Teaching English for Intercultural Spoken Communication

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Abstract Communicative approaches to teaching English can too easily marginalise or ignore culture and intercultural perspectives, assuming (implicitly or explicitly) that learners aspire to a goal of something approaching idealized English native speaker competence. More than ever, this is a problematic assumption; the linguistic landscape for English is rapidly evolving as English becomes a global lingua franca for interaction between people from different first language backgrounds. This shift raises questions as to what communicative norms, if any, should form the basis for teaching and curricula planning, and how learners can be best prepared to communicate via English with other non-native speakers. In response to such issues, in this chapter I propose a set of principles to guide the teaching of English for intercultural spoken communication. I begin by providing a brief outline of the field of intercultural languages education and the origins of the principles. I then outline the theoretical basis and rationale for each principle and suggest ways in which teachers can draw on the principles to cultivate the practice of intercultural communicative language teaching.

Keywords Teaching for intercultural competence • Communicative language teaching • Teaching spoken English

1 Introduction

In this chapter, I propose a set of principles to guide English language teachers who wish to take culture more seriously in their teaching of spoken communication. This is an exciting and non-trivial aspiration. It offers a deliberate agenda for achieving societal aspirations of individual empowerment and harmonious living in

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multicultural communities through education (Portera 2008) and languages education in particular (Byram 2006).

Why principles? Afterall, principles, by their nature, are reductive and abstract. The principles proposed in this chapter, for instance, distil a large and rapidly growing body of research and scholarship on intercultural languages education into less than 150 words of text (see Fig. 1). Teachers, on the other hand, face complexity and diversity. But this seeming dichotomy highlights the value of principles since it is their generality that allows them to be translated into diverse context-sensitive practices by teachers cognisant of the needs and demands of their communities and classrooms. They are, in a word, adaptable.

Let me make a further introductory point; although my focus is spoken communication, the principles apply to other skills areas, not least because skills naturally inter-relate in classroom practice; speaking rarely occurs without listening, for example. Even in classrooms where the skills are timetabled separately, complex embedding of skills is usually inevitable, as when a speaking activity requires reading of prompts and/or writing of speaking notes. So while the focus of the chapter is on achieving intercultural learning goals through teaching spoken communication, the principles are equally relevant to an integrated view of skills teaching.

2 What is Intercultural Language Learning?

Since early work in the 1990s by scholars such as Byram (1992, 1997) and Kramsch (1993), intercultural language learning has grown into a major field of international scholarship within education and applied linguistics (e.g., Díaz 2013; Liddicoat and Scarino 2013; Witte 2014). But what actually is it? The word, 'intercultural,' implies contact between people from different cultural backgrounds, but it carries richer connotations. As Lahdenperä (2000), p. 202 notes:

> [I]t is the quality of cultural encounters that determines whether an interaction is intercultural, i.e. encounters where different actors are conscious that their own cultures place limitations on communication, and thus influence the possibilities for an open and equal relationship.

By implication then, intercultural language learning differs from approaches to teaching language that focus on language without reference to culture, as well as approaches in which teaching about language and culture are separate from each other, and which primarily transmit information about a culture. As Liddicoat et al. (2003) explain:

> Intercultural language learning involves the fusing of language, culture and learning into a single educative approach. It begins with the idea that language, culture and learning are fundamentally interrelated and places this interrelationship at the centre of the learning process…
>
> Intercultural language learning involves developing with learners an understanding of their own language(s) and culture(s) in relation to an additional language and culture. It is a dialogue that allows for reaching a common ground for negotiation to take place, and

where variable points of view are recognized, mediated and accepted (Liddicoat et al. 2003, p. 43).

