Intercultural language instruction as a stimulus for teacher investigation

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Abstract

This study aimed to see how two language instructors evolved their multicultural language teaching techniques with the help of university academics. Using a qualitative case study technique, gathered information from classroom interviews, debriefing sessions, observations, and instructor-created guided reflection pieces. The findings show that chances for instructors to reflect on their practices modified their techniques to language instruction. The research provides important insights into how teachers' inquiries might enhance teachers' reactions to curricular change, which is beneficial for teacher education. To suit a curricular expectation, learners acquire intercultural communicative competence in plurilingual circumstances.

Keywords: *Teacher questions, foreign language acquisition, self-reflection, and intercultural language instruction*

Introduction

More and more emphasis has been placed in recent years on developing a student's ability to communicate across cultures, in addition to their linguistic fluency and accuracy in the target language. Cultural assumptions, attitudes, and practices are often implicit in good communication, and students need to comprehend this to communicate effectively. The usefulness of an intercultural approach to language instruction in plurilingual environments has grown due to its ability to contribute to overall educational goals (Presbitero 2020) and educate students for global citizenship (Hung et al., 2018). According to the national curriculum in other countries, intercultural competencies have lately been included in national curricula and other teaching and learning texts (Ashton, 2018; Goren & Yemini, 2017). Thus, instructors in various academic disciplines and professions are now required to help students develop intercultural competence. In the end, however, many instructors were entrusted with implementing educational innovations in accordance with curricular shifts without enough assistance (Akala 2021). This research responds to demands for further study on professional learning focuses on language instructors' perceptions of increasing intercultural communicative competence in their classrooms and students' learning (Zhang & Zhou, 2019).

The exploratory research recounted here attempts to investigate the development processes of intercultural teaching of two language teachers via inquiries into their practices permitted by university academics. Based on the concept of 'instruction as inquiry in the educational setting,' the research adds to a current understanding regarding teachers' professional development and growth in two ways (Ashton, 2018). First, it offers insight into

how instructors' perceptions of intercultural competence influence and change their intercultural teaching and learning practices. Specifically, how intercultural instruction may improve and enrich instructors' language teaching methods. Second, by examining teachers' questions as forms of teacher learning, the research examines how two instructors conceptualized international language education and the contextual variables that influenced those processes. This information helps point language instructors in the right direction regarding what kind of help they'll need to establish successful language programs that include an intercultural emphasis in their classrooms. Studies like these are necessary to investigate teachers' active enactment of their intercultural understandings via evaluating their teaching methods, as Arunasalam& Burton (2018) urged.

The development of intercultural communicative skills and language instructors

As a result of the growing importance of developing students' ability to communicate across cultures and languages, language pedagogy initiatives worldwide and school language curriculum have turned their attention to the interaction between language learning and the development of cultural competency (Hatoss 2019). However, an intercultural approach to language education may be traced back to the 1990s. It has only been in the past decade that national curricula have reframed communicative language instruction as intercultural. In 2007, for example, English undertook extensive language curriculum revisions (Hayakawa &Keysar, 2018). Having a pure emphasis on language is a lot more expansive vision, and it is believed to give pupils a more interesting educational experience (Margi &Vodopija-Krstanovi, 2018). Language and culture are just two aspects of intercultural competence, but they are not the only factors contributing to it. Learners must consider such facts, compare and contrast cultures, and eventually arrive at a point where cultural differences may be successfully and efficiently managed in the context of their encounters with individuals who are different or other (Ou &Gu, 2020). Many suggest that instructors will be unable to comprehend the new curricular aims in circumstances where they

have historically taught a second language only through language meaning and grammar, with the cultural context being taught as an afterthought (Kusuman in gputri&Widodo, 2018; Huang 2019).

Many language instructors have difficulty developing their students' intercultural communicative competency since they do not have suitable support systems. Suppose teachers are considered crucial intermediaries between its implementation in language classrooms and theoretical understandings of interculturality (Yu et al., 2020). In that case, they must be provided with the requisite knowledge, abilities, and attitudes to do so effectively (Lentillon-Kaestner et al., 2018). Intercultural attitude development is a cognitive and emotional process that impacts instructors' personal teaching ideas and professional identities (Vatty 2020). (Vatty 2020). Interculturality is conceptually abstract and frequently presented in universalist terms, i.e., independent of the learners' environment or age, which is a significant conceptual hurdle (Bilyalova, 2017). According to Chen &Adefila (2020), re-conceptualizing language training to include both linguistic and intercultural factors has proved challenging to implement in reality. Furthermore, instructors may not have challenged their conceptualizations and understandings of interculturality. They may not completely comprehend their involvement in their students' development of intercultural attitudes (He et al., 2017).

