

Developing assessment literacy of teachers of languages: A conceptual and interpretive challenge

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The teaching and learning of (foreign) languages in the context of globalisation is at a juncture in Australian education where fundamental changes in the field present distinctive challenges for teachers. These changes necessitate a reconceptualisation of the constructs and alter the very nature of assessment: the conceptualisation of what it is that is to be assessed, the processes used to elicit evidence of student learning and the frames of reference that provide the context for making judgments about students' language learning. In this paper I discuss the shift from communicative language teaching towards an intercultural orientation in language learning. Based on data from a three-year-study that investigated teacher assessment of language learning from an intercultural perspective in a range of specific languages in the K–12 context, I discuss the nature of the challenge for teachers as they develop their assessment practices. This challenge is characterised as both conceptual and interpretive. I conclude by drawing implications for developing the assessment literacy of teachers of languages.

Keywords: Language/s assessment; Assessment for learning; Intercultural language learning; Teacher assessment literacy

Introduction

The global movement of people brings the movement of knowledge, ideas, resources, languages, cultures, histories and values, creating a context in which the nature, scope and means of exchange in communication is more rapid, rich and complex than ever before. This movement brings an intensification of linguistic and cultural diversity (Vertovec 2010), linguistic and cultural hybridity and communication that is increasingly multilingual and multicultural (see Kramsch 2014 for an extended discussion of globalisation and its impact on languages education; Blommaert 2010; Block and Cameron 2002). At the same time theories of language, culture and learning

are expanding as a natural part of the development of the field as well as in response to the changes brought about by globalisation and the mobility of people (Shohamy 2011; Scarino 2014a; The Douglas Fir Group 2016; Leung and Scarino 2016).

Equally, in languages education in institutions and classrooms there is an increasingly rich and complex diversity of languages that are being learned and taught in diverse educational and program contexts. Engaged in these programs are students and teachers who bring diverse life-worlds of experience, knowledge, aspirations, motivations, expectations and interpretations to the act of learning languages. The implications for working in and with this intensified diversity in languages education are manifold and challenging for the teaching and learning of languages, as teachers seek to embrace a shift from a communicative to an intercultural orientation to language learning. The implications for assessment are perhaps even more challenging. Assessment is often seen as the part of the curriculum that is the least amenable to change and as the area that often lags behind in responding to changing learning theories. This is notwithstanding the increasing move towards formative assessment, assessment for learning, and learning-oriented assessment which permit an opening up of the assessment system (Black and Wiliam 1998; Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, Wiliam 2003; Purpura 2016; Turner and Purpura 2016).

In responding to this challenge of diversity in teaching, learning and assessment, it is the teachers of language/s who have a major role in effecting change in the classroom (Cochran-Smith and Lytle 2009). In language/s teaching and learning, they need to work through the changes in the theoretical constructs of 'communication' and 'understanding' in relation to the processes of communicating to accomplish an exchange of meaning both within and across languages and cultures, and how to operationalise these for the purposes of teaching, learning and assessment. They need to know how to elicit this language/s learning for the purposes of assessment, how to judge students' performances and capabilities and how to justify their judgments. This demands developing a clear understanding of the construct in its most contemporary representation, and a sophisticated kind of assessment literacy.

In this paper I discuss briefly the shift from communicative language teaching towards an intercultural orientation in language learning in the context of learning languages K–12. I highlight the challenge of taking a view of language learning and assessment of learning that is meaning-oriented more than practice- and-performance-oriented and how this applies to both student and teacher learning. I then discuss the experience of a three-year study that investigated the assessment of intercultural language teaching and learning through processes of ongoing, collaborative exploration with teachers. For the educational systems that supported the study, its purpose was to develop the assessment literacy of language/s teachers. For the researchers the focal purpose was to understand the processes of assessment

of language/s learning within an intercultural orientation as conceptualised and experienced by teachers. I illustrate the challenge that this collaborative work posed for all participants – a challenge that is both conceptual and interpretive. I conclude by drawing implications for developing the assessment literacy of teachers of languages.

The contemporary context of language/s education

The contemporary context of language/s education is characterised by increasing linguistic and cultural diversity, as indicated above. Students (and their teachers) come to language/s teaching and learning with diverse languages and cultures and other semiotic modes, as well as diverse biographies and histories of experiences, knowledge and values formed through these experiences. They may be learning languages as additional languages, as heritage languages, as L1 users who are learning their home language in a context where that language is a minority language, or in bilingual programs of different kinds. This context of diversity requires new forms of curriculum, teaching and learning, and assessment that invite students to move between languages as they decentre from their own perspectives to consider those of others and as they reflect on the variability of language use: the choices and meanings – their own and those of others. The goal is to enable students to become multilingual individuals who are sensitive to linguistic and cultural differences (Kramsch 2009). This necessitates giving greater attention to processes such as noticing, comparing, translating, decentring and reflecting.