3 Why Focus on the 'Intercultural?'

In traditional forms of communicative language teaching (CLT), culture is often either invisible or explicitly represented by the cultural norms of, say North America or the United Kingdom. Such assumptions reflect the origins of CLT in theoretical models of communicative competence, which neglect the cultural content of language in use (e.g., Hymes 1974). They also reflect a world in which the English native speaker is the standard to which one aspired. But neither of these assumptions can be sustained in the face of profound changes in the linguistic landscape for English triggered by global mobility and rapid technological change. English is now the international medium for electronic intercultural communication among non-native users of English and is much more widely used as a lingua franca in interaction between people from different first language backgrounds than it is for interaction between native speakers.

This raises important questions as to what communicative norms, if any, should form the basis for teaching and curricula design, and how learners can be best prepared to communicate in English as a lingua franca. These questions suggest the need for a dramatic about-turn in assumptions about how culture is addressed in language teaching. In teaching English for spoken communication for instance, politeness, formality, and appropriateness can no longer be automatically benchmarked against some notional native speaker standards. Instead, language instruction needs to be informed by an intercultural agenda, which seeks not to impose a foreign, hegemonic set of socio-pragmatic norms but to develop in learners sensitivity to different ways of being in and seeing the world, awareness of self and other in communication, and an understanding of how culture is constructed *in*, *around*, and *through* language (Harumi 2002). As I discuss later in the chapter, this intercultural agenda has much in common with, and finds support in, lingua franca approaches to English language teaching (ELT) (Kirkpatrick and Sussex 2012).

4 A Set of Principles to Guide the Teaching of Intercultural Spoken Communication

4.1 Background

The starting point for the content of this chapter is a curriculum renewal process in New Zealand in the 2000s. As part of a major overhaul of the school curriculum for the compulsory education sector[1] in New Zealand, I co-led a team at Victoria

University of Wellington commissioned to carry out research on the value of a more deliberately intercultural approach to language teaching and learning in New Zealand schools. This far reaching curriculum renewal program culminated in the release of *The New Zealand Curriculum* in 2007 (Ministry of Education 2007) and subsequent rollout of the curriculum in schools. The curriculum is interesting from an intercultural perspective for the way it unambiguously presents an explicit intercultural agenda for education. Here, for example, are some of the key competencies identified in the curriculum:

- Participating in local, national and global communities;
- Students knowing who they are, where they come from and where they fit in;
- Relating to others – interacting effectively with a diverse range of people in a variety of contexts; Seeing the world from new perspectives;
- Valuing diversity and respecting others;
- Learning about their own values and those of other peoples and cultures;
- Exploring with empathy, the values of others (Ministry of Education 2007, pp. 12–13).

While these statements present intended outcomes for the *whole* education system and not just learning languages, language teachers will be able to quickly identify the potential of language learning for realizing these kinds of goals. In fact, our research was commissioned to help teachers do just this through developing a framework to guide interculturally informed language teaching. The project involved reviewing the international literature in the field, interviewing teachers and students, and observing a range of language classes in action. The outcome was a report – Newton et al. (2010) – which proposed a framework of six principles to guide languages education in New Zealand schools (See Appendix). We coined the term *intercultural communicative language teaching* or 'iCLT' for this framework of principles.

In the years since this 2010 framework of principles was published, I have reflected on it in relation to my own teaching, related it to new research and scholarship in the field, and discussed it with intercultural scholars, teachers and teacher educators. While the framework has been largely affirmed through this input, the principles warranted reworking to address three issues. First, they needed more direct, less abstract wording to make them easily translatable into practice by teachers. Second, they needed re-sequencing under headings that distinguished the three different areas of pedagogy they cover. Third, an additional principle was needed to capture the importance of putting intercultural competence to work outside the classroom (see principle 3d below). With these goals in mind, I have reworked the iCLT principles into a form that I hope improves their currency and provides a useful guide for English language teachers interested in taking a stronger intercultural stance in their teaching of spoken communication. The re-visioned principles, which are presented in Fig. 1 are expanded on through the remainder of this chapter.

I now discuss each principle in turn, establishing the theoretical providence for the principles and offering practical classroom applications.