Even if instructors recognize their critical role in fostering intercultural learning in their classes, they may require to reevaluate their language education methods. This demands an evaluation of their cultural knowledge (Dusi et al., 2017) and the potential of developing ways to increase intercultural language learning instructional possibilities (Dao & Iwashita, 2018). However, some empirical studies show how instructors interpret the curriculum in very idiosyncratic and intuitive ways without instruction on interpreting or executing curricular modifications (Huang 2019). it has been shown that they teach culture in a static (facts-based) manner, seeing culture as a different matter from language (Gorter 2018). Although instructors respect the cultural component, researchers discovered that it is seldom linked with foreign

language instruction in a longitudinal sample of 30 elementary schools in Australia (Cowley 2017). Gorter (2018) found that interculturality remained an afterthought in language instruction in a similar vein.

In interview research with 15 elementary teachers of English as a Foreign Language in Canada, Heggernes (2021) found that the teachers thought interculturality was an essential objective of foreign language acquisition. It was not executed consistently because intercultural learning goals were not emphasized in the instructors' classes. Vold (2017) discovered that although instructors were eager to teach intercultural competency, their readiness was influenced by differing ideas regarding the best way to teach it. Concurring with Zhang & Liu's (2019) findings in the Australian context, Vold's (2017) study found that teachers cited the overburdened language curriculum. Remarkably, their inability to teach culture and their high focus on linguistic competence hinder establishing intercultural language instruction.

Apart from the pedagogical constraints identified in prior studies, various studies have discovered different contextual elements that impact how instructors handle culture in their language lessons. Vold's (2017) questionnaire research of 350 instructors from seven other nations revealed substantially similar macro and micro contextual characteristics to those identified by Zhang & Liu (2019). The Australian context is characterized by a shortage of time, curricular limitations (e.g., an overemphasis on linguistic components of language instruction), and a scarcity of adequate teaching resources. Additionally, the instructors in Zhang & Liu's (2019) research acknowledged difficulties with measuring students' intercultural competence and the unsustainable nature of this technique. According to Zhang and Liu (2019), creating an intercultural technique for language education stays primitive due to a mismatch between theoretical advances and practitioners' difficulty enacting theory in their language teaching (see also Bilyalova, 2017; Kusumaningputri& Widodo, 2018).

Reflection on oneself as a teacher and intercultural communicative competency

As discussed above, a typical effect of curricular reform is a mismatch between the various

restrictions affecting teachers' implementation of the reform and the reform's needed theoretical understandings. The research provided here is particularly interested in the mismatch between a reform's theoretical foundations and teachers' opinions about those grounds. One strategy to support instructors' critical analysis of their practices, values, and beliefs as a relevant foundation for debate and reflection on planned practice elements is to overcome this mismatch (Emerick 2019). This type of critical examination of experiences can result in a deeper appreciation of one's routines and practices (Cirocki& Farrell, 2019). Instructors become aware that their instructional decisions are influenced by complex, practically-oriented, personalized, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs (Gong et al., 2018).

Teachers' observations are educational, moral, and ethical since they become more aware of the power imbalances resulting from the language barrier. To put it another way, teachers may use reflection to put their emotional knowledge (Zinsser et al., 2019) into action (Ping et al., 2018) as they analyze their own professional identity (Hanna et al., 2019). Authors such as Hicks (2018) call for a critical approach to interculturality.

As established in the professional learning literature, collaborative inquiry and reflection within a professional learning community enhance teacher effectiveness (Zonoubi et al., 2017), primarily because this mode of professional learning is congruent with the fundamentals of how individuals learn (Ab Kadir 2017). Teachers utilize data from research and their own experiences to design teaching and learning opportunities to accomplish the objectives emphasized in the focusing inquiry via investigations into their teaching (Ashton, 2018). Typically, the inquiry cycle includes adopting new practices, reviewing current practices, and evaluating results to influence future action. Instructors' questions often revolve around making meaning of their own and their students' activities via the use of data from their classroom interactions (Peng et al., 2020). By engaging in this kind of data-driven reflective practice, instructors may better know the current practices. They may be pushed to change their

instructional strategies (Petek&Bedir, 2018). According to McInerney et al. (2018), the inquiry process enables educators to develop their professional identities as agentive and reflective professionals with the final objective of increasing students' learning.