It means moving towards assessment for learning through which it becomes feasible to consider the processes of learning at least as much as the products, and to take a view of learning language/s and culture/s that develops through the trajectory of students' experiences. Given the complex, dynamic nature and diverse contexts of language and language learning, there is a shift away from using the educated native-speaker as a reference point. These changes represent a major shift in conception of language, culture and learning that impacts on the development of the assessment literacy of teachers.

In Australia, the reality of this diversity coincides with the development of a new national curriculum, creating an important tension for language/s education. (See the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA] 2013.) The Australian Curriculum takes a monolingual English view of the context of the curriculum, whereas the shaping of the languages learning area has sought to propose a plurilingual view of language learning. (See ACARA 2011 and Scarino [2014b] for a detailed discussion.) The plurilingual view highlights that it is through the language/s and related cultural systems that are available to them that students and their teachers

interpret meaning in the acts of communicating and learning. In other words, languages are not just the vehicles of information and knowledge, but they are constitutive of knowledge and learning. The learning of languages and learning in general occur in the intermeshing of students' and teachers' multiple languages and cultures and the meaning-making systems they create and represent (Gutiérrez and Rogoff 2003; Lee 2008). Teaching and learning can no longer be focused on transmitting a fixed body of knowledge. Students and teachers need to be able to interpret their students' and their own learning practices in the context of diversity. Professional learning, however, is often oriented towards compliance, which is not conducive to a culture of experimentation as a necessary condition for both teacher and student learning.

The complex diversity also coincides with a period in the history of education where standardisation has become the norm and systems move towards standardised state, national and international testing regimes.

In this context a sophisticated form of assessment literacy for teachers of languages becomes crucial — a form that goes well beyond notions of defining the professional 'knowledge base' and 'best practice'. As Cochran-Smith (2000:18) states:

If we frame knowledge and learning questions as ... teachers learning to apply formal knowledge and demonstrate 'best practices', we ignore more than three decades of research on the social and psychological construction of knowledge and the enormous significance of cultural differences, culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally relevant assessment... If on the other hand, we frame these questions and teachers' work as fundamentally interpretive, political and theoretical as well as strategic, practical and local, we emphasise the importance of teachers' roles.

It is this notion of knowledge as constructed socially and interactively in the context of diversity in education that necessitates a meaning-oriented view of learning, and it is this view of learning that is necessary both for student and teacher learning in working within an intercultural orientation to the learning of language/s.

From 'communicative' to 'intercultural' language learning: A conceptual challenge

The shift from communicative to intercultural language learning can be seen as a particular manifestation of the efforts of several applied and sociolinguistic researchers to render the more complex account of language using and learning in multilingual contexts (including for example, Li Wei's (2011) multilinguality and

multimodality and code- and mode-shifting, Canagarajah's (2011) code-meshing, Garcia's (2009) and Garcia's and Li Wei's (2014) translanguaging). Central to this shift is the history of the concept of 'communicative competence' and, more recently, 'intercultural communicative competence' (Byram 1997).

When Hymes (1972) first introduced the concept of 'communicative competence' it represented a major paradigm shift away from an exclusive linguistic focus to include a consideration of the social rules of language use. With this shift came a need to consider the context of communication – the context of situation and culture – although the latter attracted less attention. Canale and Swain (1981) modelled communicative language use as four competences: linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence. This expansion was welcomed by the field. The model provided the basis for a further expansion by Bachman and Palmer (1996), which remains the most elaborated model of the construct for the purposes of assessment. Nevertheless, the model has been critiqued because of its exclusively cognitive perspective on interaction (Chalhoub-Deville 2003; McNamara and Roever, 2006) and its insufficient attention to context. In all the modelling of communicative competence it is important to note that communicative language ability is seen as monolingual communication within a language and culture, and not as communication that is interlinguistic and intercultural.

In conceptualising the nature of the construct it is instructive to consider Kramsch's evolving body of work over the past twenty-five years. In 1986 Kramsch (1986) proposed a move from 'communicative competence' to 'interactional competence', recognising communication as a social, interactive accomplishment in the 'sphere of intersubjectivity'. With this emphasis on interactivity, Kramsch highlighted the fact that communication occurs in interaction among people, that it is a performance that is best seen as a social, collaborative construction. She has further proposed that in interacting people not only exchange words but they also exchange life histories, experiences, knowledge, memories and values that come into play in their interpretation and creation of meaning. For her, it is not sufficient for learners to simply know how to communicate meanings; they also need to understand the practice of meaning-making or how meaning is produced. This attention to meaning-making also requires the meta-cognitive and meta-linguistic capability to decentre or stand back from the exchange and reflect upon it. This idea has been expanded further by Kramsch (2006, 2011) as 'symbolic competence, that is, 'the ability to think critically or analytically on the symbolic systems we use to make meaning' (Kramsch, 2011, p. 365). The concept of 'symbolic competence' foregrounds language as a semiotic system, and the interpretive and reflective nature of communication as meanings are constructed and deconstructed in reciprocal exchange (Liddicoat and Scarino 2013). In this sense the act of communication, and here I also include the act of learning, is