Principle 1. Mine the social context of learning

a. Use culturally responsive pedagogies to make the most of diversity in the classroom, school and community by recognizing and connecting to learners' home knowledge, languages and practices.
b. Expose learners to the diversity of world Englishes and raise awareness of English as an international language.

Principle 2. Focus on intercultural learning objectives

Foster and affirm intercultural learning achievements in tandem with linguistic and communicative achievements.

Principle 3. Adopt Intercultural classroom practices

Provide opportunities for learners to:

a. engage with culture in and around language from the beginning;
b. interact and communicate in the language;
c. explore, reflect on, compare and connect experiences, knowledge and understandings;
d. put learning into practice beyond the classroom, making choices and acting in interculturally informed ways.

Fig. 1 The iCLT Principles 're-visioned' for teaching intercultural spoken communication

4.2 Principle 1. Mine the Social Context of Learning

(a) *Use Culturally Responsive Pedagogies to Make the Most of Diversity in the Classroom, School and Community by Recognizing and Connecting to Learners' Home Knowledge, Languages and Practices*

Teaching a language interculturally entails first and foremost recognizing and embracing diversity in the classroom, especially as it relates to learners' cultural and linguistic backgrounds (e.g., Alton-Lee 2003; Bishop and Berryman 2006); 'Charity begins at home' as it were. Research on teaching for diverse learners highlights the effectiveness of instructional practices that match the culturally shaped ways of knowing that learners bring to the classroom. A characteristic of quality teaching for diverse students identified in a best evidence synthesis (Alton-Lee 2003, p.3) is that it creates effective links between school and other cultural contexts in which students are socialized. Elaborating on this point, Alton-Lee highlights two further aspects of effective diversity education:

- Student diversity is utilized effectively as a pedagogical resource.
- Quality teaching respects and affirms cultural identity (including gender identity) and optimises educational opportunities. (ibid.)

These points align nicely with intercultural language teaching. English language teachers are responsible for managing not only how culture is represented in inner circle English speaking countries (Kachru 1982), but also to show appreciation for the cultural worlds students bring with them into the classroom. To this end, diversity, where it exists in the EFL classroom, provides a rich resource to be explored and learnt about as part of language learning. Engaging with this diversity provides a way of developing a cognitive capacity fundamental to intercultural competence,

namely '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 2006, p. 24). This is exemplified in Classroom Application 1.

Classroom Application 1: Classroom Surveys
One of the simplest and most effective ways to apply this principle to teaching spoken communication, especially in heterogeneous classes, is to involve learners in carrying out classroom surveys or interviews with each other. These can focus on daily life themes through which learners can explore the diversity of ways of being and doing in and beyond their local communities. For example, topics such as family size, household structure and mealtime rituals all provide opportunities for younger learners in particular to use English to talk about themselves and learn about others. Where necessary or appropriate, learners can also be encouraged to draw on their primary language(s) in, for example, the process of constructing survey content or mind mapping their own experience of the chosen topic. The shared autobiographical narration generated in surveys and interviews offers a way for learners to render conscious their tacit knowledge and assumptions about self and others.

In more homogenous classrooms typical of EFL settings, similar techniques can be used to explore the diversity often found within even an apparently homogenous classroom and its associated community.

A likely benefit of such an approach is improved motivation to learn. As Dörnyei (2001a) argues, instruction that targets sociocultural values relevant to the setting of instruction (e.g., cultural beliefs about learning) *mediates* achievement, cognition and behaviour (p. 32). Dörnyei (2001b) proposed three instructional strategies relevant to this claim:

- Develop a collaborative relationship with the student's parents
- Promote the development of group cohesiveness
- Promote 'integrative' values by encouraging a positive and open-minded disposition towards the L2 [second language] and its speakers, and towards foreignness in general.

The third of these points provides a natural link to part (b) of Principle 1, which we shall now turn to.