Instructors often begin in intercultural language instruction by critically examining their settings in connection to intercultural classroom circumstances and understanding what it means to be intercultural. Recreating experiences to create a new method of language instruction creates ideal circumstances for language acquisition (Karnieli-Miller, 2020).

Context

As learners and families become increasingly varied, assisting young students in developing their intercultural competence and ability to grasp and connect with diversity has emerged as a critical problem and educational objective (Goren & Yemini, 2017). Foreign languages, arguably, are uniquely positioned to foster intercultural understanding by developing students' capacities to acquire intercultural sensitivity via an appreciation and valuation of their own culture and distinctiveness, as well as meaningful and successful interactions with others (Liu & Fang, 2017).The Study Languages section, introduced to the national curriculum in 2007, provides a dedicated place within the curriculum for teaching and studying a language other than the instruction language (English).

It was interested in discovering how educators might conduct successful and long-lasting language programs in the intermediate or pre-secondary school sector as researchers and teacher educators (year 8 and 9 children, ages 13 to 15). Secondary schools' foreign language departments have long been established. Nonetheless, non-specialist teachers with insufficient mastery of the target language and pedagogical abilities sometimes teach intermediate school language programs.This is a new area of study and an unfamiliar field at times for many educators. Despite these less-than-ideal circumstances, instructors think that with the proper institutional support, they can still convey meaningful language learning experiences for their learners (Kormos&Nijakowska, 2017). It was discovered in pilot research that teachers of intermediate-

level languages also need extra help to understand better how to improve students' intercultural competence (Woll 2020).

The Current Study

For the two-year experiment funded by the Ministry of Education, four instructors in the intermediate school sector were helping their students, ages 11 to 13, acquire intercultural competency while studying a second language. The four instructors' interviews, classroom observations, and documented reflections were utilized to gather rich data for this qualitative multiple case research. Three instructors taught the language with other subjects in the curriculum, while the other two taught it as a language expert. Chinese, Korean, and Taiwanese were among the languages taught. One Chinese instructor is a native speaker, while the other instructors characterized their language competence as beginning or intermediate.

The project was divided into distinct sections. At the project's commencement, the first phase's purpose was to build a foundation of instructors' beliefs, attitudes, and practices surrounding international language teaching and learning. One of the researchers interviewed each teacher and then observed in two or more separate classrooms and debriefed. The second phase began with a two-day conference of the entire project's participants, including four teachers and four researchers. The conference's goal was to acquaint instructors with the literature on intercultural language teaching and learning, examine the curriculum's teaching as an inquiry cycle, and choose a topic for each teacher's personal context-specific inquiry to enhance their students' intercultural ability. Teachers conducted their investigations in their classrooms in the following two school terms with a research team member, who recorded their findings and performed interviews, classroom observations, and summative interviews with the teachers, as well as summative interviews with small groups of students who had been randomly chosen for the study.All participants reconvened the following year for two days to analyze every instructor's inquiry, reflect on the second phase, and construct a new investigation for the third phase.Teachers were required to write two reflective articles during the second two-day

conference to acquire insights through delayed reflection. One focused on the second phase inquiry, while the other on a survival note (Anderson 2019) in which they shared their experiences and suggestions on intercultural teaching with a fictitious colleague. The meeting's primary goal was to discuss with instructor attendees how they may foster a thoughtful and comparative attitude toward cultural similarities and differences in their learners while also keeping language learning in mind. Given the information provided by instructors that merging language and culture may be difficult, the purpose of this study was to assist educators in recognizing the potential consequences of separate culture and language in their language education.

The authors selected two teachers from among the four participants because of their similar levels of proficiency in the languages they teach, Korean and Mandarin, and the variety of methods they use to teach these languages. Both instructors are discussed in detail below to understand better how their intercultural teaching skills have developed over time. The third phase also used data from phases one and two of the research, including interviews with the two instructors, classroom observations, and reflective writings prepared as part of the first phase. It employed content analysis and theme classification to look into the two professors' data (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Trends between and between instructors were uncovered by analyzing the themes from each source.