centred on meaning. This meaning resides in particular local instances or cases with their own configuration of features. Students learn from participation in communicative exchange in particular cases in the real world and in the classroom and over time; they learn through a repertoire of cases — at times with success and at other times with difficulty or complexity. These experiences present or illuminate different perspectives and may lead to the questioning of taken-for-granted beliefs; this, in turn, leads to a more textured understanding, through dialogue, of choices made, the meanings they evoke and the significance and consequences of these meanings. In this way the interpretive nature of communication, of learning to communicate and of learning in general, is foregrounded. This interpretive work is particularly complex when it occurs across diverse linguistic and cultural systems. It may also lead to processes of reflection on the role of language and culture in any particular interaction; on one's own and others' responses and reactions to the exchange; on the participants in the exchange and their positioning, assumptions, interpretations, intentions and expectations; and on one's own and others' language use and language learning.

It is the two dimensions, interpretation and reflection, that become necessary for language learning that is interlinguistic and intercultural. In languages education in the K–12 setting, this participation in communication, interpretation, reflection in diversity must be seen as developmental; it is the experience of an interaction as a whole that leads to the development of the capability to communicate interlinguistically and interculturally in increasingly sophisticated ways as continuous learning. For the K–12 setting, the conceptualisation must include learning as a dynamic, developmental, educational process (Scarino 2000; 2014a). As Skehan (1988) recognised, there is a need therefore for a theory of language, a theory of language learning and language development as the bases for teaching, learning and assessment.

In seeking to operationalise the construct of communicative language use as an intercultural accomplishment for the purposes of teaching, learning and assessment, Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) describe four component facets as follows:

- observation, description, analysis, and interpretation of phenomena shared when communicating and interacting;
- active engagement with the interpretation of self (intraculturality) and 'other' (interculturality) in diverse contexts of social exchange;
- understanding the ways in which language and culture come into play in interpreting, creating and exchanging meaning, and the recognition and integration into communication of an understanding of the self (and others) as already situated in one's own language and culture when communicating with others;

- understanding that interpretation can occur only through the evolving frame of reference developed by each individual; learning a new language becomes a part of this process (pp. 130–131).

The characterisation of communication as interpretive and reflective applies equally to learning as experienced by students and their teachers. The move towards an intercultural orientation is challenging for the language teacher, whose role becomes a 'go-between', mediating between languages, cultures, identities, discourses and world views (Kramsch 2004), and a co-analysers and interpreter with students. The challenge of this move is a conceptual one in which teachers of languages need to reconsider the very nature of language, culture and learning and are likely to have to unlearn, relearn and learn anew. It is only by exploring the conceptualisation that thoughtful elicitation and judging of student learning can occur. Developing student learning as described above and equally, developing teacher learning, notably teacher assessment literacy, calls for the development of ways of working that invite experimentation, interpretation and reflection on the phenomenon as well as on self and others. The challenge of working with this expanded construct was the focus of a study to which I now turn.

The study: The challenge of working with an expanded construct

In a three year study focused on teacher conceptions, experimentation and practices in assessment of language/s learning within an intercultural orientation, fifteen teachers of languages at primary and secondary levels, teaching Chinese, French, Japanese, Italian and Spanish and English as an additional language, worked collaboratively with a small team of researchers to examine ways of eliciting and judging students' intercultural language learning. My role in the study was as a researcher who played a major part in facilitating and mediating the collaborative processes of development and discussion.

The conceptual framework for the study was based on a cycle of four processes central to assessment: conceptualising; eliciting, judging and validating (Liddicoat and Scarino 2013). These four processes were seen as interrelated, with conceptualising the driving force. The processes were interrelated through the ways in which the teachers themselves interpreted and made inferences according to their prior and emergent understandings of what was relevant. Because of the interest in coming to understand teachers' conceptions and practices, the study was situated within a qualitative/interpretive research paradigm. Teachers participated in two year-long cycles of teaching, learning and assessment. The researchers accompanied the teachers in their experimental, developmental work in learning-oriented assessment. They facilitated ongoing workshops intended to develop and share a common conceptual

base. They provided feedback on assessment processes as each teacher developed and implemented them, gathering data in an ongoing way. Each teacher developed and implemented a sequence of learning and related assessment activities, gathering data at various points and then participating in intensive roundtable discussions that were intended to probe teachers' evolving conceptions and practices, based on their experimentation.