(b) *Expose Learners to the Diversity of World Englishes and Raise Awareness of English as an International Language/Lingua Franca*

Scholarship on lingua franca English and the overlapping (and sometimes interchangeable) construct of English as an international language (EIL) highlights the

fact that for the majority of English language learners their use of English beyond the classroom with be with other non-native users of English. In a discussion of lingua franca English in Asia, Kirkpatrick (2012) so effectively sums up the implications of EIL for English language education in this context that they are worth quoting in full here:

(I) The goal of the approach is not for learners to acquire native speaker proficiency and to sound like native speakers, but to enable them to use English successfully in lingua franca contexts; they will naturally sound like multilinguals;
(II) The content of the curriculum needs to include topics of regional and local cultures that are relevant for lingua franca users in these contexts; […]
(III) The curriculum must be therefore be designed to allow students to be able to engage critically in discussions about their own cultures and cultural values and interests in English;
(IV) The curriculum needs to include listening materials that familiarize students with the speech styles and pronunciation of their fellow Asian multilingual users of English as a lingua franca (Kirkpatrick 2012, p. 40).

Kirkpatrick also argues that the most appropriate English teachers for a lingua franca approach are suitably trained and proficient local multilinguals since such teachers are not only ideal *role* models for their students but also appropriate *linguistic* models (ibid). Kirkpatrick's additional recommendation that such teachers need to be knowledgeable about regional cultures and literatures is pivotal also for teachers who wish to adopt an intercultural stance. Such knowledge provides the basis for offering comparative cultural information and input and for modelling intercultural competence.

Classroom Application 2: Telecollaboration
Electronically-mediated communication offers learners ever-expanding opportunities to interact in the virtual classroom with what Witte (2014) refers to as 'authentic cultural others.' and so to be exposed to a range of world Englishes. The term 'authentic cultural others' neatly challenges the assumption that ideal interaction is always with native speakers of English. Tandem learning partnerships[2] are typically set up between two classes of learners who each speak as a native language the language the other wants to learn. But telecollaboration partnerships can also offer motivating opportunities for learners in culturally homogenous classrooms to interact in English with learners in a similarly homogenous learning context elsewhere in the world. The potential for telecollaboration to be used in this way is currently underutilized.

4.3 Principle 2. Focus on Intercultural Learning Objectives

4.3.1 Foster and Affirm Intercultural Learning Achievements in Tandem with Linguistic and Communicative Achievements

Principle 2 challenges the often implicit benchmarking of learner proficiency or progress against notional native-speaker competence. It proposes instead that intercultural competence provides a more realistic goal of English language instruction. One of the more obvious and intractable problems with the native speaker model is that it is an impossible target for language learners (Kramsch 1997, 2006; Marx 2002; Norton 2000). Furthermore, the goal of native speaker competence assumes an undesirable assimilationist goal, encouraging the learner to separate from his/her own culture and to adopt a new sociocultural identity (Byram 1997; Marx 2002).

The assumption that native speakers are models for cultural competence is also misguided, according to Byram (2003), because no native speaker is an authority on their culture, in the same way that no individual is a perfect linguistic model (because of variations in class, region, register, and so on). The implication of these points is that language learners should be encouraged to critically analyse whatever they observe in native-speaker interactions and to make informed choices about what behaviour is an appropriate model to adopt or adapt.

Another reason for not taking native-speaker norms (linguistic or cultural) as preferred models is that there is always more to learn, because cultures and languages are always changing. This reinforces the notion that schools need to prepare learners for change and life-long learning (Council of Europe 2001, p. 5). A shift in emphasis from native-speaker competence to intercultural competence broadens the goals of instruction to include the knowledge, skills, awareness, and attitudes, which enable learners to "meet the challenges of communication across language and cultural boundaries" (ibid, p. xii). Thus, intercultural learning focuses not only on knowledge *about* a second language culture, but also on other less tangible, more subjective competencies such as those captured in Byram's (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence. In broad terms, these competencies are multidimensional, including skills (such as respectful engagement with people from different cultures and using the target language appropriately in a range of contexts), understands (of one's own cultural roots and the values and beliefs of others and their ways of living), awareness (of self in interaction and one's prejudices and stereotypes), and attitudes (such as attitudes towards cultural difference and ambiguity in communication).