Findings of Two Teachers Investigated
Claire
Claire is a primary school instructor with 15 years of experience in the classroom and is fluent in English. She studied Mandarin throughout high school and college and believes herself to be a low-intermediate speaker. All instructors at Claire's school are expected to teach Mandarin three times a week for twenty minutes, and those with a thorough understanding of another language are also required to teach that language. Claire has taught Mandarin at her institution for the last six years at her principal's request.She confesses to being uneasy about her teaching since she hasn't used

Mandarin in over 25 years. Except for some in-school help from a consultant for regional languages, she has no professional experience in language instruction. Claire was teaching Mandarin to Year 6 and 7 cohorts (ages 10-11) once a week for 30 minutes to groups of roughly 27 kids in each session at the time of the experiment. Claire teaches at a decile eight public school that provides an International Baccalaureate curriculum. Learners are encouraged to be critical thinkers and self-directed at the school.

Claire identified two aspects of her educational environment that were significant to the research at the investigation's outset. First, the languages provided depend on individual instructors' language competence. The courses are given as 'tasters' since no preconceived results are guaranteed, and there is no assurance of continuance in the same language in the next year. In her own words, Claire's purpose was to fire that enthusiasm and expose the pupils to the Mandarin language because of this style. Claire hoped that at the end of the year, her pupils would feel confident that "hey, I'm excellent at languages." Second, since her school follows the International Baccalaureate curriculum, students are expected to communicate successfully in more than one language and have the chance to teach in more than one language. It's all about developing internationally-minded individuals, as Claire puts it.

Claire noted that she had to overcome her limits in terms of language and cultural knowledge to include culture into her Mandarin lessons: "where I've got the information, I try to toss it in, or if I can find a video clip... I would put it in there." After the project participants met for the first time, the instructors were exposed to literature on intercultural language training. It indicated that Claire's perceptions of herself as a language teacher were significantly influenced by exposure to literature on intercultural language teaching. She mentioned that the notion of interculturality had "freed me" in the feeling that she no longer felt obligated to be a native speaker model, which had previously made her uneasy due to her inadequate language competence.

Claire's research with her Taiwanese students focused on the use of time. Students were expected to understand numbers to convey their phone numbers, execute basic arithmetic tasks, and tell the time in the course she created. Claire's language teaching took a big turn when she included cultural elements in all of her classes. Claire asked questions like "how do we speak our phone numbers?" and "have you noticed that we cluster them a little?" in one of the monitored classrooms while learners were sharing their phone numbers to generate short intercultural thoughts. She said that in Taiwan, there is a specific phone greeting called "*nihao*," and individuals offer their phone numbers to others by using the term for the dash that separates the digits. In another session, the students learned how to tell the time, and Claire showed them a brief video of someone explaining how Taiwanese folks count with their fingers. Claire utilized the movie to discuss differences in culture, which she described as enjoyable to learn. She urged the children to consider how they count with their fingers, and she invited pupils of all ethnic backgrounds to share how they count with their fingers.

These courses served as a springboard for a project where students examined and contrasted how families in Switzerland and Taiwan spend their time. Claire started by emphasizing the significance of time to many cultures and individuals, such as farmers. Claire instructed students from her institution who did not participate in the monitored class but had been to Taiwan for a two-week immersion exchange program to document what their foster family did regarding time occurrences and the sense of time. Simultaneously, her pupils were documenting their own families' time consumption to compare it to the data supplied from Taiwan. Claire was surprised by the kid's involvement with the multicultural theme of the project, explaining that the aim was to compare and contrast ideas about time and the importance of time to us. Claire reflected on her kids' constant curiosity about how other individuals live. "I believe it is a normal apprehension." She used that curiosity to pique her pupils' interest in intercultural awareness.

When questioned regarding the objectives she had set for the learner-led initiative, Claire said, "I believe they will eliminate more disparities than similarities," as well as "the reality that for the majority of us, time is quite valuable." She added that "learning about persons unlike to them is more remembered." This was because, in her opinion, pupils may "almost expect" others to be similar to them since they feel "the world does revolve around them" - an "egocentric" attitude. Claire made a concerted attempt to engage learners from many ethnic backgrounds in debate and reflection, albeit she was circumspect since some students, in her experience, may feel ashamed about their roots.

"I probably wouldn't have talked about how important time is to Taiwanese, probably wouldn't have thought about how important time is to us. I would have just launched straight into the language part of it," Claire said, reflecting on how she was starting to grasp the connection between culture and language. "I definitely would have felt pretty bad about that in the past since I'm meant to be teaching them the Mandarin language," she said. Claire was able to teach in English because of the international component since she now feels like, "I've kind of got the flexibility that I must teach that culture."