After the first cycle, which focused on conceptualising the intercultural dimension, it became clear to the researcher team that teachers were bringing to the task their understandings of assessment as shaped by the requirements of their school, educational system or assessment authority, especially at the point of judging. It became clear that there was a need to reconceptualise the assessment process itself — to emphasise assessment as fundamentally linked to learning as a sociocultural system rather than a single event, procedure or task, and as relating to the developmental trajectories of learners. As Haertel, Moss, Pullin and Gee (2008, p.8) state, the focus within sociocultural perspectives on learning and assessment is on:

...what learners with minds and bodies, home and peer cultures and languages, previous learning experiences, interests and values — bring to their learning environments and how that shapes their interactions with those learning environments. Thus, all of the questions about meaning, experience, language, culture, positioning, identities and so on need to be asked about the interactions between particular learners and their learning environments as they evolve over time.

Although the teachers could engage with this sociocultural perspective on teaching and learning to varying degrees, it was difficult for them to extend this to assessment. They were used to an educational practice of assessment where goals, criteria, descriptors are defined a priori, and found it difficult to identify and represent emergent features.

We worked with Delandshere's (2002) notion that 'if the purpose is to understand and support learning and knowing and to make inferences about these phenomena, then ... the idea of inquiry... rather than assessment ... would be more helpful' (Delandshere, 2002, p. 1475). Thus we made a deliberate shift from the procedure-based understanding of assessment through tasks towards a focus on evidence, evaluation and judgment as it occurs in situ in the classroom, and capturing 'data points' — some of snapshots, others of developmental processes. We made a shift from criteria as rules to an understanding of criteria as provisional considerations, open to modification and emerging from experience and reflection on student performance and understanding. Within a long-term perspective, we proposed to the teachers that they experiment with cumulative questions including the following:

- What connections can you draw within and across topics? (This would require decentring, abstracting, comparing across languages and cultures, sources, tasks, experiences.)
- What connections can you draw between your responses/comments and those of others? (This would require engaging with multiple perspectives.)
- How have you come up with these connections? (This would require decentring in relation to one's own experience and developing self-awareness.)

This represented a markedly different conception of assessment from that with which they had been working in their particular educational settings.

Data gathered in each of the two cycles included:

- the teachers' profile of the class
- the teachers' unit of work, including the planned assessment procedures and a rationale for the design choices
- identified 'data points' (i.e., moments in the implementation of the unit where they would gather data; these included classroom interactions among students and class discussions as well as products such as student essays, presentations), the evidence that they expected to gather at these points and the rationale for including each data point in their plans for elicitation
- all texts, images and other resources used to stimulate discussion and learning
- planned criteria for judging performance
- student work, with teacher commentaries and written reflections on the processes
- transcriptions of class discussions (student to student, teacher to students)
- student reflections; teacher reflections.

From the researchers' perspective, data also included:

- PowerPoint presentations used to explore ideas about intercultural language learning and assessment within this orientation
- transcripts of the debriefing discussions held throughout the life of the project, which included ongoing, facilitated discussion and reflection on the processes and findings of the study.

In discussing the findings, I shall consider the processes of elicitation and judgment. I shall outline the conceptual issues that arose as teachers experimented with these processes in the context of an expanded construct and the 'complications' as they perceived them, and I shall discuss ways of understanding student assessment and student and teacher learning towards developing their assessment literacy.

Assessing intercultural language learning: Eliciting

In addressing elicitation the teachers needed to consider what it was that they were assessing in light of the expanded construct and how exactly they were to do that (see also Liddicoat and Scarino 2010). Complications arose in relation to the:

- diversity of learners and their prior knowledge, languages and cultures, their experience and values and how to do justice to all
- issue of assessing language and content in the context
- realisation that assessment needed to include at least three facets: the students' performance, their analysis of the experience of performance and their reflection on the processes
- challenge on the part of the teachers about their facilitation of student learning and their role in mediating student learning and assessment, and their concerns about 'leading the discussion' with students, and the role of English in an assessment of an additional language, particularly in relation to the reflective dimensions of assessment
- problems of cultural stereotyping and generalisation.

Two examples illustrate these issues as they emerged across the work of the fifteen teachers. In highlighting the issues I draw attention to the kinds of dilemmas that the teachers and researchers navigated and that contributed to the development of teachers' assessment literacy as an ongoing process, rather than one that can be accomplished once and for all. The first example comes from a teacher of French, working with a Year 10/11 class. The class of seventeen students included three adults, two African students and three German exchange students. The theme of the unit was the story of the Anzacs in Northern France. The class activities included a background discussion in French and English, the discussion of a set of photographs of commemoration events in Villers-Bretonneux (one with Australian students in uniform attending the service, another with a cricketer also at the ceremony giving autographs), an Anzac Day speech in French by the French Ambassador in Canberra and the viewing of a Stella Artois advertisement where a soldier returns from war and he asks for a Stella Artois, rather than the traditional wine that his father offers. Students were asked to participate in the discussions (which were recorded and transcribed), to write in French what the Anzac day or another commemoration experience meant to them, and to retell the story of the advertisement and their reaction to it.