To commit to these kinds of intercultural outcomes has far-reaching consequences for pedagogy. It requires, for instance, that teachers develop their own skills in navigating intercultural challenges and that they provide expertise and guidance in drawing learners' attention towards intercultural dimensions of communication. They must manage the sometimes fraught process of making cultural contrasts and comparisons such as those suggested in Classroom Application 2 below. A shift to intercultural learning also has profound implications for assessing

spoken communication which lie beyond the scope of this chapter. Readers interested in this area are encouraged to refer to the work of scholars such as Byram (2000), Dervin (2010), and Witte (2014)).

Classroom Application 3
Consider what kind of intercultural achievements might be affirmed in the survey task outlined in Classroom Application 1 or the telecollaboration in Classroom Application 2. These achievements might include learning about the cultural practices and world views of others, but also discovering how one's own taken-for-granted views and practices are perceived as perhaps surprising or unusual to others, and why. Intercultural learning achievements might also include noticing the different ways one's interlocutor in telecollaboration manages the interpersonal dimensions of interacting in English (including aspects of non-verbal communication) and then reflecting on how one responded and felt about the interaction. It is more than a truism to note that the teacher plays an important role in guiding learners through the reflective processes that lead to these intercultural achievements.

4.4 Principle 3. Adopt Intercultural Classroom Practices

4.4.1 Provide Opportunities for Learners to Engage with Culture in and Around Language From the Beginning

Teaching intercultural spoken communication brings the connectedness of culture and language into focus. The language–culture nexus is seen in the intricate ways that language and culture co-construct each other (Kramsch 2004). A simple example of co-construction can be seen in the terms 'mate' or 'bro' widely used in colloquial New Zealand English in interactions between male interlocutors who are only passing acquaintances and not related. On the one hand, these terms *reflect* cultural values of camaraderie and egalitarianism located in New Zealand's sociocultural history. On the other hand, to the extent that the terms remain in common parlance, they *reconstruct* and *maintain* the cultural values with which they are associated. As Kramsch (1993) expresses it, 'Every time we speak we perform a cultural act.' The implications of this point for language learning are well summed up by Liddicoat (2004), p. 17:

> Every message a human being communicates through language is communicated in a cultural context. Cultures shape the ways language is structured and the ways in which language is used. A language learner who has learnt only the grammar and vocabulary of a language is, therefore, not well equipped to communicate in that language.

Given the permeation of culture through our everyday lives and interactions one might wonder if there really is any other way to teach spoken communication but interculturally! An intercultural approach rejects the teaching of culture as a sepa-

rate strand, as if culture can be set apart from communicative proficiency. Indeed, I would argue that adopting an intercultural approach to teaching communication promotes a fuller and truer realization of the nature of communication by raising learners' awareness of the implicit messages conveyed in their choice of linguistic forms and communication strategies.

Principle 3(a) concludes with the words 'from the beginning,' implying that teachers should be guiding learners' conceptualizations of culture from the beginning of the language learning process. Why? The first and most obvious reason is that the simplest forms of interactions such as greeting others and introducing ourselves are replete with culturally coded messages. Intercultural learning is therefore a necessary part of beginning to learn to communicate in a second language. Other topics appropriate for the beginning stages of learning and ripe for intercultural exploration include the coding of family relationships, the naming of rooms in a house, and expressions of politeness and respect. A second reason is that, as Liddicoat et al. (2003) have pointed out, delaying attention to interculturality simply opens up space for uninformed cultural learning. In Dellit's (2005) words, "ignoring culture does not leave a vacant cultural space which can be filled in later. Rather, it leads to a cultural space which is filled in by uninformed and unanalysed assumptions" (p. 7). In other words, failing to address culture in the early stages of language learning increases the risk of stereotyping and prejudice.