Claire predicted the effects of the student-led initiative after the two school terms (Second Phase): "I believe the nice thing will be that they'll discover that they're not truly that different from Taiwanese people." "I believe they'll be astonished by the parallels," she said. "Seeing the parallels and contrasts, that's the crucial thing," she said. "Whereas before I completed this project, I would have wanted them to observe the distinctions," she reasoned, "now I want them to see the similarities as well." Claire, on the other hand, considered a possible danger. "It's difficult because there's a balance between the Taiwanese language and the Taiwanese culture," she said. "I still want them to have that vocab and to learn to tell the time in that setting," she said, despite her desire to "spend more time on the culture." "They've engaged with it because it's intriguing," Claire

believed. However, the fact was that "I find it quite difficult to see a way around our schedule." "Having more time inside each session to look at both culture and language, so they're feeding both elements of it every day" would be ideal.

Claire reflected on the investigation of her teaching with an intercultural emphasis before the third phase of the research project, which began about ten weeks before the end of the school year. Her "greatest difference as a language instructor has been focusing on conveying Taiwanese culture," she said. And when I say culture, I didn't mean teaching about 'festivals' or 'food,' but rather the thought that goes into them." She did admit, though, that "I still feel uneasy about my lack of cultural understanding." Claire's biggest takeaway from reflecting on the significance of intercultural communication as a Taiwanese instructor was that students don't have to be flawless to communicate. Since teaching about the lives, values, and culture of the Taiwanese people is equally as significant, she acknowledged feeling a lot calmer in her work as a language instructor. In my short time with kids, "I don't have to do huge things." "I am more confident in the substance of what I am teaching more culture and less focus on native-speaker competency," she concluded.

The inquiry cycle's last reflective activity was presented as a survival note in which instructors shared their multicultural teaching experiences with a fictional colleague. Claire gave short but effective advice to someone who may be about to go on a similar adventure. She was clear that instructors who wished to include an intercultural approach into their classrooms must understand the theoretical foundations of interculturality. Also, be organized and ready to "transform practice," but not expect "perfection right immediately." She maintained that the investigation required "honest reflection on your practice" and "being willing to let go of previous ideas." Claire did recognize, however, that the study took time and that one crucial restriction was that the instructors needed to learn about the culture since "researching the culture could be a step too far for a busy teacher."

Rennie

Rennie has ten years of experience as an elementary school instructor, 8 of which worked with pupils aged 12 to 13 in a public intermediate school in decile 7. English is his first language. Instructors at Rennie's school must teach the curriculum and English language, while adjustments are given for instructors who do not know another language. Throughout his tenure as an instructor, Rennie used professional development opportunities to research language acquisition theories and practical elements of language teaching methodology, despite his dislike for Korean during his six-month high school course. Before starting this project, he received a master's degree in Computer Assisted Language Learning at a local institution. Rennie has also attended Korean evening classes and believes himself a low-intermediate speaker, although he still struggles with confidence when speaking the language. Rennie has total control over the organization and implementation of his language curriculum with his 25-student class. During the one hour he devoted to teaching Korean most weeks, he characterizes his technique as "quite diverse," blending communicative and more conventional tactics.

Rennie felt his understanding of interculturality was "very much a work in progress" at the start of the inquiry planning phase. Rennie admitted that he and his pupils would be studying together, recognizing that "kids don't have much cultural understanding beyond stereotypes" and being "nervous about me not having the culture knowledge myself." Rennie's question, based on the subject of food and festivities, might be, "Can students develop their intercultural awareness by noting cultural differences and similarities offered in primary materials such as movies and online resources?" Rennie's classes saw brief movies, and he focused the pupils' attention on diverse cultural elements in two of the three Korean courses seen during the second phase. One of the classes, for example, focused on what the pupils ate for breakfast. Rennie led a conversation in English after the students viewed a short film of a Korean family eating breakfast, asking them to explain how the meal has seen similar to and different from their mornings.

Rennie was satisfied with the following method during the reflective debrief after these sessions. "Definitively attracting their attention to it [difference] by having those main materials [videos], which I'm loving," he said. As he said at the outset, Rennie desired that his students concentrate on clear cultural similarities and differences. He regarded the film snippets as a jumping-off point for this multicultural dialogue. However, there was a danger for Rennie in utilizing the visual input. "I'm suspicious of these generalizations," he said, adding, "I don't want them to acquire the sense that culture is simply one thing," Rennie noted that he intended to stress the similarities as well as the contrasts. Still, the students did not appear to grasp the parallels across cultures as quickly as he did. He encouraged his pupils to "consider the concept of a 'typical' item with a grain of salt" and promote "the idea that there's more in common." In questioning beliefs about what is 'normal,' one of his aims was for the kids to "appreciate their own culture... merely to be aware of it."