Reflecting on the elicitation process, the teacher recognised the issue of connection between language and content: 'I anticipated that students would learn things they had never considered', but he was used to setting culminating, summative tasks as

part of his assessment planning and he found it difficult to develop a summative assessment task with an intercultural orientation. He states:

I could not see a particular summative assessment task or procedure that would capture the intercultural but settled on some tasks I could look at as formative pieces to reflect any changes in student perceptions and understandings.

Unlike many of his fellow teachers in this study, he could entertain the notion of formative tasks and that, in fact, it might be a 'procedure' or 'process' of inquiry rather than a task that could be used for elicitation. His difficulty was in anticipating and shaping the questions that he would use to elicit discussion in situ. He explains:

The elicitation process was probably most interesting during discussions when some individuals, for example, voiced 'surprise' about what Australian students were doing in Northern France in their school uniforms. Similarly, there was humour and laughter by some as a response to the Stella Artois commercial but I couldn't turn that response into a potentially fruitful insight into the students' perceptions of the cultural factors at play. (What did they find really funny?) In other words, I found the eliciting process problematic because I had not conceptualised the purpose for the learning very clearly.

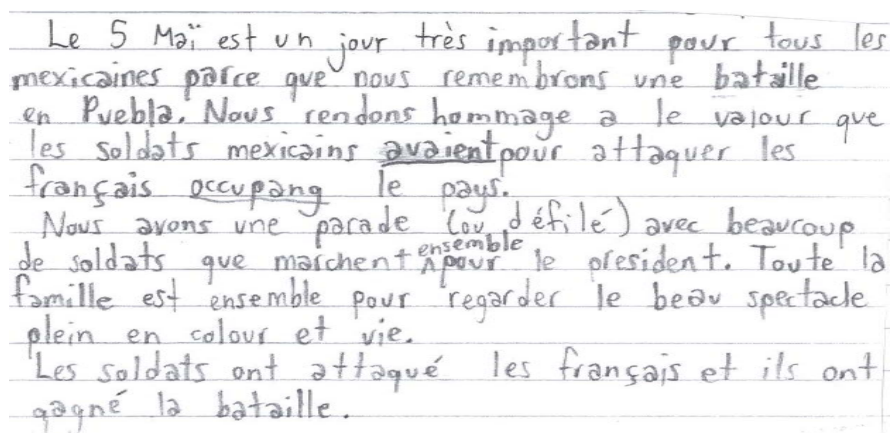
As a teacher of French at senior secondary level he was required by the state assessment authority and his school to prepare an assessment plan in advance, but this planning process cannot fully capture in advance the line that the discussion will take in situ or the reactions and responses of the students. And it is in these discussions, reactions, responses, and the invitation to reflect upon them, that the intercultural understandings emerge. It is worth noting that although he appreciated the value of seeing assessment as formative, later on, in the debriefing discussions, he comments: 'But it's not an assessment of any particular thing. It's just a class discussion', particularly in relation to a product-oriented view of assessment and indicating some tension about the elusive nature of discussion, especially when working within the constraints of his particular context and the expectations of students.

The teacher of French was articulate about his understanding of the intercultural. He explained it as:

... a process of learning about another's language and cultural context, as well as about oneself as a cultural and linguistic being, and positioning or adjusting the communication between the two (French and English). This can happen either through an analysis/reflection of the other and one's own position or actively using the language to position or adjust the communication.

Nevertheless, he found it difficult to conceptualise both what it was that he could ask the students to consider and learn and how exactly to accomplish that.

A further complication for the teacher of French was the issue of the prior knowledge of his students and the cultural meanings attached to particular events in history. The adults had no difficulty understanding the substance of the various activities, but the younger students had no prior knowledge of this chapter of Australian history. As for the African students, the whole experience was completely remote, and similarly for one of the German exchange students. They had no way of appreciating the cultural significance, for example, of Jason Gillespie, an Australian cricketer signing photographs at the commemoration ceremony. The response of the Mexican girl shows her way of connecting to a commemoration in her own cultural context.



Le 5 Mai est un jour très important pour tous les mexicains parce que nous nous souvenons d'une bataille en Puebla. Nous rendons hommage à la valeur que les soldats mexicains avaient pour attaquer les français occupant le pays. Nous avons une parade (ou défilé) avec beaucoup de soldats qui marchent ensemble pour le président. Toute la famille est ensemble pour regarder le beau spectacle plein en couleur et vie. Les soldats ont attaqué les français et ils ont gagné la bataille.

Figure 1. A Mexican girl's connection to a commemoration ceremony. (See appendix for a translation by the author of this paper.)