Classroom Application 4: The Concept of 'You'

Learning how to address people appropriately in a second language can be challenging because of the complex dimensions of culture located in terms of address. In English the word 'You' is not strongly marked for status or politeness and so can be used quite freely with a range of people in conversation. However, in many of the home languages of English learners this is not the case, and in fact often very subtle but culturally important information is conveyed in the form of 'you' one chooses to use.

For this reason, communication tasks focusing on the different ways that forms of address and personal reference are expressed in English and in other languages that learners bring to the classroom provide a rich opportunity for intercultural learning. Such tasks require learners to think about social relationships and how these are formally and informally expressed in different languages and cultures. This often also leads to discussion of body language and gestures associated with addressing people with whom you have different kinds of relationships.

For beginning classes terms of address are an ideal topic for intercultural language learning. More advanced classes can also revisit this topic since typically in these classes learners have developed greater sensitivity to the cultural and linguistic realizations of politeness in the target language.

4.4.2 Principles 3(b): Provide Opportunities for Learners to Interact and Communicate in the Language

From an intercultural perspective, learners can experience culture first through *the way* communication proceeds, and secondly through *the content* of what is discussed or written about. Interaction, therefore, is not simply a tool for developing fluency; it provides opportunities for learners to confront their culturally constructed worlds and cultural assumptions, and so to learn more about themselves, and through this learning to be more receptive to the lives of others. The teacher can approach interaction in two ways.

First, focusing on *the way* communication proceeds, the teacher can use any interaction involving the target language and/or culture as an opportunity to explore linguistic and cultural boundaries, and to engender awareness of the learner's own as well as the other's ways of communicating and maintaining relationships, and of dealing with cross-cultural misunderstandings and communication breakdowns. Focusing secondly on t*he content* of communication, the teacher can use classroom interaction to explore the cultural worlds, beliefs, values, and attitudes of others through topics which provide opportunities for explicit discussion of cultural comparisons. The survey activities in Classroom Applications (1) and (4) do just this.

Classroom Application 5: How We Spend Our Time
In this activity learners communicate about plans for the immediate future and their obligations and responsibilities.

Step 1. Students fill in a table containing a week's schedule with their usual weekly activities, routines, duties and commitments, using English as much as possible.

Step 2. '**You**' Students compare schedules with other students. Results are reported to the class, again using English as much as possible

Step 3. '**They**' Students communicate with peers in another country via Tandem Learning partnerships or some other form of telecollaboration and share details of weekly schedules. Results are collated on a new schedule.

Step 4. Comparison Students compare the two cultural sets, identifying shared interests as well as unique activities in each cultural set.

A language focus could include:

- Superlative forms of adjectives (Who has the busiest timetable?)
- Formulaic expressions of refusing, accepting, agreeing
- Vocabulary like household tasks, routine duties
- Question forms

4.4.3 Principle 3(c): Provide Opportunities for Learners to Explore, Reflect on, Compare and Connect Experiences, Knowledge and Understandings

Culture encompasses much more than the traditional arts, conventional practices, institutions and objectively describable, visible manifestations of people's lives. Using the metaphor of an iceberg (Weaver 1993), these dimensions of culture make up the small, visible segment of the iceberg above the surface. Beneath the surface lies a much larger, less visible part of culture made up of values, beliefs, and thought patterns. Kramsch (1993) gives the tangible example of the practice of keeping an office door closed in Germany, but open in America. As she explains, underlying this visible display of culture lie less visible values of friendliness (open door) and order and respect (closed door). But without an intercultural perspective in play, to an American visitor, the closed door to a German office might well be interpreted as a sign of unfriendliness, while a German visitor to America could interpret the open door as a sign of disorder and lack of respect (p. 209). In these cases, what is needed is intercultural understanding of how our cultural identity provides a lens through which we view and interpret other cultural ways of being and doing.