Aside from the third phase's focus on comparison and assumptions, Rennie reflected on her second phase experience and said that, before the inquiry, he "still regarded himself as having around preconceptions." Rennie recalled that measuring "incorporating the cultural aspect" was not as palpable as language learning, which was potentially "easy to assess." Nonetheless, he continued, "I believe people are starting to understand." "When I began," he said, "my goal was for them to develop an awareness of the intricacy of culture, rather than for me to inform them." He contended that "you can just blitz vocabulary" in a more behavioristic manner. Still, establishing the intercultural component would need more time. "It's an integration issue," he felt, "where you're continuously reminding them, constantly bringing it up."

The researcher's goal for the last second phase interview was to assist Rennie in reflecting on his work and evaluating how his inquiry had developed. As a language instructor, Rennie recognized early on that "language cannot be taught in isolation from culture." He desired his pupils to "observe cultural features of a language and people without transforming the experience into a social studies course." As a result, the emphasis is squarely on language acquisition." He admitted, though, that his work this year "was perhaps too social studies-oriented."

Additionally, Rennie stated that one of the inquiry's objectives was to develop "explicit parallels and links between language and culture" via the use of food and festivities as a linguistic/intercultural setting. Rennie said he was "delighted with the cultural themes included." He felt that this "added a tremendous lot to the teachings, a tremendous depth." He stated that "frequently, it wasn't the things I planned as much as it was the stuff that happened." It was just little observations made by children that you could see." "I don't believe it is something that can be accomplished in a class or a one- or two-term investigation," he stated. Rather than that, "you only have to begin noticing and comprehending gradually." That, I believe, is the critical step: attempting to comprehend why we believe what we believe and why things are different." "Having those basic materials [videos] was great," Rennie said. He recognized the benefit of pupils seeing movies or analyzing actual food menus. "I loved the concept of kids developing their knowledge from original materials," he said. This, according to Rennie, "resolves the issue of my perhaps not knowing enough about Korean culture." "I am always suspicious," he continued, "when you Google' Korean cuisine' or 'Korean eating,' who puts something up there, is it normal, or whether there is already some filtering in place."

Rennie believed that his pupils were "becoming adept at dispelling preconceptions about Korean society, that, I believe, was starting to occur." His kids provided information and pieced together an image using the available materials. He didn't do quite enough to examine one's own culture and understand that one cannot simply declare there is no culture; it's complicated. Rennie believed there was a need for a more in-depth study and reflection on one's own culture, which is a critical component of it.

Rennie said his kids' intercultural competence was "improving." He contended:

While some individuals will always criticize and be judgemental, I believe that the more ideas they are exposed to and the more various perspectives they are exposed to, the more

children will realize that 'hey, that's not entirely correct. Some children will not since that is how children are, but you provide them with the option. More significantly, you allow them to make their choices and confront their prejudices. When the project's participants reconvened at the start of the third phase, Rennie reflected on his experience during the second phase and admitted that, prior to the inquiry, "I still considered myself to be the 'provider' of information," that is, to use a transmissionist educational method. His primary impediment to teaching language and culture concurrently was a "lack of confidence in my cultural expertise," as he "feared that my preconceptions and understanding would skew any inclusion of a cultural element in my language instruction." As a language educator, he is "concerned that I may wind up reinforcing the prejudices and assumptions that cultural language education seeks to dismantle." As a finding of the study, he concluded that "cultural knowledge is not something that can be taught; rather, it develops gradually." He believed that "by providing fundamental materials to children and then probing them intelligently," students and instructors may begin to acquire and deepen their cultural knowledge. Rennie seems to seek to foster critical thinking in his pupils via "intelligent inquiry." He found that "culture knowledge, when communicating, may be more significant than grammatical expertise." While he considered it a plus that he included more Korean into his courses, "it did result in a diminution in the cultural components of my teaching." As a result, Rennie had to balance language and culture carefully.