Writing in French, she connects it to a commemoration event in her context, highlighting the patriotism (of marching for the president) and the sociality, colour and life of the event. She writes in two places that the Mexican soldiers were fighting against the French. The teacher needs to navigate this with intercultural sensitivity. Further complications for the teacher of French related to the language of the assessment itself. The discussions were conducted in French and English, and there was a question in his mind about the extent to which English could or should come into play in an assessment of French.

The second example is drawn from the work of an ESL teacher and his work with a Year 11 class of eighteen international students, 15 from China (including one from Taiwan), two from Brazil and one from Switzerland. This was the first stage of a two-year program that leads to an external examination conducted by the state assessment authority. The assessment plan needed to conform to the requirements of the authority. The teacher was conscious of wanting to ensure that the students felt comfortable with the educational culture of Australia, and of needing to prepare them for an examination. The unit of work involved a consideration of culture shock. The activities included: (1) reading Ji Huan's story, a story about a Korean boy and discussing generalisations about Korean culture, (2) analysing a role-play and

observing non-verbal behaviours and values, (3) reading a text about English in China, (4) writing about their own experiences of culture shock and (5) making a brochure for someone who was going to visit the students' town or country. Several weeks after the preparation of the brochures, students were asked to (6) reconsider and write a reflection on their brochure: Would the brochure be useful for someone going to your country? Why did you include the information that you did? What would you now add or delete and why?

The teacher found it difficult to conceptualise what intercultural understanding he should elicit and how he should elicit it, while recognising that for his students: 'Their whole life (in coming to Australia) is a period of intercultural learning — they've just been thrown into a continual process'. He acknowledges his own difficulty:

I need to give more thought to what can be evidence — what is it that students could do to show me that intercultural learning is taking place? The brochure theoretically encourages students to think about cultural differences and will indicate a degree of cultural awareness, but I have not clearly identified the indicators of this.

He recognized that the task would permit an intercultural comparison, but he move from a notion of intercultural learning to cultural awareness. The former would require a consideration of the movement between two linguistic and cultural systems, whereas the latter could be understood as the role of culture within a particular linguistic and cultural system. Furthermore, at the planning stage, he is used to identifying criteria for intercultural learning and indicators of success and feels unable to identify them in advance. This uncertainty is reiterated when he realises that the product on its own is not sufficient to reveal aspects of intercultural language learning. As he states:

... the brochures are done, they're all very pretty as brochures tend to be... it's all lovely. I think they still found difficulty in going beyond fairly surface things.

This realisation highlights that eliciting intercultural language learning will necessarily need to go beyond the task or the product but the question remains for the teacher as to how to do this, given the performance and product orientation of much of language assessment.

In class discussions, the ESL teacher came to understand that students necessarily made generalisations about cultures that could easily lead to stereotypes. He also realised that students have different attitudes towards the image they wish to present of their home country, in this instance, whether or not in China it is appropriate to make a noise while eating. He comes to understand that students need training in the processes of reflection, which are integral to developing intercultural understanding. He states:

ESL students benefit from being trained to reflect on experiences, events and issues from an intercultural viewpoint. Intercultural awareness and competence requires knowledge of their own culture before they can interpret and understand another culture. Development of knowledge (of own and new culture), skills (in interpreting and reflecting on what is happening in the new culture) and attitudes (about the desirability of developing some understanding of the new culture, and accepting/tolerating differences and ambiguities) are all beneficial.

His reflection also highlights that the assessment of this intercultural capability must be seen as dynamic and developing over time. The teacher comes to understand that assessment of this aspect of language learning requires that ESL students be asked to reflect on what is happening to themselves as learners who are working and living interculturally, as it then enables them to better understand their own experience. Reflecting also on his role as one of the external examiners for the state assessment authority, he states:

I have marked thousands of them (essays). I don't think ESL study or the exam offers any real opportunity for interculturality at all. In fact, I think that the whole thing is sanitised to the extent that we can't bring any intercultural in because we have people from China, from Malaysia and from Australia and we can't advantage or disadvantage anyone. So we've got to make it as neutral as we possibly can.

It is this notion of cultural neutrality that means that there is little experience for teachers of languages to draw upon to assess the expanded construct.

In both examples over cycles of planning, practice and reflection individually and collectively as part of a community of research participants, the teachers faced the challenge of working with an expanded construct. They came to realise that for intercultural language learning, elicitation needed to include not only the performance of communication or the preparation of a product but also an invitation to analyse and reflect and to connect the performances, analyses and reflections across the repertoire of experiences. They also came to realise that this work is intimately connected to the learners' life-worlds, that is, their socialisation into their primary language and culture and into the language and culture that they are learning. In planning assessment processes, they recognised that a summative, product-oriented view of assessment was insufficient and more attention needed to be given to formative processes. They also became aware of their own mediating role in the assessment process. The challenges that these highly experienced teachers encountered as they sought to work with an expanded construct provide a window into the kinds of issues that emerge in developing teacher assessment literacy and the crucial role of facilitation and mediation in discussions that allow for probing teacher conceptions and practices.