Similarly, in spoken communication, culture is manifest in language in obvious ways, such as in overt politeness forms (e.g., Japanese forms of address). But it is also deeply embedded in language in less obvious ways such as the patterns and tolerability of various forms of conversational feedback and back channelling, the degree of tolerance for overlapping speech and interruptions, the degree of indirectness in speech acts such as requests and refusals, and a vast number of other communicative subtleties displayed in the everyday use of language. For this reason, teaching that focuses largely on describing overt expressions of culture in spoken communication misses a large portion of cultural experience. As Ingram and O'Neill (2001) point out, "knowledge alone leaves learners ensconced in their own culture looking out at the other culture and observing its differences (often judgmentally) – rather like walking through a museum" (p. 14). So to teach spoken communication interculturally requires a shift from *transmission* of objective cultural knowledge to providing learners with opportunities to *explore* their first-hand communicative experience of both visible and invisible culture. Teachers play a pivotal role of guiding learners as they construct knowledge through reflection on experience (Renandya 2012). Factual information about communicative norms has its place so long as this information is interrogated by learners so as to reveal insights and understanding about the lived experience of culture. In sum, active construction of meaning and critical enquiry are essential to teaching communication interculturally.

As learners are guided through these experiential learning processes, they are led to understand that culture learning is not simply a matter of accruing information and facts. Instead, it involves observing and analysing social processes and their outcomes so as to develop more critical understanding of their own and other societies, and awareness of what constitutes culture and how it affects everybody's behaviour and use of language. These processes challenge cultural stereotyping, which exoticises and essentializes members of another culture. In its place, are opportunities

to cultivate empathetic and self-aware perceptions and attitudes (Kramsch 2006, p. 107). The classroom application below (5) offers one way to begin this process of cultivating cultural self-awareness.

Classroom Application 6: We are not the Same

The German website '*The Art of Being a German*'[1] offers the following prompt questions to encourage learners to reflect on their identity and intercultural values. I have adapted them to suit any national or cultural context.

- What virtues are associated with my home culture?
- What do I have in common with other members of my home culture/nation?
- What do I not have in common with other members of my home culture/nation
- What does the word 'home' mean to me?
- What do other nations think of my home culture/nation?
- What is it to be typically [name of my nationality]?
- When is one a [name of my nationality]?
- What is typical Korean, Japanese, German etc.?

Comparing and reflecting are such important processes in intercultural learning that I shall return to them again in the conclusions to this chapter.

4.4.4 Principle 3(d): Provide Opportunities for Learners to put Learning Into Practice Beyond the Classroom, Making Choices and Acting in Interculturally Informed Ways

We now come to the final principle, which involves practising intercultural competencies. Opportunities to interact and communicate in English beyond the classroom are not only intrinsic to the process of becoming proficient in spoken communicative English, they are the very purpose for which learners seek to develop this proficiency. This is equally true for the process of acquiring intercultural communicative competence; interaction provides the raw material for deepening intercultural understanding and for putting intercultural competencies into practice. This practice, taken into the world beyond the classroom contributes to a key aim of education for intercultural citizenship, described by Byram (2006) as "taking action through involvement with people of other societies and liberating oneself and others from assumptions and ways of being and doing which are oppressive or constraining" (p. 18). Here, we see a powerful statement of the positive contribution English language teaching committed to intercultural values can make to our world. This

[1] http://diekunstdeutscherzusein.wortbildner.de/page23/page23.html

same vision finds expression in many national curricula, and in the kinds of educational outcomes of schooling discussed earlier in the chapter such as 'participating in local, national and global communities' (Ministry of Education 2007).