In his surviving email, Rennie began his counsel to the colleague by outlining the dispositions necessary for international communicative language education, which included a desire to "attempt something unique and be thoughtful and critical." He characterized intercultural language education as not teaching children culture but rather infusing cultural components into our learning... to increase learners' understanding of culture, challenge their preconceived notions, and build more tolerance and respect. Rennie said that adding cultural components into language teaching can help you spend less time on language. However,

according to Rennie, this modification enhances student motivation. Kids care more about culture and people than they do about vocabulary, and learners have some say in the language they acquire. He completed his message by emphasizing that a lack of language instruction does not necessarily indicate a lack of learning.

Discussion
Rennie and Claire are both experienced intermediate-level teachers who have taught in schools with similar socioeconomic statuses. Albeit with two distinct structures regarding how the two various languages (Korean and Taiwanese) are taught in their respective schools. Both instructors have a similar degree of skill in the language they teach, and both are slightly apprehensive about some areas of language instruction. Both instructors sought to improve their language teaching skills via this study project. The next part analyzes Claire and Rennie's reflections to determine their queries' influence on them as professionals and language instructors.

The investigations affected instructors' ideas about language education and their pedagogical methods.
Claire and Rennie both understand their limitations in language proficiency and cultural awareness of the languages they taught. Claire was apprehensive about an erroneous notion that the goal of language instruction was to develop native speaker competency, which was unrealistic given her poor proficiency and short time with her learners. This misunderstanding seemed to contribute to Claire's absence of confidence in her proficiency and apprehension of including Taiwanese into her sessions - which she tried to compensate for by having films to her lectures to introduce children to the original language. Claire felt "freer" and calmer about conducting her language teaching as she gained more knowledge about multicultural language teaching throughout the project. She seems to have switched from the assumption that good language education must culminate in an unrealistic goal of native speaker ability to a more expansive vision of communicative competence that placed a premium on developing students' intercultural competence. For Rennie, exposure to a multicultural

perspective prompted personal reflection on the complexity of culture and the dangers of stereotyping individuals who speak Korean.

Both instructors' language teaching techniques changed due to their involvement in the project. As he directed his students' multicultural reflections, Rennie transitioned from the role of "provider of information" to one of "intelligent questioning." This demonstrates a significant change in Rennie's educational approach to teaching culture, from transmitting information to developing students' critical thinking and knowledge co-construction. Rennie also took advantage of the chance to alter certain areas of his teaching, including the usage of primary materials, genuine movies, and realia, to infuse his courses with Korean culture. These tools functioned as springboards for his pupils' multicultural reflection. In Claire's instance, her Mandarin instruction became a chance to instill a feeling of success in her pupils, as she sought to "spark a love" for language acquisition. Her fresh perspective on teaching from an intercultural perspective was ideally linked with her institution's goal of instilling an international attitude in its pupils. Claire filled her language lectures with cultural insights and "interesting to know" facts, which she utilized as scaffolding for learner-led intercultural projects.

Both instructors experimented with teaching methodologies for intercultural language acquisition (Dao & Iwashita, 2018). It was clear that their engagement in the study required them to articulate their personal language teaching views (Vold 2017), as well as their intercultural understandings, as He et al. (2017) indicated. Nonetheless, as explained below, a change has occurred away from simple 'facts' regarding the target culture and toward a degree of learner reflection on the implications of those facts for connecting to difference.

The investigations affected instructors' perceptions of culture and multicultural language instruction.

Perhaps the most noticeable change in these two instructors due to their involvement in the study was their perspective on the role of culture in language instruction. While both Rennie and Claire began with an understanding of the relevance of culture in their language instruction, their perspectives on culture shifted

significantly following the first two stages of the research. After the second phase, Rennie reflected on how including a multicultural perspective enhanced the depth of his teaching. Through his study, he could see and grasp how interculturality gradually emerged in his students, a procedure that needed both him as a teacher and them as students to see and comprehend. Claire's participation in the investigation led to a radical re-definition of culture as the facts and the "reason behind" cultural behaviors. In other words, like Rennie, she expected pupils to note both the distinctions and similarities in how Taiwanese and Swiss interacted. There were instances of comparison between the target language's culture and that of the pupils in both instructors' observed sessions. Intriguingly, kids in both classes were considerably more focused on the differences, despite the instructors' hopes that pupils would more quickly find cultural parallels. Both instructors noted that cultural differences seemed to be more remembered for pupils, with Claire attributing this to students' egocentrism.