Assessing intercultural language learning: Judging

In addressing the judging of students' intercultural understanding teachers needed to focus on features of students' interactions and performance that could be understood as evidence and how these might be formulated as criteria for judging performance. Complications arose not only from the insufficiency of the product alone, but also from needing to judge students' analyses and reflections, which were not, for them, a regular part of the assessment process. There was the recognition that teachers of languages have no well-developed frame of reference to use in making judgments of intercultural language learning. The curriculum and assessment frameworks that are available to them are most frequently structured around the four macro-skills. If culture is included in the framing, it is represented as cultural facts or practices, and not as consideration of diverse interpretations of phenomena. The frame of reference for judging language learning is normally assumed to be the educated native-speaker, but this is an inappropriate frame of reference for intercultural language learning. It is inappropriate because of the fluidity of the notion of native-speaker, and also because such a frame remains monolingualistic and monocultural (Liddicoat and Scarino 2013). Furthermore, the judgment of intercultural understanding necessarily involves considering the person, the student. It cannot be objectified in the same way that a students' product can be. The issue of judging students' performance in their L1 in the context of learning an additional language was a further complication.

Reflecting on judging students' intercultural language learning, the French teacher in first example saw the intercultural as a meta-awareness process that he found difficult to capture. He stated:

There were a few, only a very few who I say did the intellectual gymnastics and who were able to be looking beyond comparison, because it is not a natural reflex... to express an opinion, that's easy but to express an opinion knowing and then stepping back from that, that's the hard bit.

He recognised that students can offer opinions but that it was difficult for them to decentre and consider the origin and cultural situatedness and framing of their own opinions and those of others. He viewed this complex process as an exercise in 'intellectual gymnastics' Furthermore, he recognised that this process of 'looking beyond comparison' could only be accomplished over the longer term and that it is more difficult to assess development than it is to assess an episode.

The work and reflections of a teacher of Chinese in the study illustrate a dilemma in judging across languages (Chinese and English). This teacher was working in an all girls' school with a group of seven Year 11 Australian girls studying a unit on women in China. The students had:

1. engaged in class discussion about what it means to be a woman in today's world
2. given speeches about women they admired
3. analysed a range of texts in Chinese showing different aspects of women's identity
4. written an essay in Chinese
5. written a reflection in English on what it means to be a woman in China today.

For the final assessment task the teacher had prepared the following criteria:

English reflection (formative)

- Development of ideas and reflection compared to initial reflection
- Structure and expression
- Ability to link ideas to texts studied and/or discussions held

Chinese (summative)

- Depth and relevance
- Structure and organisation
- Accuracy and expression
- Evidence of reflection regarding relevance and significance of topic to oneself and one's audience

The teacher included the following note in her assessment design:

To complement my own assessment, students will also be asked to do their own self-assessment at the end of the topic through a reflection on how they see their own intercultural development (or how they see the tasks in this topic having affected their world views).

The criteria were clearly modelled on the ones available in the state assessment authority's syllabus; the only addition was the reflection. The teacher of Chinese explained that she found it difficult to develop criteria. This difficulty relates not only to the absence of a frame of reference for judging intercultural language learning but also to the way in which criteria themselves and their function and use are perceived. She observed that the students' responses were richer in ideas that she had previously seen, both in English and Chinese. This, however, created another complication for the teacher when she noted that the performance of some of the students who were the less capable in Chinese was in fact strong in English. She explains:

And one of the things I found for the less capable language students the struggle I had with the English reflection, they were able to say some of the most amazing things. But when it came to Chinese, they could make a statement but they couldn't really expand or explore that further and I found assessing them, having to make the decision: well,

do I then look at their English component to see that they have developed that idea ... I don't want to penalise them twice for language use (in Chinese) but also then penalise them because they haven't said enough even though that's purely because of their language ... I was worried if I was making a subject view ... I think if I had written a descriptor ... it would have been easier but having to attach a mark so that they can get their marks in Year 11 was really hard.

The tension between different levels of performance in the two languages that were at play in learning is compounded by the tension between language and content, making it difficult for her to decide how to manage her judgment. Through the reflective dimension she managed to capture an intracultural dimension in her students' learning, but she found the intercultural much more elusive. In seeking to resolve the problem she struggled with the need to assign a grade because she was responding to the requirements of the assessment authority and her own school. She would have preferred to profile the performances of her students, but this was not an option for her.

I think that it was the fact that I was trying to put a mark to it, give them a grade for their Year 11 SACE (certificate), I felt I wasn't able to do that justice. So I felt a descriptor rather than a grade would have made it much fairer.

She also struggled with the recognition that her judgment might be subjective, when in her context assessment can only be objective. She did not recognise the fact that any judgment would necessarily be open to interpretation, and would thus be subjective. It is very difficult to override objectivity within the regular nature of the framing of assessment in school education.

