultural communication and allow another person to use their own discovery to practice the same.

Additionally, through discovering and interaction over several years, these educators have become knowledgeable and able to interpret or at least relate to individuals on a level that is cross-cultural. To create such a curriculum that fits the needs of many but also sees the individual outside of the visible and invisible

diversities is a representation and clear understanding of intercultural competence and cognition.

6 DISCUSSION

There are many theories in understanding and applying intercultural competence. This chapter aims to create a connection between the theoretical framework presented in a previous chapter and the findings that were shared. What I used for the data analysis was that of Byram's model of intercultural competence. Further models linked with intercultural competence, such as Jokikokko's understanding of intercultural competence were used to gain a greater understanding and view of the theory. In my discussion I will also use Borg's theory of cognition to compliment and expand upon Byram's intercultural competence framework. The theoretical review also emphasizes the importance of group dynamics in the language learning environment, as this may impact the successful intercultural communication between the educator and the student.

This thesis focuses on answering the questions of (1) What type of role does intercultural competence play in the interaction between student and educator in the Finnish as a second language classroom? (2) What understanding of intercultural competence does the educator have? As for the first question, this case study finds that intercultural competence is at the center of interaction between the educator and students in the language learning classroom. Through activities of integrating intercultural competence, such as pairing, group outings into cultural events, and open discussions on the cultural beliefs or norms, intercultural competence is at the center of the discussions even if silently. Additionally, it is visible through the external environments and the surroundings in the classroom from how desks are situated to what is on the walls. It is found in this case study for the second question, that both educators have a good understanding of intercultural competence. Both are open to other cultures and want to see the students integrate into society in Finland. However, there are challenges that are faced with the curriculum and level of education everyone possesses. With Byram's model of intercultural competence, these

responses and interactions are analyzed based upon the components of the model (skills, attitude, knowledge and critical cultural awareness).

Based upon the findings of the research question and Byram's model of intercultural competence, I have expanded upon Byram's model to include findings of key relevance as seen in Figure 2 below.