5 Conclusions

Comparing languages and cultures is a fundamental process in intercultural language learning as seen in the classroom applications discussed in this chapter. In multicultural classrooms or through telecollaboration with other classrooms, comparisons and connections can be multi-faceted as learners explore and share each other's cultures while cooperatively exploring new cultures beyond the classroom associated with English. Exploration of this kind promotes an 'inner sense of the equality of cultures, an increased understanding of [one's] own and other people's cultures, and a positive interest in how cultures both connect and differ' (Tomlinson 2001). In a practical guide to integrating culture in language instruction, Tomlinson and Masuhara (2004) suggest that teachers begin and end each activity 'in the minds of the learners,' through such activities as encouraging them to think about an experience in their own culture, before providing them with a similar one in another culture, or 'getting [learners] to "translate" a new experience in another culture into an equivalent experience in their own culture' (p. 4). Maintaining this kind of awareness of culture is a primary goal of intercultural language learning and is ideally suited to teaching spoken communication.

It is important to emphasise that comparison of a target culture with one's own culture is *not* an end in itself. Instead, it is a process which is designed to facilitate movement by the learner into what is referred to in the intercultural literature as 'a third place' (Kramsch 1993). This third place is an intercultural position between cultures, a position from which the learner can negotiate differences and interact comfortably across cultures by drawing on "a reflective capacity to deal with cultural differences and to modify behaviour when needed" (Dellit 2005, p. 17).

Comparing cultures is a practical focus for language teaching. It aims to allow learners to develop more sophisticated concepts of culture and helps to undermine notions of the immutability of cultural values and cross-cultural prejudices. Instruction focused on raising cultural awareness and making connections has the ultimate goal of producing what Byram (2006), p. 4 calls "intercultural speakers" – that is, people who have "the ability to communicate and interact across cultural boundaries" (Byram 1997, p. 7).

What is the teacher's role in these intercultural learning processes? Evidence from the literature makes it clear that learners' interpretations of their intercultural experience need to be addressed explicitly and openly by the teacher rather than being left to take care of themselves through exposure and experience alone. Indeed, some research evidence suggests that, without appropriate guidance, encounters with other cultures through language learning can have an inconclusive, or worse, a

negative effect on cross-cultural attitudes (Ingram and O'Neill 2001, 2002; see also O'Dowd, 2003; Ware 2005 on cultural misunderstandings in computer-mediated cross-cultural encounters between language students).

Let me conclude with two final points about teaching interculturally. First, for the communicatively oriented language teacher, teaching interculturally does not require a new method or approach. What it does require is for teachers to build an explicit focus on interculturality into the communicative experiences available to learners. Even factual cultural knowledge can be approached interculturally, although obviously it is when learners have opportunities to interact in the language that intercultural learning flourishes. It follows then that an intercultural stance on teaching spoken communication can take many forms. It influences how you teach (e.g., encouraging learners to explore their intercultural experiences), what you teach (e.g., a focus on lived experience and critical reflection on stereotypes), and what learning outcomes are valued (e.g., showing intercultural awareness as well as communicative fluency).

My second and concluding point returns us to the teacher; intercultural teaching relies on an intercultural teacher who models and indeed embodies intercultural values such as curiosity and openness and a willingness to learn alongside the learner.

Notes

1. Years 1–13 of schooling
2. www.tandemexchange.com/en/

Appendix: The Six Principles for Intercultural Communicative Language Teaching (iCLT) (Newton et al. 2010)

Intercultural communicative language teaching and learning (iCLT):

1. Integrates language and culture from the beginning;
2. Engages learners in genuine social interaction;
3. Encourages and develops an exploratory and reflective approach to culture and culture-in-language;
4. Fosters explicit comparisons and connections between languages and cultures;
5. Acknowledges and responds appropriately to diverse learners and learning contexts;
6. Emphasizes intercultural communicative competence rather than native-speaker competence.

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