Summary

The tensions in the study emerged largely because the teachers needed to (re)conceptualise the intercultural and the assessment process itself in relation to both eliciting and judging within new paradigms. The expanded conception of language learning needed to be understood in relation to their current conceptions. Traditional assessment with its focus on products more than processes and which was the norm for them and for their students, was less able to capture students' intercultural capability. They, therefore, had to (re)conceptualise assessment in ways that could capture processes. The challenge was also an interpretive one. The subjectivity and inter-subjectivity of judging presented a challenge to the culture of objectivity in assessment, which they had believed would ensure fairness to all students.

Thus in order to assess intercultural understanding, teachers needed to be able to conceptualise its nature in language learning and find ways of operationalising what

it was that the intercultural involved. They also needed to allow for subjectivity and interpretation in making judgments about their students' language use and language learning. From my point of view as a researcher/facilitator in considering student learning of languages and cultures and in collaboratively developing teacher learning about language learning, teaching and assessment, it is crucial to engage with contemporary conceptualisations of language, culture and learning, to develop ways of working collaboratively in joint investigations, experimentation, facilitation, discussion and problematising towards development and change. It is through these ways of working that participants can come to understand how it is that they and others understand the language/s teaching, learning and assessment work in hand. Over an extended period of time, Moss (1996, 2008) has argued for an understanding of assessment itself as interpretive. In this study the challenge for all participants was to permit themselves to recognise this in their practice. They were conditioned in ways that were difficult to dislodge by the requirements of their institutions, the expectations of their students, the discourses of objectivity and products and outcomes in assessment, and a separation between learning and assessment. The focus on 'complications' in the discussion does not mean that the teachers failed to expand and change their conceptions and repertoire of practices of assessment of language/s learning within an intercultural orientation. There was a great deal of learning, but this also necessitated some processes of unlearning and relearning.

Discussion and implications for developing teacher assessment literacy

Central to the discussion of both eliciting and judging students' language learning within an intercultural orientation, is that in all aspects of language assessment, it is not only what students learn that is important but also *how it is that they understand what they learn*. This learning, in turn, is shaped by their situatedness in their own language/s and culture/s and their personal knowledge, experiences, understandings, beliefs and values, which form the interpretive resources that they bring to learning. It is in this sense that their language learning takes place in the contexts of situation and culture. Language use in communication and language learning itself are acts of meaning, shaped by the reciprocal interpreting, creating and exchanging of meaning and reflecting on the act. It is in this sense that Halliday (1993) describes language learning as 'learning how to mean' (p. 93). And meaning always remains open to interpretation.

Recent discussions of language teacher assessment literacy have focused on the range of 'components' that comprise this literacy. Inbar-Lourie (2008) maps the range of components comprehensively and proposes the notion of a framework that would

capture a holistic and integrated understanding of assessment. McNamara and Roever (2006) highlight the need to consider a critical view of testing and its social consequences.

In reviewing the components of assessment literacy for teachers of languages, Taylor (2009) raises the question of balance among the technical know-how, practical skills, theoretical knowledge, understanding of principles and the context of assessment within education and society. I have discussed previously (Scarino 2013) the need to consider the knowledge base in its most contemporary representation, as well as the processes through which assessment literacy is developed. It is through these processes or ways of working that it becomes possible to tap into teachers' personalised knowledge, (see Golombek 1998; Shulman 1987), into their own interpretive frameworks that shape the ways they conceptualise, interpret, decide upon or choose possibilities and make judgments in assessment for learning. These ways of working ultimately would permit them to come to understand their own understandings, preconceptions and practices. Developing these ways of working in communities of teachers, as the study described above permitted, allows for a dialogue where the multiple and variable conceptions and interpretations can be examined and analysed in their complexity. It is in making sense of variation in this dialogue – in diversity – that an environment for reflectivity and reflexivity is created; and it is self-awareness that emerges from these processes that leads to changes in practices in ways that respect the diverse contexts of diverse languages and cultures. It is this ever-evolving level of awareness and self-awareness through meaningful assessment literacy development for teachers that will enable students to engage in meaningful language learning and teachers to assess for meaningful language learning in the increasingly complex context of linguistic and cultural diversity.

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Appendix

The 5th May is a very important day for all Mexicans because we remember (commemorate) a battle in Puebla. We give homage to the courage of the Mexican soldiers who attacked the French who were occupying the country.

We have a parade with many soldiers who march together for the president. The whole family is there together to watch the beautiful spectacle, full of colour and life.

The soldiers attacked the French and they won the battle.

[This translation does not reflect the student's coinage of words, influenced by English, for example, 'nous remembrons' (for we remember/commemorate) and the choice of 'une parade' to render the idea of parade yet at the same time including the French word (defile) as an alternative].