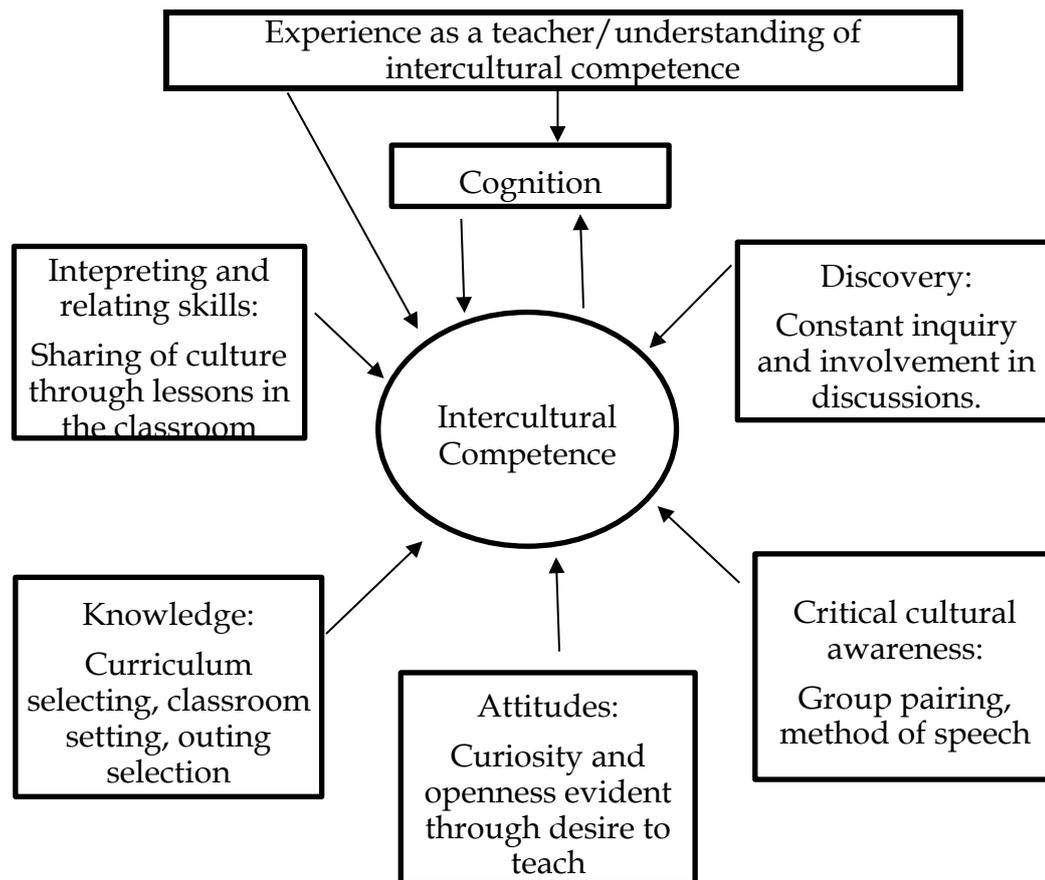


Figure 2: A mode of Techer 1 and Teacher 2's intercultural competence including their understanding and cognition, based on a revised model of Byram's intercultural competence and Borg's teacher cognition framework.

Figure 2 shows that the level of experience a teacher has, as well as the understanding of intercultural competence greatly influences their cognition and teaching practices. Both Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 have a practical knowledge of intercultural competence, although there was no formal training

that was introduced in their schooling or through work. Furthermore, it is suggested that intercultural competence plays an important role in expanding the cognition of the educators. Examples are made evident in the classroom through daily interactions, as the educators show an awareness to cultural sensitivities that do exist. This awareness or cognitive understanding of how the language and cultural atmosphere is developed, is evident through my observations of both educator's intercultural competence. While neither may not have studied intercultural competence, their teaching experience developed their cognition, which in turn enables them to be more effective in communicating interculturally. Further both educators through their interviews and the classroom observations showed that the understanding of intercultural competence develops through daily interaction with the students. It should also be considered that the figure does not capture the understanding of motivation and the role that may play in intercultural competence.

Additionally, this thesis was attempting to discover if there were any motivations linked to the job profession. The motivations that were presented seem to be evident through educational influences. Teacher 2 never saw herself as a teacher until she saw her mother teaching the language, and Teacher 1 was inspired by educators in her university trainings. Therefore, I am not able to draw concrete conclusions as to the connection between intercultural competence and motivations for such a job. Finally, this thesis ends with considerations for intercultural competence and the limitations of the thesis and suggestions for future study.

6.1 Considerations of intercultural competence teaching

As it was mentioned in the literature review, some argue that intercultural competence is not a skillset that is learned in one in-session but rather over the course of a lifetime through experiences and interactions. However, this should not be where the pursuit of understanding intercultural competence ends. These in-sessions and trainings are imperative to educators being able to teach these

Finnish as second language classrooms effectively and meet the needs of individuals on a personal basis for learning.

As per Byram's model, educators are required to be curious, open to new experiences and cultures, discovering and accumulating knowledge of others, while also suspending their own beliefs and conceptions they have about others. Furthermore, to be critically aware of one's own attitude toward intercultural experiences and communication. It is not simply the educator's perceptions and attitudes that must be kept in mind but also how the classroom is organized to appropriately encourage intercultural communication. How the classroom is arranged, how the students are made to interact in pairings, and how the students interact with the educator are all means to successful intercultural communication. With the demographics of the country changing in Finland due to immigration, so must educators and their approach to teaching the language program. Ensuring the curiosity, awareness, critical thinking, knowledge, and discovery through Byram's model will enable them to become interculturally competent individuals. Moreover, as Teacher 2 references, focusing on understanding the individual from a personal level, seeing past the visible and invisible diversities but also understanding these is what will make an educator interculturally competent.

6.2 Limitations of the study and suggestions for future research

As with every research of this type, there are limitations that are present. Primarily, the sample size that was collected. It would be beneficial to gain a greater understanding of the educator's cognition of intercultural competence across a broader spectrum. In other words, it would be beneficial to the research study to attempt to interview and observe individuals who have completed the teacher training recently. And observe and interview more than the two that were allotted for this thesis. This in turn would allow for more indepth conclusions and comparisons to be drawn not only between the

educators but also the differences that may exist in the teaching programs currently.

This would also be an effective means of conducting a future study. I also believe that trying to gain some understanding of the student's role in how they perceive their educators when entering the classroom for those first few weeks as important. While the educators may be perceived to be critically aware and practice intercultural competence, it would be interesting to see such examples from the views of the students. In other words, to draw comparisons and conclusions to teacher's cognition, intercultural competence in practice, and the influence students feel this has on their integration into the country. The reason for such is these educators are the first cultural encounters that these students have, which sets the tone for the life that these people will lead in a new country.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Consent form

Finnish as a second language: An educator's expertise in intercultural competence

INFORMATION SHEET FOR RESEARCH SUBJECTS AND CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

1 CONTACT INFORMATION OF RESEARCHER

Researcher:

Theresa Mietala

Phone number: edited for the thesis

Email: edited for the thesis

2 RESEARCH BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This is an individual study that is being carried out by the researcher. I am using the information that will be provided in the questionnaire and classroom observations for my Masters of Education thesis at Jyväskylä university.