Nonetheless, tension develops. While Claire and Rennie recognized the educational benefits of incorporating an intercultural emphasis into their language courses, they voiced worry about striking an adequate balance between language and culture instruction. Rennie acknowledged the help of an intercultural approach in terms of student motivation. Still, he expressed worry about measuring interculturality, a concern shared by Zhang and Liu (2019). Similarly, Claire expressed satisfaction with her pupils' apparent rise in interest in Taiwanese culture but expressed concern about having insufficient time to devote to culture and language. Similar contextual constraints have been identified in research conducted in several regions of the globe (Zhang & Liu, 2019; Chen &Adefila, 2020; Vold, 2017).

The effect of reflection as a component of teaching questions

As part of this initiative, instructors were obliged to include several reflective moments into their professional practices. The extensive data collection revealed that the inquiry procedure into their language teaching techniques prompted reflection on the instructors' behavior throughout the

investigations and significant modifications in their language teaching practices. As a consequence of their research, both Rennie and Claire came to identical findings of affirming the role of culture in language instruction. The inquiry cycle aided in the development of these two experienced teachers by requiring them to pause and critically analyze their personal beliefs and practices, which were then shared with other project team members, as recommended in the teacher learning literature (Cirocki& Farrell, 2019; Zonoubi et al., 2017). Additionally, the analysis of their practices during post-observation debriefings pushed these teachers to modify their language instruction (Petek&Bedir, 2018). This participation in data-driven reflection resulted in a greater knowledge of their professional identities (McInerney et al., 2018).

Additionally, in the survival memos, where instructors advise other fictitious colleagues, Rennie and Claire thought that all instructors must be reflective, critical, and ready to adapt their methods to arrive at a revitalized educational attitude. These two instructors had undoubtedly seen this firsthand. As Gong et al. (2018) describe, they had recognized that their instructional judgments are complicated and are influenced by their ideas and settings.

It was encouraging to note that Claire and Rennie felt emancipated from a restrictive vision of language instruction centered only on linguistic characteristics despite professional constraints, poorly skilled in the language they teach, and little curricular support. These seasoned educators reevaluated the objectives of their language instruction programs due to their involvement in the research. They redirected their planning to find strategies to improve their students' intercultural understandings.

Conclusion

Two experienced intermediate school teachers who were required to teach a foreign language with minimal assistance were the focus of this research, which aims to shed light on how instructors may help pupils acquire intercultural communication skills. Using a case study, focusing on only two instructors, and having researchers help them create their inquiries limit our results' generalizability. However, teachers'

perceptions of intercultural competency and their impact on their teaching might be revealed in a short period of time.

With the critical nature of global citizenship, language education is well-positioned to enable intercultural learners to interact in plurilingual environments (Presbitero 2020). This involves the development of systems to assist language instructors in leading the path toward accomplishing these overall educational goals. One such system already exists in the curriculum, which requires all instructors to self-reflect on their teaching. While the inquiry method is viable, language educators still need an understanding of language teaching. Both instructors in this research lacked language instruction training, resulting in the most intuitive interpretation of the curriculum (Huang 2019). Nonetheless, they could design short guided inquiries (two school terms in length) that resulted in major adjustments in approaching language education (Robinson 2017).

Additionally, an understanding of the contextual aspect of curriculum creation and innovation is provided. Our literature research revealed that comparable initiatives and studies conducted in other settings reached similar outcomes (e.g., Zhang & Liu, 2019; Huang, 2019; Vold, 2017). Thus, it seems as if curricular innovations with intercultural objectives follow analogous implementation patterns and very definitely make comparable mistakes. As a result, adopting a multicultural approach to language instruction has been slow and ineffective.

Language teacher education programs for pre-service and in-service teaching, or, more boldly, all teacher education preparation, may be a potential solution to the intercultural development challenge. Language teachers' personal experiences with other cultures may serve as a springboard for rethinking the relationship between cultural contexts and language education, and these programs should build on this knowledge. This and another study have shown that language and culture are artificially separated.

In summary, this study contributes further empirical data on how teachers think about and practice teaching languages from a multicultural perspective. Teachers' genuine practices, how

they develop new insights, and the obvious need for help to aid language teachers in this process have been highlighted in this paper. Intercultural language teaching may be hindered by teachers' limited knowledge of language teaching and various contextual constraints. Nonetheless, supported investigations of teachers' methods may assist them in developing competence and confidence in language instruction and lead their schools toward change and innovation. The feasibility of this strategy for teacher education might be studied further.

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