The research will be conducted over the course of a week through classroom observations in the fall of 2018 and a period of a month and a half to answer the questionnaire that is given. The classroom observations will only be for a couple hours at a time.

3 PURPOSE, TARGET AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

Language acquisition, especially in the context of a second language, is taking the proverbial front stage regarding integration. Those individuals who move here under asylum or family ties will undertake a mandatory language program through the employment office. This program consists of five days a week, six hours a day lessons in Finnish (Ministry of Employment and the Economy, 2016). The increase in applicants who desire to reside in this country is reshaping the landscape for language learning, placing a greater demand on those who are trained to teach Finnish as a second language.

I am what one would call an immigrant myself. I moved to Finland in 2014 and went through the same adult learning language program for which I am wanting to conduct a thesis. My rationale and interest for this topic is from my experiences attending the program in Jyväskylä and the

social-cultural experiences in such a program. I developed an interest through observing how individuals adapted to the program who were from vastly different cultures, to how the educators handled each person uniquely. This interest was in wondering if it is life experience or training that has influenced such a command over the profession. I have a psychology background and am well versed in cultural situations and body language. Challenging situations may bring out the worst in individuals. Although the fairness and equality shown through the educators under the most challenging of circumstances, led me to wonder what special skillset one can possess to can undertake such a uniquely challenging position every day.

As these programs are the first interaction for many with the culture and community at large, it takes a very special skillset for an educator to fill this role. The educator in many ways is a counselor, life coach and language teacher. There is some difficulty in finding recent studies about intercultural competence and awareness of such with educators who teach Finnish as a second language. Furthermore, there is very little research conducted to show the teacher values, beliefs and special skillsets that make up the educators in these specific programs. Admittedly, however, there is research conducted on Finnish as a second language acquisition, although this proposal focuses on the educators intercultural understanding, where there is not much research.

The under investigated area of educators and their understanding of intercultural competence and awareness in Finnish as a second language program is the area that I would like to further expand upon. To attempt to answer my research questions of what do these educators understand about intercultural competence? How do they believe that this has guided their career?

4 PURPOSE OF USE, HANDLING AND STORAGE OF RESEARCH DATA

The data that is being collected will be used for research purposes toward my thesis. The data that is collected will be considered anonymous and no names will be written down unless consent is otherwise given. The manual data that is written from the interviews responses will be recorded to a protected cloud server. This information will be encrypted and names will not be revealed. The manual data will then be shredded and properly disposed of.

5 PROCEDURES TARGETED TO THE RESEARCH SUBJECTS

Research subjects are recruited through the immigration language program that is offered in the city of Jyväskylä. The individuals that are selected are based through prior knowledge and experience of the program on the part of myself and through recommendation of the language program. How will research subjects be recruited? What criteria are used in their sampling and selection?

The tasks expected of the research subjects are to answer honestly and to the best of their ability the interview that is given. Classroom observations should not pose a distraction and will be brief.

6 BENEFITS AND POTENTIAL RISKS TO SUBJECTS

This is a subject that has not been well documented in the past. In the society that exists today, many are coming to Finland from outside countries. This language program presents an opportunity to give these individuals the tools necessary to participate in society. Individuals who participate in this research project benefit in having a not so well-known part of the immigration process, shown.

There are no risks associated with the research project and participation in such, should workplace management agree to the research being conducted.

7 USE OF RESEARCH RESULTS

The results of the research will be published in my master's thesis. This thesis will be available to individuals who study or search for it through the University of Jyväskylä.

8 RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. If you choose to participate in it, you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

The organization and conduct of the ways in which the research and the reporting of its findings will be done so that your identity is treated as confidential information. No personal information that is collected during the research will be disclosed to anyone else besides you and the research group. When the results of the research will be published, no information will be included that would reveal your identity. At any point, you will have the right to receive further information about the research from the members of the research group.

9 CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

I have been informed of the purpose and content of the research, the use of its research materials, and the potential risks and problems it may cause to myself as a research subject, as well as of my rights and insurance protection. I hereby agree to participate in the study in accordance with the instructions given by the researchers. I can withdraw from the research or refuse to participate in a test at any time. I give my consent to the use of my test results and the data collected on me in such a way that it is impossible to identify me as a person.

Date

Signature of the research subject

Date

Signature of the researcher